

A PARASHA THOUGHT

Follow Your Leader

"Hashem went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them on the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light."

Rashi tells us that the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire would overlap with one another, and that there was never a moment that one of the clouds was not guiding the Jewish people during their journey through the desert. Rav Moshe Feinstein explains that Rashi means that the cloud would "pass the baton" to the fire when the morning changed to night and vice versa when the night changed to morning. Rav Moshe continues that this is the way that Hashem has always treated the Jewish people. To this very day Hashem always sends messengers to lead and guide the Jewish people. The Gemara (Kiddushin 72b) says "A righteous person does not pass from this world until Hashem replaces him with a righteous person of his caliber." The Gemara points to the story in *Sefer Shmuel* where prior to the death of Eli, Hashem had already prepared Shmuel to be the next leader of the Jewish people.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz (*Sichos Mussar*, *ma'amar* 14) writes that a person should not say there is no one worthy in my generation to teach me Torah; if only there were the Torah scholars of old, I would study with them. This, Rav Chaim says, are words of fools, but a wise person realizes that Hashem gave him the leader that is perfect for him. Likewise, in the *mitzvah* to bring *Bikkurim* the *pasuk* says "You should bring the basket to the *kohain*

that is in your days." The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 25b) asks, why does the *pasuk* add the words "in your days"? How can you bring to anyone other than the *kohain* in your days? The Gemara answers that a person has to realize that all we have is the *kohain* (leader) of our day, and he is the perfect leader for our generation. We see in the annals of Jewish history that Hashem has always kept His promise to the Jewish people to never leave us without an appropriate leader. We see during different difficult times in history Hashem sent the right person to revitalize the Jewish people.

I recently read an approbation written by Rabbi Elyah Brudny for a *sefer* dealing with contemporary challenges. Rav Brudny wrote that we have a tradition that even if the great Rabbi Akiva Eiger were to show up in our times, he would not be someone we would go to for guidance, because he is part of a different generation with different challenges and our generation requires unique leadership. This is the promise that Hashem will never leave the Jewish people without the leaders they need, be it the Baal Shem Tov, Rav Hirsch, Rav Yisroel Salanter, or Rav Aaron Kotler. Hashem always sends exactly what that generation needs. So, let's appreciate our leaders who are custom made just for us. As Shlomo teaches in *Koheles* (7:10) "Do not say the earlier days were better than ours, because this is not a wise question." A wise person uses all the tools at his disposal to be the best person he can be, wishing for the good old days only slows us down in our service of Hashem. 🌟



RABBI
YAAKOV
MARCHUK

THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI YITZCHAK PREIS

Bo

Q) Is there a message in the fact that *tefillin* are worn on the weaker arm?

A) Ohr Hachayim *Hakodosh* answers this by highlighting the rest of the *possuk* (verse): "for with a strong arm Hashem removed you from Egypt." As he notes, by placing the *tefillin* on our weaker (and less skilled) arm we remind ourselves that we are not in control and that we are dependent on the true "Dominant arm," Hashem.

Beshalach

Q) The Torah describes the complaint of our newly freed ancestors, reflecting on Egypt as a place where "as we sat by the pot of meat we ate bread to satisfaction..."

Pots of meat? Satisfaction? Really!?

A) According to the approach of Rabbi Eliezer Hamoda'i, in the *Mechilta*, yes – really!

As he describes, the Jews (or perhaps, at least many of them) were slaves to the nobility and, as such, actually had access to significant amounts of good food despite the many other severe elements of suffering.

The Ohr Hachayim *Hakodosh* also understands that there were those who ate well in Egypt, but only a small subset – the corrupt taskmasters like Dosson and Aviram. And these were the primary complainers.

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whose Yahrzeit was this past week.

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

CONTINUED

The *Medrash Rabbah* notes the fact that a careful read of the *possuk* has us realize that they were not necessarily claiming to have eaten meat in Egypt. They were reflecting that while longingly observing the cooking of meat for their masters, they could at least eat bread. The current complaint reflected a concern about not even having that available in the desert. And hence the response is the *mann*, often described as a Heavenly bread. 🕊

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! Submit a question on the parasha by Monday at noon by emailing parasha@cincynkollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.



A SHINING EXAMPLE

RABBI EPHRAIM SKOLNIK

Rabbi Moshe Klein was the head of a well-known organization which helps people get the medical care they need as well as the funds to pay for it. His organization had a multi-million-dollar annual budget which he raised personally. One evening Rabbi Klein was in his office talking with Mr. Allen Steinberg, a wealthy philanthropist and one of his biggest supporters. He was sharing with him some of the organization's latest projects and accomplishments. As the hour got late Rabbi Klein turned to Mr. Steinberg and said "let's go to the *Kosel* together to daven *Ma'ariv*." As they were finishing *Ma'ariv* at the *Kosel*, which was virtually empty, Rabbi Klein noticed a man standing at the Wall tearfully praying. Rabbi Klein turned to Mr. Steinberg and said "that man seems to be deeply distressed. If he has any medical needs, I will do my best to help him but promise me that if he needs financial assistance that you will cover the costs." Mr. Steinberg agreed. When the man finished his prayers, Rabbi Klein approached him and said "I'm sorry but we couldn't help but watch you pray with such sincerity. We are here to help. I can help you with anything medical

TEFILLA TIDBITS

RABBI YAAKOV MARCHUK

After entering the *shul*, the first *Tefillah* we recite is *Adon Olam*. The Gemara (*Brachos* 7b) says that Avraham was the first person to call Hashem *Adon* – Master (*Bresheis* 15-8). The Maharsha explains that the name *Adon* is different than the name *Elokim*, *Elokim* refers to our belief in His existence while the name *Adon* refers to Hashem's control over all that goes on in our world. This was the mission of Avraham *Avinu* – to teach the world that Hashem not only exists but is intimately involved in our day-to-day lives. For this reason, both the first *Tefillah* of the day, *Adon Olam*, and the *Shemona Esrei* (which is preceded by the words *Adoni sifasai tiftach*) begin with the word *Adon*, to invoke the merit of Avraham. 🕊

and this man is ready to write a check for whatever you need." "Thank you very much gentlemen I truly appreciate your offer but I really don't need anything," the man replied. "There is nothing to be embarrassed of," said Rabbi Klein. "We really want to help and we saw the way you were crying." "You don't understand" replied the man. "Tonight, with Hashem's help, I married off my tenth and last child without any major financial or emotional headache so I just came to the *Kosel* to say thank you to Hashem." 🕊

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE ZOHAR (INTRODUCTION)

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

The *Zohar*, in its totality, is *not* a unified and organized work (like Rabbi Yehuda ha-Nasi's six books of the *Mishna* for example) but is rather an anthology of mystical writings. Therefore, the *kabbalistic* teachings of the *Zohar* aren't presented systematically, but rather emerge in the form of a commentary.

Fundamentally, the *Zohar* is comprised of three segments: the *Zohar* on the *Torah*, *Tikkunei ha-Zohar*, and *Zohar Chadash*. The *Zohar* on the *Torah*, written in Aramaic and arranged by the order of the *parshiyos*, is the core of the *Zohar* anthology. In essence, the *Zohar* on the *Torah* is a *Midrash* which contains both *Aggadic* and mystical explanations and often only interprets a small amount of the *pesukim* in a given *parasha*. Most of the *Midrashic* interpretations are authored by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and others who were part of his circle. Other supplementary parts to the *Zohar* on the *Torah*, some of which are incorporated into the main text of the *Zohar* in specific *parshiyos*, are: *Midrash Ne'elam*, *Sisrei Torah*, *Masnisin* and *Tosefta*, *Saba de-Mishpatim*, *Yanuka*, *Rav Mesivta*, *Sifra de-Tzenusa*, *Idra Rabbah*, *Idra Zuta*, *Idra de-mashkana*, *Heichalos*, *Raza de-Razin*, *Sisrei Osiyos*, *Ma'amar Kav Ha-middah*, and *Raya Mehemna*. The second segment, *Tikkunei ha-Zohar*, is comprised of seventy *Tikkunim* which elaborate on the first word of the *Torah* – *Bereishis*. Finally, the *Zohar Chadash* is a 16th century printing of the *Zohar* from a larger collection of manuscripts.

In light of the above, we must question – did one person author all of the above-mentioned parts of the *Zohar* or were many people involved in its compilation? Was everything written at one time, or was the *Zohar* anthology compiled over a number of generations?

The *Idra Rabbah* lists the names of nine Sages who were part of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's *kabbalistic* circle: Rabbi Elazar, Rabbi Abba, Rabbi Yehuda, Rabbi Yose bar Yakov, Rabbi Yitzchak, Rabbi Chezkiyah bar Rav, Rabbi Chiya, Rabbi Yose, and Rabbi Yesa. Three additional Sages found throughout *Zohar* literature are: Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair, Rav Hamnuna Saba, and Rav Yeva Saba. What role did these Sages play in the authorship of the *Zohar* anthology?

To be continued... 🕊