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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

For the Sake of Heaven

"... When you kindle the lamps, the seven lights shall cast light toward the face of the Menorah."

In the name of Heaven, it seems that almost as much blood as rain has soaked the earth.

Self-righteous fanatics from the Spanish Inquisition to modern day terrorists have invoked the name of Heaven to justify their atrocities. The Nazis believed that their obscene horror-show was the Divine Will. In 1646, after the Civil War in England, Mathew Hopkins, the self-proclaimed "Witchfinder General" led a terrifying purge that relied on testimony extorted by means of "ordeal." This featured torture of the most horrific nature including hot pincers and the thumbscrew.

All in the name of Heaven.

"...When you kindle the lamps, the seven lights shall cast light toward the face of the Menorah."

Rashi tells us: "The face of the Menorah" means the ner ma'aravi, the middle of the seven lights. The wicks of the three flames on either side of the ner ma'aravi must incline and "cast light" toward this central light. If so, why does the Torah say, "the seven lights shall cast light"? It should say," the six lights shall cast light toward the face of the Menorah" – the ner ma'aravi.

Six represents the mundane and the workaday. Seven represents Shabbat; Shabbat is not so much the end of the week as the week's end — its goal and purpose. The six lights pointing toward the central flame teach us to orient all our actions towards the center, towards Heaven.

When the Torah says that all seven lights should cast light on the center, it means that even the center must face the center. It's all too easy to justify anything and everything "in the name of Heaven." We must be sure that the things that we do in the name of Heaven should truly be worthy to bear Heaven's name.

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Questions

- 1. Toward which direction did the wicks of the Menorah burn, and why?
- From what material and in what manner was the Menorah made?
- Moshe was commanded to cleanse the *levi'im* by sprinkling on them "mei chatat." What is "mei chatat"?
- 4. Which three "t'nufot" (wavings) are in the parsha?
- 5. Why did G-d claim the first-born of the Jewish People as His possession?
- 6. Why are the words "Bnei Yisrael" repeated five times in verse 8:19?
- 7. When a *levi* reaches age 50, which functions may he still perform?
- 8. Why was the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini not commanded directly to Moshe?
- 9. What similarity is there between the Menorah and the trumpets?
- 10. What three purposes did trumpet signals serve?

- 11. How many tribes marched between the Gershon-Merari detachment and that of Kehat? How was the time differential used?
- 12. The tribe of Dan, who traveled last, was called "the gatherer of all the camps." What did they gather?
- 13. When the Jewish People entered the Land, who took temporary possession of Jericho?
- 14. Which aron is referred to in verse 10:33?
- 15. Which two topics are out of chronological order in the parsha?
- 16. Which tastes did the manna not offer, and why not?
- 17. Moshe was commanded to choose 70 elders to help him lead the Jewish People. What happened to the elders who led the Jewish People in Egypt?
- 18. Whom did Moshe choose as elders?
- 19. What was the prophecy of Eldad and Medad?
- 20. Why did Miriam merit to have the people wait for her?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Answers

- 1. 8:2 They leaned toward the middle wick so people wouldn't say that the Menorah was lit for its light.
- 2. 8:4 It was made from one solid piece of hammered gold.
- 3. 8:7 Water containing ashes of the para aduma.
- 4. 8:11 The wavings of Kehat, Gershon and Merari.
- 5. 8:17 Because in Egypt He spared them during *makat* bechorot.
- 6. 8:19 To show G-d's love for them.
- 7. 8:25 Closing the courtyard gates of the Mishkan and Beit Hamikdash; singing during the avoda; loading the wagons to transport the Mishkan.
- 8. 9:7 The people who asked about it were rewarded by being the catalyst for the teaching of this mitzvah.
- 9. 8:4, 10:2 They were each made from a single, solid block.
- 10. 10:2-7 Announcement of the gathering of Bnei Yisrael, the gathering of the *nesi'im*, and the beginning of a move of the encampment.

- 11. 10:17-21 Three: Reuven, Shimon and Gad. In the meantime Gershon and Merari set up the Mishkan.
- 12. 10:25 They gathered and returned things lost by the other tribes.
- 13. 10:32 The children of Yitro.
- 14. 10:33 The aron which held the broken pieces of the first tablets, that was taken to the battlefront.
- 15. 9:1, 10:35,36 The Pesach sacrifice, and the traveling of the aron.
- 16. 11:5 Cucumbers, melons, leeks, onion and garlic these are harmful to nursing women.
- 17. 11:16 They were consumed in the fire at Taverah (11:3).
- 18. 11:16 People who were supervisors in Egypt and had pity on Bnei Yisrael at risk to themselves.
- 19. 11:28 "Moshe will die and Yehoshua will lead the Jewish People into the Land."
- 20. 12:15 Because she waited for Moshe when he was cast into the river.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Aharon is taught the method for kindling the Menorah. Moshe sanctifies the *levi'im* to work in the Mishkan. They replace the firstborn, who were disqualified after sinning through the golden calf. The *levi'im* are commanded that after five years of training they are to serve in the Mishkan from ages 30 to 50. Afterwards, they are to engage in less strenuous work.

One year after the Exodus from Egypt, Hashem commands Moshe concerning the *korban* Pesach. Those ineligible for this offering request a remedy, and the mitzvah of *Pesach Sheini* — allowing them a "second chance" to offer the *korban* Pesach, one month later — is detailed. Miraculous clouds that hover near the Mishkan signal when to travel and when to camp. Two silver trumpets summon the princes or the entire nation for announcements. The trumpets also signal travel plans, war or festivals. The order in which the tribes march is specified.

Moshe invites his father-in-law, Yitro, to join the Jewish People, but Yitro returns to Midian. At the instigation of the *eruv rav* – the mixed Egyptian multitude who joined the Jewish People in the Exodus – some people complain about the manna. Moshe protests that he is unable to govern the nation alone. Hashem tells him to select 70 elders, the first Sanhedrin, to assist him, and informs him that the people will be given meat until they will be sickened by it. Two candidates for the group of elders prophesy beyond their mandate, foretelling that Yehoshua instead of Moshe will bring the people to Canaan. Some protest, including Yehoshua, but Moshe is pleased that others have become prophets. Hashem sends an incessant supply of quail for those who complained that they lacked meat. A plague punishes those who complained.

Miriam tries to make a constructive remark to Aharon, which also implies that Moshe is only like other prophets. Hashem explains that Moshe's prophecy is superior to that of any other prophet and punishes Miriam with *tzara'at*, as if she had gossiped about her brother. (Because Miriam is so righteous, she is held to an incredibly high standard.) Moshe prays for Miriam to be healed, and the nation waits until she is cured before traveling.

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TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Bava Metzia 103-109

Taking the Extra Step

"Rabbi Yochanan said that there is a special reward for walking a farther distance to a Beit Knesset (Synagogue)."

Rabbi Yochanan and Rav have differing views regarding the intent of the blessing in the Torah: "Blessed are you in the city..." (Devarim 28:3)

Rav says that this refers to having a Beit Knesset nearby in the city (the Maharsha points that in the time of the *gemara*, it was the general practice that the Beit Knesset would be outside of the city). Rabbi Yochanan, however, does not consider this a blessing. Having a Beit Knesset inside the city is not necessarily better, according to him, since walking to a Beit Knesset that is further away from home would award the walker with special reward called "*sachar pesiot*" — "reward for steps." Rashi writes that we find in Masechet Sotah 22a that Rabbi Yochanan was taught this concept by a widow. She said to him rhetorically: "Don't I receive more reward if there is a Beit Knesset in my neighborhood, but I nevertheless walk to your Beit Midrash to pray?"

Two points to ponder: It seems that Rav does not adhere to this concept, although the *gemara* does not explicitly state that there is a dispute in this matter. In addition, it would appear to be helpful to understand if the concept of "sachar pesiot" is connected in any way to the Mishna in Avot (5:21): "L'fum tza'ara agra" — "According to the amount of difficulty is the reward." It would seem that the Mishna in Avot applies to any mitzvah activity, whereas it appears that special reward of "extra steps" is taught specifically in relationship to extra walking to a house of prayer.

Bava Metzia 107a

Is It Fate?

Rabbi Chanina said, "Everything is in the hand of Heaven, except for cold and hot."

The source for this teaching is cited by Rabbi Chanina as a verse in Proverbs (22:5): "Cold and heat is in the troubled path, and one who guards his health will keep distance from them." From this he sees that it is within a person's ability to avoid cold and heat, and sicknesses that may result from exposure to extreme temperatures in winter and summer.

This teaching by Rabbi Chanina is quoted on our *daf* to explain why Rabbi Chanina interpreted *another* verse as referring to sicknesses caused by cold and heat: "And Hashem will remove all illness from you, and all of the evil diseases of Egypt that you knew; He will not put them on you, but He will lay them upon all of your enemies." (Devarim 7:15)

In this chapter, Moshe Rabbeinu relates to the entire Jewish People the numerous ways in which they will be immensely blessed by Hashem if they observe the way of the Torah when they enter the Land of Israel very soon. A number of interpretations are offered in the *gemara* to explain the meaning of "removing all illnesses." For example, Rav's interpretation is that the verse refers to Divine removal of the *ayin hara* ("evil eye"), in accordance with his personal experience (see Rashi) and statement that: "Nine-nine people die from *ayin hara*, while one dies from the way of the world." (See Tosefot, who asks about the descendants of Yosef, about whom it is taught elsewhere that they are beyond the reach of the *ayin hara* and should therefore have had longer life spans but did not.)

Rabbi Chanina, on the other hand, teaches that the illnesses in the verse refers to Hashem's blessing the nation by removing the maladies caused by exposure to extreme temperatures that normally promote illnesses in a natural manner.

Tosefot quotes another well-known teaching of our Sages: "Everything is in the hands of Heaven, except the fear (awe) of Heaven." It would seem that this statement does not agree with the teaching of Rabbi Chanina. Tosefot clarifies, however, that Rabbi Chanina is speaking about things that might happen to people, and occur to those who are not careful to dress warmly when the temperature drops, or are not prudent about staying in the shade with plenty of water during a heat-wave. The other statement that everything is controlled and determined by Hashem except for "the fear of Heaven" deals with human character traits, and not specific events or circumstances. Regarding "yirat Shamayim" — the fear and awe of Hashem — a person has free-will to choose whether to do what is good or what is bad, what is right or what is wrong. A person's choice to act correctly and "choose life" is free choice, and is not fatefully predetermined.

Bava Metzia 107b

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

KIDDUSH LEVANAH (PART 2)

Under the Light of the Silvery Moon

"My walk on the moon lasted three days. My walk with G-d will last forever." Charles Duke - Lunar Module Pilot, Apollo 16

Each month, normally on Motzei Shabbat, the congregation goes outside and recites Kiddush Levanah together. Why on Motzei Shabbat? Tractate Sofrim (20:1) teaches that Kiddush Levanah should be recited in a state of joy and while wearing nice clothing in respect for the Shechinah. One reason why Kiddush Levanah needs to be said with joy is that is a reminder of the intense joy of the celebrations that would take place monthly in the Holy Temple. Tractate Sofrim suggests that Motzei Shabbat is the

optimal time to recite Kiddush Levanah because we are still basking in the delights of Shabbat and dressed in our Shabbat clothing.

There is another reason given by the Rabbis for why Motzei Shabbat is considered to be the most auspicious time to recite Kiddush Levanah. Our Sages teach that the Holy Temple was destroyed on Motzei Shabbat. Within Kiddush Levanah we pray for the Mashiach to come and that the Holy Temple be rebuilt speedily, in our day. Therefore, it is apt to be seech Hashem to rebuild the Temple at the very time of the week when it was destroyed.

However, the Vilna Gaon (Maaseh Rav 159) felt that Kiddush Levanah should be recited at the first opportunity available, and that one should not wait until Motzei Shabbat. This is because of the principle of not passing up the opportunity to do a Mitzvah (Yevamot 39a). Therefore, the practice of those who follow the Vilna Gaon's ruling is to recite Kiddush Levanah as soon as it is permissible to do so. According to all opinions, Kiddush Levanah can be recited up to the fifteenth day of the month.

When is the first possible opportunity? The Shulchan Aruch rules (Orach Chaim 426:4) that Kiddush Levanah should be recited only after seven days from what is called the molad. The molad is the approximate time when the moon is closest to the sun in the sky and cannot be seen. The Sephardim follow the Shulchan Aruch's ruling.

The Ashkenazic authorities rule that Kiddush Levanah can be recited as soon as three days after the molad (Rema, ibid.) Many years ago, I heard an interesting explanation for the difference between these two approaches. Historically, the Ashkenazic communities were established in Central and Northern Europe. For much of the year, weather conditions were uncertain, and due to an abundance of cloud cover it was often difficult to see the moon clearly enough to recite Kiddush Levanah. Subsequently, the Halachic authorities ruled that once the new moon was big enough to be clearly visible, it was permissible to recite Kiddush Levanah. In that way, extra, vital days are added to the time period for the blessing, so that the opportunity to recite Kiddush Levanah is not lost.

The Sephardic communities, on the other hand, were mostly based around the Middle East, where clear skies are the norm for most of the year. Since there was no real concern that the moon may not be seen if there were only a week to recite Kiddush Levanah, the Sephardic authorities ruled that it is better to wait until the moon is fuller. Interestingly enough, despite being located in northern Europe, the Chassidim also follow the opinion of the Shulchan Aruch and normally wait until seven days have passed before reciting Kiddush Levanah. One of the reasons offered for the Chassidic custom, despite often inclement weather conditions, is that the Shulchan Aruch's ruling is based on Kabbalistic sources (Beit Yosef ibid.), which fits in with the general approach of the Chassidim in their Avodat Hashem.

In the Polish town of Piotrkow on Yom Kippur of 1941 all the shuls had been declared illegal by the Germans. But, to whatever extent possible, the Jews attempted to come together and to create a semblance of the mood of Yom Kippur. Without warning, however, before the conclusion of the holy day, German soldiers appeared out of nowhere and ordered several dozen Jews to assemble. They were ordered to board a truck and were driven to a clearing in a nearby forest. They were made to wait there for hours, cruelly extending their Yom Kippur fast. Finally, they were ordered to disembark and to run in a single file through a gauntlet of SS guards armed with clubs, whips, and rifles. These Jews were then subjected to horrible and lengthy beatings. Bloodied and broken, many barely clinging to life, they were told to climb back onto the truck, which would take them back to Piotrkow.

On their way back, an otherworldly thing happened. One of the physically broken Jews looked up into the nighttime sky and shouted, "Yidden [Jews]! Kiddush Levanah!" Overcoming pain, hunger, and thirst, the Jews aboard the truck began to recite Kiddush Levanah, the customary conclusion of Yom Kippur, with intensity and, perhaps, true joy. That night, under a canopy of shimmering stars, it was so much more than Kiddush Levanah – sanctifying the new moon. It was Kiddush LeShem Shamayim – a sanctification of Hashem's Name.

Regardless of whether one waits until after three days or seven days, it is clear that Kiddush Levanah is an awesome moment of ethereal connection. Each month we focus on an essential message of Kiddush Levanah, which is the inalienable fact that the world was created and is constantly sustained by Hashem.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

LIFT & WAVE

A few weeks ago, I received an inquiry from my friend and noted author Rabbi Shmuel Botnick. My esteemed interlocuter wanted to know about the difference between the words terumah and tenufah. Both of these terms are used in reference to the act of "waving" ritual sacrifices, but do these two words refer to the exact same act or is there some nuance between them that makes them not synonyms? This question and more will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The Mishnah (Menachot 5:6) implies that of the two terms terumah and tenufah, one refers to a vertical movement (up-down) and one means horizontal movement (back-forth). Maimonides' son Rabbi Avraham Maimuni writes in his commentary to the Torah (to Ex. 29:24) that tenufah itself means waving back-and-forth, as well as up-and-down. This seems to be based on the idea that in practice, whatever sacrifices require tenufah also require terumah, as mentioned above, so ultimately tenufah entails waving along both axes. However, this understanding does not really help us define the words tenufah and terumah vis-à-vis each other.

Rashi (to Ex. 29:26-27, Lev. 7:34, 10:15) writes that terumah refers to up-down waving, while tenufah means back-forth waving. Ibn Ezra (long commentary to Ex. 29:27) also seems to agree with this assessment. Rashi (to Ex. 29:24, following Menachot 62a) further elaborates on the meaning of these two acts of waving: the horizontal movement of tenufah in the various cardinal directions (north, south, east, and west) alludes to the fact that all four directions of the world belong to Hashem, while the vertical movement of terumah alludes to the notion that Hashem's sovereignty applies to the Heavens and the Earth. Rashi (there) also explains that tenufah wards off punishments and "bad winds" that move along the horizontal axis, while the vertical movement of terumah wards off "bad dew/rains" which descend from above.

Peirush HaRokeach and Baal HaTurim (to Lev. 7:30) find an allusion to this paradigm by noting that in the pericope concerning the peace-offering (Lev. 7:28–38), inflections of the word tenufah appear four times (technically, three times but the extraneous HEY on one those instances is counted as an

extra appearance) and inflections of the word terumah appear twice. This hints to the idea that tenufah entails waving something in the four lateral directions, while terumah involves simply waving something in two directions (up and down).

Another approach may be gleaned from Rabbi Yosef Bechor Shor (to Ex. 29:24), who writes that terumah and tenufah are synonyms, but that the Torah uses the two terms in tandem in order to avoid being repetitive. According to him, tenufah is said about the breast and terumah is said about the thigh as a mere matter of linguistic elegance, but that there is no real deeper significance in these word choices.

Rabbi Shmuel Botnick noted in his original question that Targum Onkelos (to Ex. 29:24) actually uses an Aramaic cognate of terumah when translating the Biblical Hebrew term tenufah said regarding the ram of the milluim. This would mean that tenufah means "elevating/lifting," not "waving horizontally." Yet, specifically regarding that passage, Rabbi Yaakov Zev Lev in Me'at Tzari (to Ex. 29:24) notes that Targum Onkelos disagrees with Rashi's definition of tenufah as back-and-forth, instead defining tenufah as referring to up-and-down, just like he would define terumah. Although it might be tempting to say that Targum Onkelos simply follows Rabbi Yosef Bechor Shor in seeing tenufah and terumah as synonymous, the truth is that Rabbi Lev (to Ex. 29:27) points out that Onkelos translates the word terumah said about the millium ram's thigh as meaning "separating," not as "lifting."

Terumah is also the name of a certain tithe given the Kohen. How much from one's produce must one give for this tithe? The Mishnah (Terumot 4:3) states that the generous person will give one-fortieth, the average person will give one-fiftieth, and the stingy person will give one-sixtieth. In line with the average position on this sliding scale, the Zohar (Korach 179a), Maimonides (in his commentary to the Mishnah there), and Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah #507) explain that the very word terumah can be exegetically parsed as a portmanteau of the phrase trei mi'meah (literally, "two from one-hundred," which equals one-fiftieth).

TAAMEI HAMITZVOS

Reasons behind the Mitzvos

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

"Study improves the quality of the act and completes it, and a mitzvah is more beautiful when it emerges from someone who understands its significance." (Meiri, Bava Kama 17a)

The Nazir Mitzvos #368-377 (Bamidbar ch. 6)

SAFEGUARDS AGAINST TEMPTATION

A nazir is someone who vows to abstain from wine out of the concern that he may become intoxicated and engage in immoral behavior. Being the Creator of mankind and knowing their nature, Hashem understood that a nazir who avoids wine but eats grape products will eventually come to drink wine as well. He therefore said to Moshe: "Go tell the Jewish people the laws of the nazir." In addition to the

mitzvah to avoid all grape products, these laws include prohibitions against cutting hair and coming into contact with a corpse (*Shemos Rabbah* 16:2), which will be explained below.

The Torah's insightful instructions to the nazir are a model for other areas of struggle against the evil inclination. In particular, the Sages see the instruction to avoid harmless grape products in order to avoid wine as an allusion to how one must distance himself from sexual immorality by avoiding even that which is essentially harmless and permitted if there is any chance that it may lead to sin (*Shemos Rabbah* ibid.). No being of flesh and blood cannot rely on himself to withstand temptation; he must keep far away.

A CROWN OF HAIR

The Midrash explains that the nazir cannot cut his hair because a haircut beautifies a person and allowing hair to grow wild makes a person feel disheveled and downcast. Hashem said: "Since this person has accepted upon himself to become a nazir in order to avoid immorality, let him also grow his hair to prevent his evil inclination from becoming aroused and leaping upon him" (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 10:10). In other words, having a good appearance makes a person attractive and inflates his pride, which encourages immorality. Hashem advises the nazir to counteract this by going to the other extreme and letting his hair grow wild.

This does not mean that a nazir actually feels disheveled and downcast. The Torah calls a nazir's hair "the crown of his God." A nazir replaces the pride of his body with the true pride of subjugating his body to Hashem's kingship, so he wears Hashem's crown. *Ibn Ezra* remarks: "Know that all people are slaves to earthly desires. The only true king, who has a majestic crown on his head, is someone who is free from the subjugation of earthly desires." The Kabbalists speak at length about the holiness of a nazir's hair and the reason why Shimshon's nazirite hair gave him Divine strength. Thus, by growing his hair, the nazir humbles his body but elevates his soul.

THE NAZIR'S HOLINESS

The Torah calls the nazir "holy," and the Sages add, "like an angel (Shemos Rabbah 16:2)." Every day the nazir keeps his vow, he becomes holier and holier (Alshich). By informing the nazir of his great holiness, the Torah elevates him and frees him from feeling any bitterness over his abstinence, which would otherwise cause him to succumb. A nazir is meant to be holy in all regards, distancing himself from the pulls of society and freeing himself to contemplate on Hashem. Since a nazir is a holy servant of Hashem, he may not sully their purity even in order to bury their closest relatives, just like a Kohen Gadol (Alshich and Rav Hirsch). The Torah refers to the nazir-vow as a peleh (wonder) because it is extraordinary for a person to curb his passions and be different from the rest of society (Rabbeinu Chaim Paltiel).

All Jews share the above qualities of the nazir to some extent. Each mitzvah restricts our bodies and guides our souls to connect with Hashem, thereby imbuing us with holiness that accumulates throughout our lifetimes. We therefore bless Hashem before the performance of a mitzvah, "Who made us holy through His commandments."

THE NAZIR'S OFFERINGS

The Torah commands the nazir to bring a sin-offering on the day he completes the period he set for himself in his nazir vow. Is being holy a sin? Sefer HaChinuch explains: A person is a soul that is housed in a body, and Hashem expects a person to take care of his "house" so that his soul can function at its best. Pulling toward holiness afflicts the body; pulling toward sensual drives afflicts the soul. Although the nazir deemed it necessary to afflict his body through abstinence, perhaps he went too far, and for this he must bring a sin-offering.

Alternatively, *Ramban* suggests that once a nazir has conducted himself with purity, it is considered sinful for him to descend back to the impurity of normal life. One might ask: What did the nazir gain by acting like an angel and then reverting to being exactly as he was before? We may explain based on the well-known idea that in order to correct a negative character trait, a person has to conduct himself in the opposite extreme for some time, and then he should conduct himself in a balanced manner (*Rambam*, *De'os* 2:2). So too here, by practicing abstinence, the nazir rectifies his character, and he is then capable of returning to regular conduct without fear of sin.

In total, the nazir must bring three offerings, an *olah* offering that is entirely incinerated on the altar, a *chatas* sin-offering, and a *shelamim* offering that is partly eaten by the owner, partly eaten by the Kohanim, and partly offered on the altar. We may suggest that these represent the three stages of the nazir's process: Firstly, during the period of his vow, the nazir dedicates himself to Hashem entirely like the *olah*. Then he descends back to normal life, for which he must bring a sin-offering. Now that he has attained a perfect balance between his body and soul, he celebrates with a *shelamim* that is shared by the altar, the Kohanim, and the owners, which allude to his now balanced character.

The nazir shaves his sacred hair and adds it to the fire beneath the pot of *shelamim*. He does not cast away his hair since that would suggest that he is rejecting his abstinence (*Sifsei Kohen*, cited in *Otzar HaMidrashim*). Instead, he includes the sacred hair in the offering of celebration over his newfound holiness. By acting like an angel, he has revealed the angel within.

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