

COVER UP

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

"When the camp is to journey, Aharon and his sons shall come and take down the Partition-curtain and cover the Ark of the Testimony with it." [Bamidbar 4:5]

The travels of Bne Yisrael through the desert for 40 years was accompanied by the Holy Ark in the Tabernacle, as well as all the other holy vessels used in the services to Hashem. The end of Parashat Bemidbar and the opening sections of Parashat Nasso outline the division of duties amongst the Levite families. The family of Kehat was designated for the highest status as the transporters of the Holy Ark. Hashem told Moshe to warn Aharon that the Kehatim may not look at the Ark and the Kohanim must see to it the lives of the Levites are not endangered by exposure to the Ark before it was wrapped and covered in the curtains prepared for the Holy vessel.

There was once a merchant who accumulated a large sum of money and other valuables on a business trip far from the safety of his hometown. Since he was fearful of robbers and other dangerous characters on the roads, he decided to disguise himself for the journey. He wore the clothes of a poor man and he carried his valuables in a basket of vegetables. He bought tickets in the third class car of the train all the while acting in a way that would not draw attention. Fortunately, his plan was successful and no one paid much attention to the poor traveler. Upon arrival home safely, he felt comfortable in living openly according to the wealth that he had earned in his travels abroad.

A person travels in this world bearing items of great value, Torah, misvot and good traits accompanied by fear of G-d and faith. The "roads", however, are replete with dangers. The messengers of the Evil Inclination, conceit, pursuit of honor and other poor traits seek to "rob" a person of his hard-earned "wealth" and to leave him or her "penniless" for eternity. How can a person reach his or her destination with all of one's earnings safely in hand?

The proper path is one of modestly --low-key lifestyle. One who is haughty -- even in misvot -- attracts the attention of the powers that cause spiritual failure. On the other hand, one who tries to "walk with Modesty with Hashem" travels safe from attacks of the Evil inclination that pays much attention to a "big fish" and lets the "small" catch swim to safety. The one who achieves perfection in "fear of G-d" is ultimately praised by all. As Shelomo Hamelekh said in Mishle: "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits with the elders of the land. Rashi explains: "He is recognizable amongst his peers because of his garments which are beautiful." There, in the World to Come, a person's true greatness will be recognized -- the merchant will be recognized for the great wealth he has

transported safely home.

When the Holy vessels were in transit the family of Kehat kept them covered --safe from the gaze of the people. It was only when the people had reached their destination that the Tabernacle was assembled and displayed in its entire splendor.

TABLE TALK -- QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION AT THE SHABBAT TABLE

The verse states: *"And the Levites will protect the guarding of the Tabernacle"*. [Bemidbar 1:53].

Unlike the other tribes that were counted from the age of twenty years to sixty years of age, which were the years of service for an Israelite, the Levites were counted from the age of 30 days. Is it possible for a Levite to perform his duties protecting the Mishkan as a 1-month-old infant? What could an infant do at such a young age to guard the Tabernacle?

The "Abnei Ezel" says: This comes to teach us that the protection afforded the Tabernacle was not through natural, physical security measures -- rather, security was provided in a metaphysical manner. The Levites did protect the Mishkan but not with physical strength. The holiness of the tribe and the spirituality of its members provided the wall of security for its utensils and protected others from the harm one might suffer by trespassing within its holy boundaries. The birth of the Levite child and his reaching the age of Kayama--survival -- enhanced the overall holiness of the tribe and increased the Levite's effectiveness in their duties.

It is an error to believe that the security of the people of Israel in any generation is exclusive to the realm of the physical and the practical. In fact it is the spiritual strength of our people that stands in the face of danger to guard and protect by drawing Hashem closer to us. As David Hamelekh said in Tehillim (127:1) "If Hashem will not preserve a city, in vain does the watchman keep vigil."

THOUGHT FROM PIRKE ABOT

"The Torah is acquired in 48 ways...with limited conversation..." Abot 6:6

On a simple level it is obvious that idle chatter and interruptions during study time with mundane matters breaks a person's concentration and reduces the amount that is absorbed from the lesson. Therefore, limiting conversation enables one to acquire Torah.

The Ruah Hayim takes the thought deeper. He explains that when one hears or speaks frivolous talk one dislodges Torah words from one's consciousness. It is as if one's memory bank has limited capacity and by placing a frivolity in the storage cells one has taken available space from Torah storage. Hence, even the idle talk of others that one hears, limits one's ability to learn and acquire Torah. Shabbat Shalom

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