

**Potomac Torah Study Center**  
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**NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning more than 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his untimely death.**

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**Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from [www.PotomacTorah.org](http://www.PotomacTorah.org). Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah archives.**

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Terumah opens with Hashem telling Moshe to accept voluntary gifts of various kinds from the people and to use them to make a Mishkan so that He can dwell among the people. From this point, the parsha consists of very detailed instructions for precisely how to make the structure and all of the items to go into the Mishkan. While a building engineer might find the instructions informative and interesting, how are most of us to relate to page after page of detailed building instructions?

A person who focuses on the building details and finds this section of the Torah boring misses the essential point. Indeed, look at the two dozen pages of commentaries below. None of them focuses on the details of turning acacia wood, gold, silver, copper, and fabric into a beautiful structure. The commentaries all derive fascinating lessons that go to the heart of what it means to be a Jew, develop close relationships with family and friends, and come close to God. With these insights, Terumah comes alive and brings messages relevant to us more than two thousand years after God gave Moshe the Torah to present to us for eternity.

Rabbi (Rosh Yeshiva) Dov Linzer asks why we consider the Mikdash (Temple in Jerusalem) to be the House of Yaakov rather than of Avraham or Yitzhak. Avraham davens to God on a mountain. Yitzhak speaks to Hashem in a field. Yaakov promises to build a house for Hashem. True value requires sustained effort and labor. Only when we put our whole selves into the work does something have enduring value. A house has boundaries (walls) and space inside. An idol, such as the Egel Zahav (golden calf), is just there. We must create a space with defined boundaries for Hashem or for others to enter and work on a relationship with us. The Mishkan and Mikdash create defined spaces for Hashem's presence, where we can work on our relationships with our Creator.

Rabbi Marc Angel shares insights from Bar Ilan University Professor Rabbi Joshua Berman. The structure of the Mishkan is remarkably similar to that of Ramses's camp at Kadesh. God had Moshe build a structure with a shape familiar to the Jews who had lived in Egypt for 210 years – but He gives the structure entirely new, wholly Jewish features. The purpose of Ramses's structure was to glorify Paro. The Mishkan is dedicated entirely to Hashem. There is no place around the Mishkan to glorify any humans or animals, only God.

As Rabbi Mordechai Rhine reminds us, the Mishkan reflects the relationship between Jews and Hashem. When Jews have a strong relationship with Hashem and with other humans (family and neighbors), the Mishkan is strong.

Raffi Herzl Hefter observes that the Luchot and Torah are forever hidden from human perception, present since the Revelation only in our collective memory. Once placed in the Aron, we never again open the Aron – we accept on faith that they are still there. The measurements for building the Mishkan are entirely in half cubits, thereby reflecting that human knowledge of God's dwelling can only be partial. Also, we may not remove the poles from the Ark's rings – the Mishkan is always ready to move, thereby indicating that our relationship with Hashem and His prophets is always for a specific time and place.

Rabbi Haim Ovadia reminds us that even during the time of the Mishkan and Mikdash, real life for most Jews does not revolve around these structures. People spend most of their time working in their fields. The real Mishkan is our home, and we must fill our homes with sanctity and Torah values. The Mishkan also connects us to Gan Eden and the Etz Chaim. The holy Ark is in the intimacy of our homes, and we have the power to turn our homes into Etz Chaim, a tree of life, and bring in the values and best of Gan Eden.

Many times I have wished that I could go back in my life, for example to see my parents, grandparents, and siblings when we were all alive and younger. Memories fade, and we cannot return to the best (or worst) of earlier times in our lives. As we start reading the section of the Torah about the Mishkan, God gives us suggestions of how we can come as close as possible to returning to Gan Eden. Once Adam and Chava sin, humans lose the direct route to the Tree of Life. The Mishkan is the closest that a human could approach to God and survive. (More details coming in Sefer Vayikra.) The Torah now operates as a tree of life to all who follow the mitzvot. The commentaries I selected for this week make the Mishkan come alive for me – something that my beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z”l, did for my family for so many years. Hashem’s instructions to Moshe telling him exactly what to do to build the Mishkan sound boring if one only reads the words. As the commentaries below demonstrate, the spaces around the letters contain exciting and fascinating lessons with timeless value. Our task now is to follow the insights and then to share these lessons with our children and grandchildren.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah and Alan

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**Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at [www.alephbeta.org](http://www.alephbeta.org). Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.**

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**Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Yoram Ben Shoshana, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Asher Shlomo ben Ettie, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Sharon bat Sarah, Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, who need our prayers.** Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah & Alan

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## **Dvar Torah: Terumah: A Love Based on Nothing**

By Rabbi Dovid Green © 5756

*“And G-d Spoke to Moses saying: Speak to the Israelites and have them bring me an offering.”*  
(Parshas Terumah 25:1,2)

*The Medrash Tanchuma says: “And have them bring me an offering”. That is what the Posuk (Passage) says: “I love you says G-d..... and I love Yaakov, (However) I hate Aisov....” (Malachi 1:2,3)*

Turnus Rufus (A Roman nobleman) once asked Rabbi Akiva; *“Why does your G-D hate us, as the Posuk (Passage) says,*

*"And I hate Aisov"?*

Rabbi Akiva asked him to allow him time to answer him until the next day. In the morning Turnus Rufus snidely asked Rabbi Akiva, "What did you dream about and what did you see?" (A sarcastic remark meaning, did you dream up an answer to my question yet?) Rabbi Akiva told him he dreamed he had two dogs, one was named Rufus and the other was called Rufina. Turnus Rufus became incensed and yelled "You called your two dogs by my name and the name of my wife? You are certainly deserving to die for such insolence!" Rabbi Akiva replied; "What difference is there between you and them? You eat and drink and they eat and drink. You procreate and they procreate. You will die and they will die! Do you want to kill me just because I called them by your name! Just imagine G-d's anger with you. G-d has created the heavens and the earth and you take a stick or a stone and you call it "God" – Isn't it a valid reason for him to hate you? That is why the Posuk (passage) says And Aisov I hate."

As with any Medrash we must understand what the Posuk (Passage) in Malachi has to do with our Parsha. What does the love for Yaakov versus the hate for Aisov have to do with Parshas Terumah and the taking of money, jewelry etc for the building of the Mishkon/Tabernacle?

Rabbi Yehuda Aszoud (He was a Rabbi in Seredhell, Hungary, in the 1800's) explains this Medrash by quoting another Medrash that explains the Posuk (Passage) in Malachi. The Medrash says: "I Love Yaakov and I hate Aisov" Aisov said to G-d, Why do you love Yaakov? He married two sisters? (Rachel and Leah were sisters and they were both married to Yaakov at the same time. This is considered a forbidden relationship) Aisov continues by saying "Do you want to say \*I\* am at fault? Then why do you protect him under the shade of your Succah?"

This set of questions posed by Aisov to G-D needs explaining. What does Yaakov's seemingly illegal marriage have to do with anything? What did Aisov mean "*Am I at fault?*" and to what is he referring when he says to G-d "*why protect him under the shade of your Succah?*" Finally what "Succah" is Aisov referring to?

There are two kinds of love, explains Reb Yehuda. One is when a person loves another for no reason other than an intrinsic love. There is no objective reason for it. He just loves him. The other kind is when a person loves someone because of some other situation. For example, when everybody else in a community lacks in Middos, good character. However one person, although not of sterling character himself is so much better than anyone else that he is befriended by a good person. However, If the former were to get worse than that, the relationship would end. This person is not loved for who he is, rather he is loved because of the comparison to everyone else around him.

The love G-d has for Yaakov is baseless, not relative. G-d just loves Yaakov and the Jews for who they are, \*not\* for what they do. This is in contrast to the hate G-d has for Aisov. The explanation for this could be, G-d saw our forefathers and saw the purity of their devotion for him and to what extent they were committed to serving him. Because of the commitment shown by Avrohom, G-d made a bris, a "treaty" with him choosing his children as his own chosen people for eternity. This commitment was continued by Yitzchok, and G-d renewed his Bris with him. Again Yaakov demonstrated his continued commitment, and because of that G-d extended the Bris of Avrohom and Yitzchok to Yaakov's family only. By the power of three generations of commitment to G-d, our national character has been formed into one that is committed to serve G-d. Even when the Jews veer away from the "straight and Narrow" path it is just an aberrance, it is not a character fault in the Jewish character. By virtue of the Middos, the character instilled in us by our forefathers, we are good.

Aisov on the other hand had rejected the good character displayed by his parents. He abandoned the ways of his fathers and he began his own path and national character. That character however is one that is not intrinsically good. The "personality" of a nation as is ingrained in it by its forefathers is also demonstrated by the different mitzvos that G-d offered Aisov, Yishmoel and Moav, and their subsequent refusal of Torah. When offering the Torah to the Jews, G-d offered it to the other nations. The Medrash specifically tells us about the offer to nations of Aisov, Yishmoel and Moav. G-d asked Aisov, "Will you accept the Torah?" Aisov asked, "What does it say?" "*You shall not Murder*" G-d answered. Aisov said "our entire existence is based on killing" The same dialogue went on with Yishmoel, The difference being G-d Told he "*You shall not steal*" and to Moav "*You shall not commit adultery.*" Their answer was the same, "We cannot accept that it goes against our very being" (Moav was born from an incestuous relationship. The angel informed Hagar about Yishmoel's future: "On the face of his brothers will he dwell"). What stopped the nations from accepting the Torah was:

accepting the Torah would mean a commitment to change its personality to keep G-d's bidding. Each nation refused. The Jews, on the other hand were willing to accept anything G-d requested from them.

Getting back to the explanation of the Medrash. The love for Yaakov is baseless, That is proven by the hatred that G-d has for Aisov. Why does G-d hate Aisov? That is very clear from the story of Rabbi Akiva and Turnus Rufus, we quoted earlier, because Aisov and his children are Idol worshipers. They deny G-d's existence and his authority over everything. However, even though the Jews also had worshipped idols, as they did by the sin of the Golden Calf, G-d still loves them and he forgives their transgressions. (Because as we explained earlier the idol worship was just an aberration. \*not\* a national character) This we see from the Medrash Tanchuma later in the Parsha that says *"Have them bring an offering of \*gold\* for me to cause forgiveness for the gold they gave towards creating the golden calf."* We see G-d gave the Jews a way to attain forgiveness for idol Worship. Historically, during the times of the first Bais Hamikdosh (Holy Temple), the Jews did sin by worshipping idols. However, G-d did not destroy the Jews, he took out his wrath upon the wood and stones of the Bais Hamikdosh, The Holy Temple. That is why the Mishkon/Bais Hamikdosh (The Holy Temple) is called the Mishkon because it was taken for the debt of the Jews. (Note: A mashkon is a item taken to guarantee repayment of a loan. The letters for Mishkon and Mashkon are the same)

That is what Aisov was complaining to G-d about. Why do you love Yaakov in spite of his transgressions in marrying two sisters? Is it a love only in comparison to me, (Hence the words, "am I the cause?") that you love him? However, it is not an intrinsic love? If that is the case, then why protect him in the shadow of your Succah, i.e. Why do you grant them forgiveness for the sins of Idol Worship by giving them the protection of the Bais Hamikdosh, the Holy Temple? Therefore it must be that the love that G-d has for the Jews is an intrinsic love. This love is not based on what we do, rather on who we are.

Now we can understand the connection between the Posuk (Passage) of: *"And have them bring me an offering"* and the Posuk (passage) where G-d Contrasts his love for the Jews versus his hate for Aisov. His Love for the Jews is measured by G-d's desire to forgive the Jews for the sin of Idol worship by building the Mishkon.

May we all merit to see the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdosh soon.

Good Shabbos!

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/dvartorah-5756-terumah/>

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## How to Encounter God? Build a House

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2010, 2023

Parshat Terumah begins the second half of the book of Shemot, and from here on, the book of Shemot has one focus: the building of the mishkan: *"And they shall make me a Sanctuary and I shall dwell in their midst"* (Exodus 25:8). The mikdash, the sanctuary, the sanctified space, was also a mishkan, the dwelling place of God. It was the structure that, when built, would bring God's presence into the midst of the Children of Israel.

If we wish for God to dwell in our midst, we must build a house. While God can be experienced in nature, our ongoing experience of God's presence will be in a house. Our Rabbis expressed this beautifully:

*R. Eleazar also said, What is meant by the verse, "And many people shall go and say: 'Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Yaakov'" (Isa. 2:3) the God of Yaakov, but not the God of Avraham and Yitzchak? Rather, not like Avraham, in connection with whom 'mountain' is written, as it is said, "As it is said to this day, 'In the mountain where the Lord is seen.'" (Breishit 22:14). Nor like Yitzchak, in connection with whom 'field' is written, as it is said, "And Yitzchak went out to meditate in the field at eventide." (Breishit 24:63). But like Yaakov, who called Him 'home,' as it is said, "And he called the name of that place Beth-el [The house of God]" (Breishit 28:19). [Pesachim 88a]*

Not like Avraham, who encountered God on a mountain, or like Yitzchak, who encountered God in the field, but like Yaakov, who understood that God is to be encountered in a house, *"This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven"* (Breishit 28:17). Why? What is the importance of a house?

First, a house must be constructed; ve'asu, "and they shall make." It requires sustained effort and labor. To quote Teddy Roosevelt: "Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty." Only when we dedicate ourselves – when we truly put our whole selves into something – does it become a thing of lasting and enduring value. When God's presence departed from Mt. Sinai, its sanctity evaporated; when the Temple in which we invested our time and labor to build was destroyed, the sanctity of its space endured (Megilah 28a). And such labor, labor dedicated to a holy end, is itself holy labor. When we work to achieve our ideals, when we work to reach God, we sanctify our work, we sanctify every day, every moment.

But we must be careful. For what do we create with our labor? Do we create a House of God, or do we create – God forbid – a substitute for God, a Golden Calf? What is the difference between the Mishkan and the Golden Calf? A house has walls, boundaries, which delimit and structure the space inside. The Calf is not the empty space, it is the thing itself.

When we project only ourselves into the world, we make a Golden Calf. When we project our image of the other into the world, we make a Golden Calf. When we labor not to make a thing but instead to structure a space, we allow the other to enter, we allow true encounter to occur. When we strive to encounter God in our prayer, in our learning, and in our religious striving, how much are we projecting ourselves onto God, and how much are we making space to allow God in? To have God in our midst requires not only sustained effort, it requires tzimtzum, it requires pulling ourselves in, nullifying our ego, to allow God to enter, to allow us to encounter that which is truly outside of ourselves, the ultimate Other.

What is true in our relationship with God is true in our relationships with the other people in our lives. As any teacher knows after having posed a question to the class, it is only by suffering through those few moments of uneasy silence that finally the student emerges from her shell, and true connection and true learning occurs. As any parent knows, it is when we stop talking and start listening that we really hear our children, we really connect with them and they with us. Only when we stop our efforts, stop our talking, stop our projecting of ourselves, only when we open a space, does the other enter. In such a space, God is met. In such a space, the other is met. In each of our lives we must begin with ve'asu, "and they shall make." We must find an ideal and dedicate ourselves to it. We must throw ourselves into this labor, for only labor to which we dedicate ourselves will be meaningful, will be holy. We must never waver from striving to achieve our ideals and our vision, for in this way will we sanctify every act, every moment.

However, we must be very careful. We must not become so enamored with our work that it becomes the thing itself, that it becomes the thing that we worship, that it becomes our Golden Calf. We must always remember that there are others in our lives, that there is God in our lives.

We each must thus also work to build a mishkan, to bring God in, to bring others in. We must work to create space, the space in which true encounters and true relationships occur. Even in our religious activities, we must pull back so that we can encounter God. And in all our activities and pursuits, we must learn to pull back so that we can encounter the other – our spouse, our children, our friends; a coworker, a student, a stranger.

Finally, in our relationship with others, we must strive to build a space that is a house, that has walls and boundaries. Such a space is protected, is a safe space, a space of warmth and intimacy, a space that builds nurturing relationships, relationships of security and protection. And such a space has boundaries and limits, for to love is also to instruct and guide, to set limits on appropriate and acceptable behavior. Such a space is a house – loving and nurturing, guiding and empowering.

Our Rabbis, in Shabbat 118b, tell us that it is the same Yaakov who understood the secret of the house that was also blessed with a nachala be'li maytzarim – an inheritance without bounds:

*R. Johanan said in R. Jose's name: He who delights in the Sabbath is given an inheritance*

*without limits, for it is written, "... and I will feed thee with the heritage of Yaakov thy father," (Isa. 55:14). Not like Avraham, of whom it is written, "Arise, walk through the land in the length of it," (Breishit 13:17) nor like Yitzchak of whom it is written, "For unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these lands," (Breishit 26:3) but like Yaakov, of whom it is written, "And thou shalt burst forth to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south" (Breishit 28:14).*

Building a house with walls and bounds leads ultimately to the blessing of an inheritance without bounds. We must first create a home that nurtures and empowers those whom we care about, a home that imbues them with our faith in them. When we have done so, then these dear people – our children, our students, anyone for whom we build our houses -- having benefited from this space and these walls, will know no limits, and will be able to burst forth and fly in the world. When we have created this space with walls, this house, we will have given them an inheritance that knows no bounds.

Shabbat Shalom.

<https://library.yctora.org/2010/02/how-to-encounter-god-build-a-house/>

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## **Breaking New Spiritual Ground: Thoughts for Parashat Terumah**

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel \*

This week's Torah reading includes very specific instructions for building the Mishkan, the portable sanctuary that served as the religious center of the Israelites during their time in the wilderness. Was this construction something absolutely new for the Israelites, or did they already have an idea of what a sanctuary should look like based on their experience in Egypt?

Professor Joshua Berman of Bar Ilan University, in his excellent book *Ani Maamin*, offers a fascinating insight into the design of the Mishkan. He provides a historical model that likely was familiar to the ancient Israelites.

In 1274 BCE, Rameses II — Pharaoh of Egypt — won a great victory against Egypt's archrival, the Hittite empire, in the battle of Kadesh. The event was so impressive that battle monuments were erected across the Egyptian empire. Ten copies of the inscriptions exist to this day, and there is good reason to believe that the contents of these inscriptions were widely circulated throughout the Egyptian population, including the Israelites. Several of the bas-reliefs include an image of Rameses's camp at Kadesh.

Scholars have noted the following facts about the battle compound of Rameses II. "The camp is twice as long as it is wide. The entrance to it is in the middle of the eastern wall....At the center of the camp, down a long corridor, lies the entrance to a 3:1 rectangular tent. This tent contains two sections: a 2:1 reception tent, with figures kneeling in adoration, and leading westward (right) from it, a domed square space that is the throne tent of the pharaoh....In the throne tent...the emblem bearing the pharaoh's name and symbolizing his power is flanked by falcons....with their wings spread in protection over him" (*Ani Maamin*, pp. 57-58).

The structure of Rameses's battle compound is remarkably similar to the structure of the Mishkan, in terms of layout, proportions, separation of reception tent and an inner sanctum where the central figure is flanked by beings with wings spread over. Was this simply a coincidence?

Aside from the visual similarities of the Rameses compound and the Mishkan, Dr. Berman demonstrates how the "Kadesh poem," composed to celebrate Rameses's victory, has a number of singular similarities to the *Az Yashir* poem sung by the Israelites upon their redemption from Egypt. Could there be a connection between these two works?

Dr. Berman suggests that the Israelites were aware of the depiction of Rameses's battle compound...and the Mishkan's design was influenced by this. The Israelites were aware of the "Kadesh poem," and the *Az Yashir*'s use of language and imagery was influenced by this.

While some may find this problematic as undermining the originality of the Torah, Dr. Berman draws the opposite conclusion. The Torah employed images and language that were familiar to the Israelites...but then directed these factors into a new religious context. Yes, the Mishkan was structured like Rameses's battle compound, but at the center was the holy ark of Israel...not an image of Pharaoh. Whereas the battle compound glorified Pharaoh and treated him as a deity, the Israelite Mishkan glorified the one true God and was dedicated to the worship of God...not Pharaoh. Likewise, in the Az Yashir, the Torah utilized phrases and images that the Egyptians had used to glorify Pharaoh...but the Torah directed these phrases and images only to God, not to any human being, not to Pharaoh.

Thus, the Torah broke new religious ground by taking existing Egyptian images and symbols and transforming them into an entirely new religious worldview that fostered worship of one God of supreme power. It used images and language that would have resonated with the Israelites of ancient Egypt, but used them in such a way as to lead them away from idolatry and toward monotheism.

Dr. Berman notes that the Torah should be studied with an awareness of the historical context in which its narratives took place. By doing so, we not only understand the Torah more accurately, but we also better appreciate the Torah's revolutionary advances in religious thought.

\* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

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<https://www.jewishideas.org/article/breaking-new-spiritual-ground-thoughts-parashat-terumah>

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## **Mordechai: A Cautionary Tale**

By Rabbi Chananya Weissman \*

Mordechai is universally recognized as a hero, but it wasn't always that way. Like many heroes, his acts of greatness were extremely controversial at the time. Were it not for the benefit of hindsight, many of those who admire Mordechai today would have opposed him.

Mordechai was an eccentric figure long before he encountered Haman. Megillat Esther 2:6 introduces Mordechai as follows: *"He was exiled from Jerusalem with the group of exiles that were exiled with Yechonya, king of Judah, whom Nevuchadnezzar, king of Babel, exiled."* The Vilna Gaon makes an astonishing comment based on the repetitive mentions of Mordechai's exile in this single verse: *"[This is] to inform us of his love for the Land of Israel, for each time [he was exiled], he returned to Jerusalem, and he was exiled three times."*

How many Jews today would make aliya, be forced to return to the Diaspora, then try again two more times in short succession? How many rabbis would even encourage such behavior? This is despite knowing that there is a real future in Israel as the final prophecies unfold.

Mordechai faced the exact opposite scenario. The ten tribes were exiled, much of Israel was in ruins, and the little that remained was a vassal state. Everyone was aware of the prophecies that the Temple was going to be destroyed, the inhabitants of Israel would be slaughtered, and the survivors would be exiled. What was Mordechai going back for? His contemporaries probably thought he was insane.

Then again, others would have viewed Mordechai as an idealist with a can-do attitude that put his detractors to shame.

It's no surprise that someone who refused to abandon the sinking ship that was Israel at the time, no doubt suffering great

personal hardship as a result, would be the hero of the Purim story. Mordechai was the one who urged the Jews not to attend Achashverosh's party, with its debauchery and implicit acceptance of an exile mentality, and Mordechai was the one who refused to submit to Haman.

These were not popular decisions at the time. If today's media and (God help us) social media existed back then, we can imagine how Mordechai's fellow Jews would have mercilessly attacked him, without regard for his status as a "leading rabbi." They would have accused Mordechai of endangering them with his reckless behavior, his unwillingness to be practical and accept reality. The Jews were in the Diaspora now and were fortunate to live in a "tolerant" society. Quiet diplomacy was the call of the hour, if not ingratiation and even assimilation. The last thing most Jews wanted was a religious extremist like Mordechai rocking the boat.

Contemplate this for a moment and be brutally honest. If you were there, would you have reacted any differently?

And there's the rub when it comes to heroes. Everyone points to them as role models long after they are gone, but the very qualities we admire in dead people we loathe among the living. Mordechai would be hard-pressed to land a pulpit today, or even a shidduch. Even those who admired his integrity and idealism would be leery of throwing their hat in with him. Practical considerations, after all.

We teach our children to admire people like Mordechai, but in a purely theoretical sense. Do we encourage them to emulate his behavior in real life? Does our society? No. We reward contemporary Mordechais with swift backlash and cold-blooded cancellation if they persist.

Children learn very quickly not to take stories of biblical heroes as an actual path to follow. The first time they point out an egregious hypocrisy in the community, an outrage that needs to be addressed, they might be met with amusement. Little Moshe wants people to stop talking during synagogue services! How cute!

If they don't get the message, though, they will get their first taste of retribution. If they are smart, they will learn to just be quiet and go along with it like everyone else. If they are clever, they too will reap the rewards of degeneracy, instead of being a pious fool. If they are geniuses, their idealism will be destroyed, their souls will be crushed, and they will go "off the derech." In the unlikely event that they return, their rebellious past will be a permanent stain.

If they remain religiously committed and somehow maintain their idealism, they will be social outcasts (unless they become extremely rich, in which case even worse crimes than idealism can be overlooked). Even those who agree with them and admire them will be afraid to publicly support them. If you want to take on problems in the Jewish world — really take them on — be prepared to do it alone, and be prepared to suffer mightily for it.

Mordechai's story is not so much a celebration as a cautionary tale.

Then again, it's understandable that heroes are doomed to be unpopular, at least until they are victorious. The reasons are not entirely without merit. Consider the following:

Heroes rock the boat. Their behavior is by definition threatening to people's sensibilities, and often carries real dangers to the people they are trying to help. Mordechai took it upon himself to stand up to Haman, but that very plausibly could have backfired. He might have been "right" (well, he was definitely right), but is it always right to spit in the eye of powerful, impulsive rulers who don't especially like the Jews to begin with? Granted, not standing up to Haman carried its own dangers, but apathy is always the convenient choice. Heroes make inconvenient choices and demand the same of others.

Idealists are never satisfied, and they make those around them uncomfortable. We need idealists to push us to greater heights, but they don't always make the best dinner guests.

Not every underdog with a cause is a hero. It is natural to be suspicious of people who not only go against the consensus, but try to change the direction of the community. We've had more than



enough agitators, moles, opportunists, reformers, false Messiahs, and downright traitors to be leery of those who promote changes of any kind. Just because Mordechai decided that he should stand up to Haman, why were Jews wrong to doubt him?

So how do we know? How do we know who is a hero worth supporting — in the moment — and who is just a troublemaker?

There might not be an exact formula, but we have plenty of examples of both in the Torah from which to derive pointers.

Consider the various Jews in the desert who were “left out.” There was the unnamed son of Shlomit the daughter of Divri and an Egyptian man (see Leviticus chapter 24). He had no tribe and no share in the Land of Israel, through no fault of his own. Wherever he tried to pitch his tent he was told he didn’t belong. He was a true underdog.

What did he do? He blasphemed God.

Then we have the daughters of Tzelafchad (see Numbers chapter 27). They too were excluded from a share in the Land of Israel, through no fault of their own. It didn’t seem fair. What did they do? They approached Moses and the other leaders and explained their predicament. They respectfully asked to receive a portion of the land in place of their deceased father. Most of all: they were willing to accept no for an answer if that were God’s will.

Hazal refer to these women as righteous and wise. God accommodated these underdogs, whereas the blasphemer, tragic figure though he was, was executed.

We can derive from here that an idealist worth supporting is one who is fundamentally loyal to the community, not an adversary.

Today there are many, many people who are dissatisfied with the Orthodox world. There is not enough ink to list all their complaints and debate their validity. But we must clarify the following before deciding how to address those bringing the complaints:

Are they friends or foes? Do they seek to build, or to tear down? Are they respectful, or do they blaspheme? Do they keep their criticisms in house, or do they malign the Orthodox world to our worst enemies and even partner with them? Are they willing to take no for an answer if that’s how it must be? Do they truly love their fellow Jews, imperfect and downright maddening as they often are, or is their “constructive criticism” a fig leaf for seething hatred?

Another point to consider is the agenda of the hero-in-question. A genuine idealist is one who has no personal agenda in mind. Mordechai never took the convenient path. Whether it was chastising the Jews or publicly defying Amalek, he risked his life for what was right. If he had to pay a price, even the ultimate price, so be it. Although God miraculously saved Mordechai and elevated him, he had no reason to expect that to happen.

Compare to faux idealists, such as Korah and Absalom. These rebels curried favor with the people with grandiose speeches about equality and justice, but it was just a ruse to achieve power for themselves. That’s the default playbook in our times as well. Once again, we need to consider whether we really want leaders like Mordechai, who stand for truth and make us uncomfortable, or if we prefer to play the game with corrupt leaders. Societies tend to get the leaders they deserve.

Finally, what separates true heroes from impostors is genuine fear of God. A true hero lives to serve God and bring others closer to the Torah. True heroes are humble even in greatness. Most of all, heroes refuse to negotiate away their principles, for those principles are real. Mordechai understood that the political conveniences of attending Achashverosh’s party or bowing to Haman were not a fair exchange for his identity as a God-fearing Jew.

This is the ultimate clue that we are dealing with a real hero, not a phony. A real hero places God’s will above all else and makes no attempt to rationalize going against the Torah.

It was clear that Mordechai had all the above qualities, and so many more. It is tragic that he was not fully appreciated by the people during his lifetime, even after being vindicated. But the fact that he was vindicated should not be necessary; after all, not every hero will be fortunate to achieve victory. We should not view Mordechai as a hero because he won, but because he was the real thing.

When we teach about heroes, we should emphasize this point. It is not about the glory of victory, but the sacrifice for the sake of heaven, regardless of the immediate result.

Most of all, we should help create a society in which heroic behavior is appreciated and supported. After all, the Torah requires all of us to be heroes, each in our own way.

Megillat Esther concludes with the tragic statement that Mordechai was pleasing to "most of his brethren." Today Mordechai is universally loved, mainly because he is no longer here to admonish us. When we learn to appreciate and support those who follow in his ways, we will surely merit such people to be our leaders.

May it be soon in our days.

\* Widely published Israeli author; see [chananyaweissman.com](http://chananyaweissman.com) and [rumble.com/c/c-782463](http://rumble.com/c/c-782463). This article appears in issue 41 of *Conversations*, the journal of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

<https://www.jewishideas.org/article/mordechai-cautionary-tale>

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## **Building the Mishkan in Our Time** by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine \*

The Mishkan was a magnificent structure. With gold, silver, precious gems, and the most magnificent woven tapestries, the Jewish people fashioned this holy place, a place of communion between man and G-d. From it, Hashem spoke to Moshe and shared the details of Torah which Moshe then communicated to the Jewish people. In it, we were able to pray intensely and connect with Hashem in a most intimate way.

Each part of the Mishkan symbolized the values of the Jewish people in a tangible and vivid way. The showbreads represented sustenance and the blessing of an honest livelihood; the menorah represented the light of Torah which is meant to illuminate the world. In the Kodosh Kodoshim (Holy of Holies) was the Aron containing the Law. Above it were the Keruvim representing the loving relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people.

What is fascinating is that the Mishkan does not just represent the values of Torah and the Jewish people. The Mishkan is a place of energy through which the relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people flows. When Shlomo built the Beis Hamikdash in Yerushalayim as a permanent form of the Mishkan, he declared that Jews shall pray in the direction of this holy place, a rule that we observe even today. The dynamic is such that it is through the place of the Mikdash that our prayers flow to Hashem.

The Mishkan and the Mikdash after it are not abstract depictions of Jewish values and relationship. The Mikdash is the love palace between Hashem and the Jewish people and is actually nurtured by the authenticity of that relationship. It follows that since the Mikdash reflects our integrity to the relationship, to the extent that we embody the values of the Mikdash, the Mikdash is nurtured. If we stray from those values, the flow gets interrupted and the Mikdash could actually be destroyed.

At the time that the second Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, for example, the Roman general brought a woman of ill-repute into the Beis Hamikdash to act out with her. The Nefesh HaChayim explains that the only way that such a behavior could have occurred is if it first occurred on some level in the hearts of some Jews. Because the Beis Hamikdash reflects our level in the relationship. If we are holy, then the Mikdash remains holy. It is only if we are defiled in some way that

Mikdash could be defiled.

Conversely, when the Jewish people are strong and sacred in relationships, the Mikdash is strong. No wonder that when a fallout of trust occurs between husband and wife, the Torah instructs that earth from the very floor of the Mikdash be used in the potion that may prove her innocence and restore family harmony. There is much at stake here in the distancing between husband and wife. The Mikdash itself becomes weaker because of it. Likewise, the Torah instructs that Hashem's name be erased into the potion she will drink. Hashem indicates that He is willing to do most anything to help restore peace between husband and wife.

Great Jews throughout the ages understood the connection between the individual home and the collective Mikdash and took this attitude to heart. When a certain husband in Talmudic times felt that his wife had respected Rabbi Meir more than she respected him, Rabbi Meir announced that his eye was hurting, and he needed to undergo a certain therapy of having fresh spit placed in his eye. He had this woman come and spit at him, and then told her, "Go home and tell your husband that you spat at me." In doing so, Rabbi Meir hoped to emulate Hashem in restoring peace between husband and wife.

In more recent times I have heard of a story in which a husband and wife argued about who should take out the garbage. The Rabbi they consulted listened carefully to each of their arguments and acknowledged the respective worthiness of their claims. He then showed up at their door the next day offering to take out the garbage.

It seems to me that taking out the garbage loses its stigma when we realize that it is a way to enhance the beauty of our mini-sanctuary called the Jewish home, and by extension to enhance the honor we accord to the Mikdash, even if it is not currently standing. When we realize that the Mikdash is not some detached representation of Jewish ideals, but rather is a reflection of how we conduct ourselves, our personal homes become forums for building the Mikdash. This is something we can do in our times: As we strengthen our homes the Mikdash is strengthened. May it be rebuilt speedily in our days.

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos!

\* Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of more than 20 years. Based in Maryland, he provides services internationally via Zoom. He is the Director of TEACH613: Building Torah Communities, One family at a Time, and the founder of CARE Mediation, focused on Marriage/ Shalom Bayis and personal coaching. To reach Rabbi Rhine, his websites are [www.care-mediation.com](http://www.care-mediation.com) and [www.teach613.org](http://www.teach613.org); his email is [RMRhine@gmail.com](mailto:RMRhine@gmail.com). **For information or to join any Torah613 classes, contact Rabbi Rhine.**

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## **Parshas Terumah – G-d's Respect For Man**

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer\* © 2021

The Tabernacle in the desert and later the Temples are difficult for us to comprehend. We understand them in a general sense as places of elevated devotion, with many symbolic and mystical references to G-d and our subservience to Him. A more sacred version of a shul perhaps, where G-d's Presence is more present and we offer Him sacrifices, which we perhaps understand as an elevated form of prayer.

Yet, this concept remains difficult for us. How can G-d's Presence be housed in one building, no matter how grand or how much mystical significance its structure contains? Furthermore, what purpose does it serve? What meaning is there in our offering gifts to G-d? What need is there for our service?

The Medrash Yalkut Shimoni (Remez 365) tells us that Moshe himself asked these questions. Three commands overwhelmed and frightened Moshe in the magnitude of what they demanded, all dealing with the Tabernacle. When Hashem told Moshe we were to build a Tabernacle where Hashem's Presence would dwell, Moshe was overwhelmed. "The Heavens and the highest Heavens can't contain You, and You say, 'Make for Me a Tabernacle'?" Similarly, Moshe was astounded when told we were to bring a daily sacrifice as G-d's daily meal. "Were we to bring all of the animals in the world, would it be one offering? If we were to bring all of the wood in the world, would it be one pyre?!" Moshe was again

astounded when told that we were to donate to the building of the Tabernacle as an atonement for our souls, an act in return for the gift of life. "Who can possibly give payment for his life?" The structure, the service and all the devotion, what could any of it mean?

Hashem responded to Moshe's questions with one message. The structure does not need to be large. "Twenty planks on the north, twenty planks on the south, and eight planks on the west." The sacrifice for G-d's daily meal does not need to be significant either, just lambs. "And not two at the same time, but one in the morning and one in the evening." The redemption also need not be so significant. Just a half shekel coin each.

The Medrash explains G-d's response with a parable of a king who had a young daughter. So long as she was young and not yet matured, the king would see her in the alleys and marketplaces and speak with her. However, once she began to mature and become a young woman, "It is not respectful for my daughter that I speak with her publicly. Rather make for her a private place where I can speak with her." As she matured, her conversations and her relationship with the king matured, as well. In respect for the deeper and more nuanced nature of their relationship, he wished for a private place to meet with her.

So, too, says the Medrash, was Hashem's relationship with us. In Egypt, we saw Hashem and we connected with Him as He passed throughout Egypt. As we passed through the sea, we saw Hashem. When we came to Har Sinai, we saw Hashem and connected with Him. All of these were outside and in the open. However, once we accepted the Torah and became G-d's nation, with a permanent, special and unique relationship, we had matured as a nation and our relationship and connection with G-d had matured. It was no longer appropriate for G-d to speak with us out in the open. Rather, said G-d "Make for Me a Tabernacle and I will dwell amongst them." G-d was telling Moshe that the Tabernacles were not structures which would enable anyone to properly show respect to G-d. Rather, they are structures to show G-d's respect for us. G-d is displaying His love and respect for us and how He cherishes our relationship.

The Medrash concludes beautifully, that this is our ultimate honor, even in the face of all persecution or claims that G-d has abandoned us. When we sinned with the Golden Calf, barely a month after receiving the Torah, G-d didn't destroy us. Rather, it was then after that grave sin, that G-d declared "Make for Me a Tabernacle." We had still accepted His Torah. We remained, and always will remain, His cherished nation.

\* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD. Rabbi Singer's new Dvar Torah did not arrive before my deadline. Since I did not receive his Dvar Torah in time, I am running his message from 2021.

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## **The Torah in the Mishkan: Hidden and on the Move**

**By Rabbi Herzl Hefter \***

Can the Torah continue to guide us today when so many of our basic assumptions and sensibilities about justice and fairness seem to be at odds with many of its narratives and laws? Some details of the design of the ark in the *mishkan* may hold the answer. And it is not what you might expect.

At the center of the *mishkan* rests the ark with the two tablets of the law, a tangible souvenir of the revelation at Sinai. The two tablets resting in the ark teach us about the divine revelation which we take with us from Sinai.

I would like to turn our attention to three apparently disconnected details: 1) Once the tablets are inserted into the ark, they are never seen again. This is very strange since the tablets embody the revelation at Sinai. 2) The ark is the only furnishing in the *mishkan* whose measurements are completely in half cubits. 3) The poles which are used in the transport of the ark are never to be removed from the ark's rings even after the ark reaches its final place of rest in the Temple.

Three characteristics of the revelation emerge from these three anomalous details of the ark. The Torah is invisible, incomplete and never at rest.

The tablets and the Torah are hidden forever from human perception. [1] Their presence can only be conjured up in collective memory. It is a matter of faith whether the ark contains anything at all. Similarly, the measurements in half cubits indicate that human comprehension of the Torah is inherently incomplete. In a sense our understanding only goes "half way." [2]

This brings us to the third anomaly; the prohibition to remove the poles from the ark's rings. The poles used by the children of Kehat to transport the ark symbolize the dynamic nature of the revelation. Even when then the ark is in apparent rest it is poised to move.

What is the meaning of a Torah in perpetual motion? How does a dynamic revelation square with what we were taught in yeshiva elementary school about the eternal unchanging will of God revealed in the Torah to Moshe at Sinai? The answer is that it doesn't.

Reality is as unpredictable as God's imagination which it reflects. No fixed set of principles can capture it. The true will of God is hidden from us as the tablets are hidden in the ark and our grasp of the Torah can only be partial as the half measurements indicate.

The Mei Hashiloah [3] contrasts the prophecy of Moshe to that of the other prophets and in so doing describes the meaning and ramifications of a totally dynamic model of revelation.

*All the other prophets prophesized using the word 'koh' [indicating approximation and lack of clarity] while Moshe prophesized saying, 'zeh hadavar', this is the word [indicating clarity]. All the prophecies are for the sake of Israel in accordance with the specific needs of the time. They prophesized according to their capacity to understand. From their limited perspective they thought that their respective prophecies are eternally relevant whereas in reality there are changes in every generation. Moshe however was superior to the rest of the prophets because he comprehended everything in accordance with the correct time and location and he understood that the content of the prophecy is only for a time and after a time God may desire something else...*

Moshe understands the relative time bound nature of revelation. Gods will is beyond human comprehension and His will is only revealed partially according to the subjective nature of the prophet and within the context of a specific time and place.

This interpretation offered by the Mei HaShiloah, along with what emerges from the symbolic interpretation of the tablets and the ark in the *mishkan*, open up very significant possibilities for contemporary interpretations of the Torah and halakha which would take our moral sensibilities into account in a more profound and desperately needed way.

#### ENDNOTES:

[1] Shaarei Orah, Ch. 1

[2] Mei haShiloah, Teruma

[3] Ibid, Matot. [Additional Hebrew text omitted because of problems with software]

\* Founder and dean of the Har'el Beit Midrash in Jerusalem. Rabbi Hefter is a graduate of Yeshiva University and was ordained at Yeshivat Har Etzion. For more of his writings, see [www.har-el.org](http://www.har-el.org). To support the Beit Midrash, as we do, send donations to America Friends of Beit Midrash Har'el, 66 Cherry Lane, Teaneck, NJ 07666.

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## Home, Mishkan, Eden \*

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia \*\*

### Mishkan and Home

What can the Mishkan be analogized to? When I present this question at a class, the first, intuitive answer, is that the Mishkan resembles a home, and the second, which comes after a minute of contemplation, is the Garden of Eden. Like a home, the Mishkan has a table, a candelabra, a place for preparing food, and private chambers. The word Mishkan is derived from the root שכן, to dwell, which is also the root of the Hebrew word for a personal dwelling. This connection is evident in Balaam's praise of the Israelites (num. 24:5):

*How beautiful are the tents of Yaakov and the dwellings of Israel!*

Balaam was speaking of the personal tents of the Israelites, but the double entendre did not escape the commentators. This is how Targum Yerushalmi translates it to Aramaic:

*How good are the tents where Yaakov prayed, the Mishkan of Gathering you made in honor of My Name, and your tents which surrounded it, oh House of Israel.*

The Targum uses the analogy of the Mishkan and the home, the Divine and the individual dwelling, and connects the personal tent to the Mishkan and the synagogue. Because of that special connection, Rav Amram Gaon writes in his Siddur that we should recite this verse when we enter the synagogue. In some communities, this verse is also chanted as an introduction to the wedding ceremony. This symbolizes the sanctity with which the bride and groom are going to imbue their new home.

### Home is Mishkan

Most people understand this resemblance as suggesting that our homes should emulate the Mishkan, but Nahmanides offers an opposite energy flow. In his introduction to Shemot, he explains that the life of Israel in Egypt and the desert replay the life of the forefathers on a grander scale. Genesis is the Book of Individuals, while Exodus is the Book of the Nation. In Genesis, Avraham seeks refuge in Egypt because of the famine, his wife is captured by Pharaoh, who is punished with plagues, and who then sent Avraham and Sarah free with great riches.

Does this summary sound familiar? Of course! It is the trajectory of the journey of the Israelites. They went down to Egypt because of the famine, they were captured by Pharaoh who was punished with plagues, and he then sent the Israelites free with great riches.

But wait, there's more. The Israelites, as a nation, had to follow in the footsteps of their forefathers until reaching perfection. Writes Nahmanides:

*The exile is not over until they reclaim their place, at the same level of their forefathers... when they came to Mount Sinai, and built the Mishkan, the Divine Providence dwelt among them. Then they returned to the level of their forefathers, in whose tents God was present, and who themselves were the Divine Throne. With that, the Israelites were fully redeemed and that is why this book concludes with the construction of the Mishkan and with the constant presence of God in it.*

Note that Nahmanides doesn't say that our homes emulate the Mishkan but rather that the Mishkan is a replica of the home. He says that only when the Israelites built the Mishkan they achieved the spiritual level the forefathers had at their homes.

### Portable Mishkan Gives Hope

This is a very powerful message. The Jews who were exiled from Spain after living there close to a thousand years, and who lost their homes and their synagogues, could find hope and encouragement in Nahmanides. His words were also comforting to his contemporaries, who longed for the rebuilding of the Temple and who were already suffering under Christian persecution. This message is also empowering and uplifting for modern-day Jews, and as a matter of fact, all people.

Religious life today revolves around the synagogue, the mini-Mishkan. If there is no synagogue in your vicinity, or if you are not a regular visitor to the synagogue, your religious life is considered, by you or by others, as incomplete. Even if you have a synagogue nearby and you visit it regularly, the Temple of Jerusalem is still missing from your life. But the eye-opening interpretation of Nahmanides tells us that we may pray and wish for the reconstruction of the Temple, and we may be prompted to go to synagogue, but the real temple is with us at all times. It is our home, our family.

This interpretation is anchored in the Tanakh and in history. Daily life in ancient Israel did not revolve around the Temple. As an agrarian society, people were working in the fields most of the time and would visit the Temple only three times a year. The real Mishkan was their home, and they were expected to fill it with sanctity. That is why there are so many laws governing the treatment of the land and the crops, our behavior towards others, and the responsibility for the sojourner, the widow, and the orphan. These laws are the daily service. They are meant to transform us into holier people, and our home into a sanctuary, a Mishkan. When we invest our home with sanctity, mutual respect, intimacy, and loving kindness, we also, like our forefathers, can become the throne of the divine Shekhina. Adhering to the behavior code and discipline of the Torah helps us elevate ourselves, become better people, and develop a connection with God.

### **Mishkan and Eden**

The Mishkan also takes us to the creation of the world and to Eden. The connection to creation is beautifully presented in Proverbs 3:19-20(, a book which in some ways is a commentary on Genesis:

*YHWH through wisdom founded earth, set heavens firm through discernment, through His knowledge the deeps burst open...*

The creation of the earth, the heavens, and the abyss, was accomplished by the same character traits used by Bezalel to build the Mishkan )Ex. 35:31(:

*He [God] imbued him [Bezalel] with the spirit of God, with wisdom, discernment, and knowledge, and with all crafts.*

Bezalel's qualities, given to him by God, circle back to creation. They are bookended by the Spirit of God, which appears in the opening verses of Genesis 1:2(, and the word מלאכה, which is found in the last passage of the story )2:3(:

*In it [Shabbat] God ceased of all his craft which he created to be made.*

The analogy is not only textual, but also visual as well. Eden was surrounded by four rivers, and the Mishkan by four walls. In Eden lurked the serpent, while within the walls of the Mishkan the central bolt was coiling. The Hebrew word for bolt – בריח, appears twice in the Tanakh – is the sense of serpent )Job 26:13, Is. 27:1(.

In both Eden and the Mishkan, the remedy for the serpent's poison is the Tree of Life. We know that the woman and Adam were lured by the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge because it was forbidden. When God places in Eden the Tree of Life guarded by the Cherubim, He is inviting mankind to come and get the fruit. In the Mishkan, the Tree of Life, the Torah )see Prov. 3:18(, was placed in the Ark and guarded by the Cherubim. The Tree of Life is physically inaccessible in both places, but after the Torah was given to the Israelites on Mount Sinai, it is always available to us. In our darkest moments, when our temples and synagogues were destroyed, when our scrolls of Torah and tefillin were burned, and when our bodies and minds were targeted by our enemies for annihilation, we carried the words and memory of the Torah with us, and wherever we went, we built a Mishkan at home, looking forward to restoring Eden.

The Mishkan is an analogy to the home and to Eden. This triple connection tells us that our home, our family, can become both Eden and a dwelling place, a Mishkan, for the Divine Shekhina. When we place those three on a time-continuum axis, the Mishkan is our past, our home is our present, and Eden is our future. We should remember what we had in the past and aspire to what we can achieve in the future. The vessels of the Mishkan are the table where we eat and the light that shines on our home. The holy Ark can be found in the intimacy of our home, where it holds the Torah, the Tree of Life. With its power we could turn our lives in the present into the Garden of Eden.

Shabbat Shalom.

\* Rabbi Ovadia sent me this Dvar Torah for Tetzvah rather than Terumah. However, he sent two Devrei Torah for

Terumah and none for Tetzavah. Since this Dvar Torah is also beautifully appropriate for Terumah, I am running it this week and shall use his other Dvar Torah for Tetzavah next week.

\*\* Torah VeAhava. Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan )Potomac, MD( and faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school(. **New: Many of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah are now available on Sefaria:** <https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets> . The Sefaria articles include Hebrew text, which I must delete because of issues changing software formats.

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## **Mistakes, Manuscripts and Mankind**

By Rabbi Eliezer Lawrence \*

In this week's parsha, Rashi makes a comment explaining the function of what seems to be a superfluous "vav" before the word "et" in 25:22. This comment would be in line with many of his other comments, except one significant detail: there is no such "vav" before the "et" in our chumashim.

Now this may seem like a pretty big deal! How could Rashi — the parshan we most rely on — make such a mistake? Because of this issue, as one might expect, some versions of Rashi's commentary either include only part of his comment or eliminate it altogether. "There can be no record that such a Torah giant could make a mistake!"

But the history of how this error was documented tells a different story. The Leipzig manuscript is considered the most authoritative manuscript for Rashi because R' Makhir, the manuscript's scribe, copied Rashi's commentary from the text of one of Rashi's direct students, Rabbi Shemayah. As a note in the margin to the "ve'et" comment, R' Makhir reports, without judgment, that Rashi's comment "was crossed out by R' Shemayah." It should be noted, many of Rabbi Shemayah's annotations to Rashi's text are said to have been at the behest of Rashi himself. Rashi must have seen other manuscripts of the Torah and realized he was mistaken.

Fast forward about 900 years, and we live in a cultural moment where things said on the record, or written publicly, are not as easily retracted or updated in light of new information. Think about it — any politician who has ever evolved on an issue is first charged with the sin of inconsistency, rather than lauded for the quality of being growth-oriented.

And with the democratization of the digital "town square," some of our commentary will inevitably not age well, or may no longer be consistent with the up-to-date data or our evolving set of ideas and values. But would it be better to leave those well intended ideas unstated?

When Rashi made his comments, he did so to the best of his knowledge, based on the data he had in front of him: the manuscript of the Torah he had access to )incidentally, Ibn Ezra also had "ve'et" as opposed to "et"(. But once it became clear that a mistake had been based on faulty data, Rashi did not feel the need to defend or even explain the error or change, he just corrected it — as simple as that.

Rashi was certainly adept at pointing out apparent inconsistencies; the very pasuk in question contends with an apparent contradiction regarding whether God speaks from Ohel Moed as a whole, as stated elsewhere, or as the pasuk states "from above the kaporet between the kruvim." But unlike the Torah, which is the word of God, the inconsistencies of us humans need not be so seriously investigated. They should be acknowledged, but from the standpoint that humans are not God. Errors in judgment or understanding, life-long emotional and spiritual growth, and the act of simply changing our minds "just because," are all part of the human experience.

So let's continue in the tradition of Rashi. When we recognize our own mistakes, we should own them, we should take necessary accountability, but then we should move forward. When we encounter the mistakes of others, let's engage less punitively with the knowledge that they too, like Rashi, are human.

Shabbat Shalom.



\* Semikha from Yeshivat Chovevei Torah. Faculty, YCT & Maharat Beit Midrash Program. Note: quotes in Hebrew omitted because of problems with changing software.

<https://library.yct Torah.org/2023/02/mistakes-manuscripts-and-mankind/>

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## **Shavuon Terumah** By Rabbi Moshe Rube \*

It takes all sorts to make a shul.

This week I had the pleasure of meeting June Shieff, a 97 year old member of our congregation, who has lived in New Zealand her entire life. It was a delight to get to know her and hear all she had to teach me about how to live so long )and be married as long as she was(, but her longevity in one place resonated with me.

My family moved around a lot in my childhood, and so many people I've met here have switched countries from Australia, to Israel, to America, to New Zealand. I would call those people "Mishkan" or tabernacle people. People who embody the structure described in this week's parsha. A structure to serve God that could be disassembled and assembled easily in any place.

But June is a Temple person. You can't just reassemble the Temple any which way in any which place. It is where it is, providing the stability which we can use to provide creativity in other areas. She has been in and been a bulwark of our community for her entire life.

It's the combined strength of people like June and the strength of the Mishkan people which made our move here to the new site possible.

Our last schmooze at Greys Ave was such a beautiful event because we had everyone there celebrating our power to have stability at one place for 55 years and our power to be able to move and assemble in our beautiful new site.

May all of us at AHC, both the Mishkans and the Temples, continue to thrive in Remuera!

Shabbat Shalom.

\* Senior Rabbi of Auckland Hebrew Congregation, Remuera )Auckland(, New Zealand.

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## **Rav Kook Torah** **Terumah: I Will Dwell in Their Midst**

Why did God command us to construct a Temple?

When introducing the Temple and its vessels, the Torah states the purpose for this holy structure:

*"Make for Me a Sanctuary — and I will dwell in their midst"* )Exod. 25:8(.

The goal of the Temple was to enable God's Presence to dwell in the world. The Mikdash was meant to "open up" channels of communication with God: enlightenment, prophetic inspiration )ruach hakodesh(, and prophecy )nevu'ah(.

### **Three Channels**

Rav Kook distinguished between three different channels of Divine communication. Each of these channels corresponds

to a particular vessel in the Temple.

1. The first conduit relates to the holiest vessel in the Temple: the Holy Ark in the Holy of Holies, which housed the Luchot from Mount Sinai. From the Ark emanated the highest level of prophetic vision, the crystal-clear prophecy that only Moses was privileged to receive. As God told Moses:

*"I will commune with you there, speaking to you from above the ark-cover, from between the two cherubs that are on the Ark of Testimony" )Exod. 25:22(.*

This unique level of prophecy is the source of the Torah's revelation to the world.

2. The second conduit corresponds to the vessels outside the Holy of Holies, especially the Menorah, a symbol of enlightenment and wisdom. This conduit, disseminating the wisdom of Israel, extended beyond the inner sanctum and encompassed the Kodesh area of the Temple.

3. The final conduit relates to the Altar of Incense. This is the channel of ruach hakodesh. The phenomenon of prophetic inspiration — which originates in the innermost depths of the soul — parallels the inner service of incense, which was performed in secret within the Sanctuary )see Yoma 44a(.

### **The Atonement of Yom Kippur**

The special Temple service performed on Yom Kippur seeks to attain complete atonement. It aspires to cleanse and purify all three levels of communication between man and God.

For this reason, the High Priest would sprinkle blood from the Yom Kippur offerings on precisely these three locations in the Temple:

Between the poles of the Holy Ark;

On the parochet – the curtain that separated the Kodesh, including the Menorah -- from the Holy of Holies;

On the Incense Altar.

)Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, pp. 167-168.(

<https://www.ravkooktorah.org/TERUMA-73.htm>

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## **The Home We Build Together )Terumah 5774. 5781(** By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.\*

The sequence of parsiyhot that begins with Terumah, and continues with Tetzaveh, Ki Tissa, Vayakhel and Pekudei, is puzzling in many ways. First, it outlines the construction of the Tabernacle )Mishkan(, the portable House of Worship the Israelites built and carried with them through the desert, in exhaustive and exhausting detail. The narrative takes almost the whole of the last third of the book of Exodus. Why so long? Why such detail? The Tabernacle was, after all, only a temporary home for the Divine Presence, eventually superseded by the Temple in Jerusalem.

Besides which, why is the making of the Mishkan in the book of Exodus at all? Its natural place seems to be in the book of Vayikra, which is overwhelmingly devoted to an account of the service of the Mishkan and the sacrifices that were offered there. The book of Exodus, by contrast, could be subtitled, "the birth of a nation." It is about the transition of the Israelites from a family to a people and their journey from slavery to freedom. It rises to a climax with the covenant made between God and the people at Mount Sinai. What has the Tabernacle to do with this? It seems an odd way to end the book.

The answer, it seems to me, is profound. First, recall the history of the Israelites until now. It has been a long series of complaints. They complained when the first intervention by Moses made their situation worse. Then, at the Red Sea, they said to Moses:

*"Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"* Ex. 14:11-12.

After crossing the sea, they continued to complain, first about the lack of water, then that the water was bitter, then at the lack of food, then again about the lack of water. Then, within weeks of the revelation at Sinai – the only time in history God appeared to an entire nation – they made a Golden Calf. If an unprecedented sequence of miracles cannot bring about a mature response on the part of the people, what will?

It is then that God said: Let them build something together. This simple command transformed the Israelites. During the whole construction of the Tabernacle there were no complaints. The entire people contributed – some gold, silver, or bronze, some brought skins and drapes, others gave their time and skill. They gave so much that Moses had to order them to stop. A remarkable proposition is being framed here: It is not what God does for us that transforms us. It is what we do for God.

So long as every crisis was dealt with by Moses and miracles, the Israelites remained in a state of dependency. Their default response was to complain. In order for them to reach adulthood and responsibility, there had to be a transition from passive recipients of God's blessings to active creators. The people had to become God's "partners in the work of creation" )Shabbat 10a(. That, I believe, is what the Sages meant when they said, *"Call them not 'your children' but 'your builders'"* )Brachot 64a(. People have to become builders if they are to grow from childhood to adulthood.

Judaism is God's call to responsibility. He does not want us to rely on miracles. He does not want us to be dependent on others. He wants us to become His partners, recognising that what we have, we have from Him, but what we make of what we have is up to us, our choices and our effort. This is not an easy balance to achieve. It is easy to live a life of dependency. It is equally easy in the opposite direction to slip into the mistake of saying, *"My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me"* )Deut. 8:17(. The Jewish view of the human condition is that everything we achieve is due to our own efforts, but equally and essentially the result of God's blessing.

The building of the Tabernacle was the first great project the Israelites undertook together. It involved their generosity and skill. It gave them the chance to give back to God a little of what He had given them. It conferred on them the dignity of labour and creative endeavour. It brought to closure their birth as a nation and it symbolised the challenge of the future. The society they were summoned to create in the land of Israel would be one in which everyone would play their part. It was to become – in the phrase I have used as the title of one of my books – "the home we build together." ]1[

From this we see that one of the greatest challenges of leadership is to give people the chance to give, to contribute, to participate. That requires self-restraint, *tzimtzum*, on the part of the leader, creating the space for others to lead. As the saying goes: A leader is best when people barely need to acknowledge him. When his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: 'we did it ourselves.' ]2[

This brings us to the fundamental distinction in politics between State and Society. The state represents what is done for us by the machinery of government, through the instrumentality of laws, courts, taxation and public spending. Society is what we do for one another through communities, voluntary associations, charities and welfare organisations. Judaism, I believe, has a marked preference for society rather than state, precisely because it recognises – and **this is the central theme of the book of Exodus – that it is what we do for others, not what others or God does for us, that transforms us.** The Jewish formula, I believe, is: small state, big society. ]emphasis added[

The person who had the deepest insight into the nature of democratic society was Alexis de Tocqueville. Visiting America in the 1830s, he saw that its strength lay in what he called the "art of association," the tendency of Americans to come

together in communities and voluntary groups to help one another, rather than leaving the task to a centralised government. Were it ever to be otherwise, were individuals to depend wholly on the state, then democratic freedom would be at risk.

In one of the most haunting passages of his masterwork, *Democracy in America*, he says that democracies are at risk of a completely new form of oppression for which there is no precedent in the past. It will happen, he says, when people exist solely in and for themselves, leaving the pursuit of the common good to the government. This would then be what life would be like:

*Above this race of men stands an immense and tutelary power, which takes upon itself alone to secure their gratifications and to watch over their fate. That power is absolute, minute, regular, provident and mild. It would be like the authority of a parent if, like that authority, its object was to prepare men for manhood; but it seeks, on the contrary, to keep them in perpetual childhood: it is well content that the people should rejoice, provided they think of nothing but rejoicing. For their happiness such a government willingly labours, but it chooses to be the sole agent and the only arbiter of that happiness; it provides for their security, foresees and supplies their necessities, facilitates their pleasures, manages their principal concerns, directs their industry, regulates the descent of property, and subdivides their inheritances: what remains, but to spare them all the care of thinking and all the trouble of living?]*<sup>3</sup> Alexis De Tocqueville

Tocqueville wrote these words almost 200 years ago, and there is a risk that this is happening to some European societies today: all state, no society; all government, little or no community.<sup>4</sup> Tocqueville was not a religious writer. He makes no reference to the Hebrew Bible. But the fear he has is precisely what the book of Exodus documents. When a central power – even when this is God Himself – does everything on behalf of the people, they remain in a state of arrested development. They complain instead of acting. They give way easily to despair. When the leader, in this case Moses, is missing, they do foolish things, none more so than making a Golden Calf.

There is only one solution: to make the people co-architects of their own destiny, to get them to build something together, to shape them into a team and show them that they are not helpless, that they are responsible and capable of collaborative action. Genesis begins with God creating the universe as a home for human beings. Exodus ends with human beings creating the Mishkan, as a 'home' for God.

Hence the basic principle of Judaism, that we are called on to become co-creators with God. And hence, too, the corollary: that leaders do not do the work on behalf of the people. They teach people how to do the work themselves.

**It is not what God does for us but what we do for God that allows us to reach dignity and responsibility.**

[emphasis added]

#### FOOTNOTES:

<sup>1</sup>[ Jonathan Sacks, *The Home We Build Together: Recreating Society* )Bloomsbury Academic, 2009(.

<sup>2</sup>[ Attributed to Lao-Tsu.

<sup>3</sup>[ Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America, abridged and with an introduction by Thomas Bender* )The Modern Library, New York, 1981(, 584.

<sup>4</sup>[ This is not to imply that there is no role for governments; that all should be left to voluntary associations. Far from it. There are things – from the rule of law to the defence of the realm to the enforcement of ethical standards and the creation of an equitable distribution of the goods necessary for a dignified existence – that only governments can achieve. The issue is balance.

#### Around the Shabbat Table:

1. What are the main themes and messages you have found so far in the book of Shemot?
2. Can you think of new ways that your community could unite to build something together?
3. Making the Golden Calf was also a project that united the people in a creative goal. Why was this endeavour so problematic?

<https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/bo/the-far-horizon/> Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar.

<https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/terumah/the-home-we-build-together/>

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## **Why Read the Ketubah at the Wedding?**

By Aharon Loschak \* © Chabad 2023

Have you ever been to a Jewish wedding?

If you have, you may have noticed that one of the rituals performed under the chuppah is the reading of the ketubah, the marriage contract.

Many think it's a romantic notion. As the flowery document is unrolled and the ancient Aramaic words hopefully roll off the reader's tongue, the crowd can almost feel the bonds of love between the newly minted husband and wife.

The problem is that a ketubah is far from just a contract of love. In fact, it's pretty much the exact opposite.

Sure it contains a single line in which the husband commits to, "serve, honor, feed and support you ... faithfully." But if you actually read the tongue-twisting Aramaic, it states in no unclear terms that if the husband ever even dreams of divorcing his wife, he is on the hook for a very large sum of money.

The history of this document harks back to Talmudic times when marriages were much more convenience-based, and too many men were easily dismissing their wives on flimsy pretenses. As a protection against flippant men, the rabbis put measures in place that would make them think twice before kicking their wife to the curb. Thus, the ketubah was born.<sup>1</sup>

Considering its contents, isn't the chuppah a bad place to read it? Why would we want to evoke scenes of divorce and hefty payouts during this moment of love and devotion, when the relationship is just being built with good feelings all around?

Why talk about destruction during construction?

There are halachic reasons,<sup>2</sup> but there's a deeper lesson here.

### **The Construction Project**

Parshat Terumah opens with the fledgling nation's first construction project: the Tabernacle. "*Make for Me a home,*"<sup>3</sup> G-d requests, and in what's probably the first and last such occurrence, the people overwhelmingly respond to the fundraising campaign. Gold, silver, copper, and an array of other donations pour in. Before long, the project is well underway.

The rabbis see tremendous significance in every element of the Mishkan's construction: the materials used, the height of the walls, the way the furnishings were laid out — everything was designed to reflect different facets of Jewish life and meaning.

In this vein, the Midrash<sup>4</sup> draws a connection between four materials used in the Mishkan's construction, and four eras in Jewish history. Using Biblical references, associations are made between gold, silver, copper, and the red-dyed ram skins and the four kingdoms of Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome. These are important nations in Jewish history, as they are responsible for the "four exiles" — the four periods of foreign rule to which we have been subjected.<sup>5</sup>

But, here again, we cannot help but ask: why talk about destruction during the construction? Why would the Midrash find references to the nations who destroyed our Temple in the very verses that speak of its construction?

## **A Compelling Story**

What makes a compelling narrative?

Ask any scriptwriter worth their salt and they'll tell you: conflict. If there's no conflict, there's no character growth, no narrative arch — and it's profoundly uninteresting.

There's a reason we all love a good story, because that's what life's all about: navigating and resolving conflict, and more importantly, growing from it.

## **G d Wants It, Too**

And you know what? A good story of overcoming conflict is what G d wants more than anything else as well.

There are all types of great places that G d could have chosen to call home. G d is perfect, and He could have chosen to remain alone with His perfect self. Or at the very least, to create a spiritually marvelous world full of angels and other celestial beings who recognize His glory and hallow His name.

In fact, G d did create such worlds, but He didn't stop there, opting to create this brute, physical world we call our universe — a place full of material objects and interesting creatures that haven't the faintest clue who or what G d is.

And defying all logic, it is this world that G d chose to be His home. The Torah that embodies His deepest will was not given to angels, nor did He keep it for Himself. Who did He give it to? To me and you — lowly humans in a very material world.

You know why?

Because it is only in this world that there is conflict, darkness, and confusion — and most importantly, courageous humans who do their best to overcome it all.<sup>6</sup>

## **De-Construction**

And that is why the verses that speak of the Temple's construction allude to its destruction.

You see, the Temple was about constructing a home for G d. It was designed to be the spiritual epicenter in a physical world, the place where G d's presence would be most manifest on the terrestrial plane. And so, the people responded with gusto, eagerly pooling their resources to construct a magnificent structure that would shine with sanctity.

That's all well and good, but remember: a shining edifice with no challengers nipping at its heels doesn't make for a compelling story. The true construction of the Temple is only realized when there's destruction, when conflict is introduced. When the Jewish people are exiled and thrust into dark and challenging situations and nevertheless build a home for G d there too. Then the ultimate purpose and goal of the construction project is realized.

A Temple oozing G dliness is wonderful, and we hanker for such days. Better yet, though, is a people without a Temple, without overt G dliness, who nevertheless manage to introduce G d wherever they go.

When conflict is introduced and then resolved, that's interesting and satisfying.

### **A Compelling Life Story: Overcoming Conflict**

A wedding is a construction project. It is when two people decide to build a life and a relationship together. Under the chuppah, it's all smiles and roses. Starry eyed with love and infatuation, the relationship is effortless and oh-so-romantic; a shining edifice oozing with positivity.

But it's hardly compelling, and not yet that interesting.

The true test of the young couple's love will be when conflict arrives. And it will. To see how the two lovers navigate, resolve, and grow from that conflict — that makes for a compelling storyline. That is when their true love will be realized and a real relationship will be born.

And so, under the chuppah, during the construction, we talk about the destruction, the ketubah. "You're going to face conflict, of that I'm sure," intimates the ketubah-reader in those lilting Aramaic words. "Do not be dejected or afraid. On the contrary, embrace it! — for then you will be able to truly realize the depth and beauty of your flowering relationship."<sup>7</sup>

#### **FOOTNOTES:**

1. *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Ishut 10:7.

2. The simple reason is that under the chuppah two rituals are actually being performed: "kiddushin" and "nissuin," loosely translated as "betrothal" and "marriage." Historically, these two steps were conducted up to a year apart. In post-Talmudic times, however, that practice was abolished, and the present practice of doing everything together was instituted. To make a distinction between the two steps that occur in sequence, we "break it up" by reading the ketubah aloud. See Rama., *Even Ha'ezer* 61:9.

3. Exodus 25:8.

4. Midrash Tanchuma, Terumah 7: The gold [used in the Mishkan] corresponds to the kingdom of Babylonia, of which the verse states, "*You are the head of gold.*"

The silver corresponds to the kingdom of [Persia/] Media, as the verse states, "*If it pleases the king, let it be written to destroy them, [and I will weigh out ten thousand silver talents....]*"

The copper corresponds to the kingdom of Greece, as it was the least powerful of them all.

And the red-dyed ram skins correspond to the kingdom of Edom, as the verse states, "*And the first one emerged reddish...*"

G d said: *Though you witness four kingdoms boastfully dominating you, I will sow salvation for you from the midst of your servitude.*

5. Slavery in Egypt, which took place before Jewish sovereignty had ever been established, is not included.

6. See Tanya ch. 36-37.

7. This essay is based on *Likutei Sichot* 16, pp. 292-297.

\* Writer, editor, and rabbi; editor of JLI's popular Torah Studies program.

[https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/5384427/jewish/Why-Read-the-Ketubah-at-the-Wedding.htm](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/5384427/jewish/Why-Read-the-Ketubah-at-the-Wedding.htm)

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## Terumah: Why Study the Tabernacle?

by Rabbi Moshe Wisniefsky \*

### Studying the Tabernacle

*You [Moses] shall construct the Mishkan }Tabernacle( in its proper order, as you will have been shown [by Me] on the mountain. )Ex. 26:30(*

The purpose of the Tabernacle was to enable and inspire us to reveal G-d's presence in our mundane lives, to make the world into G-d's home. This is no simple task, and one that we cannot accomplish without G-d's help

This is why G-d showed Moses How the Tabernacle was to be erected while he was still on Mount Sinai. Seeing the "celestial" Tabernacle did not only help Moses understand G-d's instructions for its construction; it also enabled Moses to construct the physical Tabernacle in such a way that it would serve its intended purpose, to be a physical resting place for the Divine presence.

Similarly, by studying the construction and operation of the Tabernacle )and its successor, the holy Temple in Jerusalem(, we can tap the Divine power that enables us to fulfill our own spiritual potential, transforming our portion of the world into G-d's ultimate home.

– From Kehot's Daily Wisdom #3 \*

Gut Shabbos,  
Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman  
Kehot Publication Society

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5783 B"H

## Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

### The Labour of Gratitude

There is an important principle in Judaism, a source of hope and also one of the structuring principles of the Torah. It is the principle that God creates the cure before the disease (Megillah 13b). Bad things may happen but God has already given us the remedy if we know where to look for it.

So for instance in Chukat we read of the deaths of Miriam and Aaron and how Moses was told that he would die in the desert without entering the Promised Land. This is a terrifying encounter with mortality. Yet before any of this, we first hear the law of the red heifer, the rite of purification after contact with death. The Torah has placed it here to assure us in advance that we can be purified after any bereavement. Human mortality does not ultimately bar us from being in the presence of Divine immortality.

This is the key to understanding Terumah. Though not all commentators agree, its real significance is that it is God's answer in advance to the sin of the Golden Calf. In strict chronological terms it is out of place here. It (and Tetzaveh) should have appeared after Ki Tissa, which tells the story of the Calf. It is set here before the sin to tell us that the cure existed before the disease, the tikkun before the kilkul, the mending before the fracture, the rectification before the sin.

So to understand Terumah and the phenomenon of the Mishkan, the Sanctuary and all that it entailed, we have first to understand what went wrong at the time of the Golden Calf. Here the Torah is very subtle and gives us, in Ki Tissa, a narrative that can be understood at three quite different levels.

The first and most obvious is that the sin of the Golden Calf was due to a failure of leadership on the part of Aaron. This is the overwhelming impression we receive on first reading Exodus 32. We sense that Aaron should have resisted the people's clamour. He should have told them to be patient. He should have shown leadership. He did not. When Moses comes down the mountain and asks him what he has done, Aaron replies:

"Do not be angry, my lord. You know how prone these people are to evil. They said to me, 'Make an oracle to lead us, since we do not know what happened to Moses, the man who took us out of Egypt.' So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewellery, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this Calf!"  
[Ex. 32:22-24]

This is a failure of responsibility. It is also a spectacular act of denial ("I threw it into the fire, and out came this Calf!").[1] So the first reading of the story is of Aaron's failure.

But only the first. A deeper reading suggests that it is about Moses. It was his absence from the camp that created the crisis in the first place.

The people began to realise that Moses was taking a long time to come down from the mountain. They gathered around Aaron and said to him, 'Make us an oracle to lead us. We have no idea what happened to Moses, the man who brought us out of Egypt.'

God told Moses what was happening and said: "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have wrought ruin."  
[Ex. 32:7]

The undertone is clear. "Go down," suggests that God was telling Moses that his place was with the people at the foot of the mountain, not with God at the top. "Your people" implies that God was telling Moses that the people were his problem, not God's. He was about to disown them.

Moses urgently prayed to God for forgiveness, then descended. What follows is a whirlwind of action. Moses descends, sees what has happened, breaks the tablets, burns the Calf, mixes its ashes with water and makes the people drink, then summons help in punishing the wrongdoers. He has become the leader in the midst of the people, restoring order where a moment before there had been chaos. On this reading the central figure was Moses. He had been the strongest of strong leaders. The result, though, was that when he was not there, the people panicked. That is the downside of strong leadership.

But there then follows a chapter, Exodus 33, that is one of the hardest in the Torah to understand. It begins with God announcing that, though He would send an "angel" or "messenger" to accompany the people on the rest of their journey, He Himself would not be in their midst "because you are a stiff-necked

### Note: Avoid Disappointment Reserve Dedications Now!

people and I might destroy you on the way." This deeply distresses the people. (See Ex. 33:1-6)

In verses 12-23, Moses challenges God on this verdict. He wants God's Presence to go with the people. He asks, "Let me know Your ways," and "Pray let me see Your glory." This is hard to understand. The entire exchange between Moses and God, one of the most intense in the Torah, is no longer about sin and forgiveness. It seems almost to be a metaphysical inquiry into the nature of God. What is its connection with the Golden Calf?

It is what happens between these two episodes that is the most puzzling of all. The text says that Moses "took his tent and pitched it for himself outside the camp, far from the camp" (Ex. 33:7). This must surely have been precisely the wrong thing to do. If, as God and the text have implied, the problem had been the distance of Moses as a leader, the single most important thing for him to do now would be to stay in the people's midst, not position himself outside the camp. Moreover, the Torah has just told us that God had said He would not be in the midst of the people – and this caused the people distress. Moses' decision to do likewise would surely have doubled their distress. Something deep is happening here.

It seems to me that in Exodus 33 Moses is undertaking the most courageous act of his life. He is, in essence, saying to God: "It is not my distance that is the problem. It is Your distance. The people are terrified of You. They have witnessed Your overwhelming power. They have seen You bring the greatest empire the world has ever known to its knees. They have seen You turn sea into dry land, send down food from heaven and bring water from a rock. When they heard Your voice at Mount Sinai, they came to me to beg me to be an intermediary. They said, 'You speak to us and we will hearken, but let not God speak to us lest we die' (Ex. 20:16). They made a Calf not because they wanted to worship an idol, but because they wanted some symbol of Your Presence that was not terrifying. They need You to be close. They need to sense You not in

By Dr. Israel & Rebecca Rivkin, Jerusalem,  
in memory of Rebecca's father  
Rabbi Jacob Bulka, z"l,  
(Harav Chaim Yaakov ben Yitzchak),  
whose yahrzeit was last week 2 Adar

By the Isen family  
on the occasion of the 29th yahrzeit of  
Milton Isen, a"h, (Moshe ben Mordechai Yitzhak)  
and the 16th yahrzeit of  
Adele Isen, a"h (Chaya bas Hinda Faiga)

the sky or the summit of the mountain but in the midst of the camp. And even if they cannot see Your face, for no one can do that, at least let them see some visible sign of Your glory.”

That, it seems to me, is Moses’ request to which this week’s parsha is the answer.

“Let them make for Me a Sanctuary that I may dwell in their midst.” [Ex. 25:8]

This is the first time in the Torah that we hear the verb *sh-ch-n*, meaning “to dwell,” in relation to God. As a noun it means literally, “a neighbour.” From this is derived the key word in post-biblical Judaism, *Shechinah*, meaning God’s immanence as opposed to His transcendence, God-as-One-who-is-close, the daring idea of God as a near neighbour.

In terms of the theology of the Torah, the very idea of a *Mishkan*, a Sanctuary or Temple, a physical “home” for “God’s glory,” is deeply paradoxical. God is beyond space. As King Solomon said at the inauguration of the first Temple, “Behold, the heavens, and the heavens of the heavens, cannot encompass You, how much less this House?” Or as Isaiah said in God’s name: “The heavens are My throne and the earth My foot-stool. What House shall you build for Me, where can My resting place be?” (Is. 66:1)

The answer, as the Jewish mystics emphasised, is that God does not live in a building, but rather in the hearts of the builders: “Let them make for me a Sanctuary and I will dwell among them” (Ex. 25:8) – “among them,” not “in it.” How, though, does this happen? What human act causes the Divine Presence to live within the camp, the community? The answer is the name of our parsha, *Terumah*, meaning, a gift, a contribution.

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying ‘Tell the Israelites to bring Me an offering. You are to receive the offering for Me from everyone whose heart moves them to give.’ [Ex. 25:8]

This would prove to be the turning point in Jewish history. Until that moment the Israelites had been recipients of God’s miracles and deliverances. He had taken them from slavery to freedom and performed miracles for them. There was only one thing God had not yet done, namely, give the Israelites the chance of giving back something to God. The very idea sounds absurd. How can we, God’s creations, give back to the God who made us? All we have is His. As David said, at the gathering he convened at the end of his life to initiate the building the Temple:

Wealth and honour come from you; you are the ruler of all things ... Who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. [I Chronicles 29:12, 29:14]

That ultimately is the logic of the *Mishkan*. God’s greatest gift to us is the ability to give to Him. From a Judaic perspective the idea is fraught with risk. The idea that God might be in need of gifts is close to paganism and heresy. Yet, knowing the risk, God allowed Himself to be persuaded by Moses to cause His spirit to rest within the camp and allow the Israelites to give something back to God.

At the heart of the idea of the Sanctuary is what Lewis Hyde beautifully described as the labour of gratitude. His classic study, *The Gift*, [2] looks at the role of the giving and receiving of gifts, for example, at critical moments of transition. He quotes the Talmudic story of a man whose daughter was about to get married, but who had been told that she would not survive to the end of the day. The next morning the man visited his daughter and saw that she was still alive. Unknown to both of them, when she hung up her hat after the wedding, its pin pierced a serpent that would otherwise have bitten and killed her. The father wanted to know what his daughter had done that merited this Divine Intervention. She answered, “A poor man came to the door yesterday. Everyone was so busy with the wedding preparations that they did not have time to deal with him. So I took the portion that had been intended for me and gave it to him.” It was this act of generosity that was the cause of her miraculous deliverance. (Shabbat 156b)

The construction of the Sanctuary was fundamentally important because it gave the Israelites the chance to give back to God. Later Jewish law recognised that giving is an integral part of human dignity when they made the remarkable ruling that even a poor person completely dependent on charity is still obliged to give charity.[3] To be in a situation where you can only receive, not give, is to lack human dignity.

The *Mishkan* became the home of the Divine Presence because God specified that it be built only out of voluntary contributions. Giving creates a gracious society by enabling each of us to make our contribution to the public good. That is why the building of the Sanctuary was the cure for the sin of the Golden Calf. A society that only received but could not give was trapped in dependency and lack of self-respect. God allowed the people to come close to Him, and He to them, by giving them the chance to give.

That is why a society based on rights not responsibilities, on what we claim from, not what we give to others, will always eventually go wrong. It is why the most important gift a parent can give a child is the chance to give back. The etymology of the word *Terumah* hints at this. It means not simply a contribution, but literally something “raised up.” When we give, it is not just our contribution but we who are raised up. We survive by what we are given, but we achieve dignity by what we give.

## Likutei Divrei Torah

[1] In Deuteronomy 9:20, Moses discloses a fact which has been kept from us until that point: “God also expressed great anger toward Aaron, threatening to destroy him, so, at that time, I also prayed for Aaron.”

[2] Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: How the Creative Spirit Transforms the World* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006).

[3] Maimonides *Hilchot Shekalim* 1:1, *Mattenot Ani'im* 7:5.

### Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

“And let them make Me a Sanctuary that I may dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8). What does it mean for God to dwell among the people? Does this not sound anthropomorphic, as if God were in human form dwelling on our street? And would the concept of a dwelling place for the divine not have been more appropriately expressed with a verse saying: “And let them make Me a Sanctuary that I may dwell in it”?

Moreover, what is the strange textual link between the Sanctuary and Shabbat? This portion and the following one, *Tetzaveh*, deal with the Sanctuary. The third portion of the sequence, *Ki Tissa*, suddenly features a ringing declaration to keep Shabbat (Ex. 31:14) – apropos of nothing. What is the relationship between the Sanctuary and Shabbat?

According to the Talmud, the aspect of Shabbat that is intimately linked to the construction of the Sanctuary is the fundamental definition of precisely which activities are prohibited on Shabbat. Similarly, in the portion of *Ki Tissa*, in the midst of God saying to Moses about Bezalel the great architect of the Sanctuary “...whom I have filled with the spirit of God in wisdom and in understanding and in knowledge and in all manner of workmanship” (Exodus 31:3) the Torah suddenly moves from the Sanctuary to Shabbat:

“But verily you shall keep My Sabbath, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you...” (Exodus 31:14).

Aside from the general declaration forbidding creative activity (*melakha*) on Shabbat (Ex. 20:10), the Written Torah is virtually silent on specifically what is included under the rubric of creative activity. By virtue of the fact that an additional Shabbat injunction appears precisely within the context of constructing the Sanctuary, the sages derived the definition of creative activity or “work” from the different categories of labor involved in the construction of the Sanctuary. They taught that whatever was involved in the construction of the Sanctuary is forbidden on Shabbat.

From a traditional perspective, one might therefore explain the linkage by saying that the Sanctuary expresses sanctity of space and Shabbat expresses sanctity of time. Sanctity of time is on a higher level than sanctity of space, so the Sanctuary cannot be built on Shabbat and all the activities necessary for the building of the Sanctuary became the paradigm for prohibited Shabbat activity.

But let us look more deeply into the activities forbidden on Shabbat. I believe we shall discover an even more profound linkage between the Sanctuary and Shabbat. The Mishna (Shabbat 7:2) lists 39 forbidden creative activities, beginning with seeding and plowing – basic agricultural activities. On the surface, there seems to be little relationship between these activities and the building of the Sanctuary. Rashi suggests that the initial group is related to the planting of herbs whose dyes were used for the Sanctuary curtains. However, if this is the case, then the eleventh listed category – baking – poses a difficult problem. According to Rashi's interpretation, it is cooking rather than baking that should have been included; after all, extracting the different ingredients needed to dye the linens required the cooking or the boiling of the herbs – not baking.

The Talmud explains that baking replaced cooking because the author of the Mishna, R. Yehuda HaNasi, wanted to list the processes involved in the manufacture of bread; hence the Mishna lists baking rather than cooking. This Talmudic response may very well be used to shed a fascinating light on all of the 39 activities. If the first group of forbidden activities in the Mishna is to be looked upon from the perspective of bread manufacture, then the next grouping of prohibited activities centers around clothing manufacture, the third around leather manufacture and the fourth around building construction.

From this perspective, R. Yehuda HaNasi is adding another dimension to the prohibited Sabbath activities: not only are they the activities involved in constructing the Sanctuary, but they are also the activities involved in producing food, clothing and shelter. He is informing us that although the human pursuit of food (bread, the "staff of life"), clothing and shelter (leather may be used for garments, shoes and tents) is legitimate and even mandatory for physical survival and certainly appropriate for the weekdays. Even animals require food and some form of protective clothing from the elements and shelter!

The Shabbat, however, is to be dedicated to God. The Shabbat is to be sanctified for the soul and the mind. The Shabbat is the means to the end for which God created human beings above animals: to catapult us into more exalted and spiritual realms of involvement. Shabbat is the key to essence, and not mere existence!

The story is told that the famed Hassidic Rebbe Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev once saw a Jew running very quickly. "I am running to make my living," explained the harried businessman. "But perhaps in the process you are losing your life," remonstrated the rebbe.

Indeed, the biblical explanation of the divine gift of desert manna teaches us that "...not by bread alone does the human being live but by

that which comes forth from God's mouth," (Deuteronomy 8:3).

Targum Onkelos (in the more precise readings of the text) translates the passage thus:

"Not by bread alone is the human being meant to exist [kayam], but by that which comes forth from God's mouth is the human being meant to live [hayei] (Onkelos on Deuteronomy 8:3).

"Existence" (kiyum) refers to the physical necessities of food, clothing and shelter, while "life" (hayim) is the purpose of human creation, the fellowship with God which teaches us to emulate His traits of compassion, graciousness, tolerance and truth, the hallmarks of His essence. The Sabbath is given as a day in which we can free ourselves from the "rat race" pursuit of a living, and dedicate ourselves to the more human pursuit of a life in the context of sacred time, "time off" which is really "time in," time dedicated to family, to Torah, and to God.

The building of the Sanctuary is the preparation, the means, just as the six days of the week are days of preparation, the means. The Sanctuary and the Sabbath are the goal, the purpose. To slightly change the apt phrase of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, the Sabbath is our Sanctuary in time, and the Sanctuary is our Sabbath in space. The days of the week are not yet holy time, whereas the Sabbath is a foretaste of the world to come. The world is not yet perfect, and we must transform it into a Sanctuary in which God and humanity can dwell together.

Once we understand that the Sanctuary and the Sabbath are parallel, we can readily see the similarity in language between the two. The Hebrew root khl (vayekhulu, vatekhel, to complete) and the Hebrew noun melakha (labor) appear almost exclusively in the two contexts of the Sabbath and the Sanctuary. Also, there are key verses in each context that are almost identical (for example, Genesis 1:31, Exodus 39:43). The biblical goal is for all space to become Sanctuary, all time to become Sabbath.

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### **The Person in the Parsha** **Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb**

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#### **The Missing Tzedakah Box**

It was a cold winter, all over the world. It was the year 1991, and it was the time of the great Gulf War. Scud missiles were falling upon towns and cities throughout the State of Israel. To say that times were tense would indeed be an understatement.

The city of Baltimore had a sister city relationship with Odessa, in the former Soviet Union. The communist regime had just fallen, and travel to places like Odessa was becoming more practical. The Jewish community of Baltimore had begun to send representatives to assist the Jews of Odessa in various ways.

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Every six months or so, they would assign a different rabbi to travel to Odessa to ascertain the needs of the Jewish community there. That winter, it was my turn as a local Baltimore congregational rabbi to visit Odessa. It was a tense time for such a visit, and my family and friends urged me not to go.

However, I did go and had one of the most adventurous experiences in my life. My companion and I were stranded in the Moscow airport and could not continue on to Odessa, because the Russian Navy was on maneuvers in anticipation of the spreading of the Gulf War – and we were considered potential spies. We spent a frigid Shabbat in Moscow, eventually obtained the credentials to gain access to Odessa, and spent about ten days there.

I had a busy and rewarding time there, especially because of my visit to the one synagogue that was permitted to function throughout the communist era. I remember the synagogue well, and I recall the fact that the prayer services were held in a basement room and not in the still beautiful and quite a large sanctuary, because the community could not afford to heat the larger facility.

About twenty men and three or four women gathered in that basement shul every morning. They had Torah scrolls and read from them. Many individuals came by for a moment or two to light memorial candles. There were even siddurim and chumashim. But something was missing, and for a while I couldn't quite put my finger on what it was.

Suddenly, it dawned upon me that there were no pushkas (tzedakah boxes) and no collection of tzedakah (charity) whatsoever. Tzedakah is an integral part of the Jewish prayer service, and no synagogue that I am familiar with, whatever its orientation, lacks a tzedakah box in which to at least put in a few pennies.

It was at that moment that I began to fully comprehend the effects of seventy years of communist domination upon the religious psyche of the Jews who lived under Soviet regime and tyranny. The deep-rooted custom of giving charity daily had been uprooted. The profound compassion, which has characterized the Jewish people throughout the ages, had been purged from the very souls of the victims of Communism.

I reflect on this important personal observation when this week's Torah portion, Parshat Terumah, comes around. For although we have examples of charity and benevolence earlier in the Torah, this week we read for the first time about the entire Jewish community and its response to a call, an appeal, for contributions.

In Terumah, the Jewish people begin to construct the Mishkan, the Sanctuary. In a sense, it is the first synagogue in our history. It is certainly the first time that we are summoned to contribute, each and every one of us, to a community-wide project. The

Jewish people do respond, and respond generously, with all their hearts, and with whatever they have available, to the call for contributions to the Sanctuary. There is no record of anyone shirking this responsibility.

Our Torah portion begins with the command of the Almighty to Moses that he speak to the Jewish people and “have them take for Me a gift from every person whose heart moves him to give.” (Exodus 25:2). Commentaries throughout the ages find it remarkable that we are asked to take, not give, a gift, establishing the basic teaching that he who gives takes a great deal in the process, that giving is a reward and not a deprivation. That fundamental lesson was expunged from the minds and hearts of the Jews of Odessa under the duress of a mere seventy years of communist oppression.

I have been reading a great deal about the science of genetics and its fascinating recent discoveries. Among these discoveries is the finding that many traits that we ordinarily think are products of our education and experience are ultimately rooted in heredity, in our genes. One of those traits is altruism, the tendency to care about others and to act benevolently toward them.

This scientific finding is, in a sense, consistent with the Talmudic teaching that three personality traits are part of the definition of the Jew, hardwired into our very nature: compassion, the capacity to feel shame, and generosity.

The Jews I met during those wintry days on the shores of the Black Sea have the same genetic composition as the alms-giving Jews I see every morning in New York, Baltimore, and Jerusalem. They share a common heritage and heredity with all other Jews. They, too, possessed the gene for altruism, if in fact such a gene exists.

But I am convinced that the power of our social experiences is sufficient enough to overwhelm the innate power of our inherited traits. The indoctrination of seventy years of a culture which taught that one has no private property, no ownership, no say over giving or taking, but that everything belongs to the commune, was sufficient to undermine centuries of teachings and practices of an entirely different ethic. For the Jewish ethic of charity teaches that we are entitled to private property that we come by through honest effort and legitimate toil. The Jewish ethic of charity teaches, however, that we are accountable to take some of that legitimately earned private property and give it on to those less fortunate than we are or to ward the needs of the larger collective, the tzibbur.

There are many ways to understand Jewish history, many perspectives from which to view our origins and our ability to have survived the vicissitudes we have encountered over hundreds of years. We can understand our

history in terms of our persecutions, in terms of our heroic leaders, in terms of our migrations to every part of the globe.

But I maintain that the way to understand Jewish history is through the recognition of the power of the mitzvah of tzedakah, a mitzvah that we have all faithfully kept whether we observed other mitzvot or not. We have had the amazing ability to recognize our obligation as individuals to the greater community. We have always demonstrated our compassion for the welfare of the poor, of the sick, of the elderly. Jewish history can be understood in terms of our successes in the area of charity.

The old synagogue of Odessa, as I am told by those who have visited there more recently, now has a tzedakah box. Indeed, it has more than one. The Jews there are more than generous in their giving. The lessons of Communism have been undone. The Jewish tradition of “taking gifts” has been restored.

That is the way I choose to understand the major theme of Jewish history; compassion for each other, generosity, charity, and altruism. Sometimes, for brief periods, we may lose our focus. But we are quick to regain it.

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#### **Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand**

#### **Once It's Your Money, It Is Hard to Part With It**

On the pasuk “Speak to the Children of Israel that they may take for Me an offering...” (Shemos 25:2) the Yalkut Shimoni asks: How is it that the Creator of Heaven and Earth, who created and owns everything that exists in the universe, needs man to offer him anything? The Yalkut answers that He clearly does not need our gifts but rather the words here, “Speak to the Children of Israel (Daber el Bnei Yisrael) are similar to the words elsewhere in the famous Haftorah of Parshas Nachamu (Yeshaya 40:2). Dabru al Lev Yerushalayim v’Kir’u eileha – Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call upon her – which are words of appeasement. The connotation of Daber in our pasuk is not a stern commandment, but rather it implies appeasement—cajole them into giving money to the Mishkan.

Apparently, the expression Dibur can also imply piyus (appeasement). The striking fact about this Yalkut Shimoni is that after the Destruction of the Bais Hamikdash (the time period that the prophet Yeshaya addresses in that Haftorah), Klal Yisrael certainly needed to be spoken to in a soft and encouraging voice. They had just lost everything. The Beis HaMikdash was destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of people were killed and exiled. They were in galus and they were starving. They needed words of nechama (consolation). So, we understand Dabru al Lev Yerushalayim v’Kir’u eileha to be words of appeasement.

But over here in Parshas Teruma, why does the Medrash say that Moshe needed to speak to them softly, to mollify them and appease

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them? What is the comparison between merely asking people for money and offering them comfort after an unprecedented national tragedy?

The Tanna d’Bei Eliyahu shares the same concept. “Once Bnei Yisrael accepted the Dominion of Heaven with joy by saying ‘All that Heaven speaks, we will do and we will listen’ – the very next parsha is “Speak to the Children of Israel and take for Me an offering.” Here too, one of the most glorious moments in the history of the Jewish people—their utterance of the famous pledge “Na’aseh v’Nishmah”—is seen as a trigger for the Almighty giving them yet a further opportunity to draw close to Him: Now that they are inspired and they are rearing to go – now is the opportune time to ask them that they should take for Me a Teruma offering. As if to say, “Strike while the iron is hot.”

What is the interpretation in both of these teachings of Chazal?

The answer is that we see from here one of the great truths of life: It is very hard to get people to part with their money. This does not come as a surprise to anyone who has ever tried to raise money for anything. People like their money, and they don’t want to part with it. Therefore, the short answer to this question is that the reason they needed appeasement (piyus) is because they were being asked for money. Likewise, the reason Moshe was told “chap arayn” (e.g. — Act now! They just said Na’aseh v’Nishma, quickly go ask them now for money) is because if that mood of enthusiasm and spiritual elevation is allowed to dissipate, it will be much harder to get them to part with their gold and silver.

This nugget of wisdom is encapsulated by Shlomo HaMelech in Mishlei (19:22): “Longing for a person is his kindness (ta’avas adam chasdo), but a pauper is better than a (rich) man who deceives (v’tov rash m’ish kazav).” The commentaries explain this pasuk. Many times, we think that if we had tons of money, how generous would we be! Oh how much money would I give to every needy institution in the world!

Every once in a while, a Power Ball lottery reaches \$300,000,000 or \$350,000,000. Have you ever fantasized what you would do with that money? I have! I would not quit my job. I love my job. I would still work because there are certain things I like to do. But I would like a Learjet because I hate going through TSA and having to take my shoes off each time I board a commercial flight. Beyond the Learjet, I am not sure what I would want. Perhaps, an apartment in Eretz Yisrael, perhaps in a prime location in the Old City. Maybe a couple of other things, but that is basically it.

Let us take off \$20,000,000 for these few items. I am still left with \$330,000,000. What am I going to do with that? Everyone thinks, “I would build for every Mosad in town the kind

of building they would like to have. I would pay all the Rebbeim fantastic salaries. I would give away huge sums of tzedaka. I would have my own gabbai tzedaka to distribute my wealth appropriately.”

Shlomo HaMelech says that the Ribono shel Olam knows that whenever someone has something in the abstract—the 350 million dollars that he is GOING TO WIN—then he is a great baal tzedaka. But when people actually have the 350 million dollars, something happens to them. This is what the pasuk testifies: ta’avas adam chasdo. Everyone pretends that his desires are to dispense chessed (if and when they had the wherewithal), but the Almighty says “I would rather have an honest poor man than a rich man who has hallucinated prior to obtaining his windfall.” Once you get it, then it becomes YOURS and it becomes very hard to part with.

On the one hand, we could think – why would it be so hard for Klal Yisrael to part with their money? Did they earn it? Did they work for it? They received the silver and gold as presents. They all left Egypt with donkeys laden with gold and silver. They were fabulously wealthy from the spoils of Egypt and the spoils of the Yam Suf. Furthermore, for what did they need money? Their garments did not wear out. They did not need to buy clothes and they did not need to buy food. They didn’t need to pay health insurance, rent or tuition. For what did they need the money?

The answer is that “It is my money now.” Maybe it was just a gift from Hashem, but “It is my money now.” Once it is YOUR money, it is hard to part with it.

This is an apocryphal story, but the story goes that Stalin, the dictator of the Soviet Union, was trying to inculcate his comrades into the concepts of Communism—everyone needs to share. He would ask them “If you had two cows, what would you do with the two cows?” They had to say “I would take one for myself and give one to Comrade Stalin.” “If you had two houses, what would you do with them?” “One for myself and one for Comrade Stalin.” “If you had two cars, what would you do with them?” “One for myself and one for Comrade Stalin.” “And if you had two planes...?” “One for myself and one for Comrade Stalin.”

Finally, he asked, “And if you had two chickens what would you do?” The response was “I would keep both chickens.” Stalin asked, “You were willing to give me the cows, the houses, the cars, and the planes, but not the chicken not! Why is that?” The comrade answered: “True. Because I don’t have a cow, a house, a car, or a plane, but I have two chickens!” If you have the two chickens, you don’t want to part with the two chickens because you have it, and once you have it you can’t part with it.

Someone once sent five hundred rubles in cash to the Yeshiva of the Chofetz Chaim in Radin.

I assume that the Polish Postal Service was no more reliable than the United States Postal Service. A fellow put five hundred rubles into the mail and sent it to the Chofetz Chaim. This was not a check, not a money order – CASH!

The Chofetz Chaim asked the secretary to find out what the story was behind this donation. The secretary investigated and contacted this donor based on his return address and asked him why he sent five hundred rubles through the mail. He said, “I was about to make a deal and I thought to myself, ‘If this deal goes through, I am going to give five hundred rubles to the Yeshiva in Radin.’” The deal went through, but it was already late in the evening when the deal went through. The banks were closed. I could not get a money order. I could not get a check. At first I figured I would wait until the next morning to send the money in the normal fashion. But then a little voice went off in my head: “And if you gave fifty rubles to the Chofetz Chaim’s Yeshiva, they would not be happy?” I started thinking that fifty rubles is a lot of money. Why do I need to give five hundred? I saw myself weakening. I saw that if I waited until the next morning, it would not even be fifty rubles, it would be five rubles. So, I took the cash and put it all in an envelope and sent it.”

He knew that if he waited any longer, he would not be able to part with his money because that is the way human beings are. It is hard to part with your money.

That is what the Medrash says: Speak to the Children of Israel—Lashon piyus, a language of appeasement and mollification, as it is written, “Speak to the heart of Jerusalem”.

Rav Aharon Kotler zt”l once commented that (according to Chazal) the pasuk in Tehillim refers to those who observe Shmittah as Giborei Koach (Tehillim 103:20), mighty people. The Torah promises that if someone keeps Shmittah, then in the sixth year he will see a bountiful crop that will last him for the sixth year, the seventh year, and even the subsequent year. If he just had a major windfall in his sixth year’s crop, why is it so hard to take off the seventh year, such that one who does so is called a mighty person?

Rav Aharon said that this is human nature. The farmer will say, “Yes I had a windfall last year – double and triple my normal income, but imagine if I work the seventh year also. How much larger an income will I have then?” It is very difficult to walk away from that. That is why the Shomrei Shevi’is are called Giborim.

This is what Shlomo HaMelech meant when he said those words “Ta’avas adam chasdo” – A person can talk big, but “v’tov rash m’ish kazav” – the Ribono shel Olam prefers the poor person, rather than the rich person who talks big, but when he writes the check, he suddenly becomes a deceitful man.

## Dvar Torah

### Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

#### Enablers are as important as achievers.

Parshat Terumah presents us with the fascinating details of the furnishing of the Mishkan (the Sanctuary) in the wilderness. As a mobile sanctuary, it was important that every item within it could be transported from place to place. So, for example, for the Aron (Ark), the Shulchan (Table) and the Mizbeach (Altar), Hashem instructed us to place rings on the sides, and poles were inserted through the rings so that people could carry the poles on their shoulders and transport these keilim (vessels) from one place to another.

However there was a major difference between the Aron (the Ark) on the one hand and the other vessels on the other. With respect to the other vessels, once they reached their temporary resting place the poles were removed, and when the time came for them to be transported again, the poles were inserted. Not so, however, with respect to the Aron. When the Ark was put down, the poles were not removed. The Torah says (Shemot 25:15),

“Lo yasuru mimenu,” – “Don’t take them from the ark.”

The poles were an inseparable part of the Ark. The Meshech Chochmah teaches us a beautiful lesson from this. He tells us that the Ark represents the centrality of the study of Torah and the practice of the mitzvot of Torah in our lives, and that’s because the Ark housed the Ten Commandments and the Torah. The poles represent the supporters of Torah. What we therefore find is that the supporters are as important as the implementers.

There are all types of supporters. There are those who give financial support for the building and running of institutions, and then there are those who give encouragement to people to learn and to teach. Foremost amongst these are family members, and the finest example I can think of is Rachel, the wife of Rabbi Akiva.

She encouraged her husband to go and study Torah and to become a great educator to the extent that we study from his teachings to this very day. But in order to achieve this, Rachel and Rabbi Akiva were separated for long periods of time. On one occasion when Rabbi Akiva was with her, in the presence of his students he addressed them and he said,

“Sheli veshelachem shelahi.” – “My achievements and your achievements are all her achievements.”

If not for her, he would never have studied and they would never have been taught.

It is therefore incumbent upon us to facilitate the high quality education of men and women within our communities and to encourage them ‘lilmod ulelamed’, to study and to educate

others. No wonder therefore that when we return the Torah to the Ark we chant the verse (Mishlei 3:18),

“Eitz chaim hi lemachazikim ba vetomcheiha meushar,” – “The Torah is a tree of life for all those who grasp it and all those who support it are rendered happy.”

If not for the supporters, we would have no Torah and without the Torah, we would have no people.

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**Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel**  
**Encyclopedia of Jewish Values\***

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**Tzedaka - More Than Charity**

Last year, discussing the Torah portion of Terumah, where each Jew was asked to contribute something for the Tabernacle for the first time, we concentrated on the unique aspects of *Tzedakah*-charity and priorities in giving. This year, we will speak about the general importance of this commandment to the Jew, and how it differs from non-Jewish or Christian charity,

Jews have always given Tzedaka-charity in much greater proportions than their population percentage would indicate. The Talmud (Yevamot 79a) states that this giving is an inherent characteristic of the Jewish personality (this does not mean that non-Jews are not charitable, but it is more endemic to the Jewish psyche). The UJA-Federation, the umbrella Tzedaka organization for American Jewry, is one of the largest, if not *the* largest, single charitable organization in the United States, despite the fact that Jews represent less than 2% of the American population. Jews of all economic reach also give a far greater percentage of their income than all other groups, dispelling the notion that it is because of perceived Jewish wealth that Jews are such large donors.

Why is this so? What is it that is so important about this particular Mitzvah-commandment that it is ingrained within the Jew? Why should any people give any of their hard-earned money to anyone else at all, especially in the “Me” generation of today?

**Importance Of Tzedaka-Charity** - It is no accident that Jews have always attached special significance to this Mitzvah. A survey of the sources certainly attests to its importance. For example, the Talmud (Bava Batra 10a) says that Tzedaka-charity is the strongest force in the entire world, able to overcome all other forces. Maimonides (Maimonides, Hilchot Matanot Aniym 10:1) implies that this Mitzvah is more important than all other (positive) Mitzvot, saying that Jews must be most careful in carrying it out properly. He continues and explains that this is the symbol of the very first Jew, Abraham, and has been passed down to all generations of Jews since. Anyone who does not fulfill this one Mitzvah of Tzedaka-charity is called a sinner and a wicked person (Maimonides,

Hilchot Matanot Aniym 10:3). The Talmud says (Sukkah 49b) that giving Tzedaka-charity is preferable to bringing all the sacrifices in the Temple combined, based on the verse (Proverbs 21:3) that specifically says that Tzedaka-charity is preferred over the sacrifices.

Tzedaka is one of the three actions in the world that can reverse the evil decree (End of *Unetane Tokef* Prayer in Musaf or Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur), based on the verse (Proverbs 10:2) that says that Tzedaka has the power to save a person from death itself. The Talmud (Bava Batra 9b) also says that Tzedaka-charity is equal to all of the other 613 Mitzvot combined. It also states (Bava Batra 10a) that each time a person gives Tzedaka-charity, it is as if he or she has personally received the Divine Spirit, and that Tzedaka-charity helps bring the redemption.

Tzedaka-charity is unique in that it is the only Mitzvah in Judaism that can be done conditionally (see last year’s essay). A Jew cannot say that ‘I will keep Shabbat only if I get a certain job,’ for example, since Sabbath observance is obligatory for a Jew. But he or she can indeed say that ‘I will give this amount to Tzedaka-charity if I get a certain job’ (or any other conditional statement) and need not give that amount if the job does not come through. Of course, there is a minimum amount of Tzedaka-charity that everyone must give regardless, but beyond this minimum, conditional Tzedaka-charity is allowed, and there is nothing else in Judaism that is parallel to this.

The Gabai of Tzedaka (the person who is charge with the administration of the community’s Tzedaka-charity) is compared to the stars (Bava Batra 8b). Maharsha (Maharsha commentary on Bava Batra 8b) explains the comparison by saying that just as the stars have influence on the world although they are not always seen, the distributor of Tzedaka-charity has an impact upon the world, although that person is rarely seen. We might expand this concept to include all givers of meaningful Tzedaka-charity, who affect and change the world for the better, long after their initial act of giving ceases, and they have eternal impact without being seen. Perhaps that is also how we may also understand the statement that Tzedaka-charity saves a person from death, in that he or she remains alive through the impact of giving Tzedaka-charity, which continues to have an impact long after the person leaves this world. Thus, an individual can indeed attain “immortality” if the effect of Tzedaka-charity giving continues after a person’s physical life ceases. Rashi (Rashi commentary on Genesis 6:9) alludes to this when he says that, like children, the kind acts of the righteous, are eternal since, like children, they continue to represent a person even after death. (See chapter “Purpose of Life” for a fuller discussion of this theme).

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**Jewish Tzedaka Is Not Christian Charity** - The use of the hyphenated words Tzedaka-charity indicate an equivalent between Tzedaka and charity, and for those unfamiliar with either the Hebrew word or the concepts of Tzedaka, it might indeed appear very similar. However, from the psychological and philosophical viewpoints, they are quite different. One only needs to begin by analyzing the two different words to see a vast difference: The word *charity* comes from the Latin *caritas*, similar to the French *cheri*, which means love. In a similar vein, the word *philanthropy* is derived from the Greek *Philo*, which means love and *Throp*, which means *man*. Thus, *philanthropy* means *love of man*. Therefore, the non-Jewish or Christian basis of charity is love. When I feel compassion for an unfortunate person, I give charity.

The Jewish word, Tzedaka, comes from the Hebrew *Tzedek*, which means righteousness, justice (Deuteronomy 16:20) or the correct thing to do (Leviticus 19:36). The Jew, then, must give Tzedaka because it is the proper and right thing to do, not because he or she has a particular feeling for the recipient. One very practical difference would be the case of an insulting, cursing, foul-smelling beggar who demanded charity. It certainly would be hard to feel any love or compassion for such an individual. Nevertheless, Judaism obligates the Jew to give this person Tzedaka (Maimonides, Hilchot Matanot Aniym 10:3).

Where does the Jewish obligation to give Tzedaka originate? Why *can't* the Jew say if the person is foul-mouthed, I will not reward such behavior? Why can't the Jew say, "I worked for my money, and he should work for his." The response to this claim is that it is *not* the Jew's money to begin with. God says (Haggai 2:8) that all the money, gold and silver in the world belongs to Him, and not to man. The Psalmist says (Psalms 24:1) that everything in the world belongs to God, implying that nothing belongs to man. Therefore, in the act of Tzedaka, a Jew is giving back to God what is already His. This is exactly what the Mishna teaches (Avot 3:7), based on the verse in Chronicles (Chronicles I 29:14). Since it is His to begin with, He tells people to give back a small percentage and then they can use the rest (which still belongs to Him) for their personal needs and wants. Therefore, Jews are obligated to give because it is not their money at all, and God makes their retaining the other 80-90% conditional upon giving the other 10-20% to Tzedaka. It is for this reason that some Jewish people have opened special Tzedaka bank accounts where they take off a percentage of their income before it even enters their bank accounts. In addition to the psychological advantage (the person does not feel that he is taking money out of his or her pocket), it is actually the more correct way to behave on a philosophical level as well, since the money never belongs to that person. We can now understand why a Jew must give to that unkempt, cursing poor person, irrespective of feelings -- God, the

owner of the money, told them to give. The Abarbanel (Commentary of Abarbanel on Deuteronomy 15:7-8) says that Jews must look at themselves like a broker, managing someone else's money. When it is their job to use someone else's funds, they must be incredibly careful about every decision they make in regard to how the monies are invested and spent: If the owner tells them to invest it in one particular manner, they must adhere to his or her request, or the owner will rescind the money, and use another broker. God gives people His money as a broker would, and then tells them to invest part of it in Tzedaka. If they do not follow the instructions, the Owner, God, may decide to give these funds to someone else.

This can be understood if we accept the original premise that all earthly materials belong to God. However, that may be challenged as well: Why indeed *doesn't* the money belong to the person? The entire world operates as if money is the property of the individual who has it, and even in Jewish law, a person cannot rob his fellow man claiming it all belongs to God. If a person works for his salary, why is it not his to do with as he wishes? To understand this, we must discern, from a Jewish perspective, why and how a person earns money at all. There are only three ways to obtain money legally: It either comes from working hard to earn money in business; from luck such as winning a lottery, or from an inheritance or gift. If a person works for his or her money, it is easy to say that the money was obtained because of the hard work. But we all know many people who work just as hard or harder than others, and yet, still earn very little. Why will one hard working person accumulate great wealth while another will not? Thus, it is not only the work itself, the toil, which earns a person large sum of money. The wealthy individual was given more talent, a better business sense, the ability to shoot a ball more accurately (or more physical abilities) or greater intelligence, and this provides the advantage that earns him or her more money. Judaism believes that these talents come from God. While it is true that without hard work, these talents would not have developed as much, nevertheless without the talent to begin with, all the hard work is meaningless in accumulating money. Thus, Judaism believes that money obtained in this way ultimately is traced back to God.

While society looks at the person who is "lucky" enough to win the lottery or be in the "right place at the right time" as a function of chance, Judaism does not believe in chance, but believes that God, for some unknown reason, wanted this person to have this money. Once again, the money can be traced back to God's wishes. Finally, an inheritance or gift is only one step removed from the previous situation since it originally was earned either because of talent (and hard work) or due to "luck." Thus, all (legally) accumulated money in this world, is due, in some way, to God. Therefore, when He asks that Jews give back

10-20%, they have more than a moral obligation to do so, they have a *legal* obligation, since it really is all His.

**\* This column has been adapted from a series of volumes written by Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel "The Encyclopedia of Jewish Values" available from Urim and Amazon. For the full article or to review all the footnotes in the original, contact the author at [nachum@jewishdestiny.com](mailto:nachum@jewishdestiny.com)**

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### Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

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#### The Binding of the Mishkan's Curtains, Solidarity and Unconditional Love Rabbanit Devorah Evron

In both the portion of Terumah and of Tetzaveh, God instructs Moshe how to build the Mishkan, its vessels and the special garments worn by the Kohanim. The Mishkan, its vessels and the special garments were made from gifts donated by the People of Israel: silver and gold; precious stones; expensive cloths and animal skins; oils and fragrant herbs. Literally everything that was needed for the building of the Mishkan and its daily functions was donated by the people.

Interestingly, our portion opens with a call to the people to offer gifts, and only later are we told what these voluntary donations will actually be used for. The usual order of things is that the donor is first told why a donation is needed, what the precise plans are, which project needs funding. Only once the details are divulged is a request made for a donation. Here the order is reversed.

I think the reason for this is that the Torah wishes to convey the message that the People of Israel and their desire to adhere to God's words and connect with Him is what is paramount here; the Mishkan is the means to reinforce this connection. This notion is clearly expressed in the following verse in our portion: "And let them make Me a sanctuary (Mishkan) that I may dwell among them" (Shemot 25, 8). By means of this Mishkan, God will dwell among the People of Israel.

Later in the parsha, we are given the explicit instructions for the construction of the Mishkan itself. The Mishkan was made of wooden beams, which constituted the core structure, and this, in turn, was covered by ten cloth curtains, sewn one to another. To be more precise, the ten cloth curtains were initially divided into two groups of five curtains, each of which was sewn one to the other. The larger curtain sheets, comprised of five cloth curtains each, were then bound together by means of loops, in such manner that they formed one very big curtain sheet. The way these cloth curtains were attached is described in the following way: "Five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and the other five curtains shall be coupled one to another" (Shemot 26, 3).

The phrase used by the Torah to express "one to another" – *isha el achota* [literally: "one

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woman to her sister"] – is curious. True enough, the Hebrew word for "curtain" [*yeri'ah*] takes the feminine form; however, in the portion of Vayakhel, when the construction of the Mishkan is recounted, the Torah uses a different choice of words: "And he coupled five curtains *achat el achat* ["one to another"]; and the other five curtains he coupled *achat el achat* ["one to another"]. As can be seen, this time the phrase "one to another" takes the common Hebrew form of *achat el achat* (Shemot 36, 10).

There seems to be no good reason for the fact that when God instructs Moshe to build the Mishkan, He uses the unusual turn of phrase "*isha el achota*" and not the usual "*achat el achat*". Furthermore, even in our portion of Terumah, where this unique expression is used, Onkelos translates "*chada im chada*" in Aramaic, which is the literal equivalent of *achat el achat*.

The lingual difference between the initial description of how the Mishkan should be built and the later description of its actual construction did not go unnoticed by the exegetes, and some even tried to explain the personification of the cloth curtains – "*isha el achota*", one woman bound to her sister. What is there in this bond between a woman and her sister that might shed some light on the way the cloth curtains of the Mishkan were bound one to another?

The Seforno, an Italian exegete of the 16th Century, explains that upon the curtains there were segments of illustrations. Each curtain had to be bound to the next curtain with great precision so that the illustrations would connect seamlessly and produce the complete decorative illustration.

In keeping with the Seforno, the Netziv of Volozhin (19th Century) explains in his exegesis on the Torah titled *Ha'amek Davar* that the expression used to describe how the separate cloth curtains were joined together – "*one woman [bound] to her sister*" – teaches us that the curtains faced each other like two sisters. Furthermore, each curtain piece minimized itself for the sake of the other, much like two sisters, each of whom tries to take up less space so that her sister will have more.

The expression "*isha el achota*" appears in only one other place in the Torah – in the book of Vayikra, where the Torah talks of the prohibition to marry two sisters: "And thou shall not take a woman to her sister [*ve'isha el achota lo tikach*], to be a rival to her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her lifetime" (Vayikra 18, 18). The Ribash [Rabi Yitzhak ben Sheshet], one of the Ba'alei HaTosafot who lived in France in the 12th Century, offers the following explanation: One is not allowed to marry two sisters because sisters love each other and are bound to each other, and if they marry the same man it might



lead to animosity and hatred between them. The Ramban, too, gives a similar explanation.

From numerous exegetes we come to learn that the phrase “isha el achota” describes two women, two sisters, who are extremely close and loving. Both women face each other and are in tune with each other, knowing perfectly how to form a seamless flow between them; giving the other the room needed for her growth; each knowing how to minimize herself for the sake of the other.

All the above are the very traits and values most suitable for the dwelling place of God Himself – the Mishkan.

The above notion brings to mind the well-known story relating to the issue of where to build the Beit HaMikdash. The story is told that many years before the Temple was built, there lived two brothers who owned a farm. For many a year, the two brothers toiled the land together, and there was love and companionship between them. Then came the day when one of the brothers took a wife, and so the brothers divided up the farm between them. The brother who got married built a new home for himself on the other side of the property, while the unmarried brother continued to live on his own in the old farm house. Each of the brothers continued to work their respective fields, and both prospered. Years passed and the married brother bore 10 children, while the other brother had not yet found his other half and so remained alone.

And one night, the unmarried brother thought to himself: “I have a big field that gives good produce, but I use it for myself alone, while my brother has to feed a large family.” With this thought in mind, he got up in the middle of the night, went out into the barn, gathered a few sheaves of wheat and made his way up the hill that separated his field from that of his brother’s and left the sheaves in the field belonging to the married brother.

That very same night, the married brother pondered to himself: “I have ten children and a lovely wife. My life is rich and full. But my brother is all alone.” And so, in the wee hours, he, too, got up and made his way to his barn and took a few sheaves of wheat. Then he climbed up the very same hill and left the sheaves in his brother’s field...

Every night, the two brothers would walk back and forth. Every night, each would climb up the hill, cross over into his brother’s field, and leave more sheaves of wheat. Every morning the brothers would wonder to themselves how it was possible that their respective heaps of wheat were getting no smaller.

On one of the nights, while both were making their way towards the other’s field, bundles in hand, the two brothers met at the top of the hill. They immediately realized what had happened, and fell into each other’s arms, crying and hugging and kissing. This hilltop,

the Midrash tells us, is the spot upon which the Holy Temple was built.

The Mishkan and the Beit HaMikdash, both of which are an expression of the Divine presence within the People of Israel, can only be built upon the foundations of deep, unconditional love, solidarity and true companionship among all the People of Israel.

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### **Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam**

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#### **From-Keit**

“HASHHEM spoke to Moshe saying: “Speak to the Children of Israel, and have them take for Me an offering (Teruma); from every person whose heart inspires him to generosity, you shall take My offering (My Teruma). Shemos 25:1-2)

and have them take for Me: Heb. לִי. dedicated to My name. -Rashi

offering: Heb. הֶרְוָה, separation. They shall set apart from their property an offering for Me. -Rashi

whose heart inspires him to generosity: Heb. לִבּוֹ הֶרְוָה, an expression of הֶרְוָה, which is an expression of goodwill, present. – Rashi

And they shall make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst (Shemos 25:8)

What is the motivation of the generous donor? What inspires his heart to want to give away his riches to build a house dedicated to HASHEM’s name?!

It can’t be a mistake that the word for “an offering” – “Teruma” is comprised of the same exact letters that make up the word Torah with a letter MEM near the end. What is the secret embedded here?

The letter MEM when used as a prefix means “from”. Another hint about the meaning of a letter in Loshon HaKodesh is when that letter is first used at the beginning of a word. The first time we meet a MEM in the Torah is the word “MAYIM” – water. It has two MEMs. Water flows from to another and then it continues to flow from there. The letter MEM is a reminder of where things come from.

The Zohar tells us how HASHEM made the entire world. He used Torah as a builder employs an architectural plan. The Torah is the blueprint of creation. “HASHHEM looked into the Torah and created the world!”

The world was created by HASHEM through the Torah. In whichever way we can understand it, it is a primary fact of life. Here we are, a product of HASHEM’s will and the Torah’s plan.

The Magdanas Eliezer, Rabbi Eliezer Auerbach (my wife’s great great grandfather) explained the verse from the Navi, “Li HaKesef v’Li HaZahav N’um HASHEM...

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Mine is the silver and mine is gold so says HASHEM...”(Chagai 2:8) It is not only meant to tell us that HASHEM is the supernal banker and ultimate controller of the financial universe but it also instructs about the proper use of money, gold and silver. As the verse reads “take for Me Teruma”, Rashi reads “Li” for My sake- My Name” So money is meant to be appropriated for the sake of amplifying, magnifying, and glorifying HASHEM’s name in the world. That’s what money’s for!

There’s a big danger when we have what we need or even more than enough money. We begin to think like that fellow that won the lottery and started giving financial advice, or in other words, “born on third base and thinks he hit a triple. What is the antidote? The Talmud states, “I created the Yetzer Horah and I created Torah as an antidote.” That is the true vaccine against this haughty posture. Again, the Talmud says, “Torah weakens the power of a man!” How so!? I once heard an explanation that the power that it weakens is that voice that tells us, “Kochi v’Otzem Yadi Asa Li Es HaChayel HaZeh – Me and my power did all of this”. He is humbled by the notion that everything he has comes from HASHEM.

The Sefas Emes explains that the name Yehuda is made up of the letter of the name of HASHEM with a Dalet in the middle. A Dalet represents lowliness and humility. We are the bearers of HASHEM’s name in this world. We are the windows through which the light of HASHEM shines into the world. So perhaps it is no mistake that the word for “an offering” – “Teruma” is comprised of the same letters that make up the word Torah with a letter MEM near the end.

The Mishne in Pirke Avos says, “Give to Him what’s His because you and what’s yours belong to Him”. Teruma flows from a clear recognition of where everything in life comes from, a heart brimming with From-Keit.

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### **Mizrachi Dvar Torah**

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#### **Rav Doron Perz: Integrity**

In one of his many ingenious quotes, Winston Churchill once said: “Democracy is the worst form of government except for all those others that have been tried...”

Democracy’s greatest strength is also its greatest weakness. Its salient strength is, of course, that it places political power in the hands of the people – by the people and for the people. One of its great weaknesses is that it nurtures politicians who often blatantly lie to be elected. Democratic politicians are dependent on the will of the people. Since people are very different, politicians often tell people exactly what they want to hear, not necessarily what the politician believes. Each population group is given campaign promises which often are contradictory and cannot be fulfilled – dishonest and deceitful.



In leadership and in life, we have to be very careful not to compromise the core values of honesty and integrity. We have to mean what we say and say what we mean. How we portray ourselves must reflect who we are. So much so, that the quality of integrity is essential to what Judaism is all about.

Nowhere is this clearer than in a critical comment of our Sages at the beginning of this week's Parasha, Terumah, regarding the very nature of the construction of the Aron, the holy ark. The ark is undoubtedly the most important of all the vessels of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle. It is the only one placed inside the Holy of Holies and housed some of the most important artifacts and symbols of Jewish life – the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments and the first Sefer Torah that Moshe wrote. There is an unusual anomaly in that the Aron is the only vessel that is not only covered in gold on the outside but the inside as well. This seems to be a waste of public spending and redundant. Gold on the outside makes perfect sense – it is consistent with the many other golden vessels adding glory and grandeur to the Tabernacle for all to see. What is the need, though, to have a golden cover on the inside where no one can see?

The great sage of the Talmud, Rava, offers the following remarkable insight: "Any Torah scholar whose outside doesn't match their inside is not a Torah scholar."

What a powerful lesson in life and leadership.

The Aron that encapsulates the Torah and the Ten Commandments represent the very values of the Torah itself. It is not enough to be learned and knowledgeable without matching personal qualities of humility, decency and kindness. Being intellectually gold and glitzy on the outside without the internal moral fiber to match the inside, disqualifies one from being a Talmid Chacham. Learned and clever – yes. A representative of Torah life and living – no. We must walk the talk – who we are on the outside must reflect who we are on the inside. The Torah calls upon us to be people of integrity where what you see is what you get and what you hear is what is truly intended.

May each and every one of us in our personal lives heed the lesson of the gold-covered Aron Kodesh both inside and out. Even when we're challenged to tell people what they want to hear and manipulate the truth, may we strive to be people of integrity. To say what we genuinely mean, and genuinely mean what we say.

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#### **Rabbi Dr. Norman J. Lamm's Derashot Ledorot**

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##### **Living Up to Your Image**

We read in this morning's sidra of the instructions given to Moses to build the Tabernacle. Among other things, he is commanded to build the Ark, containing the Tablets of the Law. This aron, Moses is told,

should be made of wood overlaid with "zahav tahor," "pure gold," both on the inside and the outside of the Ark: "mibayit umihutz tetzapenu"(Exodus 25:11).

Our Rabbis (Yoma 72b) found in this apparently mundane law a principle of great moral significance. Rava said: From this we learn that "kol talmid hakham she'en tokho kevaro eno talmid hakham," "a scholar whose inner life does not correspond to his outer appearances is not an authentic scholar." The Ark, or aron, as the repository of the Tablets of the Law, is a symbol of a talmid hakham, a student of the Law. The "zahav tahor," "pure gold," represents purity of character. And the requirement that this gold be placed "mibayit umihutz," both within and without the Ark, indicates the principle that a true scholar must live in such a manner that he always be tokho kevaro, alike inwardly and outwardly.

Thus, our Rabbis saw in our verse a plea for integrity of character, a warning against a cleavage between theory and practice, against a discontinuity between inwardness and outwardness, against a clash between inner reality and outer appearance. A real Jew must always be tokho kevaro.

Now that sounds like a truism, but it is nothing of the sort. As a matter of fact, at a critical juncture of Jewish history this requirement was the occasion for a famous controversy. The Talmud (Berakhot 27b) refers to the time when the Patriarch of Israel, Rabban Gamliel, the aristocratic descendant of Hillel, was deposed from his office as the head of the Sanhedrin, and Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria was elected in his place. Rabban Gamliel had always been strict about the requirement of tokho kevaro: he declared that any students who could not say unhesitatingly that they possessed the quality of tokho kevaro were not permitted to enter the academy. When Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria ascended to this office, he cancelled the requirement that every student should have attained this balance between inner life and outer life. As a result, many more students were attracted to the academy, and from four to seven hundred new benches had to be placed in the study hall. In other words, the question was: Does a failure to achieve tokho kevaro disqualify someone? Rabban Gamliel answered "yes." Rabbi Eliezer said "no." The latter maintained that the absence of tokho kevaro invalidates his credentials as a talmid hakham, a scholar, but not as an average ethical personality. Even if one has not yet attained this ideal of character, let him study Torah and eventually he will learn how to achieve tokho kevaro.

At any rate, both these Sages agree that tokho kevaro is a great and worthy Jewish ideal.

But if so, we are confronted by a problem in Jewish ethics. There are times when Jewish law does distinguish between private and public conduct. There is, for instance, the famous halakhic concept of *marit ayin*, that is,

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that we must avoid even the semblance of wrong-doing. Thus, for instance, the Talmud tells of a man who walks in the fields on the Sabbath and falls into water or is caught in a downpour and is drenched. When he removes his clothing, the Talmud tells us (Shabbat 146b) he should not place them in the sunlight to dry, for fear that his neighbors, not knowing of his accident, will assume that he had laundered his clothing on Saturday and thus violated the Sabbath. Or, as another example, the Shulhan Arukh (Yoreh De'a 87:3) prohibits drinking coconut milk at a meat meal lest an onlooker assume that the law against eating meat and milk together is being violated. Therefore, a coconut shell should be placed on the table to eliminate any chance for such misinterpretation. Similarly, in the context of our own lives, even completely non-dairy margarine should not be used during a meat meal, unless the carton is on the table, thus avoiding the possibility of imputing to us the transgression of the law against eating milk with meat.

Now is not this law of *marit ayin* in violation of the concept of tokho kevaro? If in his heart a man knows that he is doing no wrong, should he not act the same way outwardly, ignoring others and their suspiciousness?

In addition to *marit ayin*, there are other instances where the Halakha distinguishes between inner and outer life. Thus, *hillul Shabbat*, the violation of the Sabbath, is at all times a most serious infraction of the Halakha. Yet *hillul Shabbat befarhesya*, violating the Sabbath in public, is considered far worse than doing so in the privacy of one's own home. Or, to take another example, *hillul Hashem*, the profanation of the divine Name, is considered a dreadful sin; to disgrace God is always disgraceful. But to perform *hillul Hashem berabbin*, to desecrate God's Name in public, is not only disgraceful but totally unforgivable.

Do not these instances also reveal that the Jewish tradition does not always maintain the principle of tokho kevaro? Does it not lend religious support to this deep gulf between the two aspects of every human life, the inner reality and the image in the eyes of others?

In order to understand what our tradition meant, it is important to read carefully the specific idiom that the Talmud uses. It recommends that we always strive for tokho kevaro, that our "inside" be similar to our "outside," but it does not ask us to develop *baro ketokho*, an outer appearance that conforms to an inner reality. There is no demand that our external image be reduced to the dimensions of what we really are like within ourselves; there is, instead, a demand that we keep up the appearances of decency and Jewishness and honor, and then strive for tokho kevaro, for remaking our inner life to conform to the image that we project.

It often happens that the tokh, the inner life of man, is cruel and filthy and corrupt, whereas the bar, the outer image he projects in his circle and in his society, is clean and compassionate. Inwards, he is ruthless and crude; outwards, he is polite and delicate and considerate. Modern man has learned well the lesson that Freud taught: even infants, apparently so innocent, are seized by inner drives that are destructive and grasping. Of course, our grandparents, less modern and less sophisticated than we, knew the same principle from a more ancient and more reliable source than Freud. The Bible had already taught at the very beginning that “yetzer lev ha’adam ra mineurav,” “the inclination of the heart of man is evil from his very earliest youth” (Genesis 8:21).

Hence the Rabbis, contemplating this inner perversity and outer glitter, demand consistency – but in one direction only – tokkho kevaro! Do not destroy your outer image; in fact, preserve it through the observance of *marit ayin*. Enhance it – and then live up to it! Develop a great outer life, and thereafter transform your inner life in order to equalize your whole existence. Those who reverse the procedure, and act with crudeness and vulgarity because they think that this is being consistent with their real thoughts, because it shows that they are “sincere,” are ignorant – and worse. There is a certain tyranny in such sincerity which is used as the rationalization for being a bully.

It is therefore naïve and dangerous for a man to act the way he is; he should try to be as decent as the way he acts. It is not so important that I say what I mean; it is more important that I mean what I say.

Thus we may understand the significance of the concept of *marit ayin*. It protects my public image and the social model that I project, and I then have something to live up to as I strive for the realization of tokkho kevaro. Even as the Ark containing the tablets must be placed with pure gold “*mibayit umifhut*,” “inside and outside,” so too man must live up to the highest ideals both in his inner life and his outer appearance.

Unfortunately, some otherwise good Jews act lightly with regard to the principle of *marit ayin* and dismiss it offhand. Worse yet, some flippantly regard it as a kind of hypocrisy. But this attitude only shows their confusion and insensitivity. Hypocrisy is a conscious misleading of people, an acting out of a role I didn’t believe in. In Hebrew, hypocrisy is “*tzeviut*,” which literally means “painting”; for I purposely and consciously project an image which I do not want to be my reality. I pretend to be what I don’t even care to be. A man who comes to synagogue services regularly because it is good for his business, but who does not really care about religion at all, is a genuine hypocrite. But if one comes to shul despite his non-observance at home or in the office because he desires to learn, or wishes to be instructed, or hopes to be inspired, or if he is confused and he is looking for a way out of his dilemma – then his approach is not only intelligent but honorable. The next step, one which qualifies an ordinary human being as a

scholar, is – tokkho kevaro! It is important, therefore, to build up your image and then live up to it.

To reject the principle of *marit ayin* is to commit three fundamental mistakes. First, it is a reduction of the *kavod hatzibur*, the honor of the community, for by giving the appearance of wrong-doing, I lower the level of public observance of the laws of decency and the Torah in general. Second, it is a diminution of the *kevod haShekhina*, the honor due to God, for by giving the impression that I do not care about His laws, I have committed *hillul Hashem*, the desecration of the divine Name. Finally, a flippant attitude towards *marit ayin* represents a self denigration, a lapse of *kevod atzmo*, of the honor due to one’s self – for I have given myself a petty image, and therefore I must remain with a trivial inner self.

But let us take that argument one step further. Not only must I observe the principle of *marit ayin*, which is negative, in the sense of not harming my image, but in a positive sense that I must undertake a conscious creation of a greater image even if it is only in my own eyes, and then proceed to tokkho kevaro.

Thus, to take one example: In the technopolitan culture in which we live, with its busyness and its glitter and its gadgetry, we often fail to experience the emotional dimension of religion. One of the greatest commandments in the Torah is *ahavat Hashem*, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God” (Deuteronomy 6:5). But how many of us can experience such love? What does one do if he feels that his inner resources have dried up, that he is incapable of any deep experience or feeling? Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of the Habad movement of Hasidism, recommends a solution (Tanya, *Likutei Ma’amarim* 15): Act as if you are possessed of *ahavat Hashem*, not in the eyes of others but in the eyes of your own self. Live as if you were possessed of a passionate love of God – and sooner or later, the outer appearance will evoke an inner love, the image will create the reality, and by the process of tokkho kevaro you will indeed arrive at a level of genuine love. Otherwise, we are left only with despair and never can make any progress.

The same is true of one’s social relations. Just as we are commanded to love God, so do we have a commandment of *ahavat rei’im*, the love of neighbor or fellow. Yet this commandment is much easier to advocate than to practice, for what if one has unlovable neighbors? What if one has not the ability to love his fellow men as he thinks he ought to? An insight to the solution is provided by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, who points to the peculiar grammatical construction of this commandment. The Torah says (Leviticus 19:8): “*ve’ahavta lere’akha kamokha*,” “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Actually, the normal Hebrew should be “*Thou shalt love et re’akha*,” rather than “*lere’akha*.” The way it is written, the verse should be literally translated as “Thou shalt love to thy neighbor as thyself.” What does this mean? Rabbi Hirsch answers: Genuine love of one’s neighbor must come later; first one must love

## Likutei Divrei Torah

to him, i.e. one must act in a loving manner to him, one must play the role of the loving fellow man – and then ultimately he will indeed come to love him. First we must build up the image, and then, by the process of tokkho kevaro, we come to achieve a new inner transformation.

As a final example, let us take the matter of joy or happiness. This week we welcomed the Hebrew month of Adar, about which our tradition teaches: “*mi shenikhnas Adar marbim besimha*,” when the month of Adar comes one must increase his happiness or joy. A beautiful idea; however, what if I am miserable? How can one command a person to be happy? I often talk to people who are deep in the doldrums, and the answer I usually receive – and a very genuine one – is: How can you encourage me when my luck is bad, my situation forlorn, my existence boring, my life dull, and pain ever present? But the answer of the Jewish tradition, accumulated in the course of three thousand years, is that happiness or joy is a state of mind which can be inspired from without as well as aroused from within. If one acts happy, one eventually emerges from under the burden of sadness. Hasidism made a great principle of this idea. They drank a “*lehayyim*,” sang in the synagogue, and even danced, declared that sadness is a sin, and tried to inspire happiness, even artificially – and they succeeded. In a continent and in an age when European Jewry was seized with despair because of false messiahs, because of massacres and political persecutions, because of economic and cultural deprivation, Hasidism was able to inspire the idea of acting happy, and then being happy – by a process of tokkho kevaro! Create a greater image than your reality is, and then change over your reality to conform to the image.

To summarize, then, what we have said: To demand, as some deluded people sometimes do, that we become *baro ketokho*, that we remake our outer life to conform to our inner life, is to condemn men to the lowest station of humanity and to deny them hope. However, to urge them towards tokkho kevaro is to hold forth a realizable ideal in the finest tradition of Jewish ethical optimism. Through concern for *marit ayin*, we preserve that image. Through the other means we have mentioned, we enhance that image.

And then, we must live up to it: “*mibayit umifhut titzapenu*.”

*Excerpted from Rabbi Norman Lamm’s Derashot Ledorot: A Commentary for the Ages—Exodus co-published by OU Press, Maggid Books, and YU Press; edited by Stuart W. Halpern*

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## Doing and Hearing MISHPATIM

### Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

One of the most famous phrases in the Torah makes its appearance in this week's parsha. It has often been used to characterise Jewish faith as a whole. It consists of just two words: *na'aseh venishma*, literally, "we will do and we will hear" (Ex. 24:7). What does this mean and why does it matter?

There are two famous interpretations, one ancient, the other modern. The first appears in the Babylonian Talmud,[1] where it is taken to describe the enthusiasm and whole-heartedness with which the Israelites accepted the covenant with God at Mount Sinai. When they said to Moses, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do and we will hear," they were saying, in effect: Whatever God asks of us, we will do – and they said this before they had heard any of the commandments. The words, "We will hear," imply that they had not yet heard – neither the Ten Commandments, nor the detailed laws that followed as set out in our parsha. So keen were they to signal their assent to God that they agreed to His demands before knowing what they were.[2]

This reading, adopted also by Rashi in his commentary to the Torah, is difficult because it depends on reading the narrative out of chronological sequence (using the principle that "there is no before and after in the Torah"). The events of chapter 24, according to this interpretation, happened before chapter 20, the account of the revelation at Mount Sinai and the Ten Commandments. Ibn Ezra, Rashbam, and Nachmanides all disagree and read the chapters in chronological sequence. For them, the words *na'aseh venishma* mean not, "we will do and we will hear," but simply, "we will do and we will obey."

The second interpretation – not the plain sense of the text but important nonetheless – has been given often in modern Jewish thought. On this view *na'aseh venishma* means, "We will do and we will understand." [3] From this they derive the conclusion that we can only understand Judaism by doing it, by performing the commands and living a Jewish life. In the beginning is the deed.[4] Only then comes the grasp, the insight, the comprehension.

This is a signal and substantive point. The modern Western mind tends to put things in the opposite order. We seek to understand what we are committing ourselves to before making the commitment. That is fine when what is at stake is signing a contract, buying a new mobile phone, or purchasing a subscription, but not when making a deep existential commitment. The only way to understand leadership is to lead. The only way to understand marriage is to get married. The only way to understand whether a certain career path is right for you is to actually try it for an extended period. Those who hover on the edge of a commitment, reluctant to make a decision until all the facts are in, will eventually find that life has passed them by.[5] The only way to understand a way of life is to take the risk of living it.[6] So: *Na'aseh venishma*, "We will do and eventually, through extended practice and long exposure, we will understand."

In my Introduction to this year's Covenant and Conversation series, I suggested a quite different, third interpretation, based on the fact that the Israelites are described by the Torah as ratifying the covenant three times: once before they heard the commandments and twice afterward. There is a fascinating difference between the way the Torah describes the first two of these responses and the third:

The people all responded together, "We will do [*na'aseh*] everything the Lord has said." (Ex. 19:8)

When Moses went and told the people all the Lord's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the Lord has said we will do [*na'aseh*]." (Ex. 24:3)

Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do and hear [*na'aseh venishma*] everything the Lord has said." (Ex. 24:7)

The first two responses, which refer only to action (*na'aseh*), are given unanimously. The people respond "together." They do so "with one

voice." The third, which refers not only to doing but also to hearing (*nishma*), involves no unanimity. "Hearing" here means many things: listening, paying attention, understanding, absorbing, internalising, responding, and obeying. It refers, in other words, to the spiritual, inward dimension of Judaism.

From this, an important consequence follows. Judaism is a community of doing rather than of "hearing." There is an authoritative code of Jewish law. When it comes to *halachah*, the way of Jewish doing, we seek consensus.

By contrast, though there are undoubtedly principles of Jewish faith, when it comes to spirituality there is no single normative Jewish approach. Judaism has had its priests and prophets, its rationalists and mystics, its philosophers and poets. Tanach, the Hebrew Bible, speaks in a multiplicity of voices. Isaiah was not Ezekiel. The book of Proverbs comes from a different mindset than the books of Amos and Hosea. The Torah contains law and narrative, history and mystic vision, ritual and prayer. There are norms about how to act as Jews. But there are few about how to think and feel as Jews.

We experience God in different ways. Some find Him in nature, in what Wordsworth called "a sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused, / Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, / And the round ocean and the living air." [7] Others find Him in interpersonal emotion, in the experience of loving and being loved – what Rabbi Akiva meant when he said that in a true marriage, "the Divine Presence is between" husband and wife.

Some find God in the prophetic call: "Let justice roll down like a river, and righteousness like a never-failing stream" (Amos 5:24). Others find Him in study, "rejoicing in the words of Your Torah...for they are our life and the length of our days; on them we will meditate day and night." [8] Yet others find Him in prayer, discovering that God is close to all who call on Him in truth.

There are those who find God in joy, dancing and singing as did King David when he brought the Holy Ark into Jerusalem. Others – or the same people at different points in their life – find Him in the depths, in tears and remorse, and a broken heart. Einstein found God in the "fearful symmetry" and ordered complexity of the universe. Rav Kook found Him in the harmony of diversity. Rav Soloveitchik found Him in the loneliness of being as it reaches out to the soul of Being itself.

There is a normative way of performing the holy deed, but there are many ways of hearing the holy voice, encountering the sacred presence, feeling at one and the same time how small we are yet how great the universe we inhabit, how insignificant we must seem when set against the vastness of space and the myriads of stars, yet how momentarily significant we are, knowing that God has set His image and likeness upon us and placed us here, in this place, at this time, with these gifts, in these circumstances, with a task to perform if we are able to discern it. We can find God on the heights and in the depths, in loneliness and togetherness, in love and fear, in gratitude and need, in dazzling light and in the midst of deep darkness. We can find God by seeking Him, but sometimes He finds us when we least expect it.

That is the difference between *na'aseh* and *nishma*. We do the Godly deed "together." We respond to His commands "with one voice." But we hear God's presence in many ways, for though God is one, we are all different, and we encounter Him each in our own way.

[1] Shabbat 88a–b.

[2] There are, of course, quite different interpretations of the Israelites' assent. According to one, God "suspended the mountain over them," giving them no choice but to agree or die (Shabbat 88a).

[3] The word already carries this meaning in biblical Hebrew as in the story of the Tower of Babel, where God says, "Come let us confuse their language so that people will not be able to understand their neighbour."

[4] This is the famous phrase from Goethe's *Faust*.

[5] This is similar to the point made by Bernard Williams in his famous essay, "Moral Luck," that there are certain decisions – his example is Gauguin's decision to leave his career and family and go to Tahiti to

paint – about which we cannot know whether they are the right decision until after we have taken them and seen how they work out. All such existential decisions involve risk.

[6] This, incidentally, is the Verstehen approach to sociology and anthropology; namely that cultures cannot be fully understood from the outside. They need to be experienced from within. That is one of the key differences between the social sciences and the natural sciences.

[7] William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798."

[8] From the blessing before Shema said in the evening prayer.

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[Added from this evening CS]

from: Rabbi YY Jacobson <rabbiyy@theyeshiva.net> reply-to: info@theyeshiva.net

date: Feb 23, 2023, 7:20 PM

### **In a Dark Exile, Whispering Trees**

#### **A Father Plants Saplings 210 Years Early, Offering Solace to His Children**

**By: Rabbi YY Jacobson**

The Smuggler

Tony comes up to the Mexican border on his bicycle. He's got two large bags over his shoulders. Joe, the border guard, stops him and says, "What's in the bags?"

"Sand," answers Tony.

Joe says, "We'll just see about that. Get off the bike." Joe takes the bags and rips them apart; he empties them out and finds nothing in them but sand. He detains Tony overnight and has the sand analyzed, only to discover that there is nothing but pure sand in the bags.

Joe releases Tony, puts the sand into new bags, hefts them onto the man's shoulders, and lets him cross the border.

The next day, the same thing happens. Joe asks, "What have you got?"

"Sand," says Tony.

Joe does his thorough examination and discovers that the bags contain nothing but sand. He gives the sand back to Tony, and Tony crosses the border on his bicycle.

This sequence of events is repeated every day for three years. Then Joe runs across Tony one day in a cantina in Mexico.

"Hey, buddy," says Joe, "I retired. I know you are smuggling something. It's driving me crazy. It's all I think about ... I can't sleep. Just between you and me, what are you smuggling?"

Tony sips his beer and says, "bicycles."

#### **Cedar Trees**

One of the most employed materials in the building of the Tabernacle—discussed in this week's portion, Terumah—was cedarwood ("atzei shitim.") Much of the structure and many of the vessels of the Tabernacle were fashioned from cedar.

Says Rashi, quoting the Midrash:

How did the children of Israel obtain [cedar wood for the construction of the Sanctuary] in the desert? Rabbi Tanchuma explained: Our father Jacob foresaw with his holy spirit that Israel was destined to build a Sanctuary in the desert; so he brought cedars to Egypt and planted them [there], and instructed his children to take them along when they left Egypt.[1]

This seems strange. Why carry trees from the Holy Land to plant in Egypt for use in a building to be constructed centuries later? Surely, there is no dearth of wood in wealthy Egypt, and, in any case, it could always be obtained for a price wherever their descendants might find themselves. Even the Sinai desert was not far from populated areas from where the Jews could obtain cedarwood.[2]

From the day Jacob descended to Egypt till the Exodus, 210 years passed. In life, it is good to plan long-term. I know people who pack for a trip one week before the flight. It is not my style, but I can respect them. Yet to pack up 210 years before a journey, seems like going overboard. Did Jacob feel that he needs to prepare the cedar wood 210 years before it was needed? Could he not have told his children to obtain cedars in or around Egypt?

Imagine, a fellow by the name of Jacob Isakson (son of Isaac) is relocating from Russia to the US in 1810. He brings with him cedar saplings to plant in America. He tells his children that one day in 2020 they might leave America to go build a sanctuary in the desert and they will need cedarwood. It would be strange; we could buy the wood in America!

It is not like Jacob came to Egypt empty-handed, so he had nothing to take along, but some cedar trees. Jacob, at the age of 130, was relocating his entire life, family, livestock, and his enormous wealth, to Egypt. The last thing he needed to add to the wagons were cedar trees!

#### **Finding Comfort**

The answer to this question I heard from the Lubavitcher Rebbe at an address on Shabbos Parshat Terumah, 6 Adar, 5747, March 7, 1987.[3] I can still vividly recall the profound emotion with which the Rebbe shared this insight—and it moves me deeply to this day.

The answer, the Lubavitcher Rebbe suggested, is intimated in the name of the Sage who transmitted this tradition: Rabbi Tanchuma. As a rule, Rashi rarely quotes the authors of the teachings in Talmud and Midrash he quotes in his commentary. Here is one of the exceptions. Because it is the name of the rabbi who shared this teaching, Tanchumam which explains why Jacob would engage in this seemingly unnecessary toil, two centuries before his descendants would need the cedar.

The name "Tanchuma" means to comfort and console. Jacob our father knew that one day the very country which has been so hospitable to him and his family, the country saved by his son Joseph, would turn its back on the Hebrew tribe and transform their lives into purgatory. Egypt would impose one of the most torturous conditions upon the young Hebrews. Jacob knew that the people of Israel would need something to hold on to, something tangible to remind them that they don't belong here; something concrete to imprint upon their tormented hearts that they come from somewhere else, and they will one day leave this hellish concentration camp and return home.

A promise? Yes. He and Joseph promised the family that they would leave Egypt one day. But a verbal promise is insufficient. People can't live on words alone. Jacob needed to give them something tangible that could comfort them and offer a measure of relief as they walked in a valley of tears and watched their infants plunged into a river.

#### **Whispering Trees**

Hence, the cedar trees. Jacob transported from the Land of Canaan young, tender saplings of cedar and lovingly planted them in the soil of Egypt, instructing his children, that one day, when they depart from this country, they must take these trees with them.

Jacob dies. Joseph dies. All the siblings die. Then all the grandchildren die. The first generations of Jews who still knew Jacob and his children passed on. A new Pharaoh began to enslave the young nation. Brutal labor and the extermination of Jewish babies began to become the Jewish plight.

And throughout this entire horrific ordeal, the crushed Hebrew slaves watched these cedars grow. And with it, their hope grew. They harbored the knowledge that long before their enslavement by the Egyptians, these trees had grown in the soil of Holy Land—the land promised to them as their eternal heritage. Each generation of Jews pointed out these cedar trees to their children, transmitted to them Jacob's instructions to take these trees along when they would leave Egypt, to be fashioned into a Sanctuary for G-d.

And so, throughout their long and bitter exile, these cedars had whispered to the Jewish slaves: This is not your home. You hail from a loftier, holier place. Soon you will leave this depraved land behind, to be reclaimed by G-d as His people. Soon you will uproot us from this foreign land and carry us triumphantly to Sinai, where you will construct of us an abode for the Divine presence, which shall once again manifest itself in your midst.

These cedar trees stood as a permanent, tangible, silent but powerful, and tall symbol of courage, dignity, and hope in a bright future. They gave a nation of tormented, wretched slaves something to "hold on to" in a very concrete way, as they struggled under the yoke of their

Egyptian oppressors. These trees offered the Jews some measure of “Tanchumah,” of solace and fortitude, during their darkest moments.

When the Jewish people held on to Jacob’s “prehistoric” cedar trees, for a brief moment, they felt free. And that’s what you need in order to endure. It reminded them that in their essence they were not slaves, they did not deserve to be beaten and oppressed; they were inherently free and one day they would see that freedom.

#### Staves of Faith

“The Tzaddik shall bloom as a palm,” sings the Psalmist, “as a Cedar of Lebanon, he shall flourish.”[4] Jacob planted cedars in Egypt, and G-d plants exactly such cedars in our midst throughout our long and turbulent history.[5] These are the Tzaddikim, the Rebbe, the spiritual giants, defined in Psalms as “cedar trees,” providing us with a link to the past and hope for the future.

The Tzaddik is a soul that towers above the transience and turbulence of exile; a soul that is rooted in Israel’s sacred beginnings and pointed toward the ultimate Redemption—a soul whose two feet stand on earth, but whose head touches heaven. When our subjection to the temporal and the mundane threatens to overwhelm us, we need only look to the cedars implanted in our midst. In these timeless staves of faith, we find guidance and fortitude, comfort, and encouragement. We remember who we are and what we are capable of becoming.

#### Above Exile

This is the function of every Rebbe, every leader among our people—and in today’s age, who of us is not in a position to influence one or more of our brothers and sisters. The Rebbe is the Jew who by his sheer presence and love reminds us that we are “higher,” that we must never surrender to a life of quiet desperation; that we are Divine ambassadors of love, light, hope, and redemption.

When we connect to a Rebbe, a Tzaddik, we too become, at least for a moment, free. We are all exposed to challenges, obstacles, and pressures; we must face trauma, darkness, pain, addiction, depression, disappointment, filth, and degradation. We can become apathetic, cynical, and indifferent. But when we gaze at the cedars in our midst, and at the cedar inside each of our souls, we remember that we are fragments of infinity, sent to this world to transform its landscape. We remember that we are on a journey from Sinai to Moshiach; that as beautiful as America is it is not our true home; it is but a temporary stop in our journey toward Moshiach. As comfortable as this great country is and as much as we cherish it, it is not the place we call home. A child who has been exiled from the bosom of his father, even if he is living in the Hilton, is living in exile.

That is the function of every spiritual “cedar tree” teacher in Judaism: [6] To remind all of us that even as we are in exile, our souls can soar on the wings of eternity.[7]

[1] Rashi to Exodus 25:6

[2] Indeed, this is the view of some of the commentators. See Divrei David (Taz), Ibn Ezra, Baalei HaTosfos and Chizkuni on the verse (Exodus 25:6).

[3] Part of the address was published in Likkutei Sichos vol. 31 Terumah pp. 142-148.

[4] Psalms 92:13

[5] The Hebrew word Nassi (“leader”) is an acronym of the phrase nitzotzo shel Yaakov Avinu, “a spark of Jacob our father.” The soul of every leader of Israel is an offshoot of the soul of Jacob, father of the people of Israel (Megaleh Amukot, section 84).

[6] See Sichas Shabbos Parshas Shemos 5752, 1992—explaining why the first idea Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah said as a leader was that we are obligated to mention the Exodus of Egypt also during nighttime. This captures the role of the leader: To help people experience Exodus even when night prevails, and darkness overwhelms.

[7] My thanks to Rabbi Yanki Tauber for his rendition of this address. I used some parts from his essay: <https://www.meaningfullife.com/prehistoric-cedars/>

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## Weekly Parsha MISHPATIM

### Rabbi Wein’s Weekly Blog

The Torah prescribes that a Jewish servant who wishes to remain permanently in servitude – he loves his master’s home and his family – is given a permanent mark, a hole in his ear, as an everlasting reminder of his choice. Rashi explains, based on the Talmud, that the ear that

heard on Sinai that the Jewish people are God’s servants and not to be servants to other humans is to be drilled with an awl as a stark reminder of his poor choice in life.

The Talmud taught us that a truly free person is someone whose guide in life is Torah. The choice of servitude over freedom is anti-Jewish and anti-Torah in its very makeup. In the ancient world and even in later times, slaves were branded so that all could see that they were the chattel of their owner.

The Torah’s instruction to bore a hole in the ear of the Jewish servant was to remind everyone of just the opposite idea. That this slave belonged to no other human but rather was to be a servant of God – that was the message of the drilled ear. Freedom and independence mean that we bow to no one but to our Creator alone.

Having other masters in life is a rejection of the Jewish mission and Judaism’s true understanding of life’s purpose. Jews have often in our long history been made to serve in involuntary servitude and slavery. But voluntarily giving up one’s freedom of action and behavior is abhorrent to Jewish ideals and tradition.

The ancient world, as well as much of the later worlds, was built upon the institution of slavery, forced labor and involuntary servitude. In our time governments that preached equality and nobility enslaved others simply because they suspected them of having different ideas.

The mocking slogan at the entrance to Auschwitz “Work makes one free” symbolized the ultimate form of slavery and murder. The Gulag was the place where millions succumbed doing useless work. The great White Sea Canal of Stalin was literally a canal that led to nowhere while myriads of people died in the process of building it, often only with their bare hands.

The Jewish people were coming forth from Egypt after centuries of slavery. One would have thought that having themselves experienced that type of servitude they would not wish to inflict it upon others. However Midrash teaches us that even in Egypt there were Jews who somehow owned other Jews as slaves. It would take millennia for Jews to be completely weaned from the practice of slavery.

Such is the dark side of human nature and behavior. But the process of drilling the ear of one who wishes to remain a permanent slave reminds the Jewish society of the inherent wrong in the deprivation of people’s freedom. Only God has the right to ask us to be His servants. And those who truly serve God have no interest in depriving others of their freedom. The message of freedom that was heard on Sinai should reverberate in all of our ears constantly.

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

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***For the week ending 25 February 2023 / 4 Adar 5783***

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### ***Parshat Terumah***

*You shall make a table of acacia wood...” (25:23)*

They say that into every life, a little rain must fall. Sometimes, however, we might feel this “little rain” as a full-blown downpour, leaving us reeling and searching Terumah: The Jewish Spark for answers. But we should know that there is a little candle at the end of the tunnel, a light that can never go out.

In Yiddish it’s called the pintele Yid — the Jewish spark. And a spark that can never go out, never needs to be more than a spark. For the greatest blaze can be ignited with just one spark.

After the original creation of the world, Hashem creates nothing ex nihilo; rather, every new creation has to have a pre-existing conduit from which it can flow.

In Hebrew, the word beracha (blessing) always connotes “increase.” A blessing always takes some pre-existing state and infuses it with expansion. Hashem uses a pre-existing vessel and then injects blessing to swell and amplify what is already present.

In this week’s Torah portion, the Torah describes the shulchan. The shulchan, which was an ornamental table, was the conduit through which material blessing flowed to the Jewish People.

And similarly, on our tables, when we say the blessings after a meal, Judaism teaches us to leave the bread on the table so that it should be a vessel to receive Hashem's blessings.

Another example of this is when the prophet Elisha helped a penniless woman. He asked her what she had in her home, and she replied that all she had was a small jug of oil. Elisha told her to borrow as many jugs and pots from her neighbors as she could. Then, she was to start pouring from this tiny jug of oil into the first container. Miraculously, that little jug kept on pouring oil until all the borrowed vessels were full.

And in our own spiritual lives, we should never despair, because there will always be that pintele Yid, that eternal spark that will re-kindle our hearts even when we feel to be running on mere fumes.

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Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

**Terumah: The most extraordinary custom I've ever heard of!**

**22 February 2023**

It's the most extraordinary custom I've ever heard of. I'm referring to a comment by Rabbeinu Bachaye, the great 13th Century commentator, who mentions a practice of the Chassidim of Medieval France. When someone in their family sadly passed away, they would take wood from the person's dining room table and with it, they would make the coffin. The idea here is that the merit of everything that we do around our tables accompanies us into the world to come.

The Shulchan

Rabbeinu Bachaye mentions that this is all based on a passage in Parshat Terumah. There the Torah introduces us to the shulchan, the holy table which was used in the sanctuary and later on, in the temple, and it was upon that table that the shte' halechem, the showbread, would be brought as an offering before Hashem. That table was made of 'atzei shittim,' acacia wood, and Rabbeinu Bachaye quotes a midrash explaining that the four letters of the word 'shittim' (שִׁטִּים) stand for the attributes of that table. The shin (ש) stands for shalom meaning peace, the tet (ט) for tova, goodness, the yud (י) for yeshua, salvation and the mem (מ) for mechila, forgiveness.

Our Tables

Indeed, this is exactly what we find with regard to our tables today. First of all, the table is a place for family togetherness. There, we have shalom – shalom bayit, serenity – our tables bond us together as families and give us many memorable experiences.

There, we have tova – so much goodness happens around the table thanks to hachnassat orchim, hospitality, and bringing needy people to have their meals with us.

All of this then contributes towards the yeshua, the salvation of our people.

Finally, mechila, atonement: it was through the shulchan, the table, in the sanctuary and later the temple, that God gave mechila, forgiveness, to our people, and so too it is thanks to the precepts we perform, the blessings we recite before and after we eat, the special mitzvot relating to food which we have at the table and the kedusha, sacred nature, of our meals, all of this will hopefully prompt God to forgive us for our sins. And all of these precepts accompany us well into the afterlife. Therefore, while we readily recognise that we cannot take any of our worldly possessions with us when we go into the world to come, one thing we can ensure – all of our good deeds around our table and wherever we are will never depart from us.

Shabbat shalom.

Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

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**Drasha Parshas Terumah - Give & Take**

**Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**

After an entire portion filled with commandments regarding man's obligation toward his fellow man, the Torah focuses on a very spiritual aspect of our existence. Hashem commands His nation to build a Tabernacle in which He would figuratively dwell. Thus the Torah begins this week's portion with a mainstay of Jewish life — the appeal.

The Torah instructs the Jewish nation to contribute gold, silver, and an array of other materials to the great cause of erecting and furnishing a Mishkan (Tabernacle). However the appeal is worded very strangely. Hashem does not ask the people to give; he asks them to take. Exodus 25:2: "Speak to the children of Israel and let them take a portion for me." The question is obvious. Why does the Torah tell the people to take a portion when in essence they are giving a portion? What is the message behind the semantic anomaly?

Max and Irving went fishing on an overcast afternoon. About two hours into their expedition a fierce storm developed. Their small rowboat tossed and tossed and finally flipped over into the middle of the lake. Max, a strong swimmer, called to save Irving, but to no avail. Irving did not respond to any plea and unfortunately drowned. Max swam to shore to break the terrible news to Irving's poor wife.

"What happened?" she screamed. "Tell me the whole story!"

Max recounted the entire episode in full detail.

"But what did you do to try to save my Irving?" she shrieked. Max explained once again. "I kept screaming to your husband, 'Irving, give me your hand — give me your hand — Give me your hand! But Irving just gave me a blank stare and drifted away.'"

"You fool!" shouted the widow. "You said the wrong thing. You should have said, 'take my hand.' Irving never gave anything to anybody!"

We often make the same mistake that Irving made. When we hear the word "give" we recoil. In its first solicitation, the Torah is teaching us a lesson. When you give with true heart, you are not giving anything away. You are taking a share for yourself. Materialistic pleasures in which many people indulge are eventually digested and forgotten. The new cars become old ones, the glorious homes fall to disrepair, and the newest gizmos become outdated. The only items that remain are those that we give. They remain in a storehouse of merits and eventually will repay us and our descendants. The Montefiores and the Rothschilds are not forever cherished for opulence and indulgence. They are remembered for their great benevolence and charity. They not only gave for eternity. They received for eternity as well.

*Dedicated In loving memory of our mother, Edith Gluck of blessed memory by the Gluck Family*

*Good Shabbos!*

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*Rabbi M. Kamenetzky is the Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore.*

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**Rabbi Yisrocher Frand - Parshas Terumah**

*When We Did Not Have the Kosel, We Still Had #12 Ibn Shaprut*

In the beginning of Parshas Teruma, the pasuk says, "And you shall make for Me a Sanctuary and I shall dwell in their midst." (Shemos 25:8). Rashi comments: "And you shall make for My Name a House of Holiness." That is the essence of the Beis HaMikdash – a House of Holiness!

Two years ago, Reb Yossi Goldstein sent me an e-mail relating the following incident:

Rav Yosef Buxbaum, who was the founder of Machon Yerushalayim (an institution in Yerushalayim which puts out wonderful seforim), was once walking in Yerushalayim, when he passed the house of the Tchebener Rav. The Tchebener Rav was Hagaon HaRav Dov Berish Weidenfeld (1881-1965). The terminology 'world class scholar' and 'great personality' are not sufficient to describe who he was.

Going back to my youth (circa 1960), before my Bar Mitzvah, my shul Rabbi, Rav Sholom Rivkin, z"l, told me that "the Tchebener Rav is the Gadol HaDor!" (literally 'greatest person in the generation'). That was a time when Rav Aharon Kotler was alive, Rav Moshe Feinstein was alive, Rav Eliezer Silver was alive, Rav Henkin was alive. Nevertheless, Rabbi Rivkin told me that the Tchebener Rav was the Gadol HaDor! Now, at that time I did not know what the term "Gadol HaDor" meant! But it always remained in my mind that the Tchebener Rav was the Gadol HaDor. He was a Rosh Yeshiva. He was a Posek. He was a Tzadik. I can go on and on describing who the Tchebener Rav was.

Rav Buxbaum was once walking past the Tchebener Rav's house, which was at Rechov Ibn Shaprut #12 in the Shaarei Chessed neighborhood of

Yerushalayim. He saw that Rav Aryeh Levin (1885-1969), the Tzadik of Yerushalayim, was standing and crying in front of the Tchebiner Rav's house. Rav Yosef Buxbaum walked over to Rav Aryeh Levin and asked why he was crying. "Are you in pain? Why are you standing in front of the Tchebiner Rav's house, crying?"

Rav Aryeh told him that one of his children was sick. "If I could go to the Kosel Ma'aravi (Western Wall), I would go. (This was pre-1967, when the Jews did not have access to the Old City of Yerushalayim or the Kosel Ma'aravi) Since I cannot get to the Kosel, I need to pray in another makom kadosh (holy place). The Tchebiner Rav's house is that makom kadosh."

This is what Rashi means here "You shall make for me a Sanctuary" – a House of Holiness! If someone thinks of all the Torah that was learned in the house of the Tchebiner Rav and the chessed that was done there and the tzidkus that was practiced there – the Tchebiner Rav's house was a makom kadosh. If the Kosel Ma'aravi was not available, a person could at least go to this makom kadosh to pray.

Rav Buxbaum was so impressed with what Rav Aryeh Levin told him that he went and related the conversation to the great sage Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, who also lived in the Shaarei Chessed neighborhood. Rav Shlomo Zalman reacted without astonishment "Certainly that is appropriate. I, too, whenever I pass by that holy dwelling place, lift my eyes heavenward in prayer." Rav Shlomo Zalman also used the opportunity of being in the proximity of such a makom kadosh to petition the Almighty in prayer. Which person does not say a Tefilla when he goes to the Kosel. Religiously sensitive individuals considered the holy home of the Tchebiner Rav a similarly holy place.

This gives us practical insight into Rashi's comment "And you shall make Me a Sanctuary" – a House of Holiness.

*The Power of Torah to Transform a Person Such That His Inside Matches His Outside*

The Torah says to build of the Aron from atzei shitim – two and a half amos in length, one and a half amos in width, and one and a half amos in height. "And you shall cover it (the wood) with pure gold, on the inside and on the outside, it should be overlaid..." (Shemos 25:11).

Over the years, we have commented many times that each of the keylim (vessels) of the Mishkan is symbolic. The Aron, in which the Luchos (Tablets of the Covenant) are placed, is symbolic of a talmid chochom. The Torah resides within a talmid chochom, and so too the Luchos reside within the Aron. The fact that the Torah says that the Aron needs to be covered with pure gold on both the outside and the inside is symbolic of the concept of "tocho k'baro" (a person's inside must match his outside). In short, a talmid chochom cannot be a faker. He needs to be of sterling character – as pure on the inside as he is on the outside.

There has been much discussion, dating all the way back to the time of the Talmud, as to whether someone may teach a student who is NOT "tocho k'baro". In Avos D'Reb Nosson, this is an argument between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel. Beis Shammai were very restrictive in who they accepted into their school. They forbade teaching a student who was not of sterling character. Beis Hillel were less discriminating. They favored an "open enrollment" policy.

The well-known Gemara in Brochos (28a) says that Rabban Gamliel, who was the Head of the Yeshiva, had a policy that any student who was not "tocho k'baro," was not admitted into the Beis HaMedrash (Study Hall). When they changed the leadership of the Yeshiva because of an incident mentioned there, Rabbo Elazer ben Azariah became the Rosh Yeshiva. They then removed the guard from the door of the Beis HaMedrash. The Talmud notes that on that day they added 400 benches (or according to another version 700 benches) to the Beis HaMedrash in order to accommodate the influx of new students.

The Gemara relates that when Rabban Gamliel saw what transpired, he became depressed out of fear that his policy had inhibited the study of Torah in Yisroel. The Gemara says that he was shown containers full of embers in a dream. This dream appeased him, as he interpreted it to mean that the new students were like ashes, meaning that they were really not high caliber students.

The Gemara says that this was not really the case. He was merely shown this dream to appease him, but in truth the policy of Rav Elazer ben Azaria was correct and the policy of Rabban Gamliel was wrong.

Someone once told me an interpretation of this Gemara in the name of Rav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik, zt"l. Rav Yoshe Ber asked – what is the interpretation of this Gemara? In other words, was Rav Elazar ben Azariah right or was he not right to remove the guard? Was Hashem merely fooling Rabban Gamliel by showing him this dream?

Rav Yoshe Ber explained the significance of Rabban Gamliel being shown containers of embers. When someone views embers, it appears that the fire has been extinguished. Nothing can happen from them. But within the embers may still be little flames. If someone blows on them, he may, in fact, relight the fire. This is what Rabban Gamliel was shown in his dream. They were not trying to "fake him out." They were showing him that these new students who showed up in the Beis HaMedrash were like embers. He took it to mean – "Aghh! They are nothing!" But the real message was just the opposite. The sparks within the embers contain great potential. If they are blown on correctly, they can in fact become blazing flames.

The Zohar relates that Rabbi Abba announced "Whoever wants to become wealthy and live a long life should come to the Beis Medrash and occupy himself with Torah study." A fellow named Yossi heard this announcement and came in front of Rabbi Abba and told him that he would like to become rich so he came to learn. Rabbi Abba took him into the Beis Medrash.

The Zohar says that this Yossi was given the nickname "Yossi the Baal Tayvah" (as if to say "Joe the Money Grubber" or Yossi, the person who wants to become rich). Yossi learned for a long time but he did not become rich. He went back to Rav Abba and complained, "You told me that if I came to learn Torah in your Yeshiva, I would become rich. I came to learn, but I did not become rich."

Rav Abba was so disgusted with the fellow's attitude that he wanted to throw him out of the Yeshiva, but a bas kol came out from Heaven and said not to throw the student out – to have patience with him, because one day he would become a great talmid chochom.

Time went on and a wealthy man came to the Yeshiva to visit Rabbi Abba. The man had a golden chalice with him. He told Rabbi Abba that he was a wealthy man and he would like to support a young man who is involved in Torah study by giving him this valuable golden chalice. Rabbi Abba called in the Baal Tayvah and gave him the golden chalice. He said, "Okay. Now you have it. You learned Torah and you became rich."

The Zohar continues that years later this Yossi in fact became a very big talmid chochom. Rav Abba came into the Beis Medrash one day and saw that this Rav Yossi was crying. He said, "Why are you crying now – you got your money!" Yossi said "I am crying that I was willing to give up Torah for just a gold chalice. How could I have made such a silly mistake?"

The Zohar concludes that this Yossi became none other than the Amora Rav Yossi ben Pazi (cited in Yerushalmi Shekalim 9a). Paz means fine gold (Shir HaShirim 5:11; 5:15). Yossi was "Ben Pazi" (son of fine gold). He ultimately recognized how foolish he had been for having been willing to give up a world of eternity (Torah) for a transient world (of wealth). In the end, he realized "Better for me is the Torah of Your Mouth than thousands of pieces of gold and silver" (Tehillim 119:72).

The upshot of this Zohar and the upshot of the Gemara in Brochos is the same. Why did Rabban Gamliel become depressed when so many students came to the Yeshiva after they took away the gatekeeper? He knew that he could have had an additional 400 or 700 applicants if he waived his entrance standards! He made a decision that he wanted only students who were tocho k'barom. It was a legitimate decision. Why then was he depressed when these additional students came in?

The Chidushei HaRim says a beautiful idea. Rabban Gamliel became depressed because after those 700 students came into the Beis Medrash, he saw what the Torah did for them. He saw that the Torah had the power to flip them from being people who were NOT tocho k'barom into people who WERE tocho k'barom. Just like this Yossi the Baal



Tayvah, who became Yossi ben Pazi because the power of Torah changed him, so too, the same thing happened to new students who entered the Beis Medrash when the gatekeepers were removed. This is what upset Rabban Gamliel. He knew why he rejected these people – because he did not want students who were not tochom k'barom. But now he saw that after spending time in the Yeshiva, through the power of Torah they BECAME students who were tochom k'barom.

This is what the Medrash Eicha means when it says “If only they would have abandoned Me and kept my Torah, as a result of their preoccupation with it (i.e. — with Torah), the light within it would have returned them to the proper way.” Torah has an amazing mystical power to change a person. It happened to Yossi ben Pazi and it happened to the hundreds of students in the Beis Medrash of Rav Elazar ben Azarya. The Torah flipped them from being people who were not tochom k'barom to people who indeed possessed that quality.

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### **Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz**

#### **Parashat Teruma – 5783**

#### **Precision, Perfectionism and Goodwill**

Parashat Teruma, which we will read on Shabbat, deals with the instructions for the construction of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle – the temporary temple that accompanied the children of Israel on their journey through the desert, and continued to exist after they entered the Land of Israel until the construction of the permanent Temple in Jerusalem in the time of King Solomon. In the Tabernacle, as in the Temple built later, there were furnishings and objects that were used by the priests in their work: The Ark of the Covenant, which was placed in the hidden inner part of the Tabernacle containing the two tablets of the covenant that Moses received at Mount Sinai; a small altar for incense that emitted a pleasant smell in the Tabernacle; the famous menorah, a relief of which is engraved on the Arch of Titus in Rome, where the priests lit seven candles daily; a table on which the ‘lechem hapanim,’ the showbread, was placed, which the priests ate every Saturday; and in the courtyard of the Tabernacle stood the large altar on which the sacrifices were offered and a sink where the priests washed their hands and feet before going to work in the Tabernacle.

G-d gave precise instructions on how to build all these tools, as well as the structure of the Tabernacle itself. These instructions relate to the materials from which the Tabernacle and its vessels were made and to the size in which they should be made. Thus, for example, the dimensions of the ark are two and a half “amot” long by one and a half “amot” wide and one and a half high (an “ama” is an ancient measure equivalent to about 45 cm). The dimensions of the table are two “amot” by one by one and a half “ama”. The Tabernacle itself is built of an exact number of wooden planks, each of which was one and a half amot wide and ten amot long.

These exact measurements are quoted in the Babylonian Talmud in connection with an interesting dispute. Sages were divided as to whether it was “possible to reduce” or “it is impossible to reduce,” that is, whether it was possible to do things accurately or at a precise time, or whether it was impossible. This is a factual dispute that has various halachic implications. The Talmud seeks to prove the correctness of the opinion that “it is possible to reduce,” meaning that there is a human ability to do things precisely, from the exact dimensions of the Tabernacle and its vessels. If G-d ordered the construction of the Tabernacle and the vessels in precise dimensions, then we can infer that humans are capable of doing so accurately. This expectation is possible only if man can do precise things. So, we have proof that this ability exists and “can be reduced.”

To this proof, the Talmud responds with the following words: “Come and hear a proof from the measurements of the vessels and from the measurements of the altar of the Temple. Since the Torah gives precise measurements for them, this indicates that it is possible to measure precisely.

The Gemara rejects this proof as well: It is different there, as the Merciful One says: Do it, and to whatever extent you can fulfill His directives, this finds favor in His eyes, as the verse states: “All this in writing, as the Lord has made me wise by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern” (Tractate Bechorot, Page 17).

That is, it is different when G-d said ‘do’ and man is obliged to do the best he can, and his actions are desirable before G-d, even if he was unable to do things accurately.

These words teach us two important principles. One: G-d does not expect man to do things that he cannot do. If there is any instruction, commandment, or prohibition, directed to humans, this is proof that this is within the scope of a person’s ability. In exceptional cases, a person really cannot do the mitzvah. The Talmudic rule states that when there is something that a person cannot do, G-d exempts him from the act. Of course, this is not a sweeping exemption. The person should carefully consider his ability, get advice, and look for solutions. However, when a person is truly prevented from fulfilling the mitzvah, he is exempt from it.

The second principle stems from the first and is equally important: even when Halacha gives us an exact instruction on a particular act, if we have tried and succeeded in it only partially – our actions are desirable before G-d. There is no perfectionist expectation in Judaism that man will always be able to do things accurately. The will and the effort are what are important, and when the person wants and tries to do something right, it is appreciated even if the results are partial. This is because G-d seeks man’s heart, his will, and his willingness to make sacrifices and invest effort. Even partial results are considered sufficient when they are based on a sincere desire to do the right thing.

*The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.*

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### **Rav Kook Torah**

#### **Terumah: Betzalel’s Wisdom**

#### **Rabbi Chanan Morrison**

The Torah reading of Terumah begins the section dealing with building the Mishkan (Tabernacle) and making the priestly clothes. These chapters are among the few in which the Torah places great emphasis on external beauty — art, craftsmanship, and aesthetics.

Of particular interest is the protagonist of this unique construction: the master craftsman, Betzalel. The Midrash weaves many stories about Betzalel’s wisdom and skill. In particular, the Sages noted the significance of his name, which means, “in God’s shadow”:

“Betzalel’s name reflected his wisdom. God told Moses, ‘Tell Betzalel to make the tabernacle, the ark, and the vessels.’”

When Moses relayed the message to Betzalel, however, Moses changed the order, mentioning first the ark, then the vessels, and lastly, the tabernacle.

Betzalel turned to Moses. ‘Moses, our teacher, usually one first builds the house, and then places the furniture inside. Yet you said to make the vessels and then the tabernacle. These vessels that I will make — where shall I put them? Perhaps God told you, “tabernacle, ark and vessels”?’

Moses replied in amazement, ‘You must have been in God’s shadow and overheard!’ (Berachot 55a)

Betzalel was certainly sharp to be able to reconstruct the original divine message. Why did Moses change the order that God had told him?

#### **The Scholar and the Artist**

One way in which we can distinguish between the scribbles of a five-year-old and a masterpiece by Rembrandt is the degree to which the work of art reflects reality. A true artist is acutely sensitive to the finest details of nature. He must be an expert in shading, color, texture, and composition. A great artist will be disturbed by the smallest deviations, just as a great musician is perturbed by a note that is not exactly right in pitch, length, and emphasis.

There is a difference between the natural order of the world as perceived through the trained eye of an artist, and the proper order as understood through the wisdom of a scholar. The artist always compares the subject at hand to reality. The scholar, on the other hand, organizes topics according to their ethical and spiritual significance.



When Moses heard God command that Betzalel build the “tabernacle, ark, and vessels,” he did not know whether the order was significant. Since the tabernacle was in effect just the outer building containing the ark and the other vessels, Moses knew that the ark and vessels were holier. Therefore, when relaying the command to Betzalel, he mentioned them in order of importance, starting with the most sacred.

Why then did God put the tabernacle first? Moses decided that the original command started with the general description — the Tabernacle, the overall goal — and then continued with the details, the ark and vessels.

Betzalel, an artist with a finely tuned sensitivity to physical reality, noticed the slight discrepancy in Moses’ description. He realized that the word tabernacle did not refer to the overall construction, but to the outer building. As such, it should have come first, just as in the building of any home. The order was not from the general to the detailed, nor from the less holy to the holier, but from the outside to the inside.

It was then that Moses grasped the significance of Betzalel’s name, “in God’s shade.” Why shade? Wisdom may be compared to light, while artistic talent is like shade. Light is certainly greater and brighter than shade; but if we want to perceive an object completely, we need to see all of its aspects, both light and shade. In order that the Tabernacle could achieve its purpose, it required the special artistic insight of Betzalel.

(Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 144-146. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. II, p. 262.)

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### Shema Yisrael Torah Network

#### Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Terumah

פרשת תרומה תשפ"ג

וצפית אותו זהב טהור מבית ומבחוץ תצפנו

**You shall cover it with pure gold, from within and from without shall you cover it. (25:11)**

Chazal (Yoma 72b) derive from here that a *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, should be consistent; in other words, his inner character must correspond with his public demeanor: *Tocho k'baro*; his internal rectitude should coincide with his outward conduct. The Torah does not brook hypocrisy. The *Aron HaKodesh*, which is the repository of the Torah scroll, symbolizes the crown of Torah. As it is covered with gold both within and without, it alludes to the requisite character of a Torah scholar.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, *Shlita*, relates a *shailah*, *halachic* query, that was posed to him by an individual who thought that he had crossed the line of personal integrity, feeling that how he had presented himself did not exactly give a clear picture of him. A *meshulach*, fundraiser, visited London for the purpose of soliciting the Jewish community for the organization that he represented. When he reached the home of a distinguished philanthropist, the man, who had been in the middle of studying *Gemorah*, said to him, “I am having difficulty understanding a *Tosfos*. If you can explain this *Tosfos* to me, I will give you a very large donation.” The *meshulach* was a learned man, but was unprepared to explain the *Tosfos* to the man’s satisfaction. He walked out with the usual check – nothing extra. He walked outside and met another *meshulach* who was about to try his luck. He related to him what had occurred and suggested that, prior to soliciting this man, he should carefully review the *Tosfos* (he showed him which one) and be prepared to present a satisfying explanation. The second *meshulach* stopped by the nearest *bais medrash* and reviewed the *Tosfos* with all of its super commentaries. He was now certain that he could answer any question concerning the *Tosfos*.

The second *meshulach* knocked on the door of the man’s home and was invited in. The host was poring over a tome of *Talmud*, and when he looked up at the *meshulach*, he said, “Let me ask you a question. For some time, I have been stumped by a question that continues to bother me concerning a *Tosfos* I am studying. If you can explain it to me, I will contribute a large donation to your organization. The *meshulach*, of course, now being proficient in that particular *Tosfos*, immediately explained it to the shocked – but very happy – man. He immediately

wrote out a check for a considerable amount of money. The *meshulach* could not believe his good fortune.

A week later, however, when the *meshulach* had returned home, he was troubled by his actions. Did he transgress the prohibition of *geneivas daas*, stealing one’s mind, misrepresentation, deception? After all, the wealthy contributor had no idea that the man who stood before him had spent time preparing the *Tosfos*. Had he gone in “cold” as his predecessor had, he too, would have walked out with a less-than-considerable donation. The *meshulach* was a man of integrity. He did not want to do anything that might have a taint of unacceptable behavior. He turned to Rav Zilberstein to clarify the *halachah*. The Rav brought the question to Horav Chaim Kanievsky, *zl*, who ruled that it was not a question of *geneivas daas*. On the contrary, it was a clear example of *siyata d'Shmaya*, Divine assistance. Hashem provided the second *meshulach* with an opportunity through which he could receive a large donation.

Rav Chaim cited an instance which occurred concerning Horav Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor, *zl*, which was closely related to the incident that occurred with the *meshulach*. As a young man, Rav Yitzchak Elchanan became Rav in a small town. As he traveled to accept his position, he stopped in an inn (owned by a Jew) to spend the night. He asked the innkeeper if he had any *sefarim* from which he could learn. The innkeeper said that all he had was a *Derech Chaim Siddur* with a *halachic* commentary authored by Horav Yaakov Lorberbaum, *zl* (author of *Nesivos HaMishpat* and *Chavas Daas*, both classics). Rav Yitzchak Elchanan spent part of the night studying the laws pertaining to *Krias HaTorah* and the *kashrus* of a Torah scroll. The day he arrived in the town, a question was raised concerning the community *Sefer Torah*’s suitability. It “just so happened” that he had learned the *halachah* that addressed this question the night before. This was a clear instance of *siyata d'Shmaya*. If we would only open our eyes, we would see how often Hashem provides us with opportunities for success.

ונתת את הכפרת על הארון מלמעלה ואל הארון תתן את העדת

**You shall place the lid on the Aron from above, and into the Aron you shall put the Testimony. (25:21)**

*Rashi* notes that the Torah previously mentioned (Ibid. 25:16), “And you shall put into the Aron the Testimony.” He explains that it is teaching us that, while it is an *Aron* alone without the *Kapores*, lid, on it, he shall place the *Eidus*, Testimony (Torah) into it, and afterwards he should place the lid on it. *Ramban* argues, claiming that the *pasuk* indicates the sequence to be *Kapores* – then *Eidus*. *Rashi* clearly is of the opinion that when the *Aron* was brought into the *Mishkan*, the *Eidus* was already inside of it, and the *Kapores* was above. Once it was inside the *Kodesh HaKodoshim*, Holy of Holies, the *Paroches*, Curtain, was hung. The Torah/*Eidus* was to be placed inside the *Aron* even before the *Aron* was complete (with the *Kapores* above). Why is this? Why should the Torah be placed inside the *Aron* before it has been completed, with the *Kapores* above it?

Horav Aryeh Leib Heyman, *zl*, explains that it is done to demonstrate that the *Aron* is unlike any of the other *keilim*, vessels, which are completed in the *Mishkan* (i.e. The *Lechem HaPanim* was placed upon the *Shulchan* once the *Shulchan* was within the *Mishkan*’s environs). The reason for this disparity is that their functions are different. The *klei ha'Mishkan* are present to minister to the *Mishkan*. It is a holy site in which the *Shechinah* reposes – almost as if it were Hashem’s earthly abode. This is unlike the Torah, which is the focus of the *Mishkan*. Hashem designated the *Mishkan* as His “home,” so that He could be close to His Torah. Chazal (*Shemos Rabbah*) compare this to a king who gave his only daughter in marriage to another monarch who lived in a distant land. The father of the bride said, “I gave my daughter to this man as a wife. I am happy as a father, but it is impossible for me to remain separated from my child. I ask that you build a small apartment on the palace grounds, so that I will be able to visit as often as I want.”

Likewise, Hashem gave us His Torah, from which He cannot separate. He asked that we build a Sanctuary, so that the Torah will be there. Wherever the Jewish people move, the *Mishkan* will follow – and so will Hashem. Thus, the *Mishkan* serves the Torah, unlike the other

vessels which serve the *Mishkan*. Since the *Mishkan* is present for the *Aron*, the *Aron* “enters” it *bi’shleimus*, in complete perfection – with the Torah within it. We should never err in thinking that the focal point is the *Mishkan*. It is the Torah – as is everything in our *avodas hakodesh*, holy service. The Torah is our guide; it is our life; indeed, it is life itself.

This is the approach one should take upon learning Torah. It is not merely an attempt at mental gymnastics. It is life itself. When we study Torah, we come alive. Whoever does not understand this has not yet learned.

The following story took place about forty-years ago. Two brothers, twins, Yair and Ariel, changed schools. They had originally been in a *mamlachti*, secular, school, in Kiryat Ono, and now transferred to She’eris Yisrael in Petach Tikvah. A tragedy that had taken the life of their father precipitated this change. During a visit to the United States, they were all – two brothers, a young sister, and the parents – taking a road trip when it began to snow. It does not snow often in *Eretz Yisrael*. As a result, the father was unprepared for the icy roads which caused him to skid off the highway and fall hundreds of feet off a cliff. Miraculously, the mother and three children survived the accident, but the father did not. Having witnessed such a revealed miracle, the mother decided to change her spiritual leanings. The first step was to enroll her sons in a *frum*, observant, school.

The story does not end here. This is only the beginning. Yair and Ariel traveled daily from Kiryat Ono to Petach Tikvah. It was not an easy trip, but the boys did not complain, as they slowly acclimated to their new, observant lifestyle. They learned quickly and were receiving excellent grades until they started learning *Gemorah*. Ariel experienced great difficulty. He listened; he studied; but he could not pass the test. Finally, he informed his mother that he was not returning to school due to the difficulty he had with *Gemorah*. This was not acceptable to his mother. She decided to let him sleep on it. The next day, Ariel presented himself with his backpack on his shoulders, prepared to leave for school. “Ariel, what changed your mind?” his mother asked. “I cannot explain it, but last night *Abba* appeared to me in a dream. He was sporting a beard and *payos*, and he told me, ‘I will learn the *Gemorah* with you.’ I asked him how he knew *Gemorah*. We were not yet observant when he was so tragically taken from us. He explained, ‘Because of my two sons learning, my *neshamah* has been allowed entrance into *Gan Eden*. I am able to listen to your learning (the *rebbe’s* teaching), and I understand the lesson. Therefore, I am able to teach it to you.’ This is what happened. *Abba* studied with me all night. I now feel that I understand the *Gemorah*.”

Ariel told his mother, “*Abba* asked me to convey a message to you that your decision to have the family become observant is excellent, and you should continue to have us grow in Torah.” The mother broke down, weeping profusely. She feared that her son was suffering from an overactive subconscious, convincing himself that his dream was real. What would happen when he arrived in school and failed the test because he did not know the material?

Her fears were unfounded. Ariel negotiated the test and came out at the top of his class. The *rebbe* was so impressed that he called the mother and told her so. She wept into the phone. “You will not believe who taught him the *Gemorah*,” she said. When she shared with him what had occurred, he did not know if he should laugh or cry. He thought that both Ariel and his mother had become unhinged. Fathers do not appear in dreams to teach their children. On the other hand, the day before, Ariel had been totally clueless concerning the *Gemorah*. The *rebbe* asked Ariel to repeat the dream, which he did. The words expressed by his father, “I am learning here exactly what you are learning,” made the *rebbe* think twice. It was a concept which he may have heard, but he had never known anyone who had experienced it.

This story allows us a glimpse into the relationship between this world and *Olam Habba*, and how children can, with the power of Torah, catalyze extraordinary *nachas* and *illuy neshamah* for their parents. *Ki heim chayeinu*, “For they are our life”: Torah is our life in this world and in the World-of-Truth.

ועשיית את הקרשים למשכן עצי שטים

## You shall make the planks of the *Mishkan* of *shittim* (acacia) wood. (26:15)

*Rashi* comments that Yaakov Avinu anticipated the need for lumber for the building of the *Mishkan*. Aware that wood was not a commodity one found in the barren wilderness, he planted these trees in Egypt upon his arrival. He instructed his children that when they would eventually leave Egypt – at the end of their exile – they should take the wood with them. *Horav Doniel Alter, Shlita* (son of the *Pinchas Menachem*), adds that immediately upon his arrival in what was to be *galus Mitzrayim*, the Egyptian exile, Yaakov sought to imbue his children and all his future descendants with belief in the *Geulah*, Redemption. Throughout our tumultuous history of persecution, libels, pogroms and Holocaust, what kept us going was the belief and hope that one day it would all end.

Imagine a young child walks by the home of his aged grandfather, Yaakov, and he notices the tall trees growing in the backyard. He asks for an explanation, since he has not seen such trees anywhere else. His grandfather tells him that one day Hashem will liberate us from the land of Egypt, and we will be commanded to make a Sanctuary for Him. These trees will be used as part of the structure. Furthermore, these tall trees could be noticed from distant places such as Ramses, where the Jews were struggling under the watchful eyes of their Egyptian taskmasters. When they saw the trees, they were infused with a sense of hope for better days, when they would leave this accursed land. Yaakov showed us the way to inculcate our children and future descendants with *emunah*, faith in Hashem, and hope for an end to our *galus*. Providing our children with tangible, concrete symbols of *Yiddishkeit*, in addition to including them in every aspect of the tradition, helps them to maintain a strong identity and bond with *Yiddishkeit*. Our problems emerge when we eschew tradition: turn our backs on the past; lose our sense of pride and identity; encounter breaches in our legacy and rifts with our children.

Parenting entails responsibility: the responsibility to imbue each of our children with a clear, untarnished Jewish religious identity. He should know who he is, from whom he has descended, and which direction we would like (expect) to see him follow. We must invest him with a strong, vibrant *emunah*, faith, so that he has the strength and ability to withstand and overcome the challenges he will confront in life. The greatest tool which we possess to teach our children is our example. When he sees our positive actions, how we live authentically, maintaining spiritual integrity and adhering to our core values, he respects us and views our lifestyle as one he, too, would want to live. When *Klal Yisrael* saw the trees growing in Yaakov’s yard, they were infused with hope – hope for a better day – a day on which the exile and its suffering would end.

Years ago, this story saw light in *Peninim*. It impacts an inspiring lesson. A young boy was sent with his family to the dread Auschwitz death camp. For a short while, father and son shared a barrack. Despite the unspeakable, debasing horrors to which the Jewish captives were subjected, many of them held on tightly to whatever vestiges of Jewish religious observance they were able. One winter, every one of the internees reminded his fellow prisoners that the festival of *Chanukah* was approaching. In two days, the first *Chanukah* light would be kindled in Jewish homes throughout the world. The Nazi murderers wanted to destroy the Jewish people and their laws and rituals with them. This was all the more reason to defy them – even at the risk of their lives.

They quickly devised a plan for enabling the lighting of the first candle. One of the men was able to fashion a makeshift menorah from metal scraps that he found. For a wick, he took some threads from his prison uniform. For oil, they used some butter he was able to “purchase” from a guard. Understandably, such observances were strictly prohibited. To be caught meant almost certain death. Yet, these men felt that it was important. The Nazis could take their bodies, but they could not sever their bond with Hashem.

When the young boy took all this in, he wondered to his father, “I can understand the scrap metal – it has no value. What are a few threads from a uniform? The butter, however, was food and could be used for nourishment. Why ‘waste’ something from which they could benefit?”

His father replied, “My dear son, both you and I know that a person can live a long time without food. I want you to know a person cannot live a single day without hope. This is the fire of hope. Never let it be extinguished – not here – not anywhere.

With this in mind, we have a new perspective on the *Karshei ha'Mishkan*. These planks were no ordinary construction-grade wood. These planks were derived from Yaakov Avinu's “trees of hope.” They held up the *Mishkan* either in our midst or in our hearts. We have hope, because we have a connection with the Torah, with Hashem. If we lose hope, we are lost.

In winter of 2004, a tsunami crashed down on eleven countries in Southern Asia, killing over 170,000 people. One minute, they were sitting comfortably on the beach, staring at the calm waters and enjoying the warm sun; the next minute, they saw to their horror, forty-foot waves come crashing down on them. Some people survived the calamity. Those who tried to outrun the raging waters that crashed down on the beach were not successful. One man (there were also others) did not run from the water. Instead, he climbed a tree and held on for dear life. The water swept by beneath while he was wrapped tightly on top of the tree. Rabbi Paysach Krohn cites *Horav Chaim Volozhiner*, *zl (Ruach Chaim Pirkei Avos 6:7)*, who comments on the *pasuk*, *Eitz Chaim hee la'machazikim bah*, “It is a tree of life to those who grasp it” (*Mishlei 3:18*): “The world is like a raging sea, with its waves storming to sink/drown someone in the depths of his desires and ambitions. One who wishes to be spared from the effects of the outside world should grasp and cling to the Tree of Life – the Torah.”

A powerful lesson. We have survived because we have held onto the Torah. It has given us hope and has comforted us during the vicissitudes of life. It has kept us strong and encouraged us when the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, has attempted to sink us in a sea of desire and immorality. We have held on for thousands of years, and we will continue to do so until that glorious day when *Moshiach Tzidkeinu* will issue the clarion call for our redemption.

#### ***Va'ani Tefillah***

**ימלא ד' כל משאלותיך – *Yimalei Hashem kol mishalosecha*. May Hashem fulfill all your requests.**

The Torah (*Shemos 17:16*) states, *Ki yad al Keis Kah milchamah la'Hashem ba'Amalek*, “For the hand is on the Throne of Hashem; Hashem maintains a war with Amalek.” Instead of writing *Kisei*, Throne, the Torah writes *keis*, which is part of the word. Likewise, Hashem's Name is spelled *Kah*, rather the full name, *Yud, Kay, Vov, Kay*. *Chazal (Tanchuma, Ki Seitzei)* teach, “Hashem swore that His Name is not whole, nor is His Throne whole until Amalek's name is obliterated.”

A Jew's goal/mission should be to see to it that Hashem's Name/Glory fills the world. Hashem's eminence should take precedence over his personal needs/wants. Thus, the *Baal Shem Tov HaKadosh* explains the words, *Yimalei Hashem kol mishalosecha*; “All of man's requests should be that Hashem's glory – that the *Shem Havaya*, *Name Yud, Kay, Vov, Kay*, shall fill the world.” His Name will then be complete. As long as the world does not recognize and acknowledge the Name of Hashem, as long as Amalek and his minions continue to spew hatred and battle against Hashem, our personal requests pale in comparison.

*In memory of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents*

*ר' נפתלי מנחם בן נתנאל ז"ל*

*מרת שרה ריבע בת ר' יעקב מאיר הכהן ע"ה*

*The Rothner Family*

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*prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum*

#### **Insights Parshas Terumah**

**Yeshiva Beis Moshe Chaim/Talmudic University**

**Parshas Terumah.....Adar 5783**

**Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig**

*This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of R' Nosson Meir ben R' Yosef Yehoshua, Rabbi Nussie Zemel. “May his Neshama have an Aliya!”*

**Giving Without Getting**

Speak to Bnei Yisroel, that they bring me a *terumah* (an offering); from every man that gives it willingly with his heart you shall take my *terumah*. And this is the *terumah* which you shall take from them [...] (25:2-3).

This eponymously named parsha describes all the gifts that were received from Bnei Yisroel in order to build and operate the *Mishkan*. Rashi (ad loc) describes why the Torah uses the word *terumah* three times; “The word *terumah* refers to three offerings that are mentioned here, one is the offering of a [half-shekel] per head, from which they made the sockets, as is described in [Parshas] *Pekudei*. Another is the offering of a [half-shekel] per head for the [community] coffers, which purchased the communal sacrifices, and [the third] is the offering for the building of the *Mishkan* and the priestly garments, which came from each individual's donation.”

Essentially, this parsha describes the first fundraising effort of the Jewish people. There is much discussion among the commentaries for the seemingly odd language the Torah uses for receiving these gifts: The verse uses the word “*veyikchu*,” which literally means “to take.” Why doesn't the Torah use the word “*veyitnu*,” which means “to give”? In addition, why when describing receiving the gift does the Torah again use the word “take from them” instead of “receive from them”?

Perhaps even more perplexing is the description of the generosity of the donor: The phrase he must “give it willingly from his heart” accompanies the second offering – the cash reserve to purchase communal sacrifices. Let's examine what this “generosity” entails. The second offering consisted of a “generous” gift of a half-shekel. This would equal roughly .35 ounces of silver, which in today's market would be about \$8.

Bnei Yisroel, having just left Egypt and the Red Sea were fabulously wealthy. In addition, they had very little expenses; they received food and water from Hashem and Chazal say that even their clothes didn't wear out during their time in the desert. Seemingly, only an antisemite would cynically describe this half-shekel gift as coming from a “willing heart”!

Often, when people make a significant gift to their shul or community organization they do so by dedicating something. In addition, when giving a bar mitzvah or wedding gift many people choose to give something other than cash. Worse yet, they often inscribe their name on the kiddush cup or book as a reminder of who gave it. Why? What motivates people to try and stay connected to their gift?

People like to give on their own terms. In other words, they want to receive something, anything, in return for their generosity. This lessens the sense of loss and having less. When they go to their shul they can look at the window they dedicated and feel that at some level their money isn't totally gone. In essence, contained within the act of giving is also a semblance of receiving. This is why Maimonides (*Matnos Aniym 10:7-14*) describes that one of the highest levels of giving as being a situation where neither giver nor receiver are aware of each other.

Rashi and the Targum (ad loc) translate the word *terumah* as “*hafrasha*,” which means to separate. The Torah is giving us the ultimate guide on how we should approach giving: we must separate the gift from our other possessions to the point where it is as if it is being taken from us. Rashi (*Vayikra 23:22*) cites the Midrash “that whoever gives to the poor *leket*, *shickcha*, and *pe'ah*, it is as though he built the *Beis Hamikdash* and sacrificed *korbanos*.” Why is this only true by those three types of giving to the poor?

Because every other charity a person gives what they want to part with but with those three the poor come into your fields and take it. You have no control over who gets or how much they get. This is the reason why a “generous willing heart” is required by giving the half-shekel. That specific offering went towards buying *korbanos*. Once the *korbanos* are brought on the altar all the money given is gone. This is very different from the two other offerings that went to concrete objects where one could point to something to which they had contributed. Internalizing that the money being given will be gone forever requires “a willing heart,” one of generosity.

What is a Torah Life?

And they shall make an ark [...] and make upon it a rim of gold around it (25:10-11).

The Talmud (Yoma 72b) explains what this crown represents; “R’ Yochanan said, There were three crowns: that of the altar, that of the ark, and that of the table. The one of the altar Aharon merited it and he took it. The one of the table, Dovid merited it and he took it. The one of the ark is still lying available and whosoever wants to take it, may come and take it.” Clearly, from here we see that the Torah is available to anyone who wants to acquire it, but what does the Gemara mean by a crown?

A crown represents the very definition of that ideal: Aharon merited to be kohen gadol over Moshe and it is only his children who are kohanim. Dovid merited being king over Shaul and it is only his children who represent the true royal lineage.

At Mount Sinai the Jewish people merited receiving the Torah over all the nations of the world. In fact, the Torah was given to each individual at Mount Sinai and each person received a crown of their own at Mount Sinai (though they were removed after the sin of the Golden Calf). The Gemara is teaching us that it is the sacred duty of each and every one of the Jewish people to become a definition of the Torah ideal and to acquire the crown of Torah. What does this mean?

All too often we perceive living a Torah life as keeping all the mitzvos. But in reality this is not enough. When Hashem created the world He used the Torah as a blueprint. This means the very structure of the world is the physical manifestation of the Torah’s ideals. So too, in our lives, we must become a living manifestation of the ideals of the Torah. We don’t just do acts of kindness, we become compassionate people; we don’t merely daven, we must actually become servants of Hashem; we don’t merely refrain from injuring or causing damage to another living creature, we must be deeply pained when we see injustice or suffering of one of Hashem’s creations and do whatever is in our power to rectify it. In other words, it isn’t enough to keep the mitzvos by rote we must achieve a level where we instinctively embody all of the Torah’s ideals. Only then will we both merit and receive the crown of Torah.

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## **Blessings over Enjoyment and Gratitude Revivim**

### **Rabbi Eliezer Melamed**

Birkot ha-nehenin (blessings recited over enjoyment) determines the moral value of gratitude a person has, and from this, learns to appreciate those around him, and to thank the Creator of the world \* A person full of gratitude is a happy person whose gaze is focused on the good in his life; on contrary to him, one who is ungrateful is never happy because he always feels he has not been served properly \* Our Sages enacted a separate blessing for fruits of the tree and fruits of the ground in order to increase the praise of God \* The determining factor regarding the blessing of the fruit of a tree or a vegetable, is the withering of the stem from year to year

#### **The Value of Gratitude between a Person and His Friend**

Above all, brachot (blessings) express the important moral value of hakarat ha-tov (gratitude). To understand this value properly, we will first express the importance of hakarat ha-tov between a person and his friend. A person who knows how to be thankful is one who is able to exit his egoistic bubble and connect to his surrounding world, and see it positively. As a result, he is able to relate to those around him with humility, and appreciate them for all the good they grant him. He does not think that everyone must serve him, and therefore, recognizes the value of all the favors and gifts his family members and friends provide him.

However, it is not enough for one to be grateful in his heart; he must also express it with words of thanks, thereby making those around him happy. The love between them will strengthen, the desire of both to perform good deeds will intensify, and kindness will spread from them to all those around them.

On the other hand, one who is ungrateful sins in pride, thinking that everyone else must serve him, and therefore, does not feel the need to thank anyone for the good they have done for him. He will not be happy either, because he will always feel that he was not served properly, and was not treated adequately. He is also harmful to those around him, by causing his family members and friends to be disappointed in their good deeds.

## **Gratitude to God, and the Gifts It Contains**

The greatest thanks is due to the Creator of the world, who created the entire world with His goodness, grace, kindness and mercy. ‘Praise the LORD; for He is good, His steadfast love is eternal’. Indeed, God, blessed be He, does not need our praises. Rather, the Almighty wanted to bestow good upon us, and gave us the opportunity to thank Him, and bless Him, as it is written: “When you have eaten your fill, give thanks to your God” (Deuteronomy 8:10). By way of this, the natural emunah (faith) that exists in the hearts of man is expressed, and from this, a person becomes accustomed to seeing the Divine grace that accompanies him at all times, and to rejoice in it. How many special gifts are hidden in this!

The first gift: a deep joy of life. One of man’s difficult problems is that he tends to take all the good things in his life for granted. His thoughts are focused on what he lacks, and thus, his life is full of sorrow and frustration. However, if one pays attention to all the good things in his life, he will merit to enjoy and rejoice in it. The brachot focus a person’s gaze on the goodness and joy in his life. Even when one does not have the proper kavana (intention) while saying the blessings, in a gradual process, the brachot deepen the view of all the good in life, and the more kavana one has – the stronger one’s ability to see the good becomes, and with it, the joy of life.

The second gift: spiritual value. By means of the brachot we merit perceiving the Divine spark that invigorates each and every food, and thus, our enjoyment of the food gains depth and meaning. “To teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” In other words, the food itself nourishes the body, and paying attention to God who created the world and invigorates the food, nourishes the mind, spirit, and soul. In this way, eating also takes on a meaning of value, by which man merits to connect with his Creator, and give thanks to Him.

The third gift: out of observing and thanking God for the goodness He has given man, he strengthens his desire to cleave to God and follow His ways, and obtains from the food he eats strength and vitality to add good and blessing to the world, and to work for its perfection, with righteousness and justice, kindness and mercy.

It is likely that saying blessings with kavana will also benefit those who wish to diet but find it difficult. The more kavana one has in saying the blessing, the deeper the pleasure he will get from his eating, thus tempering his desire to overeat.

#### **The Divine Blessing that is drawn by the Brachot**

Moreover, by way of the blessings life is added to the world, because life depends on the world’s connection to the Creator, the Source of life. Accordingly, with every bracha we recite, a conduit of abundance is created through which ‘dews of blessing’ and life, descend into the world. This is the meaning of the word ‘bracha’ – to increase, and multiplicity, as written: “You shall serve your God, who will bless your bread and your water” (Exodus 23:25) – i.e., God will increase and multiply bread and water. Similarly, it is written: “God will favor you and bless you and multiply you—blessing your issue from the womb and your produce from the soil, your new grain and wine and oil, the calving of your herd and the lambing of your flock, in the land sworn to your fathers to be assigned to you” (Deuteronomy 7:13), and the meaning is that God will multiply and add to the fruit of our womb and our land. God Himself is complete and infinite, and does not need any addition. The bracha is that by our acknowledgment of the good that He has showered upon us, God will multiply and add more abundance, so that we will be able to adhere to His ways, and add more good and blessing to the world.

#### **Everything Good Requires Effort**

In order to acquire anything that has real value, one must make an effort and be diligent, as Rabbi Yitzchak said: “If a person says to you: I have labored and not found success, do not believe him. Similarly, if he says to you: I have not labored but nevertheless I have found success, do not believe him. If, however, he says to you: I have labored and I have found success, believe him” (Megillah 6b).

The same goes for becoming accustomed to seeing the good in the world and the ability to be thankful for it, and as a result, experiencing a feeling of deep satisfaction that motivates a person to add good and blessings to all those around him. For this purpose, one must study thoroughly the subject of brachot and their halachot, become accustomed fulfilling them, and thus, merit all the goodness and blessing in them.

Because of the great value of saying brachot, our Sages said that one who wishes to be a hasid (a pious person), should be diligent in matters of brachot (Baba Kamma 30a), because by way of his brachot, he adds kindness and blessing to the world.

#### **Good toward Heaven, and Good toward People**

By becoming accustomed to thanking God for all the good things He has given us, a person learns to pay attention to all the good things in his life. He does not take them for granted, and as a result, is able to thank people from whom he benefits in a deeper way.

And so throughout the Torah – the mitzvot between man and God, and the interpersonal mitzvot are connected to each other, and reinforce one another. The

better it is towards Heaven, the better it is for humanity; and the better it is for humanity, the better it will be for Heaven. Thus our Sages said, that a good righteous man is “good for Heaven, and mankind” (Kiddushin 40a).

Between Fruits of the Ground and Fruits of Trees

Q: Why did the Sages make a distinction between a bracha for fruits of the ground and for fruits of the tree, and not determine one blessing for both?

A: In general, it is preferable to say a special blessing for each type of food, because each type of food gives a person a unique benefit and pleasure, and if he were to bless all types uniformly and indifferently, he would not give expression to the abundance of the blessing that God has given to the world. On the other hand, if he were to recite his own blessing on a peach, and his own blessing on an orange, and so forth on each and every species, he would not comprehend the overall objective of God in His world, but would sink into the minute details of the cumbersome world. By way of fixing blessings for the different types of foods, on the one hand, there is an expression of the classification of the Divine blessing, and on the other hand, an expression of the overall objective.

Therefore, the division is between the fruits of the ground, and the fruits of the tree. Pri ha-adamah (fruits of the ground) grow rapidly. Within a few months from the time of its sowing or planting, it bears fruit, and the simple power of the ground is more evident in it. In contrast, pri ha-etz (fruit of the tree) goes through a complex process: in the first years, the tree needs to grow and take shape, and afterwards, in a relatively long process, it absorbs food from the soil, digests it, and gives off its fruits. It can be said that pri adamah expresses centrality and simplicity, while pri ha-etz expresses refinement and complexity, and usually also has a deeper and richer taste.

Banana – A Fruit of the Ground without the Prohibition of Orlah

The definition of a tree is also important for the mitzvah of orlah, according to which the fruits are forbidden to eat or receive enjoyment for the first three years, because the law of orlah exists only in the fruits of the tree.

The main difference between a tree and an annual vegetable is that the trunk of an annual plant withers every year, and grows back the next year from its roots, while the trunk of a tree, with its roots, remains and strengthens year after year, from which branches and fruits continue to grow each year. According to this, the bracha for eating the fruit, “etz” or “adamah” is also determined. That’s why the bracha made on a banana is “adamah” – even though it grows to a height of about four meters and looks like a tree, since every year its trunk and roots wither and it returns and grows from its pseudostem, it is considered a vegetable (Peninei Halakha: Berachot 8:2; Kashrut 2:8).

Eggplants

A question arose about eggplants, since their root remains from year to year. The author of the Chida (Birkei Yosef, YD 294: 4) in the name of his grandfather, Maharaz Azulai, wrote that there were tzaddikim who were customary to act stringently and not to eat it, lest there be a prohibition of orlah. However, in practice, eggplants do not have the law of orlah, because they are completely different from a tree, for they bear fruit already in the first year, and in the second year their fruits decrease in quantity and quality, and they do not bear fruit for more than three years. And as we have learned in the Torah, a tree bears fruit for at least five years, and its fruit multiplies and improves in the fifth year (Leviticus 19:23-25). Furthermore, if we say that eggplants are considered a fruit of a tree, there will forever be a prohibition of orlah on them, since after three years they no longer bear fruit, and it is impossible for the Torah to prohibit a certain fruit entirely (Penei Moshe YD 294, 4; Igrot Haraya 468).

Papaya and Passion Fruit

According to this, there is also no law of orlah in papaya and passion fruit, since they bear fruit already in the first year, and by the fifth year their fruits dwindle, and many of them do not even last five years. True, some poskim are machmir (rule stringently) about this, but the primary opinion goes according to the opinion of the matirim (poskim who rule leniently) (Peninei Halakha: Kashrut 2, 8).

## How Does a Heter Iska Work?

**Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

Andy Gross, a businessman who is proud that he is now observing mitzvos, is on time for his appointment. After a brief greeting, I ask him what brings him to my office on this beautiful morning.

“I recently learned that even though the Torah prohibits paying or receiving interest, there is something called a heter iska that legalizes it. How can we legitimize something that the Torah expressly prohibits?”

Indeed, Andy’s question is both insightful and important, and deserves a thorough explanation. Why don’t you join us!

I note that this week’s parsha discusses the prohibition of interest:

Do not collect interest from him, for you shall fear Hashem and allow your brother to live. Therefore, do not provide him money with interest (Chapter 25:36-37).

This verse teaches three different mitzvos:

1. Do not collect interest from him. This entails a prohibition on the lender against collecting interest (Bava Metzia 75b).

2. Allow your brother to live. From the words allow your brother to live we derive a positive commandment that one who did collect interest is required to return it (Bava Metzia 62a).

3. Do not provide him money with interest. This prohibits creating a loan that involves interest, even if the lender never collects it (Bava Metzia 62a). A lender who later collects the interest also violates the first prohibition, and if he subsequently does not return it, he violates the positive commandment.

Not only does the lender violate the prohibition against ribbis, but also the borrower, the witnesses, the broker, the co-signer, the scribe who writes up the loan document (Mishnah Bava Metzia 75b), the notary public who notarizes it, and possibly even the attorney who drafts a document that includes provisions for ribbis, all violate the laws of ribbis (Bris Yehudah 1:6). Thus, anyone causing the loan to be either finalized or collected violates the Torah’s law.

“The halachos of ribbis are quite complex,” I told Andy. “From my experience, even seasoned Torah scholars sometimes mistakenly violate the prohibition of ribbis. For example, having a margin account at a Jewish-owned brokerage, charging a Jewish customer for late payment, or borrowing off someone else’s credit line usually entail violations of ribbis. I even know of Torah institutions that ‘borrow’ the use of someone’s credit card in order to meet their payroll, intending to gradually pay back the interest charges.”

“Why does the last case involve ribbis?” inquired an inquisitive Andy.

“Let me present a case where I was involved. A Torah institution was behind on payroll, and had no one available from whom to borrow. The director asked a backer if the institution could borrow money through his bank credit line.” “I still do not see any ribbis problem here” replied Andy, “just a chesed that costs him nothing.”

“To whom did the bank lend money?” I asked Andy.

“As far as they are concerned, they are lending money to the backer, since it was his credit line.”

“So from whom did the institution borrow? The bank did not lend to them. Doesn’t this mean that really two loans have taken place: one from the bank to Mr. Chesed, and another from him to the institution? The loan from the bank incurs interest charges that Mr. Chesed is obligated to pay. Who is paying those charges?”

“It would only be fair for the institution to pay them,” responded Andy.

“However, if the institution pays those charges, they are in effect paying more money to Mr. Chesed than they borrowed from him, since they are also paying his debt to the bank. This violates ribbis. The fact that the institution pays the bank directly does not mitigate the problem (see Bava Metzia 71b).”

Andy was noticeably stunned. “I have always thought of interest as a prohibition against usury – or taking advantage of a desperate borrower. Here the ‘usurer’ did not even lend any money, and thought he was doing a tremendous chesed for tzedakah; he did not realize that his assistance caused both of them to violate a serious prohibition!”

“What is even more unfortunate,” I continued, “is that one can convert most of these prohibited transactions into a heter iska that is perfectly permitted.

WHAT IS A HETER ISKA?

“A heter iska is a halachically approved way of restructuring a loan or debt so that it becomes an investment instead of a loan. This presumes that the investor assumes some element of risk should the business fail, which is one basic difference between an investment and a loan. An investor could potentially lose money, whereas a lender does not lose because the borrower always remains responsible to pay.

“One is permitted to create a heter iska even when the goal of both parties is only to find a kosher way of creating a transaction that is very similar to an interest-bearing loan (Terumas Ha’deshen #302). The words heter iska mean exactly that: performing an allowable business deal that is similar to a prohibited transaction. As we will see, the structure must still allow for an element of risk and loss as accepted by halacha, otherwise it fails the test of being an investment.

“There are several ways of structuring a heter iska, and, indeed, different situations may call for different types of heter iska. In order to explain how a basic heter iska operates, I must first explain an investment that involve no ribbis, so that we can understand how a heter iska was developed. For the balance of this article, we will no longer refer to “borrowers” and “lenders.” Instead, I will refer to a “managing partner” or “manager” and an “investor.”

Andy interrupts my monologue. “Was heter iska used in earlier generations?”

THE EARLIEST HETER ISKA

“The concept of heter iska is many hundreds of years old. The earliest heter iska of which I am aware is suggested by the Terumas Ha’deshen (1390-1460). His case involves Reuven, who wishes to invest in interest-bearing loans to gentile customers, but does not want to take any risk. Shimon, who is an experienced broker of such loans, is willing to take the risk in return for some of the profit on Reuven’s money.

“Reuven wants a guarantee that he will receive back all his capital regardless of what actually happens in the business venture. Essentially, this means that Shimon is borrowing money from Reuven and lending it to gentiles; this would result in a straightforward Torah prohibition of ribbis, since Shimon is paying Reuven a return on the loan. Is there any way that Reuven and Shimon can structure the deal without violating the Torah’s prohibitions against paying and receiving interest?”

At this point, Andy exclaims: “Either this is a loan, and Reuven’s money is protected, or it is an investment, and it is not. How can Reuven have his cake and eat it too!”

“Actually, all the attempts at creating heter iska are attempts to find a balance whereby the investor is fairly secure that his assets are safe, and yet can generate profit. In your words, to try to have his cake and eat it.

#### PIKADON – INVESTING

“Let me explain how a heter iska accomplishes both these goals, by developing a case: Mr. Sweat has a business idea, but he lacks the capital to implement it. He approaches Mr. Bucks for investment capital. If Bucks has sufficient confidence in Sweat’s acumen to build a business, he might decide to invest even without knowing any details about it, since Sweat knows how to provide handsome profits. None of this involves any ribbis issues since there is no loan and no one is paying to use the other person’s capital. This business venture is called a pikadon.

#### GUARANTEEING THE INVESTMENT

“Your model is highly theoretical,” Andy points out, “since it assumes that Mr. Bucks invests without much assurance. Few people I know would entrust someone with their money without some type of guarantee.”

“You have hit on a key point – let us see how halacha deals with this. Whenever an investor entrusts someone with funds, the Torah permits him to demand an oath afterwards that the manager was not negligent. Therefore, Bucks may insist that Sweat swears an oath that he was not negligent with the money, and also that he reported accurately how much profit Bucks receives. An agreement may even require that Sweat swears this oath by using G-d’s name and while holding a Sefer Torah in front of the entire congregation.”

“That should certainly get Sweat to sweat,” quipped Andy. “But then again, assuming Mr. Sweat is a frum Jew, is he going to want to swear any oath at all?”

“That is exactly the point that secures Bucks’ bucks, since observant people would pay a substantial sum of money to avoid swearing an oath. The heter iska specifies that the manager has the option of swearing the oath and paying only what the investor is entitled. However, the manager also has the option of substituting an agreed-upon payment for the oath. Since observant Jews would rather pay the fixed return rather than swear an oath, we accomplish that the investor is reasonably secure, although no loan and no ribbis transpired. The result is not a loan, but a cleverly structured investment.”

After waiting a few seconds and absorbing what he just learned, Andy continued:

“Is there anything else I need to know about a heter iska before I use one?”

“I need to explain one other very important detail that, unfortunately, people often overlook. Most forms of heter iska state that the investor paid the manager a specific sum of money, say one dollar, for his time involved in the business venture. It is vitally important that this dollar be actually paid; otherwise there is a ribbis prohibition involved. Yet I know that many people overlook this requirement and do not understand its importance.”

“Why is this important?”

#### STANDARD ISKA – A SILENT PARTNERSHIP

“The standard heter iska assumes that the arrangement is half loan and half pikadon. This means that if Mr. Bucks invests \$100,000 with Mr. Sweat to open a business, Mr. Bucks and Mr. Sweat become partners in the business because half of the amount is a \$50,000 loan that Mr. Sweat must eventually repay, and the other half is a \$50,000 outlay that Mr. Bucks has invested in a business that Mr. Sweat owns or intends to open. Bucks may receive no profit on the \$50,000 loan he extended -- if he does, it is prohibited ribbis. However, he may receive as much profit on the investment part of the portfolio as is generated by half the business. As a result, Mr. Bucks and Mr. Sweat are both 50% partners in the business.

#### RECEIVING PROFIT FROM THE LOAN

“However, there is an interesting problem that we must resolve. Bucks invested a sum with Sweat, for which he received a profit, and he also loaned Sweat money, for which he may not receive any profit. However, the return on the investment was realized only because Mr. Sweat is investing his know-how and labor to generate profit for the partnership – know-how and labor for which Bucks did not pay. Why is this not payment for Mr. Bucks’ loan, and therefore ribbis?”

“This concern is raised by the Gemara, which presents two methods to resolve the problem.

“One approach is that the investor pays the manager a certain amount for his expertise and effort. As long as both parties agree in advance, we are unconcerned how little (or much) this amount is (Bava Metzia 68b). However, there must be an amount, and it must actually be paid. Even if they agree to a sum as paltry as one dollar, this is an acceptable arrangement, similar to Michael Bloomberg’s accepting one dollar as salary to be mayor of New York.”

“I now understand,” interjected Andy, “why it is so important that this amount be actually paid. If Mr. Sweat receives no compensation for his hard work on behalf of Mr. Bucks’ investment, it demonstrates that he was working because he received a loan, which is prohibited ribbis.”

“Precisely. However, there is another way to structure the heter iska to avoid the problem; have the profit and loss percentages vary. This means that if the business profits, the managing partner makes a larger part of the profit than he loses if there is a loss. For example, our silent and managing partners divide the profits evenly, but in case of loss, our manager is responsible to pay only 30% of the loss, which means that he owns only 30% of the business. The extra 20% of the profits he receives is his salary for managing the business. He is therefore being paid a percentage of Bucks’ profits for his efforts, similar to the way a money manager or financial consultant is often compensated by receiving a percentage of the profits on the funds he manages. Personally, I prefer this type of heter iska, but the type I described previously is perfectly acceptable as long as Mr. Sweat receives some compensation for his effort and know-how.

“The heter iska I have seen used by the Jewish owned banks in Israel includes this method. The bank invests 45% in a “business” managed by the mortgage borrower, but the borrower is entitled to 50% of the profits. Thus, he is ‘paid’ five per cent of the profits to manage the investment.”

“Can you explain to me how the Terumas Ha’deshen’s money lender would use a heter iska?” inquired Andy.

“Actually, his heter iska varied slightly from what we use today. Using today’s accepted heter iska, Shimon, the manager, accepts the money with the understanding that he is borrowing part and managing the balance for Reuven. He is compensated for his efforts according to one of the approaches mentioned above, and agrees in advance to divide the profits. He also agrees that he will swear an oath guaranteeing that he was not negligent in his responsibilities, and the two parties agree that if he subsequently chooses to pay Reuven a certain amount he is absolved of swearing the oath. Thus, Reuven’s return is not interest on a loan, but the amount Shimon had agreed to pay rather than swear how much he actually owes Reuven.

“This approach has been accepted by thousands of halachic authorities as a valid method of receiving a return on one’s investment that looks like interest but is not. The Chofetz Chayim notes that if someone can lend money without compensation, he should certainly do so and not utilize a heter iska, because he is performing chesed (Ahavas Chesed 2:15). Heter iska is meant for investment situations, and should ideally be limited to them.

“I would like to close by sharing with you a thought from Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch about the reason why the Torah prohibited interest. He notes that if the Torah considered charging interest to be inherently immoral, it would have banned charging interest from non-Jews, and also would have prohibited only the lender and not the borrower. Rather, Rav Hirsch notes, the Torah’s prohibition is so that the capital we receive from Hashem is used for tzedakah and loans, thereby building and maintaining a Torah community. The Torah’s goal in banning the use of capital for interest-paying loans is to direct excess funds to chesed and tzedakah.”

לע"נ

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## PARSHAT TERUMA

Had it not been for **chet ha-egel** [the sin of the Golden Calf], would Bnei Yisrael have needed a **mishkan**?

Many claim that the answer to this 'philosophical' question lies in the famous 'exegetical' controversy between **Rashi** and **Ramban** concerning **when** the commandment to build the mishkan was first given, **before** or **after** the sin of the golden calf.

In this week's shiur, as we study this controversy and its ramifications, we will show how the answer to this question is not so simple. While doing so, we will also try to make some sense out of the thorny issue of 'ein mukdam u-me'uchar ba-Torah'.

### INTRODUCTION - FOUR UNITS

To understand the source of this controversy between Rashi and Ramban, we first divide the last half of Sefer Shmot into **four** distinct units. In last week's shiur, we defined and discussed the first of these four units - chapters 19-24, the unit we refer to as **Ma'amad Har Sinai**.

Chapters 25-31 [i.e. parshiot Teruma, Tetzaveh, and the first half of Ki Tisa] also form a distinct unit, as this section includes a set of laws whose sole topic is God's commandment to build the mishkan.

Similarly, Chapters 32-34 [the 2nd half of Parshat Ki Tisa] also form a distinct unit, as they contain a narrative that describes the incident of chet ha-egel.

Lastly, chapters 35-40 [parshiot Vayakhel/Pekudei] form the final unit in Sefer Shmot, as they describe the mishkan's actual construction.

The following table reviews these four units:

CHAPTERS	TOPIC	PARSHA
(A) 19-24	<b>Ma'amad Har Sinai</b> [the <b>first luchot</b> ]	Yitro/Mishpatim
(B) 25-31	<b>The commandment to build the mishkan</b>	Teruma/Tetzaveh/ 1st half of Ki Tisa
(C) 32-34	<b>Chet Ha-egel</b> [the <b>second luchot</b> ]	2nd half of Ki Tisa
(D) 35-40	<b>Building the mishkan</b>	Vayakhel/Pekudei

The above table can help us better understand the basic controversy between Rashi and Ramban. While Ramban keeps Chumash 'in order' [A-B-C-D], Rashi claims that God ordered the mishkan's construction [unit 'B'] only after the events of chet ha-egel [unit 'C'], and hence the order would be A-C-B-D. [See Rashi on 31:18.]

At first glance, Ramban's opinion appears most logical. To understand and appreciate Rashi's opinion, we must first explain more fully the basis of Ramban's approach.

### THE FIRST FORTY DAYS - FOR WHAT?

Recall that at the conclusion of Parshat Mishpatim [the end of Unit A], Moshe ascended Har Sinai to receive the "**luchot, torah, & mitzva**" (see 24:12). As we know, the **luchot** are the tablets (upon which God inscribed the Ten Commandments). It is unclear, however, to what the words **torah & mitzva** refer. [Note how many different opinions are found among the commentators on 24:12!]

However, when we study the above chart, it may provide a simple answer to this question. If we simply follow the simple order of narrative in Chumash, then the **torah & mitzva** mentioned in 24:12 must be the mitzvot that follow, i.e. - **unit B**!

In other words, 24:12-18 tells us that Moshe ascends Har Sinai to receive the **torah & mitzva**, and then 25:1 continues by explaining what God told Moshe. Those commandments continue until the end of chapter 31.

[For those of you familiar with computers, this is similar to the

concept of 'WYSIWYG' - What You See Is What You Get. What the Torah records when Moshe goes up - is exactly what Moshe received at that time.]

Furthermore, Moshe ascends Har Sinai first and foremost to receive the **luchot** (see 24:12) - the symbol of the covenant at Har Sinai (see 19:5, 24:7). Considering that these **luchot** are to be housed in the **aron**, then it is only logical that the **torah & mitzva** refer to the laws of the **mishkan**.

Finally, considering that God informs Moshe that once the mishkan is assembled he will continue convey His mitzvot from above the 'kaporet' (see 25:21-22), it stands to reason that the laws of the **mishkan** are not only the first - but also the **only** mitzvot transmitted to Moshe during those forty days. Once the mishkan is built, the remaining mitzvot can be transmitted to Moshe via the kaporet!

[In fact, note that once the mishkan is assembled (see Shmot chapter 40), immediately afterward God transmits an entire set of mitzvot to Moshe from the 'kaporet' in the ohel mo'ed - better known as Sefer Vayikra! (See 1:1.)]

Despite the simplicity of this approach, not a single commentator advances it, for two very good reasons:

- \* First of all, it would not require **forty days** for God to teach Moshe just the laws of the **mishkan**. There must have been something else as well.
- \* Many other sources later in Chumash imply that Moshe Rabeinu learned many other mitzvot on Har Sinai. See, for example, Parshat Behar (see Vayikra 25:1) and the mitzvot in Sefer Devarim (see 5:1-28 and 6:1).

For these reasons, the commentators must explain why specifically the laws of the mishkan are recorded at this point in Sefer Shmot, even though many other mitzvot were also given to Moshe during those forty days.

Ramban (see 25:1) offers a very comprehensive and emphatic 'pro-mishkan' approach. Drafting both textual and conceptual arguments, Ramban claims that the mishkan serves as a vehicle to perpetuate the experience of **Ma'amad Har Sinai**; it is therefore the **first** mitzva that Moshe receives when he ascends Har Sinai. Even though Moshe received other mitzvot at that time as well (see Ramban on 24:12), Sefer Shmot focuses specifically on the mishkan because it reflects the unique level that Bnei Yisrael attained when they accepted God's covenant at Har Sinai.

Furthermore, at the focal point of the mishkan lies the **aron**, which contains the **luchot** - the symbol of that covenant at **Har Sinai**. [Hence the first mitzva is to build the **aron**.]

To summarize Ramban's approach, we will quote a few lines from his commentary [though it is highly recommended that you read the entire Ramban inside]:

"After God had given the Ten Commandments **directly** to Yisrael and instructed them with a sampling of the mitzvot (i.e. Parshat Mishpatim)... and Bnei Yisrael accepted these laws and entered a covenant (24:1-11)... behold they became His nation and He became their God, as was originally stipulated [at brit mila and Har Sinai]... Now they are worthy to have a house - His dwelling - in their midst dedicated to His Name, and there **He will speak with Moshe** and **command Bnei Yisrael**... Now the 'secret' ('sod') of the mishkan is that God's **glory** ('kavod') which dwelled on **Har Sinai** will now dwell [instead] on the **mishkan** 'be-nistar' [in a more hidden manner, in contrast to Har Sinai]..." (see Ramban 25:1).

### RASHI'S APPROACH

Despite the beauty and simplicity of Ramban's approach, Rashi claims exactly the opposite (see 31:18): that the commandment to build the mishkan came not only **after**, but actually **because** of, chet ha-egel. In other words, Rashi posits that the parshiot are not presented according to their chronological order. Rashi goes even further, claiming that during the first forty days Moshe received **all** the mitzvot of the Torah



**except** the laws of the **mishkan**!

At first glance, such an interpretation seems untenable. Why should the Torah record at this point specifically the mitzvot that Moshe **did not** receive at this time, while omitting all the mitzvot which he **did** receive at this time? What could possibly have led Rashi to this conclusion?

To answer this question, we must first explain the exegetical principle of 'ein mukdam u-me'uchar ba-Torah' [literally: there is **no order** in the sequence of parshiot in the Torah]. Despite the common misunderstanding to the contrary, this principle does not imply that Chumash progresses in random sequence. Rather, it simply means that the arrangement in which Chumash records its parshiot does not necessarily reflect their chronological order.

[Most commentators, and especially many of the Midrashim quoted by Rashi, employ this approach. **Ramban**, however, consistently disagrees with this assumption, arguing that Chumash **does** follow in **chronological** order. Unless a certain technical detail 'forces' him to say otherwise, he will assume that the order in which Chumash is written corresponds with the precise chronological order of the events as they took place.]

The principle of ein mukdam u-me'uchar implies that when Moshe wrote down the Torah in its final form in the fortieth year (see Devarim 31:25-26), its parshiot were organized based on thematic considerations, and hence not necessarily according to the chronological order of when they were first given. By doing so, the Torah conveys its message not only by the content of each parshia, but also by intentionally juxtaposing certain parshiot next to one another.

[See Chizkuni on Shmot 34:32 for an important insight regarding this explanation.]

Rashi, following this approach, assumes that Chumash (at times) may prefer a conceptual sequence over a chronological one. Therefore, Rashi will often explain that a certain parshia actually took place earlier or later when the progression of theme implies as such.

With this background, we can better understand Rashi's approach in our context. Employing the principle of ein mukdam u-me'uchar, Rashi always begins with considerations of theme and content in mind. He therefore cannot overlook the glaring similarities between the construction of the mishkan and **chet ha-egel**. It cannot be just by chance that:

- \* Bnei Yisrael must collectively donate their gold to build the mishkan (compare 25:1-2, 32:2-3);
- \* Betzalel, Chur's grandson, is chosen to build the mishkan; [Rashi follows the Midrash which claims that Chur was killed because he refused to allow Bnei Yisrael to build the **egel**. (See Chizkuni 31:2.)]
- \* The opening pasuk concerning the mishkan - "and they shall make for Me a **mikdash** and I will  **dwell in their midst**" (25:8) - appears to rectify Bnei Yisrael's situation in the aftermath of chet ha-egel, when Moshe must move his tent (called the **ohel mo'ed**) far away - outside the camp (33:7);
- \* Aharon must bring a **par** (a bull / an **egel** is a baby bull) for a **chatat** offering during the mishkan's dedication ceremony. [The requirement of a **chatat** implies the committal of a sin; see Rashi 29:1.]

Rashi therefore explains that the commandment to build the **mishkan** came **after** chet ha-egel (during the last forty days), for it served as a form of atonement for that sin.

[Nevertheless, it remains unclear according to Rashi **why** the Torah chose to record these parshiot out of chronological order. We'll return to this question later in the shiur.]

## LECHATCHILA or BE-DI'AVAD?

It is very tempting to consider this dispute between Rashi and Ramban a fundamental argument regarding the reason behind the mishkan.

Clearly, according to Ramban, the mishkan is 'lechatchila' [ideal]. In other words, even had chet ha-egel never occurred, it

still would have been God's desire that Bnei Yisrael build a **mishkan**, for it serves as a physical representation of God's presence in their midst.

How should we understand Rashi? Can we infer from his interpretation that the mishkan is 'be-di'avad' [a compromise]? In other words, had it not been for chet ha-egel, would there never have been a commandment to build a **mikdash**? Was the mitzva to build the mishkan simply an 'after-thought'? Was it only in the aftermath of Bnei Yisrael's sin that God realized the people's need for a physical representation of His presence?

Despite the temptation of this conclusion, we must first prove that, even according to Rashi's interpretation, one **can** (and **must**) agree that God had originally intended that at least some form of physical symbol be used to represent Him.

## TEMPLE TERMINOLOGY

To reconcile Rashi's interpretation with Ramban's explanation of the mishkan, we must differentiate between two concepts:

- (1) **MISHKAN** and
- (2) **MIKDASH**.

Although both words describe a **sanctuary** dedicated to the worship of God, for the sake of clarity, each word (in our explanation that follows) will be given a more specific meaning.

- \* The **mishkan** is a **temporary** sanctuary (a Tabernacle), a portable, tent-like structure. [Good for travel.]
- \* The **mikdash** is a **permanent** sanctuary (a Temple), such as the massive stone structure built by King Solomon.

We posit that both Rashi and Ramban must agree that the concept of a Sanctuary, a symbol of God's **Shchina** (the divine presence) dwelling with Bnei Yisrael, is lechatchila and in fact comprises a fundamental theme throughout the entire Tanach. To prove this, we must return to some basic concepts previously discussed in our shiurim on Sefer Breishit.

Recall that we first encountered the theme of **mikdash** when Avraham Avinu builds a **mizbeiach** in **Bet-El** and "calls out in God's Name" (see 12:8 & 13:4). Later, at this same site, Yaakov Avinu awakes from his dream and exclaims:

"Alas, this is the site for a **Bet Elokim**, for it is the gate to the heavens" (Br.28:17).

Yaakov then erects a 'matzeva' (monument) and vows that upon his return to Canaan he will establish the site of his matzeva as a **Bet-Elokim** - a House for God. [See Breishit 28:17-22.]

Thus, the very concept of a **Bet-Elokim** clearly preceded the golden calf.

Furthermore, even in 'shirat ha-yam', the song that Bnei Yisrael sung after they crossed the Red Sea, we already find an allusion to the establishment of a **mikdash** immediately upon their arrival in the land:

"Teveimo ve-titaemo be-**har** nachalatcha, machon le-shivtecha... - **mikdash**, Hashem konanu yadecha..."  
(See Shmot 15:17, and its context!)

Finally, in Parshat Mishpatim we find conclusive proof that the basic concept of a **Bet-Elokim** is totally unrelated to the events of chet ha-egel. Recall that even according to Rashi, the laws recorded in Parshat Mishpatim were certainly given **before** chet ha-egel. [See Rashi on 31:18, where he explains that these laws were given to Moshe Rabeinu during his first forty days on Har Sinai.]

Recall as well that within that set of laws we find the mitzva of 'aliya la-regel' - to '**visit** God' three times a year:

"Three times a year you shall celebrate for Me... Keep chag ha-matzot... and do not **visit me** empty-handed... Three times a year all your males **shall appear before me**..."  
(23:14-17).

First of all, the very existence of a mitzva to 'be seen by God' implies that there must be some type of sanctuary that would represent Him! Hence, without some sort of a **mikdash**, this mitzva of aliya la-regel could not be fulfilled.



However, the next pasuk provides conclusive proof that this sanctuary corresponds to the concept of a **Bet-Elokim**:  
"Your first fruits must be brought to **bet Hashem Elokecha** - the **house** of Hashem your God..." (23:19).

This commandment to bring the 'bikurim' to the Bet Elokim clearly implies that there would have to be some sort of 'sanctuary' that will serve as God's House.

Hence, even Rashi must agree that there would have been a need for a **Bet-Elokim** even had Bnei Yisrael not sinned at chet ha-egel.

Furthermore, there is no reason why Rashi would have to argue with Ramban's explanation that the primary function of the mikdash was to perpetuate Bnei Yisrael's experience at Har Sinai.

Instead, we posit that the dispute between Rashi and Ramban stems from a less fundamental issue - concerning the need to construct a **temporary** sanctuary before Bnei Yisrael entered the Land of Israel.

According to Rashi's interpretation, we can assume that God's original intention was for Bnei Yisrael to build a mikdash only after they conquered the Land of Israel. However, because of their sin, conquest of the Land would now be delayed. Therefore, God ordered them to build a **temporary** mikdash [= mishkan] while they remained in the desert.

Ramban would argue that even had Bnei Yisrael not sinned, it would still have been necessary for them to build a temporary **mikdash** before they embarked on that journey.

Let's attempt to explain why.

#### THE WAY IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN

Rashi's position may be based upon God's original plan that Bnei Yisrael would conquer the land through supernatural, divine intervention (see 23:20-28). Assisted by God's miracles, Bnei Yisrael would have needed only a very short time to complete at least the first wave of conquest. Had that actually occurred, there would have been no need to build a temporary mishkan, for within a very short time it would have been possible to build a permanent mikdash instead.

However, in the aftermath of chet ha-egel, the entire situation changes. As God had removed His **Shchina**, Bnei Yisrael must first bring the **Shchina** back to the camp **before** they can conquer the Land. Hence, according to Rashi, the actual process of building the mishkan could be considered a form of 'spiritual rehabilitation'. Furthermore, the mishkan would now provide Aharon and Bnei Yisrael with the opportunity to offer korbanot and thus achieve atonement for their sin.

One could also suggest that due to chet ha-egel and the 'lower level' of the 'mal'ach' that will lead them into the land (see Shmot 33:1-5 and shiur on 13 midot), it may now take much longer for Bnei Yisrael to complete the conquest. Therefore, a temporary mikdash [= mishkan] is required, until a more permanent mikdash can be built.

#### A CONCEPTUAL JUXTAPOSITION

According to this interpretation, we can now suggest (according to Rashi) a beautiful reason for why the Torah places the commandment to build the mishkan out of chronological order:

Even though the mitzva to build the 'temporary' mishkan should have been recorded **after** the story of chet ha-egel, the Torah intentionally records it earlier - immediately after Ma'amad Har Sinai - to emphasize its thematic connection to that event! In other words, Rashi, like Ramban, can also understand that the primary function of the mikdash was to perpetuate Ma'amad Har Sinai. In fact, had Bnei Yisrael not sinned, the laws of the 'permanent' mikdash may have been recorded at this spot in Chumash. However, now that a mishkan was needed (due to the events of chet ha-egel), the laws of this temporary mikdash are recorded at this point in Chumash, to emphasize the very same thematic connection that Ramban describes in great detail!

Now that Rashi makes so much sense, why wouldn't Ramban agree? To answer this question, we must return to our

discussion of the differing approaches to 'mukdam u-me'uchar'.

Ramban prefers his principle that Chumash follows chronological order. Despite the similarities between the mishkan and the story of chet ha-egel (as listed above), they are not convincing enough to warrant, in Ramban's view, a distortion of the order of these parshiot. Therefore, Ramban maintains that even had it not been for chet ha-egel, there still would have been a need for a temporary mishkan.

In fact, one could suggest a very simple reason for the immediate need of a temporary sanctuary. As we explained earlier, Bnei Yisrael must still receive many more mitzvot from God. A mishkan - with the **aron** and **keruvim** at its center - is therefore necessary as the medium through which God can convey the remaining mitzvot to Moshe. Furthermore, once the **Shchina** descended upon Har Sinai, some sort of vehicle is necessary to 'carry it' with them as they travel from Har Sinai towards Eretz Canaan.

[Accordingly, Ramban explains that most of all the mitzvot recorded in Sefer Vayikra and Sefer Bamidbar were actually given from the ohel mo'ed (mishkan). See Ramban Vayikra 1:1 & 7:38. In regard to Sefer Devarim, see Ramban on 24:1 & 24:12.]

To summarize, the dispute between Rashi and Ramban stems from their different exegetical approaches and pertains only to **why** a **temporary** mishkan was necessary. However, both would agree that a **permanent** mikdash would have been necessary even had Bnei Yisrael not sinned at chet ha-egel.

In our shiur on Parshat Tetzaveh, we will analyze the internal structure of this unit of chapters 25->31 in order to uncover additional parallels between the **mishkan** and the events of Ma'amad Har Sinai. Till then,

shabbat shalom  
menachem

#### FOR FURTHER IYUN:

**A.** In the shiur we argue that even according to Rashi, the concept of a required mikdash for serving Hashem existed even prior to the worship of the golden calf. Along similar lines, Rav David Pardo, in his supra-commentary on Rashi entitled, "Maskil le-David", writes that even in Rashi's view, the general command to build a mishkan was transmitted to Moshe during his first forty days atop the mountain. Only the details of the construction, as presented in parshiyot Teruma & Tetzaveh (and the beginning of Ki Tisa), were transmitted later. Rav Pardo proves this from the repeated reference in parshat Teruma to Hashem's having shown Moshe the appearance of the mishkan "on the mountain" (25:40; 26:30; 27:8). In the final two of these three references, Hashem employs the past tense ("you have been shown"), suggesting that Moshe viewed the image the mishkan before receiving these detailed instructions. Apparently, as Rav Pardo argues, Moshe learned of the mishkan - albeit only the generalities - during his first forty days on the mountain, even before the calf. Thus, Rashi clearly did not view the mishkan as necessary only in response to the sin of the egel ha-zahav.

#### B. RAMBAN / RASHI - earlier sources

The argument as to whether Hashem ordered the construction of the mishkan before or after the sin of the golden calf predates Rashi and the Ramban; conflicting views appear already in the Midrashim. Rashi's view, that the parshiyot appear out of order, is the position of the Midrash Tanchuma (Teruma 8, Pekudei 6), Yerushalmi (Shkalim 1:1) and Midrash Hagadol to Shmot 25:17. The Ramban's opinion is found in Seder Eliyahu Rabba 17, which states explicitly that Hashem ordered the construction of the mishkan after Bnei Yisrael declared 'na'aseh ve-nishma'. Ibn Ezra (25:1) adopts the Ramban's approach, as do the Abarbanel (31:18) and the Netziv (29:20). Despite his general affinity for the Ramban's commentary, on this issue Rabbenu Bechayei adopts Rashi's approach (25:6)

#### C. Mikdash Before Chet Ha-egel: Midrashic Sources

Several Midrashic passages support our contention that a mikdash would have been necessary even had it not been for the golden calf. Bemidbar Rabba 12:12 compares the world before the mishkan to a chair with two legs, which cannot stand; the construction of the mishkan added the third leg, so-to-speak, which enabled the world to stand independently. However one understands the image of the chair, it clearly points to the indispensability of the mishkan - regardless of chet ha-egel. Similarly, Bemidbar Rabba 13:6 describes that from the time of creation, Hashem wished ('kivyachol') to reside on earth. When the mishkan was consecrated, Hashem announced that on that day the world was created. Once again, we see that the construction of the mishkan marked a critical stage in the history of the world and was necessary since the dawn of creation. In the same vein, Bemidbar Rabba 13 writes that when Bnei Yisrael left Egypt, Hashem wished to "bring them into His quarters", and thus instructed them to build the mishkan. This Midrash makes no mention of the incident of the golden calf as necessitating a mikdash. A similar passage appears in the Tanchuma Yashan - Bechukotai 65.

We suggested in the shiur that according to Rashi, the Torah presents Parshat Teruma immediately following Matan Torah - despite its having occurred later, after the egel - to emphasize the thematic relationship between the mishkan and Matan Torah. Rabbenu Bechaye (25:6), however, explains that the Torah rearranged the sequence in order to demonstrate how Hashem is "makdim trufa le-maka" (recall that, as cited earlier, Rav Kasher reads this explanation into the Midrash Lekach Tov). Rav Zalman Sorotzkin (Oznayim La-Torah) mentions this explanation without quoting Rabbenu Bechaye. A different answer was suggested by the late Lubavitcher Rebbe ("Be'urim Le-perush Rashi al Ha-Torah" - Shmot 31:18). The Torah specifically wanted to juxtapose the tzivuy ha-mishkan with the end of Parshat Mishpatim - the formal establishment of the 'brit' between Bnei Yisrael and Hashem. As the residence of the Shchina in the mishkan marked the complete fulfillment of that brit, it is only fitting that the parsha of the mishkan immediately follows that of the covenant. (This explanation, too, seems to point to the fact that the mishkan is lechatchila even according to Rashi.)

## D. SEFARNO

The Seforno takes a particularly extreme approach to the concept of the mishkan. Already in his comments to 19:6, he notes that as a result of the egel, Bnei Yisrael forfeited "all the goodness of the future" promised to them before Matan Torah. As we will see in his comments elsewhere, this refers to God's direct revelation, which was supplanted by the mishkan. In his commentary to the final psukim of Parshat Yitro (20:20-22), the Seforno interprets these psukim as informing Bnei Yisrael that they have no need to construct a sanctuary to God. Matan Torah demonstrated that Hashem would descend, as it were, and reside among them even without any physical mediums. Commenting on 25:9, Seforno writes that after the incident of the golden calf Bnei Yisrael were required to construct a sanctuary; the direct communication experienced at Har Sinai could no longer be maintained. Seforno expresses his position even clearer in 31:18, where he describes more fully Bnei Yisrael's spiritual descent as a result of the golden calf, as a result of which they did not achieve the divine plan initially intended at Matan Torah. In this passage, he alludes to an interesting interpretation of the promise in 19:6 that Bnei Yisrael would be a 'mamlechet kohanim' (a kingdom of priests): that they would have no need for kohanim to serve as intermediaries. God had originally intended for all of Bnei Yisrael to serve God directly as kohanim. (Curiously, however, this is not how the Seforno explains the term in his commentary to 19:6 - "ve-tzarich iyun".) He develops this idea even further in Vayikra 11:2. There he explains that in response to the golden calf, Hashem decreed that He would remove His Shchina entirely from Bnei Yisrael. Moshe's intervention succeeded in restoring a very limited measure of 'hashra'at ha-Shchina', by which God would reside among Bnei Yisrael only through the structure of the mishkan. (In this passage, Seforno spells out more clearly what he meant by "the goodness of the

future" of which he spoke in his comments to Shmot 19:6 - the direct presence of the Shchina, without the need for a physical representation.) Later in Sefer Vayikra, in his commentary to the brachot of Parshat Bechukotai (26:11-12), Seforno describes the ideal condition of God's constant presence among Bnei Yisrael without it being confined to any specific location and without requiring any specific actions on Bnei Yisrael's part. In direct contradistinction to the Ramban, Seforno there reads the pasuk in Truma, "Ve-asu li mikdash ve-shachanti betocham", as a punishment, confining the presence of the Shchina to the mishkan. Seforno's most elaborate development of this notion appears in his treatise "Ma'amar Kavanot ha-Torah" (published as a separate volume by Rav Yehuda Kuperman in 5754; the relevant material for our topic is found primarily in chapter 6 in Rav Kuperman's edition).

This position of the Seforno, of course, requires some explanation in light of the proofs mentioned in the shiur to the necessity of a mikdash even prior to the egel. In fact, the Seforno himself identifies Yaakov's Bet Elokim (Breishit 28:17) and the mikdash in the Shirat Ha-yam (Shmot 15:17) as the beit ha-mikdash. How could the concept of a mikdash be discussed before chet ha-egel - if it was never to have been necessary?

The Seforno does not address this question, but in at least two instances he alludes to what may be understood as a moderation of his approach. Commenting on the pasuk "be-chol ha-makom asher askir et Shmi avo eilecha" ("every place where I will have My Name mentioned I will come to you" - Shmot 20:21), the Seforno explains, "[Every place] that I will designate as a meeting place for My service". He then adds, "You will not need to draw My providence to you through mediums of silver and gold and the like, for I will come to you and bless you". Apparently, even according to this original plan, there would still be a place designated as a mikdash of sorts, only Bnei Yisrael would not need to invest effort in its lavish and intricate construction. In Ma'amar Kavanot ha-Torah, Seforno makes a somewhat similar comment in explaining this same pasuk: "In any place that will truly be called a Bet Elokim, such as batei midrash and the like - I will come to you and bless you." Here, too, he implies that there would be a special location - or perhaps several or many special locations - for avodat Hashem, only not what we know as the mishkan or mikdash. However, in his commentary to Parshat Bechukotai (Vayikra 26:12), the Seforno strongly implies that in the ideal condition Hashem reveals Himself anywhere, without any need for an especially designated location - 've-tzarich iyun'.

**E. RAMBAM** - Review Devarim chapter 12. Note the repeated use of the phrase "ha-makom asher yivchar Hashem" and its context. Pay special attention to 12:5-12, noting when is the proper time to build the mikdash. Relate this phrase to the concept of a **permanent** mikdash, as discussed in the above shiur. Considering that Sefer Devarim contains the mitzvot that God originally gave Moshe at Har Sinai (before chet ha-egel), explain why Sefer Devarim makes no mention of the **mishkan**, yet mentions "ha-makom asher yivchar Hashem" numerous times.

Although the Rambam did not write a commentary on Chumash, we can infer his understanding of certain psukim based on his psak halacha in Mishneh Torah.

The opening Rambam in Hilchot Beit Ha-bechira (Sefer Avoda) defines the source of the commandment to build a **mikdash** (see 1:1). Read that Rambam (and, if you have time, the first five halachot). What is difficult about the Rambam's wording in 1:1? What is the source of our obligation to build a **mikdash**? Why, according to the Rambam, is the phrase "ve-asu li mikdash" (25:8) insufficient as a source for this obligation?

Why does the Rambam include the criteria, 'ready to offer upon it korbanot' and 'to celebrate there **three** times a year'? Can you relate these phrases to Shmot 23:14-19 and this week's shiur? Why does the Rambam quote the pasuk from Devarim 12:9-11? Read those psukim carefully!

## **Parshas Tetzaveh: A Continual Offering**

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

### **“THEY SHALL MAKE FOR ME A MIKDASH”**

Hashem spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the people of Israel, that they bring me an offering; from every man that gives it willingly with his heart you shall take my offering. And this is the offering which you shall take from them; gold, and silver, and bronze, And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, And rams' skins dyed red, and goats' skins, and shittim wood, Oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil, and for sweet incense, Onyx stones, and stones to be set on the ephod, and on the breastplate. And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all its utensils, so shall you make it. (Sh'mot 25:1-9)

Rambam (MT Beit haBechirah 1:1), quoting what is arguably the most famous verse in our Parashah, sees in it the Toraic command to construct the Beit haBechirah (Beit haMikdash):

It is a Mitzvat 'Aseh to build a house for Hashem, constructed to bring offerings; we congregate there for celebration three times a year, as it says: “They will build for Me a Mikdash”. The Mishkan constructed by Mosheh Rabbenu was already explicated in the Torah – and it was only temporary, as it says...

Rambam's adumbration clearly presents the Mishkan as being the forerunner of the Mikdash. This can be stated in one of two ways:

The Mishkan was the “temporary” Mikdash OR  
The Mikdash is the permanent Mishkan.

While there are significant distinctions between these approaches – chiefly, which of the two abodes is seen as the “essential” one – both assessments share a common premise: That the Mishkan and the Mikdash are essentially, functionally and teleologically one and the same. This is, by and large, the conventional understanding, prevalent both in classical Rabbinic writings and more recent homiletic literature.

I would like to suggest that a closer look at the Mishkan and Mikdash, as they are presented in T'nakh, reveal a different relationship between the two, one that, if properly assayed, can help us appreciate the significance of each structure in its own right, as well as clarifying a number of troubling textual and extra-textual difficulties relating to these edifices.

Before continuing, it is prudent to point out that it is not a consensus in the exegetical tradition to interpret our verse as referring to the Beit haMikdash:

Granted that Mikdash is called Mishkan, for it is written: And I will set My Mishkan among you; but whence do we know that Mishkan is called Mikdash? Shall we say, because it is written: And the Kohathites, the bearers of the Mikdash set forward? This refers to the Ark, Well then, from this verse: And let them make me a Mikdash, that I may dwell among them; and it is written: According to all that I show thee the pattern of the Mishkan. (BT Shavuot 16b)

First of all, I'd like to point to several difficulties which the “conventional” approach generates within T'nakh.

## **II. THE QUESTIONS**

### **A: AND IT CAME TO PASS IN THE 480TH YEAR...**

The first glaring problem raised by the “Mishkan=Mikdash” approach is one of timing. If the Mishkan is simply the “temporary solution” to the Mikdash, i.e. that until the B'nei Yisra'el are settled in their land, they need a portable “mini-Mikdash”, then why isn't the Beit haMikdash constructed as soon as they enter the Land. We see that the B'nei Yisra'el began implementing those commands which are Land-dependent (Mitzvot haT'luyot ba'Aretz – see Kiddushin 1:9) immediately, or as soon as it was feasible. For instance, as soon as the B'nei Yisra'el entered the Land, they performed the Pesach (see Yehoshua 5 – see also Sh'mot 12:25). Why, then, did they not construct the Mikdash immediately? Note how long it took:

And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the B'nei Yisra'el came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Sh'lomo's reign over Yisra'el, in the month Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of Hashem. (I M'lakhim 6:1)

In other words, it took four hundred and forty years after entering the Land before the Mikdash was built.

The immediate and nearly visceral defense to this challenge is one of specific location – although they had entered the Land, they had not yet arrived at Yerushalayim – thus prolonging the reality adumbrated by Mosheh:

For you are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which Hashem your God gives you. (D'varim 12:9)

And yet, this defense does not stand up well to the testimony of the text. Among the first wars fought by Yehoshua (perhaps, as I argued in the essay in Parashat Beshalach this year [V'shinantam 3/16], his first real war of conquest), the king of Yerushalayim, who organized the "southern alliance" of five kings, is vanquished. One might counter that even though he was defeated, that doesn't mean that the city was conquered – but the text is quite clear in the summary of wars (Yehoshua 12):

And these are the kings of the country whom Yehoshua and the B'nei Yisra'el struck on this side of the Yarden on the west, from Ba'al-Gad in the valley of L'vanon to the Mount Halak, that ascends to Se'ir; which Yehoshua gave to the tribes of Yisra'el for a possession according to their divisions... The king of Jerusalem... (Yehoshua 12:7,10)

Yerushalayim was in Yisra'eli hands as early as the first all-out war fought in the Land – and it remained a Yisra'eli town throughout the period, as indicated by the verse at the beginning of Shoftim:

And the sons of Binyamin did not drive out the Yevusi who inhabited Yerushalayim; but the Yevusi live with the sons of Binyamin in Yerushalayim to this day. (Shoftim 1:21)

The next counter-argument is that since Yerushalayim was not totally under Yisra'eli control – and rid of any foreign citizens – the Beit haMikdash could not yet be built. This argument rests on three questionable premises:

1) The situation changed in the times of David or Sh'lomo; i.e. that David drove the Yevusi out of the city such that it was a totally Judean city. Every indication of the text, up to and including the purchase of Aravnah the Yevusi's granary (the future site of the Mikdash) by David (II Sh'mu'el 24:24) points to a continued Yevusi presence in the city.

2) Absolute control of the city is necessary in order to build the Mikdash. Again, the testimony of the text clearly refutes this. We need go no further than the rebuilding of the Mikdash by Zerubavel and Yehoshua (c. 518 BCE), when the city itself, inhabited by Cutean enemies and controlled by the Persian empire, was still a valid location for construction of the Mikdash. Even if one were to posit that this is only true once the first Mikdash was constructed (following the argument that the first sanctity was eternal – see MT Beit haBechirah 6:15-16), we still come back to the presence of the Yevusi, as a significant population in the city, during the times of David.

3) Yerushalayim was always destined as the place of the Mikdash. This is the conventional way of explaining the oft-repeated reference to "The place that I will choose to place My Name", which is nearly anthemic in Sefer D'varim (12:5, 11, 14, 18, 21; 14:23, 24, 25; 15:20; 16:2, 6, 7, 11, 15, 16; 17:8, 10; 18:6; 26:2; 31:11). It is generally understood as a veiled reference to Yerushalayim. For instance, Sifri identifies The place which Hashem will choose (12:18) as "Yerushalayim". This is consistent with the Rabbinic interpretation of a key verse which appears in the earliest context of "the place that I will choose":

For you are not as yet come to the Menuchah (rest) and to the Nachalah (inheritance) (D'varim 12:9) – Our Rabbis taught: Menuchah alludes to Shiloh (the site of the Mishkan from Yehoshua's time until the end of the period of the Shoftim); Nachalah, to Yerushalayim. (BT Zevachim 119a)

Haza"l understand that the presence of the Mishkan in Shiloh was merely a "rest"; whereas the arrival in Yerushalayim was the "inheritance" i.e. final settlement. It is prudent to note that there are four opinions regarding the interpretation of these two terms, only one of which is quoted by Rashi (and thus is the "famous" one):

a) R. Yehudah: Menuchah = Shiloh; Nachalah = Yerushalayim

b) R. Shim'on: Menuchah = Yerushalayim; Nachalah = Shiloh

c) The school of R. Yishma'el: Menuchah = Shiloh; Nachalah = Shiloh

d) R. Shim'on b. Yohai: Menuchah = Yerushalayim; Nachalah = Yerushalayim

However we may wish to understand these four divergent interpretations, one thing seems clear and unanimous: that Yerushalayim is the proper understanding of "the place that I will choose". I would like to suggest that this is not necessarily the case – that these Midrashim reflect the historical reality that Yerushalayim was chosen as the site of the Mikdash. In other words, instead of reading these Midrashim as "the place that I will choose means Yerushalayim", we should understand them as "the place that I will choose turns out to be Yerushalayim". This idea will be explicated further down.

In any case, the argument that the Mikdash could not be built immediately after Yehoshua's conquest due to the "foreign" presence in the city of Yerushalayim is a difficult one.

One final argument might be mustered to explain the delay in building the Mikdash.

The Halakhah clearly states that the B'nei Yisra'el were given three commands which took effect upon their entry into the Land:

R. Yose said: Three commandments were given to Yisra'el when they entered the land;

to appoint a king;

to cut off the seed of Amalek;

and to build themselves the chosen house [i.e. the Temple]

and I do not know which of them has priority. But, when it is said: The hand upon the throne of Y-H, Hashem will have war with Amalek from generation to generation, we must infer that they had first to set up a king, for throne implies a king, as it is written, Then Sh'lomo sat on the throne of Hashem as king. (BT Sanhedrin 20b)

Since they could not (or perhaps were not obligated to) build the Mikdash until a king was anointed, the delay is now understandable – but is it?

First of all, this Halakhah itself begs the question – especially if we accept the underlying premise that the Mikdash is the "permanent Mishkan". Why would the Mitzvah of building a Mikdash be dependent on the prior anointing of a king? We do not find that other "Land-dependent" Mitzvot require a monarch and his throne to activate obligation or allow fulfillment – why does making the temporary Mishkan a permanent edifice have this prerequisite?

We have already addressed the second question raised by this Halakhah – why it took so long for the B'nei Yisra'el to appoint a king (see V'shinantam 1/27).

If we are to understand the role of the Mikdash, we must also find a solution to this "Halakhic sequencing" – something we will endeavor to do in this essay.

In sum, the first set of problems we have encountered if we accept that the principle of identity applies to the Mishkan and the Mikdash is the lengthy delay in building that great building.

## **B: THE ARON**

It is abundantly clear that the Aron (ark), which houses the Edut (testimony – the tablets of the covenant) is the central "vessel" in the Mishkan. It is the first item listed in the order of building (Sh'mot 25:10-16) and, more significantly, it is the base of the Keruvim, from where God will communicate with Mosheh:

And there I will meet with you, and I will talk with you from above the cover, from between the two Keruvim which are upon the ark of the Testimony, of all things which I will give you in commandment to the people of Yisra'el. (25:22)

In addition, the Aron (with attendant Kapporet and Keruvim) is the only vessel which sits in the Kodesh Kodashim, that most intimate and holy of locations.

If the Mikdash serves the same function as the Mishkan and is its permanent housing, we would expect the Aron to play a similarly central and significant role in the Mikdash. The text is quite clear on this point – the significance of the Aron changes dramatically (yet subtly) and its role is diminished once the Mikdash is constructed. This can be most easily seen from Rambam's description of the building of the Mikdash and its appurtenances (MT Beit haBechirah 1-4). Whereas Rambam lists the Shulchan (table), Menorah, incense altar, copper (outer) altar etc., there is no mention of the Aron. Rather, Rambam relegates the Aron to a somewhat historical presentation:

There was a rock in the west of the Kodesh Kodashim upon which the Aron rested. In front of it stood the vessel with the Mahn (see Sh'mot 16:32-34) and Aharon's staff (see Bamidbar 17:25). When Sh'lomo built the House and he knew that it would ultimately be destroyed, he built a place to hide the Aron, underneath in a deep and crooked hiding place and Yoshiyahu the king commanded and hid it in the place that Sh'lomo built as it says: And he said to the L'vi'im who taught all Yisra'el, who were holy to Hashem, Put the holy ark in the house which Sh'lomo the son of David king of Yisra'el built; it shall not be a burden upon your shoulders; serve now Hashem your God, (II Divrei haYamim 35:3) Along with it, Aharon's staff, the vessel which held the Mahn and oil of anointment were hidden – and they were never retrieved for the second (rebuilt) House... (MT Beit haBechirah 4:1)

Why was the Aron hidden? We understand Sh'lomo's concern – that when the Mikdash would be plundered, the Aron would not fall into enemy hands. Yet the practical implementation of this is difficult – how could a king (or anyone else) take it upon himself to remove (or pre-arrange for the removal of, as in Sh'lomo's case) the central vessel of the Mikdash? Aren't we commanded to maintain a proper Mikdash – and if God allows the enemy to plunder, so be it? How can we remove the central vessel from its place?

Our second question relates, then, to the Aron and its role. If the Mikdash is the “settled” Mishkan, why doesn't the Aron play the same prominent and central role in Yerushalayim as it did in the desert – and in Shiloh?

### **C: DAVID'S REQUEST**

The key passage relating to the initiative to build the Mikdash is found in Sefer Sh'mu'el:

And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and Hashem had given him rest from all his enemies; That the king said to Nathan the prophet, See now, I live in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within curtains. And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in your heart; for Hashem is with you. And it came to pass that night, that the word of Hashem came to Nathan, saying, Go and tell My servant David, Thus said Hashem, Shall you build Me a house for Me to dwell in? Because I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the people of Yisra'el out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places where I have walked with all the people of Yisra'el spoke I a word with any of the tribes of Yisra'el, whom I commanded to feed my people Yisra'el, saying, Why do you not build Me a house of cedar? And therefore so shall you say to My servant David, Thus said Hashem of hosts, I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Yisra'el; And I was with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from your sight, and have made you a great name, like the names of the great men who are in the earth. And I have appointed a place for my people Yisra'el, and have planted them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; nor shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as formerly, From the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Yisra'el, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also Hashem tells you that He will make you a house. And when your days are fulfilled, and you shall sleep with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who shall issue from your bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with such plagues as befall the sons of men; But My mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Sha'ul, whom I put away before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you; your throne shall be established forever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak to David. (II Sh'mu'el 7:1-17)

This selection raises a number of difficulties:

1) At the beginning of Nathan's prophecy, God seems to reject the notion of a dwelling place – “spoke I a word...saying, Why do you not build Me a house of cedar?” Yet, further on, God acceded to David's request. Does the Mikdash have Divine approval or not?

2) When God approves of David's initiative, He promises that the house will be built – by David's son. Why isn't David allowed to build it himself? Keep in mind that this prophecy occurs during the early part of David's career as "full monarch" (post-Sha'ul) – a career which spans 40.5 years. The commonly assumed reason for this generational delay is found in a passage in Divrei haYamim:

And David said to Sh'lomo, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build a house to the name of Hashem my God; And the word of Hashem came to me, saying, You have shed abundant blood, and have made great wars; you shall not build a house to My Name, because you have shed much blood upon the earth in My sight. (I Divrei haYamim 22:7-8)

This is, however, not found anywhere in the contemporary texts (Sh'mu'el/M'lakhim) and reflects the overall perspective of Divrei haYamim (composed during the Second Temple era – see BT Bava Batra 14a), which heightens the "spiritual/religious" nature of the Yisra'eli monarchy. If this is a piece of the reason for prohibiting David from building, it is certainly not the whole story – for, if it were, why would it not be mentioned either by Nathan, by David (to Sh'lomo – see I M'lakhim 2) or by Sh'lomo (in his words to Hiram [I M'lakhim 5:17, 19] and to the nation [ibid. 8:17-19])

Why is David prevented from building the house himself?

## **D: URIM VETUMIM**

An ancillary question, one which does not – at first blush – seem relevant to our discussion, revolves around the role of the Kohanic breastplate – the Hoshen – more commonly and directly known as the Urim veTumim.

Through the first post-Mosaic eras, the Urim veTumim played a central role in leading the nation – whenever the leader (be he Kohen, Navi or Melekh) had to resolve a crucial military or political matter, he would turn directly to God through the office of the Urim veTumim. (Indeed, it was the lack of response from the Urim veTumim [I Sh'mu'el 28:6] that drove Sha'ul to go- incognito – to the sorceress at Ein-Dor).

Here are a few examples of the use of this direct form of Divine guidance through the early political and military history of settlement:

1) The apportionment of the Land by Yehoshua and Elazar was accomplished through the breastplate (Bava Batra 122a, interpreting "Al Pi Hashem" in Yehoshua 19:50).

2) And it came to pass, after the death of Yehoshua, that the people of Yisra'el asked Hashem, saying, Who shall go up for us against the K'na'ani first, to fight against them? And Hashem said, Yehudah shall go up; behold, I have delivered the land into his hand. (Shof'tim 1:1-2 – see Ralbag and Rabbenu Yeshaya ad loc.)

3) And Sha'ul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the P'lish'tim? Will you deliver them into the hand of Yisra'el? (I Sh'mu'el 14:37)

4) And he inquired of Hashem for him, and gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine. (I Sh'mu'el 22:10 – see, however, the animadversion of R. Yeshaya ad loc.)

5) Therefore David inquired of Hashem, saying, Shall I go and strike these P'lish'tim? And Hashem said to David, Go, and strike the P'lish'tim, and save Keilah. (I Sh'mu'el 23:2)

6) And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of Hashem, saying, Shall I go up to any of the cities of Yehudah? And Hashem said to him, Go up. And David said, Where shall I go up? And He said, To Hebron. (II Sh'mu'el 2:1)

Curiously, the Urim veTumim – or any direct address to God for this type of guidance – disappears during David's career.

Our final question, then, seems to be unrelated to the analysis of the relationship between the Mishkan and Mikdash: Why are the Urim veTumim "put to rest" during David's career?

It should be noted that Haza"l maintain the continued use of the Urim veTumim throughout the First Commonwealth (see, inter alia, Sotah 9:12 and Shavu'ot 2:2 and the Bavli ad loc.), nonetheless, they were used in a different fashion than earlier. Whereas in the pre-Davidic and Davidic examples noted above, the individual leader approached God via the Urim veTumim on his own, the Rabbinic description of the use of Urim veTumim necessitates the participation of the king and

the Beit Din haGadol (Sanhedrin).

Regardless, the T'nakh makes no mention of their use after this period – and this certainly is a sea change in the relationship with God and in His direct leadership of His people. How can we understand this change?

### **E: SH'LOMO'S TEFILLAH**

This, again, is a question which may not seem to relate to our question but its resolution is most certainly a piece of this puzzle.

In the beautiful T'fillah offered by Sh'lomo at the dedication of the Mikdash (I M'lakhim 8), Sh'lomo describes the apparent futility of attempting to “house God”. He goes on to (apparently) describe the future function of the Mikdash, pointing out how His people will face His house in prayer when in need, at war etc. What is curiously missing from this T'fillah is any mention of offerings (Korbanot) – although that is certainly a most central and critical function of the Mishkan. How can we explain this omission?

### **III. SUMMARY**

We noted that conventional wisdom holds that the Mishkan was the temporary forerunner to the Mikdash – or that the Mikdash was the permanent version of the Mishkan. Although these two formulations are not identical and reflect distinct understandings of the focal point of the Mishkan/Mikdash, they share a perspective which raises difficulties in several passages in T'nakh.

We asked why there was such a delay (nearly half a millenium) between entering the Land and the construction of the Mikdash – and that Yerushalayim, the eventual site of the Mikdash, was already in Yisra'eli hands during the early parts of Yehoshua's career. We also questioned whether Yerushalayim was the pre-determined location of the Mikdash, a topic we will expand upon next week, and pointed out that there was never a requirement of absolute Yisra'eli control over the town in order to build the Mikdash.

We then noted that the Aron seems to lose its role as the centerpiece of the Sanctuary within the context of the Mikdash – a role which is unquestioned and clear in the Mishkan.

We further pointed out the difficulties arising from David's request to build the Mikdash – and God's response through the prophet Nathan. It is unclear whether the “House of God” is even a desideratum, and once God agrees to David's request, he delays the construction until David's son will ascend the throne.

We concluded our questions with two apparently unrelated issues in T'nakh – the dramatic shift in the use of the Urim veTumim after the Davidic period and the omission of offerings from Sh'lomo's prayer at the dedication of the Mikdash.

In next week's essay, we will analyze the distinct functions of the Mishkan and the Mikdash, clarifying each and thereby responding to these difficulties.

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## **Parshat Terumah: Moshe's Mishkan**

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

### **HOW SEFER SHEMOT IS "BUILT":**

The first half (chaps 1-24) of Sefer Shemot (Exodus) recounts:

- 1) The story of the enslavement and exodus.
- 2) The establishment of a covenant between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael through the Decalogue (known affectionately and inaccurately as "The Ten Commandments") and the laws of Parashat Mishpatim.

The second half (chaps 25-40) of the sefer (book) recounts Hashem's instructions for building a movable Temple (the "Mishkan") and the implementation of these instructions by Bnei Yisrael.

This week, we stand at the opening of this second half. This part of the sefer contains five parshiot: the first two and last two focus on the Mishkan, while the middle parasha (or at least the middle of the middle parasha) tells the infamous story of the Egel (Golden Calf):

- 1) Parashat Teruma: Mishkan
- 2) Parashat Tetzaveh: Mishkan
- 3) Parashat Ki Tisa: Egel
- 4) Parashat Va-Yak'hel: Mishkan
- 5) Parashat Pekudei: Mishkan

Or, divided by perakim (chapters):

25-31: Hashem commands Moshe to build the Mishkan and its contents, create clothing for the Kohanim (priests), and anoint the Kohanim.

- 31: a) Hashem tells Moshe to command Bnei Yisrael to observe Shabbat.  
b) Moshe receives the Luhot ("Tablets") while the people create and worship the Egel.

32-34: Aftermath of the Egel: punishment, forgiveness, a new covenant (including Shabbat).

- 35: a) Moshe commands Bnei Yisrael to observe Shabbat.  
b) Moshe commands Bnei Yisrael to build the Mishkan, Kelim, clothing, etc.

36-39: All of the work is done as instructed and brought to Moshe for inspection.

40: Assembly of the completed parts of the Mishkan, and investiture of the Shekhinah (divine presence).

### **THE TWO HALVES OF SEFER SHEMOT:**

The first half of Sefer Shemot progresses from the arrival of Ya'akov's family in Egypt to their enslavement there, then to the birth and rise of Moshe, the plagues, the exodus, the miracles at the sea, the people's complaints, the visit of Yitro, the revelation at Sinai, and finally the laws of Parashat Mishpatim. Although what unites all these components of the story is the development of the nation and its relationship with Hashem, these events are all independent narrative/legal units.

For instance, while the story of Moshe's birth and development into adulthood is related, to some to degree, to the account of the plagues, and both of these are related to the splitting of the sea, and all of these themes are related to Hashem's increasing level of Self-revelation (climaxing at Sinai), and all of these have some connection to the visit of Yitro and the laws of Mishpatim, we can see that despite the connections between these units and the larger themes toward which they contribute, they are all distinct units.

In contrast, the second half of Sefer Shemot is unified and tightly cohesive, narrowly focused on one topic: how and whether Hashem will maintain an intimate Presence among Bnei Yisrael in the movable Temple, the Mishkan. Instead of looking at this unit piece by piece, parasha by parasha, this week we will take a bird's-eye view of the whole Biblical terrain before us.

## **THE MISHKAN PLAN -- AND THE EGEL:**

In the end of Parashat Mishpatim, Moshe ascends Har Sinai to receive instructions from Hashem. In extraordinary detail, spanning Parshiot Teruma, Tetzaveh, and the beginning of Ki Tisa, Hashem lays out for Moshe the plan for His residence within the camp of Bnei Yisrael. All of these details come together to accomplish a fantastic (as in "fantasy") goal: "They shall make a Temple for Me, and I shall dwell in their midst" (25:8). Hashem plans to pitch His tent among the people's tents; He will be their next-door Neighbor.

## **HERE WE GO AGAIN!**

Many people have wondered (some of them great biblical commentators, some of them bored shul-goers who can't believe they're hearing all of the innumerable details of the Mishkan, which they heard in Teruma and Tetzaveh, repeated almost word for word in Va-Yak'hel and Pekudei) why the Torah repeats all of the descriptions of the Mishkan and its peripherals. Is it not enough for us to "listen in" on Hashem's conversation with Moshe in Teruma and Tetzaveh, in which He goes through all of the details? What need is met by the nearly verbatim repetition of these details in Va-Yak'hel and Pekudei, where we hear that the Bnei Yisrael did all that Hashem had commanded? Why not just tell us, "Bnei Yisrael built the Mishkan exactly as Hashem had commanded Moshe at Har Sinai. They assembled the parts, and then Hashem's glory filled the Mishkan" -- end of sefer?

One oft-quoted answer is that the Torah wants to contrast the people's total obedience to the instructions for building the Mishkan with their disobedience in building and worshipping the Egel. There is some textual support for this idea in Parashat Pekudei: every time the Torah reports that the people finish working on a particular piece of the Mishkan, it ends by saying that they did the work "as Hashem had commanded Moshe." Some examples:

(39:1) . . . they made the holy clothing for Aharon, JUST AS HASHEM HAD COMMANDED MOSHE.

(39:5) . . . gold, blue, purple, and red, and fine-twisted linen, JUST AS HASHEM HAD COMMANDED MOSHE.

(39:7) . . . on the shoulders of the Efod as a reminder of Bnei Yisrael, JUST AS HASHEM HAD COMMANDED MOSHE.

This refrain appears so many times in Pekudei -- fifteen times! -- that one begins to feel that it cannot be incidental, and that the Torah is using this device to contrast the people's complete obedience to Hashem's commands with their earlier "Egel behavior."

This is a tempting reading, but there are at least two reasons why it is not a satisfying explanation for why the Torah repeats the intricate descriptions of the Mishkan and its contents:

1) All of the "just as Hashem had commanded Moshe" formulations appear only in Parashat Pekudei; none of them appear in Parashat Va-Yak'hel, where the Torah begins to repeat all of the Mishkan descriptions. If the purpose of the repetition of the descriptions is to drive home the "just as Hashem had commanded Moshe" point, this phrase should be hammered to us again and again starting in Parashat Va-Yak'hel, where the Mishkan repetition starts, not 118 pesukim (verses) later, when Parashat Pekudei begins.

2) If the point of the "just as Hashem had commanded Moshe" formulations is to emphasize the \*people's\* obedience, it is strange indeed that of the fifteen times the phrase appears, seven of its appearances refer to action done by \*Moshe\* himself, not the people. If the Torah is emphasizing \*Bnei Yisrael's\* obedience, this makes little sense.

While the "just as Hashem had commanded Moshe" is an important pattern and surely communicates something, it is difficult to use it to explain the repetition of the Mishkan's details. (Next week I will offer an explanation of this pattern which I believe works better than the above idea.)

## **THE EGEL AND THE MISHKAN:**

Our question -- why the Torah repeats the Mishkan instructions in Va-Yak'hel and Pekudei -- may be answered by examining the relationship between the two poles of the second half of Sefer Shemot and the fulcrum between these poles; or, to put it in English, if the second half of Sefer Shemot is a sandwich, with Mishkan Description #1 (Teruma and Tetzaveh) and Mishkan Description #2 (Va-Yak'hel and Pekudei) as the "bread" sandwiching the Egel Disaster (Ki Tisa) between them, what is the relationship between the "bread" and the "filling" of this sandwich? How does the Egel disaster affect the Mishkan plans?

While Hashem is communicating the plans to Moshe, Bnei Yisrael are busy worshipping the Golden Calf. Hashem, of course, becomes infuriated; first He threatens to destroy the people completely, but then, somewhat appeased by Moshe, He spares them. But He refuses to accompany the people on their journey to Canaan:

### **SHEMOT 33:2-3 --**

"I will send an angel before you -- and I will drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, Yevusites -- to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked nation, and I might destroy you on the way!" The people heard this evil news and mourned.

### **EVERYBODY OUT OF THE POOL:**

Hashem's decision to not accompany the people on their trip to Eretz Canaan is not simply a moment of discomfort in the developing relationship between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael; it brings the relationship screeching to an emergency stop. In response to the people's rejection of Him through their worship of the Egel, Hashem 'recoils,' completely cancelling the plan for the Mishkan! All of the intricate blueprints we have traced through Ki Tisa become, well, doodling paper. Since He refuses to dwell ("shokhen") among people who worship idols, what purpose would a dwelling ("Mishkan") serve? If there will be no "ve-shakhanti," then obviously there can be no "Mishkan." Ibn Ezra makes this point explicit:

### **IBN EZRA, SHEMOT 33:3 --**

"I [Hashem] will not accompany you [to Canaan]": they should not make a Mishkan, for I will not dwell among Bnei Yisrael.

### **THE "OHHEL MO'ED" -- AND THE OTHER "OHHEL MO'ED":**

That the sin of the Egel spells the end of the Mishkan is not only logical and intuitively suggestive, it is also implicit in the way the Torah refers to the Mishkan throughout these parshiot. The Mishkan is referred to by several different names; one of the most prominent names is "Ohel Mo'ed," "The Tent of Meeting," which appears thirty-two times in Sefer Shemot in reference to the Mishkan. (Despite the fact that some people \*do\* go to shul in order to meet their friends, the "meeting" meant here is the meeting between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael.)

The word "mo'ed," "meeting," shares the same root as the words "no'adti" and "iva'ed," a word which Hashem uses in sentences like, "I will meet you ["ve-noadti"] there [in the Mishkan] and speak to you from atop the Kaporet [covering of the Ark], from between the two cherubs on top of the Ark of the Testament . . ." (25:22). The name of the movable Temple communicates its function: a place to meet with Hashem and stand before Him in worship and communication.

But then the people worship the Egel. Moshe descends the mountain, smashes the Tablets, punishes the chief offenders, and chastises Aharon for his role in the catastrophe. Hashem spares the people's lives but refuses to accompany them on their journey to Canaan. Then the Torah reports (in Ki Tisa) that Moshe creates a new "Ohel Mo'ed":

### **SHEMOT 33:7 --**

Moshe took the tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the "OHHEL MO'ED." Anyone who sought Hashem would go to the "OHHEL MO'ED" outside the camp.  
In place of the real "Ohel Mo'ed,"

- a) a structure of beauty, grandeur, and complexity, with gold and silver, exquisite weavings, coverings, and architecture,
- b) intended as a national center to meet with Hashem and
- c) located in the center of the camp,

there is now instead

- a) a plain tent where
- b) only individuals, not the nation as a group, can seek Hashem,
- c) far outside the camp.

**Moshe does not name this tent "Ohel Mo'ed" by accident. He is chastising the people, showing them what they must live with (or without) now that they have lost the Mishkan.**

But the people do teshuva, and Moshe pleads their cause before Hashem. In several incredible scenes in Ki Tisa (which we will examine in microscopic detail when we get there), Moshe intercedes with Hashem and "convinces" Him to return His presence to the people and lead them "personally" to Canaan. Hashem's agreeing to once again accompany the people means that the plan for the Mishkan is restored: His agreement to maintain His presence in their midst means that He will "need" the Mishkan to live in. (For some elaboration on whether Hashem needs a Temple or not, see this past week's haftara, "Ha-Shamayim Kis'i," Yeshayahu 66:1-2.) The next two parshiot, Va-Yak'hel and Pekudei, detail Moshe's instructions to the people about the Mishkan and their faithful obedience to the instructions. And since Hashem has forgiven the people and restored His Presence, the Torah returns to using the term "Ohel Mo'ed" to refer to the grand Mishkan where He will reside (the term appears 15 times post-Egel in Sefer Shemot as a reference to the Mishkan) rather than the forlorn tent of the period of His anger.

### **WHY THE REPETITION?**

With the understanding that the second half of Sefer Shemot is a cohesive "Mishkan unit" with the Egel at its core and "Mishkan sections" on both sides, we may have an explanation for why Va-Yak'hel and Pekudei repeat Teruma and Tetzaveh: the details of the Mishkan are repeated in order to powerfully communicate to us the total restoration of the plan of infusing the camp of Bnei Yisrael with Hashem's presence. If the audience of the Torah (i.e., us) were emotionless, purely intellectual beings, it might have sufficed to say simply, "Hashem forgave the people for the Egel at Moshe's behest and reinstated the plan to build the Mishkan. The people built the Mishkan, assembled it, and Hashem moved in." But the Torah's audience is people, emotional beings; we need more reassurance than just the stated fact of Hashem's return.

**To illustrate with a clichéd joke about Jews: a middle-aged Jewish couple come to see a marriage therapist. They have been married for thirty years. "What seems to be the trouble?" asks the therapist. "My husband doesn't love me anymore," the wife complains. "Ridiculous!" barks the husband, "of course I still love you! How could you say such a thing?!" The wife turns to her husband in surprise: "You still love me? You never tell me you love me!" The husband raises his finger in the air and says indignantly, "Thirty years ago, on our wedding night, I told you I loved you. If anything had changed, don't you think I would have told you?!"**

It is not enough to just be told. Having read of the Hashem's murderous fury at Bnei Yisrael, then the severing of the close connection between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael, we need powerful reassurance to feel that He has truly forgiven us for our rebellion, that He has truly come back. The way the Torah communicates that Hashem is with Bnei Yisrael once again is by offering the Mishkan again in all of its detail. In a sense, we have 'lost our faith' in the first rendition of the Mishkan command; that command was taken away when we were unfaithful. We need to hear it again to believe that Hashem is again willing to live among us.

If this still seems far-fetched, perhaps an illustration will help. In Tanakh (the Bible), the relationship between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael is often compared to a relationship between a man and a woman. Midrash Tana de-Vei Eliyahu Zuta, chapter 4, offers the following parable to convey the impact of the Egel on this relationship:

"... To what is this comparable? To a king of flesh and blood who had betrothed a woman and loved her completely. What did the king do? He sent for a man [i.e., Moshe] to serve as an intermediary between him and her. He showed him all of his marriage canopies, all of his rooms, all of his secret places [i.e., all the divine secrets revealed to Moshe during his seclusion with Hashem atop Sinai], and then he said to the intermediary, 'Go to the woman and tell her that I do not need anything of hers; except that she should make for me a small marriage canopy [i.e., the Mishkan] so that I can live with her, and all of my servants and the members of my household will know that I love her completely.' While the king was still busy commanding the intermediary about the marriage canopies and preparing to send many gifts to the woman, people came and said to him, 'Your fiancée has committed adultery with another man!' [i.e., the Egel]. Immediately, the king put

everything aside, and the intermediary was thrown out and left in haste from before the king. And so it was with the Holy One, Blessed be He, and Yisrael, as it says, 'Go down now, for your nation has strayed . . .' (Shemot 32)."

To summarize and extend this mashal: Hashem sits in private (Har Sinai) with his closest confidant, telling his friend (see 33:11) how he plans to make permanent his relationship with the 'woman' he loves. He talks in great detail about his plans for the home in which they will share their relationship and excitedly shows his friend drawings of the home and the furnishings he has designed for it (Parashat Teruma and Tetzaveh). But while he is eagerly sharing this dream with his friend, the woman he loves is in someone else's arms (Ki Tisa). A messenger interrupts the man's conversation with his friend to report his lover's betrayal. In a flash, his love turns to rage. He shreds the plans for the home they were to share.

Slowly, over time, the man's friend succeeds in convincing him to forgive the woman (latter half of Ki Tisa); he is also moved by her regret for what she did in a moment of weakness and insecurity ("We have no idea what happened to Moshe . . ."). But she is overcome by guilt; she cannot forgive herself, cannot believe that he has truly forgiven her. In order to convince her that he has forgiven her, the man re-draws for her all of the intricate drawings he had made of the home they were to share and all the things with which they would fill it (Va-Yak'hel and Pekudei). He presents her with the images in all of their detail and intricate beauty -- and now she can believe it.

**This may be why the Torah repeats the details of the Mishkan: we need to see the "drawings" again in all of their detail in order for us to believe that despite our infidelity, Hashem can forgive us when we do teshuva.**

If you are one of the bored shul-goers, wondering at all this repetition, maybe thinking about the Mishkan in this way will help. Besides the repetition, we may be put off by the 'ritualistic' tone of the sections of the Torah which describe the korbanot (sacrifices, coming up mainly in Leviticus/VaYikra) and the technical-sounding sections of the Torah which describe the structure and contents of the Mishkan. But the essence of the Mishkan is not the ritual/technical, it is the place where Hashem 'goes' to be near us and where we go to be near Him. This is not a "modern" theme we are reading into a ritual/technical text, it is explicit in several places in the plans for the Mishkan, where Hashem articulates the theme that the Mishkan in general and the Aron (ark of the covenant) in particular are where "I will meet with you": see Shemot 25:22, 29:42, 29:43, 30:6, and 30:36. Obviously, then, both parties (Hashem and us) should be deeply caught up in the details of the encounter we experience when we visit Hashem at 'home.' Next week we will examine some of the technical details -- the special clothing of the kohanim -- and consider how this clothing contributes to the relationship between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael.

Shabbat Shalom

Emphasis added