

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI DOV KRAMER**

### Taking a Closer Look

Reading about the construction of the Mishkan and all of its vessels, the numerous diagrams and illustrations available are very helpful for visualizing each part—and the layout as a whole. Nevertheless, one can't expect anyone to accurately draw or create the Keruvim that were on top of the Aron. Or what the "crowns" that adorned the Aron, Shulchan and Mizbe'ach Haketores looked like, exactly. If you examine the different pictures that people have spent much time and effort making, you'll—understandably—notice various differences between them. To illustrate (pardon the pun) the difficulty in creating a fully accurate representation of the Mishkan, let's look at just one part of it—the curtains that surrounded the courtyard.

For starters, there is a dispute (Zevachim 59b) about how tall the curtains were, 5 amos (cubits) or 15 amos, and whether the screen that covered the entranceway was 5 amos or 20 amos tall. But there are other issues that affect how the courtyard's enclosure should be drawn.

The Torah (Shemos 27:9-18) tells us that the courtyard was 100 amos long and 50 amos wide, with 20 pillars on the north and south sides (where it was 100 amos long), 10 on the west side, and two shoulders on east side, each 15 amos long with 3 pillars. The 20-amah opening/entranceway between these shoulders had 4 pillars, so that there were a total of 10 pillars on the east side. Rashi tells us that the distance between the pillars (at least on the north and south sides, as well as on the shoulders—but the implication is that it holds true on all sides) is 5 amos. The problem (asked by many of the commentators) is that if there are 20 pillars, then there are only 19 spaces between them, and  $19 \times 5 = 95$ , not 100. (Similarly, 10 pillars on the west means 9 spaces, or  $9 \times 5 = 45$ , not 50, and the 3 pillars for each shoulder would provide only 2 spaces --  $2 \times 5 = 10$ , not 15 -- while the 4 pillars for the entranceway gives us only 3 spaces --  $3 \times 5 = 15$ , not 20.) A variety of possible answers are given to solve this, three of which are presented below.

One approach (with slight variations—see Abarbanel and Malbim) is that the 5 amos do not include the width of the pillars themselves. If each of the pillars on the south side was  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an amah wide,

these extra 5 amos (20/4) added to the 95 amos of the 19 spaces gives us the full 100 amos. However, even though the same can be done for the north side, the west side will now have 11 spaces (as the corner pillars from the north and south sides will also be on the west, for a total of 12 pillars), meaning that each space is less than 5 amos. And while the 20 pillars stated in the Torah for the north and south are literally 20, the 10 on the west (and east) really means 12. The distance between (and/or width of) the pillars of the shoulders would also differ from the north and south (and west).

The most popular answer (see, for example, Mizrahi, Gur Aryeh, Sefornu, Chizkuni and some of the other Ba'alay Tosfos) is to use the first pillar of the next side, while not counting it for that side. Starting from the southeast corner, there would be 20 pillars 5 amos apart (including the width of the pillars). The 21st pillar would double as the first of the 10 on the west side, so it would only be attributed to that side (hence only 20 on the south side). The 11th pillar on the west side was really the first pillar on the north side, and the 21st pillar on the north side was the first of the 3 pillars of the northeast shoulder. We still need a 4th pillar for that shoulder, but the first of the 4 pillars of the entranceway held the end of the shoulder's curtain. The southeast shoulder used the first pillar from the south side (which was in the southeastern corner) along with its own 3 pillars, the last of which also supported the screen that covered the entranceway.

By completing the rectangle, the problem seems to be solved, with several caveats. First of all, each side really has one more pillar than described in the Torah, as the corners (and the ends of the shoulders and entranceway) can only be attributed to one side (or use). Secondly, the entranceway is flush with the shoulders (although the screen may have been hung from the other side than the curtains, as indicated by the Ma'aseh Choshaiv, 5:5 and 5:9). This makes entering the courtyard more difficult than had the screen been set back 10 amos from the courtyard, which is how most diagrams are drawn. Additionally, if each "space" is 4 amos and each pillar is one amah (for a total of 5 amos between pillars), we're still one amah off; the south and north sides each have 20 spaces and 21 pillars ( $20 \times 4 + 21 = 101$ ) while the east and west sides each have 51 amos ( $10 \times 4 + 11 = 51$ ). The Levush answers this by saying that the corner pillars were only  $\frac{1}{2}$  an amah wide (thus losing a full amah from each side).

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The Beraisa d'Meleches Hamishkan (5:3) seems to provide another possibility, describing how the curtains were hung on the pillars: There were small pillars (or rods), measuring one amah by half an amah, with a ring attached in the middle. The curtains were tied to these pillars with rope (according to the Sefer Hazikaron the ring was put through one of the holes of the curtain as it was wrapped around the pillar and then the top of the curtain was tied to this small pillar). The ring hung on the hook at the top of the (full-size) pillar, so that the curtain would hang down its full height (except for the part wrapped around the small pillar/hanger). "As a result, the curtain would protrude from the (full-size) pillar two and a half amos from this side and two and a half amos from [the other] side." (It was actually 2.5 amos from the ring, not from the edge of the pillar.) In other words, rather than each 5-amah section of the curtain being supported at both of its ends by two (different) pillars, it was supported in the center by just one pillar. There were no pillars in any of the corners, as the curtain protruded 2.5 amos from the last pillar on each side till the corner. (If the pillars were one amah wide, then the first pillar started 2 amos off of the corner.)

Using this scenario, the Torah's description is rather straightforward; the south (and north) side had (only) 20 pillars, holding up 100 amos of curtain, the west side had 10 pillars supporting 50 amos of curtain, and the shoulders had 3 pillars each (again starting 2 amos from the corners) supporting 15 amos each. According to the Beraisa d'Meleches Hamishkan (5:4) the screen by the entranceway was 10 amos in front of the actual opening (visualize the 10x20 area as a head and the shoulders on the eastern side, as, well, shoulders!), with the edges of the screen—which were 2.5 amos from the center of its pillar—parallel to the edges of the shoulders' curtains.

The major issue that still needs explanation is how the corners themselves (and the edges of the shoulders and the screen) were supported. We can't know if the twisted-linen curtains were thick enough to stay upright on their own, even if the top was folded over (and thereby strengthened) when it was wrapped around the smaller pillar/rods that hung from the hooks. Rashi (27:10) describes the same method of hanging the curtains as the Beraisa d'Meleches Hamishkan, while Tosfos (Eruvin 2b, who apparently uses the 2nd explanation above to answer our math problem) says that the curtains were hung from long(er) rods or poles that were supported by the hooks on the (full-size) pillars. (Numerous diagrams seem to put these poles above the pillars, independent of the hooks, but I'm not sure why. Tosfos says explicitly that these poles rested on the hooks on the *side* of the pillars.) The Ma'aseh Choshaiv describes the same small rod/pillar hangers as the Beraisa d'Meleches Hamishkan and Rashi (5:3), saying that they were hung from the hooks (5:5), but adds (5:6) that "long pieces of wood were placed on top of the hooks of the width (presumably meaning the east and west sides) that went to the end of [that] side, so that the curtains in the corners of the courtyard would hang on them in a way that they would stay fully upright in the corners." This would explain how the upper parts of the corners, as well as the edges on the eastern side, remained upright. (The bottom parts were secured by rope to pegs stuck into the ground, so would not collapse or be blown up by the wind.)

The way any illustration of the courtyard of the Mishkan is drawn will depend on which of the above explanations is used. Are there pillars in the corners, or are they a couple of amos off of the corners? How many pillars are on each side? Are the spaces between each of the pillars the same, or do they vary depending on the side? Is the screen in front of the entranceway flush with the shoulders, or 10 amos in front of the rest of the courtyard? Next time you see a diagram, take a closer look. You may be surprised at what you might find. © 2005 Rabbi D. Kramer

**RABBI BEREL WEIN**

## Wein Online

**T**here have been many explanations advanced over the years for all of the detail that appears in this week's parsha regarding the construction of the mishkan - the Tabernacle, constructed by the Jewish people in the desert of Sinai. The Torah, that usually is very chary with words, goes to great lengths here to emphasize and describe every detail of its construction, the materials and the process. I think that this is part of the Torah's unending emphasis on the importance of detail, of the small things in life that lead to the makeup of the greater whole. Every builder knows that if the architect or designer leaves out even the smallest detail from the structural plans, disaster can potentially occur.

The Torah is our blueprint for life and immortality. It is loaded with details. All of Jewish life and ritual is composed of myriad details. The mishkan/Tabernacle serves only as an example - a physical building constructed with strict attention to great detail - for the even more complicated and delicate spiritual structure that we are to build during our days here on earth. In order to emphasize the necessity for the adherence to detail in constructing our spiritual lives, the Torah was purposely heavy on detail in describing the physical appearance and construction of the mishkan/Tabernacle. This I believe is one of the more important facets of the description of the construction of the mishkan/Tabernacle in this week's parsha.

In addition, the description of the mishkan/Tabernacle outlines for us a labor of love. First, the necessary materials for building the mishkan/Tabernacle were all donated. "From each person whose heart prompts to contribute shall you take My donations for the mishkan." The physical labor and artistic talent involved in building the mishkan and in fashioning its artifacts were also a labor of love - of voluntary work and wholehearted offering of time and abilities. It was a national project in which all Jews willingly and joyfully participated. The same should be said regarding Jewish life, both personally and nationally. Coercion and force, taxation and heavy-handedness are not really the prescription for a better Jewish world. Just as the mishkan was a labor of love and volunteerism, so too must one's construction of a Torah life for one's self adhere to that model. It is not enough to be born Jewish - one must want to be Jewish and to practice Jewish life with enthusiasm and love. The same is certainly true for building national and communal Jewish life, whether here in Israel or in the Diaspora. There was an old advertisement about a famous soft drink in the United States whose theme was "Try it, you'll like it." Well, Judaism and its tenets, values and rituals can adopt that slogan as well. The key to Torah life is the enjoyment and satisfaction that it gives to one who lives in that fashion. The mishkan therefore teaches us the lesson of the inherent gain and worth of love's labor and of the necessary intense desire to be Jewish in the fullest sense of that word.

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**RABBI AVI WEISS**

**Shabbat Forshpeis**

**T**he Torah informs us that the Ark (Aron-Exodus 25:11), the Table (Shulhan -Exodus 25:24) and the Altar of Incense (Mizbeiakh Miktar Ketoret - Exodus 30:3) were all decorated with rims. Why is this so?

It can be suggested that each of these appurtenances corresponds to different roles of important personalities. (Yoma 72b) The Ark relates to the Torah scholar, as the Torah was actually contained in the Ark itself. The Table symbolizes the prosperity of our people best represented by the Ruler. And, the Altar reminds us of the Priest as he offered incense upon it.

Each of these individuals play important roles and each has a distinct challenge. The Torah scholar must be careful not to allow his knowledge to lead him to arrogance, to feeling superior over other less learned Jews. The King, the most influential of individuals, must be careful never to use his power to take advantage of his subjects. And the Priest may never permit his important religious position to be used as a platform to abuse others.

It is no wonder that the Hebrew word for rim is zaire. On the one hand, zaire comes from the word zar which means "alien". In other words, the Torah scholar, King or Priest could pervert their important roles, thus alienating themselves from God's way.

But, as Rabbi Shmuel Bornstein of Sochaczew in his Shem Mishmuel writes, zaire intersects with the word Nazir. The Nazarite is one who achieves a high level of spirituality by dedicating life entirely to the service of God.

Thus, the goal of the Torah scholar, the King and Priest is to direct all energy to holiness. To see to it that the rim at the top of these objects is manifest in the spirit of Nazir. In this sense, the rim around can be viewed as a crown, a symbol of royalty nobly turning one to God.

Note, that in Ethics, the rabbis speak of three crowns, the crown of Torah, the crown of the priesthood and the crown of kingship. Not coincidentally, they correspond to the Ark, the Table and the Altar in the Tabernacle. It is, therefore, no coincidence that the rabbis conclude that the most important crown is the crown of a good name (shem tov); in their words, "but the crown of a good name is greater than them all." (Avot 4:13).

The challenge is to infuse the three objects in the Tabernacle, representative of these three major roles in Judaism with the critical dimension of a good name. In Shem Mishmuel's words: "Each of these three great gifts to the community of Israel-Torah, Kingship and the Priesthood-needs special attention to insure that they are used only for holy, rather than self-seeking purposes. The crown on the Ark, Table, and Altar represent this constant need." © 2005 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA

**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

**Shabbat Shalom**

**“A**nd they shall make for Me a Sanctuary and I shall dwell in their midst". What is the real purpose of this Sanctuary—the forerunner of the Holy Temple—and its significance to Judaism and

the Jewish people? Our question is a crucial one, especially when we take note of the fact that the last five of the eleven Torah portions of the Book of Exodus deal with the details and precise architectural plans of the Sanctuary and its accoutrements; moreover, for the desert generation, the Sanctuary was literally erected at the center of the formation of the tribes, symbolizing its place as the center of the Jewish people. Indeed, the Western Wall of the Temple, and even the Temple Mount itself, continues to inspire and excite Jews from all over the world as the foremost religious shrine of Israel reborn. Hence our understanding of the message of the Sanctuary will go a long way in helping us to understand the message of Judaism itself.

The Ramban (Nahmanides), noting that the commandment to build the Sanctuary directly follows the Revelation at Sinai (the portion of Mishpatim is a continuation of the Ten Commandments according to the Midrash), maintains that the very function of the Sanctuary was to continue the Revelation, to build a central Temple from which the Divine Voice would continue to emanate and direct the Israelites. Therefore, the very first aspect of the Sanctuary which the Bible describes is the Ark, (Aron), repository of the Sacred Tablets of stone, over which is the Kaporet which features two cherubs. The Torah testifies in the name of G-d: "And I shall meet with you there, and I shall tell you from above the Kaporet, from between the two cherubs, which is on top of the Ark of testimony, everything which I will command you (to communicate) to the children of Israel" (Exodus 25:22).

Moses even reiterates this notion of an ongoing Revelation when he repeats the historical event at Sinai in his farewell speech to the Israelites: "G-d spoke these words to your entire assemblage from on the Mountain amidst the fire, the cloud and the fog, a great voice which never stops"(Deuteronomy 5:19 -- see Targum Onkelos there). This is likewise emphasized in our classical blessing over Torah: "Blessed are You.. Who has chosen us from all the nations and has given (past tense) us His Torah. Blessed are You O Lord who gives (present tense) the Torah."

The place where the Revelation continued was originally between the cherubs above the Ark of the Sanctuary; it therefore is quite logical that throughout the Second Temple—in the absence of the Sacred Tablets as well as the loss of the gift of prophecy—the Great Sanhedrin, sage interpreters of G-d's word for every generation, sat within the Holy Temple in the office of the hewn stone. It is after all the function of the Oral Torah to keep G-d's word alive and relevant in every time and in every situation. Apparently the Ramban would insist that the main purpose of the Sanctuary was to teach and inspire Israel and humanity with the eternal word of the Divine. From this perspective, after the destruction of the Second Temple, it is the Synagogues and the Study Houses—our central institutions of Torah reading, learning and

interpretation—which are the legitimate heirs to the Sanctuary.

The mystical and hassidic interpretations see in the Sanctuary another purpose altogether: the building of a home in which the Almighty and Israel (ultimately all of humanity) will dwell together. The Revelation at Sinai symbolized the betrothal-engagement between G-d and Israel—with the marriage contract being the tablets of stone, the Biblical laws. The commandment to erect a Sanctuary enjoins us to build the nuptial house in which the Almighty "bride-groom" unites with His bride-Israel.

Hence, the accoutrements of the Sanctuary are an ark-closet (repository for the Tablets), a menorah-candelabrum, a table for the show-bread—the usual furnishings of a home—as well as an altar; everyone knows that it is impossible to establish a family without willingness to sacrifice one for the other: each spouse for his/her partner, parents for children, and even children for the family unit. And if the Almighty created a world—albeit an incomplete, imperfect one—in which humanity can dwell, we Jews must create a more-perfect Sanctuary so that G-d will feel more comfortable with us and be enabled to dwell in our midst here on earth.

From this perspective, the heir to the destroyed Holy Temples is the Jewish home, wherever it may be. It is because Judaism sees the home as the "mother of all religious institutions" that home-centered family ritual celebrations bear a striking parallel to the religious ritual of the Jerusalem Temple even to this day. The most obvious example of this is that mystical and magical evening known as the Passover Seder, modeled upon the Paschal Meal in Jerusalem during Temple times, when every parent becomes a teacher whose primary task is to convey—through songs, stories, explication of biblical passages and special foods—the most seminal experience in Jewish history: the exodus from our Egyptian servitude.

And every Shabbat and Festival meal is a mini Passover Seder. Even before the Friday sun begins to set, the mother of the family kindles the Shabbat lights, reminiscent of the priests' first task each day: to light the Menorah. The blessing over the kiddush wine reminds us of the wine libations accompanying most sacrifices, and the carefully braided hallot, loaves of bread, symbolize the twelve loaves of show-bread which were changed in the Temple every Friday just before dusk. Parents bless their children with the same priestly benediction with which the High Priest blessed the congregation in the Temple, and the ritual washing of the hands before partaking of the hallah parallels the hand ablutions of the priests before engaging in Temple service. The salt in which we dip the hallah before reciting the blessing over bread is based upon the biblical decree, "You shall place salt on all of your sacrifices" (Leviticus 2:13), since salt, which is an external preservative, is symbolic of the indestructibility of G-d's covenant with Israel. The songs that are sung

and the Torah that is taught during a Friday night meal will hopefully further serve to transport the family participants to the singing of the Levites and the teachings of the priests in the Holy Temple. Such a Shabbat meal links the generations, making everyone feel part of the eternal people participating in an eternal conversation with the Divine.

I believe that both views, the Sanctuary as continuing Revelation, and the Sanctuary as the nuptial home between G-d and Israel together express the fundamental significance of our Holy Temple. © 2005 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

**RABBI CHAIM LANDAU**

## National Council of Young Israel

**T**here really are no words to describe the tragedy that hit South-east Asia and any that try seem hollow and vain. We must all have felt shock and horror - indeed, even awe. The right choice at this time is to focus our energy into doing everything we can, and beyond, to help the five million shattered lives and displaced persons. How the quiet oceans can turn so cruel, not differentiating between soda cans and children. How beautiful beaches can become grave sites of countless innocents. In their villages, huts, homes and hotels, on the beaches and on the streets, in a Hiroshima-scale disaster, infants, children, teenagers, parents and grandparents were destroyed in the blink of an eye.

Where is the pen that can capture the grief of a Swedish mother who pleads for any information on her four-year-old daughter, who was swept from her father's arms by the giant wave in Thailand? You could repeat this story tens of thousands of times and grieve for 150,000 (and counting) souls snuffed out in a single instant. Who can estimate how much light these souls cast upon our planet with their love, laughter, and, indeed, with their very life? Yet the tsunami did not take any notice. Tranquil waters turned into monsters, extinguishing the glow of generations.

Each of us witnessed a flood of Biblical proportions, perhaps claiming more lives than those lost in the Biblical flood of Noah. Mass media has given five billion of us front row seats to closely observe the greatest natural disaster of modern times. How ought we to respond? What is our calling at such a time?

To extend our hearts, souls and primarily our bank accounts to the five million shattered survivors is the first and foremost of our human responsibilities. Yet, we dare not send a donation and then retreat to our complacency and smugness, continuing to submerge ourselves in our daily pressures, satisfying ourselves with the delusion that what happened to them is not really connected to us.

As Jews whose primary paradigm for interpretation of history is the Torah, allow me to draw

your attention to the following Biblical incident. Following the Biblical flood, mankind decides to build a tower reaching up to the heavens, and to make a name for themselves, lest they be scattered over the face of the entire earth. G-d comes down and does just that. So what was their sin? The answer given is that in stating their objective for creating the tower, the people declared...."let us make a name for ourselves." When you have observed a flood in which the entire human race has perished, have you nothing else to think about but securing for yourself a name and a legacy? Something here is profoundly wrong. When the mission fails to be fulfilled LeShem ShaMayim, and falls under ulterior personal motivations, corruption and deceit are likely to flourish.

The idea of giving LeShem ShaMayim finds its fullest resolve in the Parshah of Terumah in the words "Veyikchu Li Terumah", You shall bring for me a gift. Rashi zeroes in on the word "Li"and transforms it into "Lishmi"- thus indicating that LeShem Shemayim is a paradigm to be present at every stage in the process of building the Mishkan. There is a parallel use of this association in Melachim 1, Chapter 5. We find King Solomon informing the non-Jewish King Hiram why his father, King David, was unable to build the Temple. He explains that due to wars he had to fight, and being surrounded by many enemies, David failed to find the "menuchah" (rest, peace) necessary for the building of the Temple. He concludes the subject by saying the need to have built the entire project "Lishmi". The need for this seemingly unnecessary explanation, says the Malbim, was to anticipate the response by Hiram who would have asked" If David was such a righteous king, then why didn't he build the Temple?

Through the Malbim's eyes, there are three themes here: (1) In order to build this huge undertaking, a period of tranquility was needed - and King David was too distracted by too many wars. (2) According to the Torah, one is not allowed to build a Temple until the enemy has been vanquished. The Gemara in Sanhedrin teaches that Israel received three mitzvot on entry to Eretz Yisrael - to appoint a king, to wipe out Amalek, and to build a Temple, and that the last-mentioned mitzvah is to be done after the first two, for only when the Jewish people have the sense of "menuchah" can they then go ahead and build. (3) And finally, the truth is that the main aspect of building the Temple is not for its own sake, but a crucial aspect of the building has to be LeShem Shamayim ,without any ulterior purpose involved at all.

King David did not build the Temple because he knew that in so building, all his wars would cease, and was afraid that the motive of Shem Shamayim would be replaced by some ulterior motive - thus it would have had to have been King Solomon to build because his reign was filled with peace. Any building by King David would have been suspect of an ulterior motive behind the project.

It is with this in mind that we have a responsibility to give of ourselves, and not just momentarily and that the motive for such giving must be surely leShem Shomayim, to the exclusion of any ulterior purpose.

May our generosity know no limits.

#### **RABBI DOVID SIEGEL**

## **Haftorah**

**T**his week's haftorah teaches us an important perspective about the Holy Temple and our synagogue. The haftorah opens with a detailed account of Shlomo Hamelech's construction of the Bais Hamikdash. He engaged nearly two hundred thousand workers in hewing and transporting scarce heavy stones for the Bais Hamikdash's foundation. He built its exterior walls from perfectly hewed stones from the quarry that did not require any cutting or planing. He enhanced the basic structure with numerous chambers, annexes and winding staircases and paneled the entire structure with impressive cedar wood.

In the midst of this heavy construction Hashem sent Shlomo Hamelech a prophetic message and stated, "(Regarding) The house you are building, if you walk in My statutes, adhere to My laws and guard all My mitzvos.... I will dwell amongst the Jewish people and not forsake My nation, Israel." (M"lochim I 6:12,13) Hashem told Shlomo Hamelech at the outset that the expressed purpose for all his labor was to create an earthly abode for Hashem. The impressive architectural structures, jewel studded walls and gold trimmings would not secure this objective. The sole factor in this would be guarding Hashem's statutes and carefully adhering to all His mitzvos. Hashem declared that the entire value of this magnificent edifice depended upon the Jewish people. If they sincerely desired to unite with Him they would merit His Divine Presence. Hashem pledged to remain amongst them as long as they displayed true desire to be with Him.

Malbim notes the juxtaposition of this prophecy in the midst of the construction. Scriptures indicate that Shlomo received this prophecy upon completing the Bais Hamikdash's exterior before beginning its interior. Malbim sees this moment as a transitional point in the building process, a time most appropriate for this prophecy. We can appreciate Hashem's timely message through S'forno's insightful comment about the Sanctuary and the Holy Temple.

The Sages inform us that the actual Sanctuary remained perfectly intact and never fell into foreign hands. When King Yoshiyahu foresaw the Jewish nation's exile he secretly buried the Holy Ark, the Sanctuary and many of its holy vessels in a cave below Yerushalyim for preservation. The first Holy Temple did not merit such fortune and aside from suffering much deterioration ultimately fell into wicked Babylonian hands who leveled the entire magnificent edifice. This

digression continued and the second Temple did not even merit to house Hashem's intense Divine Presence within its walls.

S'forno informs us the reason for such contrasting experiences with these sacred structures. He sees the key factor in this as the pious nature of individuals involved in erecting these structures. The Sanctuary was built by pious, devout individuals totally focused on creating an earthly abode for Hashem. Moshe Rabbeinu oversaw the entire construction devoting himself to the perfect fulfillment of every detail. Hashem's devout Levites had a major hand in the construction under the leadership of Ahron Hakohain's son, Isamar. The project's contractor was Betzalel gifted with sacred insights to the Heavenly process of creation. The holy structure they constructed did not allow for deterioration or destruction and demanded eternal preservation.

Conversely, the first Temple's construction shared only some of these experiences. Although the pious Shlomo Hamelech oversaw its construction his massive undertaking included multitudes of skilled craftsmen from Tyre. These foreign workers did not relate to spirituality value and failed to dedicate their every act towards that end. Although Hashem rested His intense presence in the first Temple this sacred edifice was not spared from deterioration and destruction. The second Temple was not even overseen by devout, pious individuals. Hashem's Levites were not involved in its construction and the bulk its workers were of foreign decent. In fact, the second Temple did not even merit the return of the holy Ark and Hashem's Divine Presence was not intensely sensed within its walls. (S'forno S'hmos 38:21)

In light of the above we appreciate Hashem's timely message to Shlomo Hamelech. After successfully completing the exterior Shlomo set his focus on the interior of the Bais Hamikdash. At that exact moment Hashem reminded Shlomo of the interior's exclusive purpose. Hashem desired to secure the Temple for as long as possible and chose this exact moment to inspire Shlomo towards its spiritual direction. This impressive structure was to serve as Hashem's earthly abode provided His people display true desire to unite with Him. After Shlomo received his charge he immediately focused on the project's Divine dimensions and dedicated every detail of the interior to Hashem. Shlomo hoped to create through this Hashem's permanent earthly abode. Although other factors interfered with Shlomo's noble goal, his efforts were fruitful. Unlike the second Bais Hamikdash, Shlomo's Bais Hamikdash merited Hashem's intense presence for four hundred and ten years. The awesomeness of this experience is best expressed through the Vilna Gaon's classic reflection. He once commented that he could not even fathom the spiritual capacity of the ordinary Jew of those times who merited to enter the

Bais Hamikdash and stand in Hashem's sacred presence.

This lesson in construction and devotion equally applies to our miniature Bais Hamikdash, our synagogue. HaRav Chaim of Volozhin shared with us the potential sanctity of our synagogue. He said, "Imagine what would result in one devoted his thoughts when chopping the wood for the handle of the ax used to chop the wood for the walls of a synagogue. If every detail of construction was devoted towards housing Hashem's Divine presence the following result would undoubtedly result. The sanctity within its walls would be so intense that it would be virtually impossible to engage there in idle chatter. Indeed, even our present day synagogue has potential for true sanctity. When we construct a house for Hashem totally for His sake it will also merit everlasting spiritual status. Although majestic interior contributes to the beauty of our Bais Haknesses its endurance and spiritual capacity does not stem from this. The singular factor is our focus on the Divine Presence residing therein. When we construct our miniature Temple in this manner it will undoubtedly merit intense degrees of sanctity and forever remain the home of Hashem.

Although such conditions are difficult to meet in full we can do our part to preserve the sanctity of our sacred synagogues. Even in our times Hashem desires to rest amongst His people. Our humble synagogue can facilitate this goal when shown its proper respect. If we pause before entering this sacred edifice and contemplate who rests within its walls we would merit to sense, in some way, His Divine presence. If we could devote sincere effort towards preserving our synagogue's sanctity we would be overwhelmed by Hashem's intense presence sensed therein. May we soon merit Hashem's full return to His people and may we be privileged to stand in His sacred presence forever. © 2005 Rabbi D. Siegel and www.torah.org

#### **MACHON ZOMET**

## **Shabbat B'Shabbato**

*by Rabbi Amnon Bazak*

**W**e have been commanded to make rings in most of the utensils of the Tabernacle and place rods within them, so that it will be possible to carry the utensil. However, for the Ark there is a special command: "The rods shall remain in the rings of the Ark, they shall not be removed from it." [Shemot 25:15]. Many commentators consider this as a separate mitzva, "He has commanded us not to remove the rods of the Ark from the rings" [Rambam, Sefer Hamitzvot, negative mitzva 86]. But this is problematic. The purpose of the rods seems to be technical in nature, "to use them to carry the Ark" [25:14]. Why then should it be expressly forbidden to remove the rods from the rings when the Ark is not being moved? According to the Sefer Hachinuch, this mitzva also fills a technical

need—to make sure that the Ark will always be ready to move without delay: "We have been commanded not to remove the rods from the Ark lest we might be required to move it quickly. Otherwise, because of our haste and our excitement we might not check that the rods are seated properly and the Ark might fall, and in this way we would show disrespect for it." [Mitzva 96].

It may be that the explanation for this mitzva is of a more fundamental nature. Evidently the fact that the rods are present emphasizes the temporary aspect of the Ark. It serves as the site of the revelation of the Shechina: "I will meet with you there, and I will speak to you from above the Kaporet, between the two Keruvim, on top of the Ark of Testimony" [Shemot 25:22]. The Shechina does not appear in a specific geographical location but rather wherever the Ark happens to be. This is not an ideal situation, as the Almighty says, quoted by King David: "For I have not sat in a house from the day I raised Bnei Yisrael up out of Egypt to this very day, I was always moving around in the Tent and the Tabernacle" [II Shmuel 7:6]. Thus, the existence of the rods emphasizes the fact that the Tabernacle is only a temporary site for the appearance of the Shechina, while the ultimate goal is to build a permanent house for G-d, where the Shechina will dwell forever.

Once the Temple was built, the stage was reached where the Almighty was no longer "on the move" but was able to "sit," as is noted by King Shlomo: "I have built a dwelling place for you, a place where you will dwell forever" [I Melachim 8:13]. It can then be assumed that the status of the rods of the Ark will change. In fact, this is noted as part of the dedication of the Temple. "And the rods were long, such that the tips of the rods could be seen from the holy area, in the sanctuary, but they could not be seen outside" [8:8]. What is the significance of the lengthening of the rods? According to RADAK, "They were pulled out. That is, they were moved to one side, since there was no longer any need to carry the Ark on the shoulders. At first, the rods were centered on the Ark, such that the length in the back of the Ark and in the front was the same... But once the Ark was brought into the sanctuary using the rods and it would never be necessary to carry it any more, the rods were pulled towards the outside, until their tips could be seen in the sanctuary." While in the Temple the rods were not removed completely from the Ark, they were pulled out somewhat, such that they protruded to one side. In this position, they could not be used in a practical way. In a symbolic way, this showed that they would no longer be needed.

#### **The Torah Preceded the World**

*by Rabbi Nachum Rom, Head of the Torah Mitzion Kollel, Cape town, South Africa*

The command to build the Tabernacle is followed by the command to build the Ark. It is written in the Midrash, "Just as the Torah came before everything else, so it was with the construction of the Tabernacle.

The Ark came before all the other utensils. Just as light came before everything else in the creation, so too in the Tabernacle, the Torah, which is called light... came before the construction of all the other utensils." [Shemot Rabba 34].

The Torah is the plan for the world, and it therefore preceded the world. This is what is written in the Midrash, "It is customary in the world, when a king constructs a palace, he does not build it on his own but consults an architect, who in turn does not build it without plans and notes... In the same way, the Almighty looked at the Torah and created the world." [Bereishit Rabba 1]. The Torah was not created to correspond to the world, rather the world fits the plan of the Torah! The Torah represents eternity, and we make the Ark before the other utensils as an expression of this attitude towards the Torah.

One detail separates the Ark from the other utensils. With the others, the rods were put in place just before the Tabernacle was moved, but the rods of the Ark were left in the rings even when it was not being carried. "The rods shall remain in the rings of the Ark, they shall not be removed from it." [Shemot 25:15]. This is one of the 613 mitzvot, as noted by the Rambam: "He has commanded us not to remove the rods of the Ark from the rings" [Sefer Hamitzvot, negative command 86].

Why does the Torah use the passive form, "they shall not be removed," and not give a direct command, such as, "do not remove the rods"? Rabbi Avraham Saba, an exile from Spain, explains in his book "Tzeror Hamor" that the phrase "they shall not be removed" is not just a command, it is also a promise for the future. The rods of the Ark will never be removed, for all eternity. There will always be people who study Torah and support it within Yisrael. The Torah is eternal and will remain forever.

In the long history of Bnei Yisrael, there have indeed been times when it seemed that the Torah was about to be forgotten, G-d forbid. This is described in the Talmud: "When our ancestors entered Kerem B'Yavneh, they feared that the Torah might be forgotten by Yisrael... Until Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai came, and he said, Heaven forbid that the Torah might be forgotten by Yisrael, as is written, 'For it will never be forgotten by his offspring.' [Devarim 31:21]. What, then, is the meaning of the verse, 'They will wander around looking for the word of G-d but they will not find it' [Amos 8:12]? It will not be possible to find a clear halacha and a clear Mishna in one place." [Shabbat 138b]. There will be many disagreements and doubts, but the Torah as a whole will definitely not be forgotten.

Once again, after the terrible Holocaust sixty years ago, it seemed as if the Torah might be lost, G-d forbid. But the Almighty fulfilled His promise. More and more yeshivot were established in Eretz Yisrael, and the number of people who study and maintain the Torah increased. Messengers are now sent from Eretz Yisrael

to the Diaspora, to teach Torah and to establish new yeshivot there. "For Torah will emanate from Zion" [Yeshayahu 2:3]. In many places which were spiritual deserts, the circle of those who study and observe the mitzvot is steadily growing. This is the great hour of "Torah from Zion!" Let us hope and pray that we will all have the privilege to increase the study of Torah and to glorify it.

#### THE SALANT FOUNDATION

## Parsha Insights

by Rabbi Zvi Miller

**H**aShem instructed Moshe to ask Klal Yisrael to donate materials towards the assembling of the mishkan (Tabernacle). The implication of "donate" is that they were being asked to give voluntarily (i.e., only if they so desired) Moshe was not to take by force (i.e., command).

Taking into consideration all the miracles that G-d had performed for Klal Yisrael, as well as, the tremendous wealth they amassed at the Red Sea from the Egyptian booty—it is inconceivable that they would not want to participate in this great Mitzvah. Moreover, the giving was for their benefit—because it resulted in the Shechinah dwelling amongst them.

If so, why was this Mitzvah, as in contradistinction to all other Mitzvos, not expressed to them as a commandment? Why did the donation of materials for the Mishkan have to "come from the heart"—not as the result of a Divine injunction?

When G-d desired to dwell amongst Klal Yisrael His intention was absolutely pure. His only intention was to bestow the ultimate loving-kindness upon them—the revelation of the holy Shechinah—which would enliven their souls with the highest spiritual delights and deepest joy.

Just as G-d desired with absolute purity to dwell amongst Klal Yisrael— it was fitting—that Klal Yisrael reciprocated with an untainted desire to fulfill the Divine Will. Thus, HaShem granted us the opportunity 'to choose' to welcome the Divine Presence to dwell amongst us.

The radiant example of G-d's pure love inspired Klal Yisrael to elevate themselves beyond the ulterior motives which are typically mingled with human giving: They gave their donations with no intention other than their love of G-d.

We see that teaching by example, as G-d did, when He blessed them with the Shechinah—elevated the level of B'nai Yisrael. Correspondingly, the most effective way that we can influence others is by being an example of loving-kindness and compassion.

Implement: Inspire someone—through your example—to do a good deed. [Based on the Ohr Rashaz, of Rav Simchah Zissel, article 298]