

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

As soon as we read the opening lines of Terumah we begin the massive shift from the intense drama of the exodus with its signs and wonders and epic events, to the long, detailed narrative of how the Israelites constructed the Tabernacle, the portable sanctuary that they carried with them through the desert.

By any standards it is a part of the Torah that cries out for explanation. The first thing that strikes us is the sheer length of the account: one third of the book of Shemot, five parshiyot -- Terumah, Tetsaveh, half of Ki Tissa, Vayakhel and Pekudei, interrupted only by the story of the golden calf.

This becomes even more perplexing when we compare it with another act of creation, namely G-d's creation of the universe. That story is told with the utmost brevity: a mere thirty four verses. Why take some fifteen times as long to tell the story of the Sanctuary?

The question becomes harder still when we recall that the mishkan was not a permanent feature of the spiritual life of the children of Israel. It was specifically designed to be carried on their journey through the wilderness. Later, in the days of Solomon, it would be replaced by the Temple in Jerusalem. What enduring message are we supposed to learn from a construction that was not designed to endure?

Even more puzzling is that fact that the story is part of the book of Shemot. Shemot is about the birth of a nation. Hence Egypt, slavery, Pharaoh, the plagues, the exodus, the journey through the sea and the covenant at Mount Sinai. All these things would become part of the people's collective memory. But the Sanctuary, where sacrifices were offered, surely belongs to Vayikra, otherwise known as Torat Kohanim, Leviticus, the book of priestly things. It seems to have no connection with Exodus whatsoever.

The answer, I believe, is profound.

This week's issue of Toras Aish is dedicated
in memory of
Shirley Schulder
Shifrah bat Yaakov
whose yartzeit is the 5th of Adar
by her son Bill Schulder

The transition from Bereishit to Shemot, Genesis to Exodus, is about the change from family to nation. When the Israelites entered Egypt they were a single extended family. By the time they left they had become a sizeable people, divided into twelve tribes plus an amorphous collection of fellow travellers known as the *erev rav*, the "mixed multitude."

What united them was a fate. They were the people whom the Egyptians distrusted and enslaved. The Israelites had a common enemy. Beyond that they had a memory of the patriarchs and their G-d. They shared a past. What was to prove difficult, almost impossible, was to get them to share responsibility for the future.

Everything we read in Shemot tells us that, as is so often the case among people long deprived of freedom, they were passive and they were easily moved to complain. The two often go together. They expected someone else, Moses or G-d himself, to provide them with food and water, lead them to safety, and take them to the promised land.

At every setback, they complained. They complained when Moses' first intervention failed: "May the Lord look on you and judge you! You have made us obnoxious to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us." (Ex. 5:21)

At the Red Sea they complained again: "They said to Moses, 'Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!'" (Ex. 14:11-12)

After the division of the Red Sea, the Torah says: "When the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and believed in him and in Moses his servant" (Ex. 14:31). But after a mere three days they were complaining again. There was no water. Then there was water but it was bitter. Then there was no food.

"The Israelites said to them, 'If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.'" (Ex. 16:3)

Soon Moses himself is saying: "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me." (Ex. 17:4)

**TORAS AISH IS A WEEKLY PARSHA
NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTED VIA EMAIL
AND THE WEB AT WWW.AISHDAS.ORG/TA.
FOR MORE INFO EMAIL YITZW1@GMAIL.COM**

The material presented in this publication was collected from email subscriptions, computer archives and various websites. It is being presented with the permission of the respective authors. Toras Aish is an independent publication, and does not necessarily reflect the views of any synagogue or organization.

**TO DEDICATE THIS NEWSLETTER PLEASE CALL
(973) 277-9062 OR EMAIL YITZW1@GMAIL.COM**

By now G-d has performed signs and wonders on the people's behalf, taken them out of Egypt, divided the sea for them, given them water from a rock and manna from heaven, and still they do not cohere as a nation. They are a group of individuals, unwilling or unable to take responsibility, to act collectively rather than complain.

And now G-d does the single greatest act in history. He appears in a revelation at Mount Sinai, the only time in history that G-d has appeared to an entire people, and the people tremble. There never was anything like it before; there never will be again.

How long does this last? A mere forty days. Then the people make a golden calf.

If miracles, the division of the sea and the revelation at Mount Sinai fail to transform the Israelites, what will? There are no greater miracles than these.

That is when G-d does the single most unexpected thing. He says to Moses: speak to the people and tell them to contribute, to give something of their own, be it gold or silver or bronze, be it wool or animal skin, be it oil or incense, or their skill or their time, and get them to build something together -- a symbolic home for my presence, a Tabernacle. It doesn't need to be large or grand or permanent. Get them to make something, to become builders. Get them to give.

Moses does. And the people respond. They respond so generously that Moses is told, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the Lord commanded to be done" (Ex. 36:5), and Moses has to say, Stop.

During the whole time the Tabernacle was being constructed, there were no complaints, no rebellions, no dissension. What all the signs and wonders failed to do, the construction of the Tabernacle succeeded in doing. It transformed the people. It turned them into a cohesive group. It gave them a sense of responsibility and identity.

Seen in this context, the story of the Tabernacle was the essential element in the birth of a nation. No wonder it is told at length; no surprise that it belongs to the book of Exodus; and there is nothing ephemeral about it. The Tabernacle did not last forever, but the lesson it taught did.

It is not what G-d does for us that transforms us, but what we do for G-d. A free society is best

symbolized by the Tabernacle. It is the home we build together. It is only by becoming builders that we turn from subjects to citizens. We have to earn our freedom by what we give. It cannot be given to us as an unearned gift. It is what we do, not what is done to us, that makes us free. That is a lesson as true today as it was then. © 2013 Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and torah.org

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

Giving away some of one's material wealth is never an easy thing. Our instinct tells us that what is mine, earned through my efforts, should always remain mine and in my possession. In the phrase of the rabbi, we have "a jaundiced eye" towards others and we resent their imposing themselves upon us for continued help and financial donations. We do not even think ourselves to be selfish for thinking and behaving in this fashion.

After all there is a rabbinic opinion in Avot that states that what is mine is mine and what is yours is yours and that this viewpoint is a balanced and median one. Yet there is another opinion expressed in that very same mishna in Avot that declares such an attitude regarding one's possessions to be the trait of the wicked people from the locality of Sodom. This is in line with the Torah's early description of human nature as "being evil from its earliest youth."

The Torah recognizes human nature for what it is. Man is born as a wild donkey, selfish, screaming, kicking and grasping. The Torah came to adjust human nature to seek higher goals and greater moral and social stature. We cannot completely alter human nature. But we can refine it and direct it towards noble goals and higher purposes.

The Torah recognizes that what is mine is mine and what is yours is yours and yet it points out that this seemingly logical balanced view eventually leads down the slippery slope of Sodomite behavior. One must therefore train one's self in the art of giving and donating one's wealth to others, be they individuals in need or worthy institutions and causes such as the Mishkan/tabernacle.

I unfortunately recently spent over a month confined to a sickbed until the infection that I had came under control and I was able to start walking again. The problem was that during that month of complete physical inactivity my back and leg muscles atrophied, so that even though I wished to walk upright and normally again I could not do so without great pain and difficulty. Eventually, I slowly returned to my normal health and my muscles again became reacquainted with bearing my not inconsiderable bulk.

This physical rule applies to charitable giving as well. One who does not give charity regularly will find that the generous hand muscles that sign the check and open the wallet have atrophied so that even when one

wishes to give, it is painful and sometimes even impossible to do so. Therefore the Torah places great emphasis in this week's parsha upon the ability to give freely and voluntarily to the great cause -- the holy Mishkan/Tabernacle.

It almost becomes the primary commandment in the Torah, in terms of the attention devoted to it in the holy text itself. This is because most of the other commandments of the Torah require discipline and control, not to give into our base natures, but here the Torah demands that we completely overcome our natural state of what is mine is mine and what is yours is yours.

Here we are required not to merely channel or control our nature but rather to change it completely. And that requires constant effort, training and habitual behavior. © 2013 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“You shall make a menorah out of pure gold... its base, stem... and flowers... and its six branches extending from its sides, three branches on one side of the menorah and three branches on the other side;... they shall all be hammered out of single piece of pure gold" (Exodus 25:31-36).

This week's portion of Terumah comes immediately after the Divine Revelation at Sinai: "And they shall make for Me a sanctuary so that I may dwell amongst them" (Exodus 25:8).

The Hebrews are commanded to build an elegant, majestic and portable House of G-d to carry with them during their 40-year desert sojourn. This desert sanctuary would morph into the more permanent Holy Temple once Israel settled in the Promised Land of Israel.

It is no wonder that the first of the sacred furnishings of G-d's "temporary home" was the ark, the repository for the tablets of the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments), which hold the major content of the Divine Revelation. The Holy Ark was fashioned out of acacia wood covered with a layer of pure gold both on the inside and outside. A cherub was hammered out at each end of its golden cover.

Each cherub had the face of child and a winged body serving as a representative of and protection for the Torah, which constitutes the beloved, holy and eternal words of G-d's covenant with Israel. These cherubs symbolize the children of Israel, who study the Torah in each generation, and the sages of Israel, who interpret it.

However, there was a second sacred object in the sanctuary which is also linked to Torah: the

menorah, or candelabrum. The root of this word is ner, candle, as in the verse, "the candle is commandment and Torah is light" (Proverbs 6:23). The menorah featured seven branches with a cup atop each. These cups held the wick, the oil and the flame of the candle.

The entire menorah is unmistakably similar to a tree, with branches, stems and flowers. This symbol is most aptly explained by the verse describing Torah as "a tree of life to those who grasp it, and those who uphold it will be blessed" (Proverbs 3:18).

Why are there two different sacred accouterments to the Sanctuary, the ark and the menorah, each of which is identified with Torah? Do these two objects of art and sanctity express different aspects of Torah? I would maintain that since the ark is found within the Holy of Holies, the innermost sanctum of the holy Temple, and since within this ark we find the holy tablets of stone, the ark represents the exclusive Torah of Israel. This is our sacred heritage that we must protect and transmit to our children and children's children from generation to generation.

The light of the menorah, however, illuminates not only the space around itself but far beyond, representing the importance of spreading Torah throughout the world. The tree of life must be preserved for those who wish to use Torah to perfect, or complete, the world in the kingship of G-d. The Torah that will return us to Eden is the Torah destined for all of humanity.

For this reason, the menorah cannot be merely gold plated as is the ark; it must be beaten out of one piece of pure gold, gold both within and without, because in order to be a kingdom of priests, teachers who reach out to the world, we must first become a holy nation, equally pure both within and without; otherwise we will never succeed in influencing the world.

Based upon these two aspects of Torah, the Holy Ark, which protects the Torah for Israel and the menorah, which spreads the Torah throughout the world, there were two types of windows in the holy Temple.

There were opaque windows, which prevented the outside world from seeing the Torah within, and there were transparent windows, which allowed the Torah to extend outwards (King Solomon made both transparent and opaque windows for the Temple, I Kings 6:4).

The Temple itself featured a sacrificial ritual that was unique to Israel, which included the Yom Kippur offerings that brought forgiveness and atonement exclusively to Israel. But the Temple also had an open-door policy that welcomed gentiles (I Kings 8:41-43) and encouraged all nations to "beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks" (Isaiah 2, Micah 4).

The Hanukka menorah (hanukia) was introduced after the comparatively small Maccabean army purified the Temple from Hellenistic influence and

then (post-165 BCE) reached out to the world, publicizing G-d's miracle. It must be kindled by in public thoroughfares as a message to the world. It is not mere coincidence that this "menorah to the world" has become the branding image of Chabad, which lights Hanukka menorahs in public places all over the world. And it was the Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson (of blessed memory) who taught his disciples the necessity of teaching the seven Noahide laws to every human being. © 2013 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

After first listing the items that G-d asked the Children of Israel to donate (Sh'mos 25:3-7), the Torah then tells us what these donations will go towards. "And you shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell amongst you" (25:8). This is the case not only when G-d commands Moshe about the Mishkan, but also when Moshe relays the commandment to the nation (35:5-9). There, the list ends with the general request that "all wise-hearted should come and do all that G-d has commanded" (35:10) before finally letting everyone know what the donations will be for, "the sanctuary" (35:11). Shouldn't G-d have first informed them of what the appeal was for, and then, after motivating them to give to the worthy cause, list what needed to be donated? Would a fundraiser ask for donations before describing where the money will go or how it will be used?

Not only isn't the "big picture," the sanctuary, mentioned until after all the materials were listed, but the specific uses of each material isn't mentioned either, except for the last few; "oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the incense" (25:6), and precious stones for the "ephod" and "chosen" (25:7), two of the garments worn by the Kohain Gadol. Why were the purposes of these items included, but not those of any other materials? The way oil is listed is a bit strange as well; since oil was needed for lighting and for anointing, why was the only lighting mentioned? Both purposes of the spices are mentioned (they were used in the anointing oil and for the incense); why is the anointing oil only included with the spices, but not with its main ingredient, the oil? What about the oil for the meal offerings? Why wasn't it mentioned as well? Or the flour for the "show bread" and the meal offerings? Or the animals needed for the offerings? Or the firewood? Why are only some of the materials needed for the sanctuary service mentioned, but not all of them?

Tosfos addresses this last issue, explaining that only materials needed for the structure itself (including the priestly garments) are listed; none of the materials needed exclusively for offerings are mentioned. The anointing oil was needed to consecrate the Mishkan

and its vessels, so is considered a "structural need." Royal palaces (and perhaps pagan temples in the ancient Near East) were constantly lit and kept fragrant; it would be inappropriate for the earthly home of the King of kings to be in a less honorable state than that of human kings. Therefore, the oil used to light G-d's sanctuary and the incense used to keep it pleasant-smelling are also considered "structural needs."

Rabbi Yitzchok Sorotzkin (Rinas Yitzchok II) quotes Rabbi Dovid Soloveitchik, sh'lita, who suggests that the reason the purposes of the last few items were given is to avoid having them donated for one purpose but used for a purpose with a lower level of holiness (see Rambam, Hilchos T'murah 4:11). For example, the precious stones were used for the priestly garments, not for the Mishkan itself. Upon hearing that these were needed for the Mishkan, a potential donor might think that they would adorn the structure itself and donate them for that purpose, thereby making them ineligible to be used for the priestly garments. By mentioning what these items would be used for up front, this issue was avoided. However, as Rabbi Sorotzkin points out, some of the materials that are listed without specifying their purpose(s) were used for making the priestly garments as well. If the dyed wool was donated for the sanctuary itself, and using it for garments instead is a problem, why wasn't its purpose spelled out too? (Rabbi Sorotzkin leaves this issue unresolved.)

Perhaps this was why the purpose of the donations, that they were going towards a sanctuary for G-d, was left unexplained until after the list of materials was given; they could not be donated specifically for the sanctuary, or for any specific item in the sanctuary, but were donated "to G-d" ("for My name," see Rashi on 25:2, adjusting the expression to mean "for G-d to use in any way He sees fit" rather than "for His benefit, not for personal benefit or satisfaction"). Just as one couldn't donate gold and insist that it be used for the holy ark rather than being part of the gold-plated wall beams, it couldn't be expected that any material donated would be used for the structure rather than for one of the vessels or garments. By asking for donations before explaining what the donations would be used for, G-d made it known that the donations should not be intended for anything specific.

This still leaves us with the question of why the specific purpose of some of the materials are mentioned (and why oil is only implicitly connected to the anointing oil). Even though one could not specify which item the materials donated were for, it is normal for an individual to hope that his donation would be used for the most holy, prestigious parts of the Mishkan. One could donate gold and hope it would be used for the ark, even though he knew it could be used for the gold threads of the priestly garments. All of the items listed were used, or also used, in the structure of the Mishkan, with the exception of the oil, spices and precious stones. There may be no halachic issue with

using any material donated for anything, but that doesn't mean an individual who donated something for the Mishkan wouldn't be disappointed if he knew that what he donated was put to a lesser use. In order to avoid a situation where someone donated something thinking it could possibly be used for the Mishkan itself only to find out that the material he donated wasn't even used for the structure, G-d specified which materials were needed for the Mishkan without being part of the structure itself; oil, spices, and precious stones. There was no need to list all of the uses of these items explicitly, as long as it was clear that these materials were not needed for the structure. Therefore, despite not mentioning the Mishkan until after listing the materials needed, the purposes of these items was mentioned, thereby avoiding anyone being disappointed when they found out that the item they donated wasn't used in the construction of the Mishkan or its vessels.

Ten years ago (in 5763), I suggested another possible reason why G-d didn't mention what the donations would be used for until after listing the materials; while preparing this piece I saw that the Chasam Sofer (in *Toras Moshe*) makes the same comparison, *baruch she'kivanti*. The Mishkan was built after Moshe was able to persuade G-d to (at least partially) forgive the sin of the "golden calf" (see Rashi on 35:1), indicating that the relationship between the Children of Israel and the Creator was still intact, despite the setback. In fact, our sages tell us that the gold given for the Mishkan (the very first substance asked to be donated) atoned for the gold given to make the "golden calf" (*Tanchuma* 8). However, one of that sin's lasting effects was the loss of the status attained at Mt. Sinai -- the "crowns" the nation had earned when they accepted the Torah (33:4-6). The Talmud (*Shabbos* 88a) tells us that these crowns were placed on the head of each member of the nation because they first said "we will do" and then said "and we will listen" (24:7), i.e. they did not need to hear what it was that G-d expected of them before committing themselves to do it.

Asking for donations prior to explaining what the donated materials would be for re-established (to some extent) this commitment to "do" even before knowing the details. It may have taken only a few seconds for the list of substances to be read, but in that short amount of time the people were able to commit to giving even before knowing what they were giving to. As soon as gold was mentioned, those with gold were able to think to themselves, "I have gold, and if G-d wants it for something, He can have it" without questioning what He wanted it for. By recreating the commitment prior to knowing the details, similar to what they had done when they accepted the Torah, the nation proved it was still (or once again) worthy of its special connection to G-d, as symbolized by the Mishkan. Delaying relaying what the donations were for allowed the donors to willingly part with their possessions knowing only that G-d

wanted it, without having to know why He wanted it.
© 2013 Rabbi D. Kramer

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg,

Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne

“**M**ake the Tabernacle out of ten curtains of twisted linen...” [Shemot 26:1]. The length of each curtain was twenty-eight Amot and the width was four Amot. "Five curtains should be attached to one another" [26:3]. Rashi explains that the curtains should be sown in two sets of five each. The two large cloths that were thus formed were then joined together by hooks and loops. One may ask about the point of this division. If what was needed was to have one piece of cloth forty Amot long, all ten curtains should have been sown together, and if it was necessary to have two separate pieces of cloth, why were they attached with hooks?

Sforno implies that since the two halves of the cloth were attached with the hooks at the line of contact between the holy area and the Holy of Holies, they are meant to show us that while the two areas in the Tabernacle are at different levels of sanctity, they are not to be separated. Covering the entire roof with a single cloth would have meant that there is no difference between the holy area and the Holy of Holies. On the other hand, using two separate cloths to cover the Tabernacle would have meant that the two levels of holiness are completely separate and opposite to each other. So the two pieces were neither sown together nor left kept separate but were attached with hooks and loops.

We can learn a lesson from this -- there is a difference between the holy and the secular levels, but they are not completely separate. There is mutual contact between them, and they cannot exist totally separate from each other, in the same way that the body and the soul depend on each other's existence.

We must take this idea into account now that we are rebuilding our national life. While it is true that the author of "*Chemdat Halevavot*" wrote that "the more the physical settlement increases, the greater will be the destruction of the intellect," the Chatam Sofer explained that this refers to the situation outside of Eretz Yisrael. Within our land, everything that is built is within the framework of a mitzva and preparation for holiness. What is needed is to know the proper proportion. As is written, "The Holy One, Blessed be He, took hold of Yeravam by his cloak and said to him, 'Repent, and I, you, and the son of Yishai will walk together in the Garden of Eden' (Yeravam would be involved in secular matters, and David would be involved in holiness). But when Yeravam asked, 'Who will be in front?' the answer was, 'The son of Yishai will lead.'" [*Yalkut Shimoni*

Melachim I, 202]. That is, the secular will serve as a basis for the holy.

As Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook said, "Differentiation is not separation." I heard him say that one time when he was on a ship he met the poet Chernikhovshy, who asked if he wanted to hear a new poem that he had written. After he read the poem, Chernikhovsky noted that Rav Kook had listen with rapt attention, and that he was surprised that a rabbi was so interested in a nonreligious poem. Rav Kook replied that many of the poets in the nation wrote secular poetry, and that the holy and the secular are not disconnected from each other. Separation exists only between the holy and the impure, and ritually impure material cannot enter the Temple (and Rav Kook took this opportunity to criticize poems Chernikhovsky had written that included impure ideas). © 2013 Rabbi A. Bazak and Machon Zomet

RABBI YISROEL CINER

Parsha Insights

Imagine a fundraiser who comes to your door and just when you think he's going to give you the pitch and ask you to really dig down deep, he asks you to take!

"And Hashem spoke to Moshe saying: Speak to Bnei Yisroel {the Children of Israel} and take for me donations. [25:1]" The Medrash quotes the verse [Mishlei/Proverbs 4] Ki lekach tov nasati lachem {A good taking I have given you}, my Torah, do not abandon."

We discussed last week that when one lends money to a poor person, Hashem guarantees the loan and one will not lose out from the process. Our parsha teaches how one can make the transition from 'not losing' to gaining tremendously.

The Mishna [Avos] teaches that one should not be like a servant who serves the master in order to receive a reward. The term the Mishna uses for reward is 'pras.' An additional meaning for 'pras' is half or partial. The Hafla'ah explains that a person's intentions have a profound effect on the ultimate reward. If one does things for the reward then one will receive true 'pras'? a reward that will be just a part of what one could have received.

By giving a donation to the Mishkan {Tabernacle} in those days or by donating to our present day Tabernacles, one is really receiving and taking in an enormous way. One can give and focus on the receiving and therefore receive his 'pras' or one can give with the intent of giving and receive that much more. All of this is indicated in the passuk which says: "And take for me a donation." If the donation is given with the focus and intention being for me, for Hashem, then it is taking to the full degree.

The Talmud [Kiddushin 31A], when discussing the laws of honoring parents, relates the story of Dama the son of Netina who owned the type of precious gems that were needed for the priestly garments. The Rabbis

approached him, willing to pay a fantastic sum for these stones. He declined since he would have had to wake up his father in order to give them the gems. The next year, a red heifer was born to his flock. When the Rabbis approached him to buy it, he said: "I know that whatever sum I'll ask you'll pay, but I'm only going to ask for what I lost as a result of honoring my father. With an attitude that he wasn't gaining by performing this mitzvah but rather was losing, we can understand why his reward was paid out in this world with the monetary value of a red heifer.

Contrast that with the story of a disciple of the Chofetz Chaim who, mired in poverty, asked that Hashem pay him the reward of just one of his mitzvos with the money he needed to support his family. The Chofetz Chaim explained that when you buy an item that costs a few dollars you can ask for change from a ten dollar bill. However, when buying that item, you can't ask for change from a million dollar check. A mitzvah, with its incredible value, he explained, can't be cashed in for some food.

A person doesn't lose out. When done with the right intentions it's an eternal magnification that can't be lowered to the value of anything worldly. Not even a red heifer. © 2013 Rabbi Y. Ciner and torah.org

RABBI DOVID SIEGEL

Haftorah

This 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 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. © 2013 Rabbi D. Siegel and torah.org

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik of blessed memory, points out that prayer and prophecy are two sides of the same coin. While both involve dialogue between the human being and G-d, there is one major difference: In prophecy G-d initiates the dialogue, while in prayer, the human being is the initiator.

But how can the limited and finite person interface with the unlimited, infinite G-d when the distance is so great? Furthermore, how can one initiate contact when the chasm is so vast?

The mishkan (tabernacle), constructed by the Jews at G-d's behest in the desert, plays a crucial role in addressing this very issue.

Clearly G-d does not command that the tabernacle be built for Himself. G-d is everywhere and His Being fills the entire world, therefore a specific dwelling is no use for him. No wonder the text in our parsha states: "And they shall build for Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them (betokham)," (Exodus 25:8) rather than saying "that I may dwell in it (betokho)." Betokho would imply the mishkan can actually contain G-d.

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

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

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

This is also the case with the everyday contemporary mishkan-the synagogue itself. If void of spiritual meaning, the synagogue becomes an empty shell, bricks without soul. Our challenge is to lift our houses of worship to the full potential of their spiritual heights to become a place where everyone is embraced-a place of study and transcendence where we reach beyond ourselves to touch the Divine in the hope that G-d will dwell betokheinu, among all of us.

© 2013 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 RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

Parshat Terumah is the beginning of the building of the Mishkan, where G-d would dwell among the Jews as they traveled in the desert. To build the Mishkan materials had to be collected, and G-d commanded the Jews to collect several types. After listing the need for metals, wools, hairs, skins, and wood, the Torah tells us that they collected "oil for illumination" and "spices for the anointment oil and incense". Why does the Torah suddenly need to tell us what the materials were to be used for, when it hadn't discussed it thus far?

One possible answer is that there are two differences between the characteristics of the other materials and those of the oil and spices. Firstly, while the other materials were important, they required no effort in producing, while the oil and spices had to be manufactured and maintained. Those people that didn't have the precious stones to donate to the building of the Mishkan still had the opportunity to contribute with their efforts instead. Secondly, both the oil and the spices are of the most 'giving' materials used in the Mishkan; The oil was used to light the Menorah, which gives off light to everything around it, and the spices give off a beautiful smell to its surroundings. The message is clear...The most beautiful and giving things in life are those that require our active effort. Spices smell and oil illuminates because someone took the time and effort to make them. The same can be said today...Being a good person and a good Jew is beautiful and rewarding to ourselves and to others, but only because we take the time and effort to understand and cultivate it. © 2013 Rabbi S. Ressler and LeLamed, Inc.



www.universaltorah.com