



# Torah and Tefilla

Hashem speaks with Moshe Rabbeinu “*petach ohel moed* – at the entrance of the Mishkan.” (*Shemot 29:42*) Rashi cites two opinions as to where Hashem would speak with Moshe Rabbeinu. There are those that maintain, based on the above verse, that Hashem spoke with Moshe from above the copper altar located at the entrance. Others contend that Hashem spoke with Moshe from above the *kaporet* covering the *Aron*, based on a verse found in *Parashat Terumah*, “*Ved-ibarti itcha me’al hakaporet* – and I will speak to you from above the ark-cover.” (*Shemot 25:22*) How can we reconcile these conflicting views, and how is relevant to us today?

Rav Mintzberg in *Ben Melech* analyzes these two opinions. As the *Aron* housed the *luchot*, symbolizing Torah and Divine connection, it can be easily understood that the prophetic voice of G-d emanated from above the *kaporet*. The Ramban explains that the Mishkan was a manifestation of Har Sinai, therefore the Word of Hashem came forth from the *Aron*. However, prophecy can also be attained in the merit of Divine service. The sincerity of our *avodat Hashem* arouses Hashem’s love and desire to come close to us, consequently, it was appropriate for Hashem to speak to Moshe from the copper altar that

symbolized service.

Thus, we find the two primary features in the Mishkan/Beit Hamikdash were the *aron*, the Holy Ark of the Covenant, and the *mizbeach*, the altar. These two symbolized the dual function of the *Mikdash*, as the centralized location of Torah scholarship and dissemination, as well as the designated place for sacrificial service and Divine worship.

Interestingly, the Beit Hamikdash was built on *Har Hamoriah* whose very name expresses its two-fold character. Rashi explains that *moriah* is etymologically related to “*hora’ah*,” teaching, yet Onkelos understands “*moriah*” as relating to “*mor*,” one of the essential spices in the *ketoret* offering. So, we see again the aspects of Torah and *avodah*.

We may ask, what is the more important factor in developing our relationship with Hashem? Is it Torah learning or *avodah* that we express through tefillah? Truthfully, they operate in tandem. The same Kohanim who served in the Mikdash were designated as the teachers of Am Yisrael, disseminating and elucidating Torah to the masses, (*Devarim 17:8-9*) The Chazon Ish writes, “Torah learning and tefilla are interconnected; delving into one’s learning supports the light of tefilla, and tefilla helps Torah learning.”

Today, we have both the *beit midrash*, centers of Torah study, and the *Beit Kneset*, places of tefillah. Essentially, both institutions integrate each element, giving us the opportunity to expand ourselves and grow in our *avodat Hashem*. ■