

The cloud of glory...

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While the book of Shemot is the book of the Jewish people's exodus from Egypt, it is as much about the building of a free nation, as it is about the development of the relationship between the Jewish people and God, and the relationships between Moses and the Jewish people, and Moses and God.

The end of the book, in the final verses, tells us about the completion of the Mishkan and God's moving into His new home. The cloud of glory envelops the Mishkan, filling it to the point where Moses himself cannot enter¹. What exactly is happening here?

The Or Hachaim views this episode as somewhat strange – what does it mean that Moses cannot come into the Mishkan, after all Moses is the servant of God, the one who speaks to Him face-to-face? He gives a simple answer, basically that now that God is in his home, Moses needs to be invited in!²

The Talmud in Tractate Yoma goes a step further and says that the physical presence of the cloud meant that Moses could not physically enter, and so God grabs him and pulls him in³.

Whether needing an invite or being physically pulled in by the Almighty, what is clear is that now that God has fulfilled his promise to dwell amongst the people, He has truly made this Mishkan his home. But what more can it teach us?

The Pninei Halakha offers an interesting insight, which is that God is constantly revealing himself through the opacity of the cloud, and the discerning of God is dependent on the person's spiritual stature and abilities – Moses was stuck on the outside, was he in awe, did he feel like he could no longer enter, did he misunderstand the previous command that no one shall enter (because surely that didn't apply to him)? We will never know, but according to the Talmud God got sick of waiting and reminded Moses of their relationship and brought him in. We too are standing at the cloud, and while we won't have the privilege of being pulled in by God, we have the ability to discern Godliness through our own capabilities.

At the same time, the cloud, according to the Siyach Yitzchak, teaches us another message, that of how to conduct ourselves. When we are vain we are obscured by the cloud, and when we are humble we are illuminated by the fire (the cloud's nightly transformation)⁵.

The cloud represents Godliness – but it is we who engages with it – spiritually discerning what is within, and potentially being obscured by it.

All citations can be found in **A New Page of Talmud**