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HEMDAT YAMIM

Parashat HaShavua

Vayakhel Pekudei, 25 Adar 5780

More on the Revelation of Divine Presence

Harav Yosef Carmel

We have discussed over the last several weeks the appearance of an angel. This is a clear sign of the presence of the *shechina* (Divine Presence). In our *parshiyot*, we see other signs of the *shechina*.

One of the signs is a special cloud. We learn about the fulfillment of the commandment to build the *Mishkan* and its vessels. At the end of the *laining*, it says: "The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting and the glory of Hashem was filling the *Mishkan*. Moshe could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud was hovering over it, and the glory of Hashem was filling the *Mishkan*" (Shemot 40:34-35). These *p'sukim* are also parallel to those dealing with the story of David and the altar on the Temple Mount, which we discussed at length, as David was also unable to enter the place, albeit because of the angel's sword (Divrei Hayamim I, 21:30).

Chazal (Bereishit Rabba 56:1) connected between the *p'sukim* in our *parasha* and those of *akeidat Yitzchak*. They posit that Hashem indicated to Avraham what the proper mountain was by attaching a cloud to its top. (It is noteworthy that when *Chazal* wanted to express the idea that the building of a Jewish home is equivalent to building a mini-Temple, they adopted the metaphor of a cloud over the couple's tent.)

Such a cloud also descended on the *Beit Hamikdash* at the time of its inauguration by Shlomo Hamelech: "It was when the *kohanim* left the Sanctum and the cloud was filling the House of Hashem. And the *kohanim* were not able to stand and serve because of the cloud" (Melachim I, 8:10-11). Again, we find an intensity of *shechina* preventing entrance into a holy place at a formative time.

The other sign of *shechina* is fire. In *Parashat Shemini*, the *pasuk* relates: "Fire came out from before Hashem and consumed on the altar the burnt offering ..." (Vayikra 9:24). The descent of fire appears also in the context of David and his altar on Mt. Moriah. The fire consuming David's offerings (Divrei Hayamim I, 21:26) was a sign that David had achieved atonement with his actions. A similar divine sign was found in regard to the offerings of Shlomo at the inauguration of the *Beit Hamikdash* (Divrei Hayamim II, 7:1). Of course, there was also fire at the revelation of the Divine Presence at the giving of the Torah on Sinai. Likewise, a special fire and special clouds accompanied Bnei Yisrael in their sojourns in the desert.

(Let us point out that in describing the Divine Presence's involvement in the Jewish family, the metaphor used is the cloud, which is the softer symbol of the *shechina*. We talk of fire in the context of the couple only when there is conflict. In the *Mikdash*, there is both a cloud and fire, corresponding to the joint elements of the divine attribute of *chesed* and fear.)

Let us pray that we will merit seeing many families with a "cloud over their tents" and seeing the Temple, upon which there was and will be divine clouds and fire.

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Those who fell in wars for our homeland. May Hashem avenge their blood!



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by Rav Daniel Mann

“G” Dash “D”?

Question: Some people write Hashem’s Name in English as “G-d.” Is that necessary, or are the *halachot* of Hashem’s Name only in Hebrew? If a Name can be in any language, then isn’t “G-d” another recognized form to write Hashem’s Name and have the same problem?

Answer: What to consider a Name of Hashem is significant in several areas of Halacha, and the answer needs not be uniform.

The Torah prohibition of erasing Hashem’s Name (Makkot 22a) applies only to the seven principle Names (Rambam, Yesodei Hatorah 6:2); *poskim* posit that Hashem’s Name in different languages (= *la’az*) would not be included. Yet the Rambam (Shvuot 2:1-2) says that an oath, which must invoke Hashem, is binding in any language. There is a *machloket Rishonim* (see Bemareh Habazak VII:75) whether even the Name can be in a different language or only the rest of the oath. Another question is whether it is forbidden to utter a Name in *la’az* in a meaningless way or in an unnecessary *beracha* (see Shut R. Akiva Eiger I:25). It turns out that the prohibition on erasing might be more limited than some other applications. The Shach (Yoreh Deah 179:11) rules that the Name in *la’az* is not a halachic Name. On the other hand, the Netivot Hamishpat (27:1) and Urim (27:2) posit that is fully considered a holy Name.

Although he says it is permitted to erase “God,” the Mishna Berura (85:10) forbids disgracing that Name by uttering it in a dirty place, e.g., a bathroom. Therefore, even those who are not fully stringent about a Name in *la’az* may forbid disgracing a written version (see Ginzei Hakodesh 7:12). In Bemareh Habazak (ibid.) we dealt with the question of bringing dollar bills (which include, “In God we trust”) into a bathroom uncovered. We permitted it because of several possible mitigating factors, including that it is printed without intention for something holy.

Many observant Jewish English speakers write Hashem’s Name normally and many insert a dash. An individual’s writing is, in some ways, more stringent than dollar bills because he is writing it himself, especially if it is in the context of *divrei Torah* or serious references to Hashem (not, a flippant “OMG”). On the other hand, does an individual, at the time he wants to write about Hashem, have to be concerned it will be disgraced later? Although different contexts are different, the *gemara* (Rosh Hashana 18b), regarding writing a Name in documents, says we are supposed to look ahead. The Netivot and Urim (ibid.) spoke strongly against writing “adieu” (literally “with Hashem” in French) because of the prospect the paper will “lie in garbage dumps.” Rav Soloveitchik dismissed these concerns because he was convinced that “God” is not a Name. Thus, both practices have sources and logic to stand on.

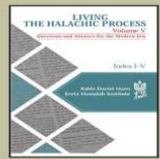
Does the dash help? Rav Soloveitchik posited that it did not because if there a problem with what Names in *la’az* represents, then “G-d” also represents Hashem. However, this contention is not fully convincing. First, the Achiezer (III:32) presented, as a simple policy solution for a Yiddish paper, to put a dash between the *Gimmel* and *Tet* of the Yiddish Name. The Rama (YD 276:10) deals with abbreviations or written substitutes of the seven Names (in Hebrew). He says that one may erase “*yud yud*” written in place of Hashem’s main Name, but only in the case of need (the Gra ad loc. views this as a *chumra*). The Minchat Yitzchak (IX:62) equates the dashes separating between the letters of a Hebrew Name to the Rama’s case. The Avnei Nezer (YD 365) posits that dashes actually indicate that the separated letters form one word and thus dashes do not help. However, it is likely that they agree if the dash is in place of a missing letter. (Google-search “G-d” and see if it is obvious in English that it refers to Hashem.) While the Rama is “a little *machmir*” regarding “*yud yud*,” that is a hint to a Hebrew Name, not what the Achiezer and we are referring to.

In summary then, while it might be fine to write “God,” for those who prefer to be *machmir*, “G-d” offers a marked improvement.

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Ein Ayah

(from the writings of Harav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, z.t.l.)

Too Great to Start the Necessary Exile

(condensed from Ein Ayah, Shabbat 9:147)

Gemara: Rabbi Chiya bar Abba said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: It would have been fit for Yaakov Avinu to have been brought down to Egypt in chains of iron. It was just his merit that caused that [he did not], as the *pasuk* says: "With ropes of a person (Rashi – because of My affection for the person, I brought him with ropes and not chains), with bonds of love; I will be for them like one who lifts the yoke [Rashi – with the use of various instruments], and I gave them [Rashi – the strength] to bear" (Hoshea 11:4).

Ein Ayah: The exile was fit to imprint its deep insignia on the entire nation from its first root. This started from the time that the nation had its uniqueness set as a special characteristic. This began with Yaakov.

Realize that the exile in Egypt did not arise as an opportunity to cleanse the people of a specific sin. Rather, the exile occurred in order to prepare the nation to be able to remain alive and intact as a defined national unit, which maintains its character, even under the conditions of exile, without having its form blurred. It would have been fitting if this stamp, of being capable of withstanding the yoke of exile and standing strong, would have started from the beginning of the "flowering of the nation" in a unique manner. This was set out to be the lot of Yaakov, as the personality with whom the character of the nation began.

However, due to the great level of sanctity that Yaakov possessed as an individual, it was impossible for the exile to take hold upon him. Therefore, [the oppressive part of] his exile remained only in potential but not in actuality. The fact that there was an exile in potential had an impact in the area of adjusting to the new life without allowing for the erasure of its essential form.

Yaakov's special merit caused him to have a life of greatness and grandeur during his stay in Egypt. This also served as an omen for all future exiles, that they can become the cause of all of mankind seeing the high value of the Jewish people and their exalted uniqueness. In this way, the "enslavement" was done through ropes of a person and bonds of love. The yoke, even though it was only a yoke in potential, was raised up. The movement in the direction of supplying the spiritual and material needs was so great that it gave light through the darkness even for generations of descendants throughout their forced travels. All of these elements together, the darkness of exile and its small elements of life, were able to lead to the final goal – the revelation of the grandeur of Hashem, through the honor and grandeur that Israel reached. This is as the *pasuk* says, "All who see them will recognize them as the seed that is blessed by Hashem" (Yeshayahu 61:9).



Tzofnat Yeshayahu- Rabbi Yosef Carmel

The Prophet Yeshayahu performed in one of the most stormy and dramatic periods of the Israeli nation's life, a period of anticipation for the Messiah that was broken by a terrible earthquake, and also caused a spiritual and political upheaval. The light at the end of the tunnel shone again only in the days of Chizkiyah.

"Tzofnat Yeshayahu – from Uziya to Ahaz" introduces us to three kings who stood at this crossroad in our nation's history: Uziya, a king who sought God but was stricken with leprosy because of his sin; Yotam, the most righteous king in the history of our people; And Ahaz, the king who knew God but did not believe in His providence.

In his commentary on the prophecies of Yeshayahu, Rabbi Yosef Carmel, Head of the Eretz Hemdah-Gazit rabbinical court and a disciple of Rabbi Shaul Israeli zt"l, clings to the words of Hazal, our sages, and to the commentaries of the Rishonim, the great Jewish scholars of the middle ages, and offers a fascinating way to study Tanach. This reading attempts to explain the Divine Plan in this difficult period and to clarify fundamental issues in faith. Tzofnat Yeshayahu reveals to the reader the meaning of the prophecies in the context of the prophet's generation and their relevance to our generation.

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P'ninat Mishpat

Return of “Borrowed” Pre-School Items – part II

(based on ruling 71104 of the Eretz Hemdah-Gazit Rabbinical Courts)

Case: The defendant (=def) runs a religious pre-school program in an Israeli town and started employing the plaintiff's (=pl) daughter-in-law (=dil) a few years ago. Shortly thereafter, pl gave several thousand shekels worth of pre-school accessories (tables, books, toys, etc.) in a few installments. A year ago, dil stopped working at the pre-school, of her own accord. Pl demanded the items back, claiming that she had stated it was a loan. Def refused but wrote a letter acknowledging the items belong to pl with the promise to return them to her if a relative of pl opens a pre-school program. Months later, pl told def that pl's daughter is doing so, and def sent her some of the items. Pl claimed it was too little, too late (because of the lack of materials, her daughter stopped her plans), and many of the items have been seriously damaged. Pl now wants 30,000 shekels rather than a return of the materials. Def contends that pl did not stipulate that she might want the materials back; if she would have, def would not have taken them because it caused her to throw out old, still usable, materials. She had every reason to believe it was a donation to an altruistic religious organization close to pl's heart. The letter admitting the items were pl's was due to a threat, right before the beginning of the school year, that pl would come to take them.

Ruling: We saw last time that pl's claim that she originally stated the items were on loan is not convincing enough to extract money.

Def claims that her admission letter was written under duress. However, the Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat 81:17) rules that even those claims that are effective against an imperfect admission do not work against an admission in writing. On the other hand, the admission's extent is limited to that which is written in the letter.

A “gift” that returns at a certain point can take different forms: 1) *she'eila* (a loan); 2) a gift for a certain time (ibid. 241:6). In this case, neither side proved which of the constructs was used. One difference between them is whether the recipient is responsible to guard the items and pay if he was not successful (according to #2, the recipient is exempt). Even a borrower (#1) is exempt from damages that occurred as a result of normal use (ibid. 340:1). Therefore, either way, def will be exempt from much of the damage. Those items that normally get fully used in a few years would not need to be accounted for at all. If viewed as a borrower, def would be responsible for some of the damages that were not due to natural wear and tear. Def would also be obligated to swear that there was no negligence that would obligate her to pay for damages.

Since being a borrower obligates the recipient, def would have had to realize that she was becoming a borrower to be obligated in that way. We do not have proof that this occurred. She would not have to be aware of becoming the recipient of a gift for a certain time, as there are no special obligations, just a need to return that which is no longer hers. Therefore, while def must return the materials, she would not be required to pay.

Next time we will discuss how to return the materials.

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