

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

The design and construction of the Mishkan and its vessels are very complex. This is especially true of the menorah, which was so complicated that even Moshe didn't understand how to build it (see Bamidbar Rabbah 15:10). Rashi tells us (Shemos 25:40) that G-d showed him a menorah of fire to help him understand what the finished product should look like, but in the end G-d had to make it Himself (25:31) because Moshe still couldn't comprehend how to do it (see Sifsay Chachamim).

The Maharal asks why Rashi only mentions a menorah of fire being shown to Moshe, if the Talmud (Menachos 29a) says that an ark and table of fire were also shown to him. This is learned from the Torah saying (25:40) that G-d showed Moshe "them" ("betavnisam"), in plural form, i.e. more than one vessel. How can Rashi say it was just one vessel (the menorah) if the Torah says he showed multiple vessels to Moshe?

The Talmud actually brings 4 statements regarding Moshe having difficulty understanding the menorah, with the other 3 discussing only the menorah. Although the Maharsha explains how one of the other statements is not inconsistent with the notion that Moshe was shown multiple vessels of fire (as the angel Gavriel only had to explain the menorah further, but not the others), and the Maharal explains that G-d had to point (as it were) to the menorah (but not to the others) in order to try and explain it, the first of these statements (learned from the menorah being described as "pure" even though it is obvious that a vessel of metal can become "impure") can only refer to the menorah. This statement must be at odds with at least one (if not all) of the others, meaning that there are two opinions in the Talmud; one that Moshe was shown only a menorah of fire and the other that he was shown 3 things. Rashi could be following the opinion that there was only a menorah of fire, with the question of how to explain the plural "them" now also applying to this opinion in the Talmud. We may want to understand why Rashi followed this opinion, but it cannot be posed as a question as to how he could.

The context of the prior verses provides a simple answer to how it could be only one vessel of fire

shown to Moshe if the plural "them" was used. However, it will bring with it other questions on Rashi.

"And you shall make its naros" (referring to the 7 cup-like receptacles that were atop the menorah which held the oil and wicks-see Rashi), "and its malkachim and machtos of pure gold" (25:38, which Rashi explains to be the tongs used to remove the old wicks and put in the new ones and the small shovels used to remove the ash from the burnt wicks). "A kikar (a measurement) of pure gold shall you make it (the menorah) and all of these vessels" (25:39). As Rashi explains, the menorah and all of its vessels were made from this kikar, so the plural "them" can refer to the menorah and its vessels, all of which were shown to Moshe in order to help him understand how to make them.

The Ramban asks two questions on Rashi's approach. First of all, if these vessels were part of the "kikar," how could Moshe know how much of it to allocate to the tongs and the shovels and how much for the menorah itself? I must admit that I do not really understand this question, as this same issue applies to the decorative parts of the menorah as well. How could Moshe know how much gold should be allocated for each cup, or knob, or flower? Should it be a wide cup, or small cup? What was the circumference of each knob? How tall was each flower, and how wide were its leaves? This was probably part of what was so difficult to understand about the menorah (and perhaps what Gavriel tried to demonstrate). Moshe could probably comprehend how to make tongs and shovels; the reason why G-d would have to show "them" to him in fire was likely precisely to show him the size of each, i.e. how much material to allocate for each tong and for each shovel, just as he needed to be told how much should be used for each cup, knob and flower.

His second question is how Rashi can say that the "malkachim and machtos" were part of the "kikar," if the Talmud (Menachos 88b) says that they were not. There is a dispute between Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Nechemya whether the "naros" were part of the "kikar" (and therefore attached to the menorah) or separate, but both agree that the "malkachim and machtos" were not part of the "kikar." Even if the plain reading of the verse is that they all came from the "kikar" of pure gold, it is not likely that Rashi would ignore our traditions when explaining them.

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The Ramban then brings a Talmudic-era source that does say that the "malkachim and machtos" were part of the "kikar" (Beraisa deMelech haMishkan 9:1). However, as the Ramban points out, the contrast of utensils that were part of the "kikar" and those that weren't implies that the Beraisa understood "malkachim and machtos" not as tongs and shovels, but as things that were attached to the menorah itself. (He explains "malkachim" as lids for the "naros" and "machtos" as small bowls under the "naros" to catch any falling sparks.) It follows that these attached pieces would be part of the "kikar," consistent with the Ramban's assertion that nothing that was separate could come from it, and consistent with the simple reading of the verse that the "malkachim and machtos" came from the "kikar" (and part of the "them" in the next verse). Nevertheless, because the Beraisa seems to say that the tongs (and possibly the shovels) were not part of the "kikar," it is unlikely for Rashi to have relied on it.

Some (e.g. the Mizrahi) suggest that Rashi does not really mean all of the menorah's vessels came from the "kikar," but only its "naros" (like Rabbi Yehuda in the Talmud). This would allow the "them" to refer to "the menorah and its naros," but still seems unlikely to be Rashi's intent, for several reasons. First of all, if Rashi really meant that, why didn't he just explain it that way? Why leave things ambiguous when he could just as easily have said that the "kikar" was comprised of "it and its naros" rather than "it and all of its vessels? Secondly, saying "all" of its vessels (not just in the Torah, but Rashi as well) should mean "all of them," not "some but not others." If Rashi only meant the "naros," he is being more than just ambiguous, but misleading. Finally, Rashi says explicitly (35:14) that the word "kaylim" refers to the "malkachim and machtos" (whereby "all the kaylim" in our verse would refer to the "naros, malkachim and machtos"). It therefore seems much more likely that Rashi is giving the simple, straightforward explanation of the verse. All we are missing is a Talmudic-era source that indicates that the tongs and shovels came from the "kikar" even though they are not attached to it.

"I would only know that the menorah (had to be from one piece, and not from multiple pieces attached together afterwards), how do we know that its cups,

knobs and flowers also (must come from the same piece)? The Torah says (25:36) 'one piece.' Perhaps even its naros, malkachim and machtos should be as well? The Torah says (25:39) 'from a kikar of pure gold shall you make it (the menorah) and all of these vessels;' they (the naros, malkachim and machtos, which are 'these vessels') are from the kikar and from the gold, but they are not built as one piece (as part of the menorah)." This is how the Vilna Gaon's version of the Sifray (Beha'alochea 61) reads. Not only are the "malkachim and machtos" part of the "kikar" despite being detached, even the "naros" were not shaped from the same piece as the menorah. And, in fact, Rashi himself (Divray Hayamim II 4:20) indicates that the "naros" were detached from the menorah.

It's true that Rashi does not explain our verses in a way that's consistent with the Talmud. Instead, Rashi uses midrashic sources to explain them in the most straightforward manner. Moshe was unable to comprehend how to make the menorah, including how much of the "kikar" of gold to allocate for each section or vessel (25:39), so G-d showed him "all of them" made out of fire (25:40). When that still didn't work, G-d told him to throw the whole "kikar" into a furnace so that it would form itself (25:31). © 2007 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

All biblical commentators have puzzled for ages over the main topic of this week's parsha—the mishkan/tabernacle and its construction. Why does G-d need a building, so to speak, to dwell in? Why all of the details in the Torah regarding this essentially temporary building and its artifacts? And why does the Torah, which in so many other instances is so concise and chary about words, devote entire long chapters to the details of the mishkan/tabernacle? Many different theories regarding these difficulties have been proposed.

We all know that it is from the description of the "work" that went into the construction of the mishkan/tabernacle that the definitions of the thirty-nine main categories of "work" on Shabat are derived and therefore the Torah had to go into such detail. Yet the question begs itself as to why the Torah did not state these thirty-nine types of "work" directly when it described the institution of the Shabat to us.

The masters of kabala read into the descriptions of the mishkan/tabernacle great hidden secrets and explanations of our universe and its untold mysteries and wonders. They even saw in this detailed description a revelation of the "real" world of Heaven and what that spiritual realm looks like. But the Torah, though containing seventy different faces—and with mysticism certainly one of those faces, it primarily possesses a simple, declarative aspect to it. And it is

that face that is most difficult to understand and to deal with regarding the mishkan/tabernacle.

I have never found any easy answers to the above questions. They are apparently part of the mysteries of Torah itself, part of the holiness that is beyond our rational understanding and appreciation. But, certainly, there are lessons- important life lessons that can be learned from the Torah's emphasis on the description of the mishkan/tabernacle.

One lesson in life is that the devil is in the details. Everyone agrees that to build a holy sanctuary is a noble and necessary task for humans to undertake. But, the details of how to go about doing it and what it is supposed to look like when built are always fraught with disagreement and sometimes even disillusion. The Torah, therefore, gave us a specific outline as to how it should be built and how it should appear. The Torah, through its mitzvot and values, does the same for our daily physical and spiritual lives-our very existence.

A second lesson is that humans build the house of G-d, so to speak, and not G-d Himself. G-d may not need the mishkan/tabernacle but humans do need such a place in a tangible, real form. Our earthly nature demands such a physical presence. This is especially true regarding Judaism, which allows for no physical representation of G-d in any way. Our construction of the mishkan/tabernacle is our way of attempting, so to speak, to reach G-d and connect with the ineffable and eternal. In dealing with the mishkan/tabernacle, we are really dealing with our own immortality and innate connection to the Creator. © 2007 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. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory.

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik of blessed memory, points out that prayer and prophecy are two sides of the same coin. While both involve dialogue between the human being and G-d, there is one major difference: In prophecy G-d initiates the dialogue, while in prayer, the human being is the initiator. But how can the limited and finite person interface with the unlimited, infinite G-d when the distance is so great? Furthermore, how can one initiate contact when the chasm is so vast?

The mishkan (tabernacle), constructed by the Jews at G-d's behest in the desert, plays a crucial role in addressing this very issue. Clearly G-d does not command that the tabernacle be built for Himself. G-d is everywhere and His Being fills the entire world, therefore a specific dwelling is no use for him. No wonder the text in our parsha states: "And they shall build for Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them

(betokham)," (Exodus 25:8) rather than saying "that I may dwell in it (betokho)." Betokho would imply the mishkan can actually contain G-d.

The formulation of the text stresses that, through the mishkan, people would be able to more profoundly feel the presence of G-d. From this perspective the mishkan was not built for G-d but for am Yisrael. The mishkan offers us the potential to bridge the tremendous abyss between the human being, and G-d.

This makes the character of the mishkan very dependent. Rather than being intrinsically holy, its sanctity very much hinges upon how holy the people make it. A clear example of this is found in Shmuel Alef, the first book of Samuel (4:1-11). After suffering a harsh defeat at the hands of the Philistines, the Jews conclude that the absence of the Ark was what led to this tragic result. They therefore decided to bring the Ark from Shiloh for surely in its presence they would be saved and succeed. However, even with the Ark, the result was the same.

The thinking of the Jews was that the Ark was G-d and with G-d present they could not be defeated. Their mistake was that the Ark was not G-d, it was rather the symbol of G-d. The symbol is dependent on one thing, the devotion of the people to G-d.

This is also the case with the everyday contemporary mishkan-the synagogue itself. If void of spiritual meaning, the synagogue becomes an empty shell, bricks without soul. Our challenge is to lift our houses of worship to the full potential of their spiritual heights to become a place where everyone is embraced-a place of study and transcendence where we reach beyond ourselves to touch the Divine in the hope that G-d will dwell betokheinu, among all of us. © 2007 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

RABBI ADAM LIEBERMAN

A Life Lesson

While in the desert, G-d gave instructions on how to build the first sanctuary. It was to be a portable tabernacle. G-d wanted all the Jewish people to play a role in the process by making donations to aid in its construction.

G-d told Moses that the people who should give are those: "...from every man whose heart motivates him..." (Exodus 25:2)

G-d wanted people whose "heart" motivated them to give. Why should it be someone's heart that motivates them and not their brain? The answer can be found in understanding what the internal "mechanism" is that motivates someone to do anything-especially an act of kindness or good deed for someone else.

When someone wants to give, the first thing that happened was their heart- or soul-became aware of something and was inspired to give to it. But just when we're about to take any sort of action, we hear a voice that attempts to reign in our behavior. It's the brain. While the heart and soul are emotionally based and only want to give, our brain, on the other hand, operates strictly on logic. And any time the heart wants to give, the brain will instantly filter the request to see if the idea makes sense from a logical standpoint.

And this where trouble starts to brew. The brain-having access to literally billions of pieces of data from your life experiences-will analyze the suggested act of kindness and decide if it's really in your best interest. There's no "heart" in the brain, just logic. While the brain knows that your heart wants and needs to give, it must look out for you in other ways and sees things only through logical glasses. This creates a significant internal conflict because in an effort for your overall protection, the brain will try to stop the heart from being a constant giver.

For example, let's say that you're rushing for an important meeting and you see an old lady who's having trouble crossing the street. Since our initial reaction is always based upon emotion, you'll instantaneously "think" with your heart and have a strong urge to stop and help the elderly lady. But then your brain instantaneously counters this decision and reasons that it will cause you to be late for your meeting and lose a huge business deal. In a matter of micro-seconds, your brain furthers reasons that if you don't stop to help this lady and you're able to make your meeting on time, then the money you'll make from the business deal can help society much more as a whole than just helping this old lady.

At this point, your heart counters that this lady needs your help now and you should stop and help her and that no one will hold it against you if you're just a couple of minutes late for your meeting. An intense three second internal battle ensues and while sometimes the heart is the victor, quite often it's your brain that wins out and the opportunity to help this lady is lost forever. And as you continue to race towards your meeting, your brain-in an effort to erase any lingering guilt you might have-will continue to give you more and more reasons to justify its earlier decision.

G-d "wired" us and He knows exactly how our decisions are made. So when G-d said that all gifts should come from every man whose heart motivates him, G-d wanted to ensure that the brain wasn't going to block the heart's true desire to give. G-d didn't want anyone's brain to convince him that helping to build the tabernacle was a bad idea.

If G-d knew that the Jewish people's brains could reason that they shouldn't give to one of the most important and crucial causes in history, then clearly our brain can talk us out of most any cause or situation we

want to give to. In this instance, G-d wanted the Jewish people to bypass the brain and listen to heart.

And that's the lesson for all of us. Sometimes the best way to win a battle is never to fight it to begin with. © 2007 Rabbi A. Lieberman and aish.org

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA
GUEST SICH OF HARAV YITZCHAK LEVI SHLIT" A

Adapted by Shaul Barth

Translated by Kaeren Fish

The Rishonim debate when the Divine command to build the Mishkan was given. Rashi, invoking the principle that "the Torah does not follow chronological order," maintains that the command was given after the sin of the golden calf. Ramban, who disagrees with this exegetical approach, insists that it was given exactly where it appears-i.e., prior to the sin of the golden calf. While these two approaches would appear, at first glance, to be simply a matter of exegetical interpretation, in this shiur we shall examine the spiritual messages underlying each position.

As we know, Sefer Shemot is divided into three sections: the Exodus from Egypt, the journeying of Bnei Yisrael in the wilderness, and finally- starting with our parasha-the building of the Mishkan. The parashot from here until the end of Sefer Shemot are arranged as follows: Teruma-Tetzaveh-G-d's command to Moshe to build the Mishkan; Ki Tisa-the sin of the golden calf; Vayakhel-Pekudei-Moshe's command to the nation concerning the building of the Mishkan.

Moshe ascends Mount Sinai three times, each time for a period of forty days. The first time, he ascends in order to receive the first set of tablets. The second time, he ascends in order to appease G-d following the sin of the golden calf. The third time, he receives the second set of tablets. According to Rashi's explanation, the command to Moshe concerning the building of the Mishkan, recounted in our parasha, is a reaction to the sin of the golden calf; it is conveyed to Moshe during his second ascent, in parashat Ki Tisa. According to this understanding, then, Moshe ascended Mount Sinai in order to receive the first tablets and the commandments in parashat Mishpatim; then Bnei Yisrael sinned in worshipping the calf and Moshe broke the tablets; Moshe then ascended the mountain to plead with G-d and there he received the command to build the Mishkan; then he descended and commanded Am Yisrael to build the Mishkan, as he had been commanded while atop the mountain.

According to Ramban, on the other hand, the command concerning the building of the Mishkan was given at the place where it appears in the Torah- during Moshe's first ascent, in parashat Teruma. According to this view, Moshe ascended the mountain in order to receive the first set of tablets, and commandments in

parashat Mishpatim, and the command to build the Mishkan. Then Bnei Yisrael sinned in worshipping the calf and Moshe broke the tablets, following which he went back up the mountain to pray to G-d on behalf of the nation, and then descended and commanded Bnei Yisrael with regard to the Mishkan.

Thus far, the debate does indeed seem to be a purely exegetical question. But we must ask ourselves what causes Rashi to insist that the order of events differs from the chronological order of the parashot. At first glance, the advantage of Rashi's view would seem to concern the selection of the Leviim. We learn of their selection only in parashat Vayakhel-Pekudei, and according to Rashi this special choice was made only after the sin of the golden calf, i.e., their selection to perform the Divine service was not G-d's ideal first choice. According to Ramban's view, the Leviim had been chosen by G-d to serve in the Mikdash from the outset. Although this detail seems to make little difference, it is decisive in molding two completely different views of Am Yisrael and of what changed in the wake of the golden calf.

According to Rashi, originally all of Bnei Yisrael were meant to have been G-d's servants and to enjoy the splendor of His Presence: literally a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation." However, after the sin of the golden calf it became apparent that Am Yisrael was not ready for such intimate proximity to G-d at all times. Therefore, G-d's encounter with Am Yisrael became limited to one tribe; only they could enter the Mikdash in order to serve G-d directly. In Ramban's view, G-d never meant to reveal His full splendor to all of Am Yisrael. The choice of the kohanim was one that G-d desired even prior to the sin of the golden calf. In other words, from the outset G-d had intended to reveal Himself to Am Yisrael through nature and through hidden miracles, while only the kohanim would encounter Him directly in the Temple.

We may express this disparity in terms of the difference between chapter 1 and chapter 2 of Bereishit. Chapter 1 describes the creation of man where G-d has no revealed contact with him; man is the ruler, the conqueror, and does not encounter G-d directly. In chapter 2, however, G-d directly commands man to tend the garden, and man subsequently hears "the voice of G-d walking about in the garden in the breeze of the day." In a situation of such closeness, it is clear that Adam must be banished from the Garden of Eden following his sin. When man is close to G-d and he sins, he is banished to a world- our material world- in which the encounter with G-d is not so clear and easy.

Rashi understands the order of the parashot as following chapter 2 of Bereishit. Creation was meant to be close to G-d at all times, and as a result of sin, the world fell into a situation in which the encounter with G-d is conducted via nature, in a manner that is not open and obvious. Ramban, in contrast, understands

the order of the parashot as reflecting chapter 1 of Bereishit, whereby G-d never had any intention of revealing Himself in His cloud of glory on a constant basis.

From the above, we learn that when there is a debate among commentators concerning the order of texts, even though the issue seems to be simply a matter of exegesis, we must try to understand the philosophical root that gives rise to the various opinions, and for what reason some Rishonim understand Biblical chronology differently than what the literal text would suggest. (This shiur was given on Shabbat Parashat Teruma 5763 [2003].)

RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND

Rav Frand

Transcribed by David Twersky

Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman

The Torah's narration of the construction of the Menorah includes: "You shall make a Menorah of pure gold, beaten out, shall the Menorah be made (tei-a-seh haMenora), its base, its branch, its goblets, its knobs, and its flowers shall be hammered from it." [Shmos 25:31]. Rashi comments on the passive conjugation (niph'al) of the word "tei-a-seh". By other Mishkan utensils, the Torah uses the more expected conjugation "t-a-she" (you shall make). Why in the case of the Menorah does the Torah use the passive form, "tei-a-seh"?

Rashi says this teaches that the Menorah was made "by itself" (i.e. - not by human hand). Moshe had difficulty envisioning exactly how it was to be constructed. Therefore, Hashem instructed him to throw the block of gold into the fire and the Menorah would emerge miraculously by itself.

Several pasukim [verses] later, at the conclusion of the instructions regarding the Menorah the pasuk [verse] says: "See, and construct, according to their form that you are shown on the mountain." [Shmos 25:40] Rashi comments: "Moshe was perplexed by the construction of the Menorah until the Holy One, Blessed is He, showed him a Menorah of fire."

These two Rashis seem to contradict one another. What in fact happened? How was the Menorah made? Did Moshe see it, get the blueprint and make it himself, as the latter Rashi says- or did it miraculously emerge from the fire by itself? Was it "ta'a-seh" or was it "tei-a-seh"?

The Sefas Emes resolves the apparent contradiction. Both teachings are correct. Moshe Rabbeinu could not figure out how to make the Menorah. The Ribono shel Olam said to him "This is what it looks like. Here is the diagram. Go do it." (Shmos 25:40), However, after Moshe tried to construct the Menorah from the diagram, he returned to the Almighty and said: "I can't do it." At that point Hashem

said, "Okay, fine. Take the gold, throw it in the fire, and out will come the Menorah."

But that raises the question, why didn't Hashem just help Moshe complete the task the first time? When He saw that Moshe Rabbeinu was having difficulty with the concept of how to construct the Menorah, why didn't HaShem immediately have him throw the gold in the fire? Why did HaShem frustrate him further going through a process that proved in the end to be futile?

The Sefas Emes explains that this is the paradigm for spirituality and acquisition of all Torah knowledge. Torah and ruchniyus [spirituality] is all about the process of acquisition. The process of trying at first and perhaps not succeeding is an essential part of the end result of acquiring Torah and ruchniyus. Success-when it comes at the end- is always "miraculous".

The Menorah is the symbol of Torah. Sometimes it seems overwhelming. How does a person master it? A person has no idea how he will ever accomplish what he has set out to accomplish. The answer is that we must try to put it all together. After we make the effort, the end result often "emerges by itself". About this it is stated: "If you make the effort and achieve, believe it!" After working, and sweating, and making the maximum effort then what comes is a "find" (metziah).

Regarding Torah learning and matters of the spirit, we first need to engage in the "ta-a-seh". We need to make the effort. After showing sincere effort, as Moshe did with the Menorah, it will be achieved, as it were, via a "tei-a-seh" process.

If a person fails to make the effort, there will never be an end result- miraculous or otherwise.

I believe I once heard the following parable from Rav Gifter. A King promised great reward to anyone who would climb a ladder and reach the top of a certain tower. The problem was that the ladder was at a 90 degree angle, and the top of the ladder was still several feet away from the top floor to which the climber had to ascend. There was no way that a person could climb the ladder, get to the top rung and then get up to the floor at the top of the tower.

The King insisted that people wear a certain helmet while climbing the ladder. The climb was difficult. People would get a third of the way up the ladder, half way up, look up and ask themselves "What am I doing even trying? It is hopeless." One after another, they would give up trying.

One determined fellow decided that he was going to give it a shot. He climbed higher and higher and higher. He sweated and toiled endlessly until he got to the top rung of the ladder. When he got there, he realized why everyone had to wear the helmet. The top of the helmet was magnetized. On the top floor was a powerful magnet. As soon as he reached the top rung,

the magnet pulled him up "magically" the rest of the way. © 2006 Rabbi Y. Frand & torah.org

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

With respect to the "Keruvim" which were on the "Kaporet" covering the Ark, it is written in this week's Torah portion, "Each one faced the other, the Keruvim faced the Kaporet" [Shemot 25:20]. The meaning of this somewhat paradoxical statement is that the Keruvim faced each other while they also looked down, towards the cover of the Ark, "like a man who bows his head" [Ibn Ezra, short commentary]. As opposed to this, in the description of the Keruvim in the Temple, it is written "they stood on their feet, facing towards the Temple" [Divrei Hayamim II 3:13]. Why are the two descriptions different? The sages suggested two possibilities, comparing the Tabernacle to the Temple (Bava Batra 99a). According to one opinion, the Keruvim were miraculously able to turn, and when Yisrael fulfilled the word of G-d the Keruvim turned towards each other, but when Yisrael did not fulfill the word of G-d the turned towards the Temple. The second opinion is that they turned partially, "like a student who is leaving his mentor." Rashbam adds, "They turned partly towards the Temple and partly towards each other, like a person talking to his friend who turns his head slightly to one side."

In Divrei Hayamim RADAK provides a simple explanation? that there was a difference between the Keruvim in the Tabernacle and those in the Temple. This would seem to be naturally linked to another significant difference between the two descriptions of the Keruvim. In the Tabernacle, the Keruvim are on the Kaporet, they are part of the cover of the Ark, and they are therefore listed among the utensils of the Tabernacle. With respect to the Temple, on the other hand, the Keruvim are not listed among the holy utensils (Chapter 7 of Melachim I). Rather, they are part of the description of the structure of the Temple (Chapter 6). "And in the holy area he made two Keruvim... And he placed the Keruvim within the innermost room of the house, and their wings were stretched out, so that the tip of the wings of one of them touched the wall, while the tips of wings of the second one touched the other wall." [Melachim I 6:23-27]. This shows that there was a substantial difference between the Tabernacle and the Temple. In the Tabernacle, the Shechina appeared over the Ark, no matter where it was located at any specific moment. The Tabernacle moved from place to place, and therefore what was important was the fact that the Shechina appeared over the Ark. "And I will meet you there, and I will speak with you from over the Kaporet, from between the two Keruvim that are on the Ark of Testimony" [Shemot 25:22]. The Temple, on the other hand, is at "the site

which your G-d will choose for the dwelling place of His name" [Devarim 12:11]. Thus, the site of the revelation of the Shechina is not linked specifically to the Ark or to its geographic location. In the Tabernacle, the revelation was linked to the Keruvim, but in the Temple the Keruvim were part of the structure of the whole building and not just part of the Ark.

This explains the changes in direction that the Keruvim faced. In the Tabernacle, the Keruvim faced the Kaporet, that is, they looked downwards, towards the Ark and the tablets within. Their position served as the basis of the Ark's testimony, since it is the source of the inspiration of the Shechina. In the Temple, where the entire edifice was the source for the inspiration, the Keruvim continued to turn towards the basis of the revelation, but in this case the important place was the Temple itself, and therefore, they faced "towards the Temple."

DR. AVIGDOR BONCHEK

What's Bothering Rashi

This week's parsha discusses the Mishkan-the portable House of G-d- which traveled with the wandering Israelites in the wilderness and in the Land of Canaan until the Temple was built by King Solomon in Jerusalem, 480 years after the Exodus from Egypt.

The first vessel discussed is the central vessel of the Sanctuary, the Holy Ark, which contained the Tablets of the Covenant. This Ark was unusual in several respects. Let us look at one Rashi-comment and then examine further aspects of this unique vessel. The Torah's discussion of the Ark is different from other Tabernacle vessels, in several ways. First, it was described first, because of its central importance. Second, it is the only one commanded in the plural "And they shall make an Ark..." (Exodus 25:10). Third, it has the longest description of all the vessels. And most important-it was from there that G-d's voice was heard, from between the Cherubim which were on the cover of the Ark. It also had poles by which it was carried. While the Table and the two altars (inner and outer) also had poles, only the Ark had poles that were never to be removed from their rings.

"In the rings of the Ark must the poles be. They must not be removed from them." (Exodus 25:15)

"They must not be removed from them"-RASHI: "Forever."

How does Rashi know this? Maybe they may be removed when the Ark is not being transported, like the Table and the two altars.

Why does he make this comment?

An Answer: The poles, ostensibly, were for transporting the Ark. Thus, when they would travel, they would certainly put the poles in the rings to enable them to carry it. Why, then, Rashi wonders, the need for the extra words "They should not be removed"?

An Answer: Simply. The extra words tell us they may not be removed ever, even when it was stationary. This is a separate mitzvah-never to remove these poles from their rings.

But we would ask: Why not? What is special here?

An Answer: This separate command is given us for the Ark only, probably so that no mistake will ever be made regarding transporting it-the Ark must always be borne by people, not by a wagon or an animal. If the poles were ever absent, by mistake, they might move it without them.

Let us look a bit closer at the Ark, the poles and the Cherubim and their symbolism.

The Ark's cover of pure gold had shaped from it two Cherubim, childlike images. This, itself, is quite strange. The Ark contained the Ten Commandments and one of the commandments is not to have any graven images. And right on top of these Commandments we are told to have two large graven images of the Cherubim!

I would say that this teaches us that there is nothing good or bad but G-d's command makes it so. If Hashem decides that Cherubim-graven images, though they be-are in (the Holy of Holies) then they are in, but only there. The post modern, relativist position is that there is no right or wrong, except what man and his particular culture agree upon. The Torah view is that there is no right or wrong, except what G-d decides on. This symbolism may be the message here.

Let us point out another law regarding the Ark, its cover and its transporting rules. The Rambam in his Code (Vessels of the Sanctuary Ch. 2, 11-12):

When the Ark is transported from place to place, it is not to be transported on an animal or wagons; rather, it is a mitzvah to carry it on the shoulders. And because King David had it carried on wagons, a tragedy was brought on Uza. But it must be carried on the shoulder, as it says (Bamidbar 7:9) "on the shoulder it must be carried."

When it is carried on the shoulders (by two men) they walk facing each other with their backs facing outward.

We must note that the Cherubim, which were situated on top of the Ark, were also facing each other (see 25:20).

Now the picture becomes clearer. Humans-Israelites-are to bear the Ark from below, while angelic figures cover it from above. Below is man's task- to bear the mitzvos (as symbolized by the Ark). Above the Ark is the connection to the One above, the angels. We, who bear the Ark, are to take our lead from the Heavenly symbols above-we are to face each other as they do. Just as the Spiritual figures face each other in a gesture of cooperation-so are we Israelites to keep Hashem's covenant by facing each other in cooperation.

This may be the meaning of the phrase, "He Who makes peace in His heavens, may He make with us and all of Israel."

We see why the Ark was so central to the Mishkan and so symbolic. We see also why this was where G-d chose to speak to His people-from between the two Cherubim. © 2007 Dr. A. Bonchek & aish.com

RABBI BARUCH LEFF

Kol Yaakov

It happens every year. Every time we open up the Torah to read Exodus, it glaringly stares us in the face. We ask ourselves: What in the world did G-d have in mind when writing all the intricacies and minutia of the building of the Tabernacle, the Mishkan?

This section seems much more appropriate for a class in architecture rather than a Book of G-d's Instructions for Living! What are we to make of this portion of the Torah and how can we grow from it?

Let us first ask another question. In the beginning of Parshat Trumah (Exodus 25:1-7), G-d tells Moshe to collect donations from all Jews for the building materials of the Mishkan. He mentions the specific materials that they should bring such as gold, silver, copper, and turquoise wool. Why must they bring specific materials? Why isn't it enough to donate money and the Tabernacle Building Fund would go buy the materials? Why the emphasis on set items that needed to be donated as opposed to simple money?

The answer teaches us something fundamental about G-d's Mishkan. The Tabernacle was to be the combination of the efforts of all Jews. Each possession that we own is part and parcel of who we are. G-d wanted us to contribute our essence to the Mishkan, which is present in our possessions. (See "You Are What You Own").

In each bar of gold that I donate, in every piece of fabric that I give, there is a piece of who I am. I invested part of my life and energies to acquire this belonging and it is in many ways a representation of my inner being.

We all have experienced this concept through desiring to possess an athlete's jersey or baseball bat, or a celebrity's pen. Many of us love to hold on to our deceased grandparents' old books or furniture and the like, because we somehow feel that as we hang on to their possessions, we are holding on to them.

Similarly, G-d lists all the various ways in which the possessions that the Jews donated were used. Every single nuance, every architectural instruction is mentioned. G-d wants to show us how He fashioned our possessions to form one collective whole structure that manifests all Jews and their substantive qualities together.

This theme explains why the Torah spends so many verses describing the Tabernacle's construction.

Haven't we all had something we owned that we were so enamored with that we knew it so well? Some of us may have had a car that we could describe in lengthy detail down to its tail pipe. Others may have a home that they bought or are building that is so state-of-the-art they fell in love with it. They can describe every nook and cranny of the house. G-d feels similarly about His Mishkan. After all, it is His Home in the world. It is where He rests His Divine Presence amongst His special nation. It is no wonder that He is fascinated with every detail of the Tabernacle's construction and wants us to be as well.

But most of all, G-d is 'obsessed' with the Tabernacle's building and architecture because He sees in it a collective soul of the Jewish People, through the material they donated from their personal acquisitions.

This idea perhaps explains a puzzling passage in Yechezkel (43:10-11): "Tell the House of Israel about the House (of G-d, i.e. the Temple) and let them be ashamed of their sins-let them calculate the design. If they become ashamed at all that they have done, then make known to them the form of the House (Temple) and its design, its exits and entrances, and all of its structures." How does the form and structure of the Temple connect to being ashamed of sins?

If we remind ourselves why G-d is so concerned with the details and minutia of the Tabernacle and Temple, then we will be thoroughly embarrassed of our iniquities. The Tabernacle and its construction is a living testimonial to G-d's love for us and our essence (which is present in our possessions) that became the building material of the Mishkan. If we contemplated G-d's enormous love and concern for us, would it be possible to rebel and sin against Him? We would only feel ashamed of our transgressions.

What are we obsessed with? What drives us to know its minutia? Is it the batting averages and statistics of our favorite baseball players and athletes? Or is it something more spiritual and meaningful? What kind of minutia should we be obsessed with?

While reading Parshat Trumah, let's allow its minutia to transform our value system in making us more spiritually detailed. © 2007 Rabbi B. Leff & aish.com

