

# THE INNER LIGHT

*by Rabbi Aron Tendler*

This week's Parsha is the first of the four Parshios in Sefer Shemos devoted to the planning and construction of the Mishkan - Tabernacle. The building of the Mishkan was a monumental development in the G-d - Human relationship, heralding a positive, although more restricted, stage. The chronology of these events requires clarification.

In 2448, forty-nine days after leaving Egypt, the Jews heard Hashem proclaim the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai. Moshe stayed on the mountain for 40 days and nights returning on the 17th of Tamuz to witness the Golden Calf. He broke the Luchos, and reascended the mountain to pray for Hashem's forgiveness. 40 days later, on the 1st day of Ellul, Moshe reascended the mountain for the 3rd and final time, returning 40 days later on Yom Kippur, the 10th of Tishrei, with the second Luchos and Hashem's reassurance of forgiveness. On the day after Yom Kippur, Moshe was instructed in the building of the Mishkan, which took 6 months, until the month of Nissan, 1 full year after leaving Egypt, to be constructed and assembled. The Mizbeach was inaugurated on the 1st day of Nissan. Therefore, it is clear that the chronology of the events does not follow the ordering of the Parshios. Two weeks ago, in Parshas Yisro, the Jews received the Torah. Last week, in Parshas Mishpatim, after stating a potpourri of social laws, the Torah tells us that Moshe ascended the mountain for the first set of 40 days. This week and next week, in Parshios Terumah and Titzaveh, the nation was instructed in the building of the Mishkan. In two weeks time, in Parshas Ki Tisa, we are first told of the sin of the Golden Calf.

The commentaries explain that Hashem prepares the cure before sending the sickness. The sickness was the Golden Calf, and the cure was the Mishkan. To understand the meaning of this explanation we must consider the profound change that the worshiping of the Golden Calf affected in the nation's relationship with Hashem.

Before giving the Torah, Hashem explains that they are to be "A kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Their mission was to show the rest of society what it means to integrate G-d and G-dliness into a lifestyle. It was intended that the Bnai Yisroel would accomplish their mission individually and collectively. It was Hashem's original intent that every single Jew should attain a level of understanding and integration equal to the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur as he entered the Holy of Holies to serve G-d and affect forgiveness. It was intended that this assumed sanctity would be self evident to all those who desired to see living examples of divinity translated into reality! It was intended that the sanctuary of Hashem would reside within each and every Jew, as stated in 25:8,

"Make for me a sanctuary that I may dwell within them." It was intended that Eretz Yisroel as a whole would be a Bais Hamikdash - a place where the sanctity of G-d could reside, unrestricted by walls or boundaries. It was intended that Moshe would descend from Har Sinai on the 17th of Tamuz with the Luchos. Three short weeks later, on the 9th of Av, the nation would triumphantly sweep into the Land establishing an international sanctuary reflecting the comprehensive integration of G-d into the lives of individuals and the destiny of a people! It was intended that the extraordinary level of prophecy experienced by the entire nation during Revelation would be maintained by all and that the beings of every single Jew would shine outward with the same light that emanated from the face of Moshe! As Moshe's being had become a living sanctuary, so should it have been for every single Jew!

In the construction of the Bais Hamikdash, it is noted that the windows were seemingly reverse in their construction. The typical medieval window is constructed to radiate inwardly from the outside of the wall through the width of the wall. The window opening is a narrow slit outside but much wider inside. This affected a greater security without minimizing the light that spread as it entered through the narrow slit. The opposite was true in the Bais Hamikdash. The windows were narrow on the inside radiating outwardly to a much wider opening on the outside! (See the Haftorah 6:4) This was a symbolic statement that the Bais Hamikdash was to be the source of enlightenment for the rest of the world and that the world required the inner light of the Temple to see its way. So too, every single Jew was to radiate the essence of G-dliness outwardly from his inner sanctuary to enlighten and teach the world about Hashem.

When the Jews sinned with the Golden Calf, they altered the very essence of the world's potential to reflect the presence of G-d. Only Moshe remained unaffected due to the fact that he was "in heaven" and not upon earth at the time of the sin. It is said that the aftermath of Revelation was an opportunity for the Jews to reverse the sin of Adam and Chava and recreate the entire world into a Garden of Eden! Tragically, with the sin of the Golden Calf, the world was incapable of supporting the intensity and intimacy of Hashem's unrestricted and unbound presence. Instead, Hashem had to restrict Himself to the tiny space between the wingspread of the Cherubim. As it says in 25:22, "And I will speak to you ... from between the two Cherubim." The Mishkan, and subsequently the Bais Hamikdash, the Kohain Gadol and the sanctity of Yom Kippur, were a microcosm of what Eretz Yisroel and the Jew should have been if they hadn't sinned with the Golden Calf.

The ordering of the Parshios to reflect the "cure before the sickness" was to teach us that, even though the Jew would fail in creating an international Gan Eden where G-d's presence is unbound and self evident; nevertheless, we can still have an intense and intimate relationship with the Creator. The self-imposed limits of G-d's presence in the world is an unfortunate consequence of our actions, and not all consequences are reversible. However, we are still able to accomplish our mission as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation through the Mishkan and Bais Hamikdash. To despair over what could have been is to be distracted from realizing the potential that can still be.

On the Ninth of Av we do not mourn for a world that would not have required a Bais Hamikdash. We mourn for a world that still has the potential to sustain the presence of Hashem within the confines of a Bais Hamikdash. Our strength as a nation is in dealing with the reality of now and tomorrow, not the fantasies and regrets of what might have been.

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