

Parshiot Vayakel-Pekudei 5777, 2017:

The Clouds of Glory and the Power of Prayer

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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 and Yitzhak Akiva ben Malka, and the safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

The second of our two Torah portions, Parashat Pekudei, contains the final verse of *Sefer Shemot*:

For the cloud of the L-rd was upon the *Mishkan* by day, and there was fire within it at night, before the eyes of the entire house of Israel in all their journeys. (*Sefer Shemot* 40:38, this and all Bible translations, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*)

A careful reading of the *pasuk* (verse) reveals that it is comprised of four separate, yet interrelated phrases, namely, “For the cloud of the L-rd was upon the *Mishkan* by day,” “and there was fire within it at night,” “before the eyes of the entire house of Israel,” and “in all their journeys.” Let us now turn to an examination of these expressions.

HaRav Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal *zatzal* (1885-1945) was a *rav*, *posek*, author and Religious Zionist. In his recently posthumously published work on the Torah entitled, *Mishneh Sochir*, he notes that “it is well-known that there were seven clouds of glory (*ananei hakavode*) that provided for the needs of the Jewish people during their time in the desert. [Moreover,] as a result of these clouds, the Jewish people lacked for nothing.” To buttress this contention, he cites Moses’ words to our forebears: “For the L-rd, your G-d, has blessed you in all the work of your hand; He knows of your walking through this

great desert; these forty years that the L-rd your G-d has been with you, you have lacked nothing.” (*Sefer Devarim 2:7, Mishneh Sochir, Parashat Pekudei, s.v. ki anan,* translations my own) In general, the *ananei hakavode* reflect the palpably immanent Divine Providence (*hashgacha pratit*) that the Master of the Universe bestowed upon our ancestors. In Rav Teichtal’s view, however, “the cloud of the L-rd [that] was upon the *Mishkan* by day,” represented: “...the highest form of humanly recognizable Divine Providence...in order for there to be the fire of Torah at night (“and there was fire within it at night”). In other words, G-d’s miraculous protection by day, whereby the nation’s legitimate needs were addressed, made it possible for the Jewish people to freely and intensely learn Torah at night. In addition, he opines that this cloud was visible “before the eyes of the entire house of Israel” so that “the entire Jewish people could experience the self-same Divine Providence [and Presence] as the *Mishkan* (Portable Desert Sanctuary) itself.” As such, we have the complete fulfillment of Hashem’s rationale for the construction of the *Mishkan*: “And they shall make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst.” (*Sefer Shemot 25:8*) This explication provides a natural transition to the concluding phrase of our *pasuk*, “in all their journeys,” i.e. Hashem is ever-present – not just during the 40 years in the desert, but rather, as Rav Teichtal notes, “even during the times the Jewish people travel through their [seemingly endless] exile.” In my view, this is reminiscent of the words penned by King David so long ago: “For the L-rd will not forsake His people, nor will He desert His inheritance.” (*Sefer Tehillim, 94:14*)

The Vilna Gaon (“the Gra,” Rabbi Elijah ben Solomon Zalman, 1720-1797) focused upon our *pasuk* in the context of the verses that represent the dialogue that transpired between G-d and Moses in the aftermath of the *Chet HaEgel* (Sin of the Golden Calf). In

particular, he emphasizes the relationship that obtains between, "...I will perform wondrous acts such as have not been created upon all the earth and among all the nations..." (*Sefer Shemot*, Parashat Ki Tisa 34:10) and our *pasuk*:

And this that is written, "I will perform wondrous acts such as have not been created upon all the earth and among all the nations," specifically refers to the indwelling of the Cloud of Glory on the *Mishkan*, and the splendor that rested thereupon, that went before the Jewish nation and was visible to the entire world. As the Torah states: "You, the L-rd appear to them eye to eye and Your cloud rests over them. And You go before them with a pillar of cloud by day and with a pillar of fire by night." (*Sefer Bamidbar* 14:14, *Sefer Chumash HaGra*, Parashat Ki Tisa 34:10, based upon *Sefer Aderet Eliyahu*, this and the following translations my own)

At this juncture, the Gra contrasts the unique nature of the Cloud of Glory that was upon the *Mishkan* to that of the Cloud of Glory that accompanied the Jewish people during their departure from Egypt:

Even though there was a Cloud of Glory that accompanied and went before them during the Exodus, it was short-lived and remained with them only until the Sea of Reeds (*Yam Suf*). Moreover, it was invisible to the vast majority of the Jewish people, since it was seen solely by the prophets that were among them. This was not the case in this instance [i.e. our *parasha*'s verse]: "For the cloud of the L-rd was upon the *Mishkan* by day...before the eyes of the entire house of Israel in all their journeys."

In sum, according to the Vilna Gaon, there were two essential differences between the original Cloud of Glory that went before our people on their journey of redemption, and the one that rested upon the *Mishkan*: The Cloud of Glory of the Exodus was temporary in nature, in contrast to the permanent Cloud resting on the *Mishkan*. Moreover, it was invisible to the majority of our nation, whereas the Cloud over the *Mishkan* was manifestly present before the entire people. What might account for these notable transformations? Here, too, we are fortunate, since we can once again rely upon the Vilna Gaon's analysis:

These changes came about from the time of Moses' prayer and onward: "For how then will it be known that I have found favor in Your eyes, I and Your people? Is it not that You will go with us? Then I and Your people will be distinguished (*v'niflinu*) from every [other] nation on the face of the earth." (*Sefer Shemot* 33:16) Then the Holy One answered Moses: "And He said: 'Behold! I will form a covenant; in the presence of all your people, I will perform wonders such as have not been created upon all the earth and among all the nations...'" (*Sefer Shemot* 34:10) [What was this?] This is what is meant by the expression, "in the eyes of the entire Jewish people." (*Sefer Devarim* 31:7, 34:12) And it is for this that we wait once again.

Thus, according to the Vilna Gaon, Moses' *tefilah* (prayer) of reconciliation to the Almighty altered the very nature of the *ananei hakavode*. Now, every member of the Jewish people could apprehend the vision of the Cloud of Glory resting upon the holy *Mishkan* – "And it is for this that we wait once again."

With Hashem's help, may we learn from *Moshe Rabbeinu* (our Teacher Moses) how to pray with deep conviction and authentically communicate with our Creator, and may we soon see the Cloud of Glory resting upon the rebuilt *Beit HaMikdash*. *V'chane yihi ratzon*.

Shabbat Shalom

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They may also be found on 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 *Megillat Esther* may be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/8hsdpd>

*** 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.