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KERUVIM: OF PARADISE AND THE PAROCHET

By *Rabbi Shaya First*

Parashat Pekudei brings the Torah's main discussion of the construction of the Mishkan to a conclusion. At this point in time, let us go back for a moment to focus on one of the Mishkan's central components: the Keruvim. The two Keruvim, magnificent, golden, winged creatures adorning the top of the Aron Kodesh, at the spiritual epicenter of the Mishkan, were two of the most majestic items in the Mishkan, but at the same time, it seems most strange and bizarre. What do they represent? What critical role do they play in the Mishkan? Much ink has been spilled over how we are to square God's command to construct the Keruvim with the Torah's general abhorrence of statues and graven images; the fact that the Torah nevertheless condoned and even mandated their construction in spite of this concern only highlights their significance, and indicates that they must have conveyed a potent and powerful message. So what was the message they carried?

One approach, taken by Rambam in Moreh Nevuchim (3:45), is that the Keruvim are a testament to the existence of angels. Rambam asserts that the existence of angels is a fundamental Jewish belief, and to remind us of this the Torah placed Keruvim at the center of the Mishkan. The Keruvim are thus not intended to represent God himself, but rather to remind us that angels do exist. In fact, Rambam writes that the reason there are two Keruvim is to make sure we realize that they are not meant to be images of God himself, as God is unique and singular. Similarly, Rambam writes that the Keruvim were made to face towards the Aron to show they were subservient beings, loyal only to God.

A second approach to the Keruvim is advocated by Ramban (Shemot 25:21 s.v. *Ve'El Ha'Aron Titeim Et Ha'Eidut*). He writes that the Keruvim are designed to mimic God's divine chariot, the Merkavah. As described by Yechezkel, God's chariot has various animal, human, and angelic figures holding it up, including Keruvim, and each one of those characters has a place in the Mishkan's construction. According to this approach, the Keruvim's purpose is to highlight the message that the Aron is the 'chariot' designed to carry God's divine presence into this world. This explanation fits in well with the Ramban's general view of the Mishkan (in contrast to the view of many other Biblical commentators), namely that its primary purpose is to serve as a conduit for God's presence to enter this world.

Another approach is taken by the Gemara (Bava Batra 99a), which famously points out what appears to be a contradiction between two verses describing the Keruvim in the Holy of Holies. One verse writes that the Keruvim would face one another, whereas the other indicates they faced towards the walls of the Kodesh HaKodashim, away from one another. The Gemara resolves this apparent contradiction by saying that in times where the Jews were acting in accordance with God's will, the Keruvim would face one another, while in times in which Bnei Yisrael strayed from the Torah, the Keruvim's faces would face apart. According to this, the Keruvim were not images of G-d, but were designed to metaphorically demonstrate the love that G-d has towards the Jewish people in good times. Rabbenu Bachya (Shemot 25:18 s.v. *Ve'Asita Shenayim Keruvim Zahav*) writes that the two faces of the Keruvim may have been that of a father and a son, to indicate the familial love God and the Jewish people have for one another. According to other Midrashim, the two faces were those of a husband and wife, to demonstrate the mutual love and shared mission between God and his nation.

It is interesting to note the sole place in which the Keruvim appear outside the context of the Mishkan and Batei Mikdash: as guardians to the entrance of Gan Eden (BeReishit 3:24). Rav Menachem Leibtag points out that the roles and descriptions of the Keruvim in that context provide a bizarre contrast with their role in the Mishkan. The Keruvim guarding Gan Eden are grouped together with the intimidating "Lahat HaCherev HaMithapechet," "The sharpness of the rotating sword" (ibid.), and Rashi (ibid. s.v. *Et HaKeruvim*) points out that those Keruvim were angels of destruction. The Chizkuni (ibid. s.v. *VaYegareish Et Ha'Adam*) writes that they were intimidating figures, designed to scare all who beheld them.

These menacing Keruvim stand in stark contrast to the beautiful and loving picture of the Keruvim on display in the Mishkan. How can one reconcile these conflicting images of the Keruvim, and why are the guardians of Gan Eden appearing in the Mishkan?

The answer to these questions brings into focus the true role and potential of the Mishkan. The Mishkan had the ability to act as a conduit to rectify man's original banishment from Gan Eden. By entering the Mishkan and utilizing it to become closer to their Creator, people could transform the frightening Keruvim into creatures of love; in fact, Rabbeinu Bachya (BeReishit 3:24 s.v. *Et HaKeruvim Ve'Eit Lahat HaCherev HaMitHapechet*) writes that a person has the power, through fulfilling Mitzvot, to overcome the guardians to Gan Eden and remove the impediments standing between him and his Creator. The Mishkan is one manifestation of exactly that idea.

All too often, people are trained as children to think of Hashem as a God of fire and brimstone, an intimidating, punishing God, a God who banished mankind from paradise, never to return. But the Keruvim remind us that that is not the case. They remind us of the love Hashem has for us, that of a father and son or a husband and wife. The Keruvim remind us how we can return to the original intimate status which we once held with God. The gates to the

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close-ness of Gan Eden were never locked. We just have to climb through it.

Bookends of Commitment

By Ezra Sepowitz ('20)

Rav Chizkiyahu Ben Manoach (known as the Chizkuni), who lived in France during the late 13th century, notes at the beginning of Parashat Shemot (1:1 s.v. *Ve'Eileh Shemot*) that the word "*Ve'Eileh*", "And these" (Shemot 1:1), is an odd way to begin a Sefer of Chumash. Typically, a Vav is a conjunction; it conjoins two clauses or sentences. Chizkuni claims that the Vav implies that the first Pasuk in Shemot must be "*MeChuberet LeMa'alah She'Amar*", "Connected to what was previously stated [in Sefer BeReishit]."

He explains that this Pasuk is continuing the Torah's discussion of Yoseif's merit to live to see all of Ephraim's grandchildren and many of Menashe's grandchildren (BeReishit 50:23). The conjunction between the names of Bnei Yisrael who went to down to Egypt with Yaakov and Yoseif's great-grandchildren applies Hashem's covenant with Avraham (that after four hundred years of slavery Bnei Yisrael will return to Eretz Kena'an with great wealth and numerous in population like the stars in the sky; BeReishit 15:5-21) to Yoseif. Chizkuni continues and points out that Rashi (Shemot 1:1 s.v. *Ve'Eileh Shemot*) states that each star has a name, not merely an identifying number. So too, each member of Klal Yisrael is not just a number, but rather an individual whom Hashem guards and protects along each step of his or her journey. The Torah does not merely number the seventy people who came down to Egypt, but also names them. Yoseif observed that each Jew had a name in the eyes of God, and despite the bleak future that lay ahead in Egypt, Hashem accompanied Bnei Yisrael every step of the way.

The very last Pasuk of Parashat Pekudei (Shemot 40:38) states: "*Ki Anan Hashem Al HaMishkan Yomam, Ve'Eish Tihyeh Layla Bo, Le'Einei Kol Beit Yisrael BeChol Maseihem*", "For the cloud of God would be upon the Tabernacle by day and fire would be upon it at night, before the eyes of all the House of Israel in all their journeys." Chizkuni (ibid. s.v. *Le'Einei Kol Beit Yisrael BeChol Maseihem*) cites Rashi's commentary on the Pasuk (ibid.) that each encampment marked the conclusion of one journey and preparation for the next journey.

Chizkuni emphasizes that each journey was different for Bnei Yisrael. At Rephidim, Bnei Yisrael were quarrelling with Moshe Rabbeinu. However, at Har Sinai, Bnei Yisrael were, as Rashi states, (Shemot 19:2 s.v. *Va'Yichan Sham Yisrael*) "*Ke'Ish Echad, BeLeiv Echad*", "As one man, with one heart." Rashi further notes (ibid. s.v. *Va'Yisru Mei'Rephidim*) that Bnei Yisrael were constantly undergoing Teshuvah and emotionally fluctuating from one location to the next throughout their journey in the Midbar. Therefore, it is fitting for Sefer Shemot to begin and end by describing Hashem's unwavering commitment to His beloved people.

Furthermore, Rabbeinu Bachya (Introduction to Parashat Pekudei) says that the Parashah begins with the word "*Eileh*", "These" (Shemot 38:21), to signify Bnei Yisrael's Teshuvah recorded in Parashat Ki Tisa after the episode of the Eigel

HaZahav, in which they stated, "*Eileh Elohechah Yisrael*", "This is your god, O Israel" (32:4) in reference to an idol. Rabbeinu Bachya then states (38:21 s.v. *Eileh Fekudei*) that "*Mishkan Ha'Eidut*", "The Tabernacle of Testimony" (38:21), signifies the Torah itself, as expressed in Tanchuma Pekudei 4. Rabbeinu Bachya expounds upon the Midrash with a parable: a king had a daughter for whom he built a palace. He made her dwell in the palace, protected by seven curtains. The king stated that whoever enters the palace and shames her shames the king as well. Similarly, the Mishkan is a testimony to Bnei Yisrael's faithful adherence to the Torah as well as to God. Although there may be times where Bnei Yisrael are without a leader like Moshe, and Hashem's presence may not be as tangible as it once was, Bnei Yisrael must remain faithful to the Torah, for that is the permanent dwelling place of Hashem. Throughout the generations, the Jewish people have been isolated and oppressed; many times, God's presence seemed to have vanished. However, the righteous and faithful cling to the Torah and understand that the Tree of Life is God's permanent dwelling place and it will never be lost. May we all be Zocheh to take this message to heart and continue to demonstrate unwavering faith in Hashem and His Torah.

Building a Home of Honesty

By Boaz Kapitanker ('21)

Parashat Pekudei discusses all the intricate details of the construction of the Mishkan. However, before the Torah discusses the process, it discusses the bookkeeping of the Mishkan. Why exactly does the Torah sidetrack here, and what can we learn from it?

Many suggest that this was just a way to show how beloved the Mishkan was. However, Chazal disagree. Chazal say that the accounting serves as a way to document each donation. This would also serve as a way to hold public officials accountable in the future.

Seforno (Shemot 38:24 s.v. *Kol HaZahav*) suggests that these records were kept to prove that the cost Shlomo HaMelech spent to build the Beit Hamikdash was greater the cost of the Mishkan. The Or HaChaim (ibid. s.v. *Kol HaZahav*) takes a completely different approach, saying that most things do not receive a Berachah when they are counted; however, because the items counted in this Parashah are from the Mishkan and God dwells there, they are blessed. Normally Hashem is opposed to direct counts, but in this case He is fine with an enumeration, as each material contributed to the Berachot of the Mishkan.

The Midrash states that Moshe Rabbeinu is an active, heroic character in the story of the building of the Mishkan. He previously convinced Hashem to keep us alive after the Cheit Ha'Eigel and give us the instructions to build the Mishkan. He also gave Bnei Yisrael the instructions for the construction of the Mishkan as told to him by Hashem, and even erected it by himself. Moshe's actions were certainly necessary and commendable, and his role in the construction itself was vital. But why did he specifically request the records of the donations for the Mishkan, read them aloud, and list exactly how much money was spent on each part of the Mishkan?

The Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 51:6) explains that Bnei Yisrael were suspicious that Moshe was stealing their money. It seems strange that the man who spoke with God face to face was being accused of corporate fraud. Moshe was loved by most of the people, and if a few individuals accused him of stealing money, why would

we care? Even more so, why would Moshe Rabbeinu go to the trouble of reading out the records just to clear his name?

The Bach in Yoreh Dei'ah derives a Halachah from this: even if a charity collector is trusted by his community, he still should give a transparent report of how every cent was spent. Moshe was obviously trusted by the vast majority of Bnei Yisrael, yet he felt that he had to account for every donation. The main point we can learn from this is that one who is collecting charity should go above and beyond to clear his or her name from even the smallest of suspicions, so that the collector can stay trustworthy and serve their community to the fullest extent.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON THE RABBI DISCOVERED THE ERUV WAS BROKEN: AN IMPORTANT CASE STUDY FOR JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADERS

By Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Upon driving myself and children home from an idyllic winter break bowling expedition, I noticed something very disturbing about our community Eruv: one of the poles along the Eruv route was severely damaged. I wondered if this impacted the Eruv and safely parked near the scene of the broken pole to investigate. Lo and behold, there was a serious problem with our Eruv. Approximately six feet of the bottom of the Lechi was missing at this important location in the Eruv, and only two and a half hours remained until Shabbat. My mind began to race with calculations as to how to handle the situation. As a first step, I called the administrator of our Eruv in greater Teaneck, New Jersey Rav Micha Shotkin. I know Rav Shotkin is a very busy man who services dozens of Eruvin in the region. I wondered if he would be able to help me rescue our Eruv.

Fortunately, Rav Shotkin "happened" (I view this as Siyata DiShmaya) to be located only fifteen minutes away, on the road near Paramus. He quickly changed course and made his way to Teaneck. Rav Shotkin made the repair rapidly and efficiently, and the Eruv was up and ready for Shabbat. Had I not noticed the damaged pole and gone to investigate, thousands of Jews would have relied on a subpar Eruv that Shabbat.

Let us analyze this situation and glean some vital lessons for Eruv maintenance:

Rabbinic Involvement with Eruv Maintenance

I currently advise more than seventy communities in regard to their Eruvin and have thirty years of experience dealing with community Eruvin. One lesson I have seen repeatedly in community after community is that the quality of a community's Eruv depends a great deal on the involvement of the local Rabbanim. Communities where the local Rabbi pays little or no attention to the Eruv are almost always in poor quality and often completely disqualified or marginally acceptable Eruvin at best. On the other hand, the Eruvin in communities where the Rabbanim are actively involved, such as Cherry Hill, New Jersey and Sharon, Massachusetts, are maintained at a high level.

Community Rabbanim are often extremely busy tending to an extraordinarily diverse set of communal and individual needs. However, it is vital for the local Rav to oversee the religious needs of the community. For example, Beitzah 16b relates that Avuha

DiShmuel made an Eruv Tavshilin for his entire town of Nahardei'a and Rabi Ami and Rabi Asi made an Eruv Tavshilin for their entire town of Teveriah. In more recent times, it is related that both the Chafetz Chaim (Dugma MiDarkei Avi zt"l 63:14) and the Chazon Ish (Pe'eir HaDor 2:136 and 285) inspected their community's Eruv every week.

In greater Teaneck, our inspector does an excellent job of meticulously inspecting the Eruv each week. It is clear that the problem arose after he completed the inspection on Thursday. In the wake of this incident, I sent a note to all of the Teaneck community Rabbanim to be alert to any unusual phenomenon in regard to the Eruv. Those Rabbanim who participate in our annual walking inspection of the Eruv are best able to notice such suspicious alterations. The walking tour provides the Rabbanim with a "Tevi'at Ayin" (recognition and grasp) of the Eruv which sensitizes them to notice when something is amiss.

Thursday Eruv Inspection

Ideally, a community Eruv should be inspected on Friday (Teshuvot Doveiv Meisharim). However, in practice many Eruvin are inspected on Thursday to allow time for the Eruv to be repaired if necessary. The Teaneck Eruv and most community Eruvin with which I am familiar are sufficiently stable to make us comfortable relying on a Thursday inspection. However, it is worth Rabbanim being alert to problems especially after the inspection is completed.

After I completed creating an Eruv in the community in which I resided in 1989, I asked Rav Schachter if I was required to look at the Lechis on the streets I happen to be passing on Friday, after the Eruv was inspected for the Shabbat. Rav Schachter replied that it is not necessary to obsessively repeat the inspection of the Eruv. However, this does not mean we can blithely ignore an obvious problem such as the one that I spotted in the situation we are addressing.

What if the professional is not available? What are the Rav's options to fix the Eruv?

In such situations, "*Sof Ma'aseh B'Machshavah Techilah*" is in order. Rabbanim should maintain a stockpile of forty-inch (the rough equivalent of ten Tefachim) Lechis that are ready to be installed on the poles in situations similar to our case. There may not be sufficient time to make such repairs by "laymen" if the Lechis are not prepared in advance.

In such situations the Rav might not have the equipment or ability to safely install the Lechis the entire way to the wire. He also may not be able to insure that the ten Tefachim (40 inch) high Lechis are plumblined beneath the wire. In such a situation, one could temporarily rely on an eyeball estimation that the Lechi is placed precisely beneath the wire. I heard this ruling directly from none other than Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach as I described at length in Gray Matter 1:183.

Relying on BeDi'eved Standards

What if we were even unable to make the "layman repair"? The Rabbanim should be aware of standards upon which they can rely in a pinch, or at the very least have a Rav whom they can consult. In our case, the Lechi from the wire was about 10 feet down (but was missing the bottom ten feet of Lechi). In such a situation, Chatam Sofer (Teshuvot number 34 in the Likkutim) permits relying on the principle of "*Gud Achit Mechitzta*", "The fence extends down" (Sukkah 4b and Chagigah 19a). The Chatam Sofer faced the

challenge of frequent vandalism to the Lechi of his community's Eruv. He advised in such a situation to rely on the Lechi extending down from the wire a minimum of ten Tefachim. Relying on the principle of "Gud Achit", the wire could "extend" the Lechi down to the ground.

The Chazon Ish (Orach Chaim 79:11) however, vociferously objects to the Chatam Sofer's ruling. He argues that we may not rely on "Gud Achit" in the creation of a Tzurat HaPetach. He argues that such construction does not meet the Gemara's requirement that it be made "KeDe'Avdi Inshi", "as people normally do," when they create items (Eruvin 94b). Since door frames are not created utilizing the principle of "Gud Achit", a Tzurat HaPetach may also not be created based on this principle. Common practice follows the ruling of the Chazon Ish.

Rav Hershel Schachter told me that he is not comfortable relying upon this ruling of the Chatam Sofer. However, Rav Mordechai Willig believes that B'Shaat HeDechak (in case of pressing need) this ruling may be followed. Indeed, the Chatam Sofer's ruling seems compelling. Just as Tzurat HaPetach may be created via the mechanism of "Gud Asik" (according at least to the Mishnah Berurah 362:62), so too it may be creating relying upon "Gud Achit."

Had the Lechi in question not been able to be repaired before Shabbat, the Teaneck Rabbanim would have faced a dilemma as to whose ruling (Rav Schachter or Rav Willig) should be followed. Fortunately, we have formal Eruv Va'ad consisting of the local Rabbanim with considerable experience managing a community Eruv.

The question would have been submitted to the Eruv Va'ad for a decision whether to announce the Eruv as functional for that Shabbat.

Another reason to be lenient in this case is that the Lechi on the pole in question is intended to correct an approximately ten degree change of direction. It is possible that B'dieved the Eruv would be kosher even if this Eruv would be missing. Is a ten degree change of direction permitted B'dieved? Again, Rav Schachter would not be comfortable relying upon this, whereas Rav Willig would find it acceptable BiSha'at HeDechak. This would have been part of the consideration had the Eruv Va'ad been asked to rule whether to Eruv is up or down for that Shabbat.

Occasionally, Announcing the Eruv is Down

Some Rabbanim might have been inclined to use the opportunity to announce that the Eruv is down. Indeed, the Elizabeth, New Jersey community follows the ruling of their venerated Rav Pinchas Teitz who announced the Eruv down once a year. Rav Teitz echoed Chazal's concern "Shema Tishtakach Torat Eruv", "Lest the Torah of Eiruv be forgotten" (Eruvin 59a and Rashi ad. loc. s.v. *V'Shel Rabbim*). Indeed, in my teaching experience, I have encountered many youngsters who are not aware of the distinction between Shabbat and Yom Tov in regards to the Issur Hotza'ah.

However, Rav Mordechai Willig does not subscribe to this approach. Sadly, in our communities, not everyone can be expected to observe the Issur Hotza'ah in case the Eruv is not functional. Public Chillul Shabbat, Chas V'Shalom, would be most detrimental to the community. In fact, I Rav Willig told me that the camp Rav at Camp Morasha once suggested the Eruv be called down upon encountering a very serious problem. Rav Willig insisted, though, that every effort be made to repair the Eruv in time for Shabbat so as not to need to call the Eruv down. (I am proud to report that my son Binyamin made a major contribution to this effort.)

Conclusion

Due to Siyata DiShmaya along with proper advanced planning and organization, a problem with the Greater Teaneck Eruv was noticed and repaired expeditiously. Baruch Hashem, a situation of thousands of observant Jews relying on a subpar Eruv for a Shabbat was avoided.

Moshe Rabbeinu, upon seeing the unusual sight of a bush on fire that was not consumed, made it his business to investigate. As a result, the process of our Ge'ulah from Mitzrayim was initiated. When you think you see something with the Eruv, say something and do something. Follow Moshe Rabbeinu's example and investigate. The Rav's alert reaction will bring Ge'ulah.

Postscript - A Related Incident with the Englewood Eruv

Daniel Lubat, while inspecting the Englewood, New Jersey Eruv on a Thursday evening, noticed utility workers working on poles along the 9W extension near Sage Street. He alerted me that the area required reinspection on Friday. Daniel made the correct assessment since the workers constituted a Rei'uta (disturbance) to the Chezkat Kashrut of the Eruv. I subsequently inspected the area on Friday and lo and behold discovered that an Eruv wire indeed was down. Baruch Hashem Rav Shotkin once again rushed to the scene and made the repair before the onset of Shabbat. Daniel wisely noticed and report the issue. He even followed up with me to insure that nothing fell between the cracks.

"Eiranut Mona'at Ason", "Being alert avoids a catastrophe," is an apt slogan posted in many Israeli public places. The same is true regarding community Eruvin. One may not assume that once the Eruv is constructed that it will remain intact indefinitely. Constant vigilance is a sine qua non for maintaining a quality community Eruv.

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