

By Rabbi
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MATAN TORAH: WHAT SHOULD HAVE HAPPENED

Based on the Hashkafa of HaRav Shimon Kessin, SHLIT'A

In memory of

Eliyahu ben Yehuda – Dr. Elliot Hahn, A'H

No'omi Malka bat Mordechai HaKohen, A'H

Matan Torah, known in the secular world as “The Revelation”, is the greatest event that ever occurred in the history of mankind. As much as the Torah tells us about this event, when combined with the various Midrashim that comment on this, what comes to life is the reality that our people were blessed with a direct interaction with Hashem Yisborach, the likes of which has never happened before or since then. The sheer awesomeness of hearing Hashem speak caused our people to die and experience techiat ha'mayseem ten different times. The end result of the event was that our people had returned to the status of Adam and Chava prior to the sin of eating from the aitz ha'daat. “Pasku zuhamsan”: The ‘zuhama’ – the spiritual manifestation of the evil that permeated every part of the created world – had departed from our entire nation. As a result, death was no longer part of our reality.

There are two questions that we need to review. The first is to understand the difference between the Luchot Rishonot and the Luchot Shneeyot. More precisely, was there a difference between the first Torah that accompanied the first Luchot in comparison to the Torah that accompanied the second Luchot? Secondly, we need to understand what the agenda following Ma'amad Har Sinai was, presuming that the egel, the golden calf had not been built and worshipped. To fully understand the answer to these two queries, we will intertwine them, weaving together the events and the philosophy.

The nation that left Har Sinai was totally transformed in comparison to the people that arrived there. A nation that, as a whole, returned to the status of Adam prior to the sin had the ability to relate to Ruchniyus in a manner that made them all prophets. What is important to understand is that Adam had no reason to be a prophet. Prophecy is the privilege of being able to leave the world of gashmius and visit the world of Ruchniyus. Before Adam sinned, the two worlds of Ruchniyus and gashmius were greatly but not fully integrated. Had Adam and Chava succeeded in the command to not eat from the Aitz HaDaas, those two circles would have continued to integrate until they were fully joined, which is the zichuch process of transforming Olom HaZeh into Olom HaBah. When Adam and Chava sinned, the two circles representing the two worlds were attached at the border, but no longer integrated. (If they ever detach, the universe as we know it would cease to exist.) At that moment, the concept of prophecy became a reality. Ruchniyus still existed in our world but was not manifest as it was before our original couple sinned. In order to experience manifest Ruchniyus, visitation rights into that adjacent world were required, which by definition is prophecy. Now that Klal Yisroel returned to the status of pre-sin Adam, for them and them alone, the two circles were partially merged providing them with the prophetic experience that was lost when Adam sinned. Every Jew enjoyed the powers of prophecy, much the same way that Adam did before he sinned.

Let's take this radical change of status and understand the essence of how these first Luchos appeared. Many are familiar with the physically based miracles that occurred. The stone in the middle of the final mem and samekh, although not attached to the surrounding stone did not fall out of the Luchos. If the nation was located in a circle, the Luchos faced every person as if they were in front of them. What is most important is to realize is that these Luchos and the Torah given with them were given as “Torah b'tzuras HaKesser”- Torah in the shape of a crown. That crown represents the fact that these Luchos and Torah were given with the nun shaaray bina, the fifty gates of wisdom embedded in them. Klal Yisroel enjoyed the highest level of wisdom based understanding and clarity accompanying Hashem's eternal gift for mankind. There were no questions regarding how any Mitzvah was to be observed. The concept of machloket regarding Halachic observance was nonexistent. Every one of Hashem's teachings

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were received with perfect clarity. Imagine living in a world with no death, palpable integration of Ruchniyut and gashmiut enabling everyone to experience prophecy as did Adam before he sinned, and a “Derech HaChaim” based Torah, understood and observed at the highest and clearest level possible. This was life for Klal Yisroel before the sin of the golden calf.

What was the schedule of events following Matan Torah? Our nation was to leave Har Sinai with Moshe Rabbeinu filling the role of Mashiach ben Yosef. On the way to Eretz HaKedoshah we had to make one stop: Moav! Why did we have to meet with Moav? Mashiach ben Yosef and Klal Yisroel had to pick up Mashiach ben Dovid whose soul was residing therein. We would have been met with great joy and jubilation and would have left Moav with their best wishes in hand. Within a few weeks we would have arrived in our Holy Land. The nations residing there would have done one of two things. They would either have done a complete Teshuva and joined us not necessarily as Jews but as resident aliens or they would have melted away on their own. We would not have had to pick up a finger to deal with them as Yehoshua did for seven years.

The next logical question is where would the Eternal Bait HaMikdash have been built? More importantly than that, what would have been the role of that edifice and how would it function. Many people think that the Mishkan which we will read about next week is the ultimate Temple. With Moshe at our helm, the Shechina was most manifest in that setting. The Ramban explains that the Mishkan was an atonement for the sin of the egel and served to carry the Har Sinai experience with us throughout the desert. If that reasoning is the purpose behind building the Mishkan, then the Bait HaMikdash that would have been built had the egel not been built serves an entirely different purpose. There would have been no sin to atone for.

In order to understand the purpose behind this Bait HaMikdash, we need to understand something critical regarding the Messianic Era that would have occurred then and will occur when it happens in the VERY NEAR future. Every day in Shachrit we say, “Ohr Chodosh al Tzion Ta’eer” – “A new light will be illuminated upon Tzion”. That new light is the light of the Nun Shaaray Bina, the fifty gates of understanding that will open our eyes, minds and souls regarding how Hashem Yisborach created this world in a manner that exemplifies a unity that, until then has never been experienced by humanity. The unity amongst our people will reach never before experienced heights and will achieve the level of “K’mocha” that Rabbi Akiva attempted to achieve in his day. We will not be a family but one organism, a concept that we have learned many times in the past. The merit that would have come with this level of unity following Har Sinai would have resulted in Hashem’s original intent regarding what the Bait HaMikdash was supposed to look like. It is summed up in one pasuk which we will read next week: (Shemot 25:8), “And

make for Me a Mikdash that I may dwell in **you**”. Each and every person, living in the reality of pre-sin Adam, would have become a “Mikdash Ma’at”, a miniature Holy Temple. Everyone would have maintained their identity, their uniqueness, and simultaneously would have come together as a “K’mocha based nun shaaray bina” unified nation, much like a jigsaw puzzle where the lines marking the uniqueness of every person is there, but barely visible because of the unity between them. This is the Bait HaMikdash Hashem wanted. What it results in is a very different type of building structure. In a world where Ruchniyut and gashmiut are partially merged, I’m not certain that there would have been “sacrifices” as they existed beginning with the Mishkan. I envision the structure as a central meeting place upon which a manifest Shechina would have been found, the goal of which would have been to achieve an unprecedented level of individual and national Dveykut with Hashem Yisborach, never before experienced.

To say that the egel was catastrophic is an understatement!! The transformation it generated was horrific. (This entire event will be covered in a few weeks.) The zuhama that departed at Har Sinai returned, bringing death with it. Moshe’s role as Mashiach ben Yosef was cancelled, (Shemos 32:7 “Laych, rayd”) and with it went the nun shaaray bina. The tikkun the world at large has been waiting for since Adam would have to wait for what has been thousands of years. Eventually Moshe came down with a second set of Luchot and the Torah that accompanied it. As asked above, was it the same as the first Torah or was it different? The fact is that this Torah was remarkably different which can be proven. The first Torah was given “b’tzurat HaKesser” while the second was given “b’tzurat HaChochmo”. The nun shaaray bina were clearly manifest in the first Torah while in the second, they were hidden. To extract them would be nearly impossible. In fact, the only person to succeed in this task was not Moshe Rabbeinu, (who made it to forty-nine) but Rabbi Akiva, as he exited the Pardes unscathed. The understanding and clarity enjoyed with the first Torah was replaced with doubts and controversy regarding Torah observance in the second. The Talmud elucidates this sad reality. With all this, what proves that the two Torahs were different is Sefer Vayikra. The first Torah given to a nation whose yetzer hara was mastered and that would no longer experience death had no need for the sacrifices described in Sefer Vayikra. Once the zuhama, death and the yetzer hara that accompanies it returned, Klal Yisroel needed to differentiate between the tuma associated with death, and tahara. Sacrifices and methods of purification were required so the Mishkan and eventually the Batay Mikdash could function within the proper setting of ritual purity, tahara. Sefer Vayikra is a blueprint regarding how to achieve these goals and maintain these standards, standards that would not have been needed had the egel not been constructed. As expressed in a pre-

vious article, all of this confirms that we are not living a “l’chatchila” life, but are on the “bidieved” life-track.

In three weeks, I hope to present a comprehensive review of the egel, the erev rav that precipitated the calamity and how all of this impacts us today. Believe me when I say the impact is far greater than many of us realize. There is one commonly asked question with which I would like to close. How can a nation that experienced everything we saw at Ma’amad Har Sinai build and worship a golden calf a few short weeks later? How could we have gone from the highest high ever experienced in human history to such a cataclysmic low? HaRav Yaakov Weinberg, ZT’L provides an insightful answer that has great import today. It relates to the Haftora following parashat Ki Sisa, Eliyahu HaNavi versus the priests of Baal. Long story short, the Jewish people come to witness this confrontation between Eliyahu HaNavi and these priests on Har HaCarmel. The priests sacrifice their animal and after hours of chanting, yelling, and the like, it remains on their alter unchanged, unrecognized. Eliyahu confirms that they are finished, obviously having failed. Eliyahu slaughters his animal, places it on the alter, soaks everything with water, says his prayer and within moments, fire from heaven comes down and consumes **everything** – the sacrifice, the water, even the stone alter itself. Our people break out in the famous chant, “Hashem, He Is Elokim”. Eliyahu, representing the truthful reality of Hashem Yisborach, has glorified Hashem’s Holy Name. The Haftora for parashat Ki Sisa ends here, but the story line continues unbroken in what is the Haftora for parashat Pinchas when it is read before the seventeenth of Tamuz. King Achav tells his wife, Izevel, all that occurred on Har HaCarmel. Izevel sends a message via an angel to Eliyahu, telling him that “tomorrow” he will be as dead as the priests of Baal. Rav Weinberg, ZT’L, asks if she wanted to kill him, why do so tomorrow rather than today? He answers that the message Izevel was conveying to Eliyahu was heartbreaking to the point that he himself wanted to die because he knew she was right. What Izevel was saying was that, following the spectacle, the people were with him, overjoyed with the Kiddush Hashem Eliyahu wrought. The Jews were emotionally

charged, ready to follow him. Izevel told

Eliyahu that in a few

days and they will be back with her, enjoying all the physical delicacies that come with the lifestyle the palace promoted. Eliyahu knew she was right, and it broke his heart!! The reason Izevel was right then and the same principle applies today is because every lifestyle commitment, especially in the realm of Torah, requires an intellectual base to support the emotional fulfillment that comes with it. The indispensable knowledge of Hashkafa provides an understanding of who Hashem Is, why we have two Messiahs rather than just one, what the Avos accomplished, what really occurred at the Akeyda, on Har Sinai, at Har HaCarmel – this list can take up many pages. The emotional highs that come with hearing a great pshat will be short lived because they need an intellectual foundation and file in which to be placed in order for the emotions to endure beyond the moment. This is why the nun shaaray bina were such a critical component of the first Luchot and the Torah that accompanied it. That wisdom intellectually concretized the love we are **commanded** to experience as expressed in the Shema. The “nun” may not be manifest today, but the Torah knowledge that serves as the foundation to achieve a real love for Hashem Yisborach, our Heavenly Father is there for all to partake in. It’s our responsibility to pursue it, acquire it, not only to enrich our own souls but to inspire our children accordingly. If we do our best to take advantage of the Torah knowledge that is readily available to us, when the Geulah occurs – SHORTLY – the impact the nun shaaray bina will have will be all the greater.

The most important point to remember is this. Whether it was thousands of years ago with Eliyahu HaNavi on Har HaCarmel or today’s Torah learning in 5779, the goal is Dveykut, establishing unbreakable bonds with Avinu ShebaShamayim. Everything we do should serve to enhance what is the most timeless and important relationship in our lives. May we be zoche – together – to achieve this Dveykut and shine in the Presence of the Hashem Yisborach, now and forever.