



Parshat Shemot

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STARTING POINT

On the Road to Faith – by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

The Torah portion of Shemot ends on a surprising note: While it is true that the Almighty had warned Moshe when He spoke to him at Sinai that the release from Egypt would not be fast and simple ("I know that the king of Egypt will not allow you to leave" [Shemot 3:19]), there was no advance hint that the situation would first become worse before it improved. In fact, the outcome of Moshe's first mission to the nation had implied that there would be a good result ("And the nation believed... And they kneeled and bowed down" [4:31]), but this was then followed by disappointment. Not only did Pharaoh completely reject the request by Moshe and Aharon, he increased the oppression, making it more severe than it had been before. As a result, the leaders of Bnei Yisrael came to Moshe to complain, and Moshe in turn went to the Almighty: "Why did you make matters worse for this nation? Why did you send me? Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has oppressed the nation more, and you have not rescued your people!" [5:22-23]. Why did this unexpected change in the course of events take place?

Perhaps the reason for the change was related to the difference in principle between the command given to Moshe at the burning bush and the way he carried out the instructions. Moshe was told to turn to Bnei Yisrael with the good news, "I have remembered you and all that was done to you in Egypt" [3:16], and G-d promised Moshe, "They will listen to your voice" [3:18]. However, Moshe feared that Bnei Yisrael "will not believe me and will not listen to my voice" [4:1], and the Almighty therefore gave him three signs, to make sure that they listened, emphasizing that it might not be necessary to use them all. "But if they do not believe you and they do not listen to the first sign, they will believe the next sign. And if they do not believe these two signs... you shall take from the water of the Nile..." [4:8-9]. That is, Moshe was expected to turn to Bnei Yisrael and test their faith. If they did not respond positively, he was instructed to show each sign in sequence and test whether the people had achieved the desired level of faith.

However, when he carried out his mission Moshe acted differently. "And Aharon spoke all of these things that G-d had told Moshe, and he performed the signs before the nation" [4:30]. Moshe and Aharon did not wait to see the reaction of the people to each sign, but they immediately showed all the miracles. The objective was in fact obtained – "and the nation believed" [4:31] – but evidently the path taken was too short. Bnei Yisrael should be able to become faithful even if they do not see an entire sequence of miracles. The true test of faith in this case, starting with the redemption from Egypt and leading

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to all the subsequent generations, is in the darkest moments, believing in G-d even when His ways cannot be seen clearly.

The conclusion is that the very speed with which the initial faith of Bnei Yisrael in the redemption was achieved led to a need to make the conditions harsher than they were at first. In this way the nation would learn that the stages of redemption might entail hardships. This will also be a lesson for Moshe, as is written in the last verse of the Torah portion: "Now you will see what I do to Pharaoh, for he will send them out with a mighty hand, and he will expel them from his land with a strong hand" [6:1]. As Rashi notes, "You wondered about my practices... Therefore, 'now you will see' – you will see what will be done to Pharaoh, but not what will be done to the seven nations of Canaan, when I bring them to the land."

POINT OF VIEW

Civil Disobedience - by Rabbi Yisrael Rozen

The subject of refusal to obey orders has recently received prominent attention. Those who are opposed to the "disengagement plan" seem to have given up hope of the possibility of a national decision, either by a referendum or elections, and they have increased the level of discussion about refusal.

Fear Mongering

I cannot accept the political warnings that the currently proposed refusals, related to evacuating Gush Katif, will lead to such disastrous effects as a national division, splitting of the nation, total chaos, destruction of the country, disintegration of the army, or other apocalyptic events. Such terms have been created to satisfy the needs of the press, which is always looking for emotional appeal and is interested in increased excitement. In addition, the phrases have been developed in the minds of strategists from both camps, right and left, who would like to force the other side to retreat from their opinions in reaction to terms that have a potential to increase the level of fear.

In my opinion, it is possible to have a serious discussion on the current issues of the legitimacy of disobedience and the evacuation and abandoning of the land without any accompanying dire threats of civil war or "the end of the world." We have great experience in controversy, in the nation and in our country, starting before the state was born and continuing ever since. I have memories of street corner speeches by Menachem Begin, full of the fear of disunity, on such topics as the reparations payments from Germany. We

have lived through these types of horror movies, and we have survived.

A Civilian Order Camouflaged as a Military Command

There is one more central concern that I have about an issue which has come up in public debates. As far as I am concerned, this is the most significant matter in the current discussions. It can also help explain the difference between the calls for disobedience on the right side of the political spectrum and those of the left.

There is no question in my mind about the serious nature of a refusal to obey a command in the midst of a battle against an enemy. An example would have been to disobey an order to enter Beirut for ideological reasons. If a helicopter pilot refuses to shoot a missile at an identified terrorist for ideological reasons involving humanitarianism and harm to the surroundings, disobeying a direct command, he has committed a terrible crime that cannot be condoned. It is just as serious to refuse to serve in the "territories" for ideological reasons (such an objector should be sent to grease tanks or paint the army camps).

On the other hand, I cannot view in the same category and with the same seriousness a policeman who might have refused to forcefully evacuate those who recently occupied the "Bread Square" in spite of a court order, ignoring the rule that "the law is the law." Such policemen, even if they had acted as a group, especially if they would be ready to be punished for their socialistic outlook, are not in the category of "national refusal" that is so fraught with danger. If the IDF would be given the task of destroying illegal houses belonging either to Jews or Arabs and a group of soldiers would decide on an organized basis to disobey the command for political or social reasons, I would not define this as refusal to obey a military command of a type that will lead to total disaster.

Forced evacuation of the Gaza Strip is not a legitimate military action, even if it has been assigned to land forces, and even if it is carried out using military personnel and equipment. When the IDF is involved in the rescue of people who are caught in floods or who get lost on a field trip, it is performing a task that is by nature a civilian police action and nothing more. The use of military resources because they happen to be available does not transform a political mission into a military one, no matter how gleefully it is witnessed by the enemy.

As far as I am concerned, military disobedience is by definition only an action in a mission "against an enemy," including all preparations, support groups, and any necessary offshoots. Any other activity, even if it is in response to external political pressure, is not really "military" in nature.

SERMON BY A GUEST

Moshe on the Way to Leadership - by Ruti Foichwanger-Segel, Matan, Jerusalem

Moshe was born into the world during a difficult time for Bnei Yisrael. They had been oppressed for many years, and there

was nobody among them who could say how long the oppression would last. In addition to physical hardship and the daily struggle for existence, there was also spiritual oppression. "And they did not listen to Moshe, because of impatience and the hard labor" [Shemot 6:9]. In this atmosphere, it was necessary for a man to be raised who was not a slave in his heart, a man who could stand up to Pharaoh and make demands without flattery, one who could lead the people from slavery into freedom and guide them through the desert.

The Midrash makes it clear that the spirit of the women in Egypt was freer than that of the men. The midwives feared G-d and dared to defy Pharaoh. Perhaps this is because they were not forced to do hard labor: "And Egypt made Bnei Yisrael do hard labor" [1:13] – the word "bnei" might refer only to the men. Perhaps the spiritual strength of the women helped them to better withstand the difficulties of their livelihood. Moshe was privileged to have women rescue him from Pharaoh's decree to kill the infant boys, and he was raised by women from the moment he was born. Pharaoh's daughter, by taking part in raising Moshe, contributed to Moshe's experience of freedom.

Moshe was raised in a protected atmosphere, and he did not experience the difficult conditions on the outside. We might have feared that since he matured far from the suffering of his people he would feel estranged from them and not identify with their suffering, but his encounter with reality showed his sensitivity. "And Moshe grew and went out to his brethren, and he saw their suffering" [2:11]. He later demonstrated again this quality of empathy during his meeting with Yitro's daughters, "And Moshe rose and helped them, and he gave water to their sheep" [2:17]. The Midrash provides us with further insights about Moshe in his capacity as a shepherd. "He lifted the goat on his shoulders and continued on his way. So the Almighty said to him: You have the mercy needed to lead the sheep belonging to men. I therefore confirm that you will also lead my own sheep." [Shemot Rabba 2].

The ability to identify with the weak element is a necessary trait for the leader of a nation that has suffered and has been beaten, as was true of Bnei Yisrael at the time when they were redeemed. This trait developed in Moshe based on the surroundings in which he grew, engulfed by the care and the compassion of the women around him. "And his sister stood far away in order to know what would happen to him... Pharaoh's daughter went down... and she saw him... behold, a child was crying, and she had pity on him and said, this is a child of the Hebrews." [2:4-6]. In this way, a leader was created who had pity on his people and who also loved them. Perhaps this is the explanation of the words of the Midrash, "As a reward for the righteous women of that generation, Yisrael were redeemed from Egypt" [Shemot Rabba 1].

TORAH, SOCIETY, AND GOVERNMENT

"What is His Name?" - What Should I Tell Them?" - by Rabbi Uri Dasberg

Some religious people refrain from speaking G-d's name in vain, including the name as it appears in other words. There are people who will say they live in "Beit – Keil" and not Beit El,

and so on. Should this practice be followed if the name of G-d is encountered during Torah study?

The Maharsha allowed pronouncing the name of G-d during study, based on his interpretation of the Talmud, "Even a single person who sits and studies Torah is joined by the Shechina, the Holy Presence, as is written, 'Every place where I mention my name, I will come to you and bless you.' [Shemot 20:21]" [Berachot 6a]. Thus, one who sits and studies Torah is permitted to pronounce G-d's name. According to Rabbi Yaacov Emden, his father, the "Chacham Tzvi," would rebuke him if he used a nickname for G-d while he was studying instead of the full name. Perhaps using a nickname demonstrates a lack of respect. It may also be a deficiency in the study itself, in that the person is modifying what is written. All of this of course does not refer to the "explicit name" of G-d, which is only said out loud once a year by the High Priest, on Yom Kippur.

When a person quotes a full verse, and some rabbis feel that this is also true for part of a verse, he is permitted (and some would say, obligated) to read the full name as it is written. Rabbi Emden felt that one should use the full name of G-d when practicing how to recite a blessing, in order to become used to saying the name correctly, as opposed to the common mistake of Bar Mitzva boys who sometimes use a nickname ("Hashem") when reciting the blessings of the Torah in public. In this matter, the Magen Avraham differentiates between grownups and children (Orach Chaim 215:5). He indeed fears that a minor who becomes used to reciting a blessing without the name of G-d will continue to do this when he matures, while an adult can be relied upon to know the difference between practice and the real obligation of making a blessing.

Another issue is related to a chazzan who repeats the name of G-d during prayers to fit in with the tune. How often should G-d's name be repeated just in order to accommodate the music?

All of the above refers to the spoken word. With respect to written matter, it is necessary to take into account what will happen to the printed page. Newspapers (and perhaps Shabbat bulletins too) are thrown away and not treated with respect. Books are usually kept on shelves or in bookcases and might be expected to be treated with more respect.

Reference: Rabbi Yehuda Shaviv, "Techumin," volume 24, pages 455-459

MOUNT MORIAH

About Mount Moriah - by Rabbi Yitzchak Levy, Yeshivat Har Etzion

Where is Mount Moriah?

The first time we encounter the name Mount Moriah in the Torah is with respect to the binding of Yitzchak. Avraham is commanded, "Please take your one and only son whom you love, Yitzchak, and go for yourself to the land of Moriah, where you will bring him as an Olah sacrifice on one of the

mountains, as I will tell you" [Bereishit 22:2]. Yitzchak is to be bound in the land of Moriah, on one of the mountains, "as I will tell you." In this case, Moriah is the name of the land, and the location of the mountain is not given. While three days is a reasonable time for travel from Be'er Sheva to Jerusalem, this does not prove that the mountain involved was what is identified today as Mount Moriah.

There is only one other verse in the entire Tanach where the name "Moriah" appears, and this is concerned with the construction of the Temple by Shlomo: "And Shlomo began to build the House of G-d in Jerusalem, on Mount Moriah... at the granary of Arnan, the Yevusite." [II Divrei Hayamim 3:1]. Here, for the first time, we are told that Mount Moriah is Jerusalem. Today, the correspondence between the Temple Mount and Moriah is accepted by all except for the Shomronim.

The Name of the Mountain

The name "Moriah" has been interpreted in many ways by the sages, all of them related to the essence of the site.

(1) "G-d will see" (yir'eh) [Bereishit 22:14]. The first Midrashic interpretation was attributed to Avraham himself. He called the site "G-d will see," meaning that He will choose this place. Thus, the meaning of the name is that the site will be a Divine choice, and this is promised to Avraham at the time of the binding.

The commentators have given other interpretations to the phrase, "G-d will see." For example, it might mean that G-d will be revealed at this place, that there is an extra measure of Divine guidance at the site, or that G-d keeps watch over the place. The interpretation of making a choice is a hint of the verse, "the site that your G-d will choose" [Devarim 12:5]. The site is unique because G-d chose it, not because of any actions by man.

(2) Fear of G-d – "yir'ah" - The most straightforward interpretation of the passage would seem to imply that the name is related to fear of G-d. "Now I know that you fear G-d" [Bereishit 22:12]. According to the Rambam, the binding clarified and publicized Avraham's strong fear and love of G-d.

(3) Teaching – "hora'ah" - This interpretation is based on a link between the Temple and judgment. The Sanhedrin sat in the "Lishkat Hagazit," near the Altar, in order to fulfill the verse, "For the Torah will emanate from Zion, and the word of G-d from Jerusalem" [Yeshayahu 2:3]. This shows the tight link between the Temple and the Torah, which we discussed in this series of articles in the past.

(4) To be shown – "I'har'ot" - Mount Moriah is a place that G-d shows to man. This is what happened at the binding, and it was repeated when G-d showed David the granary of Aravnah, the Yevusite (when the prophet points out to David where to build an altar). It also happened in the time of the Second Temple, when one of the prophets who returned from exile indicated the position of the Altar.

(5) Authority – "marut" – The sages interpret the word Moriah as "the site where the world is ruled," referring to authority and royalty. The Temple is the royal palace of the Almighty on the earth. This is one of the reasons that an honor guard is maintained at the Temple, in order to honor the king, and it is also related to the commandments of bowing and having respect for the Temple. The Ark of G-d is the royal throne, and in the Temple the response to a blessing is "Let His glorious royal name be blessed forever."

(6) Spice – "mor" – It is written, "I will go to the mountain of spice, to the hill of the incense" [Shir Hashirim 4:6]. The sages consider this as referring to the Temple, a reference to the incense that was offered on the Golden Altar.

All of these interpretations complement each other and together they give a picture of the many roles played by the Temple. Let us hope and pray that we will return to the site quickly.

A LESSON FOR THE CHILDREN

The Platoon of the Thirty-Five (Part 2) - by Rabbi Yikhat Rozen, Merkaz Neria, Kiryat Malachi

Summary of the first chapter: In the War of Independence, the area of Gush Etzion was in a severe blockade. Food, medicine, and ammunition were almost gone. One night, a platoon of 35 soldiers of the Palmach started out on foot in order to reach Gush Etzion. They never arrived, and nobody knew what had happened to them. Their bodies were finally discovered a few days later. Only 19 years later, with the recapture of the area in the Six Day War, was it revealed what had happened. Here is the story that was pieced together from discussions with elderly Arabs and British officers:

As dawn approached, the men suddenly saw an old Arab shepherd, and he saw them too. For a moment, they hesitated about what to do – this Arab could tell everybody about them, and very quickly a crowd of angry Arabs could gather to attack them. On the other hand, this was simply a poor and old Arab who could do them no harm. Should they kill him? Ethics, pity, and Jewish sensitivity won out – and they decided not to harm the man. They continued on their way.

And what about the old man? He had evidently not heard about Jewish ethics and mercy. He immediately abandoned his sheep and ran to a nearby village to tell what he had seen. The leaders of the Arab bands were excited by the news, and they quickly organized for an attack. They gathered their men from the entire area of Chevron, and they began a severe attack on the soldiers of the Palmach.

Soon after, the platoon of thirty-five discovered that they were surrounded by thousands of Arabs. Should they retreat? No. The thought didn't even enter into their heads. Soldiers of the Palmach would never for a moment consider the possibility of running away from a battle. They knew how to fight and they wanted to fulfill their mission at any price. They also knew that the inhabitants of Gush Etzion were waiting for the bulging

knapsacks that they carried on their backs, and they did not want to delay for even one more night.

A fierce battle developed. The situation became continually worse, and from one moment to the next the number of Arabs grew, fighting against the small group of Jews. In the midst of the battle, the commander of the platoon, Dani Moss, decided to climb a tall hill in the area (later given the name the "Hill of Battle"), in order to fight from a high position.

The Arabs could not understand where such a small number of Jews drew such strength. They did not really know how many soldiers there were, and they were sure that the number was very large, since they met very strong opposition in their fight.

In spite of everything, the soldiers were defeated. One after another, they were killed. Those who remained alive took the ammunition from their dead colleagues in order to use it for their courageous fight. In the end, there was no ammunition left. The last bullet had been shot, the last hand grenade had been thrown, and only then did the ring of blood-thirsty Arab fighters close around the hill and climb to the top. The last soldier was still standing at the top, and when he saw that he had nothing left to shoot he lifted a large stone and threw it at his attackers. At least he would make one last attempt... And then he was hit, and he also fell.

With the intervention of the British, the bodies were given to the people of Gush Etzion for burial. But when they attempted to bury them, it became clear that because of the Arab mutilation of the bodies it was very hard to make a positive identification of the soldiers.

(To be continued next week.)

THE WAYS OF THE FATHERS (Pirkei Avot)

Chapter 5 Mishna 13 - by Rabbi Yehuda Shaviv

"There are four types of men: One who says, what is mine is mine and what is yours is yours – this is the common type – others say, this is the trait of Sedom; What is mine is yours and what is yours is mine – this is a simple man; What is mine is yours and what is yours is yours – this is a pious man; What is yours is mine and what is mine is mine – this is an evil man."

The previous Mishna was concerned with giving (gifts to the poor). The other side of the coin of giving is taking. Looking at both sides of the coin, there are four possible arch-types of men: the first two are close to average and the next two are extremes.

The Mishna begins with the simplest example, which is evidently the most common. "What is mine is mine and what is yours is yours." Everybody is concerned only with what belongs to him and is not interested in giving or in taking. According to the first opinion in the Mishna, this approach is the common average, not to be praised or criticized. However, there are some people who see this as "the trait of Sedom." This is a harsh and extreme description, which is evidently written on purpose, in order to actively refute the first opinion.

The people of Sedom are described by the Torah as "evil, who were very sinful to G-d" [Bereishit 13:13]. In the Midrash, the sages were very graphic in their descriptions of the evil ways of Sedom (see Sanhedrin 109, Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer 25). Their evil was so great that the Almighty was forced to overturn the city and transform it into sulfur and brine. And now we have an opinion in the Mishna that somebody who champions the approach of private property is characterized as having the traits of Sedom! Evidently, this approach, what is mine is mine and what is yours is yours, can be the beginning of a slippery slope, leading in the end to the approach of Sedom, where "the hand of a pauper was not supported" [Yechezkel 16:49].

This might lead us to believe that we should praise the next group, whose approach is that "what is mine is yours and what is yours is mine." This cancels out any private property, as if to say, "all of us will have one pocket" [Mishlei 1:14]. However, the Mishna declares that one who feels this way is an "am ha'aretz," an uneducated and simple man. The use of this term should be studied in more detail, since usually "am ha'aretz" refers to a person who does not know the Torah and not to somebody who has a mistaken social or economic outlook. Evidently there is no problem with the spiritual outlook of this person, since he is kind enough to give away his own possessions, but rather with his error in understanding. The Mishna does not explain this in detail. Perhaps the problem is that such an approach might prevent any economic development. If a man is convinced that everything he has belongs to everybody else and everything that is in somebody else's hands belongs to him, there is no longer any economic incentive to create, to do anything, or to increase productivity. This is not good for society, and it may lead to stagnation and a great increase in the number of needy people.

So much for the first two traits. The next two, on the other hand, are extreme approaches, and those who maintain them are indeed given extreme names, a righteous person and an evil one. The fact that the Mishna ends with an evil person corresponds to the second opinion that the first of the four types is typical of Sedom, as then the Mishna completes a cycle, both starting and ending with evil. It is also possible to find a link between the two types in the middle. A person who accepts that "all of us have one pocket" is showing a pious approach in that he gives up his own possessions. While Hillel taught us in Chapter 2 that "a simple man cannot be pious," the fact that he felt he had to say this shows that there is a basic level of similarity between the two traits.

HOLY AND SECULAR

The Kid - by Rabbi Amichai Gordin

In response to various requests, we repeat the full story of the kid that we told in a shorter version last year.

Every day he would utilize some of his time in the pasture for prayer. The solitude and the quiet of the desert gave him the opportunity to leave behind the day-to-day physical life. In the great desert, he could reach spiritual worlds that he had never

encountered before. In the desolate desert his prayers were purified and distilled.

He did not always reach the same peak. Sometimes, the sheep demanded his attention. The shepherd, who never neglected his duty to the sheep, was forced every now and then to give up on his desire for solitude. Time and again, he had to quickly leave the upper spiritual worlds in order to tend to a rebellious sheep. This would bring him great frustration, but work is work.

This was indeed one of the shepherd's frustrating days. First there was a group of sheep that insisted on descending into the nearby wadi. The shepherd followed them in order to bring them back. But unfortunately the colleagues of the wayward sheep refused to be abandoned. In an act of utter loyalty, they also began to descend into the wadi. By the time the shepherd reached the bottom of the wadi, he met the entire flock of sheep there.

It took until the afternoon for the shepherd to bring all the sheep back to where they belonged. The shepherd, who valued his time of prayer very much, started immediately to pray. But he did not manage to begin one word before his neighbor's flock appeared. The neighbor, who was basically a good man, loved to talk. When he saw the neighbor, the shepherd understood that for the next few hours he would not be able to pray at all. And he was right – the talkative neighbor kept him occupied for at least three hours.

When the neighbor finally left, only one hour of daylight remained. But, unfortunately, when things start to go bad they often continue in the same way. The small kid, born only two weeks earlier, had disappeared.

In spite of the great difficulty, the shepherd made sure to keep a very close watch over the young kids. He knew that they were not aware of the dangers in the surrounding area. More than once, they would simply disappear. But on this day, the close watch did not help. Just a few moments of distraction were enough for the kid to disappear. A few minutes later, when the shepherd discovered the loss, he was very frustrated. "Why does this always happen to me?" he thought, "and I was just about to start praying for a little while."

But he said to himself, "I have no choice, work is work." He started to follow the trail of the kid. The walk in the hot sun made him weary. He kept reminding himself not to give up, as his eyes searched for the tiny tracks. He kept going. Only after his entire body was completely soaked with sweat did he finally see the kid.

He quickly caught up with the kid. When he was close enough to pick it up, he saw out of the corner of his vision a very strange and surprising sight. A few dozen meters above him there was a bush that was on fire but was not burned. The shepherd, who was very curious, left the kid and approached the bush.

"And G-d saw that he had turned to look... And He said, Moshe, Moshe. And he replied, Here I am." [Shemot 3:4].

The revelation to Moshe did not come about because of a spiritual uplifting. According to the sages, it was triggered by his kindness to a small kid. They emphasize that revelation is not only a consequence of spiritual purification. It is also based on a deep feeling of responsibility to others. It is true that acts of kindness will necessarily cause us to enter into worldly reality. They will cool our enthusiasm for spiritual matters. But what really matters to G-d is our showing of empathy for others.

Which prayer is of a better quality – that of one who stepped on his colleague's foot in order to take possession of a better seat in a synagogue or that of a man who gave up his comfortable seat in order to avoid a fight? To whom will the Almighty pay more attention – to one who prays the "Ne'illa" with deep conviction in a synagogue or to the brief prayer of a soldier who is on duty at that moment?

THE CHAIN OF HALACHA

In Which Room Should Shabbat Candles be Lit? - by Rabbi Yosef Tzvi Rimon, Rabbi of Southern Alon Shevut and a teacher in Yeshivat Har Etzion

We saw in last week's issue that there are three reasons given for lighting candles on Shabbat: Honoring the Shabbat, Shabbat joy, and tranquility in the home. The reason of peace in the house is the only one mentioned in the Talmud, and for this reason Shabbat candles take precedence over Chanukah candles and wine for Kiddush. According to Sefer Hamanhig (page 145 in the Mossad Harav Kook edition), this reason of peace in the home explains the custom of reciting the Chapter "Bameh madlikin" (What can be used for lighting?) on Shabbat eve, since this explains which types of flame burn well and will therefore lead to a peaceful home.

In spite of the significance of this explanation, the Rambam ignored it and only gave as a reason the aspects of honor and joy. In the laws of Chanukah (4:14), the Rambam does take note of the need for tranquility in the home, in order to explain why Shabbat candles take precedence over Chanukah candles. In this case, at the end of his "Book of Festivals," the Rambam expands on the subject of the importance of peace:

"If one has before him a candle for the home and a Chanukah candle, the candle for the home takes precedence, because of peace in the home. Note that even the holy name of G-d is erased in order to bring peace between a man and his wife. Peace must be a great value, for the entire Torah was given in order to bring peace to the world, as is written, 'Its ways are pleasant ways, and all of its routes lead to peace' [Mishlei 3:17]."

Evidently, the Rambam felt that the original reason for requiring Shabbat candles was for reasons of joy and honoring Shabbat, since the need to maintain tranquility in the home is not directly related to Shabbat. However, once the sages had ruled that candles should be lit because of the need for honor and joy, the decree was given special emphasis since it also led to tranquility in the home. Thus, peace was not the reason for enacting the decree but it remains one of the characteristics of the candle lighting and gives it added importance.

In Which Room Should the Candles Be Lit?

There are halachic consequences of the relationship between maintaining peace and the other two reasons that have been given. RAMA rules, following Or Zarua, that the main requirement is to light the candles at the place where food will be eaten (Hilchot Erev Shabbat 11). This also corresponds to the words of Rashi and Tosafot that we quoted last week, that the main honor is achieved when the candles are lit for the meal (Rashi), and that the main joy can be achieved when food is eaten by the light of the candles (Tosafot). On the other hand, based on the reason of peace in the house, there is no special significance to the place where the people eat. Rather, this reason would imply that candles should be lit in every room, so that nobody will encounter any obstacles, anywhere in the house.

The Magen Avraham indeed writes that candles should be lit in every room, for the reason of maintaining peace in the home (Orach Chaim 263:1). The Mishna Berura agrees (263:2), but he adds that the blessing should be recited only for the candles in the dining room. Why, then, don't we light candles in every room? Two answers can be given:

(1) Nowadays, there are electric lights in all the rooms. There is therefore no danger that somebody will stumble on any obstacle.

(2) Because of the need for peace, it is evidently not necessary to have light in every room of the house (just the opposite – often one person would like to go to bed earlier than the others, and the light might disturb him). It will be sufficient to have light in the hallway with a very small light in the room, to avoid the danger of obstacles. Today, with the existing electric lighting, no room is completely dark, and it is therefore not necessary to light Shabbat candles in every room.

May electric lights serve the purpose of candles in order to fulfill the obligation from the point of view of honoring Shabbat and because of the need for joy? We hope to discuss this in future editions of this bulletin.



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Save the Date for our Annual Dinner
March 22, 2005
At
The Marriott Marquis Hotel