

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

### Covenant & Conversation

**T**he parsha of Terumah describes the construction of the Tabernacle, the first collective house of worship in the history of Israel. The first but not the last; it was eventually succeeded by the Temple in Jerusalem. I want to focus on one moment in Jewish history which represents Jewish spirituality at its lowest ebb and highest flight: the moment the Temple was destroyed.

It is hard to understand the depth of the crisis into which the destruction of the First Temple plunged the Jewish people. Their very existence was predicated on a relationship with God symbolised by the worship that took place daily in Jerusalem. With the Babylonian conquest in 586 BCE, Jews lost not only their land and sovereignty. In losing the Temple, it was as if they had lost hope itself. For their hope lay in God, and how could they turn to God if the very place where they

served Him was in ruins? One document has left a vivid record of the mood of Jews at that time, one of the most famous of the psalms "By the waters of Babylon we sat and wept as we remembered Zion... How can we sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land?" (Psalm 137)

It was then that an answer began to take shape. The Temple no longer stood, but its memory remained, and this memory was strong enough to bring Jews together in collective worship. In exile, in Babylon, Jews began to gather to expound Torah, articulate a collective hope of return, and recall the Temple and its service.

The prophet Ezekiel was one of those who shaped a vision of return and restoration, and it is to him we owe the first oblique reference to a radically new institution that eventually became known as the Beit Knesset, the synagogue: "This is what the sovereign Lord says: although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet I have become to them a small Sanctuary [Mikdash me'at] in the countries where they have gone" (Ezekiel 11:16). The central Sanctuary had been destroyed, but a small echo, a miniature, remained.

The synagogue is one of the most remarkable examples of an *itaruta de'letata*, "an awakening from below." It came into being not through words spoken by God to Israel, but by words spoken by Israel to God. There is no synagogue in Tanach, no command to build local houses of prayer. On the contrary, insofar as the Torah speaks of a "house of God" it refers to a central Sanctuary, a collective focus for the worship of the people as a whole.

We tend to forget how profound the concept of a synagogue was. Professor M. Stern has written that "in establishing the synagogue, Judaism created one of the greatest revolutions in the history of religion and society, for the synagogue was an entirely new environment for divine service, of a type unknown anywhere before." It became, according to Salo Baron, the institution through which the exilic community "completely shifted the emphasis from the place of worship, the Sanctuary, to the gathering of worshippers, the congregation, assembled at any time and any place in God's wide world." The synagogue became Jerusalem in exile, the home of the Jewish heart. It is the ultimate expression of monotheism -- that wherever we gather to turn our hearts towards heaven,

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there the Divine Presence can be found, for God is everywhere.

Where did it come from, this world-changing idea? It did not come from the Temple, but rather from the much earlier institution described in this week's parsha: the Tabernacle. Its essence was that it was portable, made up of beams and hangings that could be dismantled and carried by the Levites as the Israelites journeyed through the wilderness. The Tabernacle, a temporary structure, turned out to have permanent influence, whereas the Temple, intended to be permanent, proved to be temporary -- until, as we pray daily, it is rebuilt.

More significant than the physical structure of the Tabernacle was its metaphysical structure. The very idea that one can build a home for God seems absurd. It was all too easy to understand the concept of sacred space in a polytheistic worldview. The gods were half-human. They had places where they could be encountered. Monotheism tore this idea up at its roots, nowhere more eloquently than in Psalm 139 "Where can I go from Your Spirit? / Where can I flee from Your presence? / If I go up to the heavens, You are there; / If I make my bed in the depths, You are there."

Hence the question asked by Israel's wisest King, Solomon: "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain You. How much less this temple I have built!" (I Kings 8:27).

The same question is posed in the name of God by one of Israel's greatest prophets, Isaiah "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)

The very concept of making a home in finite space for an infinite presence seems a contradiction in terms. The answer, still astonishing in its profundity, is contained at the beginning of this week's parsha: "They shall make a Sanctuary for Me, and I will dwell in them [betokham]" (Exodus 25:8). The Jewish mystics pointed out the linguistic strangeness of this sentence. It should have said, "I will dwell in it," not "I will dwell in them." The answer is that the Divine Presence lives not in a building but in its builders; not in a physical place but in the human heart. The Sanctuary was not a place in which the objective existence of God was somehow

more concentrated than elsewhere. Rather, it was a place whose holiness had the effect of opening hearts to the One worshipped there. God exists everywhere, but not everywhere do we feel the presence of God in the same way. The essence of "the holy" is that it is a place where we set aside all human devices and desires and enter a domain wholly set aside for God.

If the concept of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle, is that God lives in the human heart whenever it opens itself unreservedly to heaven, then its physical location is irrelevant. Thus the way was open, seven centuries later, to the synagogue: the supreme statement of the idea that if God is everywhere, He can be reached anywhere. I find it moving that the frail structure described in this week's parsha became the inspiration of an institution that, more than any other, kept the Jewish people alive through almost two thousand years of dispersion -- the longest of all journeys through the wilderness. *Covenant and Conversation 5779 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l* ©2019 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## Shabbat Shalom

"According to the way I show you the pattern of the Sanctuary and the pattern of its vessels, so shall you make them." (Exodus 25:9) What is the real purpose of the Sanctuary -- the forerunner of the Holy Temple -- and its significance to Judaism and the Jewish people? Our question is a crucial one, especially when we take note of the fact that the last five of the eleven Torah portions of the book of Exodus deal with the details and precise architectural plans of the Sanctuary and its accouterments. Moreover, for the desert generation, the Sanctuary was literally erected at the center of the formation of the tribes, symbolizing its place as the center of the Jewish people. Indeed, the Western Wall of the Temple, and even the Temple Mount itself, continue to inspire and excite Jews from all over the world as the foremost religious shrine of Israel reborn. Hence our understanding of the message of the Sanctuary will go a long way in helping us to understand the message of Judaism itself.

Nahmanides, noting that the commandment to build the Sanctuary directly follows the revelation at Sinai (the portion of Mishpatim is a continuation of the Ten Commandments, according to the Midrash), maintains that the very function of the Sanctuary was to continue the revelation, to build a central temple from which the divine voice would continue to emanate and direct the Israelites. Therefore, the very first aspect of the Sanctuary that the Bible describes is the ark cover, (aron), repository of the sacred tablets of stone, over which is the kapporet with its two cherubs. The Torah testifies in the name of God: 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 children of Israel. (Exodus 25:22)

Moses even reiterates this notion of an ongoing revelation when he reviews the historical event at Sinai in his farewell speech to the Israelites: God spoke these words to your entire assemblage from on the mountain amidst the fire, the cloud and the fog, a great voice which never ceases. (Deuteronomy 5:19 and Onkelos ad loc.)

This is likewise emphasized in our classical blessing over the Torah: Blessed are You...Who has chosen us from all the nations and has given [past tense] us His Torah. Blessed are You O Lord who gives [present tense] the Torah. (Siddur, Morning Service)

The place where the revelation continued was originally between the cherubs above the ark of the Sanctuary; 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, sage interpreters of God's word for every generation, sat within the Holy Temple in the office of the "hewn stone" or the "decisions" (the Hebrew word "gazit" means to cut or decide, to chisel a stone or to decisively cut through a problem). It is after all the function of the Oral Torah to keep God's word alive and relevant in every time and in every situation. Apparently Nahmanides would insist that the main purpose of the Sanctuary 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, it is the synagogues and the study houses – our central institutions of Torah reading, learning and interpretation – which are the legitimate heirs to the Sanctuary.

The mystical and Hassidic interpretations see in the Sanctuary another purpose altogether: 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 God and Israel, with the marriage contract being the tablets of stone, the biblical laws. The commandment to erect a Sanctuary enjoins us to build the nuptial house in which the Almighty "bridegroom" unites with His bride – Israel.

Hence, the accouterments of the Sanctuary are an ark-closet (repository for the tablets), a menoracandelabrum and a table for the shewbread – the usual furnishings of a home – as well as an altar. Everyone knows that it is impossible to establish a family without every member being willing to sacrifice for another: each spouse for his or her partner, parents for children, and even children for the family unit. And if the Almighty created a world – albeit an incomplete, imperfect one – in which humanity can dwell, we Jews must create a more perfect Sanctuary so that God will feel more comfortable with us and be enabled to dwell in our

midst here on earth.

From this perspective, the heir to the destroyed Holy Temples is the Jewish home, wherever it may be. It is because Judaism sees the home as the "mother of all religious institutions" that home-centered family ritual celebrations bear a striking parallel to the religious ritual of the Jerusalem Temple even to this day. The most obvious example of this is that mystical and magical evening known as the Passover Seder, modeled upon the Pascal meal in Jerusalem during Temple times, when every parent becomes a teacher whose primary task is to convey – through songs, stories, explication of biblical passages and special foods – the most seminal experience in Jewish history: the Exodus from our Egyptian servitude.

And every Shabbat and festival meal is a mini-Passover seder. Even before the Friday 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 hallot, loaves of bread, symbolize the twelve loaves of shewbread which were changed in the Temple every Friday just before dusk. Parents bless their children with the same priestly benediction with which the High Priest blessed the congregation in the Temple, and the ritual washing of the hands before partaking of the halla parallels the hand ablutions of the priests before engaging in Temple service. The salt in which we dip the halla before reciting the blessing over bread is based upon the biblical decree, "You shall place salt on all of your sacrifices" (Lev. 2:13), since salt, which is an external preservative, is symbolic of the indestructibility of God's covenant with Israel. The songs that are sung and the Torah that is taught during a Friday night meal 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.

I believe that both views, the Sanctuary as continuing revelation, and the Sanctuary as the nuptial home between God and Israel, together express the fundamental significance of our Holy Temple. ©2019 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

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## Aron Hakodesh

*Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss*

**W**hen one refers to the "Holy Ark" (*Aron Hakodesh*) we generally are speaking about the Ark that houses the Torah in the front of every Synagogue. Ostensibly this Ark can only be used for this lofty purpose and must be treated with dignity. Thus, one is not permitted to house other items there.

Are we allowed to house in an *Aron Kodesh*, *Chumashim* (bibles) or *Siddurim* (prayer books) or a scroll of the *Haftorot* or Torahs that have become unusable? It would seem that since these have less holiness than the Torah itself, it should be forbidden.

However, there are arguments which would permit this.

1. Since the *Siddurim* and *Chumashim* etc. are in the Aron with the Torah, they do not diminish its holiness. (this explanation would come into question when we customarily remove all the Torah on *Simchat Torah* and *Hoshannah Raabah*)

2. The leaders of the community who originally built the Aron had this use of storing holy objects and books in mind as well.

3. Since Today we also decorate the Torahs with additional ornaments and cloths, the Aron Kadash has become a lesser utensil (*Tashmish Detashmish*) and therefore it would be permitted.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the above three reasons, there are still those who only allow the Torahs to be stored in the *Aron Kodesh* and nothing else.

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#### RABBI BEREL WEIN

### Wein Online

Even though the Lord requires no building or special place in the universe that He created, the Jewish people are commanded in this week's reading of the Torah to donate special materials and talented labor to begin the construction of such a building, where the spirit of the Lord, so to speak, will reign. There have been many ideas advanced over the ages as to why such a building was ever necessary for a God that prohibits idolatry and is purely a spiritual entity. But this is not the subject of my few words for this Sabbath.

It is rather the fact that wherever the Jews have found themselves, in every far-flung corner of this world, they have always constructed houses of worship and of learning upon which to base their communal life and societal survival. Most of these buildings – those that remain and have not been destroyed by time, changing demographics or wanton evil perpetrated by humans – are no longer serviceable as synagogues, for the Jewish communities that once populated them. So, these buildings have become at best museums and in many, if not most cases, buildings now used for purposes other than Jewish worship services.

Nevertheless, these buildings even if abandoned or not used for their original purpose, stand as mute testimony to the loyalty of the Jewish people and their perseverance in the face of terrible odds and hostile societies. Many of these buildings are now visited by Jewish tourists and some of them are even official national landmarks protected by the governments of those countries. But they all stand as

testimony to the one-time presence of a vibrant Jewish community that was determined to continue to worship God in its own way and according to its millennia old tradition. The building became the representative of Jewish continuity and survival.

One of the great tragedies of current Jewish life is that so many Jews have abandoned the synagogue and its worship service. Statistics in the United States for instance show that the highest proportion of any religious group in that country that does not attend worship services regularly are the Jews. What has resulted is the disintegration of the Jewish community in that country. Synagogues may be merely buildings constructed of bricks, cement, steel or wood. Buildings alone certainly do not guarantee any sort of Jewish future. Wherever these synagogue buildings existed, the Jewish community was able to bring forth generations and remain vital and productive.

It is as though the Torah in this week's reading senses this truth and commands that such buildings be built, from Jewish funds, talent and effort. The blueprint for a synagogue building is a very ancient one and it also details what a synagogue should look like and for what purpose it is to be built and attended. The synagogues and their buildings that exist throughout the world are the signposts of Jewish existence and the eternal witness to the spirituality of its people. ©2019 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](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)

#### RABBI AVI WEISS

### Shabbat Forshpeis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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#### **RABBI DAVID LEVINE**

## **The Need for the Holy Ark**

**P**arashat Terumah deals with the instructions for building the Mishkan, the Temple, in the desert.

The Torah deals with two different kinds of building: (1) the various keilim or furniture of the Mishkan and (2) the structure and size of the Mishkan in which these objects were to be placed. It is interesting to note that the various objects are described before the actual Mishkan. HaRav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explains that the objects were the most important things to be built and that the Mishkan was only there as a covering and protection of these objects. The first and therefore the most important of all the objects was the Aron Kodesh, the Holy Ark.

The Torah begins with the words, "and they shall make the ark of acacia wood." Contrast this mitzvah with the mitzvah for the next object to be made: "and you will make a table of shitim wood." For the aron we find the commandment given in the third person plural whereas for the shulchan the

commandment is issued in second person singular. The Ramban explains that the aron was to be built by everyone with each person assisting. The other holy objects were not given this same importance and could be built by one individual alone. The Midrash explains: "Rabbi Yehudah the son of Shalom said, the Holy One Blessed is He said, 'all will come and be involved in the aron in order that they all be worthy of the Torah.'"

The Ramban interprets the words of Rabbi Yehudah to mean that each person would donate gold for the covering of the Aron Kodesh either on the outside or the inside, or he would advise and assist Betzalel, or he would direct his thoughts to the building of the Aron. Nechama Leibovits quotes the Or HaHayim who draws our attention to the fact that the fulfillment of the entire Torah cannot be performed by any one individual person. A Kohen cannot give but only receive the twenty-four priestly gifts nor can he or the Levi bring a pidyon haben. The Yisrael cannot sacrifice the animals on the altar even though he brings the sacrifice to the Kohen. Each individual must perform those mitzvot which are appropriate for him but may never fulfill all of the mitzvot of the Torah. This requires a group effort much as the building of the ark which is to house the Torah must be done as a group effort also.

The Aron Kodesh is essentially the box into which the Torah was placed. This box was actually three boxes that fit together. The outer box was of gold and the inner box was of gold. These sandwiched between them a box of shitim wood so that the sandwiched wood could not be seen on the outside or on the inside. The inner box also had a lip which protruded over the top of the wooden box so that none of the wooden box could be seen. The Torah commands, "on the inside and on the outside, you shall overlay it." This could have been interpreted to mean that one should coat the wood on the inside and the outside. Betzalel envisioned that this was not a mere coating but two separate boxes which sandwiched the wooden box between them. The second unit that was fitted onto the outer box which already was slightly higher than the other boxes was the golden crown which went all around the outside of the Aron cover. The third unit was the rings of gold that were to be used for the transporting of the Aron through the desert. There were four rings attached to the four corners of the Aron which were poured of gold. Two long rods were placed into these four rings to enable the Kohanim to carry it on their shoulders. These rods were made of shitim wood and were overlaid with gold. There is a machloket as to whether these were the rods with which the Aron was carried. The final unit of assembly was the flat base cover of the Aron with the angels, on the top.

Hirsch explains the significance of the term Aron Kodesh. The word Aron comes from the word

arah which means to pick off for eating. This word is related to harah which is to absorb a seed for life (become pregnant). The Aron then becomes the vehicle for our permanent acceptance of the Torah as a seed from which we can grow. The Tablets of the Torah which were placed inside the Aron were solid, complete, unchanging. Yet we, the B'nei Yisrael, are more like the shitim wood that is purified by the gold encasing it. We are a growing thing, a progressive development through the means of the permanent Tablets of the Torah. Another sign of this growth was the broken tablets which were also placed inside the Aron together with the second set of the luchot. These were included to demonstrate both our ability to do teshuva and Hashem's willingness to forgive our sins. Also included in the items that were placed in the Aron was the manna, the bread that fell from the sky each day to provide food for our needs in the desert. This was a demonstration of Hashem's providing for our needs on a daily basis. Though this demonstration was miraculous, it was natural for Hashem to provide for our needs. Sometimes the ways through which Hashem provides for us seem no less miraculous than the manna. Another item that was placed in the Aron was the Sefer Torah that Moshe wrote for himself.

There is one aspect of the Aron Kodosh that needs further discussion. The Torah says, "and you shall overlay it with pure gold, on the inside and the outside you shall overlay it and you shall make upon it a crown of gold around it." HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin explains that normally we could not use pure gold because it cannot stand alone and must be used as a coating on something else. Yet Betzalel understood this to mean that each box would be capable of standing on its own in spite of the fact that pure gold should not have this quality. He reasoned that the purity of this gold was in relationship to the purity of the Torah that was held within. That would enable it to be strong enough to stand on its own.

For ourselves, the Aron Kodosh indicates that we must strive for the purity and holiness of the Aron Kodosh in our own lives. It is not good enough for us to be spiritual and holy on the outside but on the inside as well. Our purity, our spirituality, and our holiness must stem from the inside to the outside. In truth it is only when we make a commitment to fulfill Hashem's Torah on the inside that it leads us to a fulfillment of that commitment in our actions. May we all strive for that pure gold on our insides that will lead us to be pure gold on the outside. ©2019 Rabbi D. Levine

**RABBI DOV KRAMER**

## Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd into the Ark shall you place the Testimony that I will give to you" (Sh'mos 25:21). This is the second time within the instructions for the Ark that G-d told Moshe to put "the Testimony"

(referring to the Luchos, the stone tablets with the "Ten Commandments" carved into/through them; it also refers to the Torah, see <http://tinyurl.com/d97jjm6>) into the Ark (see 25:16). Before suggesting a reason for the repetition, Rashi (on 25:21) says he doesn't know why it was repeated. [It would seem that his "not knowing" meant he had no earlier source upon which to rely; he still didn't "know" why it was repeated even after thinking of a possible explanation. V'dok.]

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

[Although the Torah also seems to say that the Luchos must be put into the Ark after the Ark is already inside the inner sanctum (the Kodosh HaKadashim) rather than covering the Ark outside the sanctuary and then bringing it in (26:34, see Netziv), this contradicts what actually happened (see 40:20-21). Rather, the Torah (26:33-34) is just telling us that the Ark, including its covering, belong in the inner sanctum; after

describing the curtain that divides the inner sanctum from the outer one, thereby designating the inner sanctum as the "Holy of Holies," we are told that the "Kaporet" (the covering), along with the Ark that contains the Testimony, resides in the "Holy of Holies.]"

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

Since the purpose of the Ark was to hold the Luchos, the poles made to carry the Ark (25:14) should not have been needed at all times; the Ark is no less efficient at containing the Luchos without poles than with them, and they seem superfluous when the Mishkan was not being transported. Yet, as opposed to the Shulchan (table) and Mizbayach (altar), which also have poles, the poles of the Ark could never be removed. The implication is that things that support the Luchos (and by extension, the Torah) cannot be removed even if the apparent reason for them doesn't apply. Similarly, if the Kaporet (covering) could be put on the Ark even without the Luchos inside, it would have indicated that they had a purpose in and of themselves aside from being the container for the Luchos. Just as mitzvos must be observed even when it seems that the reason for them doesn't apply (as evidenced by the poles of the Ark always having to be attached), doing mitzvos has little spiritual value if they aren't being done because G-d commanded them (see Rambam, Hilchos M'lachim 8:11). The structure (the Ark, and the system of law) must have the Torah (the

Luchos) within it (at its center) in order for it to have any religious value.

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

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

#### HARAV SHLOMO WOLBE ZT"L

### **Bais Hamussar**

**W**hen 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 Hamikdash 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 Hamikdash 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'halacha.

Reb Naftoli Amsterdam once lamented to his Rebbi 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 oved 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*

**RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER**

## Weekly Dvar

**P**arshat 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.

