

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

Sitting is the new smoking. So goes the new health mantra. Spend too much time at a desk or in front of a screen and you are at risk of significant danger to your health. The World Health Organisation has identified physical inactivity as the fourth greatest health hazard today, ahead of obesity. In the words of Dr James Levine, one of the world's leading experts on the subject and the man credited with coining the mantra, says, "We are sitting ourselves to death."

The reason is that we were not made to sit still. Our bodies were made for movement, standing, walking and running. If we fail to give the body regular exercise, it can easily malfunction and put us at risk of serious illness. The question is: does the same apply to the soul, the spirit, the mind?

It is fascinating to look at the sequence of verbs in the very first verse of the book of Psalms: "Happy is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of the scornful" (Ps. 1:1). That is a picture of the bad life, lived in pursuit of the wrong values. Note how the bad man begins by walking, then stands, then sits. A bad life immobilises. That is the point of the famous verses in Hallel: "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but do not speak, eyes but do not see, ears but do not hear, noses but do not smell. They have hands but cannot feel, feet but cannot walk, nor can they make a sound with their throats. Those who make them will be like them; so will all who trust in them." (Ps. 115:4-8)

If you live for lifeless things -- as in the bumper sticker, "He who dies with the most toys, wins" -- you will become lifeless.

Except in the House of the Lord, Jews do not sit. Jewish life began with two momentous journeys, Abraham from Mesopotamia, Moses and the Israelites from Egypt. "Walk on ahead of Me and be blameless" said G-d to Abraham (Gen. 17:1). At the age of ninety-

nine, having just been circumcised, Abraham saw three strangers passing by and "ran to meet them." On the verse, "Jacob dwelled [vayeshev, the verb that also means "to sit"] in the land where his father had stayed" Rashi, citing the sages, commented: "Jacob sought to live in tranquility, but immediately there broke in on him the troubles of Joseph." The righteous do not sit still. They do not have a quiet life.

Rarely is the point made with more subtlety than at the end of this week's parsha and the book of Exodus as a whole. The Tabernacle had been made and assembled. The closing verses tell us about the relationship between it and the "cloud of glory" that filled the Tent of Meeting. The Tabernacle was made to be portable. It could be dismantled and its parts carried as the Israelites travelled on the next stage of their journey. (This was especially true of the ark. It was carried by staves that passed through rings on the side of the ark. It was forbidden to remove the staves, even when the Israelites were encamped (Ex. 25:15). The ark already had to be ready to travel at a moment's notice. See the commentary of S. R. Hirsch ad loc.)

When the time came for them to move on, the cloud moved from the Tent of Meeting to a position outside the camp, signalling the direction the Israelites were to take. This is how the Torah describes it:

"When the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, the Israelites went onward in all their journeys, but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out until the day it lifted. So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel in all their journeys." (Ex.40:6-38)

There is a significant difference between the two occurrences of the phrase "in all their journeys". In the first, the words are meant literally. When the cloud lifted, the Israelites knew they were about to begin a new stage of their journey. However in the second instance, they cannot be meant literally. The cloud was not "over the Tabernacle" in all their journeys. To the contrary, it was there only when they stopped journeying and instead pitched camp. During the journeys the cloud went on ahead.

Rashi notes this and makes the following comment: "A place where they encamped is also called massa, 'a journey'... because from the place of encampment they always set out again on a new journey, therefore they are all called 'journeys'."



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The point is linguistic, but the message is remarkable. In a few brief words, Rashi has summarised an existential truth about Jewish identity. To be a Jew is to travel. Judaism is a journey, not a destination. Even a place of rest, an encampment, is still called a journey. The patriarchs lived, not in houses but in tents. (Note that Lot, in Sodom, lived in a house [Gen. 19:2]. So did Laban [Gen. 24:23].) The first time we are told that a patriarch built a house, proves the point: "Jacob traveled to Sukkot. There he built himself a house and made shelters [sukkot] for his livestock. That is why he called the place Sukkot." (Gen. 33:17).

The verse is astonishing. Jacob has just become the first member of the covenantal family to build a house, yet he does not call the place "House" (as in Bet-El or Bet-lechem). He calls it "cattle-sheds." It is as if Jacob, consciously or unconsciously, already knew that to live the life of the covenant means to be ready to move on, to travel, to journey, to grow.

One might have thought that all this applied only to the time before the Israelites crossed the Jordan and entered the Promised Land. Yet the Torah tells us otherwise: "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity because the land is Mine: you are strangers and temporary residents as far as I am concerned." (Lev. 25:23)

If we live as if the land is permanently ours, our stay there will be temporary. If we live as if it is only temporarily so, we will live there permanently. In this world of time and change, growth and decay, only G-d and His word are permanent. One of the most poignant lines in the book of Psalms -- a verse cherished by the French-Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas -- says, "I am a stranger on earth. Do not hide your commands from me" (Ps. 119:19). To be a Jew is to stay light on your feet, ready to begin the next stage of the journey, literally or metaphorically. An Englishman's home is his castle, they used to say. But a Jew's home is a tent, a tabernacle, a sukkah. We know that life on earth is a temporary dwelling. That is why we value each moment and its newness.

Recently a distinguished British Jew, (Lord) George Weidenfeld, died at the age of 96. He was a successful publisher, a friend and confidant of European leaders, an inveterate fighter for peace and a

passionate Zionist. In 1949-50, he was political adviser and Chief of Cabinet to Chaim Weizmann, first President of Israel. One of his last acts was to help rescue 20,000 Christian refugees fleeing from ISIS in Syria. He was alert and active, even hyperactive, to the very end of a long and distinguished life.

In an interview with The Times on his ninety-second birthday he was asked the following question: "Most people in their nineties slow down. You seem to be speeding up. Why is that?" He replied, "When you get to ninety-two, you begin to see the door about to close. I have so much to do before the door closes that the older I get, the harder I have to work." That is a good formula for staying young.

Like our bodies, our souls were not made for sitting still. We were made for moving, walking, traveling, learning, searching, striving, growing, knowing that it is not for us to complete the work but neither may we stand aside from it. In Judaism, as the book of Exodus reminds us in its closing words, even an encampment is called a journey. In matters spiritual, not just physical, sitting is the new smoking. ©2016 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

In the portion of Pekudei a reckoning of the work done in the Tabernacle is recorded. Interesting, is the Hebrew word for reckoning—pekudei. (Exodus 38:21) As I have often pointed out in these weekly Torah discussions, one key to understanding the meaning of a word in the Torah is by analyzing the first time it is found.

In the story of Avraham (Abraham) and Sarah we first come across the term p-k-d. The Torah tells us that for many years, Avraham and Sarah could not have children. Finally Sarah does give birth. In the words of the Torah, "and the Lord remembered Sarah as He had spoken...and Sarah conceived and bore a son to Avraham." (Genesis 21:1) The word "remembered" is pakad. Somehow then pekudei is interwoven with birth as the text indicates that G-d had remembered Sarah.

It follows therefore, that Pekudei, the accounting of the Tabernacle, is associated with birth. Perhaps it can be suggested that just as a mother plays the crucial role in the development of the fetus and the nurturing of its well being, so too does G-d serve as a Mother in His protection of the Tabernacle. The Hebrew word for mercy is rachum, from the word rechem that means womb. G-d's love is the love of the womb. It is a mother's love that is infinite and unconditional, much like the love displayed by G-d in protecting the Tabernacle.

Another parallel comes to mind. By definition birth involves a sense of history. When a child is born there is recognition of historic continuity, of the infant

being part of a continuum of the family's past history. So too, the Mishkan. In many ways, the building of the Tabernacle was the crescendo of Israel's past, the culmination of a dream that Israel as a nation would have a place in which to worship G-d.

Although the birth of a child is often the end of a time of feelings of joy and anticipation, it is also a beginning. It is the start of hopes and wishes that the child grow to full maturity and impact powerfully on the Jewish people and all humankind. This is also the case with the Mishkan. In many cases of buildings, many involved see the beauty of the actual structure to be an end in itself. But buildings are not ends, they are rather the means to reach higher, to feel more powerfully the deeper presence of G-d. The Mishkan is associated with birth for it reminds us that even as a tabernacle or any synagogue is dedicated, our responsibility is to go beyond the bricks and mortar to make sure that the space is infused with spirituality.

The birth of a child is a time to re-evaluate our priorities and look ahead toward the dream of years of growth. The Mishkan, and in the same way our individual structures of worship, should, in the same way, make us reflect on our values and aspire to higher spiritual levels of holiness. ©2016 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 BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The end of the book of Shemot describes the culmination of the events of the exodus from Egypt, the revelation at Sinai and the construction of the Mishkan/Tabernacle. All of these events are certainly on the positive side of the historical ledger. On the other side of that historical ledger sheet that the book of Shemot represents there is the sin of the Golden Calf and the constant carping and complaining of the Jewish people against Moshe and against the G-d of Israel.

In effect, this sets the template for all further Jewish history. There are always ups and downs, plus and minuses in the national behavior of the Jewish people. The book of Shemot ends on a triumphant note – the spirit of G-d, so to speak, invests and dwells within the Jewish people and the Mishkan/Tabernacle that they so lovingly built –promises an eternal relationship.

Jewish tradition teaches us that this is the ultimate result of the long story of our existence. It will end triumphantly but there will be many serious bumps on the road before we arrive at our ultimate destination. And therefore it seems especially appropriate that at the conclusion of this holy book, the entire congregation rises to proclaim that we will be strengthened in our

lives and experiences. We will attempt to strengthen the positive side of our ledger and minimize the entries on the other side.

The Torah expended much detail and space to the construction of the Mishkan/Tabernacle. Part of the reason for the need to adhere to the laws in this regard is that the devil lies in the details. All of history instructs us that seemingly unimportant details shape great events, with unexpected results.

The ineptness of Archduke Ferdinand's chauffeur, who drove the car back into the teeth of the assassins' ambush after first escaping from it, helped bring about the cataclysmic events that are called World War I. The Jewish people questioned why Moshe was late on returning from his ascent on Mount Sinai and thus the conditions for the construction of the Golden Calf somehow presented themselves.

All of Jewish law and halachi decisions are built upon recognizing and analyzing the details of the issues involved. It is the small detail that builds the general rule, not the other way around. We are all aware how in architecture, manufacturing and construction for example, it is the smallest detail that is the difference between success and failure, achievement or disaster.

This is in line with the details regarding the Mishkan/Tabernacle, which in turn reflect the Torah itself, which in its turn reflects and represents all of human life. Today's parsha teaches us the requirement of accountability in all aspects of our lives. All of these ideas are taught to us to help us form a proper ledger book on the basis of whose entries we will be eventually judged. This book of Shemot stands as the book of human judgment and understanding. ©2016 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

"The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of G-d filled the Tabernacle... When the cloud was raised up from the Tabernacle, the Children of Israel would embark on all their journeys... For the cloud of G-d was on the Tabernacle by days and fire would be on it by night, before the eyes of all of the children of Israel throughout their journeys" (Ex. 40: 34-38) Apparently the cloud (ha'anan) and the "glory of G-d" come together as the ultimate symbol of G-d's protective presence. With reference to Mount Sinai, the mountain of the two Revelations surrounding the twice-gifted Tablets of the Covenant, the Bible similarly records, "Moses ascended the mountain and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of G-d rested upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for a six day

period. [G-d] called to Moses on the seventh day from the midst of the cloud... And Moses arrived into the midst of the cloud and ascended the mountain; Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights [receiving G-d's Torah]" (Ex. 24:15-18).

G-d's "glory," the Presence of G-d in this world (as explained by Maimonides in his Guide for the Perplexed), is what Moses is desperately seeking to understand and to effectuate 4 when Moses says, "Show me now Your Glory" (Ex. 33:19).

Whatever that "glory" is, it is somehow to be found in our two Revelations from the mountain. The cloud as the symbol of G-d's presence seems to hark back to the Divine admonition to Moses, "You will not see My face, for no human can see My face and live." For as long as we are limited mortals in this physical world of temporariness and imperfection, our glimpse of G-d, and His Presence, can only be nebulous, ambiguous, "through a cloud darkly."

Herein lies the tremendous tension within the portion of Ki Tisa, and the dialogue therein between G-d and Moses. Moses desperately wants the nation of Israel and G-d to come together (as it were) as one, with G-d's ineffable Presence to be palpably felt within Israel and within the world.

If that were to happen, presumably Israel would not sin and Jewish history could assume its natural course towards redemption.

G-d informs Moses: "I will send an angel [messenger] ahead of you... but I shall not ascend into your midst; you are a stiff-necked people, and I may be forced to annihilate you on the way" (Ex. 33:3-5).

G-d is explaining to the Israelites that His presence within their midst in a palpable and apparent way would very likely be to their detriment; if the G-d of Truth and Judgment were too close, He might have to destroy Israel completely before they had a chance to properly repent! His distance from them and the world may be seen as an advantage.

After the second Revelation, however, of the G-d of unconditional love and forgiveness (Ex. 34:6,7), Moses repeats his earlier requests; Moses now feels empowered to ask G-d to enter into the midst of

Israel: "And Moses said, If I have now found favor in your eyes, let my Lord walk in our midst, [precisely because Israel] is a stiff-necked nation, for You will forgive our iniquity and error and make us Your heritage" (ibid 9). After all, that is exactly how You, G-d, defined Yourself to us in the Second Revelation.

This is indeed the message that G-d gives Moses. Israel is the nation of Covenant and permanence within a world of flux and change (Ex. 34:10); G-d will always dwell within His people and guarantee their survival no matter what, to the amazement (and jealousy) of all the nations. Israel will bear witness to the world about the evils of idolatry and the glories of our festivals, our Sabbaths and our

righteous laws until we are ready for the ultimate redemption. In effect, G-d is "incarnate" within the Jewish nation (see the writings of Michael Wyschogrod).

This too, is the message at the conclusion of the Book of Exodus. In the immortal words of the Ramban (Nachmanides) in his introduction to the Book of Exodus:

Behold the exile has not ended until [Israel] returns to their place and to the exalted status of their ancestors... only when they came to Mount Sinai and constructed the Sanctuary, only when the Holy one Blessed be He returned and rested His Divine Presence amongst them... so that they rose to the status of the chariot [merkava], could they be considered redeemed. Therefore, this Book concludes with the Sanctuary filled with the glory of the Divine in the midst of Israel.

The Sanctuary is the ultimate symbol of G-d's presence in Israel and the world, our promise of ultimate redemption. From this perspective, the sukka which we build five days after the Yom Kippur of the Second Revelation represents the clouds of glory, the ultimate Sukka-Sanctuary of world redemption. And the sukkot which likewise remind us of the huts in which we survived during our desert wanderings teach us that G-d remains in our midst – albeit as through a cloud darkly – even as we wander towards redemption, always forgiving and always protecting. ©2016 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

"**A**nd Moshe was unable to go into the Tent of Meeting, for the cloud dwelled upon it, and the honor of G-d filled the Mishkan" (Sh'mos 40:35). The commentators contrast this verse with Bamidbar 7:89, which says that Moshe did, in fact, enter the Tent of Meeting, and they discuss how Moshe was able to go in -- something he did on a fairly regular basis (whenever he communicated directly with G-d) -- if G-d's "honor" filled the Mishkan and the cloud covered it. Another issue raised by some of the Tosafists is how the required service, such as the lighting of the Menorah, burning the incense, and putting the bread on the Shulchan, could have been done by Aharon or any of the other Kohanim if they weren't able to enter the sanctuary (the "Tent of Meeting") either (as if Moshe couldn't, surely they could not). Let's take a closer look at how these issues (which are not necessarily one and the same) are addressed.

Rashi, quoting the end of the introduction to the Sifra (Rabbi Yishmael's "13 attributes" for expounding verses), says that since the reason Moshe couldn't enter was the cloud cover being there (which indicated that G-d's "honor" was inside), whenever the cloud would leave (indicating that G-d's "honor" no longer

filled the Mishkan), Moshe could enter. Similarly, Moshav Z'kaynim, Pa'anayach Raza and R' Chaim Paltiel quote the Rokayach (R' Eliezer of Worms), who points out that the first letters of the expression "the cloud dwelled upon it" (Shin, Ayin, Hay) spell out the word "temporary," indicating that the cloud only dwelled upon it temporarily, after which Moshe could enter and the Kohanim could perform the service.

There are two aspects of this approach that need a further explanation. First of all, the cloud cover is said to have always been over the Mishkan, not just sometimes or temporarily. The very next verses (40:36-38, reiterated in Bamidbar 9:17-22) state that whenever the nation wasn't traveling, "the cloud of G-d" was on the Mishkan. Since the service was only performed in the Mishkan when they camped (and Moshe communicated with G-d when they were camped as well), if the cloud prevented these things from happening, and the cloud was always covering the Mishkan when they camped, how were these things accomplished? [Elsewhere (Bamidbar 9:16), it says explicitly that the cloud was "constantly" covering the Mishkan, making it quite difficult to assert that this only occurred for a short time.] Additionally, as Pa'anayach Raza points out, since one of the main purposes of the Mishkan (and the reason it is called the "Tent of Meeting") was for Moshe to communicate with G-d there (see Sh'mos 29:42), if he could only enter after G-d's presence had vacated the premises, how could it be the place they "met" to communicate?

Rashbam (see also Ramban and Chizkuni) says that initially G-d's "honor" filled the entire Mishkan, so the cloud cover (which provided a "screen" for the "consuming fire" that G-d's honor is compared to, see Kli Yakar) covered the entire Mishkan, including the Tent of Meeting, i.e. the sanctuary where the Menorah, Shulchan and Mizbayach HaZahav were. At that point in time, Moshe was unable to enter the Tent of Meeting, but subsequently, G-d's "honor," and the cloud that covered it, left that part of the Mishkan, and "squeezed" into the inner sanctum, the "holy of holies" where the Aron was (similar to the kabbalistic concept of "tzimtzum," whereby G-d, who's "honor fills the entire land," makes room for us to function and exercise our free will by "vacating," as it were, the space we operate in). Afterwards, Moshe was able to enter the Tent of Meeting and stand next to the curtain that divided it from the inner sanctum, where he would communicate with G-d, whose divine presence ("honor") was over the Aron, between the K'ruvim (see Sh'mos 25:22). [Rashi says this explicitly on Bamidbar 7:89.] And just as Moshe was able to enter the Tent of Meeting after "G-d's honor" had left that part of the Mishkan, so too were the Kohanim able to enter the sanctuary/Tent of Meeting to perform the service (see Moshav Z'kaynim) then as well.

Although this answers the questions posed

above, it does leave us with one quirk, as Moshe couldn't enter the Tent of Meeting because of "the cloud" (Sh'mos 40:35), yet "the cloud" is said to have been on "the Mishkan" whenever the nation was camped (40:36-37), without any indication that it is not the same "cloud," or that it wasn't covering the same parts of the Mishkan, in all those verses. True, they are technically accurate, as "the cloud" was initially over the entire Mishkan, and was then over the part of the Mishkan where the Aron was, but it is a bit misleading. It's possible that prior to the nation traveling, G-d's "honor" once again filled the entire Mishkan before departing, and then temporarily filled it again whenever they camped (before becoming concentrated over the inner sanctum), which would make the verses more exact, but it seems strange for G-d's "honor" to momentarily fill the Tent of Meeting right before departing from the Mishkan completely (as opposed to when it was reconstructed at the next camp site, thereby recreating its initial construction).

Ramban is among the commentators (see B'chor Shor and R' Chaim Paltiel, and Aderes Eliyahu on Vayikra 1:1) who take a different approach to resolve the apparent contradiction between Moshe "not being able to enter" (Sh'mos 40:35) and Moshe "entering" (Bamidbar 7:89); it wasn't that he physically couldn't enter while the cloud was there, but that he didn't have permission to (or felt it was inappropriate to just walk in without first being invited). After G-d "called to him from the Tent of Meeting" (Vayikra 1:1), though, and permission was granted for him to enter, he did. [This was similar to Moshe's initially being unable to enter the "cloud" that covered "G-d's honor" on Mt. Sinai (Sh'mos 24:16), when Moshe didn't enter for six days until G-d "called to him on the seventh day" (ibid), after which Moshe entered (24:18).] Whether G-d called to Moshe each and every time before he entered the Tent of Meeting (see Rashi on Vayikra 1:1), or Moshe entered whenever he wanted after the initial "calling," once we translate "was not able to enter" as "it was not appropriate for him to enter without being invited in," there is no contradiction between his "inability to enter" in Sh'mos and his actually entering, after the invitation was extended, in Bamidbar.

Interestingly, although after Ramban presents his approach, he quotes Rashi's and refers to it as the approach of "our rabbis" (since it is from the Sifra), the Talmud (Yuma 4b) seems to present Ramban's approach (see Maharsha). Nevertheless, Ramban may have understood the Talmud to only be saying that Moshe entered "the cloud" at Sinai; even though a verse from the Mishkan is used as part of the setup, the answer may not apply to the Mishkan. It should be noted, though that Vayikra Rabbah (1:5, see also Tanchuma Vayikra 1) does seem to use the same approach as Ramban's for the Mishkan.

As well as this approach explains how Moshe

was (finally) able to enter the Mishkan, it does not explain how the Kohanim could enter to perform the service, as only Moshe was invited inside, not Aharon, nor his sons.

I would therefore suggest that both approaches are true (and not just in an "eilu v'eilu" way); after being invited in, Moshe was able to enter the Tent of Meeting even when G-d's "honor" was still there (just as he entered the "cloud" that covered the "consuming fire" on Mt. Sinai after he was called in). And G-d's "honor" did fill the Mishkan, including the Tent of Meeting, for much of the time when the nation was camped, so "the cloud" referred to in Sh'mos 40:35 is the same "cloud" referred to in 40:36-38. [Since G-d's "honor" filled the entire Mishkan for much of the time (as opposed to only initially), and it was always in at least part of the Mishkan, it can be presented as if it is the same "cloud," and that it was there constantly.] Nevertheless, there were times when G-d's "honor" was only in the "holy of holies," and not in the Tent of Meeting, including whenever it was necessary for the Kohanim to enter the sanctuary/Tent of Meeting to perform the service, thereby allowing them to come in even though they didn't receive the same special invitation to enter that Moshe did. © 2016 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

After the completion of the construction of the Tabernacle, the Torah states: "And Moshe saw all the work and behold, they did it as the Almighty commanded... and Moshe blessed them" (Exodus 39:43).

Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin was once at a dedication ceremony for which one rabbi selflessly devoted an extremely large amount of time and energy. When the rabbi spoke he heaped praise and blessings upon the donors whose contributions made the institution possible.

Rabbi Sorotzkin spoke next and said, "Really the donors should be the ones to praise and bless the rabbi. It was his efforts that enabled them to have the merit of contributing to such a worthwhile cause. However, the rabbi followed in the steps of Moshe. After the complete report of everything that was donated to the Mishkan, (the portable Tabernacle), Moshe blessed all those who participated in the donations and contributions. They should have blessed Moshe for the opportunity he gave them."

Rabbi Sorotzkin continued, "The same is true when a wealthy person helps a poor person. The wealthy person gains more from the poor person, since he gains spiritual merit. However, what usually happens? The receiver expresses more thanks to the giver than the giver does to the receiver."

When someone approaches us for a contribution for a worthy cause, we should appreciate

that he is doing us a favor by giving us an opportunity to contribute. This is an important concept for people who work for the community to raise funds. They should be aware that they are doing an act of kindness for the donors. At the same time, they need to show their gratitude to the donors. And if the donors -- or prospective donors -- do not have respect or appreciation for the one making the request (assuming it was made pleasantly and properly), it is the prospective donor who needs to examine his own character and values. *Dvar Torah based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin ©2016 Rabbi K. Packouz & aish.com*

RABBI BENJAMIN YUDIN

TorahWeb

As we take leave of the completed Mishkan built by the Jewish people in the desert, "all the work of the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, was completed" (Shemos 39:32), I'd like to look at a significant aspect of the Mishkan not necessarily visible at first glance. Among the obvious questions regarding His home is: why is it composed of earthly materials, gold, silver, and copper, when He could have made it from Divine materials? After all, the first set of luchos, those broken by Moshe, were "heavenly made", "stone tablets inscribed by the finger of G-d" (Shemos 31:18). The manna which nourished the Jewish nation for 40 years, was literally food from Heaven -- "I shall rain down for you food from Heaven" (Shemos 16:4.) Why then, asks the Dubner Maggid (Ohel Yaakov, opening essay on Terumah), did Hashem not construct a more fitting holy abode for the Divine Presence in this world?

The Maggid answers that Hashem wants to build His Sanctuary with the love of the Jewish people. King Shlomo describes the special House of G-d as, "tocho ratzof ahava -- its foundation is paved in with love" (Shir HaShirim 3:10.) Because love is too abstract a commodity with which to build, Hashem chose precious metals that are dear to man and that man has an emotional attachment to, and by giving these metals one is really donating the emotional attachment contained therein. It is for this reason that the Torah that a constant refrain throughout the parshiyos dealing with the Mishkan is nedivas halev -- "every man whose heart motivates him" (Shemos 25:2.) In actuality, the Sanctuary was built upon the nedivas halev that was contained within the gold, silver, and copper.

King David explains (Chronicles I 28:3) that because he has been a warrior, albeit to destroy the enemies of the Jewish people, and has shed much blood, he cannot build the Beis Hamikdosh. In (29:2) he declares, "with all my might I have prepared for the Temple of my G-d, gold for golden things, silver for silver things, and copper for copper things". The Maggid teaches that the apparent repetition is not to state the obvious, i.e. that gold was used for golden

objects, but rather to communicate that ha'zahav, the gold, the golden emotion of love, or the love in the gold, was utilized in the construction.

In many areas of Jewish law one can use an object of equal value as payment (shaveh kesef k'kesef). For example, one has to redeem their firstborn son with 5 silver coins, but if one does not have coins a Kohen can accept a silver wine cup in their place. We read last week about machatzis hashekel, the annual monetary contribution to the Beis Hamikdosh to fund communal offerings. If one did not have a half shekel he could give an object of equal worth which the Temple treasurer would exchange for money. When it came to donations for building the mishkan, however, Seforno explains that the word "this" in the passuk, "This is the portion that you shall take from them, gold, silver, copper" (Shemos 25:3) excludes the possibility of donating any other materials, including money, to exchange for these precious metals. Offering a substitute would be miss the key component, the nedivas halev. Once again the Torah is highlighting that it's not the gold per se that Hashem wanted as a contribution as much as that which is represented by the gold, i.e. man's love of it and his attachment to it. In essence, we are being taught that the Mishkan was built with the emotions and spiritual energy invested into the physical components.

There is another understanding of "tocho ratzuv ahava", namely, its foundation is that of continuous love. The establishment of the Beis Hamikdosh, this special meeting place for G-d and man, reflects the mutual outpouring of love between them. In reality, all that we do can either reflect our nedivas halev -- our excitement, enthusiasm, and love for Hashem and His Mitzvos -- or a laissez-faire, lackadaisical attitude towards mitzvos. One can daven with nedivas halev or by rote; one can give tzedakah with nedivas halev or be guilted into giving or give to have their name in lights. Even one's chessed can be performed with nedivas halev, exercising great sensitivity to safeguard the dignity of the recipient, or for personal self-aggrandizement; the manner in which we speak to our spouse and children can be either with nedivas halev, respect and admiration, or unfortunately demeaning.

As we take leave of the physical building of the Mishkan -- "all the work of the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, was completed" (Shemos 39:32) -- we must take the Mishkan with us. "B'l'vavi mishkan evneh" in our hearts -- or more importantly, with our hearts -- we too can build a Mishkan. "They shall make a Sanctuary for Me so that I may dwell among them" (Shemos 25:8). The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 232) devotes an entire chapter to expounding the passuk, "B'chol derachecha da'ei'hu -- in all your activities know Him" (Proverbs 3:6.) One's many hours engaged in earning a livelihood can be infused with nedivas halev by working to send one's children to yeshiva, to be able to give

charity, to manifest in his business a kiddush Hashem, and to be able to create a home that is truly shehasimcha b'mono -- that He has another place to live and love. ©2016 Rabbi B. Yudin and The TorahWeb Foundation, inc.

RABBI YITZCHOK ADLERSTEIN

Meshech Chochmah

"You shall place the golden altar for ketores before the ark of testimony." Meshech Chochmah: "The pasuk certainly does not tell us to place the golden altar immediately in front of the aron, either within the Holy of Holies, nor right in front of it. We know where this mizbeach stood; it was displaced a considerable distance from the aron. It was further removed, in fact, than the shulchan and the menorah, both of which stood closer to the kodesh ha-kodashim. The simple reading of our text is an instruction that wherever it is placed, it should line up directly with the aron inside the kodash ha-kodashim, and not be displaced neither to the left nor the right."

Such a reading, though, is unsatisfying. If this were the Torah's intention, the instruction belongs elsewhere. It would seem more appropriate in the section describing how Moshe set up the mishkan, and where he placed the kelim. A good candidate would be the pasuk that describes how Moshe placed the golden altar "in front of the paroches." (Shemos 40:26) Similarly, the Torah even earlier (Shemos 30:6) describes this altar as standing in front of the paroches. At either one of these places the Torah could have underscored that the altar should line up in a straight line (along the front-to-back axis of the mishkan) with the aron that stood behind the paroches.

We could imagine a different purpose for our pasuk: informing us about the function of the ketores itself. There were those -- notably the Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 3:45) -- that the aromatic ketores was meant to displace the otherwise foul odors that would seep into the structure of the mikdosh. We know the stench associated with abattoirs; the mikdosh was a place in which not only were animals slaughtered and butchered, but their fats were then burned day and night. The lingering effects would naturally be overpowering. The Torah, according to these sources, instructed as to burn powerful but sweet-smelling incense twice daily to counteract the less desirable smells.

Others strongly objected to this approach. If the function of the ketores were simply instrumental, why would the Torah list the ingredients of the ketores with great specificity, and forbid any change in the recipe, as well as using the special blend for any other purpose? Ketores figured in the avodah of the week of the mishkan's inauguration, before many animals had been slaughtered, and when the structure was taken apart and reassembled each day.

We must conclude that the purpose of the ketores was not for the practical benefit of those who would come to the mishkan. Rather, it was what Chazal call tzorech Govoha/ a Divine need. This means that it was a necessary component in the precise manner in which Hashem wishes to be served in the mikdash. Nothing in the avodah is arbitrary; the precise formulation of its requirements flows from its source in esoteric mysteries. Those privileged to have penetrated some of those mysteries are well aware of the lofty messages are incorporated in the ketores.

This, then, is the Torah's intention in our pasuk. It describes the avodah of the ketores as "before the ark of testimony." We are meant to understand that its purpose is not to serve any practical human need, but to serve the Divine Presence that rests upon the ark of testimony. (Based on Meshech Chochmah, Shemos 40:5) © 2016 Rabbi Y. Adlerstein and torah.org

HARAV SHLOMO WOLBE, ZT"L

Bais HaMussar

The week's parsha begins, "These are the reckonings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony, which were reckoned by Moshe" (Vayikra 38:21). Rashi, commenting on the redundancy in the pasuk, cites the Medrash which explains that the double mention of the Mishkan is the Torah's way of hinting to the two Batei Mikdash which were destroyed. They were both seized by Hashem as "collateral" -- mashkon -- in lieu of the debt created by the sins of Bnei Yisrael. Rav Wolbe (Daas Shlomo) offers a beautiful explanation of this Medrash.

Chazal exhort us (Yerushalmi Brachos 9:5) "Serve [Hashem] out of love and serve [Hashem] out of fear. Serve out of love because if you become inclined to hate, you will bear in mind that one who loves does not hate. Serve out of fear because if you decide to rebel, you will bear in mind that one who fears does not rebel."

There are two possible relationships that one can have with Hashem; one of closeness or one of feeling distant. Both of these scenarios each have a positive and negative facet. Closeness can breed a tremendous love of Hashem. On the other hand, this closeness has the ability to develop into hatred. We find that Hashem said to Bnei Yisrael that if not for the fact that He rested His Shechina amongst them they would not have sinned in kivros ha'taava (Rashi to Bamidbar 11:20). Familiarity breeds contempt which in turn caused them to rebel against Hashem.

Disconnection obviously has the ability to breed hatred. Yet, there is also a positive side to this situation. The acknowledgment of the distance between the Creator and oneself, and the cognizance of the infinite greatness of Hashem in contrast to his own finiteness, will bring a person to yiras Shamayim. The Maharal explains that we refer to fear of Hashem as "yiras

Shamayim" in contrast to love of Hashem which is not referred to as ahavas Shamayim. This is to emphasize the distance between man and his Creator: it is as great as the distance between heaven and earth.

Man is meant to utilize the inherent distance between him and his Creator to produce a fear of Hashem, and use the inborn closeness of being created in Hashem's image as a catalyst to obtain a deep love of Hashem. These two qualities will keep his relationship with Hashem in check. The love created by the closeness will prevent any feelings of hatred that might have been generated by the distance, and the fear borne out of the distance will preclude the possibility of any rebellious actions engendered by the closeness.

Yet, there is another situation which also exists. When the intensity of the closeness or distance is so strong, nothing in the world can change that situation. Chazal refer to the yetzer hara as "a foreign god." Its very essence is one of isolation and distance from Hashem and there is nothing that can be done to change that fact.

The converse is also true. Chazal tell us, "A cherished one (Shlomo) the son of a cherished one (Dovid) will build a cherished edifice (the Bais Hamikdash) for the Cherished One (Hashem) in the portion of the cherished one (Binyomin) wherein the cherished ones (Bnei Yisrael) will find forgiveness" (Yalkut Shemoni Shmuel II 12:149). We should be awestruck by Chazal's description of the intensity of the love between Hashem and Klal Yisrael. The connection is so deep that there is no way out of it.

With this idea in mind, we can appreciate the Rashi at the beginning of the parsha. Collateral is something which despite the fact that it is being held by the lender, nevertheless, remains to an extent in the possession of the borrower. Likewise, the love manifested by the Bais Hamikdash, which was taken as collateral in lieu of the debt created by the iniquities of Bnei Yisrael, still remains intact despite their wayward behavior. The connection to Hashem is so intrinsic that there is nothing in the world that can sever that bond.

Appreciate the greatness of Klal Yisrael. No matter what and no matter when, they remain cherished beyond words. Even the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash, and certainly any spiritually depraved situation in which one finds himself, cannot wipe away the tremendous love that Hashem has for us. Next time you daven, thank Hashem for the zechus of being part of the Chosen Nation. It's a fortune much greater than winning the billion dollar Powerball lottery! © 2016 Rav S. Wolbe, zt"l and AishDas Society

