Parashat Pekudei: Forbidden Divinity

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Shemot 40:34-35	
וַיְכַס הֶעָנָן אֶת־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וּכְבוֹד יְהוָה מָלֵא אֶת־הַמִּשְׁכָּן: וְלֹא־יָכֹל מֹשֶׁה לָבוֹא אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד כִּי־שָׁכַן עָלָיו הֶעָנָן וּכְבוֹד יְהוָה מָלֵא אֶת־הַמִּשְׁכָּן:	…the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting and the Presence of God filled the Tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the Presence of God filled the Tabernacle.

1. **Why Couldn't Moshe Enter the Tent?**

Rashbam on Shemot 40:35	
כי שכן עליו הענן - מיד להראות חיבתו של הקדוש ברוך הוא על ישראל, אחר כך היה מסתלק הענן מתוך האהל ושכן על הארון, כדכתיב: ונועדתי שמה ודברתי אתך מבין שני הכרובים. ואז בא משה אל אהל מועד, כדכתיב: ובבא משה אל אהל מועד לדבר אתו וישמע את הקול וגו' מבין שני הכרובים וידבר אליו. וכן אתה מוצא בבית עולמים: ולא יכלו הכהנים לעמוד לשרת מפני הענן כי מלא כבוד ה' את בית ה' בשעת השלמת הבית היה הקב"ה מקדשו בענן ואחר כך היה מצמצם שכינתו על הארון בין הבדים.	**כי שכן עליו הענן -** immediately after it had been put up. This was a way of God to demonstrate His love for the people of Israel. Later on, the cloud moved from being over the Tabernacle and filling the whole Tabernacle with its presence and concentrated on being above the Holy Ark. This has been explained in where the Torah defines the site of the Shekhinah as being between the two cherubs on the kapporet, the lid of the Holy Ark. Moses is described as hearing the voice of God originating from the area between the extended wings of these two figurines. We found something similar when the Temple Solomon had built was inaugurated that the priests could not enter due to the presence of God which filled the Temple. God also had appeared in a cloud, much as He had in the desert. Subsequently, He reduced His presence to the area we described, enabling the priests to perform their duties. t.

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed- Peninei Halakhah Days of Awe 10:7:5	
כדי להבין את משמעות ענן הקטורת, צריך לדעת שכך הוא סדר הגילוי האלוקי לישראל – בעב הענן, שנאמר (שמות כד, טו-טז): "וַיְכַס הֶעָנָן אֶת הָהָר. וַיִּשְׁכֹּן כְּבוֹד ה' עַל הַר סִינַי וַיְכַסֵּהוּ הֶעָנָן שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים, וַיִּקְרָא אֶל מֹשֶׁה בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִתּוֹךְ הֶעָנָן". הענן מבטא גילוי אלוקי עליון ונשגב שמעבר לתפישה האנושית, ומתוך הענן והערפל יכול האדם לקלוט ולהבין את העניין האלוקי בהדרגה כפי כוחו. וכן נאמר לאחר גמר הקמת	To grasp the meaning of this cloud of incense smoke, one must first realize that this was patterned on how God revealed Himself to Israel – in the opacity of the cloud. Thus, we read, "The cloud covered the mountain. The Glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud hid it for six days. On the seventh day, He called to Moshe from the midst of the cloud" (Shemot 24:15-16). The cloud connotes an exalted and sublime divine revelation beyond human comprehension. Yet through the fog and cloud, one can reach an understanding of the divine, albeit only partially, in accordance with his capabilities. Thus, we read that after the *Mishkan* was completed, "The cloud covered

[1] All translations are from Sefaria, unless otherwise noted.

המשכן (שמות מ, לד-לה): "וַיְכַס הֶעָנָן אֶת אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וּכְבוֹד ה' מָלֵא אֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן. וְלֹא יָכֹל מֹשֶׁה לָבוֹא אֶל אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד, כִּי שָׁכַן עָלָיו הֶעָנָן וּכְבוֹד ה' מָלֵא אֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן". בתחילה הגילוי עליון ונשגב עד שאין אדם יכול לעמוד בפניו, ורק לאחר מכן מתוך הענן והערפל יתגלה העניין האלוקי בהדרגה כפי כוחם של הכהנים. וכן מצינו בעת הקמת בית המקדש הראשון (מלכים א' ח, ו-יא): "וַיָּבִאוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת אֲרוֹן בְּרִית ה' אֶל מְקוֹמוֹ אֶל דְּבִיר הַבַּיִת אֶל קֹדֶשׁ הַקָּדָשִׁים אֶל תַּחַת כַּנְפֵי הַכְּרוּבִים... וַיְהִי בְּצֵאת הַכֹּהֲנִים מִן הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְהֶעָנָן מָלֵא אֶת בֵּית ה'. וְלֹא יָכְלוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים לַעֲמֹד לְשָׁרֵת מִפְּנֵי הֶעָנָן כִּי מָלֵא כְּבוֹד ה' אֶת בֵּית ה'".	the *Ohel Mo'ed* and the Presence of the Lord filled the *Mishkan*. Moshe could not enter the *Ohel Mo'ed*, because the cloud had settled upon it and the Presence of the Lord filled the *Mishkan*" (Shemot 40:34-35). Similarly, when the First Temple was dedicated, we read, "The *kohanim* brought the Ark of the Lord's Covenant to its place underneath the wings of the *keruvim*, in the Shrine of the House, in the *Kodesh Ha-kodashim*…. When the *kohanim* came out of the *Kodesh*, the cloud had filled the House of the Lord, and the *kohanim* were unable to stand and serve because of the cloud, for the Presence of the Lord filled the House of the Lord" (1 Melakhim 8:6, 11). First was a sublime, exalted revelation that no human being could endure, and only afterward, from within the cloud and fog, would the divine idea become revealed gradually, according to the abilities of the *kohanim*.

2. The Divine Around Us

Jon D. Levenson, "The Jerusalem Temple in Devotional and Visionary Experience," *Jewish Spirituality*
The Tent is the vehicle for communication with God; in it, oracles are received. God's visible "Presence" (kavod) renders the Tent and its sacrificial apparatus sacred. But the sanctity does not preclude immediate human contact; it only restricts it to the chosen priesthood (kohanim), Aaron, and his male descendants. The Tent is a visible relationship between God and Israel, a relationship whose other great testimony is the exodus.

Nahum Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus*, 237
34. "cloud...Presence": The function of the Tabernacle was to create a portable Sinai, a means by which a continued avenue of communication with God could be maintained. As the people move away from the mount of revelation, they need a visible, tangible symbol of God's ever-abiding Presence in their midst...

Bavli Yoma 4b	
"וַיִּקְרָא אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר", לָמָּה הִקְדִּים קְרִיאָה לְדִיבּוּר? לִימְּדָה תּוֹרָה דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ, שֶׁלֹּא יֹאמַר אָדָם דָּבָר לַחֲבֵירוֹ אֶלָּא אִם כֵּן קוֹרֵהוּ. מְסַיַּיע לֵיהּ לְרַבִּי חֲנִינָא. דְּאָמַר רַבִּי חֲנִינָא: לֹא יֹאמַר אָדָם דָּבָר לַחֲבֵירוֹ אֶלָּא אִם כֵּן קוֹרֵהוּ. "לֵאמֹר", אָמַר רַבִּי (מוֹסָיָא בַּר בְּרֵיהּ דְּרַבִּי מַסְיָא מְשָׁמֵיהּ דְּרַבִּי מוֹסָיָא) רַבָּה: מִנַּיִין לָאוֹמֵר דָּבָר לַחֲבֵירוֹ שֶׁהוּא בְּבַל יֹאמַר עַד שֶׁיֹּאמַר לוֹ: לֵךְ אֱמוֹר — שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֵלָיו מֵאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֵאמֹר".	The verse says: **"And He called unto Moses, and** the Lord **spoke** unto him from within the Tent of Meeting, saying" (Leviticus 1:1). **Why** does the verse mention **calling before speaking,** and God did not speak to him at the outset? **The Torah is teaching etiquette: A person** should **not say anything to another unless he calls him** first. This **supports** the opinion of **Rabbi Ḥanina, as Rabbi Ḥanina said: A person should not say anything to another unless he calls him** first. With regard to the term concluding the verse: **"Saying," Rabbi Musya, grandson of Rabbi Masya, said in the name of Rabbi Musya the Great: From where** is it derived with regard **to one who tells another** some **matter, that** it is incumbent upon the latter **not** to **say it** to others **until** the former explicitly **says to him: Go and tell others? As it is stated: "And the Lord spoke to him from** within **the Tent of Meeting, saying…"**.

Big Question: How can we understand the theological significance of God coming to the Israelites as a cloud, close (but not too close) to them?