

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI DOV KRAMER**

### Taking a Closer Look

There were 13 types of materials used to make the Mishkan (Rashi, Shemos 25:2), with the second material listed being silver (25:3). Although the Torah says that these materials should be given voluntarily (25:2), Rashi (25:3) points out that all of the silver needed for the Mishkan, which was used for the bases of the Mishkan's walls (the "adanim") and for the hooks ("vavay ha'amudim") that the walls of the courtyard were hung from (see 38:25-28), came from the involuntary half-shekels that were collected (see 30:13-15). Why was silver listed with the materials that were only given voluntarily if all of the silver needed for the Mishkan was collected mandatorily?

Rav Saadya Gaon (quoted by Ibn Ezra) and Rashi say that the additional silver, i.e. any silver donated (besides the mandatory half-shekel), was used to make other vessels to be used in the Temple service. As the Rambam says (Hilchos Bais Habechira 1:18-19), even though lesser materials could be used for these secondary vessels (such as tables to prepare things on and bowls to catch the blood to be sprinkled on the altar), if people were wealthy enough, even gold or silver should be used; "even the gates of the courtyard are covered with gold if they have the means." The question then becomes why silver is included with the other materials if none of the vessels described in the Torah are made from the silver that was voluntarily donated.

Ibn Ezra suggests that even though silver was a mandatory donation, it can still be listed with the other, voluntary, materials; it is not problematic to refer to all the materials as being "voluntary" if almost all of them were. He compares it to Ya'akov's children being described (Beraishis 35:26) as having been born in Padan Aram, even though Binyamin was born in Canaan, and to the 70 individuals said to have originally gone down to Egypt (Devarim 10:22), despite Yosef's sons being born in Egypt. Similarly, the Torah can refer to all the categories of donated items as being given willingly, even if the silver was not. However, as the Netziv (35:4) points out, the Torah describes the bringing of the silver together with the rest of the voluntary donations; according to Ibn Ezra, the silver was collected separately. Why would the Torah include silver in either place if it were given under different

circumstances, at a different time? Especially if including it with the other materials might lead some to donate additional silver when it wasn't necessary!

Several years ago ([www.aishdas.org/ta/5764/terumah.pdf](http://www.aishdas.org/ta/5764/terumah.pdf)), I suggested that there might be individuals that only had silver to donate. Not everyone had every type of material that could be donated (see 35:23-24); rather than excluding those that only had silver (such as silver coins, see Abarbanel, although his approach is problematic because the Torah testifies that there was more than enough of each material donated), the Torah included silver in the list of materials that could be donated so that those who only had silver could participate as well. By taking a slight detour, I would like to suggest an additional possibility.

Rashi tells us (25:2) that when G-d commands that materials be donated "for Me," it means "for My name." In other words, it shouldn't be donated in order to impress your peers or for any other secondary reason, but because G-d asked for it (or however "lishma" is understood). After listing all of the materials to be donated, G-d says, "and you should make for Me a Temple" (25:8), with Rashi again explaining that "for Me" means "for My name," i.e. not for secondary reasons. Why does the Torah need to tell us twice to do this "for G-d" and not for selfish reasons?

The obvious answer is that building the Mishkan was a multi-step process, with each step needing to be done "for G-d." Not only must the donations be given "for G-d," but the actual construction had to be "for G-d" as well. Since most people did not take part in the actual construction, it can be broken down even further, with the materials being separated "for G-d" (i.e. when taking some gold to be donated and leaving some at home, which would be the equivalent of our writing a check or taking some money out of the bank or our wallet) and then handing it over to the charity collector "for G-d" (see Levush HaOrah). There is another possibility as well.

Rashi (25:2) references the Talmud (Megilla 29b and Yerushalmi Peah 1:1), which says that three different types of "terumos" (separating personal property for a higher purpose) are being referred to here: the half-shekel that was used for the "adanim," the half-shekel collected (also mandatorily) for public-offerings, and the materials used for the construction of the Mishkan. Based on the breakdown of the three times a "terumah" is described, the first "for Me" that teaches us to do it "for G-d's sake" refers to the giving

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of the half-shekel that was used for the "adanim," while the second "for Me" comes after all the materials were listed, and would be referring to all of those materials being donated "for G-d's sake." The message is clear: even though they were required to give the half-shekel, it should also be given "for G-d," because G-d wants us to, not because we had to. The reason the Torah had to tell us twice to do it "for G-d" was to include both categories, the silver we were obligated to give and the materials we gave voluntarily, as things to be done "for G-d's sake."

[The middle category, the half-shekel given for the public offerings, could be learned from the first category; just as the mandatory half-shekel collected for the "adanim" should be given "for G-d," so too should the mandatory half-shekel collected for the offerings be given "for G-d." On the other hand, the half-shekel for the offerings, if it was not given willingly, was collected against their will, to the extent of confiscating possessions if necessary (see Rambam, Hilchos Shekalim 1:9). It is therefore appropriate that only the first and third categories of "terumah" have the word "for Me" attached to them. Nevertheless, this does not negate the idea that ideally this "terumah" should also be given "for G-d's sake."]

If the reason the Torah teaches us twice that the Mishkan's material should be given "for G-d" is for us to learn that even those "donations" that are obligatory should be given "for His sake," we can easily understand why the mandatory silver was included with the voluntary silver and the other materials that were donated voluntarily, as the same way everything else was given "for G-d's sake," so too should the half-shekel that was used for the "adanim" be given "for G-d's sake." © 2010 Rabbi D. Kramer

**RABBI SIR JONATHAN SACKS**

## **Covenant & Conversation**

**T**his week's sedra and those that follow it to the end of the book of Exodus, describe the great collective project of the Israelites in the desert: building a mikdash, a portable Sanctuary, that would serve as the visible home of the Divine presence. It was the first collective house of worship in the history of Israel.

The opening command, however, emphasizes an unusual dimension of the project: "G-d spoke to

Moses saying: 'Speak to the Israelites and have them bring Me an offering. Take My offering from everyone whose heart impels him to give... They shall make me a Sanctuary, and I will dwell among them.'" (Ex. 25:1-2,8)

The emphasis is on the voluntary nature of the gifts. Why so? The Sanctuary and its service were overwhelmingly compulsory, not voluntary. The regular offerings were minutely prescribed. So too were the contributions. Everyone had to give a half-shekel for the silver sockets needed for the building, and another half-shekel annually for the sacrifices. The Sanctuary itself was the pre-eminent domain of the holy, and the holy is where G-d's will rules, not ours. Why then was the Sanctuary specifically to be built through voluntary donations?

There are some biblical passages whose meaning becomes clear only in hindsight, and this is one. To understand this week's sedra we have to move forward almost five hundred years, to the time when King Solomon built the Temple. The story is one of the most ironic in Tanakh.

Our initial impression of Solomon is that he was a supremely wise king. He had asked G-d for wisdom, and was granted it in abundance: "G-d gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and the breadth of his understanding was measureless as is the sand on the sea shore." (I Kings 4:29)

During Solomon's reign, Israel reached its greatest heights, economic and politically. The building of the Temple was itself seen by the Bible as the completion of the exodus from Egypt. Unusually the text tells us the date of the project, not only in terms of years of the king's reign, but also in terms of the exodus: "In the 480th year after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign... he began to build the Temple of the Lord." (I Kings 6:1)

The reference to the exodus is striking and deliberate. It reminds us of the phrase Moses used to the Israelites as they were about to enter the land: "Now you have not yet come to the resting place and the inheritance that the Lord your G-d is giving you." (Deuteronomy 12:9)

The classic commentators take this to be a reference to Jerusalem and the Temple. Thus Solomon's project brought the narrative of the exodus to closure. It was the last chapter in a long story.

Yet ultimately, and significantly, Solomon failed as a king. After his death the kingdom divided. The ten northern tribes seceded from Solomon's son Rehoboam, and formed their own kingdom under the rebel Jeroboam. This was the critical turning-point in biblical history. Weakened by division, it could only be a matter of time before both kingdoms eventually fell to neighbouring empires, and so it happened.

The real question is not, why did Jeroboam rebel? Politics is full of such events. It is: how was he able to do so and succeed? Coups d'etat do not happen when a nation is flourishing, successful and at peace.

Israel was all these things in Solomon's reign. How then was Jeroboam able to mount a coup, with real expectation of success?

The answer lies in the impact the building of the Temple had on the people. We are told: "King Solomon conscripted labourers from all Israel-thirty thousand men. He sent them off to Lebanon in shifts of ten thousand a month, so that they spent one month in Lebanon and two months at home. Adoniram was in charge of the forced labour. Solomon had seventy thousand carriers and eighty thousand stonemasons in the hills, as well as thirty-three hundred foremen who supervised the project and directed the workmen." (I Kings 5:27-30)

The Tanakh tells us that it was this burden that made the people restive after Solomon's death: "So they (the people) sent for Jeroboam, and he and the whole assembly of Israel went to Rehoboam and said to him: 'Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labour and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you.'" (I Kings 12:3-4)

The elders who had been Solomon's advisors told Rehoboam to accede to the people's request: "If today you will be a servant to this people and serve them and give them a favourable answer, they will always be your servants" (12:7). Rehoboam, influenced by his own young, impetuous advisors, ignored their advice. He told the people he would increase, not reduce, the burden. From then on his fate was sealed.

Something strange is happening in this narrative. On several occasions we hear words that appear in the Mosaic books either in the context of Egyptian slavery or in laws forbidding the Israelites to act harshly towards slaves. The phrase "harsh labour", spoken by the people to Rehoboam, is used at the beginning of Exodus to describe the enslavement of the Israelites (Exodus 1:14). The description of Solomon's "carriers", *nosei saval*, reminds us of the sentence, "Moses grew up, and went out to his brothers and saw their burdens" (*sivlotam*, Ex. 2:11). After Solomon's death, the people use the word yoke: "Your father put a heavy yoke on us" (I Kings 12:4) -- yet another term that recalls slavery in Egypt: "Therefore, say to the Israelites: I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. (Ex. 6:6).

Solomon's supervisors are described as *harodim ba-am*, the verb used in Leviticus 25 to describe how a master should not treat a slave: "Do not rule over (*tirdeh*) them ruthlessly" (Lev. 25:43,46,53). Solomon built "store cities", *miskenot*, the same word used to describe the cities built by the Israelite slaves for Pharaoh (I Kings 9:19; Ex. 1:11). Like Pharaoh, Solomon had and chariots and riders (*rechev and parashim*, I Kings 9:19; Exodus 14-15).

Without saying so explicitly (indeed, at one point denying it: "But Solomon did not make slaves of any of the Israelites", I Kings 9:22), the Tanakh is hinting that the building of the Temple turned Israel into

a second Egypt. Solomon was altogether too close to being an Israelite Pharaoh.

The irony is overwhelming. Solomon was Israel's wisest king. The nation stood at the apex of its power and prosperity. Momentarily, it was at peace. The king was engaged in the holiest of tasks, the one that brought the exodus narrative to completion. Yet at that precise moment, the faultline developed that was eventually to bring centuries of tragedy. Why? Because Solomon in effect turned the Israelites into a conscripted labour force: the very thing they had left Egypt to avoid. On the surface, the text tells another story. Solomon fell from grace because his foreign wives led him astray into idolatry (I Kings 11:4). Yet it was not this that led to the rebellion of the people.

No sooner do we understand this than we appreciate the significance of another text. When David first conceived the plan of building the Temple, G-d sent word through the prophet Nathan: "I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with the tent as My dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel: Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?" (2 Samuel 7:6-7)

There is a hint here that G-d disclosed to David the danger involved in the project. Only later did it become clear. Even then, Solomon's son could have salvaged the situation, had he listened to the advice the elders gave him.

There is a profound theological statement here. The free G-d desires the free worship of free human beings. As the sages used to say: "The Holy One blessed be He does not behave tyrannically to his creatures" (*Avodah Zarah 3a*). It was not accidental but of the essence that the first house of G-d -- small, fragile, portable, the opposite of the grandeur of the Temple- was built by free, uncoerced, voluntary contributions. For G-d lives not in houses of wood and stone, but in minds and souls of free human beings. He is to be found not in monumental architecture, but in the willing heart. © 2010 Rabbi Sir J. Sacks and torah.org

**RABBI AVI WEISS**

## Shabbat Forshpeis

This week's portion talks about the first synagogue of all time-the mishkan. Because the chasm between the finite human being and the infinite G-d is great, the mishkan, was established so that there be a tangible place where people can feel more intensely, more powerfully, the presence of G-d. Synagogues have followed the model of the mishkan with this goal of spiritual connection in mind. The holiness of these places is contingent upon human input.

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

Maimonides concludes that just as G-d is above any boundary of time, so too the holiness that emerges from G-d is equally eternal. It follows, therefore, that Jerusalem's holiness is endless and infinite. It is a holiness that lasts forever. (Rambam, Laws of the Temple 6:16)

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

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

The Temple Mount and Jerusalem are the soul of the Jewish people and the soul of the Jewish land. It is above and beyond any boundary of time, and reminds us of our proud past and of our hope and faith in a promising future. © 2010 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 SHLOMO RISKIN**

## **Shabbat Shalom**

“**S**peak to the children of Israel: 'Let them take for Me a gift-offering...'” (Exodus 25:2) The central commandment of this week's Biblical portion and indeed for the last five portions of the Book of Exodus is: "They shall make for Me a Sanctuary so that I may dwell in their midst" (Ex 25:8). Our sacred text exquisitely describes in the minutest detail the manner and the materials of construction employed for the outer building of the Sanctuary as well as its sacred objects. This entire Sanctuary enterprise was completely "funded" by voluntary donations of the Israelites (25:2), and proved to be the most successful fundraising campaign in history; Moses even had to ask the people to cease bringing gifts because the supply

had exceeded the need (Ex. 36: 5-7). Apparently, the desert generation had not yet heard about endowment funds!

There is, however, one difficulty in the textual expression: G-d tells Moses to ask the Israelites to "take' for Me a gift-offering" (v'yik'hu). Ought not the word have been to "give" rather than to "take" for Me a gift-offering?

The Italian commentator Rabbi Ovadiah Sforno (1470 - 1550) writes that G-d was saying to Moses, "Tell the Israelites that I would like the gabbaim, or trustees of the Sanctuary, to collect gifts from each individual." Rav Haim of Brisk adds that the trustees would then take the donated materials and properly dispense them for use in the Sanctuary.

This procedure, rather than having the people themselves give directly to the Sanctuary, was necessary in order to teach the Israelites that no one individual privately owned any specific "piece" of the Sanctuary, which belonged in a certain sense to the entire nation of Israel - and really, to G-d, for whom the gifts had originally been made.

The importance of this teaching was brought to my attention in my former community in New York when a disagreement erupted over the right of a synagogue member who came late to the service to ask a visitor who was sitting in his seat (marked with his name) to please vacate it. As there was no other vacant seat in the Sanctuary at that time, the argument became very intense and almost led to a fistfight!

The lesson was strengthened when a member of one of the synagogue communities in Efrat removed "his" bima (the Torah table which also served as the Cantor's lectern) from the Sanctuary, because he felt that the individual in whose honor he had dedicated the bima had been wronged by the shul's gabbaim.

No accoutrement of a Sanctuary may belong to any individual, no matter how large a donation he or she might have made in order to dedicate it. The donor gives his offering to the trustees, and they then take from the Sanctuary funds to provide whatever objects are necessary.

Allow me to suggest an alternative explanation for the command, "Let them take for Me a gift-offering." One of the outstanding disciples of Rav Yisrael Salanter, (1810-1883), initiator of the Ethicist (Mussar) Movement, was Rav Yosef Yoizel of Novardok. This great Talmudic sage began a network of yeshivot throughout Europe - there were 180 of them before the Second World War and only one survived the Holocaust - dedicated to teaching the students to denigrate fashion and popular opinion in favor of total dedication to following G-d's "wishes."

Rav Yosef Yoizel had a student who seemed impervious to the unique spiritual and even iconoclastic attitudes of the Yeshiva, and was asked to leave. He was accepted to another yeshiva in a neighboring town, where he managed to remain for the required period of

study. Upon leaving that yeshiva, he became a very successful businessman.

Rav Yosef Yoizel asked to meet with him - and emerged with a million-ruble donation to start a new "Norvadok" yeshiva. The Dean of the yeshiva who had accepted Rav Yosef Yoizel's "reject" excitedly made an appointment with his former student, expecting to receive at least two million rubles; after all, he had looked after him when the student had no place to go. To his chagrin, he received a mere 36-ruble donation. In perplexed disappointment, he requested an explanation. "I will explain the matter to you," said the businessman. Rav Yosef Yoizel came to my home in the midst of a snowstorm. He walked straight into the salon, paid no attention whatsoever to the elegant furnishings, dirtied my expensive carpet with his muddied shoes, and immediately began to speak of the spiritual and ethical power a new Novardok yeshiva would add to the Jewish world. In his presence, all of my material wealth seemed meaningless unless it could be used to enhance our Jewish mission. I felt that he was giving me a gift; an opportunity to use my money wisely, and so I gladly took the opportunity to make my donation.

"When you entered my home, on the other hand, your eyes widened as you looked around at my art collection and my thick carpets. You removed your boots at the door and seemed to walk on eggshells so as not to damage in any way my furnishings. You prefaced my name with the title Reb, not because of my learning, but because of my money. In your presence, beloved Rebbe, I came to value my money even more, and so I was loathe to give away any more than 36 rubles..."

A number of years ago I visited a congregant in a hospice. He was a well-known philanthropist, whose many material assets could not bring him good health. "Apparently," he said, in the full knowledge that he would soon be leaving this material world, "the only money I really have is whatever I gave away to good causes." Many investors in the stock market or with Ponzi-like scheme investment brokers are not coming to the same realization. To give to a good cause is really to "take" on the highest level, because it enables our assets to live even beyond our lifetime. © 2010 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

### **RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND**

## **RavFrاند**

*Transcribed by David Twersky;*

*Assistance by Dovid Hoffman*

**A**t the end of the description of the Menorah, the pasuk [verse] says, "(U'Re-ay v'asay..."-"And see and construct according to the pattern that you were shown on the mountain" [25:40]. The Baal HaTurim has a very cryptic and enigmatic comment on

this pasuk: "There are only 3 times in all of Tanach that a pasuk begins with the word 'u'Re-ay' ['And see']".

The other two occurrences are both in Tehillim-"And see sons to your children, peace on Israel" [128:6] and "And see if I have an evil way; and lead me in the way of Eternity" [139:24]. The Baal HaTurim seems to provide us with a "Jewish Crossword Puzzle". The trick is to find the connection between these three pasukim [verses]. The Baal HaTurim himself suggests a common thread, but I will discuss an alternate explanation from the Shemen HaTov.

Rash"i on our pasuk comments that Moshe was puzzled about the appearance of the Menorah, until HaShem [G-d] showed him a replica of the Menorah made out of fire. Moshe was able to conceptualize all of the other Kaylim [vessels] of the Mishkan, but somehow he had difficulty conceptualizing the complex shape and structure of the Menorah. Therefore, HaShem formed a Menorah out of fire and showed Moshe exactly what the Menorah looked like. However, even that did not help. We know from another statement of the Sages that even after Moshe saw the image of the Menorah, he still could not construct it. Finally, HaShem instructed Moshe to (have Betzalel) throw the gold into the fire, and the Menorah was created miraculously.

The question must be asked: HaShem knew Moshe's capabilities. If, ultimately, HaShem knew that Moshe would not be able to construct the Menorah on his own, why did HaShem ask him to do something that he could not do?

The Shemen HaTov answers: it was vital and crucial for Moshe to see the shape and form of the Menorah-even if he would not be able to duplicate it. A person must have a vision of what is required and expected. If one does not have the vision, he cannot even begin. One must have a dream, whether that dream can be realized and become a reality or not. The minimum that is absolutely necessary is the perception of a direction and goal.

The initial image that HaShem showed to Moshe was the vision of the Menorah. Moshe was then at least aware of the dream-the ultimate goal. If later, Moshe could not construct the Menorah himself, then HaShem would help, but at least Moshe knew what he was trying to accomplish.

There are many things in life that are beyond our capabilities. We need the Help of Heaven to accomplish them. However, in order to be able to invoke the Help of Heaven and reach that dream, we must first possess the dream and the vision. This is what we learn from the pasuk: "See and construct, according to the image that I showed you on the mountain."

Our Sages teach us that children, life and sustenance are dependent upon 'Mazal' [fortune]. We can do very little about how many children we will have; what type of children we will have; how our life will turn out; how our livelihood will go. These are things that are

up to HaShem. But we must have the dream on our own.

The Shemen HaTov explains that this is what Dovid HaMelech [King David] is saying in the second of the pasukim in Tehillim "And see..." [139,24]. HaShem, I do not know what You have in store for me, but if it is not the type of productive life that I dream for, please fill it in, in accordance with those dreams. The dreams, however, are mine.

In addition, the Shemen HaTov explains that this is the connection that the Baal HaTurim is making to the first of the pasukim: "And see children to your children; peace on Israel". We never know what we will see from our children. Who knows? There are so many factors. We can try, put in effort, pray, and do everything within our power. But who knows what will happen? There are so many factors that mold and affect a child. But we must have dreams for our children. I, like you, want to see children from my children. I want to see my grandchildren sharing my values. I want to see my children committed to Torah. I want them to be G-d fearing, honest Jews. I want to see from them, children who share those values as well. That is the definition of "Peace upon Israel".

These things are not always up to us or under our control to carry out, but we must have the dreams and the wishes. We must always have the proper directions and goals. © 2010 Rabbi Y. Frand and torah.org

#### **RABBI BEREL WEIN**

### **Wein Online**

**T**he Torah in this week's parsha dwells upon the giving of one's wealth, assets, time and talents for an altruistic public cause—in this case the construction of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle of Israel. The Torah lists a prerequisite for being able to give such a donation of effort and wealth. First the donor's heart must be willing and compassionate. Though charity is eventually realized in the actual act of giving, it begins within the heart of the giver.

Charity is an emotional and oftentimes gut-wrenching experience, both for the donor and the recipient. The Talmud indicates that the giving of wealth alone is insufficient to meet the true demands of charitable behavior and action. "G-d wants our hearts" is the Talmudic phrase that is applicable to charitable giving, as well as to most of Jewish life and law.

Giving without passion and sympathy is still giving, but it is imperfect. The heart must want before the hand signs the check. The Torah sets no goal or specified amount as to what one's donation to the Mishkan should or would be. Some people brought gold and silver, others gave items that would be considered to be less expensive and not as valuable.

The Torah makes no reference to these obvious differences. The copper and bronze mirrors that plated the altar, donated by the women of Israel,

are given the same prominence in the Torah as the gold that was donated for the Holy Ark and the other artifacts. The Torah measures the giving by the intent of the heart of the giver.

As someone who has been engaged in Torah and Jewish fundraising for many decades, I can testify that when the emotion is present in the heart of the giver, the check is correspondingly larger. While I was in America recently I met a Jew from Israel who was collecting money to help a destitute family cope with a very serious medical issue. While in Los Angeles, he was robbed at gunpoint and the few thousand dollars that he had collected was stolen from him.

Later, when I met him in a different American city, he told me that people were more generous to him after they knew what had happened, even though the purpose of his collection had not changed. I told him that it was the emotion of the unfairness of his loss that now touched the hearts of people and that naturally their donations increased. The nation of Haiti required enormous financial and social support from the rest of the world long before the devastating earthquake ravaged it. But it took the earthquake to reach the hearts of individuals, organizations and governments worldwide. The measure of the truly righteous is how open their hearts are to others' problems and needs "normally." This, in essence, is the lesson of Parshat Terumah—though the original Mishkan constructed by Moshe no longer exists amongst us. © 2010 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](http://www.rabbiwein.com)

#### **RABBI DOVID SIEGEL**

### **Haftorah**

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

In the midst of this heavy construction Hashem sent Shlomo Hamelech a prophetic message and stated, "(Regarding) The house you are building, if you walk in My statues, adhere to My laws and guard all My mitzvos.... I will dwell amongst the Jewish people and not forsake My nation, Israel." (M'lochim I 6:12,13) Hashem told Shlomo Hamelech at the outset that the expressed purpose for all his labor was to create an earthly abode for Hashem. The impressive architectural

structures, jewel studded walls and gold trimmings would not secure this objective. The sole factor in this would be guarding Hashem's statutes and carefully adhering to all His mitzvos. Hashem declared that the entire value of this magnificent edifice depended upon the Jewish people. If they sincerely desired to unite with Him they would merit His Divine Presence. Hashem pledged to remain amongst them as long as they displayed true desire to be with Him.

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

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

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

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

second Temple did not even merit the return of the holy Ark and Hashem's Divine Presence was not intensely sensed within its walls. (S'forno S'hmos 38:21)

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

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

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

devote sincere effort towards preserving our synagogue's sanctity we would be overwhelmed by Hashem's intense presence sensed therein. May we soon merit Hashem's full return to His people and may we be privileged to stand in His sacred presence forever. © 2010 Rabbi Y. Neuburger and The TorahWeb Foundation

### RABBI NAFTALI REICH

## Legacy

**W**hat is the point of asking someone to do the impossible? What is to be gained by having a person make the attempt and fail? In bringing up our children, we are always careful to demand of them only what they can realistically accomplish. Otherwise, we would be setting them up for failure. Yet in this week's parashah, we find that Hashem does exactly the opposite.

"And you shall make a menorah of pure gold, hammered," Hashem told Moses, "the menorah will be made." The Midrash observes that at first Moses was commanded "to make a menorah," but much as he tried, he was unable to produce it according to the Torah's specifications. Finally, Hashem told him to throw the gold into the fire and "the menorah will be made" by itself-miraculously.

We can safely assume that Moses, the greatest man who ever lived, made the most valiant attempt to fulfill the commandment of making a menorah, that he exerted himself to the full extent of his considerable talents and abilities. And yet he failed. Surely, then, it was not humanly possible to create such a menorah by any means short of a miracle. If so, why did Hashem command Moses to produce a menorah when He knew failure was guaranteed? Why didn't Hashem produce the menorah miraculously right from the beginning?

A similar question arises earlier in the parashah, where we find an interesting paradox. The Torah commands that the Holy Ark be carried by long wooden rods inserted through golden rings in its sides, and that these rods never be removed; other Tabernacle furnishings were also carried by similar means, but there is no prohibition against removing the rods. Why was it so important that the rods of the Holy Ark never be removed? After all, our Sages tell us that the Holy Ark traveled under its own power and actually carried its bearers with it. The act of carrying was only an illusion. In real terms, however, the bearers of the Holy Ark contributed nothing to its transportation, and yet, here in particular, special emphasis is placed on keeping the rods of the bearers in place. Why is this so?

The commentators explain that a profound lesson is being taught here. Every person in the world is obligated to accomplish as much good as he possibly can. He is obligated to provide for his family, help those less fortunate than himself, support institutions of Torah

and charity. This is called *hishtadlus*. Although a person knows that in the final analysis Hashem controls the world and everything that happens in it, he should not say, "Why should I bother when it is all up to Hashem anyway?" Hashem wants all people to exert themselves to the full extent of their abilities, as if it were all up to them. Then-and only then-does Hashem reward their efforts.

True, the Holy Ark carried itself, and it is for this very reason that the rods must never be removed. Don't delude yourself, says the Torah, into thinking you don't need to lift up the rods because it won't make a difference anyway. The omnipresent rods are there to remind you that you are always obligated to do your utmost-no matter what.

For this same reason, Hashem commanded Moses to make the menorah, even though He knew it was impossible. Again we are being taught the same lesson. A person is required to try to the best of his ability, regardless of whether he can assume that his efforts will be crowned with success. Moses was rewarded for all his exertions in the attempt to make the menorah, even though in the end it took a miracle to produce it.

In our own lives, we too are sometimes overwhelmed by the daunting tasks that face us, whether in our private lives, the workplace or our obligations to the community. We sometimes cannot see how we will ever achieve success, and therefore, we become discouraged and lose heart. Let us draw on the lessons of the golden menorah and the Holy Ark. Let us reflect on the deeper truths of existence, that success and failure are never in our own power, that all we can do is try. And let us pray to Hashem that He look kindly upon our sincere efforts and bless them with success-even if it takes a miracle. © 2009 Rabbi N. Reich & torah.org



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