

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

FFrom here to the end of the book of Exodus the Torah describes, in painstaking detail and great length, the construction of the Mishkan, the first collective house of worship of the Jewish people. Precise instructions are given for each item – the Tabernacle itself, the frames and drapes, and the various objects it contained – including their dimensions. So for example we read: “Make the tabernacle with ten curtains of finely twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, with cherubim woven into them by a skilled worker. All the curtains are to be the same size—twenty-eight cubits long and four cubits wide... Make curtains of goat hair for the tent over the tabernacle—eleven altogether. All eleven curtains are to be the same size—thirty cubits long and four cubits wide... Make upright frames of acacia wood for the tabernacle. Each frame is to be ten cubits long and a cubit and a half wide...” (Ex. 26:1-16)

And so on. But why do we need to know how big the Tabernacle was? It did not function in perpetuity. Its primary use was during the wilderness years. Eventually it was replaced by the Temple, an altogether larger and more magnificent structure. What then is the eternal significance of the dimensions of this modest, portable construction?

To put the question more sharply still: is not the very idea of a specific size for the home of the Shekhinah, the Divine presence, liable to mislead? A transcendent G-d cannot be contained in space. Solomon said so: “But will G-d really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this Temple I have built.” (1 Kings 8:27)

Isaiah said the same in the name of G-d Himself: “Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where is the house you will build for Me? Where will My resting place be?” Isaiah 66:1

So no physical space, however large, is big enough. On the other hand, no space is too small. So says a striking midrash: When G-d said to Moses, ‘Make Me a tabernacle,’ Moses said in amazement, ‘The glory of the Holy One blessed be He fills heaven and earth, and yet He commands, Make me a tabernacle?’... G-d replied, ‘Not as you think do I think. Twenty boards on the north, twenty on the south and

eight in the west are sufficient. Indeed, I will descend and confine My presence even within one square cubit.’ (Shemot Rabbah 34:1)

So what difference could it make whether the Tabernacle was large or small? Either way, it was a symbol, a focus, of the Divine presence that is everywhere, wherever human beings open their heart to G-d. Its dimensions should not matter.

I came across an answer in an unexpected and indirect way some years ago. I had gone to Cambridge University to take part in a conversation on religion and science. When the session was over, a member of the audience came over to me, a quiet, unassuming man, and said, “I have written a book I think you might find interesting. I’ll send it to you.” I did not know at the time who he was.

A week later the book arrived. It was called ‘Just Six Numbers’, subtitled ‘The deep forces that shape the universe’. With a shock I discovered that the author was the then Sir Martin, now Baron Rees, Astronomer Royal, later President of the Royal Society, the oldest and most famous scientific body in the world, and Master of Trinity College Cambridge. In 2011 he won the Templeton Prize. I had been talking to Britain’s most distinguished scientist.

His book was enthralling. It explained that the universe is shaped by six mathematical constants which, had they varied by a millionth or trillionth degree, would have resulted in no universe or at least no life. Had the force of gravity been slightly different, for example, the universe would either have expanded or imploded in such a way as to preclude the formation of stars or planets. Had nuclear efficiency been slightly lower the cosmos would consist only of hydrogen; no life would have emerged. Had it been slightly higher there would have been rapid stellar evolution and decay leaving no time for life to evolve. The combination of improbabilities was immense.

Torah commentators, especially the late Nechama Leibowitz, have drawn attention to the way the terminology of the construction of the Tabernacle is



Take Control of
YOUR MONEY!
tinyurl.com/fitness5

...probably the best personal
finance training course I've seen! - CPA

**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**

the same as that used to describe G-d's creation of the universe. The Tabernacle was, in other words, a "micro-cosmos, a symbolic reminder of the world G-d made. The fact that the Divine presence rested within it was not meant to suggest that G-d is here not there, in this place not that. It was meant to signal, powerfully and palpably, that G-d exists throughout the cosmos. It was a man-made structure to mirror and focus attention on the Divinely-created universe. It was in space what Shabbat is in time: a reminder of creation.

The dimensions of the universe are precise, mathematically exact. Had they differed in even the slightest degree the universe, or life, would not exist. Only now are scientists beginning to realise how precise, and even this knowledge will seem rudimentary to future generations. We are on the threshold of a quantum leap in our understanding of the full depth of the words: "How many are your works, Lord; in wisdom You made them all" (Ps. 104:24). The word "wisdom" here – as in the many times it occurs in the account of the making of the tabernacle – means, "precise, exact craftsmanship" (see Maimonides, The Guide for the Perplexed, III:54).

In one other place in the Torah there is the same emphasis on precise dimensions, namely, Noah's ark: "So make yourself an ark of cypress wood. Make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around" (Gen. 6:14-16). The reason is similar to that in the case of the tabernacle. Noah's ark symbolised the world in its Divinely-constructed order, the order humans had ruined by their violence and corruption. G-d was about to destroy that world, leaving only Noah, the ark and what it contained as symbols of the vestige of order that remained, on the basis of which G-d would fashion a new order.

Precision matters. Order matters. The misplacement of even a few of the 3.1 billion letters in the human genome can lead to devastating genetic conditions. The famous "butterfly effect" – the beating of a butterfly's wing somewhere may cause a tsunami elsewhere, thousands of miles away – tells us that small actions can have large consequences. That is the

message the Tabernacle was intended to convey.

G-d creates order in the natural universe. We are charged with creating order in the human universe. That means painstaking care in what we say, what we do, and what we must restrain ourselves from doing. There is a precise choreography to the moral and spiritual life as there is a precise architecture to the tabernacle. Being good, specifically being holy, is not a matter of acting as the spirit moves us. It is a matter of aligning ourselves to the Will that made the world. Law, structure, precision: of these things the cosmos is made and without them it would cease to be. It was to signal that the same applies to human behaviour that the Torah records the precise dimensions of the Tabernacle and Noah's ark. *Covenant and Conversation 5777 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l ©2017 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"And they shall make Me a mishkan, that I may dwell among them." [Ex. 25:8] What is the significance of the mishkan (tabernacle) to Judaism, the Jewish people, and the world? Two perspectives from our tradition offer answers that I believe provide insights that will imbue our daily lives with additional meaning and spread the light of Torah to all of humanity.

The great commentator Nahmanides [13th Century Spain and Israel] maintains that the primary purpose of the mishkan is to perpetuate the Sinaitic revelation, a central temple from which the Divine voice would continue to emanate and direct the Jewish people. This is why the very first aspect of the mishkan that the Bible describes is the Ark, the repository of the sacred Tablets of Stone, over which is the Ark-cover [kapporet] with its two cherubs. The Torah testifies in the name of G-d: "And I shall meet with you there, and I shall tell you from above the kapporet, from between the two cherubs, which is on top of the Ark of Testimony, everything which I will command you [to communicate] to the People of Israel" [ibid. 25:22].

Similarly, Moses articulates this idea in describing the revelation at Sinai: "G-d spoke these words to your entire assemblage from atop the mountain amidst the fire, the cloud and the fog, a great voice that never ceases" [Deut. 5:19 and Targum Onkelos ad loc.]. It therefore is quite logical that throughout the Second Temple—in the absence of the sacred Tablets and the gift of prophecy—the Great Sanhedrin sat within the Holy Temple. From the Sanctuary [mishkan] must emanate the word of G-d!

Since the function of the Oral Torah is to keep G-d's word alive and relevant in every generation, Nahmanides maintains that the primary purpose of the

mishkan was to teach and inspire Israel and humanity with the eternal word of the Divine. From this perspective, after the destruction of the Second Temple, synagogues and study halls—our central institutions of Torah reading, learning and interpretation—are the spiritual heirs to the mishkan.

Mystical and Hassidic interpretations see in the mishkan yet another goal: the building of a home in which the Almighty and Israel (and ultimately, all of humanity) will dwell together. The revelation at Sinai symbolizes the betrothal-engagement between G-d and Israel, with the marriage contract being the tablets of stone, the biblical laws. The commandment to construct a mishkan thus means a need to build the nuptial home in which the Almighty “bridegroom” unites with His bride, the Jewish people.

Hence, the accoutrements of the mishkan are an Ark (a Repository, or Closet, as it were, which encased the tablets), Menorah-Candelabrum, and a Table for the showbread—the usual furnishings of a home—as well as an Altar, which expresses sacrifice. Therefore, if the Almighty created a world in which humanity can dwell, the Jews must return the compliment and create a mishkan so that G-d will feel comfortable with us and be enabled, as it were, to dwell in our midst here on earth. From this perspective, the heir to the destroyed Holy Temples is the Jewish home.

And it is because Judaism sees the home as a “miniature mishkan” that home-centered family ritual celebrations bear a striking parallel to the religious ritual of the Holy Temple even to this day.

A striking example of this notion is the weekly Friday Night Shabbat meal. Even before the sun begins to set, the mother of the family kindles the Shabbat lights, reminiscent of the priests’ first task each day to light the Menorah. The blessing over the Kiddush wine reminds us of the wine libations accompanying most sacrifices, and the carefully braided loaves of challah symbolize the twelve loaves of Temple showbread.

Moreover, parents bless their children with the same priestly benediction with which the High Priest blessed those in the Temple, and the ritual washing of the hands before partaking of the challah parallels the hand ablutions of the priests before engaging in Temple service. The salt in which we dip the challah before reciting the blessing over bread is based upon the biblical decree, “With all of your sacrifices shall you offer salt.” (Lev. 2:13), since salt, which is an external preservative, is symbolic of the indestructibility of G-d’s covenant with Israel.

The analogy continues to the zemirot (songs) that we sing and the Torah that we speak about during the meal, which will hopefully further serve to transport the family participants to the singing of the Levites and the teachings of the priests in the Holy Temple. Such a Shabbat meal links the generations, making everyone feel part of the eternal people participating in an eternal

conversation with the Divine.

Ultimately, whether in the synagogue or the home, we are blessed by G-d with ample opportunities to perpetuate the revelation at Sinai every day. Through the sanctification of our lives in each of these places of holiness, may we merit to witness the rebuilding of the Holy Temple itself, and the restoration of the full glory of G-d as experienced at Sinai, speedily and in our days. ©2017 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

One of the great deficiencies and dangers that face organized religions, and certainly Judaism as well, is its necessary connection to fundraising. In a perfect world, religion would be completely separate from the necessity to obtain and dispense money – in fact, from any monetary consideration whatsoever. However since this perfect world has not yet been achieved, the problems and influence of money on religion, both individually and institutionally, are many and powerful.

The necessity to raise funds gives birth to all sorts of schemes in which the prevailing attitude often times is that the greatness of supporting Torah and Judaism justifies the use of otherwise questionable means. I need not identify or enumerate the numerous cases that have led to individual and institutional grief and public shame because of this type of mindset.

The building of the Tabernacle/Mishkan, the story of whose construction starts to be told to us in this week’s Torah reading, was accomplished by the voluntary donations of the individual Jews encamped in the desert of Sinai, in response to the call and appeal of Moshe. We do not find that this fundraising effort was in any way sullied by graft, greed, commissions or overhead expenses.

Moshe will make a full accounting for all of the donations received and will detail exactly how they were processed and built into the construction of the holy edifice. And when it appeared to Moshe that there was sufficient material and donations to complete the task, he calls a halt to the fundraising efforts. Moshe’s efforts were blessed by G-d and became the ideal paradigm, never again equaled in Jewish world history, of a completely notable and transparent fundraising campaign.

This was not the case in the time of the kings of Judah when funds were required to refurbish the Temple of Solomon. The fund-raising dragged on for years in the priestly clan and the public grumbled over the manner in which it was conducted. Finally the King had to acquiesce to some sort of looser arrangement regarding the accounting and spending of the funds that were donated in order to be able to finally complete the project.

Moshe and his generation and their ability to

transcend the lure of money were no longer present. As the generations have declined since Sinai, that paradigm of Moshe has tended to recede even further. There is no practical benefit in bemoaning this fact. For religion and religious institutions to survive, expand and become influential, money is necessary. And when money becomes therefore necessary, all of the dangers that money brings with it enter our camp and unfortunately sometimes even seem to dominate it.

We should always demand transparency and honesty when dealing with public and charitable funds. Eventually Heaven separates the pure silver from the dross which always seems to encompass it. But we should insist, for our part, that holiness is built by holy means and just and responsible behavior. ©2017 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

The Torah informs us that the Ark (Aron-Exodus 25:11), the Table (Shulhan –Exodus 25:24) and the Altar of Incense (Mizbeiah Miktar Ketoret – Exodus 30:3) were all decorated with rims. Why is this so?

It can be suggested that each of these appurtenances corresponds to different roles of important personalities. (Yoma 72b) The Ark relates to the Torah scholar, as the Torah was actually contained in the Ark itself. The Table symbolizes the prosperity of our people best represented by the Ruler. And, the Altar reminds us of the Priest as he offered incense upon it.

Each of these individuals play important roles and each has a distinct challenge. The Torah scholar must be careful not to allow his knowledge to lead him to arrogance, to feeling superior over other less learned Jews. The King, the most influential of individuals, must be careful never to use his power to take advantage of his subjects. And the Priest may never permit his important religious position to be used as a platform to abuse others.

It is no wonder that the Hebrew word for rim is *zair*. On the one hand, *zair* comes from the word *zar* which means “alien”. In other words, the Torah scholar, King or Priest could pervert their important roles, thus alienating themselves from G-d’s way.

But, as Rabbi Shmuel Bornstein of Sochaczew in his *Shem Mishmuel* writes, *zair* intersects with the word *Nazir*. The Nazirite is one who achieves a high level of spirituality by dedicating life entirely to the service of G-d.

Thus, the goal of the Torah scholar, the King and Priest is to direct all energy to holiness. To see to

is that the rim at the top of these objects is manifest in the spirit of *Nazir*. In this sense, the rim around can be viewed as a crown, a symbol of royalty nobly turning one to G-d.

Note, that in *Ethics*, the rabbis speak of three crowns, the crown of Torah, the crown of the priesthood and the crown of kingship. Not coincidentally, they correspond to the Ark, the Table and the Altar in the Tabernacle. It is, therefore, no coincidence that the rabbis conclude that the most important crown is the crown of a good name (*shem tov*); in their words, “but the crown of a good name is greater than them all.” (Avot 4:13).

The challenge is to infuse the three objects in the Tabernacle, representative of these three major roles in Judaism with the critical dimension of a good name. In *Shem Mishmuel*’s words: “Each of these three great gifts to the community of Israel—Torah, Kingship and the Priesthood—needs special attention to insure that they are used only for holy, rather than self-seeking purposes. The crown on the Ark, Table, and Altar represent this constant need.” ©2017 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 KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

The Torah states regarding the walls of the Tabernacle: “The center crossbar shall go through the middle of the beams, from one end (of the Tabernacle) to the other” (Exodus 26:28).

What lesson for life can we learn from the crossbeam?

Targum Yonoson, an Aramaic translation and commentary of the Torah, informs us that the center crossbar was made with wood that came from the trees that Avraham planted. Rabbi Mordechai Mann of Bnei Brak commented that these trees were planted by Avraham for the purpose of doing kindness for travelers -- to provide them with shade.

The center crossbar was placed right in the middle of the tabernacle to remind us that even when we are devoting ourselves to serving the Almighty, we should never forget to have compassion for our fellow men, who are created in the image of the Almighty. *Dvar Torah based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin* ©2017 Rabbi K. Packouz & aish.com

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA BY HARAV YAAKOV MEDAN

Translated by Kaeren Fish

What is found in the *Kodesh Kodashim*? According to most of the commentators, in the

Second Temple, the Kodesh Kodashim ("Holy of Holies") was a room that contained nothing visible to human eyes, but at some stage the Divine Presence rested in it. In contrast, in the Mishkan during the desert wanderings, in the Mishkan in Shilo, and in the First Temple, the Kodesh Kodashim housed the ark of the covenant, inside of which were the luchot (both the second luchot and the broken pieces of the first luchot), alongside the Sefer Torah that Moshe wrote, and above them -- the kaporet (covering) with the two keruvim. In addition, the Kodesh Kodashim also held a container of manna, which Aharon placed there at G-d's command, and Aharon's staff, which had sprouted blossoms and almonds as a sign of having been chosen by G-d following the rebellion of Korach and his company (Bamidbar 17).

The text mentions all of these features in connection with the Mishkan that Moshe made in the wilderness, and Chazal explain that they also all existed in the Mishkan in Shilo and in the First Temple:

"The container of manna, and the bowl of anointing oil, and Aharon's staff with its almonds and blossoms, and the chest which the Pelishtim sent as a gift honoring the G-d of Israel, were all to be found in the Kodesh Kodashim." (Tosefta, Yoma 2:15; Yoma 52b, and elsewhere).

Our focus here will be on the container of manna: "And Moshe said, 'This is the thing which the Lord commands: Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations, that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out from the land of Egypt.' And Moshe said to Aharon, 'Take a jar, and put an omer-full of manna in it, and place it before the Lord, to be kept for your generations.' As the Lord commanded Moshe, so Aharon placed it before the Testimony, to be kept." (Shemot 16:32-34)

At this point in the narrative, the Mishkan has not yet been built, and the location of "the Testimony" is not clear. A plain reading of the text would suggest that the command to Moshe to place manna in a container to keep before G-d was actually given later on, after the Mishkan had been built and the Tablets of Testimony had been placed in the Kodesh Kodashim. The command appears here because it relates to and completes the unit on the manna. 2. The container of manna before the Ark of the Covenant

The "container of manna" and the "ark of the covenant" are at the center of the life of every Jew -- material sustenance (our equivalent of manna) and, above it, spiritual sustenance, the Torah. The blessing over bread and the blessing over the Torah are the only two blessings that are commanded explicitly in the Torah (Written Law). The combination of these two elements represents the ideal of Torah together with the Land of Israel, which sustains us with its produce and fruit by virtue of the rainfall. Concerning this combination we are told:

"This led R. Shimon ben Yochai to say: The Torah was given for delving into only by those who eat manna." (Mekhilta De-Rashbi 13)

By the term "those who eat manna" R. Shimon bar Yochai refers to those who do not concern themselves excessively with physical sustenance: "R. Eliezer said: [The container of manna was meant] for the days of the prophet Yirmiyahu. When Yirmiyahu said to Israel, 'Why do you not engage in Torah?,' they answered, 'How then will we make a living?' At that time, he took out a bowl of manna and said, 'O generation: see the word of the Lord...' (Yirmiyahu 2:31). Your forefathers, who engaged in Torah -- did they know how they would sustain themselves? Likewise you, too -- if you engage in Torah, the Holy One will take care of your livelihood." (Mekhilta De-Rabbi Yishmael, "Vayisa" 5)

There are other realms that bind together the "container of manna" and the "ark of the covenant," which are housed together in the Kodesh Ha-Kodashim.

We find that a person who fulfills the above expectation of him is compared to a tree that is firmly planted, does not wither or dry out, and constantly yields fruit -- a tree of life: "Happy is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scorners; but whose delight is in the Lord's Torah, and who meditates in His Torah day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by streams of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, its leaf also shall not wither, and in whatever he does he shall prosper." (Tehillim 1:1-3)

"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and for whom the Lord is his hope. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out its roots by the river, and shall not be anxious in the year of drought, nor shall it cease from yielding fruit." (Yirmiyahu 17:7-8)

The man depicted in Tehillim is one who meditates in the Torah. The depiction of him dwelling at the river that emerges from Eden sits well with another source: "It is a tree of life to those who grasp it, and happy are those who hold it fast." (Mishlei 3:18)

The context in which this verse appears speaks of Divine wisdom, the wisdom of the Torah, and this is what is referred to as the "tree of life."

Of course, the tree of life appears also in the story of the Garden of Eden, and there, too, we find keruvim: "So [G-d] drove out Adam, and He placed the keruvim at the east of the Garden of Eden, and the bright blade of a revolving sword to guard the way to the tree of life." (Bereishit 3:24)

The Garden of Eden is the first and most primal incarnation of the Temple. The keruvim guarding the way to the tree of life parallel the keruvim that guard the Sefer Torah and the Tablets of Testimony in the Kodesh Kodashim in the Mishkan, and later in the

Temple.

The water that sustains and gives life to the tree planted on its banks -- the human being who meditates on the Torah -- is the river that emerges from Eden, and later also from the Temple, as we find in Yechezkel's description of the tree of life: "And by the stream, upon its bank, on this side and on that side, shall grow every tree for food, whose leaf shall not wither, neither shall its fruit fail; it shall bring forth new fruit every month, because its waters have issued from the Sanctuary..." (Yechezkel 47:12)

While in Tehillim we find a description of the man (ish) who meditates in the Torah, Yirmiyahu speaks of the man (gever) who trusts in G-d; he, too, is compared to the tree of life planted in the Garden of Eden or in the Temple. Trust in G-d characterizes those who ate manna, looking to the heavens in anticipation and supplication each day anew, relying on G-d for their sustenance in the same way that servants trust that their master will take care of their needs, or like children who know that they have a place at their father's table, for they have nothing of their own. Once again, the Torah is paired with physical sustenance, and likewise for all future generations the Torah stands together with Eretz Yisrael; the blessing over the Torah is paired with the blessing recited after eating bread.

To put it differently, we might say that our two channels of communication with G-d are Torah and prayer. When we engage in Torah, we meditate on His words to us and try to fulfill them. When we engage in prayer, we ask that He hear our words and supplication to Him and fulfill them. 3. The container of manna in the Garden of Eden

We mentioned above the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, symbolizing or alluding mainly to the Torah. The container of manna would seem to be alluded to in the "bedolach" (bdellium) mentioned there: "And the gold of that land is good; there is bdellium, and the shoham stone." (Bereishit 2:12)

"And the manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance was like that of bdellium." (Bamidbar 11:7).

Perhaps the container of manna is also hinted to in Adam's expulsion from the Garden: "And to Adam He said, 'Because you have listened to your wife and have eaten of the tree concerning which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat of it -- cursed is the ground because of you; in sorrow you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread, until you return to the ground, for from it you were taken, for you are dust, and to dust you will return.'" (Bereishit 3:17-19)

The severance from the tree of life finds expression in the decree of man's death and his return to dust. The labor that he will have to exert in order to

make a living is an expression of his severance from the container of manna providing blessed sustenance directly from G-d's generous beneficence.

Adam was severed from the Kodesh Kodashim. What remains to him is the altar that stands outside. Kayin, his son, who spilled his brother's blood in a fight over sacrifices to G-d, brought about a further severance from the altar, until the Divine Presence would come to rest once again in the tent of Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivka, Yaakov, Rachel and Leah.

ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

Avot Nezikin

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

"**T**hou shall make an ark" (Va'asu Aron") Maimonides(Rambam) and also the Sefer Hachinuch do not count the mitzvah of building an ark that appears in this week's portion as part of the six hundred and thirteen Mitzvot, though Nachmanides(Ramban) did. Some believe that the reason both the Rambam and the Sefer Hachinuch did not include this specific Mitzva is because it is included in the overall Mitzva of the construction of the Beit Hamikdash. Others explain that this Mitzva is only for a specific period of time, since a second Aron (Holy Ark that was in for the Tabernacle) has never been rebuilt. King Solomon as well did not construct a special Aron but used the Aron that Moshe made. In addition our tradition states that when we construct the Temple once again we will use the original "Aron" that our teacher Moshe completed.

Nachmanides (Ramban) however, did count the Mitzva of building an ark as one of the six hundred and thirteen mitzvot but he excluded the other utensils of the Tabernacle as separate mitzvot. Perhaps the reason for this is that the Ramban only included those utensils that are in it of themselves a Mitzvah such as the Aron. However the Table of showbread and the Alter and Menorah are only utensils that allow one to perform an additional mitzvah; the Table to hold the showbread, the Alter to offer sacrifices and the Menorah to be lit.

The difference that appears in the language in the Torah could support both views. When speaking of the Aron the Torah uses the word "V'asu ("and you should do" in the plural form) but when the Torah refers to the construction of the other utensils, the Torah uses the language of V'asita (and you should do" in the singular form) Thus the Rambam would explain that the singular language of V'asita (when discussing the utensils) is expressing that it is an obligation on each and every individual and the plural language that appears by the Aron (v'asu) is meant in a general way and thus not incumbent on each individual --thus it is not included in the six hundred and thirteen mitzvot.

The Ramban on the other hand would say that the language of "V'easu" expresses the obligation for all Israel for generations to build the ark but the language of V'asita only expresses the personal obligation of Moshe to construct these utensils. Thus the Aron is counted as a Mitzva but not the utensils.

Though the Rambam did not count the building of the Ark as a mitzvah by itself, he did include the positive Mitzvah of carrying the Ark on one's shoulders and not in a wagon, but not the Mitzva that one cannot touch or gaze upon the ark. In later generations Rav Saadia Gaon and Rav Shlomo Ibn Gabiral and the Sefer Yerayim did include these Mitzvot as part of the six hundred and thirteen mitzvot. ©2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit

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. ©2015 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky & torah.org

RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

Torah Weekly

"Take for Me an offering" (25:2). "I have given you a good `deal' (lit. `taking') - My Torah, do not forsake it" (Tehillim, 132 8-10).

The Torah can be looked at just as one would look at one's business affairs: If you have a bad week in business, you don't close up the shop! Because if you close the business and give up working completely you will surely sink lower and lower, until you hit the bottom. Similarly in learning Torah, even though there will be times when a person will be unsuccessful in his efforts, and will feel very despondent, he must continue to try harder and harder with an implacable will, for if a person forsakes his learning, and `closes up the shop', this will certainly be his undoing. (Rabbi Dovid m'Kotzk)

"And they shall make a Sanctuary for Me, so I may dwell in them" (25:8). The Torah's choice of the words "so I may dwell in them" is unusual, for more correctly it should have written "so I may dwell in it"—in the Sanctuary. However the real meaning is that every Jew should make his heart into a Sanctuary where Hashem will dwell. "And they shall make—their hearts into a Sanctuary for Me, so I may dwell in them." (The Alshich)

"You shall cover it (the Aron) with pure gold, from within and without, and you shall make on it a gold crown all around (25:11). The Aron HaKodesh (Holy Ark) represents the Torah scholar. He must be as golden on the inside as he is on the outside _ his inner character must be consistent with his public demeanor. Then the Torah will be his crown and he will be a crown for the Torah. (Adapted from Rabbeinu Chananel)

"The staves shall remain in the rings of the Ark, they may not be removed from it" (25:15). In the description of the Aron HaKodesh, the Holy Ark, the Torah tells us that the carrying staves of the Aron are never to be separated from the Aron itself. These staves represent the financial supporters of Torah _ just as the staves of the Aron cannot be removed, so are the Torah's supporters and benefactors inseparable from Torah scholarship. However, the Aron never really needed the staves because, not only did it bear its own weight, but it would lift up those who were `carrying' it. When Rabbi Eliezer Gordon, the founder of Telshe Yeshiva, got married, his father-in-law, Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Neviezer, wanted to support him so that he could devote himself to study and become a Gadol B'Torah (great Torah scholar). As Rabbi Gordon's family began to grow, he became increasingly uncomfortable with the feeling that he was burdening his father-in-law, and frequently asked Reb Avraham to allow him to accept one of the rabbinical positions that were then being offered to him. Despite difficult financial times, Reb Avraham refused to let him accept and insisted that he carry on studying. Reb Avraham's wife asked her husband how long he intended to support their daughter and son-in-law, he replied, "My dear wife, who knows who is supporting whom..." When finally Rabbi Gordon was offered the Rabbinate of Eisheshok, his father-in-law felt he could not restrain him from accepting such an important post. The day after the Gordon family left for Eisheshok, Reb Avraham Yitzchak, Rabbi Gordon's father-in-law, passed away. It then became clear who had been supporting whom...The Aron carries those who `carry' it. (Adapted from Rabbi Zev Leff—"Outlooks and Insights") © 1995 Rabbi Y.A. Sinclair & Ohr Somayach Int'l

RABBI YOSEF BLAU

Enayim L'Torah

The Rambam counts the building of the Mishkan as a mitzva. He explains that all of the separate

commandments to build the Mishkan's main vessels are part of the general obligation and are not counted separately. Remarkably, while making this distinction he mentions all of the vessels of the Mishkan and leaves out the aron (the ark). In contrast the Ramban counts the building of the aron as a separate mitzva while subsuming all of the other vessels under the general command to build the Mishkan.

Noting the plural form used in the text of the mitzva of building the aron, the Ramban places this obligation on all Jews. He explains that the aron which contains the Tablets represents Torah which applies to all.

There is a fundamental difference between the aron and all of the other vessels as they all have specific functions in the Mishkan, while the aron is not part of any temple service. The Rav zt"l explains that the Ramban believes that the aron is the basis of the sanctity of the Mishkan and that during the construction of the Temple Shlomo built a place for it to be hidden (Rambam Hilchos Beis Hab'chira 4:1). There is no need to count building the aron as a separate mitzva as it is the essence of the Mishkan. Once the Temple contains the aron it can then accomplish its many functions.

While there is a difference between the two with respect to the number of different mitzvos on a hashkafic level, the Rambam and Ramban agree that the root, both of the Mishkan and later the Temple, is the presence of the aron. A dispute exists between Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Y'huda (Baba Basra 15a) whether a Torah scroll is in, or adjacent to the aron, but all agree that the second Tablets and the broken remnants of the first tablets are inside. Divine revelation to the Jewish people expressed through Torah is the source of the sanctity of the Holy Temple. Not merely the Torah scroll but the two sets of tablets which focuses on the relationship between the word of Hashem and the Jewish nation in its full complexity
© 1995 Rabbi Y. Blau and Yeshiva University

