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"[They shall make...] the stakes of the Tabernacle and the pins of the courtyard and their tying ropes." —35:18 Rashi explains that the stakes were inserted into the ground to fasten the edges of the curtains, so that they would not flap because of the wind, and the ropes were used for binding them.

There is a moral to be derived from this: The generations that preceded us can be compared to the builders of the Tabernacle itself. Our own generation, the last one before the coming of Moshiach, can be compared to those who tie the edges of the curtains to the stakes in the ground so they will not flap loosely in the wind.

In the overall stature of Israel's history, our generation is the very "heel"—the lowest part of the body—while our predecessors are like the brains, heart and other "higher" parts of the body. Our task and mission is likewise the "last" or "heel"-labor to complete and finish all that is still required to bring about the Messianic redemption. Ours may be the "lowest" task, merely tying down the very edges of the curtains, some rather incidental and external details. Nonetheless, it is just this work that completes the whole job, and it is specifically what we do that will fasten the Tabernacle so that it may stand firm.

We are indeed the "heel"-generation, time-wise and quality-wise, compared to all those before us. This may raise the question: "Is the generation worthy?" Why should we merit the coming of Moshiach when our ancestors, who were greater saints and scholars than we are, did not? Nonetheless, the fact is that we are the ones who complete the work. The credit and merit, therefore, is attributed to our generation. Our sages thus said that a meritorious deed is attributed to him who does the last part of it and completes it (Sotah 13b).

Moreover, the edges of the curtains were to be tied to the pegs that were fixed in the ground, the earth. This alludes to the very purpose of the Sanctuary, namely, to bring about an indwelling of the Divine Presence in the Tabernacle which was to be a physical abode established specifically here on earth. This, indeed, is the very task and purpose of our generation. We are to draw the Divine Presence all the way down to the very earthiness of this material world, and this will happen with the coming of Moshiach and the ultimate redemption. (www.moshiach.com)

Gold, silver and copper (35:5) "Gold" represents the purity and perfection of the tzaddik. "Silver" represents the great yearning of the Baal Teshuvah ("returnee" or penitent) for closeness to G-d—a yearning many times more powerful than that of the tzaddik, because it is a yearning from afar (kesef, the Hebrew word for silver, also means "yearning"; copper, the lowliest of metals, represents the good deeds of the sinner. G-d's home on earth is complete only when it includes all three. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses (12:19) There are other foods whose consumption is forbidden by the Torah; but leaven on Passover is forbidden to eat, benefit from in any way, or even keep in our possession. Usually, a forbidden substance becomes "nullified" if it mixes with a much greater quantity of permissible substances; of leaven, the Torah forbids even the slightest trace.

This is a reflection of what these "forbidden foods" represent on the spiritual level. Leaven is that which rises and inflates itself; in the human character, "leaven" is the trait of pride. While many negative traits can be useful in small, greatly diluted doses, the leaven of the soul must be utterly rejected. Thus the Talmud (Erchin 15b) states that G-d says of the arrogant one, "I and he cannot dwell in the same world," and Maimonides writes that while in all character traits one should follow the "golden mean," regarding the trait of pride, one must avoid it entirely and follow the path of consummate humility. Like chametz on Passover, we must abandon any attempt to exploit it, and must totally eradicate it from every nook and cranny of our hearts. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe) chabadonline.com)

CONNECTION

During the winter of 5663 (1903), when I accompanied my father for the couple of months he spent consulting medical specialists in Vienna, he would sometimes go out in the evening to visit the shtiblach (small informal "houses" of study and prayer) of the local Polish Jews--to be among Chassidim, to hear a story from their mouths, to listen to a Chassidic saying, and to observe fine conduct and refined character.

One Wednesday night, on the eve of the Fifteenth of Shevat, my father visited one of these shtiblach, where several hoary Chassidim were sitting around together and talking. As my father and I drew nearer, we heard that they were telling stories of the saintly Rabbi Meir of Premishlan. Among other things, they related that the mikveh (ritual bath) in Rabbi Meir's neighborhood had stood at the foot of a steep mountain. When the slippery weather came, everyone had to walk all the way around for fear of slipping on the mountain path and breaking their bones--everyone, that is, apart from Rabbi Meir, who walked down that path whatever the weather, and never slipped.

One icy day, Rabbi Meir set out as usual to take the direct route to the mikveh. Two guests were staying in the area, sons of the rich who had come somewhat under the influence of the "Enlightenment" movement. These two young men did not believe in supernatural achievements, and when they saw Rabbi Meir striding downhill with sure steps as if he were on a solidly paved highway, they wanted to demonstrate that they too could negotiate the hazardous path. As soon as Rabbi Meir entered the mikveh building, therefore, they took to the road. After only a few steps they stumbled and slipped, and needed medical treatment for their injuries.

Now one of them was the son of one of Rabbi Meir's close Chassidim, and when he was fully healed he mustered the courage to approach the tzaddik with his question: Why was it that no man could cope with that treacherous path, yet the Rebbe never stumbled?

Replied Rabbi Meir: "If a man is bound up on high, he doesn't fall down below. Meir'l is bound up on high, and that is why he can go up and down, even on a slippery hill." (From Likkutei Dibburim, a collection of transcribed talks by the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, translated by Uri Kaplun and published by Sichot in English. chabadonline.com)

IN RESPONDING TO L'CHAYIM THERE ARE TWO VERSIONS:

(A.) L'CHAYIM TOVIM UL'SHALOM, "FOR GOOD LIFE, AND FOR PEACE." THE REASON FOR THIS BLESSING IS THAT THE FIRST TIME DRINKING WINE IS MENTIONED IN THE TORAH, THERE WERE UNDESIRABLE RESULTS. "NOACH BEGAN ETC." (1) ALSO, THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE WAS A GRAPEVINE. (2) THEREFORE WE EXTEND THE BLESSING THAT THIS WINE BE FOR A GOOD LIFE.

(B.) THE MAGGID OF MEZRITCH USED TO RESPOND L'CHAYIM VELIVRACHA. ONCE AT A FARBRENGEN, THE ALTER REBBE RESPONDED L'CHAYIM VELIVRACHA. AFTER THE FARBRENGEN CHASSIDIM DISCUSSED THIS EXPRESSION, WHICH THEY HEARD THEN FOR THE FIRST TIME. ONE CHASSID PROPOSED: SINCE "WHEN WINE ENTERS, THE SECRET COMES OUT," (3) WHICH IN AVODA SIGNIFIES THAT THE EMOTIONS ARE REVEALED, WE NEED A B'RACHA FOR THIS; THE EXPRESSION IS L'CHAYIM VELIVRACHA, AND "LIVRACHA" MAY BE READ, LEIV RAKA, A SENSITIVE HEART. THE TZEMACH TZEDEK COMMENTED: SUCH AN INTERPRETATION COULD BE PROPOSED ONLY BY A CHASSID WHO HAS DAVENED AND LABORED IN AVODA FOR THIRTY YEARS. (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM ADAR 29)

***Just as wisdom is not something you can touch with your hands, so G-dliness is not something you can grasp with your mind.
The mind cannot experience G—d. G—d is not an idea. G—d is real.
G—d is better found through inspired deeds than by inspiring thoughts.***

Be Within, Stay Above - More meditations from the wisdom of the Rebbe