

Have You Seen The Shechinah?

Understanding the concept of Hashra'as HaShechinah is pivotal in our journey towards spiritual growth. In fact, one of the most significant berachos one can receive is the merit of Hashra'as HaShechinah, as it embodies the hope that the Shechinah, God's Presence, will dwell among us.

Our parashah recounts that Moshe bestowed a special blessing upon Bnei Yisrael after all the preparations for the Mishkan were completed and it was set to function. At that time, he prayed that the Shechinah would dwell within their midst.

But what exactly is the key to deserving the Shechinah? Where, indeed, can it truly be found? The ultimate goal of the redemption from Egypt was to achieve Hashra'as HaShechinah, allowing God's Presence to dwell among us. This aspiration was finally realized when the Shechinah, manifesting as a cloud, settled in the Mishkan. The presence of the Shechinah in the Mishkan had several tangible impacts.

Firstly, it energized the entire function of the Mishkan. Without the Shechinah, the Mishkan was akin to an intricate machine waiting to be connected to its power source.

Secondly, this Hashra'as HaShechinah meant that Moshe was initially unable to enter the Mishkan due to its filled state with God's essence (a topic I plan to delve into in a future post).

Lastly and most pertinent, the Bnei Yisrael's lives were directly influenced as their movements and travels were dictated by the lifting and movement of the cloud. In practice, all eyes were perpetually on this cloud with every action being synchronized with the Shechinah. This fostered a continuous and personal connection for each individual with the Shechinah.

Rav Ovadia Seforno gives a deep insight into the historical significance of Hashra'as HaShechinah. He explains that the degree of Hashra'as HaShechinah witnessed during the time of the first Mishkan was extraordinary and unmatched. He goes on to say that such an intense manifestation of the Shechinah did not come back at Mishkan Shilo or even at Mikdash Shlomo. It is destined to recur only with the establishment of the Third Beis Hamikdash. The Ramchal echoes this sentiment, elaborating that in the era of Mashiach, the Shechinah will be amplified with unprecedented Kavod and Simcha.^{1]} This perspective not only deepens our understanding of the past, it also helps shape our anticipation for what the future holds.

The Tiferes Shlomo^{2]} teaches that in the absence of the Mishkan or Beis Hamikdash, our tefillos must seek the return of the Shechinah. Presently, as the Shechinah is in galus, we need to bring it back home. This can be achieved through the study of Torah and the performance of mitzvos, by maintaining our focus on the Shechinah and striving to bring Nachas Ruach to Hashem. I am fortunate to be part of a small Chabura led by [Rav Yehoshua Gerzi](#), where we engage in meaningful conversations encompassing life, Torah, and a myriad of other topics. In one of our recent sessions, Rav Gerzi presented us with a thought-provoking exercise. He encouraged us to reflect on and discuss two fundamental questions: 'How do we perceive Hashem?' and 'What is our general experience with Hashem?'

This exercise prompted deep introspection and sparked a vibrant discussion among us. A pivotal takeaway was the understanding that Hashem must be an integral part of our everyday lives, not just during tefillah. In every situation, we should consider what Hashem would want us to do. It's about consistently incorporating Hashem into our daily actions and decisions, throughout the grit of the day-to-day.

1] Maamar HaGeulah Chapter 8

2] Tiferes Shlomo, Pikudei

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When we spend time thinking about Hashem, it is then that we can truly aspire to merit the Shechinah. When we realize that contemplating Hashem isn't confined to heavenly thoughts, but it can be done even with our feet firmly on the ground, we truly embrace the full redemption from Mitzrayim. The prevailing belief in Egyptian culture was that while Hashem might exist, He dwells only in the heavens, not on Earth. However, a mindset geared towards Geulah recognizes that Hashem is omnipresent, both in the heavens and on Earth. It's a matter of directing our eyes and hearts towards this omnipresence.

My father, [Rav Yaacov Haber](#), often uses a compelling analogy to explain the Galus of Mitzrayim and the 49 levels of Tumah we experienced there. He likens it to a copper wire composed of 50 strands. When a few strands are disconnected, the difference may not be significant. However, when 49 strands are disconnected, only a faint flicker of light can pass through. This faint glimmer represents the state of Galus. In contrast, Geulah is like the copper wire in its entirety, with all 50 strands connected, unleashing its full potential of energy.

The Vilna Gaon illuminates this concept further. He teaches that if there were even a single moment without someone in the world being conscious of Hashem's presence, our reality would cease to exist.^{3]} Rav Yitzchak Eizik Chaver, expands on this, explaining that the world's primary purpose is to serve as a dwelling place for the Shechinah. Hence, the presence of the Shechinah is proportional to our awareness of it. When we are fully aware of the Shechinah, we can reach the spiritual heights experienced during Moshe's time. Conversely, if there were a complete lack of recognition of Hashem, the power source would disconnect, and the world would cease. Recognizing Hashem reinforces our 'copper strand,' inviting the Shechinah to dwell among us. A lack of recognition, however, inevitably weakens this connection.^{4]}

The Shechina is found where we invite it in.

The Ramchal further teaches^{5]} that when Yisrael are in Galus, the Shechinah accompanies them. By actively inviting the Shechinah into our endeavors, we open ourselves to the opportunity of witnessing miracles.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz zt'l, the esteemed Rosh Yeshiva of Mir, often reminisced about the Yeshiva's extraordinary escape from the Nazis. It was a journey that took them through Russia, Japan and Shanghai. He recounted a promise made by the Mashgiach, Rav Yechezkel Levenstein zt'l guaranteeing survival to anyone who stayed with the Yeshiva without leaving, even for a single day. Rav Chaim recalled instances where some took a day off for sightseeing and tragically, they were never heard from again. However, those who remained steadfastly with the Yeshiva, survived. During this tumultuous period, Rav Chaim was unwavering in his commitment, delivering 400 shiurim without missing a day, whether on trains, on boats, or amidst the intense heat of Shanghai.^{6]}

The Shechinah was in Shanghai, because it was invited in.

So, have you considered how Hashem plays a role in your daily life? How can we, as individuals and a community, work towards experiencing Hashra'as HaShechinah in our time?

May we all merit the full Hashra'as HaShechinah.

3] Yahel Ohr - Hashmatos, Chelek 1, Pg 30

4] Maalas Hatorah 74

5] Daas Ramchal pg 629

6] As recounted in Daas Chaim U'Mussar, by Rav Chaim Walkin Zt'l