

Parashat Tetzaveh, 5778, 2018:

Hashem in Our Midst

Rabbi David Etengoff

Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon Hakohen, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yecheiel, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, Chaim Mordechai Hakohen ben Natan Yitzchak, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, Avraham Yechezkel ben Yaakov Halevy, Shayna Yehudit bat Avraham Manes and Rivka, the *refuah shlaimah* of Devorah bat Chana, Yitzhak Akiva ben Malka, Yekutiel Yehudah ben Pessel Lifsha and Shoshana Elka bat Etel Dina, and the safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

The final five *pasukim* (verses) of Parashat Tetzaveh focus our attention on the underlying purpose of the *Ohel Moed* (Tent of Meeting):

...at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting before the L-rd, where I will arrange meetings with you (*asher eva'ade lachem shamah*), to speak to you there.

There I will make Myself known (*v'no'adati shamah*) to the children of Israel, and it will be sanctified by My glory.

I will sanctify (*v'kidashti*) the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and I will sanctify Aaron and his sons to serve Me [as *kohanim*].

I will dwell (*v'shechanti*) in the midst of the children of Israel and I will be their G-d.

They will know (*v'yaidu*) that I, the L-rd, am their G-d, Who brought them out of the land of Egypt in order that I may dwell in their midst; I am the L-rd, their G-d. (*Sefer Shemot* 29:42-46, this and all translations, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*, with my emendations)

A careful reading of these verses provides us with an understanding of the *Ohel Moed* as a unique dwelling wherein Hashem revealed his Divine presence during meetings with the Jewish people. These encounters brought *kedushah* (holiness) to the *Ohel Moed*, and to the *kohanim* who served Him there. In addition, this passage continues a familiar theme that was introduced in Parashat Ki Tisa, “And they shall make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst,” (25:8) and adds the highly significant words, “and I will be their G-d.” The final *pasuk* informs us that the *Ohel Moed* served as the glory-filled place

for the Almighty, from which He taught us that it was He, and none other, who redeemed us from the shackles of Egyptian servitude in order to dwell in our midst.

The Malbim (Rabbi Meir Leibush ben Yechiel Michel, 1809-1879), widely considered to be one of the greatest and most perceptive Tanach commentators, offers an enlightening analysis of our passage. In his view, these verses contain a number of core concepts regarding the singular import of our people's worship in the *Ohel Moed*, and by extension, the *Beit Hamikdash* (Holy Temple), as found in the words *asher eva'ade lachem shamah, v'no'adati shamah, v'kidashti, v'shechanti* and *v'yaidu*.

Our author begins by noting that the *avodah* (Temple service) generated “an unceasing flow of *nevuah* (prophecy) amongst our nation.” This idea, he maintains, is intimated by the phrase, “*asher eva'ade lachem shamah*,” and refers to “Hashem's communications with Moses from between the cherubim that were shared with the Jewish people, [since] all communications were [ultimately] for the [sake of our] nation.” (*Commentary on the Torah*, this, and all translations, brackets and underlining my own)

The Malbim continues his analysis and interprets the expression, “*v'no'adati shamah*,” as referring to Hashem's ongoing revelation to our nation during the course of the *avodah*. He suggests that this interpretation is buttressed by the following complementary *pasuk* from *Sefer Vayikra*: “And Moses said, ‘This is the thing the L-rd has commanded; do [i.e. the *avodah*,] and the glory of the L-rd will appear to you.” (9:6)

Next, our author explicates the term, “*v'kidashti*,” as connoting two crucial ideas:

The subject matter of this expression teaches us that through the *avodah*, the *Ohel Moed* and its vessels were sanctified, since it was the very place wherein the Temple service was undertaken; and Aharon and his sons – who were designated to serve in the holy

priestly service - [performed their obligations]. This means that the *avodah* served a dual purpose: the sanctification of both the *Ohel Moed* and those who ministered therein [i.e. the *kohanim*].

According to the Malbim, the next term, “*v’shechanti*,” teaches us a vital notion regarding the eternal existential bond that links us to the Almighty: “As a result of the *avodah* in the *Ohel Moed*, Hashem’s presence became manifest amongst the entire people until He became their G-d, [precisely because He] placed His divinely revealed immanence amongst them.” In other words, the experience of the *Shechinah* (Hashem’s Presence) in the *Ohel Moed* was similar in kind to that which the Jewish people had encountered at *Kriat Yam Suf* (the Splitting of the Sea of Reeds). Our Sages teach us that the Holy One’s presence at the *Yam Suf* was so palpable that we proclaimed as one, “The Eternal’s strength and His power were my salvation; **this** is my G-d, [i.e. we could “see and point to Him”] and I will extol Him, the G-d of my father, and I will exalt Him.” (*Sefer Shemot* 15:2, translation my own, analysis based upon the commentary of the Torah Temimah)

I believe that the Malbim’s explication of our final term, “*v’yaidu*,” is an intellectual tour de force in its presentation of the underlying rationale of the *Ohel Moed*:

For through this [i.e. the *Ohel Moed* and the *avodah* therein,] the people would acquire a crystal-clear knowledge that He is their G-d and the One that took them out of Egypt. The purpose of the Exodus, therefore, was none other than to dwell among them in order that they would become the spiritual chariot (i.e. G-d’s platform on earth) for His all-powerful immanence (*shechinat uzo*). Through this knowledge and understanding Hashem would be their G-d and strengthen the connection and the closeness between Himself and the Jewish people – His intimate nation [forevermore].

The Malbim’s final sentence is reminiscent of a well-known *bracha* that we recite each morning before the recitation of the *Shema*:

And You have brought us close to Your great Name forever in truth, to offer praiseful thanks to You, and proclaim Your Oneness with love. Blessed are You Hashem, Who chooses His people Israel with love. (Translation, *The Complete ArtScroll Siddur*)

With Hashem's help and our fervent desire, may we ever be the spiritual chariots for His immanence in this world, so that we may experience His closeness amongst us in the newly rebuilt *Beit Hamikdash* soon and in our days. *V'chane yihi ratzon*.

Shabbat Shalom

Past *drashot* may be found at my blog-website: <http://reparashathashavuah.org>

They may also be found on <http://www.yutorah.org/> using the search criteria of Etengoff and the parasha's name.

The email list, *b'chasdei Hashem*, has expanded to hundreds of people. I am always happy to add more members to the list. If you have family or friends you would like to have added, please do not hesitate to contact me via email <mailto:rdbe718@gmail.com>.

*** My audio *shiurim* for Women on the topics of *Tefilah*, and *Tanach* may be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/8hsdpyd>

*** I have posted 164 of [Rabbi Soloveitchik's](#) English language audio *shiurim* (MP3 format) spanning the years 1958-1984. Please click on the highlighted link.