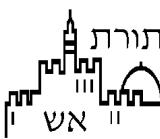


Toras Aish



Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

It was the first Israelite house of worship, the first home Jews made for G-d. But the very idea is fraught with paradox, even contradiction. How can you build a house for G-d? He is bigger than anything we can imagine, let alone build.

King Solomon made this point when he inaugurated another house of G-d, the First Temple: "But will G-d really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain You. How much less this house I have built!" (1 Kings 8:27). So did Isaiah in the name of G-d himself: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What house can you build for me? Where will my resting place be? (Is. 66:1).

Not only does it seem impossible to build a home for G-d. It should be unnecessary. The G-d of everywhere can be accessed anywhere, as readily in the deepest pit as on the highest mountain, in a city slum as in a palace lined with marble and gold.

The answer, and it is fundamental, is that G-d does not live in buildings. He lives in builders. He lives not in structures of stone but in the human heart. What the Jewish sages and mystics pointed was that in our parsha G-d says, "Let them build me a sanctuary that I may dwell in them" (Ex. 25:8), not "that I may dwell in it."

Why then did G-d command the people to make a sanctuary at all? The answer given by most commentators, and hinted at by the Torah itself, is that G-d gave the command specifically after the sin of the golden calf.

The people made the calf after Moses had been on the mountain for forty days to receive the Torah. So long as Moses was in their midst, the people knew that he communicated with G-d, and G-d with him, and therefore G-d was accessible, close. But when he was absent for nearly six weeks, they panicked. Who else could bridge the gap between the people and

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G-d? How could they hear G-d's instructions? Through what intermediary could they make contact with the divine presence?

That is why G-d said to Moses, "Let them build me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." The key word here is the verb sh-kh-n, to dwell. Never before had it been used in connection with G-d. It eventually became a keyword of Judaism itself. From it came the word Mishkan meaning a sanctuary, and Shekhinah, the divine presence.

Central to its meaning is the idea of closeness. Shakhnen in Hebrew means a neighbour, the person who lives next door. What the Israelites needed and what G-d gave them was a way of feeling as close to G-d as to our next-door neighbour.

That is what the patriarchs and matriarchs had. G-d spoke to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah intimately, like a friend. He told Abraham and Sarah that they would have a child. He explained to Rebecca why she was suffering such acute pain in pregnancy. He appeared to Jacob at key moments in his life telling him not to be afraid.

That is not what the Israelites had experienced until now. They had seen G-d bringing plagues on the Egyptians. They had seen Him divide the sea. They had seen Him send manna from heaven and water from a rock. They had heard His commanding voice at Mount Sinai and found it almost unbearable. They said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have G-d speak to us or we will die." G-d had appeared to them as an overwhelming presence, an irresistible force, a light so bright that to look at it makes you blind, a voice so strong it makes you go deaf.

So for G-d to be accessible, not just to the pioneers of faith -- the patriarchs and matriarchs -- but to every member of a large nation, was a challenge, as it were, for G-d Himself. He had to do what the Jewish mystics called tzimtzum, "contract" Himself, screen His light, soften His voice, hide His glory within a thick cloud, and allow the infinite to take on the dimensions of the finite.

But that, as it were, was the easy part. The difficult part had nothing to do with G-d and everything to do with us. How do we come to sense the presence of G-d? It isn't difficult to do so standing at the foot of Mount Everest or seeing the Grand Canyon. You do not have to be very religious or even religious at all, to feel awe in the presence of the sublime. The psychologist

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Abraham Maslow, whom we encountered a few weeks ago in these pages, spoke about "peak experiences", and saw them as the essence of the spiritual encounter.

But how do you feel the presence of G-d in the midst of everyday life? Not from the top of Mount Sinai but from the plain beneath? Not when it is surrounded by thunder and lightning as it was at the great revelation, but when it is just a day among days?

That is the life-transforming secret of the name of the parsha, Terumah. It means "a contribution". G-d said to Moses: "Tell the Israelites to take for me a contribution. You are to receive the contribution for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give." (Ex. 25:2) The best way of encountering G-d is to give.

The very act of giving flows from, or leads to, the understanding that what we give is part of what we were given. It is a way of giving thanks, an act of gratitude. That is the difference in the human mind between the presence of G-d and the absence of G-d.

If G-d is present, it means that what we have is His. He created the universe. He made us. He gave us life. He breathed into us the very air we breathe. All around us is the majesty, the plenitude, of G-d's generosity: the light of the sun, the gold of the stone, the green of the leaves, the song of the birds. This is what we feel reading the great creation psalms we read every day in the morning service. The world is G-d's art gallery and His masterpieces are everywhere.

When life is a given, you acknowledge this by giving back.

But if life is not a given because there is no Giver, if the universe came into existence only because of a random fluctuation in the quantum field, if there is nothing in the universe that knows we exist, if there is nothing to the human body but a string of letters in the genetic code and to the human mind but electrical impulses in the brain, if our moral convictions are self-serving means of self-preservation and our spiritual aspirations mere delusions, then it is difficult to feel gratitude for the gift of life. There is no gift if there is no giver. There is only a series of meaningless accidents, and it is difficult to feel gratitude for an accident.

The Torah therefore tells us something simple and practical. Give, and you will come to see life as a

gift. You don't need to be able to prove G-d exists. All you need is to be thankful that you exist -- and the rest will follow.

That is how G-d came to be close to the Israelites through the building of the sanctuary. It wasn't the quality of the wood and metals and drapes. It wasn't the glitter of jewels on the breastplate of the High Priest. It wasn't the beauty of the architecture or the smell of the sacrifices. It was the fact that it was built out of the gifts of "everyone whose heart prompts them to give" (Ex. 25:2). Where people give voluntarily to one another and to holy causes, that is where the divine presence rests.

Hence the special word that gives its name to this week's parsha: Terumah. I've translated it as "a contribution" but it actually has a subtly different meaning for which there is no simple English equivalent. It means "something you lift up" by dedicating it to a sacred cause. You lift it up, then it lifts you up. The best way of scaling the spiritual heights is simply to give in gratitude for the fact that you have been given.

G-d doesn't live in a house of stone. He lives in the hearts of those who give. ©2016 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"They shall make an ark of acacia trees. Overlay it with pure gold— outside and inside—and you shall make upon it a gold crown all around. Cast for it four gold rings and place them on its four corners, two rings on one side and two rings on the other. Into these rings you must insert the [two] poles of acacia trees which you are to overlay with gold, and with which you are to carry the ark. The staves shall remain in the rings of the ark; they may not be removed from it. You shall place into the ark the Testimonial Tablets which I will give you" (Ex. 25:10-16)

The first of the Sanctuary's accouterments is the Ark of the Covenant, into which the Tablets of the Ten Commandments are to be deposited. These Tablets are the written record of the Revelation at Sinai, under whose rubric G-d transmitted the 613 Commandments of the Torah.

Herein lay the Constitution of this newly formed nation, the message by which a holy nation was to be fashioned and the mission with which blessing was to be brought to all the families on earth. Hence, the production of this ark must contain many symbolic and instructive teachings; its very architecture is therefore divinely commanded.

The wood of the sacred ark came from acacia trees (atzei shittim), a rare type of tree which grows even in a desert wilderness; it is therefore an early forerunner of the freshness and vitality of the cedars of Lebanon which, in the days of our redemptive Messiah,

will spread its force throughout Israel and transform arid deserts into fountains of water: "I will open up streams on the bare hills and fountains amid the valleys; I will turn the desert into ponds, the arid land into springs of water. I will plant cedars in the desert, acacia and myrtle and the oil tree... that people may see and know, consider and comprehend, that the Lord's hand has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it" (Isa. 41:18-20).

The fact that the Sacred Ark, receptacle for the Torah, the Tablets of Testimony, was fashioned from the acacia tree emphasizes the fact that the Revelation was given to Israel not in the Land of Israel, not from Mount Moriah, but rather from the open-spaced no-man's land of the Sinai desert wilderness. This, our Sages teach us, is because "had the Torah been given in the Land of Israel, the Israelites could have demanded it only for themselves, arguing that the nations of the world have no share in it; now, anyone who wishes to accept it, may come and accept it" (Mekhilta de R. Yishmael, BaHodesh 1, Lauterbach ed. p. 198).

Moreover, many botanists and researchers claim that the miraculous "burning bush" seen by Moses at the very beginning of his ministry was actually a semi-parasitic plant which covers acacia trees, the Loranthus acaciae, whose fire-red blossoms seemed to Moses to be a fiery flame which was burning, but which did not consume the tree it surrounded (Tree and Shrub in our Biblical Heritage, Nogah Hareveni, p. 39).

The message and mission of the wood from the acacia tree is indubitably clear; G-d entrusted us, inflamed us, with His "fiery law of love" (esh dat) to become a holy nation of priest-teachers to humanity, to transform the wilderness wasteland of a corrupt world into a blooming Garden of Eden of fruits and flowers, piety and productivity, during the Time of Redemption.

The rest of the symbolism of our Sacred Ark is easy to interpret. The wooden ark was placed within a larger, outer box made of pure gold, and it itself enclosed a smaller, inner box of pure gold so that the wooden ark which encased the Tablet of Testimony was formed from the outside as well as from the inside with pure gold. Gold symbolizes eternity—it never decays; it is critical that the golden preciousness of G-d's Torah must be expressed to the outside in human words and deeds and must emanate from an inner purity of heart, soul and mind.

The essential, central ark was made of wood, as we have seen, because a tree, unlike sterile gold, grows, develops branches, and often gives forth new fruit. Two staves, likewise made of wood, were inserted into gold rings on the sides of the ark, so that the ark—the Torah—would move, progress and travel along with the People of Israel.

Ours must be a living Torah. Our Torah must be found wherever the people of Israel happen to be.

Our Torah must respond with commanding vision to every new era, to every fresh possibility. Our Torah must apply eternal truths to changing conditions, maintaining deep roots which dig deeply into the depths of ancient nutrients but equipped with the necessary wings to fly into hitherto uncharted heights; it must bring us close to the One who revealed His Will in the wilderness and endowed us with the wisdom and wherewithal to perfect his world. Herein lies the secret of the cherubs, in human form with wings poised heavenwards, ultimate guardians of an eternal people with an eternal Torah. "They shall make for Me a Sanctuary so that I may dwell in their midst," in My Sanctuary, which must transform the world into a house of communion and communication with Me for all the nations of the world. © 2016 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

There is traditional opinion in the works of the commentators to Torah that the construction of the Mishkan/Tabernacle was a form of atonement for the sin of the Jewish people in erecting and worshipping the Golden Calf. So to speak, gold atones for gold. Gold well spent on holiness and goodness atones for gold badly misspent on idolatry and wanton behavior.

This idea is very much in line with the Jewish concept of repentance, which sees the penitent being in the same position and circumstances as when he originally sinned but no longer behaving sinfully in those circumstances. It is truly wise to avoid temptation but it is heroic and noble to overcome it.

The Mishkan/Tabernacle and the priestly garments were to be constructed from gold, silver, fine wood, precious stones and diamonds, valued by humans as possessions of pleasure of this world. People steal and kill, work long and hard hours and years, in order to acquire these physical items. They have greatly inflated importance in human eyes, far beyond their actual value and true worth.

But since the Torah was not addressed to angels but rather to humans, the Torah instructs us to consecrate these material gifts to lofty, spiritual and eternal purposes, and to take weapons used many times unfortunately for evil and base goals and convert them to tools of beneficence and purpose.

G-d does not need our wealth nor does He require buildings for His presence to be felt in this world. Rather, it is this lesson of being able to harness everything – even gold and diamonds – for noble purposes. And this is the true challenge in life – consecrating the mundane and impure to holiness.

This is the attitude of Judaism towards the so-called pleasures of the world. We are not a nation of monks or ascetics. We are meant to be a kingdom of

priests who serve G-d and humankind and a holy nation. Holiness is the ability to take the realities of life and deal with them in an exalted and immortal fashion. There was a famous dictum/motto attributed to Rav Kook that pretty much said it all regarding this matter: "To renew and refresh the old and to sanctify the new."

We live in a transformative generation regarding communication and interpersonal connections. Unfortunately, much of this technological achievement has been exploited for base and harmful purposes. We have not as of yet been able to convert the materials of the Golden Calf into a Mishkan/Tabernacle. Our generation, especially its younger members are struggling mightily with this issue.

Much of the future structure of our society is dependent on how this struggle will eventually resolve itself. As we read in Terumah this week, if we can wrest away these valuables from being servants of the Golden Calf and use them to construct our individual and national Mishkan/Tabernacle, then the Lord has assured us that he will dwell within us, in our homes and in our lives. ©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 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. ©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 DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

"Oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the incense of spices" (Sh'mos 25:6). The Tosafists (e.g. Da'as Z'kaynim, Hadar Z'kaynim, Moshav Z'kaynim, B'chor Shor, Sefer HaGan, Chizkuni, R' Chayim Paltiel) ask why these three things are included in the list of items to be donated for the Mishkan if the list only consists of materials needed for the structure itself (and the clothing), but not for the service done in the Mishkan. After all, none of the animals brought as offerings are included in this list, nor is the grain needed for the meal offerings or for the "bread of faces" (Lechem HaPanim), nor is the wood used as fuel for the fire. Why are the materials needed for these three things included?

The anointing oil being included does not pose as much of a problem, as the vessels and the structure itself had to be anointed before being eligible for the service (see 30:22-29); the materials needed for the anointing could therefore be said to be part of the needs of the building itself. [Some of the Tosafists also feel that the spices for the incense present less of a problem, as they "need workers" (which I understand to mean that they are not just a "raw material," as making them into usable spices takes much work and expertise), so it's as if they were also "built." They add that incense was necessary before G-d's "divine presence" could fill the Mishkan, since it was "within the

cloud" of the burning incense that He "appeared on the Ark's cover" (see Vayikra 16:2).] This concept of something needed for the building to be considered usable qualifying as being materials needed for the building itself is extended to include the spices for the incense, since a structure fit for a king -- and certainly for the King of kings -- has to have a pleasant smell, and also to the oil for lighting, since a dark structure isn't fitting for the King of kings (even if He Himself does not need any light to be able to "see"). Nevertheless, even if this enables these materials to be included in the list, that doesn't seem to warrant their having to be included in it. Why were these items included in the list of materials needed for the actual building of the Mishkan and its vessels?

There are other issues in this verse that deserve a closer look as well. First of all, although "oil for lighting" is mentioned, oil for anointing is not (only "spices for the anointing oil"). [Although some of the Tosafists address this issue as well, saying that the word "oil" applies to both, with the verse read as "spices should be added to the same oil used for lighting to make the anointing oil," this is not the easiest way to read the verse, and brings with it its own difficulties.] Secondly, the specific spices needed for the anointing oil and for the incense are not mentioned, only the category of "spices." The different types of dyed wool (blue, purple, red) are listed, not just the category of "dyed wool." Why aren't each of the spices needed listed separately as well? How would the nation know which spices to donate if they weren't specified?

The items on this list were donated by "those whose heart gave willingly" (25:2; see <http://tinyurl.com/zjrunez>), as opposed to being given in order to fulfill an obligation. However, the "oil for lighting," whose inclusion in this list indicates that it also must be donated voluntarily, is mentioned elsewhere (27:20) as being "commanded," indicating that it's an obligation for it be given. This is reiterated the third time oil for lighting is mentioned (Vayikra 24:2), where it is also "commanded." As I have previously discussed (<http://tinyurl.com/jckvn57>), the purpose of the second mention was to inform Moshe that he will, at some future point, tell the nation that they must provide extra-pure olive oil for the Menorah, whereas the third mention was when Moshe was told to actually relay the commandment to the nation that they must provide extra-pure olive oil. That third commandment, though, was communicated to Moshe in the Mishkan, after it was already built and operating, including the Menorah having already been lit "from evening to morning." It would therefore seem that until then, the Menorah was lit using oil that had been donated before Moshe commanded the nation to provide more.

When the details of the Mishkan were taught to Moshe, he was told that the oil for the Menorah had to be extra-pure olive oil, but that he shouldn't tell the

nation this until later ("you shall" in the future, but not now, "command the Children of Israel," the second mention of the oil for lighting). Instead, he should just tell them that one of the things needed for the Mishkan was "oil for lighting" (the first mention), so that not only would the donation be completely voluntary, but the kind of oil donated would also be voluntary. And they donated the highest quality oil, extra-pure olive oil. Once the original donation (including the quality of the donation) was done voluntary, Moshe could then tell them that it would always have to be only the highest quality oil for the Menorah (the third mention).

Even though "oil for lighting" had to be listed as one of the items to be donated so that it would be donated voluntarily, if it had no connection to the building process, it wouldn't belong in the list. However, since having the Menorah lit was a requirement of the structure itself, it could be included. And once the "oil for lighting" was included based on this criteria, the anointing oil and the incense, which had similar criteria, had to be included too. (After all, if the "oil for lighting" was included based on it being needed for the structure, how could materials that filled similar needs not be included as well?) Nevertheless, since the reason for mentioning these three things was to be able to include the oil for lighting, there was no need to mention every ingredient of the other two; including them by simply mentioning them without detailing which specific spices were used (and that oil was used in the anointing oil, which was obvious) was all that was necessary. Eventually, Moshe told the nation which spices to donate (30:22-38). For now, though, mentioning them in a general sense in order to be consistent with mentioning the oil for lighting was enough.

[It is possible that for a similar reason the types of precious stones needed weren't specified either, as the point was for them to be included in the list of items donated voluntarily. This way, when the Nesi'im realized that they were wrong for waiting to donate to the Mishkan (see Rashi on 35:27, see also page 2 of <http://tinyurl.com/grxnyyh>), there would still be something left for them to donate.] ©2016 Rabbi D. Kramer

HARAV SHLOMO WOLBE ZT" L

Bais Hamussar

When Adam was created, he entered a spiritually pure world. In a sin-free setting, Hashem's presence is palpable and it is quite comprehensible that one living in such an environment would be able to converse with the Creator Himself as was the case with Adam. Unfortunately, this utopia lasted only a number of hours. He sinned by eating from the eitz hada'as and thereby plunged the world into a spiritual darkness.

This darkness culminated with the destruction

of most of mankind during the flood.

Avraham Avinu began building a new world of spirituality. Seven generations later his offspring stood by Har Sinai and declared na'aseh v'nishma and thereby restored the world to its original state of spiritual purity. Once again those present at that time merited hearing words emanating from Hashem Himself. However, shortly thereafter the original course of events recurred: a sin was committed and it hurled the world downward into a spiritual abyss.

According to the Seforno, the building of the Mishkan was meant to rectify this situation and create an edifice which would act as a substitute for the former world of purity. The Mishkan was in effect a microcosm of the universe. When Moshe Rabbeinu entered this abode which was untainted by sin, he immediately heard the voice of Hashem. Indeed, anyone who entered encountered numerous miracles that proclaimed Hashem's presence.

Chazal tell us (Shemos Rabba 34:1) that when Hashem instructed Moshe to build the Mishkan, Moshe wondered aloud: "His presence fills the entire universe and He is asking me to build an abode for Him?" Hashem responded, "I did not intend it to be as big as you think it should be. Erect twenty beams on the northern side, twenty beams on the southern side and eight beams on the western side. Moreover, I will descend and rest My Shechina within a space of a cubit by a cubit." Rav Wolbe (Daas Shlomo) quotes Rav Yeruchom Levovitz's explanation of Moshe's surprise. Moshe did not assume that Hashem intended to maintain His presence in the world and merely occupy an additional personal abode. Had this been the case then there would be no place for his question since such an endeavor would not necessitate a huge building.

Rather, Moshe understood that Hashem was planning on removing His presence from the entire universe and dwelling solely in the Mishkan! Hashem responded with the concept of tzimtzum Ha'Shechina -- He would condense His presence and limit it to a single square cubit!

Alas, the Mishkan and Beis Hamikdosh have been destroyed and Hashem's presence on earth is no longer felt. Do we have any hope of regaining His presence in a fashion similar to what was felt in the previous generations? Chazal (Brachos 8a) enlighten us and assert, "From the time that the Beis Hamikdosh was destroyed Hashem has no place in this world aside from the four cubits of halacha." We are left without a Mishkan and without any of its vessels, but Hashem still finds a way to condense and concentrate His presence i.e. on a person who delves into the Torah l'hhalacha.

Reb Naftoli Amsterdam once lamented to his Rabbi Reb Yisroel Salanter that he feels inadequate to properly serve Hashem. "If only I had the brilliant mind of the Shaagas Aryeh, the passionate heart of the

Yesod V'Shoresh Ha'Avodah and your sterling middos, then I would be able to properly serve Hashem!" Reb Yisroel Salanter replied, "Naftoli, with your mind, with your heart and with your middos you have the ability to be a true oveid Hashem!" Rav Yeruchom Levovitz comments that Reb Yisroel Salanter was informing his disciple of just how far this idea of tzimtzum Ha'Shechina goes. Hashem will even condense His Shechina and rest it upon a person with limited intellectual abilities, a small heart and unpolished middos, as long as he serves Hashem with seriousness and wholesomeness. We have the ability to build a Mishkan. We do not even have to travel to Yerushalayim since the building is to take place in our own backyard. The most lucrative investment is the investment of time one spends in building himself into an abode for the Shechina! ©2016 Rabbi S. Wolbe zt"l & AishDAs Society

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

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STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA
HARAV BARUCH GIGI SHLIT"A

Adapted by Immanuel Mayer; Translated by Kaeren Fish

At the beginning of the parasha, G-d commands: "And let them make Me a Sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. According to all that I show you, the pattern of the Mishkan and the pattern of all its vessels -- so shall you make it." (Shemot 25:8-9)

These verses encapsulate the aim and purpose of the Mishkan: it allows G-d's Presence to dwell amongst the nation. Indeed, at the end of Sefer Shemot we find that this aim materializes:

"Then a cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Mishkan. And Moshe could not enter the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud rested upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Mishkan." (40:34-35)

It is within the same context that we read at the beginning of Sefer Vayikra: "And He called to Moshe, and G-d spoke to him out of the Tent of Meeting, saying: Speak of Bnei Yisrael and say to them, If any man of you brings an offering to the Lord, of the cattle shall you bring your offering, of the herd, and of the flock." (Vayikra 1:1-2)

G-d calls to Moshe from inside the Mishkan, from within the cloud that is in the Tent of Meeting. It seems logical and natural that the place where the sacrifices are offered should be the place where G-d's Presence rests. In other words, the resting of G-d's Presence finds expression in those sacrifices, as well as in many other mitzvot that are described in Sefer Vayikra. In fact, the entire Sefer -- with the exception of its last two parashiot -- deals with the commandments given to Moshe in the Mishkan.

Another verse expressing the same idea appears after the giving of the Torah: "An altar of earth

shall you make to Me, and you shall sacrifice upon it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen; in all places where I cause My Name to be pronounced, I will come to you and I will bless you. And if you will make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone, for if you lift up your sword over it, you have defiled it." (Shemot 20:21-22)

The idea that G-d's blessing exists in every place where His Name is mentioned, is juxtaposed with the command to build an altar. Thus, the sacrifices are a way of publicizing and declaring G-d's Name in the world. Indeed, Ramban (ad loc.) explains: "In truth, the units are organized such that they follow an order: 'You have seen that I have spoken with you from the heavens' (Shemot 20:19) by My great Name, and so therefore 'You shall not make with Me gods of silver, neither shall you make for yourselves gods of gold' (Shemot 20:20). However, I permit you to make an altar, for Me alone, and to 'sacrifice upon it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings' in 'every place where I cause My Name to be pronounced' for 'I will come to you and I will bless you' -- with 'blessings of the heavens above; blessings of the deep that crouches beneath' (Bereishit 49:25)."'

The Rambam presents a different view of Mishkan in the opening of his *Hilkhot Beit HaBechira* (1:1): "It is a positive commandment to build a House for G-d, ready for sacrifices to be offered within it, and celebrations are held there three times a year, as it is written (Shemot 25:8), 'And you shall make Me a Sanctuary.' The Mishkan built by Moshe as described in the Torah was only temporary, as it is written (Devarim 12:9), 'For as yet you have not come [to the place of rest and inheritance].'"

In contrast to Ramban and the plain meaning of the verses, as we have seen, suggesting that the purpose of the sacrifices is to express G-d's Presence in the Temple, here the focus is on the sacrifices themselves. The sacrifices are not meant as a response to or expression of G-d's Presence resting in the Temple in fulfillment of His promise "that I may dwell in their midst"; rather, the sacrifices are an end in and of themselves, for the sake of which we must build a Temple.

Here the obvious question arises: was the Rambam then unfamiliar with the verses we quoted above? Did he perhaps fail to notice that the very first verse in our parasha sets forth explicitly the purpose of the Mishkan as the place of G-d's dwelling amongst Bnei Yisrael?

In fact, the same idea is stated explicitly again, at the end of parashat Tetzaveh: "And there I shall meet with Bnei Yisrael, and it shall be sanctified with My glory. And I will sanctify also both Aharon and his sons, to minister to Me as kohanim. And I will dwell among Bnei Yisrael, and will be their G-d. And they shall know that I am the Lord their G-d Who brought

them out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them; I am the Lord their G-d." (Shemot 29:43-46)

The message of these verses seems to be quite clear. It could not be stated more clearly: the purpose of the Mishkan is for G-d to meet with Bnei Yisrael, to sanctify the nation, to make His Name present in the world. How, then, does the Rambam arrive at the conclusion that the purpose of the Temple is the offering of sacrifices?

In order to answer this question, we need to pay close attention to the Rambam's words. First of all, in quoting the verse from our parasha, he brings only the first part -- "Let them make Me a Sanctuary," while omitting the continuation, "that I may dwell in their midst."

Seemingly, the Rambam draws a distinction between the Mishkan and the Mikdash (Temple). The Mishkan was indeed meant to be a place where G-d's Presence dwells; it is the place of His Name and His glory. According to the Rambam, all the verses quoted above refer to the Mishkan alone. There -- and only there -- G-d causes His Name to rest, and the sacrifices are an expression of that reality, along with their other functions for those who offer them.

In the wilderness, Bnei Yisrael receive manna and water directly from G-d, and their garments do not wear out. However, once the nation reaches Eretz Yisrael, their reality starts to be dependent upon themselves. The period of the wilderness is symbolized by the Mishkan and the period in the land of Israel by the Mikdash (Temple). The entry into the land expresses and embodies the transition from a miraculous way of life to a natural way of life, from a situation in which G-d performs miracles and acts for man's sake, to a situation in which man himself must exert effort to make things happen.

This contrast between the generation of the wilderness and the generation that enters the land also finds expression in the difference between the Mishkan and the Temple. In the Mishkan, G-d indeed caused His Presence to rest. In the Temple, however, He expects man to bring His Name there. This is the purpose of the sacrifices: to define the place as the House of the Holy One, blessed be He.

Thus, there is a fundamental difference of opinion between Ramban and the Rambam when it comes to their respective perceptions of the Temple. This disagreement is also expressed in the question of what represents the heart of the Temple. In the Introduction to his Commentary on the Torah, Ramban expounds on the Foundation Stone: "[It is written,] 'Out of Tzion, the perfection of beauty, G-d shone forth...' (Tehillim 50:2). Out of Tzion the whole world was developed. How is this known? Why was it called 'the Foundation Stone?' Because the world was founded from it...."

This stone, as we know, lies beneath the Ark of

the Covenant in the Temple. The Ark of the Covenant is the place of the Divine Presence, the place from which G-d's word comes to Moshe. From the stone beneath the Ark, G-d began to build the world.

In contrast to Ramban, the Rambam makes no mention of the Foundation Stone anywhere in the Mishneh Torah in the context of a description of the Temple. (He mentions it once in Hilkhot Avodat Yom HaKippurim, in an altogether technical context.) In his view, the heart of the Temple is the sacrificial altar, the place where sacrifices are offered and the geographical center of the Temple structure.

The same difference of perception is reflected in the list of mitzvot. According to the Rambam, the building of the Temple and the building of the altar are two separate mitzvot. Ramban, on the other hand, counts them together. Instead, he separates the building of the Temple from the building of the Ark, regarding each as its own separate positive mitzva. (See Rambam's positive mitzvot no. 20; Hilkhot Beit HaBechira, chapters 1-2; and Ramban's gloss, commandment no. 33)

In fact, this difference of opinion is not limited to one's understanding of the Mishkan vs. the Temple. It extends to a broad view of man's place in G-d's world.

The Rambam views the commandments as human actions that change the world. In his view, G-d gives Am Yisrael commandments, thereby bequeathing to them the ability to effect change and have an impact in many different areas. The Ramban, we might say, views mitzvot as a way for man to tap into Divine manifestation in the world.

The Rambam and Ramban are similarly divided in their view of the sanctification of the new moon. According to the Rambam, it is the court that actually sanctifies the new moon; it is they who establish and define Rosh Chodesh, while G-d "listens" to them, as it were, and accedes to their decision. Ramban, on the other hand, maintains that the court simply clarifies (through questioning witnesses) the time of the sanctification of the new moon, which is actually determined by G-d Himself.

Attention should be paid to the deeper significance of what the Rambam is saying: G-d gives His world over to man so that he will develop it, and He has given man the tools and the guidance to proceed with that task. In fact, according to the Rambam, even today, in the absence of a court on the Temple Mount, Am Yisrael in the Land of Israel actually, literally, sanctifies the new moon.

Another area in which the difference of opinion reveals itself pertains to the mitzva of visiting the Temple. Ramban maintains that the mitzva of "re'iya" and the mitzva of bringing sacrifices are mutually independent. The Rambam, in contrast, insists that the mitzvah of "re'iya" must be accompanied by the bringing of a sacrifice (Hilkhot Chagiga 1:1). From the

Rambam's words we learn of man's huge impact in the world: man's world which is also G-d's world.

Along with this impact comes great responsibility. Causing G-d's Name and Presence to dwell in the world, along with establishing appointed times and many other attainments, are all dependent on us. We must realize this potential that G-d has placed within us in the best possible way. (*This sicha was delivered on leil Shabbat parashat Teruma 5773 [2013].*)

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. © 2011 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.

