

The staves shall remain in the rings of the Ark; they may not be removed from it. (25:15)

The staves/poles were to be left in the rings permanently. One who removed them was in violation of both a positive and prohibitive commandment. This restriction was not applied to carrying the poles of the *Mizbayach*, Altar, and the *Shulchan*, Table. Another unique aspect of the *Badei HaAron*, poles of the Ark, was that they protruded into the *Paroches*, Curtain, which separated the *Kodesh HaKedoshim*, Holy of Holies, from the *Kodesh*, Sanctuary. In other words, they were visible in the *Mishkan* and later in the *Bais HaMikdash*, but only through the Curtain – never directly. Indeed, this is the manner in which they were always seen: through their jutting into the Curtain. Even when the *Mishkan* was dismantled and the *Aron* wrapped in the *Paroches*, Aharon *HaKohen* and his sons would pull on the poles until they formed protrusions in the Curtain. This meant that the poles never left their place and were always visible as a protrusion against the Curtain. What is the significance of all this? If they are supposed to be noticed, why are they covered? If they are not to be seen, why are they placed in a manner which compels protrusion?

Horav Meir Bergman, Shlita, cites the *Meshech Chochmah* in his commentary to *Parashas Bechukosai*. *Rav Meir Simchah* quotes a passage from the *Talmud Bava Metzia* 85b, in which Rabbi Chaviva *bar Surmaki* said, “I saw that in the morning the eyes of a certain sage who was regularly visited by *Eliyahu HaNavi* were bright and beautiful, but in the evening they appeared as if scorched by fire. *Rav Chaviva* asked the sage, “What happened?”

The sage replied, “I asked *Eliyahu HaNavi* to show me the sages in Heaven as they rise up from *Gan Eden* to the *Yeshivah Shel Maalah*, Heavenly Academy. He told me, ‘You will be able to look at all of their thrones, except for the throne of Rabbi Chiya – you must not look at his.’”

“I asked him, ‘How can I distinguish between the thrones?’” he replied, ‘All of them are accompanied by Angels as they rise up and descend again. Rabbi Chiya’s throne rises and descends of its own accord.’ I was unable to restrain myself. I had to see the throne of Rabbi Chiya.” The sage gazed on the throne, and immediately two sparks of fire came and struck his eyes, blinding him. “The next day, I went to Rabbi Chiya’s grave and entreated that he intercede on my behalf, and I was healed.”

The *Meshech Chochmah* wonders why Rabbi Chiya’s throne was deemed “off limits”? What distinguished his throne? He explains that the difference is like the difference between a *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, and a *machzik Torah*, one who gives material support to enable Torah study. In the *Talmud Berachos* 34b, *Chazal* state that all the visions of the *Neviim*, Prophets, concerning the future were about the reward awaiting one who marries off his daughter to a *talmid chacham*, who does business on his behalf or who grants him something of his possessions. Concerning the *talmidei chachamim* themselves, the *pasuk* in *Yeshayahu* 64:3, applies, “No eye has ever seen a god – except for You – that acted for those who trust in Him.”

This means that one whose main endeavor is in the field of **material** involvement – the mundane, physical and familiar to mortal man – his reward, splendid as it may be, will nonetheless be drawn from ordinary human life – something in line with his physical vision. However, a person who occupies himself primarily with holy wisdom, the *shleimus*, perfection, whose concepts lie beyond the realm of the human experience, his reward will also be beyond that of human account. The profundities of the Torah's wisdom will be revealed to him, which will delight him in a totally **spiritual** manner, far beyond the grasp of the human experience. Thus, the Prophets could not speak of it.

Maharal explains that a prophecy is a vision. As such, the *Navi* with his physical senses can perceive only those things that are part of the physical world; his ability to “see” is limited to the human experience. Those things that are foreign to earthly human life cannot be perceived via the prophetic vision.

The sage could look at the “thrones of the sages” as a reference to the individuals who support *talmidei chachamim*, as a throne supports the person who sits upon it. He could, however, not gaze upon the sages themselves as they ascended to the Heavenly *Yeshivah* to study the Torah's hidden wisdom. The reward which they received was supernatural, something which no human eye has been able to behold.

Why was Rabbi Chiya's throne singled out from the others? Apparently, those who were *machazik*, supported, Rabbi Chiya's Torah were in a league all their own. Their reward was greater than the reward received by the other Torah supporters. Rav Bergman explains that Rabbi Chiya's Torah was different than that of the other sages, because not only was he personally an erudite scholar, but he also traveled around *Eretz Yisrael*, seeing to it that the children of parents who themselves were illiterate – who could not teach their own children Torah – were taught the *Chamishah Chumshei Torah*, Five *Chumashim*, and the *Shishah Sidrei Mishnah*, Six Orders of the *Mishnah*. The individual who had the **privilege** of supporting Rabbi Chiya was supporting **both** Rabbi Chiya and the **future** thousands of children whose lives would be changed and given meaning through the efforts of Rabbi Chiya.

This Torah insight is not a primer for fundraisers. However, it very well could be, since it underscores the incredible merit of those who support *yeshivos* and all forms of Torah education. No praise is too great, no reward too high, for those who enable a *tzaddik* to build future generations. This was Rabbi Chiya. He was not satisfied with his own learning, unless he was able to provide options for others. The world as man knows it holds nothing so precious, nothing so fitting, to reward the “Rabbi Chiyas” of the world. They were given the Torah itself. They could go to the “highest *shiur*.” No mortal could behold this “throne”; thus, the sage who looked was blinded.

With this idea in mind, Rav Bergman goes on to explain why the *Badim* were so significant, and why unique *mitzvos* and miracles encompass them. The commentators teach that the Ark and its

poles symbolize the Torah and its supporters. As the poles enable the Torah to be carried and upheld, likewise, the *machazikei Torah*, who support and sustain Torah scholars, afford them the opportunity to study Torah unimpeded by the mundane demands of the human experience. This is why the poles may never leave the Ark. The *Aron* is their designated place. If the world was left for even one moment without the sound of Torah study reverberating in the air, if Torah study were to come to a halt, the entire Creation would lapse into *tohu va'vohu*, nothingness. The Torah supporters have a full-time task that may not be interrupted. Theirs is a unique, critical responsibility. One who removes the poles from the *Aron* or causes a hindrance, a rift in the support of Torah, incurs punishment.

Why were we not able to see the poles with the naked eye? Why did they protrude against the Curtain, but could not penetrate into visible airspace? Rav Bergman explains that on the *Kapores*, Cover of the Ark, *Keruvim* were fashioned. These images were shaped with the faces of children. The Ark represented both Torah studied by adults and Torah studied by children. Both were upheld by the poles, representing the supporters of Torah.

We now can understand why the poles had to protrude, but yet not be visible. Whoever gives support to those who prepare the next generation of Torah Jews, who enables the continued Torah existence of *Klal Yisrael*, is achieving the same merit as the supporters of Rabbi Chiya. Regardless of the object focus of one's support: *yeshivos* and *kollelim*, which will provide tomorrow's Torah educators; institutions that prepare one to go into the secular world and maintain his Torah identity; organizations that provide Torah content for lives that would otherwise have little to no meaning, all build the future of our People. Boys, girls, all Jewish children need a Torah education in a Torah environment. The reward of those who sustain our Torah institutes is **beyond all imagination**.

This is why the poles, although protruding, must be covered by the Curtain. They are seen to remind us that, without material support, the Torah will lapse – and with it, *Klal Yisrael*. The covering represents the unimaginable reward these supporters will merit as a result of their magnanimity.