

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

As we conclude Sefer Shemos and the series of parashiyos that describe the building of the Mishkan, I would like to discuss one more aspect of the Mishkan's covering, its clasps, and the Paroches that separated the Kodesh (where the Menorah, Incense Altar and Table were) and the Kodesh Hakadashim (where the Holy Ark was).

The Paroches was situated below the clasps that connected the two parts of the Mishkan's covering (26:33). It was 10 cubits tall (see Rashi on 26:31), the same height as the interior of the Mishkan (see Rashi on 26:16), meaning it reached the ceiling. However, the Talmud (99a) is among the numerous sources that tell us that "the clasps gave the appearance of the stars in the sky." But how could the clasps be visible in order to give such an appearance if they were directly over the "paroches," which went all the way up to the ceiling?

Last week (www.aishdas.org/ta/5768/vayakhel.pdf) I discussed several possible ways to explain how Rashi and the Beraisa d'Mem Tes Midos could be of the opinion that the clasps were actually one cubit east of the Kodesh Hakadashim since the Paroches, which was on its western edge, was Biblically mandated to be below the clasps. One of the suggestions I made was to diminish the distance by taking into account the thickness of the Paroches itself and the means by which it was attached to the pillars that supported it, as well as the thickness of the clasps themselves. The Paroches was one "tefach" (fist-breadth) thick (Shemos Rabbah 50:4), and was wrapped around a pole that was hung horizontally on hooks attached to the pillars (see Rashi on 26:31). If the Paroches was wrapped around the pole, then its tefach thickness must have been on all sides of the pole, or two tefachim, aside from the thickness of the pole itself. Rashi (27:10) says that the supports that the curtains of the courtyard were wrapped around (before being hung on their pillars) were three tefachim thick. Although there is no reason to assume that the pole the Paroches was wrapped around was as thick, it is hard to imagine that a tapestry as thick as a tefach could be wrapped around anything thinner than a tefach (especially since the Paroches was 10 cubits wide). Which means that the eastern edge of the Paroches was at least three tefachim east of the edge of the pillars it was hung from. (We can also

include the thickness of the hooks themselves, i.e. the small part of the "vuv" that ensured that the pole didn't roll off, as it had to be situated between the pole and the Paroches.)

A cubit is either five or six tefachim (see Kaylim 17:10), which leaves a maximum distance of three tefachim from the Paroches to the edge of the eastern part of the covering, where the clasps were. (I would add that Rashi giving the measurement of the curtain supports as six tefachim by three tefachim, rather than as one cubit by a half a cubit, indicates that a cubit was only five tefachim.) Since things less than three tefachim apart are considered "lavud," i.e. as if the two are connected (see Eiruvim 9a), if we can minimize this distance by even a slight bit more it would be considered as if the Paroches were directly under the clasps.

The Chizkuni (26:5) says that the 50 loops through which clasps went took up 3.5 of the 28 cubits of the width of the lowest covering, making the part of the clasp that fit into each loop either slightly more than a third of a tefach (if there are 5 tefachim/cubit) or slightly more than 4 tenths of a tefach (if there are 6 tefachim/cubit). With the Malbim's assertion (26:4-5) that the clasps were "on" one of the edges of the covering while being "at the edge" of the other, if the clasps started from the eastern edge, we can count both ends of the clasp (the part that went through the loops of the eastern part and the part that went through the loops of the western part) as well as the stem of the clasp that connected its two fasteners, putting the edge of the Paroches almost another tefach closer to the edge of the clasps.

In other words, according to Rashi (and perhaps the Beraisa) the clasps were either between one and two or between two and three tefachim from the Paroches, close enough for the Paroches to be considered underneath them while still allowing them to be visible. However, even if the Paroches was directly underneath the clasps, there are several ways to explain how they could still be visible.

Although the height of the Paroches was 10 cubits, it is unclear if that means how far off the ground the top was or how tall it was. If it was only 10 cubits tall and part of its height was used to wrap around the pole it was hung on, it never really reached the ceiling, allowing the clasps directly above it to be seen. It should be noted that Rashi's method of attaching the

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Paroches to its pillars is not universally accepted, so if, for example, there were loops on the Paroches itself by which it was hung, the 10 cubit height of the Paroches would reach all the way to the ceiling.

When explaining Rashi above, we had the Paroches on the eastern side of its pillars, outside the Kodesh Hakadashim, with the pillars themselves within the 10x10 cubit area of the Kodesh Hakadashim. It is also possible, though, for the pillars to have been within the 20x10 cubit area of the Kodesh, with the Paroches hanging on the western side, inside the Kodesh Hakadashim (see Chizkuni on 26:5). If so, the tefach thickness of the Paroches (and its hanging mechanism) started from the western edge of the pillars, allowing the clasps directly above it to be seen from the Kodesh portion of the Mishkan. © 2008 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“**A**nd he made the ephod of gold, blue, and purple and scarlet ...And he made the breastplate of artistic work...He made therobe of the ephod, weaving it completely...And they made coats of fine linen of woven work” (Exodus 39:1-31).

Why should priestly garments be so elaborately constructed, gold beaten into threads, embroidered sashes, blues and purples and scarlets skillfully and intricately woven? In this week's portion Pekuday, some 30 verses are devoted to the making of the priestly garments, and several portions back in Tetzaveh, more than 40 verses were devoted to these same garments. What's clear is that the priestly garments were unusual, awesome to behold.

Granted that priests should look different from the rest of the nation, but why isn't a white garment sufficient, something simple and functional? Indeed, one might even argue that priests should not wear anything special or unique because of G-d's declaration to all of Israel: "You shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6).

Furthermore, in Tractate Zevachim (17b), the Talmud teaches that "...while their [priestly] garments are upon them, the priesthood is upon them. If their garments are not upon them, the priesthood is not upon them." In other words, without the garments there is no priesthood, a far-reaching statement.

Over the centuries many commentators have addressed themselves to the question of priestly garb. In Tractate Eruchin (16a), R. Annani bar Sasson asks why portions of the priestly garments is next to that of the sacrifices, and the answer given is that just as the sacrifices atone for sins, these garments atone for sins as well—the tunic for murder, the breeches for illicit sexual acts, the waist sash for one's innermost thoughts, the ephod for idol worship, the robe for slander, the turban for haughtiness... Nachmanides sees the priestly garments as the garb of kingship and royalty, each one of the garments regal in its own right. For Nachmanides, the priestly garb need not be seen beyond its inherent beauty intended to exalt the priest into the domain of the majestic.

The author of the Sefer Hachinuch, an anonymous commentary on the 613 commandments first published in 1523 (usually identified as Rabbi Aharon HaLevy), acknowledges that a person's inner being is affected by his outer garments. Thought follows action, and since a priest must have special thoughts when he performs the service, unless he is transformed himself he won't be able to achieve the required concentration, a process which begins with the act of getting dressed in special garb. Extraordinary garments are intended to transform an ordinary human being into someone who becomes a master of thought-kavanot. This idea recalls the text in Tractate Zevachim which states that without the priestly garments "there is no priesthood."

The Netziv (1817-1893) in his Torah commentary follows the principle of the Sefer HaChinuch except that he switches the focus from the priest to the Israelite coming upon the glory of the priests in their ceremonious garb. Seeking atonement, he is confronted with the gravity of what is about to transpire. And since the ultimate purpose of the sacrifice is to bring about this atonement, it is the Israelite's thoughts which are most significant, his contrition, his encounter with the transcendent. The garments of the priests are intended to draw the individual closer to his own spiritual cleansing.

These explanations certainly illuminate the complex and varied role of the priestly garment. But I would suggest that if we look at the first time a garment is mentioned in the Torah, we discover that there is more to clothes than meets the eye.

When Adam and Eve are exiled from the Garden of Eden, the text tells us that "the Lord G-d made for Adam and his wife, garments of skin, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21). Two verses later G-d drives them out of the Garden of Eden, and because of the power of the tale of this banishment, the reader tends to overlook how unique it is that G-d Himself created these garments.

After the creation of the universe, G-d commanded man to conquer the world, "...replenish the

earth and subdue it, and have dominion" (Gen 1:28). The world is a tabula rasa for man to discover, unravel, invent, define, and so man discovers fire and bronze, wheels and windmills, atoms and electricity. There is nothing that man doesn't discover except the clothes on his back, and this he carries with him when he is banished. But of all the potential discoveries within human scope why should the creation of a garment be relegated to G-d Himself? What can it possibly mean?

It was a serpent that led to the banishment of man. Condemned to eat dust, the serpent remains naked, but G-d forms these garments for man to rise above his animal nature. Worn in modesty, a garment paves the road toward recapturing what was lost in the Garden, redeeming a measure of holiness.

If we glance at the more visible symbols of Jewish life, we see how sanctity is associated with a covering. Inside the synagogue, the Sefer Torah is covered with its special garb; this is also the case regarding the table upon which the Torah is read from, similarly the Ark in which the Scroll stands. Everything holy needs a covering and it all began with the human body.

Commanded to wear unique garb during the temple service, the priest puts us in touch with the separation between the human and the animal. Perhaps the reason why G-d creates these garments Himself is because the passage between the two realms-before exile and after exile-requires that G-d point the human in the direction he must take in order to fight the lure of the animal kingdom.

Departing from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve are taught the holiness of the body. Once they know this, they can go out and "conquer" the world, transforming it in the process, but if they forget that the body is holy, then the world transforms them, in the process getting drawn closer to their animalistic nature.

From the Jewish point of view, clothes do not make the man. Clothes do, however, distinguish the man, reminding him of the inherent sanctity of the body separating man from beast, priest from ordinary layman. © 2008 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

DR. AVIGDOR BONCHEK

What's Bothering Rashi

After the Torah describes in detail the making of the Tabernacle and its vessels, it makes the following concluding statement: "And all the work of the Tabernacle / Tent of Meeting was completed and the Children of Israel did as all that Hashem had commanded Moses. So they did." (Exodus 39:32)

"And the Children of Israel did"-Rashi: "the work as all that Hashem had commanded etc."

This appears to be quite a simple, even uninformative, Rashi-comment. But after examination we will see its cleverness and what it teaches us. First notice the style of this comment. Rashi weaves his two

words ("the work") in between the Torah's words. I have emphasized the Torah's words. What is he adding by making this addition? It seems to tell us exactly what the verse itself says.

An Answer: There is a redundancy here. Did you notice it? It says "And the Children of Israel did" etc., and then it repeats and says "and so they did." By Rashi's two words he enlightens us about a very subtle point. The Hebrew "vaya'asu" can have two meanings.

"And they did." "And they made." What does the first "vaya'asu" mean? (Translated in English Chumashim as "and they did.")

An Answer: It means "and they made." That is why Rashi adds the crucial words "the work" to tell that they "made (not did) the work." The second time the word "asu" is used in this verse, it means "they did."

But we have another point of verbal confusion here. Why does Rashi say "hamelachah" (the work) when the verse earlier had used the word "avodah" for work?

The answer is that here too, these Hebrew words have two different meanings- even though in English they are both translated (incorrectly) as "work."

"Hamelachah" is a noun and means crafts-the product of creating something. The word "avodah" is a verb and means, "to work" to do some labor. See now the precision of Rashi's choice of words. He says "The Children of Israel made (not did) the artifacts (not work) as G-d had commanded Moses, so they did."

Now there is no redundancy in this verse. With two words Rashi clarifies a subtle point, that is missed by all translations of the Chumash. © 2008 *Dr. A. Bonchek and aish.com*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The conclusion of the book of Shmot describes the attainment of Israel in having the Divine Presence rest upon the Jewish people through the medium of the Mishkan that it had built in the desert of Sinai. Ramban states that this accomplishment of having the Divine Spirit dwell amongst the people of Israel was equal to that state of being during the period of the Avot, the patriarchs and matriarchs of Israel, when the Divine Spirit was resident in their tents and homes.

However, it is one type of accomplishment for an individual family to attain the degree of spirituality that the presence of the Divine Spirit in its home signifies and a far different matter for an entire nation of people, millions in number, to do so as well. This achievement borders on the extraordinary and in fact has rarely again been achieved in Jewish history.

Of course, the revelation and granting of the Torah at Sinai undoubtedly contributed to this spiritual feat though the incident of the Golden Calf indicates to us that even the experience of Divine revelation does

not guarantee the maintenance of spiritual heights and Torah behavior.

There must therefore be a deeper personal reason for the ability of Israel at that moment and place to merit the Divine Spirit's presence within its midst on a steady basis.

For it is clear from the Torah that the presence of the Divine Spirit amongst a human society is obviously more dependent on the actions and behavior of that society itself than on the Divine Spirit, so to speak.

I feel that the attainment of the generation of the desert, in spite of its many failures and ultimate doom, to achieve Divine Presence in its midst was due to its sacrifice and willingness to build the Mishkan itself, no matter what the cost and detail. The building fund drive, so to speak, was oversubscribed.

A project of holiness and nobility, that merits across the board support and great generosity from the society that it intends to serve, is the main stepping stone to reach spiritual heights. The concerted willingness of Israel to have the Divine Spirit dwell amongst it itself drove the effort that resulted in that goal being achieved.

The great rebbe of Kotzk is reported to have said that G-d can be found wherever humans allow Him to enter. Seeking G-d has always been a Jewish goal. A society that devotes itself to that task with sacrifice and sincerity has that ability, even in weaker generations, to achieve great spiritual and societal accomplishments. But it requires unity, persistence and a willingness to sacrifice wealth, talent and effort for the cause.

A generation that is bitter, divided, intolerant of others and selfish as regarding its blessings will never be able to build a society worthy of G-d's presence, so to speak, residing within it.

We are engaged in a struggle to have our present Jewish state and society become more traditional and spiritual, more idealistic and less iconoclastic. If we are able even to glimpse a glimmer of G-d's presence amongst us, it will be worth all of our efforts and sacrifice in achieving this goal. © 2008 Rabbi Beryl 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

The second book of the Torah concludes at the end of this week's portion. As the final words are recited, the assembled call out hazak, hazak, ve-nithazek, be strong, be strong and may we be strengthened. Indeed, we say these words when completing each of the Five Books of Moses. Most

interpret these words to speak first to the individual, and then to the collective whole. Hazak is a singular term. When uttered twice it creates a sense of community. Hence, ve-nithazek - together we will gain greater strength and prevail.

However, if we examine the end of Genesis and Exodus, the first two places where we actually utter this phrase, a deeper understanding emerges. Genesis concludes with Joseph's death. Exodus comes to a conclusion with the cloud of glory resting upon the newly finished Tabernacle.

A common thread can be seen. Both books conclude with endeavors left unfinished-left to be concluded by the next generation. When Joseph dies, slavery is about to begin-fulfillment of the covenant with our ancestors, in the form of redemption, comes many years later. Similarly the Exodus narrative ends with the Tabernacle just constructed, but the fulfillment of the use of the Tabernacle has not yet taken place. Not only has it not been used, but it serves as a blueprint for the ultimate House of G-d, the Holy Temple built many years later.

Note that the three other places where hazak is recited fall into the same pattern. Leviticus and Numbers end with laws of tithing and inheritance. Those laws are given, although they can only fully become a reality after possessing land in Israel, which occurs later. And, of course, Deuteronomy concludes with the death of Moshe. The irony of his life is that the greatest leader of our people never realized his greatest dream, to enter the land of Israel - a mission only to be achieved by those he left behind.

An important lesson emerges. Often, in life, we think that there is nothing we cannot accomplish. The culmination of each book teaches us-no. No one leaves the world fulfilling all of their dreams, all of their hopes and expectations. In the words of Rabbi Tarfon, it is not for any of us to complete the task. (Avot 2:21)

The story is told of an elderly man who plants a carob tree. "Foolish man," a passerby proclaimed, "why do you waste your time? Surely, you will not live long enough to see the tree produce." The old man sighed and responded, "My father planted trees for me and I, in turn, must plant trees for my children."

Notwithstanding that no one can fully complete the task, Rabbi Tarfon adds that we are not free from doing our share, from embarking on our goals with our utmost energy and strength. This in fact, may be the deeper meaning of the refrain: first we proclaim hazak hazak-be strong, be strong, let us each make sure to do our share, knowing all along that we will not complete every goal. But then, we call out together, ve-nithazek, may we be strengthened in the recognition that together, our task be concluded, even if it takes generations to make it a reality.

With this in mind, I suggest that this week, and every other occasion that we complete a book of the

Torah, we take a moment of pause to recognize that as we surround the Torah, that we appreciate the gifts of the generations that proceeded us. At the same time, we should hold our children close in the prayer that they continue the mission of our people and Torah. © 2008 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.

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

This week's Torah portion begins with a list of the amounts of gold, silver, and copper gathered for the construction of the Tabernacle (Shemot 38:24-31). The structure of this passage seems unusual in that the gold is described in a very different way than the silver and the copper. For the silver and the copper, the Torah notes both the total amounts and also how they were used. About silver it is written, "The silver donated by the community was one hundred talents, and one thousand seven hundred and seventy five shekels, measured in holy shekels" [38:25]. This is followed by the use of the silver: "And the hundred talents of silver were used to pour the holy beams and the beams of the curtain... And he made the thousand seven hundred seventy five shekels into hooks for the beams, and he covered their tops and strengthened them." [38:27-28]. The same is true for copper. The Torah begins with the amount, "The donations of copper were seventy talents together with two thousand four hundred shekels" [38:29]. And this is immediately followed by the use to which it was put: "He made with it the beams at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, and the copper Altar, and its copper crown, and all the utensils of the Altar. And also the beams of the surrounding courtyard, the beams of the gate, the pegs of the Tabernacle, and all of the pegs surrounding them." [38:30-31]. However, with respect to gold only the amount is noted, "And the donated gold was nine hundred and twenty talents together with seven hundred and thirty holy shekels." But the Torah does not mention how this gold was used. Why is the gold described in a different way than the silver and the copper?

Ramban suggests that the reason for the difference is technical, since most of the gold was used to plate many different utensils, and Moshe was not able to accurately measure how much gold was used up. Ibn Ezra also agrees with this: "Who can estimate how much gold was used to plate the vessels in the Tabernacle?" But this does not really answer the question, since the Torah could have written that the gold was used to make the golden vessels (the Menorah and the Kaporet) and also as plating for the other vessels (just like for the silver, where the Torah

notes that it was used to cover the poles of the Tabernacle). Why doesn't the Torah do this?

Perhaps this can be explained in another way. Perhaps the gold was not used exclusively for building the vessels in the Tabernacle but it also had another role which is not directly connected to them. The contributions are described in the Torah after the affair of the Golden Calf, in the Torah portion of Ki Tissa. Thus, it may be that the contribution of gold was also meant as atonement for the previous use that Bnei Yisrael had made of gold? "And the entire nation removed the golden rings in their ears and brought them to Aharon... And he made it into an idol of a calf" [32:3-4]. "This nation has done a great sin, they have made a golden deity for themselves" [32:31]. Thus, the main value of the gold was in order to rectify their previous use of gold. The Torah therefore found a need to emphasize the contribution itself, not only for the practical need of using it to make the holy utensils.

RABBI BORUCH LEFF

Kol Yaakov

In Israel, religious political parties generally consult spiritual leaders on a wide range of issues. To a modern person, it seems odd that spiritual giants should be able to formulate opinions on matters of state when their primary occupation is Torah study, in their "ivory towers." Yet, Judaism does accept the notion of "Daas Torah," loosely translated as "A Torah Opinion," as a fundamental element of an observant lifestyle.

What exactly is this elusive concept? Why is it considered virtuous to consult Torah leaders on issues that would appear at first thought to be outside the realm of their concerns? The solution to these questions will also help elucidate a Rashi in Parshat Pekudei.

In Ethics of the Fathers, Chapter 1:6, it states: "One should establish a relationship with a Rabbi and one should acquire a friend." No matter how learned or how great or how mature, an individual can never live a productive life on one's own. A person needs these two relationships with others in order to function in a healthy fashion. One of these relationships is having a Rabbi.

When I establish a relationship with a Rabbi, I learn to subordinate myself. I accept the Rabbi as my superior and nullify my opinion before his. It is obvious that if I am lacking Torah knowledge that I should consult a Rabbi. But I should also ask him concerning matters that do not directly seem to involve knowledge of Torah. A Rabbi who has studied the Torah in depth has spent many hours and expended great efforts to discover what G-d wants from us in this world. This is because the very definition of the word "Torah" is G-d's Instructions for Living. As a result of the Rabbi and Torah scholar's mastery of the Torah, he trains his mind to think in terms of "What would the Torah demand? What would G-d expect of a person in the

given situation which he faces?" In this way, a decision is based on an attempt at discovering what G-d wants from us and not merely what we desire.

This is the explanation of the concept of Daas Torah and is why religious political parties, and many Torah observant people, always consult Torah leaders before making major decisions. We now have a better understanding for what Rashi means in Shemot 38:22. Betzalel, the lead architect of the construction of the Tabernacle, had presented his own idea for the order of the different stages of the construction which Moshe had heard directly from G-d.

Moshe then told Betzalel, "Now I know why your name is Betzalel! You must have dwelled in G-d's shadow-B'tzel E-l-which is the meaning of your name!" Betzalel had used his own mind to think of an idea which was exactly the idea G-d had planned as well. Betzalel achieved the level of Daas Torah, figuring out what G-d would want in a particular situation.

The concept and acceptance of Daas Torah is also the key to the Jewish people's repentance in the Purim story. As recorded in Talmud Megillah 12b and Midrash Esther Rabbah 7:18, there was a dispute between Mordechai, the leader, and the rest of the Jewish nation. Achashveirosh, the Persian king, had invited the Jews, among all nations, to his grandiose feast and party celebration. The Jews felt that for political reasons, they had to go for if they did not it would mean disaster and danger facing Achashveirosh's wrath. They felt that to avoid the party would be an insult to the king. Their logic was compelling.

Mordechai told them that the lewdness and immorality that would be present at the party forbids Jews to go. They told Mordechai that if they followed his advice, they would be lost. Lo and behold, they went to the feast and it indeed brought prosperity to them for a while. They turned to Mordechai and said, "We were right, you were wrong. Thank G-d we didn't listen to you."

Then a Haman, with his plan to exterminate the Jewish nation, came into existence. (The Talmud states that this was due to the sin of attending Achashveirosh's party. Megilah 12a) And Mordechai refuses to bow down to him. They came to Mordechai and said "Murderer! Bow down to him or we will all die because of you!" Lo and behold, they were right. Haman was angered and the genocide decree came.

Who was right? Mordechai, the old and out-of-touch Torah scholar, the ivory tower dweller, the old and impractical man, or the masses of people who knew the ways of the world? By all nature, the Jews should have turned against Mordechai. Everything they said came true. They saw they were right. They should have thrown him out! But instead they come back and say, "Rebbe, tell us what to do" and from that comes the salvation.

What happened? What made them come back to Mordechai? They began to repent and finally realized the significance of Daas Torah. They knew that they needed a deliverance and the only way to achieve that was to turn back to G-d and those righteous individuals who are closest to G-d. It is only through the logic and direction of Torah and the Torah giant that salvation can come. We think we see but we do not see. The reality was that Haman's decree came as a result of sins and not politics. Our logic which seems so strong is very often influenced by personal bias. The Torah scholar's mind does not have these biases and can access G-d's true will. This doesn't mean that Rabbis are infallible. It is of course possible for Rabbis to make mistakes. But we also know that even the world's best doctors are human and also make mistakes. That doesn't prevent us from seeking out their medical advice and expertise because following their advice remains the best course of procedure in trying to heal an illness. So too, G-d expects us to try our best to make decisions based upon His will, and asking a Rabbi, a Spiritual Doctor, knowing fully that Rabbis are human and can err, is part of that process.

No, we shouldn't be asking Rabbis what we should make for supper tonight nor should we run to inquire about every little decision in our lives. But when it comes to the truly significant issues that concern us, we should think in terms of what G-d would want us to do, and asking a knowledgeable Rabbi is the closest we can come to asking G-d Himself. © 2008 Rabbi B. Leff & aish.com

RABBI YAKOV HABER

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“**A**nd Moshe erected the Mishkan, and he placed its sockets...its beams, and its crossbars... And he spread out the tent-curtains (ohel) on the Mishkan and he placed the covering of the ohel on top as G-d commanded Moshe" (P'kudei 40:18-19). With these verses the Torah describes the initial steps of the construction of the Mishkan. A careful reading of the text reveals an anomaly in the order of the construction. The Mishkan's building structure consisted of gold-coated wooden beams placed into silver sockets and strengthened by crossbars. The roof, unlike in the Mikdash in Jerusalem, consisted of three (or four) coverings. As described in Parshat T'ruma and repeated in Parshat VaYakheil, they were: 1) the woolen curtains called "Mishkan"; 2) the goat-hair curtains "to be an ohel"; 3) a leather cover (or covers) made of ram and tachash skin (see T'ruma 26 and Rashbam and S'forno to 26:1). Following this nomenclature then, our verses tell us that Moshe first erected the bottommost "Mishkan" curtains, then he placed the sockets and the wooden beams with their crossbars. Afterward he spread out the goat-hair curtains as an ohel followed by the leather cover. This

order certainly contradicts the intuitive order of construction, which would be to first place the sockets and the beams and then spread the "Mishkan" curtains on top followed by the others. As described by the Torah, the Mishkan curtains had to be suspended in mid-air somehow and then the structural beams and sockets placed underneath them. The commentaries noting this anomaly explain the verses in two basic ways. 1) "Mishkan" refers not to the bottommost curtains here but rather to the total structure (see Ha'amek Davar and Malbim). 2) "Mishkan" indeed refers to these curtains and they were suspended first either by Moshe, with poles, or miraculously (see Ibn Ezra, S'forno, and Rashi to M'nachot 99a also implied by his commentary to verse 40:19).

In commenting on this counterintuitive construction order, S'forno writes that these curtains were the main part of the entire structure of the Mishkan and therefore were set up first. All the other structural beams and covers were to support and cover these curtains! S'forno to T'ruma (26:1) elucidates this somewhat by pointing out that in them were the major vessels of the "Mishkan"-the resting place of the Divine Presence. This is difficult since the beams also housed these same vessels. Why are the curtains any more significant than the beams?

Perhaps we can suggest an approach based on an analysis of the central theme of the Mishkan and later the Mikdash in Jerusalem. The Mishkan was of course the "meeting place" of G-d and Man containing within it symbolically and with its 'avoda the major themes of Divine service. It represented the goal of creation (see Tanchuma Sh'mini) and the fulfillment of the Divine plan of "The Holy One Blessed Be He desired to create a dwelling place for himself in the lower worlds" in which Man would elevate himself constantly by cleaving to His Creator. (In the article The Ultimate Mikdash, we elaborated on this theme more fully. The laws of Shabbat, the day eternally recalling Divine Creation, not surprisingly are derived from the construction of the Mishkan since, in essence, the Jewish people were building a microcosm of the world.)

One of the cardinal principles in Divine service is middat hatzniut-the quality of privacy and modesty. The prophet Micha (6:8) encapsulates one of the three major themes of 'avodat Hashem in his famous statement "v'hatznei'a lechet 'im Elokecha"-and walk humbly (privately) before your G-d" (see Makkot 24a). Inherent in the very construction of the Mishkan is a powerful message of this important quality. First, the "Mishkan" woolen curtains were set up creating a roof and four temporary walls. Only afterward were the silver sockets and gold-covered beams placed underneath followed by the dazzling golden vessels of the Mishkan: the 'Aron, Shulchan, M'nora and Mizbei'ach. The message could be as follows: whether one is filled with Torah-wisdom represented by the

'Aron and the M'nora, or is of royal blood or wealthy symbolized by the Shulchan or complete in his Divine service symbolized by the Mizbei'ach (see Kli Yakar to T'ruma 25:10), all of these talents and accomplishments must be channeled properly toward the goal of serving our Creator and sharing our gifts with His creations but in a private, non-ostentatious manner. Rav Soloveitchik in one of his lectures beautifully described the many heroes of Jewish history who are unknown to us since they engaged in enormous acts of kindness but never told anyone. After they acted majestically they "faded into the shadows of history". It was sufficient for them that the One Above know about their accomplishments without the need for a public display of righteousness.

Rav Dovid Ariav in his enlightening s'farim on the interpersonal laws of the Torah entitled L'Rei'acha Kamocha writes that one of the primary ways to overcome the bad trait of jealousy is to realize that the measure of your success in the world is not what others say or think of what you own or the talent that you have. This of course is the source of much jealousy. Rather, the barometer of success or failure is how many mitzvot you perform and how many middot you have worked on perfecting. All of these acts can largely be done in the private sphere away from the public eye known to G-d alone. These are the greatest of accomplishments.

In a world practically obsessed with ostentatious presentations of wealth, immodest displays of beauty, and haughty exhibitions of talent and wisdom, the lesson of midat hatzniut included in the Mishkan and throughout the entire Torah must be absorbed, practiced and put into action. May we all merit to fulfill the charge of Micha: "v'hatznei'a lechet 'im Elokecha"! © 2008 Rabbi Y. Haber & TorahWeb

RABBI ADAM LIEBERMAN

A Life Lesson

Moses asked the Jewish people to donate gold, silver and copper for the construction of the Tabernacle. Seemingly, the most valuable and precious of these metals was gold, second was silver, and most plentiful and least valuable was copper. But each of these three metals were used for completely different purposes in the construction of the Tabernacle. "Gold... was used... for... the holy work... silver to cast the sockets of the Sanctuary... the copper... the sockets of the courtyard..." (Exodus, 38:24-31)

Gold, silver, and copper all served different purposes in the construction of the Tabernacle. In fact each metal was actually dependent upon the other metals in order for their own purpose to be realized. For example, the gold was used to construct the ark that housed the Torah, but the ark needed to have a

courtyard around it in order to protect itself-which needed the silver and copper in order for it to be made.

Each and every one of us, on some level, all want to change the world. But sometimes we feel that compared to others our contributions are not as significant. But the exact opposite is true. This is because for in order for someone else to help, they almost always depend upon other people doing their part. We all must contribute in the way that G-d enabled and empowered us to do so. If we don't, it literally prevents others from doing their part.

Sometimes we doubt if we really have what it takes to make a difference, and we further question this if we compare our talent and resources to other people we see making a difference. But this is only half the story.

Every project or cause that was ever completed had many people who made it happen other than those who were "front and center" upon it's completion. It might be the one's who envisioned the project, those who labored in it's every detail, or maybe it was the one who rescued the project after the initial excitement faded. The bottom line is that all of these people are why the project succeeded. But again, they were all individually dependent upon someone else to do their part or there literally would be no place for their contribution. Think about it. Who could a philanthropist give his or her money to if no one came up with new and exciting ideas?

Don't make the mistake of thinking that your contribution isn't going to make a difference. Just like in the days of the tabernacle you have the responsibility to contribute in relation to your ability. Whether G-d gave you gold, silver, or copper you're obligated to give what you can. And remember, the one who donates gold can only do so if the one who has copper gives as well. So, no matter what metal you have to give-whether it's your money, time, or assistance-take much happiness in knowing that not only are you giving in the exact measure G-d wants you to but you also lay the foundation for allowing so many others to give as well.

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RABBI ABBA WAGENSBERG

Between the Lines

This week's Torah portion concludes the Book of Exodus by describing the construction of the Tabernacle, its vessels, and the priestly garments. The Midrash (Tanchuma 11) states two opinions regarding the seven-day inauguration of the Tabernacle. According to Rebbe Chiya ben Yosef, Moses dissembled and reassembled the Tabernacle twice a day during the inauguration. This is deduced from the repetition of the word "to erect," which appears in the forms "takim" (Exodus 40:2) and "hukam" (Exodus 40:17). How could the Tabernacle be erected again once it was already built? According to Rebbe

Chiya, the repetition of this word implies that Moses took the Tabernacle apart and then rebuilt it.

Rebbe Chanina adds to Rebbe Chiya's opinion by noting the word "vayakem" (Exodus 40:18), which is from the same root word "to erect." Rebbe Chanina therefore claims that Moses dissembled and reassembled the Tabernacle three times a day! By now, the question is obvious: why was it necessary for Moses to continually take apart and rebuild the Tabernacle?

The Slonimer Rebbe uses this Midrash to teach us a vital lesson. Although we spend our lives toiling and struggling to build ourselves into sanctuaries-vessels worthy for the Divine Presence to rest within-there still may be times that we stumble and fall. Despite these low periods, however, we must never give up hope. Rather, we must rouse ourselves immediately and continue to strengthen and build ourselves, because it is forbidden for a Jew to fall into despair. We see this lesson expressed in Rebbe Chiya ben Yosef's opinion that Moses dismantled and rebuilt the Tabernacle twice a day. These two times correspond to morning and evening: the bright time and the dark time of the day. We could suggest that the message being conveyed here is to move forward not only during the bright, easy times of life, but also when circumstances are dark and difficult. No matter what the situation, our task is to build ourselves and continue to grow. Rebbe Chanina's opinion-that Moses rebuilt the Tabernacle three times a day-also hints to this idea. If the Tabernacle was dismantled three times a day for all seven days of the inauguration, then it was taken apart and put back together a total of 21 times. Twenty-one is the numerical value of the word "ehyeh," which means, "I will be." When G-d revealed Himself to Moses at the Burning Bush, this is the Name that He asked Moses to tell the Jewish people.

G-d's description of Himself as "Ehyeh asher ehyeh"-literally, "I will be what I will be" (Exodus 3:14) -- can be interpreted to mean, "I will be with a person who says I will be." Even after we stumble and fall, G-d is with us when we choose to continue on the path of growth rather than sinking into hopelessness.

The statement "Ehyeh asher ehyeh" also hints to the value of the word "ehyeh" (21) multiplied by itself, resulting in 441. This is the same numerical value as the word "emet," which means "truth." We can suggest that a person who cultivates an attitude of continual growth, even during difficult times, will eventually come to truth.

May we be blessed to never give up, even after falling two or three or 21 times, by having confidence in ourselves and realizing that the fall is part of the climb. By doing so, may we build ourselves into a sanctuary, and merit to witness the rebuilding of the ultimate sanctuary, our Holy Temple in Jerusalem. © 2008 Rabbi A. Wagensberg & aish.com