

PARSHAS REAH

by Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari

Even though the study of Torah is one of the 613 mitzvot, nevertheless, it has priority since it is the way for the fulfillment of all the others. Such study like all the other mitzvot need the emotion of the heart and its ecstasy, otherwise the body and the mind are unable to study in the way that is needed, so that Torah study merges both mind and heart.

That is why there is no simcha on the Shabbat rather only oneg that is the ecstasy of the mind. The Festivals flow from the heart since they are the outpouring of rejoicing, exhilaration and knowledge of the imminence of G-d's Mercy, Love and Redemption.

Shilo was in the portion given to Joseph and Joseph is the head of Israel. Jacob taught him all that he had learnt from Shem and Ever, and Torah relates to the mind and the brain. The midrash (Bereishit Rabbah chapter 100, section 9) tells us that Joseph said to the Tribes, 'you are the body and I am the head', as we see in the sheaves of corn [a symbol of the mind] that bowed to the sheaf of Joseph. He is called the head because he was the one who devoted himself to guarding and observing the Covenant that affects and is integrated into the mind. He separated himself from sexual immorality that is so closely related to the purity and the holiness of the mind. He implanted it in the mind and brain of the People of Israel and Shilo is this mind.

The Temple Mount, Courts and priestly offices were in the territory of Judah while the Temple Hall, the sanctuary and the Kodesh HaKedoshim were in the portion of the tribe of Benjamin. A slice of ground protruded from the portion of Judah and entered that of Benjamin and on that slice stood the altar. Benjamin was in great sorrow and every day yearned that this ground together with the altar should be transferred to him. For this Benjamin was rewarded even as it is written there, 'G-d takes His Abode between his shoulders' . (Talmud, Yoma, 12a). Judah, the partner to the Temple, was an ancestor of David, whose Psalms are the epitome of the yearning of the heart and of spiritual desire. Jerusalem is the heart of the world and the Temple is the heart of Jerusalem.

In the desert, the Tabernacle was constructed completely from the animal and vegetable kingdoms; spiritually, Israel then only had the ability to sanctify such products. When they crossed the Jordan and took possession of the Land they were able to achieve greater spirituality and therefore to sanctify, at least in some measure even inanimate things. So the Tabernacle erected at Shilo, with a spirituality enhanced by the mind, had walls of stone, yet it was still covered with the Tent they had made in desert. After the establishment of the Davidic dynasty, in the heart of Israel there came an

expansion and outpouring of holiness that enabled the people to reach the highest level of sanctity. This outpouring of holiness allowed David and Solomon to enlarge the borders of the Land, beyond that of the Seven Nations. Now even inanimate materials like stone and metal were able to be made holy and the Temple of David and Solomon was built completely of stone.

Copyright © 2002 by Rabbi Meir Tamari and Project Genesis, Inc.

Dr. Tamari is a renowned economist, Jewish scholar, and founder of the Center For Business Ethics (www.besr.org) in Jerusalem.