

GOING UP?

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Friday Night:

G-d said to Moshe, "Tell the Children of Israel that they should take a Terumah for Me" (Shemos 25:1)

Parashas Terumah begins the discussion of the Mishkan, or, Tabernacle. A "terumah" is an "Elevated-Offering," something that was previously fit for everyday use by anybody, and made holy, becoming part of Temple property. Though no noticeable change may occur to the object itself upon sanctification, spiritually the transformation is remarkable (if we could see it), reflected in the changed halachic status.

For example, if a non-priest, who sanctified part of his property, were to then use that property, he would be guilty of profaning Temple property, for which the punishment is quite severe. Though, the previous moment, prior to sanctification, he would have been able to freely use it, one moment later, after sanctification, he is forbidden to use it.

However, explain the Kabbalists, one mustn't think that this concept only applies to that which is headed for Temple use. Quite the contrary! In fact, the writing on the Kohen Gadol's Tzitz (Diadem) -- Holy to Hashem -- applies to all men, and their obligation to raise everything to a level of holiness.

What does this mean, and how do we do this? How do you imbue something profane with holiness?

The answer is that you don't, or better yet, that you don't have to, because it is already intrinsically holy. This is what the psalmist writes:

By Dovid, a psalm. G-d's is the earth and its fullness (Tehillim 24:1)

And, not only does it belong to G-d, but, even more so, it is a part of G-d, which is why, explains the Nefesh HaChaim, G-d is called "HaMakom," "The Place," as in, "The Place within which all exists." You can't get any holier than that!

If so, then the question is reversed. It is no longer, how can you imbue the profane with holiness, but rather, how can something so holy as creation, and man for that matter, become so profane? A simple analogy from the physical world, in this case the Torah, alludes to the answer, and Purim.

When Yosef's brothers finally came down to Egypt in search of food, they stood before Yosef whom,

the Torah emphasizes, they did not recognize (Bereishis 42:8). Why not asks the Talmud (Kesuvos 27b)? Because, when Yosef had left them, he had merely been seventeen years of age, and quite beardless. Now, when they stood before him, he had a beard, and, we can assume he was dressed up like an Egyptian, costume and all.

However, later on, when Yosef revealed himself (Bereishis 45:4), he went to great lengths to prove to his brothers that he was the same old Yosef, just older and wiser, and quite successful. But, in essence he was the same, as they would see for themselves if they were to look past the physical changes.

So, too, it is with the spiritual world as well. Since creation, everything has been holy. However, as the Kabbalists teach, when Adam's skin changed from light to physical skin as a result of his eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, everything else in creation also became layered in impurity and physicality.

Thus, never before have "looks" been so deceiving! And, destructive too, for, even the most energetic person weighed down by bundles of clothing and filth loses touch with his positive energy. So too does creation, under the "weight" of so many layers of materialistic mass lose its ability to radiate its intrinsic holiness in any meaningful way.

Thus, rectification of Adam's sin is to remove the layers from physical creation, to reveal its inner spiritual brilliance, to reveal its spiritual potential and not just its physical potential. Making something "holy to G-d" means being the vehicle to liberate the spiritual reality -- what in Kabbalah is called the "sod" (spiritual mystery) of a thing -- of that which is being sanctified. Thus now, being spiritually "light" after having shed so many extraneous layers, it automatically ascends. This is really the message of Purim, and why we dress up in costumes, as we will discuss in the next d'var Torah, b"H.

Shabbos Day:

"Tell the Children of Israel that they should take a Terumah for Me" (Shemos 25:1)

Amalek, the tribe from which Haman descended, tries hard to make us believe in only that which we can physically see, thus severing our connection to holiness. This is why his name has the same gematria as the Hebrew word for "doubt" ("sufek"), and it can be read, "ayin-malak" -- the "severed eye," as in "mind's eye."

When we follow his "advice," we imbue the physical world with power it does not have, but which, measure-for-measure, we are subject to. This is why Moshe Rabbeinu and the Jewish people had to wage such a physical war against Amalek at the end of Parashas Beshalach, after having destroyed

Egypt with a wave of Moshe's hand. When we look at the world through Amalek's eyes, we lose touch with our holy selves, and spiritually endanger ourselves, and, eventually, physically as well.

Purim comes along and reminds us that the outer layer is only a "costume," masking hidden holiness that we must reveal. Sometimes, only one layer must be removed, other times many layers must be eradicated. But when we do, and we allow the inner holiness of something to shine forth into the world for all to see, be it from within ourselves, something we own, or the Torah, then, we too, have brought a "Terumah-Offering" to G-d, and add another stone in the wall of His Holy Temple.

The result is "Ha-Man," as opposed to, "Haman."

They sound the same, but they are radically different concepts, and represent different sides of the same spiritual coin. The latter was one of the most hateful and dangerous enemies the Jewish people have ever known -- a direct descendant of Amalek. If anything, he represented the complete camouflage on holiness, the ultimate hester panim (hiding of G-d's face).

The former was the holy bread that came down from Heaven each day for the Jewish people while travelling in the desert. It was completely holy, with no layers of waste whatsoever, and that is why every aspect of it went to nourish the body and soul, and none of it had to be rejected as waste. It was the complete opposite of Haman and Amalek.

"Haman," in Hebrew can be read another way: heh-men, nun, which, would render as, "they are fifty." Who are "they," and what is "fifty." In truth, "they" and "fifty" refer to the same thing: the FIFTY Gates of Understanding, or, Fifty Gates of Holiness, that godly knowledge which allows us to truly combat Amalek and ascend to higher levels of spiritual awareness, like Terumah itself.

Haman built his gallows FIFTY amos high, says the Pri Tzaddik, to hang Mordechai, who saw through Haman, and therefore represented a walking Nun Sha'arei Binah (Fifty Gates of Understanding).

Thus, the following explanation by the Ba'al HaTurim is not only brilliant because of the connection it creates between the Mishkan and the Temple, but, because it fits right in with all we're saying:

TAKE A TERUMAH FOR ME: Make a place for Me that is one-fiftieth of the Temple Mount just a Terumah is one-fiftieth. For, the Temple Mount was five hundred by five hundred, and, the Courtyard was one-hundred by fifty, which is one-fiftieth of five-hundred by five-hundred. (Ba'al HaTurim)

In other words, when it comes to produce grown in Eretz Yisroel, there is an obligation to remove one-fiftieth of the produce and to give that portion to the priest, as an Elevated-Offering, at least while the Temple is in existence. Today, the practice is still followed, though as the result of a rabbinical ordinance.

Thus, according to the Ba'al HaTurim, not only was the Mishkan the result of Terumos -- gifts from the people -- but, it itself WAS one! It was considered to be "Terumah" taken off the Temple, so-to-speak, and sanctified to G-d. And, the fraction of one-fiftieth is extremely important, as we now

understand, because it symbolizes the intellectual clarity of the Nun Sha'arei Binah, which is why it says of the Mishkan:

You shall make fifty loops on the end of the one curtain that is the outermost in the joining, and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that joins to the second. You shall make fifty catches of copper, and put the catches into the loops, and join the tent together, that it may be one. (Shemos 26:11)

This also fits in with the Ba'al HaTurim's earlier explanation:

TAKE A TERUMAH FOR ME: The letter "mem" in the word (Terumah) alludes to Torah, which was given over forty days (represented by the mem) to those who ate Terumah, as it says, "Torah was only given to those who ate manna" (Ba'al HaTurim)

Furthermore, says the Ba'al HaTurim:

The word "Me" (lamed-yud) equals forty, the percentage of Terumah considered to be generous -- ayin yafeh.

Literally, a "good eye," as opposed to the "bad eye" of Amalek, represented by the first letter ayin of his name. And THAT'S why the Purim redemption came seventy years after the exile began, and after the seventy days for which Haman ruled.

SEUDAH SHLISHI:

Sew together five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves. Half of the sixth sheet will hang over the front of the tent. (Shemos 26:9)

OVER THE FRONT OF THE TENT: Half of the width hung down and doubled the eastern curtain opposite the opening, and it was similar to a modest bride who covers her face with a veil. (Rashi)

There is revealing, and then there is revealing. There is a revealing that hides, and, a hiding that reveals. For example, when a person dresses immodestly, and reveals parts of their body that the Torah requires to be clothed, he or she has revealed his or her physical body, and, in the process, has hidden his or her spiritual being.

On the other hand, tznius (modesty) is a physical "hiding" that is spiritually-revealing. By properly covering over immodest parts of the body, a miracle occurs: the spiritual essence of the person is revealed. Is it really a miracle, though, or self-dignity that stems from a sense of godliness, from being made in the image of G-d?

Miracle, or natural reality, it doesn't really make a difference. It is a value that the Mishkan came to teach and emphasize, by itself acting in a "modest" way, as Rashi points out above. This was in perfect keeping with its theme of removing the layers of "Chitzonios," negative spiritual realities to

reveal in spiritual essences and holiness.

The Western world does not understand this idea, for the most part, and is in great spiritual danger as a result (and therefore, so are the Jewish people). In a European city at this time, there is an art exhibition taking place that is acting in an extreme opposite fashion than the Mishkan, in the name of "Art." To maintain the sanctity of this parshah sheet, I will say no more.

Objectively-speaking, though, what is taking place is clearly obscene and degrading for human beings (what people won't do for \$200 and a little fame). Subjectively-speaking, it is called "Art," and the elite of society will attend and pay good money to "have been there," and pay great homage to the exhibit and the artist.

Who's in charge here?

Ba'al Pe'or. This is the ancient idol worship of the indecent, of the shocking. It is the belief in the need to "elevate" the degrading to the status of "lofty," to put in on a pedestal and call it "godly." It is the instinctual tendency within mankind to service the animal-side of human beings, but in what masquerades as a "dignified" manner.

However, it is not true. You can fool man some of the time, but you can't fool G-d any of the time, and He sees it for what it is. It represents an orderly dismantling of the moral boundaries of society, or, whatever is left of them today. And, as World War II taught us, it does not take very long for society to continue its slide down a slippery path of immorality, until even genocide can be performed in what some called a "dignified" manner.

MELAVE MALKAH:

A Maskil by Eisan HaEzrachi. I will sing forever of G-d's kindness, I will make Your faithfulness known to every generation with my mouth. (Tehillim 89:1)

Eisan was among the Levi'im who sang in the Temple service, during the reign of Dovid HaMelech. According to tradition, many of his songs were composed with Divine inspiration, and therefore, this one is included in the Psalms of Dovid HaMelech. The Vilna Gaon even includes Eisan among the forty-eight primary prophets.

Eisan is giving testimony here with his own mouth. He is testifying to the fact that Dovid HaMelech's kingship will endure forever, that G-d has chosen him to be the source of true kings of Israel, and that it will from his seed, eventually, that the final king will come, Melech HaMoshiach.

For, Who in the sky can be compared to G-d; be likened to G-d among the angels(7)

It's a rhetorical question of course. Eisan is just pointing out the omnipotence of G-d, as if to say, what G-d wants, G-d gets -- one way or another, at some time or another. G-d is the Ultimate King-

Maker. He builds nations up, and, when the moment is right, He takes them down again. This is why we, in spite of historical patterns, are often caught by surprise by amazing turn of events.

You crushed arrogant Rahav like a corpse(11)

Egypt, that is. One of the reasons why the Western world has difficulty accepting that the Jewish people left Egypt is because it is hard to believe that a small, slave-based nation, could overpower so mighty a nation as Egypt. The only way to believe in such an event is to believe in G-d, a G-d Who involves Himself in the affairs of man. They don't.

You are powerful, phenomenally powerful, Eisan the Prophets speaks of G-d, yet, you are even more righteous and fair. Unlike man-made governments, G-d's rule is not based upon pragmatism or self-interest. It is based upon benevolence, and, a desire to bring creation and mankind to fruition, and, eventually, to the World-to-Come. Man's values come and go, but G-d's are absolute, and, completely reliable.

Praises to the people who know the teruah; G-d, in the light of Your countenance they walk. (16)

This verse actually made its way into the prayer service of Rosh Hashanah, said be the Chazzan just before the blowing of the shofar -- the teruah-sound maker. The shofar is a mystical device entrusted to the Jewish people that is able to pierce the many layers of externalities that often spiritually clog the Jewish heart and block one's relationship to G-d. It has the power to supercede the boundaries of time, and unite the Akeidah of the past and the people of the present, to allow them a taste of Jewish self-sacrifice for G-d and Torah.

This is the G-d who has said:

I have found Dovid, My servant; with My holy oil I have anointed him; with whom My hand shall be established. My are also shall strengthen him(21-22)

Then, Eisan recounts G-d's many promises to protect Dovid HaMelech, to establish his kingdom and to make it flourish. And, best of all:

"And I shall establish his seed eternally, and his throne like the days of heaven. If his sons should leave My Torah and not walk in My judgments then I will punish their transgressions with the rod but My kindness shall not be completely removed from him(31-34)

That was the good news. Now comes the bad news:

But You have abandoned and rejected; You have been angry with Your anointed one. You have destroyed the covenant of Your servant; You have profaned His crown to the ground (39-40)

In spite of all of G-d's promises, says Eisan, still, the sins of Dovid's descendants were enough to allow his kingdom to fall and be destroyed. And now, the long delay in Moshiach's coming have led the nations to mock the Jewish people's belief in a redeemer. The fact that he has not come, they

say, means that he will NEVER come.

However, Eisan was a prophet, a sincere prophet, who loved his G-d, loved his people, and loved his king. And, because he asked the question with such sincerity, he was given a vision of the future, and that future included the re-construction of the very kingdom over which he mourned. And, in that vision, he saw that ultimate redeemer -- Moshiach -- descendant of Dovid HaMelech.

In one moment, Eisan's hope was restored. In one line, he conveyed that hope to the future generations:

Blessed is G-d forever, Amen and Amen. (53)

May our generation be the fulfillment of that prophetic vision, Amen and Amen.

Have a great Shabbos, and, a very, very happy Purim. May redemption for the Jewish people swift and safe.

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