



Parashat Terumah- #270

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On the Haftarah... The Temple is Not Magic

[Melachim 1 5:26-6:13]

"It was four hundred and eighty years after Israel left the Land of Israel, in the fourth year – in the month of Ziv, which is the second month of Shlomo's kingship over Israel, when he built the Temple for Hashem" (Melachim 1 6:1). After waiting for such a long time, the Nation of Israel was finally brought to a higher level of unity with the Master of the Universe by building the Temple!

In the Song of the Sea, Moshe Rabbenu revealed to the young Nation of Israel that a miraculous redemption was not a goal in and of itself - our relationship with Hashem would develop over time, on different levels, which would unfold throughout the generations. A lengthy wandering in the desert was followed by the conquering of the Land. But possession of Jerusalem – our Holy City – was yet to come. When that event finally occurred, the glory of the Temple quickly burst forth through its hills. Our Sages teach that Hashem loves His Nation so much that even before the Temple was built, he decided to give a modest advance and gave us the small, portable Mishkan which they took with them in the desert (Ketubot 62b).

The building which King Shlomo constructed for Hashem's honor was quite impressive: 60 amah in length, 20 amah in width, and 30 amah in height; special windows to illuminate it; side rooms built all around (ibid. v. 2-6). The Temple possessed amazing beauty and was built from the most precious and steady material. Anyone who entered it was immediately struck with awe and holiness.

We warn those who are seduced by the field of comparative religions not to search for similarities between our Temple in Jerusalem and the well-known project of the

Catholics in Rome. The latter, which took twenty years to complete, relies on all architectural and artistic “wonders” to infuse its visitors with a deep “religious” feeling. But when one reads the verse of the Tanach, he understands that the Temple employed none of these devices: "When the Temple was being built, it was built of complete quarried stone. Hammers, chisels and any iron utensils were not heard in the Temple, when it was being built" (ibid. 7).

Because the use of iron was forbidden, other methods were obviously going to be needed to construct this holy edifice. But King Shlomo took this stricture even further. He required that only "complete quarried stone" (ibid.) - referred to as "virgin stones" by our Sages – was to be used. The pieces were to be incorporated into the structure exactly as they were found. But why demand such a difficult task? It is true that the Torah itself prohibits the use of iron in relation to the altar: "And when you make Me an altar of stones, do not build it of hewn stones, for you will have raised your sword over it and desecrated it" (Shemot 20:22). Our Sages explain that the altar was built to lengthen a person's life, whereas iron, when used to make weapons, shortens it. We are therefore not permitted to use something which shortens life on an item which lengthens it (Mechilta ibid.). But King Shlomo was even stricter than his Rabbi. While Moshe Rabbenu applied this Halachah to the altar, which did not require such a major effort, King Shlomo applied it to the entire Temple.

We can conclude from this unique mitzvah that religious conviction that leads to murderous violence is very far from our worldview. The purpose of the Torah is to purify us and lead us to love people and understand them. The Temple is not an automatic, magical instrument which grants Divine forgiveness for our corrupt actions. Hashem warns us: "The word of Hashem came to Shlomo, saying: 'This Temple that you are building, if you follow My decrees, perform My statutes and observe all My commandments to follow them, then I will uphold My word with you, which I told your father, David. I will dwell among the Children of Israel, and I will not forsake My Nation Israel'" (ibid. v. 11-13).

The strength of the Temple is not based on its external beauty, but on observing the mitzvot, on our integrity and by purifying our character traits. The Temple must fill the Nation of Israel with the highest level spirituality, and then Hashem will dwell among us: "Make a sanctuary for Me and I will dwell among them" (Shemot 25:8). Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk said that it does not say "I will dwell in it," i.e. the Temple, but rather "I will dwell among them," i.e. the Nation of Israel. In order for us to be a suitable receptacle for the Divine Presence, we must distance ourselves from all impurity and evil.

When – to our great distress – the Nation of Israel does not fulfill its role as a Light unto the Nations, and is mired in corrupt behavior, the Divine Presence departs from the Temple, which is then consumed in flames. The Temple is far from being an

amulet which protects the Nation of Israel from the results of its transgression. The Temple is a place of Divine service which demands a high ethical standard.

We gird ourselves with faith and hope, since Hashem concludes His words to King Shlomo with a promise: "I will dwell among the Children of Israel, and I will not forsake My Nation Israel" (ibid.). The connection between Hashem and His Nation is eternal, and His love is unconditional, even with our rebellions against Him. Hashem patiently waits for our response which proves our love for our Creator. His patience also will not end. The Song of Songs, which was not by happenstance written by King Shlomo, relates to the love between Hashem and His Nation. Even though there may be ups and downs, this love never completely crumbles. The Tanach describes at length the future days of our Nation's history: we will be unified in our Land, which will lead to the rebuilt Temple where we will have a supreme, ideal and eternal meeting with Hashem.

Rav Aviner on... Relating to Biblical Prophets as Prophets

[Be-Ahavah U-B-Emunah – Mishpatim 5773- translated by R. Blumberg]

How should we approach the Tanach? First you have to approach its author. "But your eyes shall see your teacher" (Yeshayahu 30:20). The author is the Prophets who bring us the word of Hashem, for it is G-d who gives prophecy to the prophets, as Rambam said in Hilchot Yesodei Ha-Torah, chapter 7. There are different levels to the Tanach. There is the Torah, the prophecy of Moshe, transcending all other prophecy. There are the Prophets, with their prophecy, and there are the Writings, whose source is Ruach Ha-Kodesh, divine intuition. All of them are the word of G-d.

The idea of the word of G-d reaching man involves a miracle. The King of the Kuzars had difficulty believing this, and he asked the Jewish wise man to convince him that it is possible. We thus derive that a prophet is an entirely different type of person. An angel revealed himself to the parents of Shimshon, and they thought he was a prophet, until he rose to heaven in a flame. Then they understood that it was an angel, but before that they were incapable of distinguishing between a prophet and an angel.

Therefore, when King Shaul met the prophets, he turned into a different person, and since he was worthy of it, he prophesied. We, too, when we study the Tanach, become different people. The entire world, with prophets or without prophets, is another world.

When prophecy ceased in Israel, the entire human race declined. There were three reactions to this: that of the West, that of the Far East, and that of ourselves, the Middle East. The Greeks said: prophecy has not ceased, because it never existed in the first place. There is human intellect, and nothing more.

The mysticism of the Far East said: G-d spoke, and He continues to speak, yet He does not speak except from within man. G-d is not someone, but something that has been absorbed in man.

We say: G-d spoke, and then ceased to speak, but we continue to learn the prophets' words with absolute steadfastness, as our Sages, the disciples of the prophets, instruct us to do. The

prophets handed down the Torah to the Men of the Great Assembly. Ezra the Scribe, first of the Great Assembly, is Malachi, last of the prophets.

We try a bit to encounter and to understand the words of the prophets, and this turns us into different people - not in the sense of being cut off from this world, but of being people who bring G-d's blessing into this world. As Rabbi Meir said in Avot 6:1: "whoever studies Torah for the sake of Heaven, merits many things." He merits supreme, ethereal heavenly things which we lack the human words to define. "Nay more, the whole world is worthwhile for his sake. He is called friend, beloved. He loves G-d and he loves mankind. He pleases G-d and he pleases mankind. The Torah invests him with humility and reverence. It enables him to become righteous, godly, upright and faithful. It keeps him far from sin, and draws him near to virtue. Men are benefited by him with counsel and sound wisdom, understanding and strength, as it says, 'Mine are counsel and sound wisdom; Mine are reason and might' (Mishlei 8:14). It gives him rule, a commanding personality and judging ability. To him the secrets of the Torah are revealed. He is made like a fountain that ever gathers force, and like a never-failing stream. He becomes modest, patient, and forgiving of insults. The Torah makes him great and raises him above all creatures." The entire world takes on a new countenance.

What the Tanach possesses is something that we cannot find through our own intellect i.e., through philosophy, but only through prophecy. True, mankind is capable of achieving a certain degree of contact with the word of G-d, because we possess a divine soul (see the end of Guide to the Perplexed). For the sake of that we must pull ourselves upward towards heaven. We must exalt ourselves to the pinnacle of our spiritual abilities.

We mustn't lower the words of the Tanach to our own small stature. Rather, we must recall that it is divine and not human, that these are things that we have never heard. These things are infinite, and it is puzzling that I am able to understand even the least bit of it. For the sake of doing so, one must exit himself, one must burst out of an astrological mindset and one must transcend one's own limitations. Otherwise, one will never meet the Tanach.

If someone studies in the modern fashion, distinguishing between what is relevant/understood and what is old-fashioned/primitive, then he has never studied Torah in all his life. He has only studied himself, his own personality, fashioned by his surroundings, by life, the street, the marketplace, the media. He gains mastery over a text, in a postmodern fashion, when there is nothing absolute, nothing all-encompassing, nothing eternal. There is only the personal, the individualistic. That is not the "Torah study for the sake of heaven" that Rabbi Meir was talking about, but "Torah for my own sake".

Certainly, the prophecies were recorded because they were needed for future generations (Megillah 14). True, they were revealed at a certain time and under certain circumstances, but their inner essence transcends time and place. Hence they also illuminate other times and other circumstances.

All the more so that the Torah itself transcends time and place, that it stands above and before reality. Therefore, it illuminates all the circumstances of reality. It illuminates in the State of Israel and the Exile, and it provides illumination to those who are healthy and those who are ill, to the honest man and to the thief, to rich and to poor.

The King of the Kuzars asks, "How did your Torah develop?" After all, he says, it is the way of religions that they have a founder, and then every generation adds or subtracts, lengthening or shortening at will. No, answers the Jewish scholar, our Torah was given all at once in its entirety. There was a bursting forth from On High, with thunder and lightning, a heavy cloud over the mountain, a stentorian Shofar blast, and the entire camp trembled with fear. Indeed, the entire mountain trembled. The Torah was given all at once, in its entirety, and gradually it is revealed to us.

The Tanach views the world from a divine perspective, and it trains our eye to see things in parallel to the eye of G-d. "For they will see eye to eye, as G-d returns to Zion" (Yeshayahu 52:8). Certainly we must delve deeply into the Tanach. Certainly we must ask questions and answer them, and clarify matters all the way. Yet, said Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook in his article, "Emet Bilti Me'ur'eret" [An Unassailable Truth], regarding the scientific approach to Torah learning, in the book *Li-Netivot Yisrael* (vol. 2, p. 242), everything depends on one's starting point – on whether or not we believe that we have before us a divine truth, a heavenly truth that we accept with perfect faith.

The Tanach is divine, superhuman, and it instructs us to elevate ourselves to G-d, to emulate Him, as a man with a divine image, and not, G-d forbid, to fashion a G-d in the image of man. The Tanach enables us to hear the word of G-d. The prophets are a different world. They possess a divine fortitude that we lack, as Maran Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook wrote in his book *Orot*, in the chapters on Warfare, regarding the spiritual level of the Patriarchs.

Taking this approach, my learning has an influence on me, intellectually, morally and in terms of my faith.

A prophet has an alternate perception. He speaks out of an absolute world, a different world. He hears the word of G-d which bursts forth into our own world, and then almost collapses, like a small device that has been struck by lightning. We, too, learn Torah with fear and dread, with shaking and with trembling, as at the Sinai Revelation (see *Berachot* 22a).

If one does not understand that the Tanach is superhuman, one has not understood a thing. We are talking about prophecy, not philosophy.

Certainly there is room for independent thought, but only after I accept with perfect faith the word of G-d. As we say in our morning prayers, first one must "admit the truth" – the supreme, absolute, divine truth – and only then can one "speak truth in his heart", as is explained in the "Olat Re'eiyah" prayer book of Rav Kook. Yet if we begin by "speaking truth in our heart", that constitutes a post-modern utterance, in which the text is nothing but the interpretive worldview of the reader, a subjective, human analysis.

Do not mix up your own thoughts with the absolute divine truth that illuminates all generations and circumstances.

Prophecy constitutes a spark from the Upper World, as Ramban explains in his introduction to the *Guide to the Perplexed*, in his "Torat Ha-Berakim". It is not a small flashlight, but a giant bolt of lightning that bursts forth from heaven to earth and momentarily illuminates the whole horizon in a manner which you have never seen before.

Likewise, one who learns Torah for the sake of heaven sometimes merits such a bolt of lightning, as is mentioned at the beginning of the work, "Tanya". He merits a true understanding of the word of G-d.

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Child who Causes Damage

1. Children who were playing games on their bicycles, and one of them injures his friend, he is exempt from paying damages as long as the injured party does not bring clear proof that the injury was caused by the other child deviating from the general rules of the game. This is the principle of "the burden of proof is on the one who

wants to exact money". Furthermore, it seems that even if he brings proof that he is guilty of the injury, he would still be exempt, since anyone who plays games on bicycles knows from the outset that there is a chance of injury or damages, and he waives responsibility for any damage done to him. If this were not the case, his friends would never want to include him in the game.

2. Therefore, if the one who caused the injury says that he will pay the injured party, this is considered a gift which he is giving out of the goodness of his heart, and the injured party cannot claim that this gift is payment from a legal perspective.
3. Regardless, if a person says to his friend that he will give him a gift, it is proper that he keeps his word. If he promises and does not fulfill it, and it is a minimal amount, it is considered "Mechusar Amana" – a verbal agreement (Baba Metziah 49a. Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 204:7). If it is a substantial amount, however, it is not considered "Mechusar Amana", since the one who will receive the gift is not certain that he will fulfill his word. This is especially true in the case of a child, who does not have various sources of money and relies on his father. Therefore, if it is a minimal amount, it is ethical for the one who promises, of his own free will, to give the money to fulfill his word and to give the gift. "And one who hates gifts will live [a long life]" (Mishlei 15:27).

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