

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

### Shabbat Shalom

**“M**ake two golden cherubs, beating them out as one piece from the ends of the cover (of the Holy Ark)...spreading their wings upwards...” (Exodus 25: 18-20)

The Ark-Cover in the Biblical Sanctuary, punctuated on both ends with cherubs, has left a strong imprint on our western art consciousness, countless images of winged, angelic creatures with exquisitely young and innocent faces. And indeed our classical Biblical commentaries Rashi (1040 - 1105), based on a Talmudic passage (B.T. Hagiga 13b), derives the Hebrew word K'ruv from the Aramaic rubis, literally a young person. Apparently the symbolism of this imagery comes to teach that the whole-hearted purity of our future generations must maintain the continuity of the Divine Teaching within the Ark, thereby protecting it.

However, there is a radically different image of cherubs in a much earlier passage in the Book of Genesis, described along with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden after they eat of the forbidden fruit: "... And He placed the cherubs at the east of the Garden of Eden, along with the flaming, revolving sword, to guard the path leading to the Tree of (eternal) life" (Genesis 3:24). And in explaining the cherubs of this verse, Rashi comments, "angels of destruction." How can the same image of cherubs symbolize such two contrasting ideas?

One possible resolution may be that a young, innocent child has enormous potential to study and develop in Torah - but the possibility always exists for him to turn in another negatively destructive direction. The crucial issue becomes in which environment he is placed: if he is sent to serious academies of Torah learning from Nursery School onwards, and he is inspired to stand close to the Holy Ark, the chances are great that he be a cherub guarding the Torah; but if he is left to his own devices, placed in an unsupervised fashion next to an internet or television which have programs of violence and sexual immorality, the likelihood is that he will be drawn to the revolving sword

**As you read these divrei torah, please keep  
Esther Malka bas Kayla  
in mind for a Refuah Shelaima**

and may G-d forbid develop into an agent of destruction.

But the distinction is not as clear-cut as my previous argument might suggest. I have often been confronted in my rabbinical career by parents who have seemingly done all the right things, sent their children to all the "right" schools - and have nevertheless suffered the heart-ache of seeing their offspring veer far from the traditional paths of religious observance. Certainly there can be no fool-proof for success; every individual is a world unto him/herself, born with his/her own genetic proclivities, subject to influences from unexpected and far-flung directions. But our Biblical portion does suggest - at least by innuendo - yet another critical variable the interior accoutrements of our Sanctuary are an ark (aron, literally a closet) a menorah (candelabrum), a table, and an altar. The first three are immediately recognizable as the necessary furnishings of a home; and when we remember that the Sanctuary was the primary institution of the Israelite Religious establishment, the message which cries out to us is that our synagogues and schools must express the same warmth, love, sensitivity and individual concern as parents express for the children in their household. Our Sages have made this principle a cardinal aspect in the qualifications for a teacher: " 'And you shall teach Torah diligently to your children' - these are your students, who must always be referred to as your children" (Deut. 6:7, see Rashi ad loc).

And if the school, study hall and synagogue must have the familial warmth of a home, certainly a home must have the loving sensitivity which children have the right to expect from parents. There are instances especially when each parent is involved in a high-powered and pressurizing professional pursuit - when a household becomes reminiscent of a bus-station, with each member on his/her own time table, when everyone rarely meets together at one time, and when they do, they generally crash into one another. Children would like to feel that at least for their parents they are the highest priority. This means receiving a parents' undivided attention during a conversation - without his/her answering a cell-phone or reading an SMS at the same time - and receiving quantity (and not just quality) time from the parent. Indeed, for children, quantity time is quality time, as my wife is fond of saying. Indeed, my children fault me to this day for having been there for emergency situations, but only for

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emergency situations; Imma was always there for us - and that prevented many emergency situations from occurring! Perhaps this explains the altar, the place of sacrifice. Parents, teachers and rabbis must make sacrifices - take away from their own professional and private time - to give time to their children, students and congregants, who have the right to expect them to do so.

In the final analysis, however, I would suggest an altogether different resolution to the question of the two types of Biblical cherubs, the cherubs at the ends of the Ark - Cover and the cherubs guarding the tree of life with the revolving sword. I write these words only a few days after two newly - freed terrorist prisoners walked into a Yeshiva High School dormitory in Kibbutz Kfar Etzion at 10:30 p.m. last Thursday evening with the intent to murder innocents. Miraculously, they first entered a class-room where the counselors were having a meeting rather than the Bet-Midrash Study Hall where many students were still learning. The counselors, unlike the students, were armed - and shot the terrorists dead before they could do any damage. The counselors are young and innocent, just released from their years in Yeshivat Hesder, with faces very reminiscent of the cherubs. Fortunately, they were armed with their modern-day "revolving swords," and successfully guarded the path to the Tree of Life.

The Torah is truly our tree of life. Our youth-our cherubs - must preserve and protect it. They do it by studying it and they do it by defending it against our enemies. Both are angels, soldiers in the army of the Lord. © 2008 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

#### **RABBI BORUCH 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. © 2008 Rabbi B. Leff & aish.org

#### **RABBI BEREL WEIN**

### **Wein Online**

**T**he Mishkan which the Jews built in the desert as well as the Temple of Solomon and the Second Temple in Jerusalem were not intended as ends in themselves but rather to be the facilitators, the means to the ultimate - closeness to Hashem and holiness. We see throughout the words of the later prophets of Israel a constant warning theme not to confuse the means - the Temple - with the end goal of sanctity and a holy life.

Sanctity and holiness are achieved from inside one's being, from the depth of one's soul and personality, and not necessarily from outside forces - even the Holy Temple or Mishkan. The danger that is always present in building any structure for a religious and spiritual purpose is that the building itself takes over to such an extent that the religion and spirituality which brought it about fades into a secondary role. The other danger that the parsha raises is the raising of funds - gold, silver, bronze, textiles, etc. - and how the necessity for these items can corrupt the holiness of the structure that is intended for such an exalted purpose.

Perhaps in no other area - like fundraising for religious causes - can the trap of the end justifying the means close so tightly and solidly. Thus the parsha of Terumah and the entire recounting of the story of the Mishkan poses the continuing challenge of translating the purely physical into the spiritual, the temporary into the eternal, and to do so in accordance with the axiom that righteousness is pursued only by righteous means.

The Mishkan was built by very young architects. Midrash teaches us that Bezalel himself was barely bar-mitzva when he undertook this enormous task. Perhaps the Torah wants us to realize that only the young, those still pure and uncontaminated, are

worthy of such a task. They still have ideals that have not been allowed to deteriorate in the face of life's practicalities and difficulties. Thus their approach to building a Mishkan will of necessity be less tainted and conflicted than that of the older, wiser but more battered adults.

One of the most refreshing things that I have experienced in my decades of teaching young men Talmud is their freshness and lack of cynicism and conflict of interest. Teaching adults, no matter how fine and pious, always involves an entirely different approach. It is a measure of self analysis that determines how one views the building of a Mishkan - a personal Mishkan and a national one. Those who are able to recognize their personal faults and intend to improve them, who can recognize their true motives and conflicts will undoubtedly be able to reach the level of such a Mishkan - that G-d Himself, so to speak, will dwell amongst them.

But without such a self analytic effort, any Mishkan that will be built will be temporary and faulty. The effort and materials that have to be taken to build a Mishkan have to be as honest and pure as possible - they have to be taken for "Me" - for G-d Himself. © 2008 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 AVI WEISS**

### **Shabbat Forshpeis**

**F**rom a strictly halakhic perspective, the kindling of the menorah is not an act of serving G-d. No doubt the menorah is a holy object, but still the Talmud concludes that "lighting [it] is not considered a service." (Yoma 24b)

Perhaps this means that the lighting of the menorah creates a holy atmosphere that serves as a backdrop to the actual Temple service where we approach G-d. This is accomplished through its representation of three major themes in human experience--- creation, revelation and redemption.

The menorah brings us back to the creation story, where the first creation was light. (Genesis 1:3) In the center of the Garden of Eden were the tree of knowledge and tree of life. The menorah looks like a tree. It is adorned with flowers, knobs and cups. The flowers represent the buds that spring forth fruit; the knobs are shaped like a round fruit; and the cups are symbolic of vessels into which nectar is poured. (Menahot 28a) As Eden was a society of peace, so the menorah sets the tone for what hopefully would be an experience of inner peace as we serve G-d in the sanctuary. Its lighting accentuates the powerful beauty of the tree; it ignites serenity within us.

The menorah resonates with the image of Sinai as well. It brings us back to the moment when the Torah was given where light was abundant. (Exodus 19:16) The three branches on each side are associated with worldly knowledge. Yet, the wicks in each of these branches turn toward the inner shaft - teaching the idea that everything has its source in Torah. The lighting of these wicks focus our energy on our primary means of connecting to G-d-love of the light of Torah. (Mishlei 6:23)

The menorah may also allude to the Messianic world. Not only do the wicks point inward, the flames reach toward heaven, reminding us of our mission to be a light to the nations of the world. (Isaiah 42:6) From this perspective, when viewing the lighting of the menorah our thoughts focus on the fact that the tabernacle experience should encourage us to fix the world, bringing it to ultimate redemption.

These ideas should speak to us today. Upon entering a synagogue and seeing the eternal light, it ought to echo inner peace, love of Torah, and a striving toward perfection. When creation, revelation and redemption converge in the synagogue we can't help but feel spiritually drawn to G-d. © 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.

#### 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 statutes, adhere to My laws and guard all My mitzvos.... I will dwell amongst the Jewish people and not forsake My nation, Israel." (M'lochim I 6:12,13) Hashem told Shlomo Hamelech at the outset that the expressed purpose for all his labor was to create an earthly abode for Hashem. The impressive architectural structures, jewel studded walls and gold trimmings would not secure this objective. The sole factor in this would be guarding Hashem's statutes and carefully adhering to all His mitzvos. Hashem declared that the entire value of this magnificent edifice depended upon

the Jewish people. If they sincerely desired to unite with Him they would merit His Divine Presence. Hashem pledged to remain amongst them as long as they displayed true desire to be with Him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Although such conditions are difficult to meet in full we can do our part to preserve the sanctity of our sacred synagogues. Even in our times Hashem desires to rest amongst His people. Our humble synagogue can facilitate this goal when shown its proper respect. If we pause before entering this sacred edifice and contemplate who rests within its walls we would merit to sense, in some way, His Divine presence. If we could devote sincere effort towards preserving our synagogue's sanctity we would be overwhelmed by

Hashem's intense presence sensed therein. May we soon merit Hashem's full return to His people and may we be privileged to stand in His sacred presence forever. © 2008 Rabbi D. Siegel & Project Genesis, Inc.

#### MACHON ZOMET

## Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

There are only two vessels in the Tabernacle about which we are told that they were made from one piece? the "Kaporet" (the cover of the Ark) and the Menorah. With respect to the Kaporet, it is written, "And you shall make two Keruvim from gold, hammered from one piece, at the two ends of the Kaporet" [Shemot 25:18]. And, for the Menorah, it is written, "You shall make a Menorah of gold, hammer it out" [25:31]. The Torah implies that these two vessels are similar in other ways too. In both cases, there is a central base or rod surrounded by parallel elements on each side. For the Kaporet, we are told, "Put one Keruv on one side and on Keruv on the other side" [25:19], and for the Menorah, "With six branches coming out of the side, three branches of the Menorah on one side and three branches of the Menorah on the other side" [25:32]. In both cases, the Torah emphasizes that the items on the sides are fashioned from the base itself: "Make the Keruvim from the Kaporet" [25:19], and "Their knobs and branches shall be part of it" [25:36]. In both vessels, the elements on the side face in the direction of the central base: "Let the faces of the Keruvim be towards the Kaporet" [25:20]; "He shall light the lamps and shine the light towards its face" [25:37]. All of this leads to an obvious question: What is the significance of the similarity between these two vessels?

The role of the Kaporet is clear and explicit in the passages: "And I will meet with you there, and I will speak to you from above the Kaporet, from between the two Keruvim on the Ark of Testimony." [25:22]. The Kaporet serves as the basis for the revelation of the Shechina and for meeting with G-d. On the other hand, the role of the Menorah seems to be of a more technical nature? to "make light towards its face." However, because of the similarity of the two vessels we can understand that this light has a special significance. While the Kaporet was hidden from everybody during the year and was only revealed to the High Priest on Yom Kippur, the Menorah, which could be seen by anybody who was in the Tabernacle, served as a permanent reminder of the presence of the Shechina in the Holy of Holies. As our sages said, "If you want to suggest that G-d needs its light, for forty years that Bnei Yisrael journeyed in the desert they followed His light! Rather, it is testimony for all the creatures that the Shechina dwelt among Yisrael" [Menachot 86b].

This link between the Kaporet and the Menorah can also be seen in the dedication of the Tabernacle in

the desert. After the summary of the sacrifices brought by the tribal leaders, the Torah notes, "And he heard the voice speaking to him from above the Kaporet on the Ark of Testimony, from between the two Keruvim, and He spoke to him." [Bamidbar 7:89]. And this is immediately followed by a command to Aharon, "When you light the lamps, let the seven lamps shine light towards the face of the Menorah" [8:2]. And in fact the Torah seems to give a hint of why the Menorah was mentioned at this point: "And this is how the Menorah was made, hammered from gold, from the base to the knobs, it was hammered out. Just as G-d showed Moshe, that is how he made the Menorah." [8:4]. The special construction of the Menorah, which is in principle similar to the Kaporet which had just been mentioned, is the reason for the great importance of the lighting of the lamps in the Menorah.

**DR. AVIGDOR BONCHEK**

## What's Bothering Rashi

**P**arshat Trumah details the preparations necessary for the building of the Mishkan-Israel's Sanctuary as they traveled through the desert.

There is a dispute among the Talmudic Sages and, as a consequence, among the Torah commentaries, when were the commandments for the Mishkan given to Moses. One opinion (the Ramban, for example) has it that the building of the Mishkan was commanded before the sin of the Golden Calf (as is the order of the parshiyot-Trumah comes before Ki Sisa, where the sin of the Golden Calf is mentioned).

The other opinion (Rashi, see Exodus 31:18) claims that the Mishkan laws came afterwards, and thus not in accordance with the order of the parshiyot—because as the Sages have said "ain mukdam um'uchar baTorah." There is no "early" or "later" in the Torah—which means that chronological sequence is not always adhered to in the Torah.

Rashi's view, that the laws and the conception of the Mishkan itself came after the sin of the Golden Calf, would lead to the idea that the Mishkan was offered as an atonement for that sin, and perhaps may never have been given, had the people not sinned. The necessity of having some concrete manifestation of G-d on earth among the people (in the form of a Sanctuary) was seen as a necessity only once they had sinned by making the Calf. This showed their need for some physical presence of the Almighty to which they could relate.

The Ramban, on the other hand, saw the creation of the Mishkan as unrelated to this sin and independent of it. The need to relate to a spiritual entity (G-d) is an inherent human need. This need existed long before the sin of the Golden Calf. That sin was but a distortion of this normal and acceptable human striving for the spiritual that can, in some way, be

"grasped" by flesh and blood mortals. In light of the above, let us look at a brief Rashi-comment.

"And they shall make for Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst." (Exodus 25:8)

"And they shall make for Me"—RASHI: "They shall make for My name's sake a House of Holiness."

Rashi adds but one crucial word (in the Hebrew) "for My name's sake." He changes "for Me" to "for My name's sake." Why would you say he did this? What is bothering him?

An Answer: Rashi sensed that one doesn't make a Sanctuary for G-d. He neither needs it, nor could He possibly reside in it. As King Solomon said when he dedicated the Temple:

"Would G-d truly dwell on earth? Behold the heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain You, and surely not the Temple that I have built." (Kings I, 8:27)

So Rashi had to interpret the Hebrew word "li" not as "for Me" but in another way. Rashi reinterpreted the word "li" to mean "for My name's sake." Otherwise it would make no sense. Rashi also adds the words "a house of holiness" as a substitute for the Hebrew Mikdash (Sanctuary). This may be necessary to make explicit what the word Mikdash means here, since the pagans also had their "holy places" but their worship in these places was far from holy. They were often places of "holy" prostitution or other kinds of scatological rituals. We needn't study history to be aware that pagan acts of "holiness" can include such audacities, insanities and blasphemies as suicide bombers and wanton murderers. We need only read today's newspapers! In clear distinction from such perverse behaviors done in the name of some sick G-d-idea, Hashem's House was to be a place of pure holiness, where human beings elevated themselves and in the process, elevated the whole world with them.

This is the purpose of the Yom Kippur ceremonies performed in this Sanctuary. In fact, according to Rashi, the laws of the Mishkan were given the day after the first Yom Kippur. © 2008 Dr. A. Bonchek and aish.com

**RABBI DOV KRAMER**

## Taking a Closer Look

**C**losely examining the construction of the Mishkan brings out numerous complex details. One of these issues is precisely how the coverings lay on top of, and hung over the sides of, the Mishkan. Although examining this issue will lead to other issues as well, by focusing on one specific question that, for the most part, has remained unresolved, we can get a better understanding of which issues directly impact the placement of the lower two layers that covered the Mishkan.

The lower layer consisted of 10 sections (Shemos 26:1), with each measuring 4 cubits by 28

cubits (26:2). Two sets of five of these sections were sown together (26:3) and connected via 50 sets of loops and clasps (26:4-6), for a total length of 40 cubits ( $4 \times 10 = 40$ ). Although there are several different opinions regarding the exact measurement of the Mishkan itself, the overwhelming majority opinion is that its internal dimensions were 30 cubits by 10 cubits (see Rashi on 26:5). The height of the Mishkan was 10 cubits (26:16), and the thickness of the walls was 1 cubit. However, there is a dispute whether it was only a cubit thick at its base (becoming narrower and narrower until the top, which was only the thickness of a finger) or as thick at the top as at the bottom (Shabbos 98b). If the thickness of the walls must be accounted for, then this layer covered 8 of the 10 cubits on each side ( $8 + 1 + 10 + 1 + 8 = 28$ ), whereas if it doesn't, all but the bottom cubit (minus the thickness of a finger and the extra amount needed to travel almost 1 cubit diagonally for a distance of 10 cubits) was covered by the lower layer.

Whether or not we must take the thickness of the wall into account affects how the covering lays over the length as well, but we also must consider whether the posts the curtain in the doorway was hung on was covered too. The Talmud (ibid) assumes it was not, so either all 10 cubits of the rear wall were covered ( $10 + 30 = 40$ ) or only 9 of them were ( $9 + 1 + 30 = 40$ ). The Beraisa d'Mem Tes Midos (10, quoted by Rashi on 26:5) not only accounts the thickness of the rear (western) wall, but also accounts for a cubit in the east for the thickness of the doorposts, leaving only 8 cubits of the rear wall covered ( $8 + 1 + 30 + 1 = 40$ ). The Beraisa d'Meleches HaMishkan (1:3) follows the opinion that the top of the walls were narrow, so has 9 cubits of the side walls and all 10 of the rear wall covered.

The second layer consisted of 11 sections (26:7), with each measuring 4 cubits by 30 cubits (26:8). Five were sown together for the western part of the Mishkan and the other six were sown together for the eastern part (26:9) and connected via 50 sets of loops and clasps (26:10-11), for a total length of 44 cubits ( $11 \times 4 = 44$ ), 4 cubits longer than the lower layer. Part of the extra length extended in the front (26:9) and part extended in the back (26:12). The extra 2 cubits of the width (30 vs. 28) is easy enough to account for, as all we need to do is add an extra cubit of covering on each side; if 8 cubits were covered by the lower layer, 9 are now covered, and if (almost) 9 were covered, now (almost) 10 are. The extra 4 cubits of the length, on the other hand, are not as straightforward.

According to the Talmud (98b) 2 of these extra cubits extended in front of the Mishkan while the other two extended in the back (with either both extra cubits laying on the floor or one of them covering the last exposed cubit of the rear wall and the other laying on the floor, depending on whether we must account for the thickness of the rear wall). The Beraisa d'Mem Tes

Midos (12) brings two opinions. The second (Rabbi Yosi) also splits the extra 4 cubits in half, placing two in the front and two in the back. Since this Beraisa has only 8 cubits of the rear wall covered by the lower layer, these extra 2 cubits in the back covered the rest of this wall. The first opinion has the clasps connecting the two parts of the upper layer situated directly above the partition that separated the "kodesh" (where the Menorah, Shulchan and Incense Altar were located) from the "kodesh hakadashim" (where the Aron was). Since the "kodesh hakadashim" was 10 cubits by 10 cubits, the western part of the upper layer, which was 20 cubits long, covered the 10 cubits of the "kodesh hakadashim," 1 cubit on top of the western (rear) wall, and 9 cubits of that wall. This is only one more cubit covered than by the lower layer, leaving 3 extra cubits extending in the front. Although the Torah calls the extra length in the back "half" (26:12, i.e. two of the four cubits of the extra piece), there are other instances where the Torah calls something "half" even though there are not two equal parts (see Ibn Ezra).

The Beraisa d'Meleches HaMishkan (or "BdMhM," 3:3) also brings two opinions regarding the extra 4 cubits of the length of the upper layer. The second (Rabbi Yehuda) splits them in half, placing 2 in front and two in back. According to a previous BdMhM (1:5) Rabbi Yehuda is of the opinion that we must account for the thickness of the walls, but it does not tell us whether he also accounts for the thickness of the posts in the front. To further confuse things, in the Talmud (Shabbos 98b) Rabbi Yehuda says that we need not account for the thickness of the walls, making it unclear whether splitting the extra 4 cubits means that the extra 2 cubits in the back lay on the floor, covered the previously uncovered lower 2 cubits of the rear wall, or covered the 1 remaining uncovered cubit while the 2nd extra cubit lay on the floor. The first opinion in the BdMhM simply has the extra 4 cubits "doubled" (mimicking the Torah's verbiage) "opposite the front of the tent." Which leaves us wondering how, if all 4 extra cubits were in front, this opinion understands the Torah telling us that half of the extra "extends on the back of the Mishkan" (26:12).

The Malbim, admitting that his approach is a reach, suggests that this verse is referring to the middle section (yeriyah #3) of the western portion, which was half on top of the Mishkan (one cubit over the westernmost part of the Mishkan and one cubit over the rear wall) and half hanging/covering the [top two cubits of the] rear wall. As he points out, the same could be said of the lower covering. Additionally, since the western portion of both lower layers were (according to this opinion) right on top of each other, it has no connection to the "extra" section of the second layer. Yet, the Torah (in the same verse) refers to this part as being "extra" twice. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan suggests that the Torah is referring to the entire western portion, as

half of it (10 cubits) hung over the back of the Mishkan. This approach has the same issues as the Malbim's, plus the fact that the Torah refers to it as "half of the extra section" ("yeriyah") not half of a portion ("choveres").

The Lekach Tov (26:10) says that the copper clasps of the upper covering were situated directly above the golden clasps of the lower covering, a detail that seems to be shared only with this opinion in the BdMhM. The Lekach Tov also says (26:9) that the extra (sixth) section consisted of two cubits that doubled over in the front. This is also consistent with the BdMhM, while specifying that the extra 4 cubits in front did not hang down, but were folded over into a double-layer, and were "like a veil (or similar ornament) on the forehead" (keep in mind that there were other coverings above this second layer). Even though the BdMhM did not have the lower covering laying on top of the posts by the entrance, it would seem that this double-thick second layer did. This extra section did not hang down at all; rather, after extending two cubits beyond the lower covering was folded over, with the second two cubits folded back, towards the back of the Mishkan. True, it wasn't literally "over the back of the Mishkan," but as opposed to hanging down, this "half" of the "extra section" "extended towards the back of the Mishkan." As the Lekach Tov puts it (26:12), "for half was folded towards the front of the Tent, and the two cubits - the [cubits] remaining - extended over (read: towards) the back of the Mishkan." © 2008 Rabbi D. Kramer

### **RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY**

## **Ark of Inclusion**

**I**n this week's portion, Hashem commands the Jewish nation to build the Mishkan. Each one of the utensils is specified as to how it should be constructed, its width, its length, and its height. The type of material whether it was gold, silver, or copper, is enumerated and the details of its ornaments are provided.

The procedure for the construction of each vessel is preceded by a command stated in the singular form: "And you shall make" "And you shall make a show bread table." "And you shall make a Menorah." "And you shall make an Altar."

The command is directed toward Moshe to delegate the construction. The Aron Kodesh, the Holy Ark is different. Its command is not stated in the singular form, rather in the plural. The Torah does not say and you shall make a Holy Ark, it states, "And they shall make a Holy Ark." The commentaries ask, why was the command to build the Ark the only one that was given to a group?

In a small shul in Yerushalayim, a daily Daf HaYomi shiur (Talmudic folio class) was held each morning before Shacharis. An elderly Russian immigrant attended the shiur. Quiet as he was, his

behavior in the shiur intrigued the lecturer. He would never ask a thing. Often he would nod off. Sometimes, when the Rabbi quoted a particular Talmudic sage, the old man's face would light up - especially when the Rabbi mentioned an opinion from a obscure Talmudic personality.

This behavior continued throughout the summer. Always quiet, the man would sometimes nod off, and at other times he would perk up. Then winter came. The group of men would gather around the table in the frigid mornings huddled close as they would warm to the strains of the Talmud and the straining heater in the old synagogue. The old man never missed a class.

One morning a rare snow blanketed Jerusalem. No one showed up to the shiur except the Rabbi and the elderly Russian Jew. Instead of giving his usual lecture, the Rabbi decided he would ask the old Jew a little bit about himself.

"Tell me," he inquired, "I watch you as I say my shiur. Sometimes you look intrigued but at other times you seem totally disinterested. The trouble is I would like to make the shiur more interesting for you during its entirety, but I can't seem to make out what perks you up and makes you doze?"

The old man smiled. "I never had a Jewish education. I can barely read Hebrew. I do not come to the shiur for the same reasons that the other men come." He paused as his eyes pondered his past. "You see, I was a soldier in the Red Army during World War II. Every day our commander would herd us into a room and put a gun to our heads. He commanded us to recite the names of every member of the Politburo. And we did. We learned those names backwards and forward. I come to this class to hear the names of every rabbi in the Talmud. If I cannot learn at least I will know the names of all the great sages! "That." he smiled "is my Daf HaYomi!"

Although the show bread table, the Menorah, and the Altar can be constructed by individuals-the Ark that holds the Torah is different. One man cannot make it alone. It must be a communal effort. Just as the Torah cannot be learned by one man alone, its Ark cannot be built by an individual either.

The Torah is given for everyone to learn and to experience - each one according to his or her own level and ability. Lighting a Menorah is a clear-cut ritual delegated to the Kohain. The Altar is used for the sacrifices brought by the kohanim. The Torah is for everybody. And each individual has his own Shas and Daf HaYomi. Each person has his share in Toras Yisrael. Everyone extracts something holy from the Torah. To some it may be extrapolative halachic theory, while for others it may be the refinement of character. And still for others it may be the names of Abayai and Rava. © 2002 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and Project Genesis, Inc.