



Light Lines

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Light Insight

The Ink Of Eternity

“Carve for yourself two stone Tablets like the first ones.” (10:1)

Michaelangelo may have known a thing or two about painting, but when it came to Jewish anatomy he was a bit off. When he painted Moses he gave him little horns. Michaelangelo’s problem came from a mis-translation of the Hebrew word *keren*. It’s true, *keren* does mean a ‘horn,’ but it also means a ray of light. The English word *corona*, meaning a glowing halo, is probably a derivation of *keren*.

How did Moses get his ‘horns’?

After the Jewish People heard the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, Moses ascended the mountain again to receive the rest of the Torah. When he came down he was greeted by the sight of the people worshipping the golden calf they had built. Moses smashed the two tablets of the Torah to the ground.

These first tablets were made by G-d and engraved by G-d. They contained all

the Torah — Written and Oral — everything that was necessary to carry out the Creator’s instructions. For example, the first tablets included all the details of how to make *tefillin*: they must be perfectly square black boxes made from the hide of a kosher animal. Similarly, it was on these two tablets that G-d inscribed all the minutiae of the laws of Shabbos.

However, when G-d gave Moses the second tablets, they only contained the Written Torah. The detailed instructions, the Oral Torah, was given to him verbally.

The Torah recounts that when Moses came down to the people with the second Tablets, his face was shining with a radiant corona. Why didn’t Moses’s face shine before? One would think that the second giving of the Torah was certainly less monumental than the giving of the first Tablets, after which Moses’s face was apparently not shining. After all, the first tablets were written by G-d on rock hewn by G-d, whereas the second tablets were the work of man, and only the writing was Divine. It sounds like the first giving was a much greater one.

Really the reverse is true. When G-d

first gave the Torah, the Jewish People were to be the vessel that would contain the Torah. Like the Holy Ark, we would hold the Torah but we would not *be part of* the Torah, just as a box only contains what is inside it. It’s not the thing itself.

But with the second Tablets, the Jewish People became part of the Torah itself. The beams that radiated from Moses’s visage came from the light of the Oral Torah. G-d put into the mind of Moses — the rabbi, the teacher of Israel — the Oral Torah. All the verbal instructions that were originally written on the first Tablets were now engraved only in the mind of Moses. Everything that is possible for a mortal understanding to achieve was written in the mind of Moses, to be taught to the Jewish People and transmitted throughout the generations.

Thus the Jewish People became *partners* in the Torah. Our invitation to become partners in G-d’s Torah, to carry it around in ourselves and to be part of the Torah itself, made the giving of the second Tablets greater than the first. Thus only after Moses’s mind became part of the tablets of Torah to receive the Oral Torah, did his face shine with the radiance of the light of Torah.

.....Light Update

Ohr Somayach Representatives Dispatched Around the World

A new corps of dynamic young educators have been dispatched by Ohr Somayach Institutions to a number of its centers throughout the world .

Rabbi Moshe Mayerfeld will be joining the staff of the London Jewish Learning Exchange Center.

Rabbi David Shapiro will be assuming the directorship of the Ohr Somayach Center in Detroit.

Rabbi Yirmeyahu Cohen will be joining the faculty of the Ohr Somayach Centers in Thornhill and Toronto.

LOVE of the LAND

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

The Motive of Moshe

Why did Moses so desire to enter the Land of Israel? Surely it was not just in order to eat its fruits and enjoy its goodness!

Thus reasoned Moses: Many of the *mitzvos* which the Jews have been given can be fulfilled only in the Land of Israel. I therefore pray to G-d to allow me to enter the Land so that I will be able to fulfill all of them.

The Other SIDE of the Story

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

The imagination is an incredible gift. It can be used for creative enterprise or for a relaxing meander down day-dreamer's lane. Imagination is also an important tool in judging others favorably. Don't think it takes much imagination to dream up extenuating circumstances for people's seeming misbehavior? Who would have thought of this one... (and this is a TRUE STORY that was reported on CNN about a year ago!)

“Earlier this year, the dazed crew of a Japanese trawler was plucked out of the Sea of Japan clinging to the wreckage of their sunken ship. Their rescue, however, was followed by their immediate imprisonment after authorities questioned the sailors on their ship's loss. To a man they claimed that a cow, falling out of a clear blue sky, had struck the trawler amidships, shattering it's hull and sinking the vessel within minutes.

They remained in prison for several weeks, until the Russian Air Force reluctantly informed Japanese authorities that the crew of one of its cargo planes had apparently stolen a cow wandering at the edge of a Siberian airfield, forced the cow into the plane's hold and hastily taken off for home. Unprepared for live cargo, the Russian crew was ill-equipped to manage a rampaging cow in its hold. To save the aircraft and themselves, they shoved the animal out of the cargo hold as they crossed the Sea of Japan at an altitude of 30,000 feet.”

Response Line

Roy Bernstein wrote:

What is the origin of the Magen David, the six-pointed star? Does it have any mystical connections? The reason I ask is that geometrically, it is very interesting; a Magen David can be circumscribed by a hexagon. The inside of a Magen David is also a hexagon and therefore one can draw another similar Magen David inside it. This process may be carried on ad infinitum. The bottom line is that the Magen David actually contains an infinity of hexagons! Moreover, it is the smallest polygon (i.e. the one with the fewest sides) which has this property.

Dear Roy,

The six-pointed star has long been associated with the Jewish people. In Southern Italy, a tombstone dating back to 300 C.E. was found with a six-pointed star on it. In the year 1354, King Carl IV insisted that the Jews of Prague make a flag for themselves that would feature the six-pointed star as well as the five-pointed star of King Solomon.

The words “Magen David” literally mean “Shield of [King] David.” Some say that the soldiers of King David's army wielded shields in the shape of a six-pointed star. King David's personal seal was not a star, but rather a shepherd's staff and bag. His son, King Solomon, used a five-pointed star for his personal seal.

In mystical teachings, one finds

that the number six represents the Heavens and the Earth and the four directions (North, South, East, West). There are those who suggest that the Magen David with its six points corresponds to this idea, which in turn can represent G-d's Omnipresence. Interestingly, the words “Magen David,” in Hebrew, are made up of six letters.

Some people have the tradition of hanging a Magen David in their Sukka during the holiday of Sukkot. Perhaps the six sides allude to the six “Ushpizen” — guests, who visit during the first six days of Sukkot: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, and Joseph. The star as a unified whole symbolizes the seventh “Ushpizen” — David — the “king” who unifies the whole. Furthermore, the Magen David has 12 sides: David as king unified the 12 tribes.