

TSEFET'S PERICOPE #84

וְנִטְעַתֶּם כָּל-עֵץ

“UN'ta'tem Kol Ets”

“and plant any tree”

“y plantareis todo árbol”

Vayiqra (Lev.) 19:23 - 20:27

B'Midbar (Num) 28:9-15

Ashlamatah: Is. 65:22 – 66:2, 4-5, 10-11

Special: I Samuel 20:18,42

Psalm 84:1-13

N.C.: 2 Peter 1:16-21

BESB

16. ¶ For we did not rest on self-taught (*self-invented*) wisdom and stories (*myths*) when we made known to you the [*dynamic*] power [*of the ten lights/virtues*] and arrival of our Master Yeshua the Messiah having been eye witness of this man's (*royal Ish*) magnificence. ¹⁷ For, he (*i.e. Messiah*) received (*Heb. "Qibel"*) from G-d our Father approbation and honour^a carried by such a magnificent “daughter of the voice” (*Bat-Kol*) which honoured him saying “this is my beloved son in which I am pleased.” (*A conflation of the following three texts: “Let me tell of the decree: the LORD said to me, “You are My son, I have begotten you this day” (Ps. 2:7), “And He said, “Take your son, your favoured one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you.” (Gen 22:2),*

Greek

¹⁶ Οὐ γὰρ σεσοφισμένοις μύθοις ἐξακολουθήσαντες ἐγνωρίσαμεν ὑμῖν τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δύναμιν καὶ παρουσίαν ἀλλ' ἐπόπται γεννηθέντες τῆς ἐκείνου μεγαλειότητος ¹⁷ λαβὼν γὰρ παρὰ θεοῦ πατρὸς τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν φωνῆς ἐνεχθείσης αὐτῷ τοιαῦδε ὑπὸ τῆς μεγαλοπρεποῦς δόξης οὗτός ἐστιν Ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός εἰς ὃν ἐγὼ εὐδόκησα ¹⁸ καὶ ταύτην τὴν φωνὴν ἡμεῖς ἠκούσαμεν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐνεχθείσαν σὺν αὐτῷ ὄντες ἐν τῷ

^a Friberg, Timothy, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller. Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament. Baker's Greek New Testament Library. Trafford Publishing, 2005 pg 119-120- “manifestation of light radiance, brightness, splendor,” an excellent reputation.

Furthermore, the lexical information would suggest someone created (like Adam ha-rishon) in the image of G-d.

Philo uses as follows...

Spe 1.45 When Moses heard this he betook himself to a second supplication, and said, "I am persuaded by thy explanations that I should not have been able to receive the visible appearance of thy form. But I beseech thee that I may, at all events, **behold the glory that is around thee. And I look upon thy glory to be the powers which attend thee as thy guards**, the comprehension of which having escaped me up to the present time, worketh in me no slight desire of a thorough understanding of it." (Spe 1:45 PHE)

⁴⁵ ταῦτα ἀκούσας ἐπὶ δευτέραν ἰκεσίαν ἦλθε καὶ φησι· "πέπεισμαι μὲν ταῖς σαῖς ὑφηγήσεσιν, ὅτι οὐκ ἂν ἰσχυσα δέξασθαι τὸ τῆς σῆς φαντασίας ἑναργὲς εἶδος. ἰκετεύω δὲ τὴν γοῦν περὶ σὲ **δόξαν θεάσασθαι· δόξαν δὲ σὴν εἶναι νομίζω τὰς περὶ σὲ δορυφορούσας δυνάμεις**, ὧν διαφεύγουσα ἢ κατάληψις ἄχρι τοῦ παρόντος οὐ μικρὸν ἐνεργάζεται μοι πόθον τῆς διαγνώσεως". (Spe 1:45 PHI)

It should be noted that δόξαν is rooted in the thought of an opinion or what one thinks of something.

and “This is My servant, whom I uphold, My chosen one, in whom I delight. I have put My spirit upon him, He will teach the true way to the Gentiles” (Isa 42:1)).¹⁸ And this “daughter of the voice” (Bat-Kol) (speaking) to him, we heard carried from the heavens [when we were] with him in (on) the holy mountain.¹⁹ And we possess [a] the secure^b prophetic Oral Torah which we do well to give attention as a lamp shines in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star (i.e. Venus, fig. used of the Messiah as the “Light bearing One”) may arise in your hearts (minds).²⁰ Knowing (from intimate connection) this first, ALL Prophecy from Scripture is not from one’s own (private) interpretation.²¹ Prophecy did not come by the will of man but by the Ruach HaQodesh which holy men brought forth the Word of G-d.

ὄρει τῷ ἁγίῳ¹⁹ καὶ ἔχομεν βεβαιότερον τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον ὧ καλῶς ποιεῖτε προσέχοντες ὡς λύχνῳ φαίνοντι ἐν ἀύχμηρῷ τόπῳ ἕως οὗ ἡμέρα διαυγάσῃ καὶ φωσφόρος ἀνατείλῃ ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν²⁰ τοῦτο πρῶτον γινώσκοντες ὅτι πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται.²¹ οὐ γὰρ θελήματι ἀνθρώπου ἠνέχθη ποτέ προφητεία ἀλλ’ ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν οἱ ἅγιοι θεοῦ ἀνθρώποι

DELITZSCH HEBREW TRANSLATION

¹⁶ כִּי לֹא הִלְכְנוּ אַחֲרֵי הַגְּדוֹת מְחוֹפְמוֹת בְּהוֹדִיעֵנוּ אֶתְכֶם גְּבוּרַת אֲדוֹנֵינוּ יְשׁוּעַ הַמְּשִׁיחַ וּבָאוּ כִּי עֵינֵינוּ הָיוּ הָרְאוֹת אֶת־גְּדוּלְתוֹ: ¹⁷ כִּי נִשְׂא יָקָר וְכְבוֹד מֵאֵת אֱלֹהִים הָאֵב כָּבֵא אֱלֹיו קוֹל מִלְּפָנֵי הַדָּרַת כְּבוֹדוֹ לֵאמֹר זֶה בְּנֵי יְדִידֵי רְצָתָה נִפְשֵׁי בּוֹ: ¹⁸ וְאֶת־הַקּוֹל הַהוּא שָׁמְעֵנוּ בְּאֲזִינֵינוּ יֵצֵא מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּהִיוֹתֵנוּ עִמּוֹ בְּהַר הַקֹּדֶשׁ: ¹⁹ וְדַבֵּר הַנְּבוּאָה יוֹתֵר קִים אֶתְנוּ וְהִטִּיבְתֶם עֲשׂוֹת אֲשֶׁר שָׁתֶם לְבַכְּם אֱלֹיו כְּנֵר מֵאִיר בְּמִקּוֹם אֶפְלַע־כִּי יִבְקַע אֹר הַיּוֹם וְזָרַח כּוֹכַב הַנְּגִיָּה בְּלִבְבְּכֶם: ²⁰ וְזֹאת תִּדְעוּ רֵאשׁוּנָה אֲשֶׁר כָּל־נְבוּאֹת הַמִּקְרָא אֵינָנָה כְּפִי פִתְרוֹן אָדָם מִלְּבוֹ: ²¹ כִּי מֵעוֹלָם לֹא־יֵצְאָה נְבוּאָה בְּרִצּוֹן הָאָדָם כִּי אֲנִשִּׁי אֱלֹהִים הַקְּדוּשִׁים דְּבָרוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאָם רוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ:

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^b Deissmann (BS, p. 104 ff.) has shown very fully how much force the technical use of this word and its cognates to denote legal guarantee. i.e. covenant (Torah)

INTRODUCTION

This week's translation is a joint effort between His Eminence, His Honor and me. Likewise, I am afraid that my commentary will only be an echo of His Eminence. Given the context of the material I am afraid that I will only be able to offer commentary echoing his words and from a more textual (explanation of the Greek) perspective.

In my Thursday Night Live – Torah Focus class I have commented on the writing and interpretation of the Nazarene Codicil. That material is relevant to this week's commentary. However, I will not replicate that material here. I will simply make a link to that material on [Torah Focus](#).

For we did not rest on self-taught (*self-invented*) wisdom and stories (*myths*) when we made known to you the [*dynamic*] power [*of the ten lights/virtues*] and arrival of our Master Yeshua the Messiah having been eye witness of this man's (*royal Ish*) magnificence.

I arrived at the conclusion that the translation of this opening phrase should be translated “**For we did not rest on self-taught (self-invented) wisdom and stories (myths)**” rather than the traditional “cunningly devised fables” as suggested by the Authorized Version. The accusation here as we have it translated suggests that Hakham Tsefet fabricated the stories of the “Bat –Kol” experience atop the mountain. σοφίζω demands the translation association of “wisdom.” There are two ways in which this conclusion (interpretation) is deduced. The first is from lexical study of ALL the possible words, thoughts and ideas which can be applied. (This took me about four hours) The second is that of contextual interpretation (hermeneutic). I argue that this verse MUST be understood as not being a private invention or fabrication of some “myth – story” as an interpretation and commentary to the Torah. The key to interpreting these passages is LOCKED up in Vayikra 19:31-32; 20:27. Without these verses as the basis for this pericope, the pericope is disconnected from its true objective, meaning and intention.

Rashi - Vayikra 19:31-32

³¹ You shall not turn to [the sorcery of] Ov or Yid'oni; you shall not seek [these and thereby] defile yourselves through them. I am the Lord, your God.

³² You shall rise before a venerable person and you shall respect the elderly, and you shall fear your God. I am the Lord.

Targum Pseudo Jonathan

³¹ Targum Pseudo Jonathan ³¹. Go not astray after those who inquire of impostors, or bring up the dead, or interrogate the bone of Jeddua: neither you be inquirers with them, to pollute yourselves thereby I am the LORD your God.

³² You will rise up before the aged who instruct in the Law and honour the presence of the wise, and fear your God: I am the LORD.

Rashi's Commentary to verses 31-32

31 You shall not turn to [the sorcery of] Ov or Yid'oni. This is a warning against one who practices the sorcery of Ov or Yid'oni. [And what are these forms of sorcery?] One who practices the sorcery of Ov is “Pithom the sorcerer” (see Rashi Deut. 18:11); [he communes with the dead, as it were, by raising the spirit of the dead, which then] speaks from his armpit. [And one who practices

the sorcery of] Yid'oni inserts the bone of a creature called Yido'a (see Bartenura, Mishnah Kilayim 8:5) into his mouth, and the bone speaks [from there].-[Torath Kohanim 19:79; Sanh. 65b]

you shall not seek to occupy yourselves with these [types of sorcery], for if you do occupy yourselves with them, you will become defiled before Me [says God], and I will deem you abominable.

I am the Lord, your God Know Whom you are exchanging for whom [i.e., you would be exchanging "the Lord, your God" for these futile sorceries].-[Torath Kohanim 19:79]

32 You shall rise before a venerable person One might think [that the commandment refers to rising before] an old person, [even though he may be] guilty [of transgression]. Scripture, therefore, says, *zakan* the term *zakan* exclusively refers to one who has acquired wisdom [see Num. 11:16, where the same term refers to great, wise men, and therefore not guilty of transgression].-[Torath Kohanim 19: 80; Kid. 32b]

and you shall respect the elderly What is meant by "respecting" [the elderly]? One may not sit in his place, speak in his stead [when it is the elder's turn to speak], or contradict him. [Since one is obligated to rise before the elderly only when the latter enters within one's four cubits,] one might think that he may close his eyes [when the elder approaches], as if he did not see him [and thus evade the obligation to rise before him]! Therefore Scripture adds here, "and you shall fear your God," for this matter is privately known to the one who commits it, and no one knows about it except the person himself, and, concerning any matter known only in the heart [of one person,], Scripture says, "and you shall fear your God," [for God knows man's thoughts].-[Torath Kohanim 19:80; Kid. 31b, 32b]

In repetition, I have cited the above materials because these passages inspired Hakham Tsefet to write the words of this week's pericope. Hakham Tsefet's is answering an accusation with polemic. This polemic tells us that Hakham Tsefet could NEVER have invented or fabricated such a story.

Verse 27 of Vayikra weaves the above cited verses into the final thoughts that Hakham Tsefet is playing on.

Rashi - Vayikra 20.27

²⁷ And a man or a woman who has [the sorcery of] Ov or Yid'oni, shall surely be put to death; they shall pelt them with stones; their blood is upon themselves.

Targum Pseudo Jonathan

²⁷ And the man or the woman who has in them (the spirit of) divination or necromancy will die by the casting of stones; for they are guilty of death.

Vayikra 20:27 [And a man or a woman] who has [the sorcery of] Ov or Yid'oni Here, regarding those [who practice the sorcery of Ov or Yid'oni,] Scripture states death, while above (verse 6), Scripture states excision. [With] witnesses and warning [not to commit the sin], they incur [death by] stoning, but if [the perpetrators transgress] willfully but without warning, they incur excision; and if they transgress unintentionally, [they must bring] a sin-offering. And this [general principle regarding death, excision or sin-offering,] applies to all who are subject to the death penalty, about whom excision is also stated.

The question would remain, why Hakham Tsefet could not have fabricated this story. In short the answer to the question is that Hakham Tsefet associates the fabrication of such stories to

sorcery, divination and necromancy. Furthermore, Hakham Tsefet transmits a factual account of events that he “witnessed.” **“having been eye witness of this man’s (royal Ish) magnificence.”** Later we will see that the “eye-witness” account is stated in the plural. This meets the Torah mandated command of having more than one witness. Consequently, the argument of Hakham Tsefet is not based strictly on his personal eye-witness account. The statement “σὺν αὐτῷ ὄντες” – “we were with him” stated in the plural, indicates that there was more than one person present to witness the event. **IF** this event is a reference to the transfiguration, which we will discuss later, we know from the Mesorah of Mark that Hakham Tsefet, Yaakov and Yochanan were all present. Consequently, the story would be corroborated by the three Arch-Talmidim of Yeshua.

Perhaps I have taken the long road to make my point. Nevertheless, I believe that the above cited material inspired the words of Hakham Tsefet. All the material for interpreting this week’s pericope **MUST** be found in this week’s Torah Seder. Therefore the materials cited and alluded to by Hakham Tsefet tell us that he did NOT invent some “wives tale” to be transmitted as a factual account of the Masters approbation and honor. In jest we have referred to this system of hermeneutic “handkerchief hermeneutics.” As noted last week, from time to time Rashi uses a “theme-detail-theme” apparatus to interpret the Torah. The reason Rashi uses such an apparatus is that this is how the Torah section, being interpreted is laid out. This is not some new invention by Rashi. Rashi simply follows the system found in the Torah. Consequently, this is the basis for the way that Hakham Tsefet produced this pericope. We will further develop this idea in that latter part of this commentary. It should be very evident to the reader that the system of “handkerchief hermeneutics” is woven into Hakham Tsefet’s pericope. He begins with the detail of NOT making up or inventing his own stories, or as the context demands interpreting scripture from personal perspective. While we are readily able to find applicable situations and messages from the Torah Seder we are not at liberty to make up interpretations and commentaries from thought not derived from the chain of transmission. Here I reiterate that the student is subject to his teacher (Hakham). Any other “interpretation,” according to Hakham Tsefet is invalid. **“ALL Prophecy from Scripture is not from one’s own (private) interpretation.”**

When we made known to you the [dynamic] power [of the ten lights/virtues]...

The Greek text uses the all famous word “**δύναμιν**” *dunamion* from **δύναμις** *dunamis*. This word is translated in a number of ways. It is cross-translated into English with such words a “dynamic,” from the idea of dynamite. Like many other words, **δύναμις** *dunamis* must be looked at in its context. Here the text subtly reminds the reader, one final time of the “ten lights of Messiah.”

In short the “ten lights” are also equated with the “ten men” who guide the Esnoga. In this respect, we see “Ten Men” of power (with dynamic power). The word **δύναμις** *dunamis* is associated with “supernatural power.” My use of super-natural is based on the understanding that super means from M.L. *supernaturalis* “above or beyond nature,” from L. super “above” + natura “nature” “above” and natural means “nature.” Therefore, their powers are above the powers of nature. It is amazing that the “Ten Men” should be empowered with supernatural power. I believe this relates to decision-making and a great number of other possibilities.

For, he (i.e. Messiah) received (Heb. “Qibel”)

I have argued for this Hebrew word based on the fact that the Greek λαβών *-labon* is seldom used and translated with difficulty in the LXX. None of the cases match the context of our present pericope. Therefore, I have followed the handkerchief hermeneutic and argued for “Qibel.”

Approbation and Honour

This phrase is usually translated “honour and glory.” I argue here for approbation and honour. τιμήν is used in the LXX in such cases as Shemot 20.12 “honor” parents. However, the word is more broadly associated with the moral quality of keeping the mitzvot of HaShem. Gn. 38.23; 1 S. 15.30; 2 S. 6.20. Hebrew does not have a direct equivalent. Therefore, τιμήν is paralleled by Hebrew words like H1935 *hod*, H3366 *yeqar* and H3519 *kavod* only to mention a few of twelve possibilities. Philo uses the word τιμήν in the same manner as the LXX. In short the word τιμήν means something of value. I have translated “approbation” because he received the approval of G-d for his achievements and thereby become something (someone) of value to G-d. However, I must qualify this statement with a question. How did Yeshua receive this approbation? Was the approbation simply the result of this Bat Kol or was there some other mechanism in place?

His Eminence has pointed out in his commentary to this section that the qualifications for the label “Rabbi” meant approbation by the House of Hillel. Here I must absolutely concur. Therefore, the initial approbation by the House of Hillel tells us that Yeshua was a Rabbi approved by Hillel, which in turn brings the approbation of G-d. In other words, Yeshua receives the approbation of G-d ONLY because he has received the approbation of the House of Hillel at his ordination as a Rabbi.

I find this vocabulary especially interesting given that fact that the Torah Seder tells us that we are to honor the elders. Rashi goes to some detail exactly who those elders are.

A Magnificent Voice

18 And this “daughter of the voice” (*Bat-Kol*) (*speaking*) to him, we heard carried from the heavens [*when we were*] with him in (*on*) the holy mountain.

A HERMENEUTIC EXERCISE

This pericope is specially suited to the hermeneutic process. This is because Hakham Tsefet is telling us that we are not allowed to venture our own interpretation of any Scripture of Oral Torah. Therefore, we MUST follow the hermeneutic practices of the Chazal before we can ever venture to posit a thesis.

At this juncture I would like to posit my thesis to see if it might possibly be true. I will insert my thesis and hermeneutic process to see how we must approach the text to prove or disprove a point.

Thesis

2 Peter 1:18 is a reference to Mark 9:2-8 where the mountain top experience mentioned there is referred to by Hakham Tsefet here in our present pericope. The thesis as it will stand will prove or disprove that the mountain experience of Mark 9:3-8 was on Mt Hermon or some other “Holy

Mountain.” This hermeneutic can be used to determine possibility, probability and or impossibility of several thoughts that we will encounter along the way.

The Difficulty...

In 2 Peter 1:18 Hakham Tsefet uses the phrase ἐν τῷ ὄρει τῷ ἁγίῳ “in (on) the Holy Mountain.” The difficulty is the use of ἁγίῳ “holy” to describe τῷ ὄρει “the mountain.” We must assert here that the mountain be called “holy” which implies the presence of the Shechinah and it must be a place given to the heavenly voice or the Bat Kol. The phrase “Holy Mountain” relates to three possible mountains. The First Mountain, as noted should be Har Sinai. The Second Mountain is Har haBayit (the Temple Mount). And, the Final location is Tz’fat, the location of modern Safed in northern Yisrael. Therefore, if the thesis posited is true a fourth mountain will be Mount Hermon or we will verify one of the other mentioned locations. However, we have no precedent in Scripture that refers to Mount Hermon as being “holy” therefore; our hermeneutic must prove or disprove our thesis that Mount Hermon is a “holy mountain” and the possible location of the “Bat Kol.”

Keeping in mind the “**Knowing (from intimate connection) this first, ALL Prophecy from Scripture is NOT from one’s own (PRIVATE) interpretation**” we will follow appropriate hermeneutic (Rabbinic) process to determine the possibilities.

Therefore, we must turn to the Chazal (Sages of blessed memory) to determine the validity of our thesis.

1. We must realize that the language of our present pericope source is Greek though, the mindset is Hebrew. Therefore we must translate the Greek language back to its original Hebrew.
2. The Greek word ἁγίῳ is paralleled in the Hebrew **שְׁדֵי** *qodesh*.
3. We must define **שְׁדֵי** *qodesh*.
4. We should use Biblical sources to determine if there are any parallels with our current thesis. We should look for mountain top experiences and their parallels to determine if our thesis is valid.

Definition

The verb *qādash* in the Qal connotes the state of that which belongs to the sphere of the sacred. Thus it is distinct from the common or profane. In the Piel and Hiphil it connotes the act by which the distinction is affected. It is a denominative verb.

The suggestion that the root *qdash* is derived from an original biliteral *qd* ("cut") is attractive but tenuous in view of the uncertainties surrounding the transmission of biliteral roots to the biliteral form. The meaning "to separate" is favored by many scholars, but the fact that *qdash* rarely, if ever, occurs in a secular sense makes any positive conclusion in this regard difficult because of the limited evidence on which to base philological comparison.^c

^c TWOT entry **שְׁדֵי**

Upon scrutiny of our Torah Seder and related readings, one will note Rashi's commentary on the Torah Seder we note the following criteria.

Vayikra 19:30 And revere My Sanctuary One may not enter [the Temple Mount] with his [walking] staff, his shoes, with his money belt, or with the dust on his feet. [Yev. 6b] And although I warn you regarding the [holiness of the] Sanctuary, [says God,] nevertheless—"You shall observe My Sabbaths"—the construction of the Sanctuary does not supersede [the laws of the] Sabbath. [Yev. 6a].

We need to follow the appropriate hermeneutic that will answer the question of how a location is considered "holy." We have a case where two words from our thesis appear in Scripture. This case, found in Scripture will help us solve our problem.

Shemot 3:5 And He said, "Do not draw near here. Take your shoes off your feet, because the **place upon** which you **stand** is **holy soil**."

Ramban of blessed memory, by hermeneutic tells us that this experience took place atop Har Sinai.^d Therefore, following Ramban's hermeneutic we can see that the cited verse is on top of Har Sinai. However, we will need further proof, unless Ramban is citing earlier Rabbinic sources.

We now have similar language and experience with Hakham Tsefet's "Holy Mountain."

1. Mountain top
2. And the use holy

Jewish Commentaries on this passage offer a great deal of help by telling us that there is another similar or related incident in Yehoshua 5:15.

Yehoshua 5:15 And the captain of the Lord's host said to Joshua, Remove your shoe from your foot; for the place upon which you **stand** is **holy**. And Joshua did so.

The language of these two verses varies only slightly. The text of Shemot uses "**the place** where you are **standing** is **holy ground**." The text of Yehoshua states, "**the place** you are upon is **holy**."

The language is close enough that Jewish Scholar such as Ramban and other cite these verses in order to draw hermeneutic conclusion.

The conclusion of Ramban,^e The Artscroll Chumash^f and the Hertz Pentateuch^g is that "wherever the Shechinah has appeared one must not go about with his shoes on. The Priests minister in the temple (also a Holy Mountain) in bare feet" as noted above.

However, these sources must also cite Rabbinic tradition to validate their claims. Again, Hakham Tsefet would reiterate "**Knowing (from intimate connection) this first, ALL Prophecy from Scripture is NOT from one's own (PRIVATE) interpretation.**" Therefore we need Rabbinic

^d Ramban, The Torah; with Ramban's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated, Sefer Devarim, Artscroll Series, Mesorah Publications Ltd, June 2008 pg.44

^e Ibid

^f The Stone Edition Chumash, Mesorah Publications, ltd , Artscroll Series. Pg 301-302

^g The Pentateuch and Haftorahs, Edited by Dr. J.H. Hertz C.H. London Soncino Press 1992 pg. 214

sources to either validate or destroy our claims. The validation of the above cited materials is found in Shemot Rabbah.

Shemot Rabbah II:6 PUT OFF THY SHOES. Wherever the Shechinah appears one must not go about with shoes on; and so we find in the case of Joshua: Put off thy shoes (Josh. V, 15).¹⁰ Hence the priests ministered in the Temple, barefooted.

Yehoshua was NOT on top of a mountain. But, the **place** where he stood was “**holy.**” Could this possibly validate our thesis? Let us see.

1. Moshe stood on “**holy ground**” and was required to remove his shoes.
2. Yehoshua was confronted by a *malak* (messenger) who required him to remove his shoes because he was on a **holy place**. Given the location of this event, it seems plausible that the site of this episode was the eventual spot where the Mishkan sat when it entered Eretz Yisrael.

We can logically deduce from the above-cited Midrash that wherever the Shechinah appears is “**a holy place**” or “**holy ground.**”

If we stopped our hermeneutic here it might appear as though we had solved our problem. This would require us to say that the Shechinah appeared on Hakham Tsefet’s “mountain” and therefore, it should be called “holy.” This would possibly equate Mount Hermon with other places recognized as “holy.” However, we cannot stop here because we have **NOT** solved the problem or answered our question yet. So what is the problem?

Our translation says that Hakham Tsefet heard a “**Bat-Kol.**” This posits a further question, are the Shechinah and a Bat Kol the same thing? We have Hakham Tsefet’s account of a Bat Kol. But, is the **Bat Kol the Shechinah**?

Again, we must find our answer in the Chazal.

Yoma 9b What is ‘sasmagor? - R. Abba says it is the divine^h voice as it has been taught: After the later prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi had died, the Holy Spiritⁱ departed from Israel, but they still availed themselves of the Bath Kol.^j

Sotah 48b Come and hear: When the first Temple was destroyed the cities with pasture land^k were abolished, the Urim and Thummim ceased, there was no more a king from the House of David; and if anyone incites you to quote, And the governor said unto them that they should not eat of the most holy things till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim,^l reply to him: [It is only a phrase for the very remote future] as when one man says to another, ‘Until the dead revive and the Messiah, son of David, comes! — But, said R. Nahman: Who are the former prophets? [The term ‘former’] excludes Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi who are the latter [prophets]. For our Rabbis

^h Bath Kol (v. Glos.). Just as some part of the cedar is unaffected by the worm, surviving the ruin, so was the gift of the divine voice a remnant of God’s grace, even after the destruction. V., however, Cant. Rab. VIII, 11

ⁱ Of prophecy.

^j V. Sot. 48b.

^k For the Levites; v. Num. XXXV, 2.

^l Ezra II, 63. From this verse it would appear that the Urim and Thummim continued up to the destruction of the first Temple, contrary to the view of R. Huna.

have taught: When Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi died, the Holy Spirit^m 10 departed from Israel; nevertheless they made use of the Bath Kol.ⁿ On one occasion [some Rabbis] were sitting in the upper chamber of Gurya's house in Jericho; a Bath Kol was granted to them from heaven which announced, 'There is in your midst one man who is deserving that the Shechinah should alight upon him, but his generation is unworthy of it'. They all looked at Hillel the elder; and when he died, they lamented over him, 'Alas, the pious man! Alas, the humble man! Disciple of Ezra!' On another occasion they were sitting in an upper chamber in Jabneh; a Bath Kol was granted to them from heaven which announced, 'There is in your midst one man who is deserving that the Shechinah should alight upon him, but his generation is unworthy of it'. They all looked at Samuel the Little;^o and when he died, they lamented over him, 'Alas, the humble man! Alas, the pious man! Disciple of Hillel! At the time of his death he also said,^p 'Simeon and Ishmael^q [are destined] for the sword and their colleagues for death, and the rest of the people for spoliation, and great distress will come upon the nation.' They also wished to lament over R. Judah b. Baba,^r 'Alas, the pious man! Alas, the humble man!' But the times were disturbed and they could not lament publicly over those who had been slain by the government.

When we study further ALL the citations of "Bat Kol" in the Rabbinic sources we will see that the **"Bat Kol" and the Shechinah are NOT the same thing.** Therefore, we must conclude that the Bat Kol is of lesser authority and supremacy than the presence of the Shechinah. Likewise, we see that the Bat-Kol is not equal to the Shechinah or prophecy. While the presence of the Bat Kol would certainly be awe-inspiring we have no precedential case to prove that when a Bat Kol is present that we should label the experience "holy." In point of fact, when we study various manifestations of the Bat Kol in rabbinic materials we see that the Bat Kol is often argued against when determining halacha in Rabbinic secessions.

Thus, the "Magnificent Voice" (Bat Kol) of Hakham Tsefet 1:18 and the "Voice" of Mark 9:2-8 are not the "Divine Presence" (Shechinah) and of lesser authority than the Shechinah.

Hence, we CANNOT prove that Hakham Tsefet's "holy mountain" was Mount Hermon or that 2Peter 1:18 is a direct reference to Mark 9:2-8. Here we must deduce that Hakham Tsefet understands the appropriate use of "holy" in relation to the Shechinah. If Hakham Tsefet uses the term "Holy" is another fashion it would debunk the whole thesis and hermeneutic exercise.

In the process of our hermeneutic, I considered the Yehoshua passage where the "malak" is present and causes Yehoshua to remove his shoes as a means of proving our thesis. When we look at the passage, we determine that the "Malak" is an agent of HaShem. Therefore, as HaShem's "agent" he carries the same authority as the Shechinah. Someone might argue that the cited Mark passage contains two "messengers" Moshe and Eliyahu. The difficulty with this statement is that while Hakham Tsefet sees them talking with Yeshua they are NOT the source of the "Magnificent Voice" – Bat Kol.

Therefore, we CANNOT, at present prove that the present pericope is a reference to Mark 9:2-8 unless the experience of Mark 9:2-9 does NOT occur on Mount Hermon. If the experience of

^m Divine inspiration.

ⁿ V. Gios.

^o A famous pupil of Hillel who died about a decade after the destruction of the second Temple.

^p Under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

^q Probably Simeon b. Gamaliel and Ishmael b. Elisha who were put to death after the capture of Jerusalem. See the full discussion in R.T. Herford, op. cit., pp. 129ff.

^r A victim of the Hadrianic Persecution. For further notes on this passage, v. Sanh. (Sonc. ed.) p. 46.

Mark 9:2-8 happened at another location, it might be plausible to think that 2 Peter 1:17-18 refer to Mark 9:2-8.

Because Hakham Tsefet says that the Bat Kol and the Shechinah were both present at the “holy mountain”, we must conclude that the incident in question happened at Har Sinai or Har haBayit or Tz’fat.

Now we must consider the other possibilities if we are proving or disproving that 2Pe. 1:17-18 is a reference to Mark 9:2-8. I shall not labor to prove my point here but we are certain that the events of Mark 9:2-8 took place in northern Yisrael. In pericope 65-66, we see that Yeshua and his talmidim are near the Galilee, specifically in the neighborhood of Capernaum (The town of Nachum – ha Navi). Therefore, we must surmise that the incident for the transfiguration took place somewhere in that region. Given this material and adding to our hermeneutic, we see that the Har haBayit (Temple Mount) could not have been the location of the said Bat Kol and Shechinah experience. This leaves us with either Har Sinai or Tz’fat. We know that (contending modern scholars and archeologists) that Har Sinai is not in Eretz Yisrael. This of course leaves us with Tz’fat.

Let look at what some of the Rabbis say about Tz’fat to see if it meets the criteria, we have laid out.

Tsfat, a town high in the mountains in the north of Israel, is considered one of the four "**holy** cites." The others are Hevron ('earth'), Yerushalayim ('fire'), and Tiverya ('water').

Tsfat is associated with the element of air, and "the air of the Holy Land makes one wise." **The Zohar, a primary source of Jewish mysticism, states that the air of Zefat is the purest in all of Israel.** It is no coincidence that the holy Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, known as "the Ari", revealed great depths of kabbalah while living in Tsfat. **The Zohar also states that the Moshiach will come first to the Galilee, in the north of Israel;** the Remaz, a main commentary on the Zohar, states unequivocally that this is referring to Tsfat!

R. Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk established the first Chassidic community in Tsfat more than two hundred years ago, but soon moved to Tiberias. When asked why he had moved, he answered that the air in **Tsfat is so pure and holy that he kept hearing heavenly voices** calling through the night and he couldn't get a decent night's sleep.^s

We see that according to Rabbinic thought Tz’fat meets the needed criteria given to us in 2Pe 1:17-18 and Mark 9:2-8. I would like to draw your attention to the places where I have bolded the text. Note, it is one of four “Holy” cities and that Rabbi Menachen Mendel of Vitebsk heard heavenly voices. The Holy Zohar says that Messiah will come to Tz’fat on his way to Jerusalem. His Eminence has taught me that this has already happened (note the Mark passages). It should also be noted that when we look at Mark 6: 1-6a weighed against their Gemara parallel that we find that the “Hometown of Messiah was Tz’fat.

Let us look at one more opinion. This opinion is a bit more secular. However, I think you will find this interesting.

^s <http://www.ascentofsafed.com/cgi-bin/ascent.cgi?Name=tsfat>

Welcome to the [web-site](#) of the ancient city of Safed (also spelled Safed, Zefat, Tsfat, Zfat, Safad, Safes, Safet, Tzfat, etc.). A rather small town located in Northern Israel, 900 meters (3200 feet) above sea level in the **mountains of the Upper Galilee**, it commands magnificent views east to the Golan, north to the Hermon and Lebanon, west to Mt. Meron and the Amud Valley, and south to Tiberias and the Kinneret (Sea of Galilee).

For a long time Safed has been a well kept secret, even to most Israelis. However, according to the great mystics of the past, Safed is to play an important role in the final redemption. The **Meam Loetz**, in the name of **Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai**, says that the **Messiah will come from Safed on his way to Jerusalem**. The Ari HaKodesh said that until the Third Temple is built, **the Shechinah (God's Manifest Presence) rests above Safed**.

Its past is also rich and great. According to legend, Safed is where **Shem and Ever, son and grandson of Noah, established their yeshiva where Jacob (Yaakov Avinu) studied for many years**. According to other sources, the town was founded in 70AD. The city flourished in the 16th century, when many famous Jewish religious scholars and mystics moved to Safed following the Spanish Expulsion,, fleeing from the horrors of the Inquisition. Safed then became the spiritual center of the Jewish world, where Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism) reached the peak of its influence. Kabbalists, such as Rabbi Yitzhak Luria (Ha-Ari HaKadosh) and Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz (author of Lecha Dodi) and Rabbi Yosef Karo (author of the Shulchan Aruch) just to name a few, made the city famous. It was here that the first printing press in the Middle East was set up, publishing in 1578 the first Hebrew book to be printed in Israel. At that time, the town was also a thriving trade center. However, Safed suffered terribly during the ensuing years due to earthquakes, plagues and Arab attacks. In modern times, the liberation of Safed was one of the most dramatic episodes in the 1948 War of Independence.

Safed is one of the four holy cities in Israel, together with Jerusalem, Hebron and Tiberias. The old part of town consists of narrow cobblestone alleys revealing artists' galleries, medieval synagogues, private homes and small guesthouses. Despite its small population (ca 27,000), Safed is once again making its mark on the map.^t

Notice the overlapping materials from this website.

Conclusion

The incident of Mark 9:2-8 did NOT occur on Mount Hermon. It DID occur on the Mountain of Tz'fat. Therefore, I conclude that 2Pe 1:18 does in fact refer to mark 9:2-8.

Perhaps someone will need a bit more persuasion. I have reiterated in this hermeneutic that we must use our handkerchief hermeneutic to validate our thesis. This causes me to ask another question. Is there anything in the weekly readings that would suggest that Tz'fat is the site of the transfiguration?

I believe that Hakham Tsefet is making a subtle allusion to the fact that Tz'fat was the location of the transfiguration by incorporating his reference to it in this pericope. Where is this subtle reference? B'Midbar (Num) 28:9-15! For those who are keeping abreast of the readings and how they relate to the festival and New Moon you will recognize that the B'Midbar passage is the passage that we read for the New Moon. How can this possibly tell us that Hakham Tsefet was

^t <http://www.safed.co.il/>

referring to Tz'fat? Tz'fat was one of the mountains upon which the signal fire was lit to advance the news of the New Moon. Here I believe Hakham Tsefet knew that the new moon was approaching so he included this small nuance alluding to it in his reference to the transfiguration.

A Flawed Thesis and a proven Hermeneutic

While it may seem disappointing that I was at present unable to prove my thesis that Mount Hermon was the "Holy Mountain" of the transfiguration I am glad that the hermeneutic helped me travel the path of the Chazal (Sages of Blessed memory) to make this determination. Having derived at the **truth** (that Tz'fat is the place of the transfiguration) elates me even more. Therefore, I am actually glad to experience this process. I am even gladder to sit at the feet of the Sages (Our Sage and Hakham) and drink in their (his) words.

I am certain that there is much more to say on this matter. However, I will conclude these thoughts for the present.

Prophecy did not come by the will of man but by Ruach haKodesh which brought forth the Word of G-d.

What a fascinating verse! I know that many scholars, teachers and preachers have abused this verse. I have stated before and I reiterate here. The translation of the Nazarene Codicil **MUST** be done within the confines of the material it is trying to translate and comment on. Here Hakham Tsefet is **CLEARLY** giving comment on and elucidates Vayikra 19:31-37; 20:27.

I think I have made my point through the hermeneutic exercise. We **MUST NOT** rely on our own conjecture. This conjecture will lead men astray **EVERY TIME**. I believe that Hakham Tsefet is equating such practices with sorcery, divination and necromancy. I am certain I do **NOT** want to association with that group.

CONNECTIONS TO TORAH READINGS

Torah Seder

I have elaborated at length above on how I believe that the Torah Seder is woven into the fabric of Hakham Tsefet's commentary and thoughts. In short, I believe the verses of Vayikra 19: 30-33 along with 20:27 inspired the words of Hakham Tsefet. Therefore, I will not elaborate any further here.

Tehillim

Hakham Tsefet speaks of Yeshua haMashiach (the anointed) which matches verse 10 of the Psalm. The Psalm further discusses the "day" as does Hakham Tsefet. Our Psalmist sees the sun and Hakham Tsefet sees the "day Star" knowing that the sun is soon to follow. I believe that all of this is a play on the ritual of the morning Tamid as elaborated in Yoma 3

Ashlamatah

The Ashlamatah discusses those who will not hearken to the voice of G-d in verse Yeshayahu 66:4. Hakham Tsefet alludes to the idea that men will not listen to the voice of G-d. They would rather fabricate their own ideas than follow the things of Scripture and Oral Torah.

RELATED MITZVOT

246	Not to eat of the Tree's produce for the first three years	Vayikra 19:23
247	The precept of the tree's fourth year	Vayikra 19:23-24
248	Not to eat after the manner of a Glutton drunkard	Vayikra 19:26
249	Not to practice augury (follow after omens)	Vayikra 16:26
250	Prohibition against practicing conjuring	Vayikra 19:26
251	Prohibition against rounding off the corners of the head	Vayikra 19:27
252	Prohibition against marring the edge of the beard	Vayikra 19:27
253	Prohibition against inscribing a tattoo in the flesh	Vayikra 19:28
254	The Precept of reverent awe for the Temple	Vayikra 19:30
255	The precept against acting as an Ov (Medium)	Vayikra 19:31
256	Prohibition against functioning like a Yid'oni (Wizard)	Vayikra 19:31
257	The Mitzvah of Honoring a Scholar	Vayikra 19:32
258	The prohibition against cheating in measures	Vayikra 19:35
259	Precept of honest weights and measures	Vayikra 19:36
260	Prohibition against cursing one's father or mother	Vayikra 20:9
261	Precept that whoever incurs death by burning is burned	Vayikra 20:14
262	Prohibition against following the traditions of the Amorites	Vayikra 20:23

RELATED MISHNAYOT

M. Orlah (and entire tractate)	M. Middot
Tosefta Orlah 1:1 (and entire tractate)	M. Tamid
M. Makkot ch3	M. Sanhedrin ch7, 9, 10
M. Nazir ch8	M. Kiddushin ch1
M. Berachot ch9	M. Bava batra ch5
M. Megillah ch4	M. Bava M'tzia ch5

BS"D (B'Siyata D'Shamaya)
Aramaic: With the help of Heaven