

Parshas Terumah 5772

BABIES IN THE MISHKAN

BLISSFUL IGNORANCE

Flying on a plane can be a surreal experience.

Did you ever consider the fact that this huge craft is constructed primarily from metal? Even discounting the added weight of its human cargo, the sheer tonnage of this vehicle must be astronomical. A penny dropped off of a skyscraper would go hurtling to the ground. Yet this hulk of machinery remains suspended in mid-air, thousands of feet above the earth's surface. What prevents it from a precipitous fall (*rachmana litzlan*)?

The answer has something to do with Bernoulli's Principle and lift and air pressure and what-have-you. Unless one is knowledgeable in the pertinent concepts of physics and aerodynamics, it is very difficult to get a firm grasp on the forces that keep a plane aloft.

And yet, the passengers on a given flight don't seem particularly disturbed by this "*kashye*" (difficulty). Even a child knows what happens to a heavy object dropped out of a window. One would think that people entrapped in a huge metal tube 10,000 feet above the ground would be screaming in fear at such a prospect. Yet, observing our passengers almost always yields the same unlikely scene. Far from a group seized in the throes of panic, most everyone seems relaxed and complacent: people listening to music, engaged in casual reading or even taking a nap – clearly not focused on impending peril. Are they all such experts on gravitational forces? Have they even heard of Bernoulli? So why do they seem so calm and collected?

In truth, this bizarre but commonplace occurrence

could serve as a model for another type of principle, of a different nature altogether: the essential notion of *bitachon* (reliance on Hashem).

SLEEPING LIKE A BABY

This idea is manifest through one of the Temple implements discussed in this week's *parshah*: the *Aron Kodesh* (Holy Ark). This most sacred of vessels was situated in the Holy of Holies of the Sanctuary and contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments. The makeup of the golden *Aron* was somewhat elaborate and ornate – especially when it came to its cover (known as the *kapores*). The lid was festooned with two winged *keruvim* (cherubs) facing each other, each in the likeness of a baby. But this arrangement was not intended for mere decoration; rather, it served as a focal point for the resting of the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) and its communication with Moshe. As the verse states, "And I will commune with you there, and I will speak with you... from between the two *keruvim*" (*Shemos 25:22*).

This certainly appears to be a curious place for Hashem's principle resting place! Why did He specifically choose His abode to be between these childlike figures?

The Vilna Gaon explains that this location was indeed most appropriate for a concentration of the *Shechinah* and reflected on the essential elements that facilitated Hashem's dwelling in Yisrael's midst. In reality, an infant finds itself in a rather precarious situation. It cannot move, talk, calculate – basically, a completely helpless creature when left to its own devices. For its sustenance and very existence, it is wholly and completely reliant on its mother. And yet, this powerless individual remains essentially unconcerned. For the greater part of the day,

לזכר ולעילוי נשמת
משה טוביה בן ר' מרדכי מנחם מנדל הלוי
נפטר ז' אדר

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of
אברהם יהודה בן ישעיה ע"ה, a fellow Jew who passed away with no
relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of his neshamah.

it engages in worry-free sleep, totally unperturbed about where the next meal is coming from or any other of life's perils.

The image of a baby provided by the *keruvim* served as a model for Klal Yisrael, reflecting on the connection they were to strive to cultivate toward their Father in Heaven. Just as a small child instinctively places his entire trust and reliance on his parent – to the extent that he himself remains free of concern – so, too, Yisrael was to “cast their burden on Hashem, and He would provide for them” (cf. *Tehillim 55:23*). Attainment of this level of *bitachon* would forge such closeness with Hashem as to allow for reciprocity – Hashem would rest His Presence amongst His children.

FIRST IN WAR

This notion could help explain another aspect of the *Aron*,

which is mentioned in the Mishnah in *Sotah (8:1)*. The Mishnah quotes from the address delivered to the Jewish soldiers on the cusp of entering into battle:

שָׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתְּם קְרָבִים הַיּוֹם לְמַלְחָמָה עַל אוֹיְבֵיכֶם... אֵל יִרְדָּ לְבַבְכֶם אֵל תִּירָאוּ וְאֵל תַּחֲפוּזוּ... הֵן בָּאִין בְּנִצְחוֹנוֹ שֶׁל בָּשָׂר וְנֶדָם, וְאַתֶּם בָּאִים בְּנִצְחוֹנוֹ שֶׁל מְקוֹם. פְּלִשְׁתִּים בָּאוּ בְּנִצְחוֹנוֹ שֶׁל גְּלִית, מָה הָיָה סוּפוֹ, לְסוּף נָפַל בְּחָרָב וְנִפְּלוּ עִמּוֹ... וְאַתֶּם אֵי אֶתֶם כֵּן. כִּי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם הֵוֹלֵךְ עִמָּכֶם לְהִלָּחֵם לָכֶם וְגו', זֶה מַחֲנֵה הָאָרוֹן:

“Hear, Yisrael, you are drawing near today to wage war against your enemies... let not your hearts be faint, do not fear, and do not be terrified..’ (*Devarim 20:3*). (Your enemies) are coming in reliance on the power of man, while you are backed by the victorious power of Hashem. The Philistines relied on the power of Golyas (“Goliath”); what was their end? Eventually, he fell by the sword, and his army fell with him... But for you, the situation is entirely different. ‘For Hashem your G-d is the One Who accompanies you to battle for you...’ (*ibid. v. 4*). This refers to the camp of the *Aron*.”

The Mishnah refers to the fact that the *Aron* would accompany the Jewish army in battle. According to a number of commentators (cf. *Ramban, Malbim to Devarim 10:5*), it was the golden *Aron*, complete with its attendant *keruvim*, which partook in these military campaigns. Based on the Gaon’s exposition, the inclusion of the *Aron* in this capacity seems most fitting. Expected to march fearlessly to war, the Jewish army was reminded to place their trust in the Almighty by that ultimate symbol of reliance on Divine Power.

The great lesson of the *keruvim* is not limited merely to battle situations. Rather, in all of life’s situations, we are enjoined to recall and rely on Hashem’s guiding Hand at the same time that we recognize our own frailties. Just as a baby has no misconceptions of its own power, but trusts blissfully in its caregivers, so, too, we can ultimately sit back and relax – confident that the “Pilot” of this world has the know-how and ability to successfully guide the ship.

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