

VAYAKHEL 5776 - FORCING THE SATAN OUT OF THE CAMP

Moshe had been well aware of the presence of the Angel of Death (Satan) in the camp of Israel as he descended from Har Sinai with the second set of Luchos. The Zohar (Vayakhel 196) asserts that Moshe knew that permission had been given to the Angel to remain there indefinitely. The Angel would only be forced out when the Unity of Hashem would be reestablished by Israel through the building of the Mishkan.

MOSHE SEEKS PROTECTION - SEPARATES THE MEN

Moshe sought protection for Israel from becoming victims to the (Angel of Death) Satan. Our Parasha begins with Moshe assembling the entire congregation of the Sons of Israel. The Ohr HaHayyim asserts that this is a reference to the men being separated from the women. This he writes would forestall giving Satan a pretext to harm the Men of Israel. His proof text is the first verse of Vayakhel which specifies that it was the Congregation of the "Sons of Israel" in favor of a generic expression "Congregation" whom Moshe assembled. Rabbenu Bahya agrees with the assertion but cites a later verse (22) "The men came in addition to the women".. This he interprets as the men arriving with gifts for the Mishkan and finding that the woman had preceded them. The word על in the verse connotes "in addition" as opposed to a figurative translation of "accompanying". The Zohar writes that after the sin of the עגל, the power of the Satan had been amplified. Moshe recognized that the Satan was present amongst the women; he therefore separated the men to protect them from endangering themselves by staring at the women. He realized that the Satan can only wreak havoc upon one who sets his eyes in the direction where he lay in hiding.

MEN MUST SEEK PROTECTION AT FUNERAL PROCESSION

The Zohar relates the actions of Moshe with similar precautions that men are to take while attending a funeral. R. Shimon Bar Yohai teaches; "most do not pass from this world before their time, some unfortunately do; as they are not appropriately informed on how to protect themselves....The Angel of Death is given permission to even take the life of men who are found tending to the dead and escorting the coffin to its burial. At that time the Angel can be found amongst the women...He seeks to prosecute those who mistakenly stare in the direction of the women... recalling the sins of the man, judging his transgressions and bringing judgement upon him even before his allotted time to pass from this world...The Zohar asks; What is his remedy? At that time, men should turn their faces in a manner assuring that the women remain behind them; if the women are in front; the men must remain behind the coffin.. All to insure he should not come face to face with them.. If he does, he gives access to the Angel to prosecute him.., R. Eleazer asked his father, "maybe it is preferable not to escort the coffin to burial?" R. Shimon dismisses this option and answers that one who escorts and returns from the misva properly; without looking fixedly at the women, merits long life and life in the world to come.

RULING FROM THE TALMUD

This warning is similarly expressed in the Talmud (Berakhot 51); R. Yehoshua Ben Levi said "three things were told to me by the Angel of Death... Do not stand in front of women when they are returning from a funeral because I stand in front of them with my sword in my hand with permission to harm."

SEEK PROTECTION

The Talmud continues and asks what is the remedy for one who at that time comes face to face with the women? Let him turn aside four Amot from his place. If there is a river (to his side) let him cross it..if there is a wall let him stand behind it (until the women pass) If none of these options are available he should face away from the women and declare a verse from Zekharya (3:2) בך ה' יגער השטן אל ה' ויאמר "And Hashem said to the Satan, Hashem shall denounce you..".During the Temple era we see that the Jews were particular about separating the genders during the initial

mourning stage. Zekharya (12) writes " the land shall wail...the family of the house of David themselves and their women by themselves, the family of the house of Natan by themselves and their women by themselves.

RULING OF SHULHAN ARUKH

In Shulhan Arukh (YD 359) Maran cites a Beraita in Sanhedrin (20) which allows the women to continue to escort the dead in the manner to which they are accustomed. Whether it be in front or behind the coffin. During the 16th century Maran felt it proper for the women to trail the coffin. In the next Se'if Maran appears to adopt an even stricter approach. He suggests that we should consider preventing the women from even trailing the coffin when escorting it towards the cemetery. No doubt a real concern existed even beyond that of Rashbi in the Zohar.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE MISHKAN - TO ESTABLISH UNITY HERE BELOW

Our Rabbis have noted the parallels between the creation of the world and the establishment of the Mishkan. The Talmud (Berakhot 55) writes overtly that Besalel knew to combine letters with which heaven and earth were created. The Torah claims (35:31) that Hashem filled him with Wisdom, Understanding and Knowledge. These according to Mishle (3:19) parallel the intelligence used in creation. Hashem founded earth with Wisdom, established the heavens with Understanding, and the depths were spirited with his Knowledge. The six days of creation culminate with Man and Woman. The Nahash or Satan was able to attach himself to Havah similar to the access given to the Satan prior to the completion of the Mishkan. Our sages teach that Adam was to wait until Shabbat to have relations with Havah. His attachment to her prior to Shabbat or prior to the day which expresses the unity of Hashem allowed the Satan to bring death upon Adam. Similarly, the men of the Midbar needed to be especially careful of the temptations of the Satan until the unity of Hashem was established below with the building of the Mishkan.

SHEKHINA DESCENDS AND THE ANGEL OF DEATH LEAVES

The Torah points out that the construction managers of the Mishkan were Besalel from the tribe of Yehuda and Aholiav from the tribe of Dan. These tribal affiliations are an expression of the unity of Israel required in its construction. The Mishkan or the dwelling below of His Presence was to mimic the Divine Throne above. We noted last week that the travels of the tribes of Israel in the desert, as reflected in each triad of tribes carrying a flag of the Merkava, was to parallel the Divine chariot above. As the Divine Throne was to be established by the carriers of the Merkava; the Mishkan below was to be built through the first (Yehuda) and last (Dan) tribes of Israel, according to their order of travels associated with the Merkava. These leaders would unify and encompass all the tribes (in between) preparing a physical home here on earth for the Shekhina paralleling the divine throne above. With the establishment of the Mishkan during the month of Nisan the unity of Hashem was revealed and the Satan was no longer able to reside below and he was forced to depart from the camp of Israel.

Shabbat Shalom

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