

# FOR THE BIRDS

*by Rabbi Raymond Beyda*

*"And you shall be for me a kingdom of Kohanim and a holy nation" [SHEMOT 19:6]*

G-d chose the Jewish people from amongst all the peoples of the Earth as His holy nation; the one's chosen to receive the Torah and to carry His name. The fact that any member of the human race should be chosen above the angels to serve as the ambassador's of the King of the world begs clarification. An angel is totally spiritual, free from weaknesses of the flesh that cause one to violate the will of G-d and it would seem, therefore, that the perfect choice for the elevated, prestigious status of Kohanim would best be served by the spiritual beings rather than the physical.

Rabenu Yosef Haim Zt'l of Baghdad, the Ben Ish Hai, explains the correctness of Hashem's choice with a parable. A tourist was walking through the marketplace and saw a beautiful sculpture of a bird offered for sale by one of the many shops on the avenue. The artwork carved from wood and stone was so lifelike that one could imagine it soaring to the clouds.

"How much is this bird?" inquired the anxious buyer.

"Ten gold coins," answered the merchant.

"How can that be?" asked the surprised tourist, "a real bird that can fly can be purchased for a few pennies."

"A bird that flies is made by Heaven and there are millions of them all over the Earth. This bird is a unique, one-of-a-kind piece of art created with the special talents of the human artist. It is, therefore, rare and expensive."

An angel is spiritual and has no earthly desires and therefore, is naturally "holy". There are countless myriads of them in G-d's creation. But the human being is made of the physical earth and is infused with base desires, which fight the urge to do the will of G-d. Therefore, should a person overcome his or her natural tendencies and behave in a spiritual fashion, this is truly a special, novel form of Holiness that deserves special recognition and reward.

The Jewish people followed the lessons developed by the Patriarchs Abraham, Yishak and Yaakov in overcoming base instincts and serving G-d with all of their hearts, body and possessions. This sterling behavior was unique and endeared them to Hashem and so He gifted them with His greatest prize --the Holy Torah -- a "lekah tob" a good acquisition--as a guide to happiness and reward in this world and the next.

One should appreciate the value and love G-d places upon us and perform up to the standards that will maintain our uniqueness -- our status as a kingdom of Kohanim and a holy nation. In a world full of values contrary to the will of Hashem adherence to Torah and misvot increases one's value and endearment to G-d.

Shabbat Shalom.

## **TABLE TALK --QUESTION FOR THE SHABBAT TABLE**

*"I am Yitro, your father-in-law coming to you." [Shemot 18:6]*

Question:

Why did Yitro send a message to Moshe that specified that he was Moshe's father-in-law? Moshe knew who he was and what his relationship was in regard to him.

Answer:

The Hobot Halebabot says one time a pious man came to buy something in a store. The merchant told him that he was going to give him a special price because he recognized what a righteous individual he was. The Tsaddeek answered, "I came to buy with money -- not with Yirat Shamayim -- fear of Heaven."

The pious person understood that he was better off declining any benefit from his righteousness in this world. Yitro, who was a convert to Judaism, was certainly one who had acquired a great deal of fear of G-d and certainly many people in the camp would have been ready to receive him with great hospitality and respect --especially his own son-in-law Moshe Rabenu who respected yirat shamayim a great deal.

Yitro told Moshe, "I am coming to YOU in the desert because you are my relative -- and only you amongst all the Jewish people have an obligation to host my visit without any regard to my fear of heaven but rather because of good manners and propriety. [Based on the Derashot of the Ben Ish Hail]

## **DID YOU KNOW THAT**

Where it is possible to light the Shabbat "candles" with oil or wax one should certainly do so as it is more obvious that the lights are specifically for the honor of Shabbat and Yom Tob.

One should have in mind when saying the blessing on the lighting that the berakha is also intended to cover the electric lights that one will also light afterwards [for those who do not accept Shabbat with the lighting].

In any event, in a situation where it is impossible to acquire candles of wax or oil, one may say the blessing and light an electric light and thereby fulfill one's obligation. [Source Yehave Daat, volume

5, responsa 24]

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