

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

### Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA  
HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"A

*Summarized by Shaul Barth*

*Translated by Kaeren Fish*

“Let them make Me a Sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.” The Rishonim debate the purpose of the Mishkan. Rambam maintains that the Mishkan offers optimal closeness to G-d, and is a special place dedicated to His worship. Ramban, on the other hand, argues that the Mishkan is a continuing symbol of the revelation at Sinai and the acceptance of the Torah. In order to verify Ramban's approach, we must investigate whether the characteristics which lent the events at Sinai their unique nature, existed in the Mishkan and the Temple, too; this will clarify whether the Mishkan indeed symbolizes a return to that awesome experience at the foot of Mount Sinai.

When we examine the revelation at Mount Sinai, we see that its most significant feature is the attainment by Am Yisrael, at its finest hour, of the greatest possible measure of closeness to G-d. This closeness is characterized by two seemingly contradictory aspects, which in truth complement each other.

The Midrash (Shir Ha-shirim Rabba 6:3) recounts that, with each Commandment that issued from G-d, the souls of Israel departed, and were returned to them for the next Commandment. Clearly, when the midrash speaks of their souls "leaving them," it does not mean merely that they fainted. Rather, they experienced a desire for absolute cleaving to G-d a sense of such powerful yearning for closeness that each and every Jew was elevated to the extent that his or her soul could no longer exist within the body, and it departed:

"My soul departed as He spoke" (Shir Ha-shirim 5:6).

In contrast, the Gemara (Shabbat 88b) tells us that with each and every Commandment, Bnei Yisrael moved twelve mil backwards. Why, at their greatest moment, would Am Yisrael distance themselves to the very outskirts of the camp? This seemingly puzzling retreat is, in fact, an expression of the greatness of Am Yisrael at this most auspicious time. The feeling that led the nation, on the one hand, to come close to G-d and

to cleave to Him- a desire that, in its highest form, caused their souls to depart, so intense was their desire and love-was accompanied by an opposite yet complementary feeling: awe of G-d and His greatness, which moved them to distance themselves.

These two emotions-love and awe-characterize every person in the course of his or her coming close to G-d. When they prevail simultaneously, they are the best possible reflection and expression of the situation in which man, finite and mortal, encounters the immortal G-d Who "fills all worlds."

This feeling-which so typified the revelation at Sinai-was experienced again, in a somewhat diminished form, in the Mikdash, which was indeed intended to re-enact the experience of receiving the Torah. The Gemara (Yoma 54a) describes that the two poles on the sides of the Ark in the Holy of Holies protruded into the curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy, looking to the kohen standing in the Holy "like a woman's two breasts." This description, astounding in its power, tells us that when the Kohen Gadol approached the Holy of Holies for the most intimate possible encounter with G-d, he would feel such closeness to G-d that it could be described only by employing imagery from the love between husband and wife. On the other hand, when the Kohen Gadol entered the Holy of Holies, he proceeded in fear and trembling. These emotions, although opposites, accurately express a person's feelings as he or she draws close to G-d. Thus, as stated, they recall the experience of Sinai.

The Mishkan existed not only during the course of the Jews' wanderings in the desert, nor only in the form of the Temple in Jerusalem, but-in a certain sense-is meant to exist within each of us, as the poem says, "Bi-levavi Mishkan evneh," "In my heart I shall build a Sanctuary." Each one of us is meant, in the course of his inner service of G-d, to come close to G-d and cleave to Him. This attempt manifests itself, in each of us, in the form of these two emotions-awe and love. Each one of us must try to relive the experience of Sinai within himself and to hear the voice of G-d. On the other hand, we know that we are unable to do this; ultimately, we are forced to hide from G-d's glory and acknowledge the distance between ourselves and Him. "Let them make Me a Sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst"-within each and every person. [*This sicha was delivered on leil Shabbat parashat Teruma 5763 (2003).*]

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**RABBI DOV KRAMER**

## Taking a Closer Look

**P**arashas Terumah details G-d's commandment to Moshe regarding the building of the Mishkan.

When did this commandment take place? The midrashic sources (and the early commentators after them) indicate two distinct possibilities.

Shemos Rabbah (33:1) tells us that the reason G-d commanded us to build a "home" for His "Divine Presence" was because He had given us the Torah, and since G-d can't be separated from the Torah, He needed (as it were) to live near the Torah. This can be understood from the kabbalistic notion that "Israel (the nation), the Torah and the Holy One, blessed is He are really one," i.e. that the Torah reflects His essence, which we become attached to by attaching ourselves (through learning Torah and doing mitzvos) to the Torah. This can be seen in Avos (3:6) as well, as whenever anyone learns Torah, the Divine Presence rests on him. Once G-d gave us the Torah, it became necessary to command us to build a Mishkan for Him to "live" in.

If the purpose of the Mishkan was for G-d's presence to rest on the nation, it would follow that this commandment would be given during the first 40-day period that Moshe spent on Mt. Sinai. And this is the opinion of the Ba'aley Tosfos, the Ibn Ezra, the Ramban, and others.

However, other midrashim (e.g. Tanchuma, Terumah 8) tell us that the Mishkan served as a means for the nation to repent for the sin of the "golden calf," as "G-d said, 'let the gold [donated to] the Mishkan come and atone for the gold that [was donated towards] the making of the [golden] calf.'" Similarly,

numerous midrashim (e.g. Shemos Rabbah 51:4) say that the reason the Mishkan is called "the Mishkan of testimony" is because it testifies that G-d has forgiven us for the sin of the golden calf. "Moshe said, 'Master of the Universe, I am convinced that you have forgiven Israel, but proclaim to all the nations that You harbor no resentment towards them.' G-d said to him, 'on your life, I will cause My Divine Presence to rest amongst them, and they will recognize that I have forgiven them.'" Other parallels showing how the

Mishkan atoned for the golden calf are brought in other midrashim as well (e.g. Vayikra Rabbah 27:8).

If the Mishkan served as a means of repenting for the golden calf, and as proof that we were forgiven for it, the commandment to build it would seem to have come after the sin it is bringing forgiveness (or evidence of forgiveness) for. Some of these midrashim, as well as Rashi (Shemos 31:18), say explicitly that the commandment to Moshe came after they were forgiven, which was on Yom Kippur following the third set of 40-days that Moshe spent on Mt. Sinai.

The truth is, though, that these reasons for the Mishkan are not mutually exclusive. The purpose may have been primarily for G-d's presence to rest on Israel (who were now "Benai Torah"), and would therefore have needed a Mishkan even had there never been a golden calf. Nevertheless, after the sin, giving the gold for the Mishkan did also serve as a means of repentance, and the Divine Presence resting on the Mishkan was proof to all that they had been forgiven. As a matter of fact, some midrashim (e.g. Lekach Tov, at the beginning of Vayakhel, which lists many other ways that the Mishkan was a means of repenting for the golden calf) says explicitly that the commandment (to Moshe) to build it preceded the sin it was coming to atone for. The question therefore becomes why each opinion felt that the commandment came specifically during the first 40 days or specifically after they had already been forgiven.

The Mizrahi (and others) suggests that Rashi (and, by extension, the midrashim he is following) couldn't accept the possibility that the commandment was given before the forgiveness, because if it was commanded before the sin, Moshe would not have known that the forgiveness included building the Mishkan as originally intended. However, Moshe's request for forgiveness (see Shemos 14-16) included distinguishing between Israel and the other nations through G-d living with them. We have already quoted the midrash that Moshe asked for proof that there was full forgiveness, and that G-d's response was that the Mishkan was the proof. If so, Moshe would know that the original commandment to build the Mishkan was still valid.

The most obvious reason to say that the commandment happened earlier is that that's how it is written in the Torah! First the commandment to Moshe is taught (Parashos Terumah and Tetzaveh), then the sin of the golden calf (Parashas Ki Sisa), followed by the commandment being relayed to the nation and carried out (Parashos Vayakhel and Pekuday). In order to say that the commandment to Moshe really happened after Parashas Ki Sisa if it was written before it, we would need a good reason why the Torah would write them out of order.

There are midrashim (see also Rabbeinu Bachya on 25:6) that say that G-d wanted to put the "cure" (the Mishkan) before the "disease" (the sin),

which could mean that it was therefore written first even though it happened afterwards, or that it was commanded first even though it would not be relevant until afterwards. One could posit that these different opinions are dependent on what is meant by the "cure;" is it the telling over in the Torah or the actual commandment.

I would like to suggest a possible reason why G-d wanted to put the "cure" first here. Since the primary purpose of the Mishkan is to have G-d's Divine Presence live with the nation, if it were commanded (and/or written) after the sin, rather than being a reminder that G-d had forgiven us, it would be a reminder of the sin. The Mishkan was also a vehicle to attain atonement, and might be taken as a response to facilitate that atonement, rather than the atonement coming through a vehicle that would have been necessary anyway. The commandment had to be made, or at least taught, before the sin, so that it becomes a symbol of our relationship with the Creator, not a symbol that we had temporarily rejected Him.

The Ramban (et al) may be of the opinion that having written it first despite being commanded later is not enough (certainly not for those in the desert that wouldn't get this part of the Torah until the 40th year, when most had died) to make the Mishkan a symbol of our attachment to Him rather than of our (temporary) detachment.

Rashi (and the midrashic sources he relied on) may have felt that writing it earlier is enough to show that it would have been commanded even if they hadn't sinned. The actual commandment didn't come until later, but that was only because it wasn't relevant until later. Notice how the commandment (according to these sources) didn't occur until after complete forgiveness had been achieved. This didn't happen until Yom Kippur, the last day of those 40 days, right before Moshe came down; the commandment itself didn't need 40 days. Well, it was on that last day of the first 40 days that the golden calf was made! How could G-d have commanded Moshe to build the Mishkan if the nation had already started sinning? This may be why they say that the commandment itself didn't occur until after they were forgiven, even though it was written in the Torah as if it were before. © 2006 Rabbi D. Kramer

**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## Shabbat Shalom

**S**ince the Desert Sanctuary (Mishkan) was the "Mother of all Temples," and the Sacred Ark which housed the Tables of Stone was arguably the central feature of the Sanctuary, then the details of the construction and decorations of the Ark would certainly contain important lessons for us today. To this end, there are a number of questions concerning the Biblical command to erect the ark which beg to be asked.

Firstly, whereas the construction of every other aspect of the Sanctuary began with the verb, "You (Moses) shall make....," the ark's construction opens with the command, "they (plural) shall make....." (Ex. 25:10). Why? Secondly, the ark was made of acacia wood (atzei shittin) and was overlaid with gold; was not the repository of the Ten Commandments, the two tablets engraved by G-d Himself, worthy of being made completely of gold, like the menorah was? Why was the ark only gold-plated? (Ex 25:13). Thirdly, what was the significance of the two staves, or poles, which had to be constantly attached to the ark and could never be removed (25:13,15). Indeed, Rabbi Eliezer goes as far as to say that whoever would dare remove the staves would be liable to the penalty of whipping ordained by the Bible. (B.T. Yoma 82b) Were simple poles so important to the functioning of the Ark that removing them would be transgressing a Biblical command? And finally, the detailed description of the ark concludes with the two cherubs, each at either end of the ark cover, between whom "I shall meet with you there and I shall speak to you.... Everything that I shall command you with the children of Israel (Exodus 25:22). But since G-d had already commanded the laws of the Decalogue, why is this put in the future tense? And what is the symbolism of the cherubs?

Nachmanides (Ramban), in his introduction to our Biblical portion which deals with the Sanctuary, maintains that the Almighty commanded the construction of the Sanctuary following the Revelation at Sinai and the subsequent legal code of Mishpatim as a continuation of the ongoing Divine communication with His nation ; "it was from there, (between the cherubs overlooking and protecting the ark), that G-d would speak to Moses and command the children of Israel," (Ramban, adloc). Hence, the Ark was not merely the repository of the Divine word already given; it was rather the place from where the Divine message would continue to be given-even after the Sanctuary itself would cease to function and Moses himself would pass on to the next world.

That is why Moses records the Revelation at Sinai as having been given by means of "a great (Divine) voice which has never ceased" (Deuteronomy 5:19, see Targum there); that is why the Great Sanhedrin was situated in the Office of the Hewn Stone (or the office of the clear-cut Decisions) which was within the Holy Temple Precincts, the body of 71 Sages who interpreted, enacted and decreed laws for the Israelites in accordance with the exegetical and hermeneutic principles of our Oral Law with express Divine Sanction (Deut 17:8-11); and that's why our Responsa and Commentary literature continue to interpret and legislate new laws (a new semi Festival like Israeli Independence Day, for example) in accordance with the blessing we recite over Torah; we praise the G-d who "has chosen us from all the nations and has given us the Torah. Blessed art thou, O Lord,

Who gives (now, in every generation, through the Torah leaders of the generation) the Torah".

With this understanding, it becomes clear why Moses may have died, but we do not know his burial place: The Divine Torah he gave us still lives, G-d's word is not frozen or ossified, it continues to guide and direct every situation in every period. And from this perspective, all of our questions can be answered.

Firstly, G-d may command Moses personally to construct every part of the Sanctuary, but the Sacred ark-and the Divine Words within it-has to be erected by all future generations, by the religious leaders of every era, whose task it is to interpret, expand and apply the Divine Will to the novel inventions and experiences which continually emerge. Secondly, the ark is made of acacia wood and is plaited with gold; gold represents constant and eternal precious value-exactly as our laws and customs are all predicated on eternal values and ideals such as the unchanging Ten Commandments-and wood comes from a tree which is ever-growing, ever-changing, ever bearing new seeds and new fruits. These are like the "children" (toldot) who emerge from the "parents" (Avot), like the 39 "parent" prohibitions of physical creativity each of which births 39 "children" (toldot), or like the festival of Hanukkah and Israel Independence Day which our Rabbis enacted on the basis of the prophetic dictum that we praise G-d and celebrate our peoplehood whenever Israel is saved from death and destruction.

Thirdly, the staves must always remain part and parcel of the Ark as a constant reminder that the Torah of G-d must always be on the move: the Torah must be where the Israelites are, and the laws of the Torah must be able to deal with the exigencies and demands of a society on the move. Indeed, the very term halakhah means to progress, to step forward, to be timeless and timely at the same time. That is the message of the staves-the expression of the ark's portability-which may never be removed from the Ark.

And finally, the angelic cherubs-with faces like children and wings extending heavenwards-symbolize Jewish religious leadership of every generation through whom we continue to hear the ever-present and ever-relevant loving voice of the Divine. Of course, our Bible speaks in the future tense, -- when G-d will speak to us and will command us-because our Torah emerges from the past and legislates for the future, our Torah is masoret (tradition) and movement, masoret and modernity, at one and the same time. © 2006 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

**RABBI ZVI SOBOLOFSKY**

## TorahWeb

**T**he halachic concept of kedushas makom-geographic sanctity-is introduced in Parshas Terumah. The Mishkan, and later the Beis Hamikdash, was endowed with holiness. Chazal (Keilim

1:6-9) delineate distinctions within the geographical sanctity that permeated the Beis Hamikdash: The Kodesh Hakodoshim (Holy of Holies) was endowed with a greater degree of sanctity than the Heichal (Sanctuary), which in turn was holier than the courtyard. There were ten distinct levels of geographic holiness, the lowest level being Eretz Yisroel at large. Outside Eretz Yisroel, no geographic sanctity exists whatsoever.

In delineating the gradations of holiness the mishna emphasizes that there were practical differences that resulted from these distinctions. The Kodesh Hakodoshim was distinct in that no one except the kohein gadol on Yom Kippur could enter, in contrast to the Heichal where other kohanim could enter on a daily basis. The practical ramifications of levels of sanctity, are also seen in the realm of time. Shabbos is holier than Yom Tov and this is reflected by practical differences such as the permissibility of certain activities on Yom Tov that are prohibited on Shabbos.

The mishna highlights the halachic distinction between Eretz Yisroel and the rest of the world. The korbanos of the omer and the shte'i halechem of Shavuot can only be brought from grain that grew in Eretz Yisroel. Although this distinction is halachically accurate, it seems strange that Chazal singled it out-there are many other differences between Eretz Yisroel and chutz la'aretz such as the agricultural mitzvos of Terumah and shemittah. Why highlight the omer and shte'i halechem?

The sanctity of Eretz Yisroel is two-fold. Eretz Yisroel is endowed with kedushas karka-holiness which emanates from the ground and expresses itself through the mitzvos hateluyos ba'aretz-the agricultural mitzvos, but there is a second dimension of kedushas Eretz Yisroel. The Beis Hamikdash is holy because it houses the Divine presence though the kedushah has gradations. The closer to the center of the mikdash-the Kodesh Hakodoshim-the greater the degree of holiness. At what point does kedushas hamikdash end? The absolute outermost boundaries of the Beis Hamikdash are the borders of Eretz Yisroel.

The mishna that delineates the distinctions between Eretz Yisroel and chutz la'aretz is not focusing on the distinctions within agriculture. The ten distinctions of the mishna are the gradations within kedushas hamikdash. That Eretz Yisroel is part of the Beis Hamikdash is expressed in the requirement that the korban omer and shte'i halechem be brought specifically from Eretz Yisroel.

Besides the halachos of agriculture and korbanos that differentiate Eretz Yisroel from chutz la'aretz, there are other distinctions as well. Semicha-the transmission of tradition handed from teacher to student dating back to Moshe-can only be conferred in Eretz Yisroel. Similarly, the declaration of Rosh Chodesh can only occur in Eretz Yisroel. These two halachos point to a third dimension of Eretz Yisroel's uniqueness, its primacy as the place of Torah study.

Only there can the authentic chain of transmission be continued. The declaration of Rosh Chodesh, and the dependent determination of the yomim tovim<sup>א</sup>, can only be made by a beis din in Eretz Yisroel. Torah scholars of the highest level are given the authority to decide this matter which affects the entire Jewish people.

This third aspect of Eretz Yisroel, its place as the pinnacle of Talmud Torah, is closely linked to its unique role as being the outermost precinct of the Beis Hamikdash. The Ramban (Terumah) explains that a primary purpose of the mishkan was to enable the Har Sinai experience to remain alive for eternity. The luchos were at the center of the mishkan, and later the beis hamikdash. The mishkan, besides being a place for korbanos, was also the center of Torah. It is for this reason that the Sanhedrin sat in the Beis Hamikdash. If Eretz Yisroel is the outermost area of the Beis Hamikdash, it is also the outermost area blessed with this unique aspect of Torah. Har Sinai remains alive in the Beis Hamikdash and, by extension, throughout Eretz Yisroel. For the unique Torah experiences such as semicha and declaration of Rosh Chodesh, only a place which is a continuation of Har Sinai is acceptable. Eretz Yisroel, as the outermost precinct of the Beis Hamikdash, qualifies for these mitzvos as it does for the korbanos of the omer and shtei halechem.

Following the descriptions of ma'amad Har Sinai in Parshas Yisro and Mishpatim, we are given Parshas Terumah to keep the experiences alive. To visit the Beis Hamikdash is to revisit Har Sinai. To learn Torah in Eretz Yisroel is to enter the mikdash and reconnect to Har Sinai. © 2006 Rabbi Z. Sobolofsky & The TorahWeb Foundation

#### RABBI AVI WEISS

## Shabbat Forshpeis

**T**his week's portion talks about the first synagogue of all time—the mishkan. Because the chasm between the finite human being and the infinite G-d is great, the mishkan, was established so that there be a tangible place where people can feel more intensely, more powerfully, the presence of G-d. Synagogues have followed the model of the mishkan with this goal of spiritual connection in mind. The holiness of these places is contingent upon human input.

There is one exception to this rule. The Holy Temple, and for that matter all of Jerusalem, is endowed with a unique holiness that is called kedushat shehinah—the holiness of the indwelling, the holiness of G-d. While the holiness of most places emerges from human energy, the holiness of Jerusalem does not emerge from us, it comes from an external force—from G-d himself.

Maimonides concludes that just as G-d is above any boundary of time, so too the holiness that emerges from G-d is equally eternal. It follows, therefore, that Jerusalem's holiness is endless and

infinite. It is a holiness that lasts forever. (Rambam, Laws of the Temple 6:16)

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik points out that when we first entered Israel in the time of Joshua, Jerusalem was conquered last. The movement of liberating the land was from the periphery to the center. Hundreds of years passed by between the conquest of Jericho by Joshua, and the building of the Temple by Solomon. Precisely because Israel was conquered prior to Jerusalem, Israel remained holy for only as long as we were in control of the land. Once the land was conquered by the Babylonians, the holiness departed.

But, when we re-entered the land in the time of Ezra said Rav Soloveitchik, Jerusalem was settled first. It follows, therefore, that whatever lands were liberated afterwards, were imbued with the spirit of Jerusalem. Just as the holiness of Jerusalem is eternal, so too is the holiness of the whole land of Israel. No wonder Maimonides believes that even after the Roman conquest of Israel, the land retained its holiness.

The Temple Mount and Jerusalem are the soul of the Jewish people and the soul of the Jewish land. It is above and beyond any boundary of time, and reminds us of our proud past and of our hope and faith in a promising future.

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#### RABBI BEREL WEIN

## Wein Online

**T**his parsha deals with the act of giving away one's money. But it does not deal with what we commonly call charity. Charity is given to individuals in need of support, either individually or to organizations that represent them and their needs. The terumah that the Torah refers to in this parsha is a voluntary act as is charity but it is goods and services to be given for the construction of a national entity, the mishkan. Otherwise charitable people have a strong aversion to donating to such projects. For after all, why do we need it? And why does it have to be so fancy? Is not simplicity better than gold and silver and precious stones? And does not this project divert funds that could otherwise have been better spent to help needy people and other more worthwhile causes? And does G-d really need a structure in which to dwell, so to speak? All of these seemingly legitimate questions seem to mitigate the essential fulfillment of the core mitzvah that appears in this parsha. So what is with this mishkan and all of the donations and labor and time that it will require to build? This is a key underlying question that requires some sort of answer for any understanding of not only this parsha but of the next four parshiyot that conclude the book of Shemot as well.

The Torah pays a great deal of attention to externals. It is interested in personal dress and appearance and in communal structures as well. It is in favor of large and more central congregations of Jews praying together rather than in small private prayer services. It stresses every detail in the construction of the mishkan and later of the Temple in Jerusalem because it wants us to appreciate the importance of community, of togetherness, of numbers and of the awe of ceremony and holy grandeur. In order to reinforce this sense of community, the Torah asked everyone, according to one's abilities, wealth and talents to contribute to the building of the mishkan. This was done in order to encourage all Jews to feel that this building was their personal mishkan. Separating one's self from the larger community, smaller and smaller venues of prayer, accommodating G-d's service to one's particular taste, convenience and desires is in the long run destructive to both the individual and the community. The rabbis taught us the principle that in the multitude of the people gathering for prayer lies the honor of the King. The increasing tendency of the shtibelization of the Orthodox world costs our cause dearly. After the destruction of the Temple, the synagogue became the "miniature Temple" of Israel in all of the lands of our dispersion. If the "miniature Temple" is not seen and treated as a mishkan, a place of beauty and awe and a place of large gathering, then we are missing something very important in our communal lives. If we will build our mishkan correctly and magnificently, then we can hope for the fulfillment of G-d's promise to us that "I will, so to speak, dwell within them" collectively and individually. © 2006 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory](http://www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory).

### **RABBI DOVID SIEGEL**

## **Haftarah**

**T**his week's haftarah teaches us an important perspective about the Holy Temple and our synagogue. The haftarah 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 statues, 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. © 2006 Rabbi D. Siegel & torah.org

#### **MACHON ZOMET**

## **Shabbat B'Shabbato**

*by Rabbi Amnon Bazak*

**T**his week's Torah portion describes the design of the Tabernacle in three main categories. The first is the utensils, such as the Ark, the Table, and the Menorah (Shemot 25). Next is a description of the structure, including the tapestries and the beams (26). This is followed by a description of the external Altar (27) and, finally, the details of the courtyard are given at the end of the Torah portion. There is a significant difference between the way that the first three parts and the courtyard are described. In the beginning of the portion, the Almighty tells Moshe to make the Tabernacle and its utensils, "in the way that I show you the design of the Tabernacle and of the utensils, and this is what you shall do" [25:9]. As noted by the Rashbam, "the forms of all the utensils and the plan of the buildings were shown by the Almighty to Moshe." In fact, this is emphasized explicitly with respect to each section. At the end of the first section, after the utensils are described, it is written, "Look and make them in their form, which you were shown on the mountain" [25:40]. After the details of the tapestries and the beams, it is written, "Construct the Tabernacle, according to the way you were shown on the mountain" [26:30]. And at the end of the third section, after the description of the Altar, it is once again written, "As you were shown on the mountain, this is what they shall do" [27:8]. However, there is no such reference with respect to the courtyard. In fact, Moshe was never given a command to make this area the way it was shown to him at Sinai, since this was only noted at the beginning of the commands with respect to the Tabernacle and its utensils and not with respect to the courtyard.

There is in fact one passage that we did not discuss in the previous paragraph, that which describes the Parochet, the curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Tabernacle (26:31-37). This appears between the details of the structure of the Tabernacle-the tapestries and the beams-and the external Altar. At first glance, the Parochet should be considered part of the construction of the Tabernacle itself, but as noted above, the summary of the Tabernacle (26:30) appears before the details of the Parochet, which is thus not included. This seems to imply that the curtain is similar to the courtyard, and it

was not made according to a detailed plan shown to Moshe at Sinai. Why is the Parochet different from all the other items that make up the Tabernacle?

Evidently, this different approach stems from a remarkable difference between the Parochet and other elements of the construction. In the beginning of the Torah portion, G-d commands Moshe to turn to Bnei Yisrael, saying, "Let them make a contribution for me" [25:2]. The goal of the contribution is that "they will make a Tabernacle for me, and I will dwell among them" [25:8]. The Tabernacle is meant as a place of revelation of the Shechina, and therefore it is necessary to emphasize that everything connected to it was constructed in response to a detailed command by G-d, according to an explicit plan, without any human influence. The curtain, on the other hand, is the only item in the Tabernacle that is not meant for the Almighty. Rather, its purpose is that "the Parochet will make a separation for you between the Holy section and the Holy of Holies" [26:33]. Thus, the Parochet is unique in that it is meant for Bnei Yisrael, so that they will have proper borders between the different areas. Thus, even though the general plan was given to the people, the detailed construction was left to their own creativity.

### The Rods of the Ark

by Rabbi Elazar Aharonson, Head of the Hesder Yeshiva, Cholon

At the end of the command to build the Ark, Moshe is told to make rods out of acacia wood in order to carry it. At the end of the passage, it is written, "Let the rods remain in the rings of the Ark, they shall not be removed from it" [Shemot 25:15]. "They shall not be removed" means that the rods must remain attached to the Ark not only while it is being moved from place to place but also when the Tabernacle is stationary, so that the Ark will be ready to be moved at any time. However, Rashi adds one word which gives a new and different meaning to the command: "They shall not be removed- permanently." That is, even after the Ark was brought to the Temple, when there would no longer be any need to move it from place to place, the rods were left in place. Why must the rods remain in the Ark forever? After all, once the Ark reaches its position in the Temple, there is no longer any desire to move it. Just the opposite-"This is my resting place forever, here I will remain, for it is what I desire" [Tehillim 132:14]. What is the significance of the rods?

On reflection, we can ask the same question from a different angle. Why were the rods needed at all? Even in the time of the desert, the Ark "carried those who moved it" [Sottah 35a], and it certainly carried its own weight. There was no need at all for human hands to move it from place to place.

This second question can be used as a starting point for a very different way to understand the role of the rods. They were not meant to help the Ark in

movement but rather to give us, Bnei Yisrael, a point of contact and a link to the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark, which was placed in the Holy of Holies, completely hidden from view, between the two Keruvim, the place where the Almighty revealed Himself to Moshe, was an expression of the innermost point of the revelation of the Shechina in the world. On one hand, we are in general not permitted to approach this inner point of strength-only the High Priest is allowed to enter the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur, and only the children of Kehat are permitted to carry the Ark, after they have taken the precaution of covering it with a cloth, so that they "will not see the holy item, and die" [Bamidbar 4:20]. On the other hand, every Jewish soul is intimately linked to the Ark. This link is represented by the rods, which are permanently attached to the Ark, representing the deep link of the eternal covenant between the Almighty and Bnei Yisrael. For the moment, the link may be in a roundabout way, through mediation by the Kohanim and the Levites. But in the future, G-d promises, "I will pour my spirit over all flesh" [Yoel 3:1], and then the innermost point of the Ark will be revealed to all of Bnei Yisrael.

This is what was meant by Yehoshua when he gathered all of Bnei Yisrael and placed them in the limited space between the rods of the Ark (see Bereishit Rabba 5:7). He wanted to tell them that "G-d lives within you"-in the very soul of every individual in Bnei Yisrael.

### RABBI ZEV S. ITZKOWITZ

## A Byte of Torah

“**A**nd you shall make two golden cherubs, you shall make them of beaten work, at the two ends of the cover (of the ark).” (Exodus 25:18). What did the cherubs look like? They were winged creatures that each had the face of a child (Rashbam). What was the point of having something on top of the ark? The purpose of the cherubs was not for worship. Rather, Hashem manifested His Divine Presence from between the cherubs when He would speak to Moses (Sephoreno). In this sense, the ark cover symbolizes the Throne of Glory. In fact, in the vision of Ezekiel, cherubs are associated with the Throne of Glory (Ramban). We can think of it as follows: since the purpose of building the Tabernacle was so that Hashem would 'reside' among the Children of Israel, it stands to reason that there should be something in it to represent His Throne. This was the ark cover with the cherubs.

What does it mean to be "of beaten work"? The cherubs were not made separately and then attached to the cover of the ark; rather they were beaten out of the gold that would later gild the covering of the ark (Rashi).

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