



Light Lines

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Light Insight

No Stone Unturned

“Do not erect for yourself an altar of only one stone” (16:22)

When people think of a quiet moment of spiritual contemplation, an encounter with the metaphysical, they might imagine a moment alone in a quiet meadow, or strolling on a moonlit beach.

To be sure, the individual communicating with his Creator is not only a part of Judaism, it is Judaism’s bequest to the world. But there is another side to Divine worship, that of the entire group, the congregation, and its Maker.

There are two kinds of altars. An altar made from a single block of stone and an

altar made from many distinct stones. There are two kinds of Divine service — that of the individual and that of the congregation. The single block altar represents the service of the individual, the altar of many stones represents the service of the complete group.

In this week’s portion, we learn that the Torah forbids an altar consisting of only one stone. In the days of the Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the fathers of the Jewish People, the single-stone altar was beloved. Subsequently however, it became the preferred method of idolatry and was thus no longer fitting for the service of G-d.

The Prophet Elijah erected an altar of 12 stones. Twelve is the number of the Tribes of Israel. The altar of 12 symbolizes the unity of the Jewish People in the

service of G-d; the congregation becoming like a single person. The stones are separate but they join together to become the instrument through which Man can serve his Creator. The individual’s desire finds its highest expression when channeled through this mystical ‘single entity’ who is the Jewish People.

Thus it was that our forefathers were able to build altars of only one stone. They were the entire Jewish People as if in embryo form. But since the Jewish People were ‘born’ during the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, the service of the individual finds its proper fulfillment becoming part of the ‘one person’ who is Israel.

There is no place which is devoid of G-d’s radiance. Thus, when we approach our Creator, it must be as a totality, joined like the stones of the altar. For with even one stone missing, there is no altar.

LOVE of the LAND

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

Gateway to Heaven

One who prays outside the Land of Israel should face in the direction of the Land of Israel, and one who prays in the Land of Israel should face in

the direction of Jerusalem. Both of these directives are deduced from the prayer of King Solomon at the inauguration of the Holy Temple, in which he appealed to G-d to accept the prayers of His people in all places and all circumstances. Should they be taken away from their land into foreign captivity because of their sins, he asked that their repentful “prayers directed to G-d through

their land” be accepted (*Melachim I 8:48*). Should they be engaged in war in their own land, he asked that their prayer for heavenly help “directed to G-d through the city You have chosen” be accepted (*Melachim I 8:44*).

Although King Solomon was referring to particular circumstances placing Jews outside their land and their city, he set the guidelines for how Jews in all times must direct their prayers to Heaven through the holy land and the holy city where the house of G-d stood, and will one day stand again.

Light Update

Ohr LaGolah Graduates Take to the Road

In the past several months, recent graduates of the Ohr LaGolah Leadership Institute of Ohr Somayach have taken positions in outreach, education and as rabbinic leaders in

communities around the world.

Among some of the most recent graduates were Zev Kahn, sent to Chicago, IL; Mordechai Fishberg, Montreal, Canada; Dr. Steven Gaffin, Ilford, UK; Yisrael Koval, Buffalo Grove, IL; Eli Moskowitz, New York, NY and Elazar Orlowek sent to Johannesburg, South Africa.

Additionally, there were three separate groups of graduates who went to Baltimore, MD, Milwaukee, WI and Vienna, Austria to establish or join Outreach Kolel Centers in those cities.

The Other SIDE of the Story

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

The Blasting Radio

Here's a story about giving the benefit of the doubt that taught me that I still have a lot to learn.

Our downstairs neighbor had a baby and was staying with her parents for a few weeks. Her husband alternated between staying with her and staying at their own home. One night their radio was playing so loudly

that I actually got a headache from it, and I was afraid it would wake up and scare my children. I went down to ask them to lower the volume, but no one answered. I telephoned and left messages on their machine. Each message I left was more abrupt than the previous one. It was getting late, and I wondered how I would be able to fall asleep.

I went down a few more times to ring their bell, steam coming out my nose. I had a whole lecture ready.

My husband said to me, "Have pity on the poor fellow, his wife is away and he's all alone. He needs the music to liven up the place."

"I'm sure it's not him blasting the music," I replied self-righteously, giving our neighbor the benefit of the doubt.

"He probably gave his friends the key to the apartment and is letting them stay while he's away."

What really bothered me was that his friends didn't even have the decency to open the door when I buzzed!

I considered going to the window to get a word with them, but I was trying to be the 'good neighbor,' and could not stoop to poking in other people's windows.

A few days later I met the wife in the park. She apologized profusely for the disturbance. (At least she listens to the telephone messages, I thought to myself.) She went on to explain that her husband had indeed been away (Just as I thought, I said to myself proudly) and had left the lights and radio on the automatic timer to ward off would-be thieves while he was away.

Was I ever embarrassed!

• *Contributed by a reader*

Response Line

Balint wrote:

I noticed that often after the name of a great Rabbi, the word "Shlita" is written. What does this mean? Thank you.

Dear Balint,

The term "Shlita" is actually an acronym, and stands for the words "Sheyichye

L'orech Yamim Tovim Aruchim." This means that we pray that he "will live many long and good days." "Shlita" is used as a term of respect.

Other terms often written as a blessing or well wishing when addressing

someone is "Amosh" which is spelled: *Ayin, Mem, Vav, Shin.* This stands for "Ad Me'ah V'esrim Shana." That is to say: "May You Live To Be 120!"

Another customary abbreviation used after a person's name to offer respect and well-wishes, is *heh, yud, vav.* Although not commonly pronounced, the acronym stands for *Hashem Yishmerehu V'yatzelehu,* G-d should watch over them and protect them.

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