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FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER

Angelic Awareness

The *keruvim*, the two angelic figures that sat on top of the *Aron* in the *Kodesh Kodashim*, were of the most fascinating features in the Mishkan. We find a tremendous amount of symbolism in these figures and deep, relevant lessons.

Chazal teach us that when the Jews were living aligned with the Will of Hashem, the *keruvim* faced each other, and when their behavior was in opposition to His Will, the *keruvim* turned away from each other. Rav Gamliel Rabinovich in *Tiv HaTorah* learns an important message from this. It is well-known that the *Aron* represents the Torah. The cherubim were fashioned “*peneihem ish el achiv* — with their faces toward one another,” (*Shemot* 25:20) reflecting that the path of Torah is expressed in each person’s concern for his fellow man; this

is upholding the Will of Hashem. Indeed, most of the 48 acquisitions of Torah delineated in *Pirkei Avot* relate to interpersonal relationships — ergo, the way to truly acquire Torah is through connecting, sharing and assisting others.

This is the famous directive related by Rav Chaim Volozhin *zt”l* to his son, the purpose of human existence is not for self-indulgence, but to benefit and help others to the greatest extent possible.

A similar idea is found in the teachings of Rav Avraham Schorr in *Halekach V’Halebuv*, understanding the positioning of the *keruvim* to be a sign of unity and connection between people. This *achdut*, this harmony and alliance, is one of the clearest signs that *Am Yisrael* is living with the Will of Hashem. Rav Schorr teaches that to access this status one must have a “good eye.”

He notes that the *Ari Hakadosh zt”l* links each month with a different tribe,

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and the final month of the year, Adar, is associated with the tribe of Naftali whose *nasi*, the prince or primary leader, was Achira ben Einam. When each of the tribal leaders offered their sacrifices and gifts at the inauguration ceremony of the Mishkan, Achira was the last one, as hinted in his name, “Achira,” similar to “*acharon* — last.” He allowed everyone else to go before him as he possessed a “good and pleasing eye,” he was willing to give others the honor and gratification of being first.

Additionally, the mazal of Adar is fish, which are also known not to be affected by an “*ayin hara*,” an evil eye. This *middah* of brotherhood and seeing good in others is a dominant motif of the Purim holiday, celebrated by giving *mishloach manot* and gifts to those more unfortunate.

Rav Schorr further quotes *Rabbeinu B'chaye* *zt”l* explaining the expression in our verse, “*Ve’asita shenayim keruvim zahav*— and you shall make two golden cherubim,” (*Shemot* 25a;18). The word “*shenayim*” is employed to connote two different entities, as opposed to the form “*sh’nei*,” used to signify two equal elements. This highlights the importance of showing respect and consideration to people who are distinctly diverse. Just as the figures of the *keruvim* were male and female, it is specifically through bringing unity among those who are different from each other that the energy of the *keruvim*, “*pineihem ish el achiv*,” is manifested. The final letters of these words spell “shalom,” the ultimate goal of Torah and the Mishkan, embodying Hashem’s Wholeness and Oneness in the world. ■

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