

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

The sequence of parshiyot, Terumah, Tetzaveh, Ki Tissa, Vayakhel and Pekudei, is puzzling in many ways. First, it outlines the construction of the Tabernacle, the portable house of worship the Israelites built and carried with them through the desert, in exhaustive and exhausting detail. The narrative takes almost the whole of the last third of the book of Exodus. Why so long? Why such detail? The Tabernacle was, after all, only a temporary home for the Divine presence, eventually superseded by the Temple in Jerusalem.

Besides which, why is the making of the Mishkan in the book of Exodus at all? Its natural place seems to be in the book of Vayikra, Leviticus, which is overwhelmingly devoted to an account of the service of the Mishkan and the sacrifices that were offered there. The book of Exodus, by contrast, could be subtitled, “the birth of a nation.” It is about the transition of the Israelites from a family to a people and their journey from slavery to freedom. It rises to a climax with the covenant made between G-d and the people at Mount Sinai. What has the Tabernacle to do with this? It seems an odd way to end the book.

The answer, it seems to me, is profound. First, recall the history of the Israelites until now. It has been a long series of complaints. They complained when the first intervention of Moses made their situation worse. Then, at the Red Sea, 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 crossing the sea they continued to complain, first about the lack of water, then that the water was bitter, then at the lack of food, then about the lack of water again. Then, within weeks of the revelation at Sinai – the only time in history G-d appeared to an entire nation – they made a golden calf. If an unprecedented sequence of miracles cannot bring about a mature response on the part of the people, what will?

It is then that G-d said: Let them build something together. This simple command transformed

the Israelites. During the whole construction of the tabernacle there were no complaints. The people contributed, some gold, some silver, some bronze, some brought skins and drapes, others gave their time and skill. They gave so much that Moses had to order them to stop. A remarkable proposition is being framed: It is not what G-d does for us that transforms us. It is what we do for G-d.

So long as every crisis was dealt with by Moses and miracles, the Israelites remained in a state of dependency. Their default response was complaint. For them to grow to adulthood and responsibility, there had to be a transition from passive recipients of G-d's blessings to active creators. The people had to become G-d's “partners in the work of creation.”¹ That, I believe, is what the sages meant when they said, “Call them not ‘your children’ but ‘your builders.’”² People have to become builders if they are to grow from childhood to adulthood.

Judaism is G-d's call to responsibility. He does not want us to rely on miracles. He does not want us to be dependent on others. He wants us to become His partners, recognising that what we have, we have from Him, but what we make of what we have is up to us, our choices and our effort. This is not an easy balance to achieve. It is easy to live a life of dependency. It is equally easy in the opposite direction to slip into the mistake of saying “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me” (Deut. 8: 17). The Jewish view of the human condition is that everything we achieve is due to our own efforts, but equally and essentially the result of G-d's blessing.

The building of the Tabernacle was the first great project the Israelites undertook together. It involved their generosity and skill. It gave them the chance to give back to G-d a little of what He had given them. It conferred on them the dignity of labour and creative endeavour. It brought to closure their birth as a nation and it symbolised the challenge of the future. The society they were summoned to create in the land of Israel would be one in which everyone would play their part. It was to become – in the phrase I used as the title of one of my books – “the home we build together.”

From this we see that one of the greatest challenges of leadership is to give people the chance to give, to contribute, to participate. That requires self-

¹ Shabbat 10a.

² Berakhot64a.

**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**

restraint, tzimtzum, on the part of the leader, creating the space for others to lead. As the saying goes: "When there is a good leader, the people say: The leader did it. When there is a great leader, the people say: We did it ourselves."³

This brings us to the fundamental distinction in politics between State and Society. The state represents what is done for us by the machinery of government, through the instrumentality of laws, courts, taxation and public spending. Society is what we do for one another through communities, voluntary associations, charities and welfare organisations. Judaism, I believe, has a marked preference for society rather than state, precisely because it recognises – it is the central theme of the book of Exodus – that it is what we do for others, not what others or G-d does for us, that transforms us. The Jewish formula, I believe, is: small state, big society.

The person who had the deepest insight into the nature of democratic society was Alexis de Tocqueville. Visiting America in the 1830s he saw that its strength lay in what he called the "art of association," the tendency of Americans to come together in communities and voluntary groups to help one another, rather than leaving the task to a centralised government. Were it ever to be otherwise, were individuals to depend wholly on the state, then democratic freedom would be at risk.

In one of the most haunting passages of his masterwork, *Democracy in America*, he says that democracies are at risk of a completely new form of oppression for which there is no precedent in the past. It will happen, he says, when people exist solely in and for themselves, leaving the pursuit of the common good to the government. This would then be what life would be like:

Above this race of men stands an immense and tutelary power, which takes upon itself alone to secure their gratifications and to watch over their fate. That power is absolute, minute, regular, provident and mild. It would be like the authority of a parent if, like that authority, its object was to prepare men for manhood; but it seeks, on the contrary, to keep them in perpetual childhood: it is well content that the people should rejoice, provided they think of nothing but rejoicing. For

³ Attributed to Lao-Tsu.

their happiness such a government willingly labours, but it chooses to be the sole agent and the only arbiter of that happiness; it provides for their security, foresees and supplies their necessities, facilitates their pleasures, manages their principal concerns, directs their industry, regulates the descent of property, and subdivides their inheritances: what remains, but to spare them all the care of thinking and all the trouble of living?⁴

Tocqueville wrote these words in the 1830s, and there is a risk that this is what some European societies are becoming like today: all state, no society; all government, little or no community.⁵ Tocqueville was not a religious writer. He makes no reference to the Hebrew Bible. But the fear he has is precisely what the book of Exodus documents. When a central power – even when this is G-d Himself – does everything on behalf of the people, they remain in a state of arrested development. They complain instead of acting. They give way easily to despair. When the leader, in this case Moses, is missing, they do foolish things, none more so than making a golden calf.

There is only one solution: to make the people co-architects of their own destiny, to get them to build something together, to shape them into a team and show them that they are not helpless, that they are responsible and capable of collaborative action. Genesis begins with G-d creating the universe as a home for human beings. Exodus ends with human beings creating the Mishkan, as a 'home' for G-d.

Hence the basic principle of Judaism, that we are called on to become co-creators with G-d. And hence too the corollary: that leaders do not do the work on behalf of the people. They teach people how to do the work themselves. It is not what G-d does for us but what we do for G-d that allows us to reach dignity and responsibility. ©2014 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

There was a long and critical article that appeared this past week in one of the Hebrew newspapers here in Israel concerning the role of rabbis in society. There is no question that the role of most rabbis in the United States is far different than what is currently the case in Israeli society.

In the United States the rabbi is a far more

⁴ Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, abridged and with an introduction by Thomas Bender, The Modern Library, New York, 1981, 584.

⁵ This is not to imply that there is no role for governments; that all should be left to voluntary associations. Far from it. There are things – from the rule of law to the defence of the realm to the enforcement of ethical standards and the creation of an equitable distribution of the goods necessary for a dignified existence – that only governments can achieve. The issue is balance.

personal figure. He is a teacher, speaker and confidant. He is also expected to be somewhat of a social worker, psychologist and counselor. His main task is to care for his flock, which in most cases is limited to his immediate congregation and in certain instances does expand to include the entire Jewish community where he is located.

He also has important executive and administrative duties as well as being a fundraiser. This is certainly not the classical job description of rabbis over the past centuries in Europe, the Levant and early American Jewry. While holy men and kabbalists abounded over all of these centuries, those rabbis were not expected to be a dispenser of blessings, an advisor as to business matters or a political guru.

His realm of expertise was limited to studying and teaching Torah, writing books, debating halachic issues and being a role model in his community. This type of rabbi in the main did not take hold in American soil. In America the congregational rabbi described earlier in this paragraph came into being and to a great extent still exists today in American Jewish life.

It is interesting, if not even distressing, to note that there is a great disconnect between the yeshiva education given to potential rabbis in the United States and the real skills needed when they actually enter the field. This disconnect has caused many personal and communal difficulties and disappointments.

In Israel, in most cases, the congregational rabbi as he exists in the United States is absent here. There are neighborhood rabbis, city rabbis, court judge rabbis, chief rabbis, army rabbis, but almost all of them have very little contact with the people or society that they are meant to serve. In Israel the matter is further complicated by the fact that the community that they are meant to serve is not a homogeneous one.

The congregational rabbi in the Diaspora may have a diversity of people in his congregation but basically he is serving a particular section of the Jewish society. Here in Israel the rabbi is serving a society that is at one and the same time secular and religious, believing and denying and of a very different social and economic strata.

The concept of a congregational rabbi has made some headway here in Israel over the past few years, especially in areas that have absorbed immigrants from English-speaking countries. Nevertheless, the great disconnect between the Israeli rabbinate and the Israeli public is felt in all areas of Israeli life and is a vexing and disturbing issue.

In Israel certainly, again with relatively few exceptions, the disconnect between the yeshiva education, the formal exams given for rabbinic ordination and the entire mindset of the educational system with the general society, is glaring and troublesome. Israel needs rabbis desperately but also desperately needs rabbis that can somehow connect to the average Israeli without a demeaning attitude and an

always critical eye.

In both the United States and Israel the Hasidic rebbe and the rosh yeshiva have both supplanted the roles and authority traditionally ascribed to the rabbi. But these positions have currently expanded so that the rebbe and the rosh yeshiva are not only rabbis but are savants as well. All personal, domestic, social and economic questions are addressed to them for divinely inspired answers.

They are all active in politics with all of the baggage that that brings with it. They are somehow to be invested with prophetic powers that can decide life-and-death issues for individuals, institutions and for the State of Israel itself. Over the last few decades this has been shown to be a very slippery slope that bordered on dangerous consequences for many.

Great caution should be exercised in appealing to those who proclaim themselves to be all-knowing. Great and wise men should certainly be consulted on issues of importance, and their opinions, if rendered, should be taken into consideration. Nevertheless in the long run of life it is only we that are responsible for our actions and for our behavior and policies.

Both rabbis and savants need to be connected to and part of the general society in order to be effective and productive. All of Jewish history bears out this contention. One would hope to see progress in narrowing the disconnects and enhancing the roles of rabbis and savants as well. ©2014 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

"**A**nd the Lord spoke to Moses saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, and let them take for Me a gift offering (Terumah) from every individual motivated by his heart...'" (Ex. 25:1)

Moses not only served as the Rabbi, Rosh Yeshiva and "Pastor" of the Israelites, but he also did the fundraising - collecting the "gold, silver, copper...wool, linen...ram-skins...acacia wood, illuminating oil, anointing oil, aromatic incenses and precious stones" for the construction and upkeep of the Sanctuary. (ibid. 25:3-7).

Moreover, he was consummately successful: "Moses commanded that they proclaim throughout the camp, saying, 'Man and woman shall not do any more (collection) work towards the gifts for the Sanctuary'; the people were restrained from bringing....there was extra" (ibid. 36:6-7). I can only state that, in my own history of fundraising for Torah institutions both here in Israel as well as in the United States, there was never "extra"!

There is, however, one difficult phrase in the second verse of our Biblical portion. G-d commands

Moses to tell the children of Israel to "take" gift offerings for the Sanctuary; ought not the proper verb be to "give" gift offerings for the Sanctuary?

I certainly understand the significance of the adage that "it is better to give than to receive," and that individuals who give of their time for a good cause often receive much more in satisfaction than they expect. Indeed, I can never forget the response of one of our regular donors when I visited him soon after the Madoff debacle. Since it had been rumored that he had lost his entire fortune, I stipulated when I called for a meeting that I would not accept a check even if he offered one; I was coming only to thank him for his many years of generosity and to wish him well for the future.

Despite my sincere remonstrations, the donor insisted upon giving me another check. "You must understand", he said. "My entire fortune went down the drain of excess greed. The only thing I still have - and can truly still enjoy the benefits of - is the money I spent on my children's education, and the funds I gave to worthy charities. No one can take those away from me".

Having said all of this, the expected verbal usage is that the donor "gives" gifts and the recipient "takes". There may be intangible rewards which outweigh the expenditure, but the proper Hebrew verb should still be "let them give for Me a gift offering," not take for Me a gift offering.

I once heard from my revered teacher Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, in the name of his grandfather Rav Haim HaLevi, that the individual donor must first give his gift to the Gizbar or treasurer of the Sanctuary; the treasurer represents the entire Knesset Yisrael (Congregation of Israel), accepting the gift-offering on their behalf. The donor then takes the gift which no longer belongs to him but rather to Communal Israel and presents it to the Sanctuary on behalf of "Israel entire."

This procedure ensures that no object in the Sanctuary could be claimed by any individual, no matter how much he may have donated, not even if he had made the ritual object himself. Once a sacred object becomes part of the Sanctuary, it could never be removed or tampered with. It no longer belongs to the donor; it belongs to Klal Yisrael (Israel Entire).

This also applies to every sacred object in a synagogue or Bet Midrash today. No donor may remove it for whatever the reason; it was first given to Klal Yisrael and only later, afterwards, to the synagogue. It even applies to a seat with a name written upon it. No one can eject anyone else from "his seat"; it may be memorializing his name or memorializing his parent's name, but it does not belong to either of them!

What made Moses such a successful fundraiser? Rabbi Yosef Yoizl of Navardok founded 180 Yeshivot in Eastern Europe between the two World Wars. He had a student who fell short of his Yeshiva's

standards and he gently insisted that he leave. Another Rosh Yeshiva accepted the student to his institution. This time, he barely made the grade, but not long afterwards, left the Yeshiva and went on to become a very wealthy businessman. Rav Yosef Yoizl visited with his former student and received a gift of one million rubles to open another Yeshiva.

When the Rosh Yeshiva who had taken in the failed student came to visit his former pupil, he had extremely high expectations of the gift he would receive, but he only got eighteen rubles. He bitterly complained, to which he received the following reply: "When Rav Yosef Yoizl visited me, he showed disdain for my fine furniture, and he spoke of Torah learning as the highest value. Through his presence, my money lost all value for me, I gladly gave him a million rubles. But when you entered my home, I saw how your eyes glowed in amazement at my expensive furniture. You called me by the honorific title "reb" - certainly not because of my Torah Knowledge. In your presence, my money gained in value and so I could barely part with eighteen rubles!"

Moses had no interest in the gold, silver or precious stones. He understood that the material objects were only a means to inspire to ultimate values of spirituality. ©2014 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

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 it 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. ©2014 Rabbi S. Ressler & Lelamed, Inc.

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

From 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. ©2012 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 DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“Bnd into the Ark shall you place the Testimony that I will give to you" (Sh'mos 25:21). This is the second time within the instructions for the Ark that G-d told Moshe to put "the Testimony" (referring to the Luchos, the stone tablets with the "Ten Commandments" carved into/through them; it also refers to the Torah, see <http://tinyurl.com/d97jjm6>) into the Ark (see 25:16). Before suggesting a reason for the repetition, Rashi (on 25:21) says he doesn't know why it was repeated. [It would seem that his "not knowing" meant he had no earlier source upon which to rely; he still didn't "know" why it was repeated even after thinking of a possible explanation. V'dok.]

Rashi's suggestion is that it was repeated in order to teach us that the Luchos must be put inside the Ark before the Kapores (its cover, which was discussed immediately prior to this verse) is put on. Many commentators question what this means, as obviously the contents of a container must be put inside it before it is closed. Some (e.g. B'er Yitzchok and Rebbi Sh'muel El-Moshnainu) explain it to mean not being able to first cover the empty Ark and then partially open it in order to put the Luchos inside. However, they don't explain why this is problematic (or why it is "partially" uncovering the Ark that is being pre-empted rather than completely uncovering it and then recovering it). Others (e.g. Rosh and Tur) are more specific, stating that the verse means that it is forbidden to cover the Ark if the Luchos are not inside or, put another way (see Rabbeinu Bachye towards the end of his commentary on 21:18) that it is forbidden for the Ark to not have the Luchis inside of it. (They are not all saying that this is what Rashi meant; Gur Aryeh makes this suggestion to explain the repetition, but assumes it is not what Rashi meant.) Based on this, many (e.g. Rashash on Yuma 53b and Chasam Sofer on our verses) explain that there was no Ark in the Second Temple because the Luchos were "hidden" (or in exile, see Yuma 53b) with the Ark from the First Temple shortly before its destruction. This is contrasted with the Choshen, the Kohain Gadol's breastplate, which was worn in the Second Temple even though the "Urim v'Tumim" were also lost, despite the Torah also telling us (28:30) to put the Urim v'Tumim inside the Choshen. Since those instructions weren't repeated, the Choshen was allowed (and needed for the Temple service) even without the Urim v'Tumim, while a Luchos-less Ark was not. Some (e.g. Meshech Chachmah) point out that there is a general rule regarding Temple service that whenever a law detail is repeated, the service is not valid without the detail being fulfilled; since putting the Luchos inside the Ark was repeated, the Ark cannot be used without them.

[Although the Torah also seems to say that the Luchos must be put into the Ark after the Ark is already inside the inner sanctum (the Kodesh HaKadashim) rather than covering the Ark outside the sanctuary and then bringing it in (26:34, see Netziv), this contradicts what actually happened (see 40:20-21). Rather, the Torah (26:33-34) is just telling us that the Ark, including its covering, belong in the inner sanctum; after describing the curtain that divides the inner sanctum from the outer one, thereby designating the inner sanctum as the "Holy of Holies," we are told that the "Kaporet" (the covering), along with the Ark that contains the Testimony, resides in the "Holy of Holies."]

Rashi proves his point by referencing what Moshe actually did (40:20). However, that verse does not just say that Moshe put the Luchos into the Ark before covering it; he also waited to put the poles in their rings until after he put the Luchos inside. [This seems to contradict Tosfos' contention that the reason the poles are not allowed to be removed is because the Ark/Luchos was so holy that G-d didn't want it handled unnecessarily when taking the poles out and putting them back in. If this were so, I would have expected Moshe to specifically put the poles in before the Luchos were placed in the Ark; by putting the Luchos in first, the Ark/Luchos was handled when the poles were first inserted into their rings even though this could have been avoided. Although it is possible that it's not as problematic for the Ark/Luchos to be handled before the Kaporet covered it, since the real "holiness" is from the Luchos this would not seem to be the case.] Interestingly, just as the second verse that says to put the Luchos in the Ark follows the instructions for the Kaporet, the first verse (25:16) follows immediately after the instructions about making poles for the Ark (25:12-15). It certainly seems that this juxtaposition was meant to indicate that the instructions detailed before stating that the Luchos are to be placed in the Ark should be fulfilled after the Luchos were already inside the Ark (see Ibn Ezra on 25:21). The question becomes why it was important to have the Luchos inside the Ark before the poles were added and before the Ark was covered.

Since the purpose of the Ark was to hold the Luchos, the poles made to carry the Ark (25:14) should not have been needed at all times; the Ark is no less efficient at containing the Luchos without poles than with them, and they seem superfluous when the Mishkan was not being transported. Yet, as opposed to the Shulchan (table) and Mizbayach (altar), which also have poles, the poles of the Ark could never be removed. The implication is that things that support the Luchos (and by extension, the Torah) cannot be removed even if the apparent reason for them doesn't apply. Similarly, if the Kaporet (covering) could be put on the Ark even without the Luchos inside, it would have indicated that they had a purpose in and of themselves aside from being the container for the Luchos. Just as

mitzvos must be observed even when it seems that the reason for them doesn't apply (as evidenced by the poles of the Ark always having to be attached), doing mitzvos has little spiritual value if they aren't being done because G-d commanded them (see Rambam, Hilchos M'lachim 8:11). The structure (the Ark, and the system of law) must have the Torah (the Luchos) within it (at its center) in order for it to have any religious value.

That the Ark isn't really considered valid without the Luchos inside is explicitly stated by Ramban (40:2). Since the Torah says that the poles should be attached to "the Ark," the Luchos must already be inside before attaching them. (Although this could answer the question I raised on Tosfos, if there was a concern about handling the Ark unnecessarily, the Torah shouldn't have required it to be a valid Ark before the poles were attached.) Similarly, since the Torah required that the Kaporet be placed on top of "the Ark," the Luchos had to be inside first.

"Into the Ark shall you place the Testimony" (25:21) follows the instructions for making the Kaporet in order to teach us that without the Luchos being inside, the Ark isn't considered a valid "Ark," while "you shall put into the Ark the Testimony" (25:16) follows the instructions regarding the Ark's poles -- specifically the prohibition against ever removing them -- to teach us that they too must be added after the Luchos are inside. In turn, these requirements teach us that the value of the structure only exists because of the Luchos; there is no need for the "un-removable" poles, nor can the covering be added to complete the container, without the Testimony that connects us with G-d being inside first. ©2014 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI DOVID SIEGEL

Haftorah

This week's haftorah, read in conjunction with Shabbos Rosh Chodesh, reveals to us a secret dimension of this significant date. In fact, as we will discover, Rosh Chodesh possesses the potential of assuming a greater personality than ever seen before. Its heightened effect will be so powerful that it will be likened to the impact of one of our three Yomim Tovim.

The prophet opens the haftorah with a fiery message regarding the privilege of sacrifice in the Bais Hamikdash. Yeshaya declares in the name of Hashem, "The heavens are My throne and the earth is My foot stool. What home can you build for Me and what is an appropriate site for My Divine Presence?" The Radak explains that Hashem was rejecting the notion of His requiring an earthly abode wherein to reside. Even the span of the universe barely serves as a throne where upon Hashem rests, how much more so our small Bais Hamikdash. But the purpose of His earthly abode is in order for us to experience His Divine presence. And it is in this uplifting environment that we offer sacrifices to Hashem and commit ourselves to fulfilling His will.

Yeshaya continues and expresses Hashem's view of the Jewish people's sacrifices at that time. Hashem says, "One who slaughters the ox is likened to smiting a man; he who sacrifices the sheep is akin to slashing a dog's neck; a meal offering is like swine's blood.... (66:3) The Radak explains Hashem's disturbance and informs us of the attitude of those times. The people would heavily engage in sin and then appear in the Bais Hamikdash to offer their sacrificial atonement. However, this uplifting experience was short-lived and they would return home and revert to their sinful ways. Hashem responded and rejected their sacrifices because the main facet of the sacrifice was missing, the resolve to elevate oneself. From Hashem's perspective, a sacrifice without an accompanying commitment was nothing more than an act of slashing a useful animal.

The prophet continues and notes the stark contrast between the above mentioned and the humble and low spirited people. Hashem says, "But to this I gaze, to the humble and low spirited and to the one who trembles over My word." (66:2) These humble people do not need the experience of the Bais Hamikdash. They sense the Divine Presence wherever they are and respond with proper reverence and humility. Unlike the first group who limits Hashem's presence to the walls of the Bais Hamikdash, the second views the earth as Hashem's footstool and reacts accordingly. In fact we are told earlier by Yeshaya that they are actually an abode for His presence as is stated, "So says Hashem, "I rest in the exalted and sanctified spheres and amongst the downtrodden and low spirited ones." (57: 15)

In a certain sense we resemble the first group when relating to our Rosh Chodesh experience. Rosh Chodesh is a unique holiday because its entire festivity consists of a special Rosh Chodesh sacrifice. There are no specific acts of Mitzva related to Rosh Chodesh and there is no halachic restriction from productive activity. However, the first day of the month provides the opportunity for introspect. After our serious contemplation over the previous month's achievements we welcome the opportunity of a fresh start. We offer a sacrifice in atonement for the past and prepare ourselves for the challenges of the new month. Unfortunately this new opportunity is met with trepidation and is always accompanied by mixed feelings of joy and remorse. Because each Rosh Chodesh we realize how far we have strayed during the previous month and we look towards the next month to be an improvement over the past.

This is the limited status of our present Rosh Chodesh. However, as we will soon learn, a greater dimension of Rosh Chodesh was intended to be and will eventually become a reality. The Tur in Orach Chaim (417) quotes the Pirkei D'R'Eliezer which reveals that Rosh Chodesh was actually intended to be a full scale Yom Tov. The Tur quotes his brother R' Yehuda who

explains that the three Yomim Tovim correspond to our three patriarchs and that the twelve days of Rosh Chodesh were intended to correspond to the twelve tribes. This link reveals that each Rosh Chodesh truly has a unique aspect to itself and that one of the Biblical tribes' remarkable qualities is available to us each month. However, as the Tur explains, due to an unfortunate error of the Jewish people this opportunity has been, to a large degree, withheld from us.

But in the era of Mashiach this error will be rectified and the experience of Rosh Chodesh will actually reach its intended capacity. Yeshaya reflects upon this and says at the close of our haftorah, "And it will be that from month to month.... all will come and prostrate themselves before Hashem." (66: 23) The Psikta Rabbsi (1:3) explains that in the days of Mashiach we will have the privilege of uniting with Hashem every Rosh Chodesh. All Jewish people will come to the Bais Hamikdash each month and experience His Divine Presence. During the illustrious era of Mashiach sin will no longer exist and Rosh Chodesh will be viewed exclusively as an opportunity for elevation. Each month will provide us its respective quality and opportunity which we will celebrate through the Rosh Chodesh festivities. The sacrifice of Rosh Chodesh will reflect our great joy over being with Hashem and will no longer contain any aspect of remorse or sin. In those days, the experience of His Divine Presence in the Bais Hamikdash will be perpetuated throughout the month and the entire period will become one uplifting experience.

This, according to the Maharit Algazi is the meaning of our Mussaf section wherein we state, "When they would offer sacrifices of favor and goats as sin offerings.... May you establish a new altar in Zion.... and we will offer goats with favor." With these words we are acknowledging the fact that the goats which had previously served as sin offerings will now become expressions of elevation. Without the need to reflect upon our shortcomings of the previous month, Rosh Chodesh will be greeted with total happiness, and we will welcome with great joy the uplifting spiritual opportunity of each respective month. ©2014 Rabbi D. Siegel and torah.org

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Ark of Inclusion

In 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. ©2014 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and torah.org

RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

The Torah states: "Cover (the ark) with a layer of pure gold on the inside and outside and make a gold rim all around its top" (Ex. 24:11).

Why was it necessary to cover the ark with gold on the inside?

The Talmud (Tractate Yoma 72b) comments that from here we see symbolized that a Torah scholar must be pure inside as well as outside to be considered a Talmid Chochom, a Torah scholar. That is, just as the ark which symbolized Torah knowledge had gold on both the inside and the outside, so too a torah scholar is not someone who just speaks wisdom on the outside, but he must also internalize his wisdom and live with it.

There have been many intellectuals throughout the ages who have espoused profound philosophical ideals. They have expressed the most elevated thoughts of universal love for humanity. However, in their own private lives they have been arrogant and cared only for their ideas, but not for the people with whom they actually had to deal with on a daily basis. This is not the Torah concept of a Talmid Chochom, Torah scholar. To be considered a true Torah scholar and not merely someone who carries a lot of book knowledge with him, one must practice the lofty ideals that he speaks about. This has held true for all our revered Torah scholars both in ancient and modern times.

Our lesson: Whenever you speak about lofty thoughts, ask yourself whether you actually follow the principles you speak about. If not, do not stop speaking about those ideals, rather you should elevate your behavior. *Based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin ©2014 Rabbi K. Packouz & aish.com*

