



Ohr Somayach Light Lines

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Light Insight

So Close And Yet So Far Away

We perceive G-d in two ways. We believe that He is pre-existent, the Cause, the Creator and the Sustainer of all reality. He is far beyond and above. Ultimately distant. No creature can fathom Him, for what can the painting know of the Painter? He created thought, so no thought can think of Him. He is utterly separate and distant beyond all concept of space and time.

And yet He is very, very near. There is no place or time where He is not. For if He were not there, that place could not exist, that second would never take place. He fills all worlds and encompasses all worlds.

G-d is both transcendent and immanent.

It is the unique privilege of the Jewish People to proclaim these two seemingly opposite aspects of our perception of G-d. Many religions have a concept of G-d being supremely elevated above all, but they falter in their recognition of His imminence. They fail to understand that He is here right now. He sees all, knows the secrets of every living thing and is interested in their every move.

During the *kedusha* prayer, the

Jewish People rise and proclaim like the angels:

“Holy, Holy, Holy, Hashem, Master of Legions. The whole world is filled with His Glory.” And: “Blessed is the Glory of Hashem from His place.”

The first statement depicts our relationship with G-d as immanent — the universe is “filled with His Glory,” no place or time being devoid of Him. The second statement expresses G-d’s transcendence, His utter separation and elevation from this world — “from His place.”

This is the deeper meaning of the words of the Prophet Isaiah: “Peace to afar and to close at hand, says Hashem.” To the righteous who are faithful to these two beliefs, G-d radiates a constant stream of Heavenly influence.

These two aspects express themselves in the awe of Heaven, on the one hand, and the love of G-d on the other. A person is awed by that which is above and beyond him. That which is near at hand doesn’t strike fear into his heart. It’s too close. On the other hand, love only flourishes in closeness. It’s difficult to love when there is no contact.

“And you will bow down from a distance.”

The hidden meaning of this verse in this week’s parsha is that bowing — an expression of fear

and awe — is the natural partner of distance — G-d’s transcendence.

Under The Eye

The star of the movie ‘2001: A Space Odyssey’ was a schizophrenic super-computer called HAL (*Heuristically programmed Algorithmic computer*). At the time, it was said that the name of the computer hinted to the computer giant IBM, because if you take the letters ‘HAL’ and substitute them with the letters which follow them in the alphabet, you get ‘IBM’.

Actually, HAL is a pale plagiarism of the real thing.

Our Sages teach us that when the Torah says “An eye for an eye,” it means that if a person blinds someone, he has to pay financial compensation. It does not mean that they are punished by having his own eyesight removed.

This is hinted to in the Torah. The literal Hebrew translation of the phrase “An eye for an eye” is “An eye under an eye.” Why does the Torah use such an unusual expression here?

In the Hebrew *alef bet*, the letters which follow the letters of the word ‘*ayin*’ (eye) spell ‘*kesef*’ (money).

In other words, if you take the Hebrew letters which are under the word ‘eye’ you get ‘money’.

Therefore, the ‘eye’ which is ‘under’ the ‘eye’ is ‘money.’ Financial reimbursement is the eye which is ‘under’ the eye.

LOVE of the LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel

Peki'in

Many legends surround this village in the north of Israel. New Peki'in was established as a Jewish community in 1955, a short distance from Old Peki'in, a village populated by Druze, Christians and a few Jews.

One tradition is that the Jewish community in Peki'in was never exiled from the Holy Land. Arab riots in 1936 forced the Jews of Peki'in to leave their homes for safer parts of the country and only a few of them later returned.

Another tradition is connected with the ancient synagogue which was restored in 1837. Two carved stones lying sideways were reportedly brought from Jerusalem and legend has it that they fell on their sides as a sign of mourning when the Temple was destroyed.

But certainly the most famous tradition regarding Peki'in is that it houses the cave in which the great Talmudic Sage Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and his son Elazar hid from the Romans for thirteen years, miraculously sustained by a spring of water and a carob tree while totally absorbed in the study of Torah.

Response Line

Thou Shalt Have No Other What?

Daniel Serfer wrote:

I go to school in Vermont where there are not many Jews and I was never "bar mitzvah-ed," however after law school I intend to be Orthodox. Right now I have a question for you: In the Ten Commandments, at least in my English version, G-d says "You shall have no other

Dear Daniel,

This is sort of a mistake in translation. The Hebrew word *elohim* most often refers to G-d, but it is actually a descriptive word meaning "one of power" or "force." Thus, it can also mean an angel (*Genesis 32:29*) or a powerful leader (*Exodus 7:1*).

Other forces seem to exist —

gods before Me." Does that mean that other gods exist?

wind, fire, radioactivity, electro-magnetism, chi, yang, etc. — so the Torah tells us that they have no independent power. G-d is all powerful and all other forces are merely G-d's "agents" and they should not be deified.

The great commentator Rashi explains that the proper translation is not "other gods" but rather "gods of others." That is, anything that others believe in as a god, we should not.

So, you can believe the sun exists, but don't worship it.

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