

SICHA SUMMARY

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 32

Nissan

The Context:

The inauguration of the Mishkan began on the first day of Nissan, and continued through the 12th, with each leader, nasi, of the twelve tribes offering an identical sacrifice on behalf of his tribe. It is our custom to commemorate the Mishkan's inauguration each year by reading, on each of these twelve days, the verses from the Torah which describe the offerings of that day's nasi.

The reading is followed by a brief prayer, in which we say: "May it be Your will, L-rd my G-d and G-d of my fathers . . . that if I, Your servant, am from the tribe of — — — whose section of the nasi I have read today in Your Torah, may all the holy sparks and holy illuminations that are included within the holiness of this tribe shine upon me, to grant me understanding and intelligence in Your Torah and my awe of You, to do Your will all the days of my life . . ."

The Question:

The inauguration of the altar in the Mishkan was a one-time event; the Mishkan was a temporary structure that will not function again — why do we observe an eternal commemoration of this seemingly irrelevant event?

The Explanation:

The inauguration of the altar in the Mishkan is the beginning of the entire enterprise of serving G-d as He commanded in the physical space which He chose to rest His presence. It is the first "educational" step in preparing the world to become host to the presence of G-d. The educational years of a child are critical not because of the content or sophistication of the material or practices of those years, but because of the values and priorities they entrench in the child's consciousness. The inauguration of the Mishkan's altar by the Jewish leaders was the Jewish people's education in how to make the world a home for G-d. This is an eternally relevant milestone to commemorate, and relive, every year, as we constantly seek to dedicate ourselves to this sacred task.

Nissan and the Nasi:

From the fact that we recite these verses and this prayer during the month of Nissan, it is evident that an important theme of the month is the eternity of the Nasi, the leaders of the people, and our eternal attachment to them.

In the Chabad tradition, this is accentuated in this time since the second day of Nissan is the *yahrzeit* of the Rebbe Rashab, and the inauguration of his son, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, as the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Prior to his passing, the Rebbe Rashab famously said, "I am departing for Heaven; the manuscripts I leave with you." The significance of this teaching is in tethering himself to his manuscripts. The righteous emulate G-d: Just as G-d instilled His essence in the words of the Torah, so did the Rashab place himself within his "manuscripts" so that his very essence, as he is "in Heaven," is still present and available in this physical world, in the manuscripts he left himself in.

This theme appears again in the Previous Rebbe's first *maamer* said after his father's passing in which he said, "holiness does not depart from its place... the physical space

where the Tzaddik studied Torah and engaged in Divine service remains in its holiness even after he has passed... and the sacredness remains within all his utensils which he used in his Divine service..." To substantiate this the Previous Rebbe then shared that he once saw how his father entered his grandfather's (the Rebbe Maharash) private chambers, which was still preserved in its original arrangement after his passing, and stood by the desk opposite the chair and spoke quietly while tears streamed down his face.

Thus, the idea of the eternity of the Nasi's influence in this world apparent from the fact that we still commemorate their contributions to the spiritual foundations of our Divine service also resonates from the Rebbe Rashab's and Previous Rebbe's teachings which coincide at the same time of year.

When we connect ourselves to the Nasi of our generation, then we avail ourselves of this eternity which then elevates our Divine service of Torah and mitzvos, as well as our sacred task of making the world into a Mishkan for G-d.
