



Ohr Yerushalayim News

ח - ב אדר תשע"ח - תרומה - 17th February 2018 - Volume 10 - Issue 30

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazal Tov to Mr & Mrs Laurence Ross on birth of a grandson to Rabbi and Mrs Samuel Ross. The Sholom Zochor takes place at 84 Albert Avenue

Rov's Shabbos Afternoon Shiur

The Rov's Shiur on Shabbos afternoon will be learning Hilchos Purim.

Tzedoko for Josh

Everyone in the Kehilla is invited to give a donation to צדקה on Sunday 18th February between 9.30-12.30.

Any donation to a worthy cause is acceptable but should be specified that it is לזכות ולרפואה שלמה for אלימלך יהושע אהרון בן דברה רבקה.

An immortal philosophy

Dani Epstein

Many years ago when I had the misfortune to work as a tech-support technician, I was called by a client on one particular occasion who complained that his computer was not working. "Are there little pictures on the screen?" I asked. "Is there text beneath them?" When the reply was in the affirmative, I then informed the hapless user: "Your computer is working. It's just not doing what you want it to."

Today, the study of iconography has shifted within the popular culture from a specific interpretation of fine art to symbols on graphical user interfaces and now to the conceptualisation and design of small images that convey, within the boundaries of a small pre-determined area, a simplistic symbolic representation of an emotion, reaction or readily-identifiable object.

The historic usage of such symbols rising from the combination of typographical elements commonly found on computer keyboards to form an emotional cue the writer was unable to convey in literary form gave rise to the word "emoji". For the uninitiated, I suggest sourcing a teenager with a mobile phone who, once they have recovered from their initial shock, will happily demonstrate the endless possibilities of communicating without employing a single alphabetical character. This has been hailed as progress within a very narrow demographic of the world's population. The cusp of our nation's formation occurred when they crossed their Rubicon, which in this particular instance was a sea as opposed to a river. At this juncture the exodus was complete and with that came the rejection of the pantheon of gods, superstitions and icons that the Egyptian culture inflicted upon them. With a brief interlude of less than two months they were required to transpose their weltanschauung from the idolatrous and pagan to the monotheistic ontology of the Torah.

With over three millennia and a tremendous leap in technology and science separating us from these pivotal events, the context of this juncture and the ones that followed is blurred behind the windows of history; therefore the urge to worship graven images defies our comprehension and we resign it to the superstitions that held sway in times of yore. Yet even in the 21st century, surrounded by radio waves carrying digital information across tens of thousands of miles beamed from billions of digital devices and the epic launch of an electric vehicle to the outer reaches of the solar system, religious icons of an idolatrous nature can be found in almost every country on the planet.

The worship of idolatry has hardly abated whilst perhaps evolving, although the sacrificial element has largely disappeared, and fortunately

לעלוי נשמת דוב יצחק ב"ר אפרים אלחנן ז"ל

Kiddush Bemokom Seuda - "Same Room"

לכתחילה it is best not to change one's place at all for the meal after קידוש, even from one side of the room to the other. But if one has intention to do so it is permitted and בדיעבד even if one did not have intention, one is still יצא.

However, one may eat in a different room only if all the following conditions are met:

- 1) One can see the other room from one's place for Kiddush.
- 2) The other room is in the same apartment, and
- 3) One had this in mind when making Kiddush.

that of humans in particular, which is quite felicitous for young children everywhere.

We therefore have to appreciate what a tremendous sacrifice was required from the Bnei Yisroel when they were asked to reject the culture and mind set that held sway in their entire contemporary world.

Imagine their confusion when – brief moments after the revelation of Hashem at Har Sinai – they were asked to create something which appeared at first glance to parallel the very philosophies they were just asked to reject! Whilst they had just been informed that temples, statues, reliquaries and other trappings of the religions popular in the region were decidedly verboten, now the tables were turned and they were being instructed to create precisely that. Surely they should have been tremendously suspicious of Moshe and they should have, at the very least, wondered whether or not this command represented some kind of test they required to pass by refusing to carry out the order?

Yet there is no record of any representative committee being formed to examine this possibility, and even the rebellion Korach fomented questioned other issues, but never the Mishkon, the oron or the two mizbechos. One must surely wonder why.

It would appear that the question is in fact the answer – the very fact that

The Week Ahead

שבת פרשת תרומה

Candle Lighting	5.06pm
Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	5.11pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.53am
1st Mincha	1.30pm
Rov's Shiur	4.24pm
2nd Mincha	4.54pm
Shalosh Seudas	Following
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	6.14pm
Ovos uBonim	7.14pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	5.15pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm

this whole enterprise was accepted wholeheartedly and without question clearly indicates that no-one was remotely suspicious of Moshe's motives or the validity of the command. Such a state of affairs might indicate that the Bnei Yisroel were privy to information no longer extant, leaving us with this mystery. It does seem rather implausible, however. Granted, the Mishkon was a unique structure whose impermanence was at the heart of its design and it would therefore appear to be perfectly rational to extrapolate this state to the knowledge enshrined in its construction and conclude that we are bereft of the rationale that permitted this apparent dichotomy. Conversely, it seems implausible that the construction of a unique edifice such as this would be recorded in meticulous detail only to leave us with the conundrum of its permissibility.

I hesitate to suggest anything that might be remotely construed as a definitive answer, although the question raised above really dovetails with something that mystified me for many years, which is quite simply what the *raison d'être* of the Mishkon was altogether.

As always, turning to the Abravanel provides one with a plethora of insights, thoughts and explanations; however when it comes to the Mishkon it is akin to sipping from a firehose. He goes into copious detail examining the many positions of the leading meforshim on the topic, and even goes to the degree of quoting the **חכמי אומות העולם** (presumably contemporary and earlier theologians) in an effort to cover the topic in epic depth.

Key amongst them, effortlessly straddling both worlds – the secular and religious – stands the Rambam. Steeped in Torah with a breathtaking knowledge of science, philosophy and medicine, he was a rationalist of the Aristotelian school of thought. In his opinion, the Mishkon was reflected the vast heavenly arrays and their counterparts here on earth.

Others such as the Ramban offer esoteric mystical hints to explain the meaning of every material, unit and construction representing the multiple spheres, **מלאכי השרת** and roam into topics that in my ignorance I simply have no frame of reference for, in order to even glean a hint of meaning thereof.

It should hardly come as a surprise that the Abravanel rejects each and every explanation out of hand with one simple yet overriding and powerful argument. Why would Hashem command the fabrication of such a complex project if the essence is merely a reflection of creations that came about by His hand? What purpose would that serve?

In truth the Abravanel was quite prescient in rejecting the mystical and metaphysical as rationales for the Mishkon, since today the theories espoused by the Rambam in the opening chapters of his eponymous work concerning the functioning of the planetary bodies and other celestial creations, were firmly based on contemporary and Greek natural philosophy and have been roundly disproved by modern science and have no basis in reality whatsoever. This is hardly to the detriment of the Rambam; far from it. Despite the fact that he erred extensively on the topic, he was unafraid to expose what he believed to be the truth at the time, regardless of its source; something which for centuries has been actively repressed and suppressed within our circles.

Nonetheless, it is a double-edged sword. Theories come and go, as does their evidence or their interpretations, hence the foresight of the Abravanel in his avoidance of such a potential pitfall is quite logical.

His approach, as always, is unique.

In Yechezkel 43:10 we read: **אִתָּהּ בְּרִאֲדָם הִגֵּד אֶת־בֵּיתִי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַבַּיִת** – Son of Man, describe to the House Of Yisroel the House; an instruction to the *novi* regarding the construction of the Beis Hamikdash. The instruction is rather telling, in that the verb employed is “describe” as opposed to “inform”. This, says the Abravanel is the key to comprehending the Mishkon. Unlike the stone edifices whose sole purpose was to install fear, awe, admiration or perhaps even wonder, the Mishkon was to act as an intellectual stimulus, a symbolic representation; one whose allusions and intimations were to be studied and internalized.

The structure of the Mishkon consisted of four elements: **יריעות** – the cloths whose threads were spun of *techeiles*, purple wool, scarlet silk and natural silk. Above that came goat skins, then red-dyed ram skins and Tachash skins. The walls were constructed of wooden columns plated in gold, with silver sockets.

These four groups of coverings allude to four categories of individuals that form a balanced society: the intellectuals, workers, warriors and rulers.

The first category – the intellectuals – are represented by interleaved threads of a very fine quality, “woven with great skill and complex patterns, the process being referred to as **מעשה חושב** – contemplative creativity, something akin to Brocade, Jacquarde or Nishijin-ori weaving. The wool used to spin the *techeiles* and purple was not sourced from sheep, since

even at that time this was regarded as an inferior product, but from goats. Remarkable as this might appear, even the superior wool from the Merino lamb is no comparison to Shahtoosh (a Persian word meaning “king of fine wools”) spun from the down hair of chiru - Tibetan antelope. Although produced illegally, a Shahtoosh shawl currently sells in the regions of £3,000 to £4,000.

Representing the craftsmen, traders, labourers and those involved in agriculture and livestock were the goat skins. Commonly available and inexpensive, these proved to be long-wearing and practical despite the economy they extended.

Quite obviously the red-dyed ram skins were representative of the warrior class, who are red with blood of battle, along with the colourful skins of the Tachash perhaps representing the colours of war banners, used for communication and rallying points. The Trooping of the Colour, a ceremony that dates back to the 17th century, was the outcome of earlier traditions of having the ensign slowly march with their flags in order to familiarise the troops with them.

The columns of acacia wood, plated in gold and supported by silver sockets represented the ruling and wealthy elite, and their pursuit of dominion.

Turning tables on all this were the levels of *kedushoh* within the structure. At the epicentre was the *dvir*, or *kodesh hakodoshim*, centered within it the *Oron*. Representing ultimate sanctity, its purpose was to remind all the four categories that neither intellect, labour, war nor commerce and power will fulfil man's destiny or provide him with ultimate satisfaction; this can only be obtained by a devotion to and study of the Torah, enshrined in the *oron*. As Shlomo Hamelech wrote in *Koheles*: **סוף דבר הכל נשמע –** when all is said and done, **את האלהי ירא –** be in awe of Hashem, **ואת מצותיו שמור –** and observe his statutes, **כי זה כל האדם –** for this is the purpose of Man”.

The decorative border around the *Oron* represents the Crown of Torah, which is the crowning glory of man and should be his ultimate aspiration. Placed on the cover of the *Oron* were two *keruvim*, wings stretched overhead to reflect the Source of the Torah, facing each other to represent the unity, love and peace that is core to the Torah's philosophy and an essential requirement for the betterment of society and adherence to its statutes. In addition, suggests the Abravanel, they were children who represent the purity of the sin-free.

Needless to say, there is considerably greater detail expounded by the Abravanel and restrictions on space force curtailment. It is nonetheless possible to pause at this juncture and reflect on the following. A cursory reading of the Torah will glean little if any concrete philosophical revelations; it would appear that history and legislation are all the text espouses. What is clear from the Abravanel is that this assumption is predicated on shallow thinking and utterly fallacious.

As a functional society, we require our intellectuals, our merchants, shopkeepers, shepherds, warriors, musicians, artists, politicians and entrepreneurs. This, however, must not and cannot define us. Our culture is not one of art, or music, war, commerce or territory. Whilst those define every other nation on earth, ours is entirely unlike and in fact unique, since it delineates not merely the anthropological but blends the ontology, the social strata and the intellect to rise immortally above the *zeitgeist* to an aspiration far greater than merely ephemeral culture.

Central to our civilization is the Torah; it is the property of anyone who wishes to acquire it and in doing so they need not expend their capital or liquidate their assets; the Torah is not the domain nor the acquisition of the priestly or any other caste.

Power and wealth give way to the dominion of its scholars, steeped not merely in knowledge but in practice as well. They too are required to participate in all the areas a society will engage in, but elevate the mundane to the sublime and the profane to the sacred and in doing so represent the standards and aspirations of the rest of the nation. And despite these lofty goals, the opportunity to join this cultural elite does not require great wealth or connections with the powerful. Uniquely, the Torah provides this possibility to any member of our *sui generis* nation who is prepared to devote themselves and rise to the challenge, whilst – as the *keruvim* on the *oron* – keeping their feet firmly planted on the ground.

This serves to answer the question posed earlier. No-one objected to the apparent contradiction since there was none. The Mishkon was not a temple of worship and sacrifice, it was the iconographic representation of a new moral philosophy, one so distanced from the contemporary that the new adherents required a physical representation in order to facilitate its absorption. The Bnei Yisroel immediately realised this, so why would they object?