

A QUANTUM LEAP

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

FRIDAY NIGHT:

Let them make Me a sanctuary . . ." (Shemos 25:8)

After having lived in this physical world for as long as we have, we are used to building things: a house, a study hall, a shul, and the local store. Whatever was needed we built. If the idea exists and it calls for materials that are available, then it is just a matter of time until it ends up becoming a physical reality.

Imbuing a physical structure with holiness is another concept altogether. Holiness is a metaphysical reality, one that we can try to create, but ultimately, it is really G-d Who decides just how successful we will be. The Second Temple was not on the same level of kedushah that the First Temple, even though the Talmud said it was the most beautiful building of all (Succah 51b).

There is no question that G-d's decision to allow His holiness to enter our creation was in response to our spiritual level at that time. However, sometimes even though the builders are worthy of such Divine acclamation, history itself doesn't allow it. That is why as holy as the rabbis were in the Second Temple period, that Temple could not come close to the level of kedushah for which the First Temple was well known.

Thus, even though the Jewish people built the Mishkan completely according to Divine specification, it did not automatically have kedushah, though doing so was what made it possible for the following to happen:

The cloud covered the Appointed Tent, and the Glory of G-d filled the Tabernacle. (Shemos 40:35)

And once It did, the Mishkan became a different structure. Physically it had not changed, but spiritually it had been transformed. At that moment when the Divine Presence moved into the Mishkan the physical and the metaphysical met and became one; its new kedushah was just a projection of that reality, like the glow that metal gives off when heated red-hot.

What you saw was no longer what you got. What you saw was a building, a temporary structure that might have looked like nothing more than an ornate tent and human living quarters. However, what really existed was a spiritual "wormhole" that joined two very different realities, the Upper and completely spiritual Realm, and the Lower and quite physical Realm.

This is what the Talmud means when it says about the Temple:

Woe to the gentile nations who destroyed it but know not what they destroyed! While the Temple stood the altar atoned for them, and now, what will atone for them? (Succah 55b)

They came, they saw, and they destroyed. And what did they destroy? A building, the place of worship of the Jewish people. They even enjoyed themselves while destroying it, having no sense of what the Temple had been. They even took their success as proof positive that the Temple had never been much more than what it seemed to be, which is why a Bas Kol called out:

Rava said: Nebuchadnezzar sent Nebuzaradan three hundred mules laden with iron axes that could break iron, but they were all shattered on a single gate of Jerusalem, as it is written, "And now with all its ornaments together, they beat down with hammers and chisels" (Tehillim 74:6). He wanted to return but said, "I am afraid that I may meet the same fate as Sennacheriv." Thereupon a voice called out, "Leaper, son of a leaper, leap, Nebuzaradan, for the time has come for the Sanctuary to be destroyed and the Temple burnt." He had but one axe left so he went and smashed [the gate] with the head of it and it opened, as it is written, "It had been regarded as bringing to the Above, the axes in the thicket of trees" (Ibid. 5). He hewed down [the Jews] as he proceeded until he reached the Temple. Upon setting it on fire, it sought to rise up but was forced down from Heaven, as it is written, "G-d has trodden down the virgin daughter of Yehudah as in a winepress" (Eichah 1:15). His was elated when a voice came forth from Heaven saying to him, "You have slain a dead people, and have burned a Temple already burned; You have ground flour already ground" . . . (Sanhedrin 96b)

In other words, what you came to get is not what you saw, for the Divine Presence had already withdrawn from it, and the supernatural connection between the physical and the metaphysical had already been severed. It would take mankind another 3200 years to begin to understand a little of what that means.

SHABBOS DAY:

Let them make Me a sanctuary, so I can dwell among them . . . (Shemos 25:8)

The following was taken from the site: <http://www.geocities.com/thesciencefiles/emc2/emc2.html>

Albert Einstein is perhaps the most famous scientist of this century. One of his most well known accomplishments is the formula $E=mc^2$ (squared). Despite its familiarity, many people don't really understand what it means . . . One of Einstein's great insights was to realize that matter and energy are really different forms of the same thing. Matter can be turned into energy, and energy turned into matter . . .

To the average individual and non-scientist, there is little interesting or unusual about this statement. They probably all know that everything physical is made up of something called matter, and energy is a term they use on a daily basis. What most people don't know or appreciate is that energy is completely metaphysical, making the entire physical world upon which we depend for so much stability quite unstable, at least as far as we are concerned.

"The question of information comes up time and time again. How does information get around so fast on a sub-atomic level? How does matter know? Matter seems to know. The implication of this theory is that there is knowledge, intrinsic and inherited, in physical existence. Although we consider physical matter to be inanimate, it is really sensitive - something alive and filled with information. It knows itself, and it knows what's going on within itself. This is basically a mystical concept - that there is knowledge that is innate within matter. This is a natural consequence of observations made in quantum physics and it's unavoidable."

A remarkable concept that, only 50 years ago, might have come only from a rabbi with a very advanced understanding of physics. Now, these concepts are made by physicists, and in particular Dr. James Brawer during a lecture in 1986. But, here is how one rabbi explains it today:

Classical science maintains that objects are inherently separate from one another. This means that two separate objects influence each other only when they are in close proximity of each other. Quantum mechanics maintains that the influence that distant subatomic particles have to each other indicates the underlying unity between them. This is because quantum phenomena are mutually influenced at far distances. There is no need for phenomena to go to each other as there is no space separating them from each other. This means the quantum level is unified. (Sparks of the Hidden Light, p. 53)

Thus, the diversity that we notice within Creation and which often acts as obstacles to accomplish the will of man, and certainly to achieve peace, on a subatomic level is really non-existence. But, recall what has already been said:

Energy is a totally abstract quantity, introduced into physics as a useful model with which we can short-cut complex calculations. You cannot see or touch energy, yet the word is now so much a part of daily conversation that people think of energy as a tangible entity with an existence of its own. (The Ghost in the Atom, p. 26)

That would make reality an awesomely incredible optical illusion. It may be an optical illusion, but not an illusion at all because regardless of why something exists, if it exists, it is there. Even if Creation is only a passing thought in the mind of G-d, so-to-speak, for the duration of time that it is passing it is real, for nothing can be more real than that which G-d thinks about.

Nevertheless, the implication is extremely dramatic. In simple terms it means that spirituality is the building blocks of physicality, which means that it is, by scientific definition, all a function of G-d's will. Yes, the entire universe is a three-dimensional projection of information, that information being the will of G-d. Thanks to science one no longer needs to go only to a Torah scholar to prove the existence of G-d, though the average physicist can probably tell you very little about what G-d wants us to do with the existence He is willing to exist each moment.

SEUDOS SHLISHIS:

The Tabernacle of the Appointed Tent was completed. (Shemos 39:32)

Thus, the Torah is not an instruction book on how to live a somewhat spiritual existence within a very physical reality; that is arduous and often leads to people who tire of religion. Rather, the Torah is a guide for turning mass into energy, not in the sense that Einstein and his colleagues meant it, but in the way that G-d does. It is a path to the understanding that within all that is physical is something totally spiritual: G-d Himself.

And, the Mishkan was a living example of a successful experiment at doing just this.

This is why after G-d commanded Moshe Rabbeinu to assemble the Mishkan, he answered:

Moshe said before The Holy One, Blessed is He, "How is it possible for man to assemble it?" (Rashi, Shemos 39:32)

Assemble what? A building? What's the problem? We can build skyscrapers that reach into the upper sky. What's the big deal about a large tent?

Build a Mishkan that interfaces between the physical and the spiritual? That is another matter altogether, and thus G-d answered him:

"You just busy your hands with it and it will stand up by itself."

But then again, that is what G-d is always doing: He is always translating our thoughts into reality. Everything that has ever existed and will ever exist is the result of His work, not ours. Except for one thing: Will. The potential to be and the actualization of it is G-d's handiwork, but the desire to see that potential become reality is triggered by our conscious will, and therefore we are credited for the creation.

In the end, Creation comes down to one thing and one thing only: Will - G- d's will that allows everything to exist both in potential and in actuality, and our will that determines, as per G-d's ultimate will, whether or not Level A will actually become Level B.

MELAVE MALKAH:

G-d told Moshe, "Tell the Children of Israel that anyone who desires to bring to Me an elevated-offering should do so." (Shemos 25:1-2)

Having said all of this, we return to the beginning of the parshah and Rashi's explanation of this verse, which now appears far deeper than first perceived. Rashi - who comes only to provide a simple explanation for the words - interpreted the words "to Me" to mean "in My Name." But isn't that exactly what the reader would have thought when he read the verse? What then is Rashi adding that we don't already know?

The Sifsei Chachamim explains that Rashi was troubled by a dilemma: if the whole world belongs to G-d, and any gift we bring to Him is already His, then how is it possible to give something to G-d?

Thus, Rashi concludes it is not possible, for everything does belong to Him - everything, that is, except for how we give the gift, which, of course, is a function of our free will.

Now we can take this idea a quantum leap further. If everything in the physical world is really just G-d in the end, then how can we possess it, let alone give it and form it? If the physical gift in my hand never really existed independent of its Creator, but rather, is just a projection of His will for it to appear to exist, then how can I give part of Him back to Him?

The answer is you can't and besides, that is not what G-d wanted in the first place. As Dovid HaMelech wrote:

G-d is close to the broken hearted; and those crushed in spirit He saves. (Tehillim 34:19)

Yes, the traditional explanation is that G-d favors the humble. There is only room in Creation for one G-d, and He is G-d, so anyone else trying out for the position is bound to make waves - BIG ones. However, on the level of Sod, this posuk refers to one who gives himself over to the inevitable understanding that all we can do in this world, which is EVERYTHING, is will to bring good from potential to reality. The rest, as the Talmud says, "is in the hands of Heaven" (Brochos 34b).

Ultimately, this is an expression of one of the deeper Kabbalistic concepts of all: tzimtzum, the constriction of the Light of Ain Sof. How can you constrict and give measure to that which is infinite and without any boundary whatsoever? The very term used to describe the source of this light after the constriction is called Kav Ain Sof (the Line of Infinite Light), the greatest oxymoron of all time. For, the first part of the phrase denotes something that is limited while the second part connotes something that is not!

Unless, of course, the physical realm is not what we perceive it to be on the surface, but rather, what the new science is starting to confirm: Will, pure will of G-d. Or better yet, information, or knowledge of G-d, and the physical reality, the tzimtzum is none other than a partial projection of that knowledge, temporarily fixed in a form that OUR will needs it to be, and to the extent that something acts as a vehicle to make this reality clear. It is holy.

And that, is why the Mishkan was the antidote for the eigel hazahav (the golden calf), for it came into existence only as a celebration of the solidity and stability of the physical. Thus, it wasn't just destroyed but reduced to nothingness, and in its place the Mishkan was erected, the celebration of just the opposite, the symbol of unlimited spiritual possibility and therefore mastery over the physical realm. And, to the extent that a person has built his own life along this line is to the extent that he has become a miniature Mishkan, holy - a place within which the Master of the Universe can dwell.

Have a great Shabbos,
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Text

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