

Teruma: Keruvim

- Nisson Shulman.

KrUVim look at each other or away? It depends whether we do Hashem's will or not. What does that mean? Tablets ben adam laMakom and lahavero are indivisible. When we forget half, considering Judaism as only towards man or only towards Hashem, then keruvim turn away from each other. Shimon Hatzadik, praying for death when Hellenism took over the market and Judaism was left with only half the tablets. For Keruvim are not symbols of angels, but represent the people of Israel and express our attitude to Torah and society.

TERUMA KERUVIM by Rabbi Moses Isaac Shulman zt"l

(Meavi-Mori, zt"l, Harav Moshe Yitzchok Shulman)

1. The KrUVim symbolize the protection of the Torah. They must look down towards the ark and across towards each other, the wings guarding Torah and therefore outstretched. They must be made of one piece of gold, beaten to shape.

2. Why one piece of gold? Why facing each other? Samson Raphael Hirsch explains that each guards one tablet. The two tablets are really one. They represent the man-to-man mitzvot and the man-to-God mitzvot.

3. There were times when Jews denied one of the tablets. Some forgot the mitzvot between man and man. As Yeshayahu declares, Ube'parischem kapchem eylay, al'im eynai mikem, gam ki tarbu tefila, ayneni shomea, yedechem damim mileu. "You may spread your hands to me in supplication, I will not see, you may pray a great deal, I will not listen, for your hands are steeped in blood." Others forgot the mitzvot between man and God, such as Heine, Marx, Freud, and many like them.

4. Nowadays we haven't forgotten either half of the tablets. But there are many who have simply split them apart. That is equally dangerous. Can we say a man is pious if he is a scoundrel in his dealings with his fellow man? Can a man ever be called religious if he does not deal with his fellow men with integrity? The KrUVim must be of one piece of gold. That is the symbol of Jewish integrity. The synagogue and the market are one.

5. There is a remarkable Midrash. The Torah tells us they faced each other. In Solomon's Temple, we are told they faced the wall. The Midrash declares that sometimes they faced each other; sometimes they faced the wall. When? When Jews did the will of their Father in Heaven they faced each other. That is to say, when they did their duty to God and to man, and both tablets were one. If not, then "Israel forgets God and builds Temples"!

6. There is a story of Shimon Hatzadik. One year he said, "I will not live out this year". They asked him how he knew this. He explained: Each year, until then, as he proceeded to enter the Holy of Holies, he had a vision of an old man dressed all in white who entered with him and emerged with him. That particular year, the vision appeared again. The old man came in with the

great High Priest, but he did not leave with him (Midrash Rabbah, Aharei Mot).

7. The old man is the spirit of Judaism Yisrael Saba, which accompanied Shimon Hatzadik to the Holy of Holies, and came out again with him, to the daily life of the people, the commerce, the market, the politics, the street, the home.

But at the end of Shimon's life, the spirit of Hellenism began to take over the street. Greek culture effectively encroached on the life style of the people. The Torah was finally split. The spirit of Judaism entered into the Holy Temple, but did not go out again to the marketplace.

8. The old High Priest, Shimon Hatzadik, refused to live in such a climate, and prayed for death rather than see the Kruvim torn apart, the Tablets of Torah they guarded and represented, split in two.

When Israel does the will of the Almighty, the spirit of Judaism is everywhere, and they find it in their homes, work, society, each man with his neighbor, and the way their leaders face the pressures around us, as well as the way we measure up to our responsibilities towards our fellow Jews, wherever they are, and especially when they are in trouble. Pneyhem ish el achiv.

9. That is why we must say that the Kruvim are not the symbols of angels. They represent, in fact, the people of Israel themselves, and express what constitutes an ideal society.

(Submitted by Nisson Shulman)