

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"L

Covenant & Conversation

There is an important principle in Judaism, a source of hope and also one of the structuring principles of the Torah. It is the principle that God creates the cure before the disease (Megillah 13b). Bad things may happen but God has already given us the remedy if we know where to look for it.

So for instance in Chukat we read of the deaths of Miriam and Aaron and how Moses was told that he would die in the desert without entering the Promised Land. This is a terrifying encounter with mortality. Yet before any of this, we first hear the law of the red heifer, the rite of purification after contact with death. The Torah has placed it here to assure us in advance that we can be purified after any bereavement. Human mortality does not ultimately bar us from being in the presence of Divine immortality.

This is the key to understanding Terumah. Though not all commentators agree, its real significance is that it is God's answer in advance to the sin of the Golden Calf. In strict chronological terms it is out of place here. It (and Tetzaveh) should have appeared after Ki Tissa, which tells the story of the Calf. It is set here before the sin to tell us that the cure existed before the disease, the tikkun before the kilkul, the mending before the fracture, the rectification before the sin.

So to understand Terumah and the phenomenon of the Mishkan, the Sanctuary and all that it entailed, we have first to understand what went wrong at the time of the Golden Calf. Here the Torah is very subtle and gives us, in Ki Tissa, a narrative that can be understood at three quite different levels.

The first and most obvious is that the sin of the Golden Calf was due to a failure of leadership on the part of Aaron. This is the overwhelming impression we receive on first reading Exodus 32. We sense that Aaron should have resisted the people's clamour. He should have told them to be patient. He should have shown leadership. He did not. When Moses comes down the mountain and asks him what he has done, Aaron replies: "Do not be angry, my lord. You know how prone these people are to evil. They said to me, 'Make an oracle to lead us, since we do not know what happened to Moses, the man who took us out of Egypt.' So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewellery, take it

off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this Calf!" (Ex. 32:22-24)

This is a failure of responsibility. It is also a spectacular act of denial ("I threw it into the fire, and out came this Calf!"). So the first reading of the story is of Aaron's failure.

(In Deuteronomy 9:20, Moses discloses a fact which has been kept from us until that point: "God also expressed great anger toward Aaron, threatening to destroy him, so, at that time, I also prayed for Aaron.")

But only the first. A deeper reading suggests that it is about Moses. It was his absence from the camp that created the crisis in the first place.

The people began to realise that Moses was taking a long time to come down from the mountain. They gathered around Aaron and said to him, 'Make us an oracle to lead us. We have no idea what happened to Moses, the man who brought us out of Egypt.'

God told Moses what was happening and said: "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have wrought ruin." (Ex. 32:7)

The undertone is clear. "Go down," suggests that God was telling Moses that his place was with the people at the foot of the mountain, not with God at the top. "Your people" implies that God was telling Moses that the people were his problem, not God's. He was about to disown them.

Moses urgently prayed to God for forgiveness, then descended. What follows is a whirlwind of action. Moses descends, sees what has happened, breaks the tablets, burns the Calf, mixes its ashes with water and makes the people drink, then summons help in punishing the wrongdoers. He has become the leader in the midst of the people, restoring order where a moment before there had been chaos. On this reading the central figure was Moses. He had been the strongest of strong leaders. The result, though, was that when he was not there, the people panicked. That is the downside of strong leadership.

But there then follows a chapter, Exodus 33, that is one of the hardest in the Torah to understand. It begins with God announcing that, though He would send an "angel" or "messenger" to accompany the people on the rest of their journey, He Himself would not be in their midst "because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way." This deeply distresses the people. (See Ex. 33:1-6)

In verses 12-23, Moses challenges God on this

verdict. He wants God's Presence to go with the people. He asks, "Let me know Your ways," and "Pray let me see Your glory." This is hard to understand. The entire exchange between Moses and God, one of the most intense in the Torah, is no longer about sin and forgiveness. It seems almost to be a metaphysical inquiry into the nature of God. What is its connection with the Golden Calf?

It is what happens between these two episodes that is the most puzzling of all. The text says that Moses "took his tent and pitched it for himself outside the camp, far from the camp" (Ex. 33:7). This must surely have been precisely the wrong thing to do. If, as God and the text have implied, the problem had been the distance of Moses as a leader, the single most important thing for him to do now would be to stay in the people's midst, not position himself outside the camp. Moreover, the Torah has just told us that God had said He would not be in the midst of the people -- and this caused the people distress. Moses' decision to do likewise would surely have doubled their distress. Something deep is happening here.

It seems to me that in Exodus 33 Moses is undertaking the most courageous act of his life. He is, in essence, saying to God: "It is not my distance that is the problem. It is Your distance. The people are terrified of You. They have witnessed Your overwhelming power. They have seen You bring the greatest empire the world has ever known to its knees. They have seen You turn sea into dry land, send down food from heaven and bring water from a rock. When they heard Your voice at Mount Sinai, they came to me to beg me to be an intermediary. They said, 'You speak to us and we will hearken, but let not God speak to us lest we die' (Ex. 20:16). They made a Calf not because they wanted to worship an idol, but because they wanted some symbol of Your Presence that was not terrifying. They need You to be close. They need to sense You not in the sky or the summit of the mountain but in the midst of the camp. And even if they cannot see Your face, for no one can do that, at least let them see some visible sign of Your glory."

That, it seems to me, is Moses' request to which this week's parsha is the answer. "Let them make for Me a Sanctuary that I may dwell in their midst." Ex. 25:8

This is the first time in the Torah that we hear the verb *sh-ch-n*, meaning "to dwell," in relation to God. As a noun it means literally, "a neighbour." From this is derived the key word in post-biblical Judaism, *Shechinah*, meaning God's immanence as opposed to His transcendence, God-as-One-who-is-close, the daring idea of God as a near neighbour.

In terms of the theology of the Torah, the very idea of a *Mishkan*, a Sanctuary or Temple, a physical "home" for "God's glory," is deeply paradoxical. God is beyond space. As King Solomon said at the

inauguration of the first Temple, "Behold, the heavens, and the heavens of the heavens, cannot encompass You, how much less this House?" Or as Isaiah said in God's name: "The heavens are My throne and the earth My foot-stool. What House shall you build for Me, where can My resting place be?" (Is. 66:1)

The answer, as the Jewish mystics emphasised, is that God does not live in a building, but rather in the hearts of the builders: "Let them make for me a Sanctuary and I will dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8) -- "among them," not "in it." How, though, does this happen? What human act causes the Divine Presence to live within the camp, the community? The answer is the name of our parsha, *Terumah*, meaning, a gift, a contribution.

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying 'Tell the Israelites to bring Me an offering. You are to receive the offering for Me from everyone whose heart moves them to give.' Ex. 25:8

This would prove to be the turning point in Jewish history. Until that moment the Israelites had been recipients of God's miracles and deliverances. He had taken them from slavery to freedom and performed miracles for them. There was only one thing God had not yet done, namely, give the Israelites the chance of giving back something to God. The very idea sounds absurd. How can we, God's creations, give back to the God who made us? All we have is His. As David said, at the gathering he convened at the end of his life to initiate the building the Temple: "Wealth and honour come from you; you are the ruler of all things... Who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand." (I Chronicles 29:12, 29:14)

That ultimately is the logic of the *Mishkan*. God's greatest gift to us is the ability to give to Him. From a Judaic perspective the idea is fraught with risk. The idea that God might be in need of gifts is close to paganism and heresy. Yet, knowing the risk, God allowed Himself to be persuaded by Moses to cause His spirit to rest within the camp and allow the Israelites to give something back to God.

At the heart of the idea of the Sanctuary is what Lewis Hyde beautifully described as the labour of gratitude. His classic study, *The Gift: How the Creative Spirit Transforms the World* (2006), looks at the role of the giving and receiving of gifts, for example, at critical moments of transition. He quotes the Talmudic story of a man whose daughter was about to get married, but who had been told that she would not survive to the end of the day. The next morning the man visited his daughter and saw that she was still alive. Unknown to both of them, when she hung up her hat after the wedding, its pin pierced a serpent that would otherwise have bitten and killed her. The father wanted to know what his daughter had done that merited this Divine

Intervention. She answered, "A poor man came to the door yesterday. Everyone was so busy with the wedding preparations that they did not have time to deal with him. So I took the portion that had been intended for me and gave it to him." It was this act of generosity that was the cause of her miraculous deliverance. (Shabbat 156b)

The construction of the Sanctuary was fundamentally important because it gave the Israelites the chance to give back to God. Later Jewish law recognized that giving is an integral part of human dignity when they made the remarkable ruling that even a poor person completely dependent on charity is still obliged to give charity. (Maimonides Hilchot Shekalim 1:1, Mattenot Ani'im 7:5) To be in a situation where you can only receive, not give, is to lack human dignity.

The Mishkan became the home of the Divine Presence because God specified that it be built only out of voluntary contributions. Giving creates a gracious society by enabling each of us to make our contribution to the public good. That is why the building of the Sanctuary was the cure for the sin of the Golden Calf. A society that only received but could not give was trapped in dependency and lack of self-respect. God allowed the people to come close to Him, and He to them, by giving them the chance to give.

That is why a society based on rights not responsibilities, on what we claim from, not what we give to others, will always eventually go wrong. It is why the most important gift a parent can give a child is the chance to give back. The etymology of the word Terumah hints at this. It means not simply a contribution, but literally something "raised up." When we give, it is not just our contribution but we who are raised up. We survive by what we are given, but we achieve dignity by what we give. *Covenant and Conversation 5775 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l ©2015 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks z"l and rabbisacks.org*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"And they shall make Me a mishkan, that I may dwell among them." (Exodus 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 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 People of Israel" (ibid. 25:22).

Similarly, Moses articulates this idea in describing the revelation at Sinai: "God 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" (Deuteronomy 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 God!

Since the function of the Oral Torah is to keep God'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 God 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 God 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." (Leviticus 2:13), since salt, which is an external preservative, is symbolic of the indestructibility of God's covenant with Israel.

The analogy continues to the *zemiroth* (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 God 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 God as experienced at Sinai, speedily and in our days. ©2022 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

It is interesting to note the choice of verbs used by the Torah, regarding the collection of materials that will be necessary in the building of the Mishkan in the desert of Sinai. The Torah places emphasis on the collectors and takers of the donations and does not emphasize the intent on the part of the givers. It is true that the Torah instructs Moshe that he should take from those who have a heart that is willing to voluntarily give.

The emphasis in the verse is that everything should be taken on behalf of God and the holy noble project which is being undertaken – the building of a physical Tabernacle that will have within it the ability to somehow capture the spiritual and moral greatness of the Torah and of the people of Israel.

I have been in Jewish public life for well over 65 years. In those years, I have been engaged in building schools, synagogues, Torah learning platforms, book publishing and film production. I can testify that without raising funds and collecting money from others to sponsor and facilitate these projects, it would be impossible to see any to fruition. So, one must learn and train oneself to become a taker.

For many years, I foolishly dreamt that, somehow, I would win the lottery or otherwise become

wealthy enough to sponsor the projects that I had in mind to accomplish with my own funds. I would never have to ask anyone for money to fulfill my ambitions and complete my projects. As you can well understand, Heaven has mocked my dreams of personal wealth, as all projects have required intensive and continuous fundraising on my part. Since, by nature, I never have liked to ask people for favors or donations, all of this has been a trying experience.

However, the great Rabbi Yosef Kaheneman taught me a valuable lesson during the years that I was able to accompany him in Miami Beach on his fundraising visits and forays. He taught me that the taker who was asking for the money was really the one that was doing the ultimate favor for the giver who was writing the check. He used to tell me every morning before we journeyed to visit people, that we were going to do a great favor today for these Jews, by requesting their help in building Torah in the land of Israel. And he said this to me in sincerity. Even when we were rebuffed, and for various reasons left empty-handed, he would remark to me that some people just did not know how to grasp an opportunity and appreciate the favor that is being done for them.

Heaven instructs Moshe to help others participate in projects of eternity and holiness. And I imagine that this is the proper attitude that all who raise funds for noble causes should possess. ©2022 *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

While people need a place to feel God's presence, is it possible for God to be contained in any particular space? King Solomon makes this point when he dedicates the Holy Temple. He declares "Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You; nor can this house that I have built" (I Kings 8:27).

Indeed, in the morning service, we recite the sentence "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3). Holy (*kadosh*) can mean separate, apart, transcendent; "the whole earth is full of His glory" speaks of God being close, immanent. This suggests the following formula, which I have heard over the years: $G-W=G$, God minus the world equals God; $W-G=0$, the world minus God equals nothing. Here, the simultaneous transcendence and immanence of God suggests that God cannot be contained in any physical place.

Abarbanel succinctly expresses the tension between the infinity of God and His command that we build Him a sanctuary to dwell in: "Why did God command...[the] Tabernacle be built...as if the Blessed

One was physically limited to a place. This is contrary to the truth" (Abarbanel, Exodus 25:1).

To answer this question, we must distinguish between sign and symbol. A sign is a self-contained entity. Outside its parameters, it has no meaning. In contrast, a symbol represents something beyond itself. It points in a direction beyond its own limits. The symbol catapults us to experience a message that transcends its immediacy.

Sinai, the Tabernacle, and contemporary synagogues are all symbols of God, not God Himself. While God cannot be contained in a space, a space can become a symbol of God. Whether the symbol inspires us to integrate its teaching into our lives depends upon us. While the symbol can help catapult us to a higher plane, the journey requires intense human effort.

One sentence advances this rationale: "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8). One wonders, why does the phrasing include b'tocham (among them) and not b'tocho (within it)? The answer is that b'tocho would imply that God could be contained in the Tabernacle, whereas b'tocham emphasizes that, through the Tabernacle, God has the potential to dwell among the people if only we are willing to receive Him. ©2022 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

ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

The Holy Ark

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

When people nowadays refer to the *aron kodesh* (the holy ark), they are generally speaking about the ark in the front of the *shul*, which houses the Torah scrolls. This ark is considered a *tashmish kedusha*, something that serves a holy object and thus is holy itself. Therefore, other items should not be stored in the ark. Additionally, even if an old ark is replaced by a newer one, the old one retains its holiness and should be treated accordingly.

The question arises: May we use the ark to store *Chumashim*, *Siddurim*, *Haftarah* scrolls (written on parchment), or Torah scrolls that have become unusable? It would seem that since all of these are of less holiness than a Torah scroll, such storage should be forbidden, as it would detract from the holiness of the ark.

However, a number of reasons have been adduced to permit this:

1. Since the Torah scroll is resting in the ark as well, the holiness of the ark is not diminished by these additional items. (If this explanation is correct, there is a problem when we remove all the Torah scrolls from the

ark, as we do on Simchat Torah and (in some places) Hoshana Rabbah.)

2. The people who originally built the ark had in mind that it would be used for storing other holy objects besides Torah scrolls.

3. Since we customarily cover Torah scrolls with ornamental mantles, the ark is further removed from the scrolls' holiness. It is now a *tashmish detashmish*, something that serves an item that itself serves a holy object. Therefore, placing other holy items in the ark does not detract from its holiness.

Notwithstanding the above three reasons, there are still those who insist that Torah scrolls alone, and nothing else, may be stored in the *aron kodesh*. ©2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit

RABBI DAVID LEVIN

More than Light

One of the three items that were placed in the Kodesh (the Holy which was just outside of the Holy of Holies) was the Menorah. Many people think of the Menorah as the nine-canded light of the Chanukah Menorah, but this was a representation of the seven-canded Menorah of the Mishkan and later the Temple. Our Rabbis discuss the significance of the Menorah, its light, and its placement in the Holy.

The Kli Yakar explains that the Menorah was placed opposite the Table of the Showbreads. The Showbreads were a symbol of Hashem's gift to every person of his basic needs. Since the breads were actual food that would be given to the Kohanim after a week of display, our Rabbis understood this to mean that the breads symbolized Man's sustenance, his material rewards, in this life. The Menorah, which shined its light on the Showbreads, represented the spiritual rewards of the next life (*olam habah*). The Kli Yakar goes on to explain that the flame of the Menorah drew a special connection between Man and Hashem. That flame represented the Soul of Man which was kindled each day as we kindled the Menorah. It is as if Hashem said to the B'nei Yisrael that the mitzvah of lighting the flames says to you, "My flames are in your hands, and your flames (your souls) are in Mine."

HaRav Shmshon Raphael Hirsch adds another dimension to our discussion. "The lighted Lamp, radiating light, we would suppose, is symbolic of light, and Light, we would suppose, equally simply represents knowledge, understanding The Lamp, especially remembering its position, opposite the Table, and in front of the Ark of the Covenant of the Torah, represents spiritual, intellectual understanding, which, together with the Table, representing material well-being, would then show the results of a Jewish national life based on Hashem's Torah, and dedicated to keeping it, as being material well-being and intellectual clarity." Hirsch continues with a different explanation of the Light: "We find Lamp and Light used as the

metaphor for the source of continued existence and life, of development and blossoming, of undisturbed progress and happiness, of cheerfulness and joy.” In this way, Hirsch views knowledge and understanding as only half of the meaning of the Light; the other half is movement and growth tempered by the Torah.

HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin explains that the order of the objects that were described in our parasha was based on the order of the Creation. The first item described was the Ark which contained the Torah. The Torah preceded the Creation of the World so its resting place was made first. The Table of the Showbread is a commemoration of the creation of the grasses and trees on the Third Day of the Creation. The Menorah is a commemoration of the Sun, Moon, and Stars which were created on the Fourth Day of the Creation.

The Creation theme is repeated in the form of the Menorah, a central branch (Shabbat), three branches on each side of the central branch representing the six days of the week which lack the Holiness of Shabbat. The three branches on the right and left of the center are like the three days before Shabbat and after Shabbat which guard and protect the Shabbat. HaRav Sorotzkin explains that there is a connection between the holiness of Shabbat and the holiness of the Mishkan; Shabbat is the holiness of time while the Mishkan is the holiness of place. Both forms of holiness are important and must both be respected. For that reason, we are told that the building of the Mishkan could not take place on the Shabbat, and the forms of work which are considered forbidden on Shabbat are derived from the forms of work used to build the Mishkan.

Hashem described the different parts of the Menorah, the goblets, knobs, the flowers, and the branches. One condition was placed on the entire Menorah, that it should be made from one piece of pure gold, struck with a hammer to shape each of the figures. The Midrash tells us that Moshe was unable to visualize the Menorah from Hashem’s instructions. Hashem showed Moshe the form, yet Moshe was still unable to comprehend how to construct the different pieces of the Menorah without forming each thing separately and soldering them together. Moshe was concerned that he would not be able to show Betzalel, the artisan of the Temple, how to properly construct the Menorah. Hashem then told Moshe to instruct Betzalel to throw the gold into the fire and the Menorah would emerge in its completed form as one solid piece.

Professor Nechama Leibovits explains that the many precise details for the construction of the Menorah, perhaps one of the reasons why it was so difficult for Moshe to visualize, prompted Abravanel to say, “that we have no alternative but to assume that they have an allegorical meaning over and above their immediate literal sense.” The Rambam disagreed and argued that the number of details and the precision of

those details does not require allegorical explanations. “Rambam ignores the details of manufacture (of one piece beaten out), the shape and number of its components. No reason is advanced for the Torah’s insistence on the Menorah being shaped with its branches, flowers, etc. ‘in accordance’ with the plan ‘that was shown on the mountain.’” In contrast to the Rambam, we find that Hirsch has more than twenty-five pages of allegory concerning the Menorah. These allegories range from the light and its importance and direction within the Sanctuary, to the height of different sections of the main, central shaft containing the middle light, indicating different stages in the growth of a child into a man. Hirsch described the pure gold of the Menorah and compared it to the other two objects inside the Holy (the Table and the Incense Altar) which were made of wood and then covered in gold. The Rambam allowed for explanations of Hashem’s Laws, but as a rationalist, was reluctant to accept an allegorical approach. Abravanel, on the other hand, frequently sought out allegorical explanations, and his commentary on the Menorah is the source of many of the explanations given by Hirsch for different aspects of the Menorah.

The three wicks on the right pointed to the center wick, while the three wicks on the left also pointed to the center. Sforno understood this to mean that all intellectual achievements must be directed towards the central authority of the Torah. Intellectual achievements do not mean moral or ethical achievements. Each achievement must be measured by the moral and ethical guidance of the Torah. (This is the intellectual clarity of Hirsch). Progress both intellectual and societal is not progress if it is contrary to Hashem’s guide for us, the Torah. May we learn to distinguish between moral and ethical progress which is supported by the Torah and that which appears to be progress only because it is new. © 2022 Rabbi D. Levin

RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

"You shall place the cover upon the top of the ark, and into the ark you shall place the testimony that I will give you.”(Shmos 25:21)

Rashi here questions the repetition of the command to place the “testimony,” being the tablets Moshe received, in the ark. It had just said to place them there a few pesukim ago. Why mention it again? He suggests that it is to teach us that before the cover goes on, the luchos are to be placed inside. This would perhaps be in contradistinction to other opinions that required the ark to have the cover placed on top, thus completing the vessel, and only then would the cover be lifted and the luchos placed inside.

A bit later, we read about the coverings of the Mishkan. There were beautiful tapestries made of the finest craftsmanship, with intricate designs of eagles

and lions and cherubs. They were placed over the beams of the Mishkan as a covering, and then, covers of dyed goat hair were placed on top of them.

It is curious. What is the point of making these fine needlework items if they were simply going to be covered over by the goat hair curtains? Why not put them on top where they could be seen and inspire awe of Hashem's majesty in those who viewed them?

Perhaps, in light of Rashi's explanation of the repetition about placing the luchos in the ark, we can infer a key aspect of the Aron's construction. By mentioning the "testimony" twice, first when discussing the building of the bottom of the Aron and then again by its cover, the Torah wants us to realize that the main focus of the Aron was what was inside, being the word of Hashem to His people Am Yisrael. When the cover went on, and you wouldn't be able to see the luchos, but you should not forget what the cover is protecting.

Similarly, the needlework tapestries, called "maaseh choshev" because they required much thought and effort, may have been placed over the Mishkan and then covered, to remind us that our main efforts in Avodas Hashem are to be expended on developing our penimius, our internal sanctity and relationship with Hashem, rather than on outer trappings that may or may not reflect what is in the heart of a person. If you see someone who is dressed in the garments of a religious Jew, you don't know for sure what he is like on the inside.

The ark, in fact, was covered inside and outside with gold to teach us that one's interior must match his exterior, and just as he presents a shining countenance to the world, so must he actually reflect that grandeur from deep within his soul.

Therefore, Hashem said, "I want each of you to search for wisdom deep within yourself, and use it to make the needlework tapestries to cover the Mishkan. Then, I want you to cover them, so they cannot be seen. This will remind you to look inside and focus on what lies there, then, YOU will become a Mikdash, and I will dwell in you.

After the passing of his Rebbe, the Chofetz Chaim, R' Elchonon Wasserman inherited the mantle of being Daas Torah for his generation. He would defend Torah against attack from the outside and mercilessly fought those seeking to destroy it from within.

To this end, Reb Elchonon felt the need to keep up with the goings-on in the world and would read the newspaper daily. It was placed on his shtender and each morning he would spend three minutes going through it and digesting it with his incisive mind.

When asked why he would read the newspaper on his shtender in the Bais Midrash of all places, he said, "If I must read the paper, then it is because it is a mitzva and I can read it right here on my shtender. If there is an issue with reading the paper, then I cannot even do it behind closed doors." ©2022 Rabbi J. Gewirtz

and Migdal Ohr

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

Parshat Terumah is the beginning of the building of the Mishkan, where G-d would dwell among the Jews as they traveled in the desert. To build the Mishkan materials had to be collected, and G-d commanded the Jews to collect several types. After listing the need for metals, wools, hairs, skins, and wood, the Torah tells us that they collected "oil for illumination" and "spices for the anointment oil and incense". Why does the Torah suddenly need to tell us what the materials were to be used for, when it hadn't discussed it thus far?

One possible answer is that there are two differences between the characteristics of the other materials and those of the oil and spices. Firstly, while the other materials were important, they required no effort in producing, while the oil and spices had to be manufactured and maintained. Those people that didn't have the precious stones to donate to the building of the Mishkan still had the opportunity to contribute with their efforts instead. Secondly, both the oil and the spices are of the most 'giving' materials used in the Mishkan; The oil was used to light the Menorah, which gives off light to everything around it, and the spices give off a beautiful smell to its surroundings. The message it clear... The most beautiful and giving things in life are those that require our active effort. Spices smell and oil illuminates because someone took the time and effort to make them. The same can be said today... Being a good person and a good Jew is beautiful and rewarding to ourselves and to others, but only because we take the time and effort to understand and cultivate it. ©2014 Rabbi S. Ressler & Lelamed, Inc.

RABBI AVROHOM LEVENTHAL

Build Your Portfolio

Like others, my organization receives donations of varying sizes from a diverse audience. One day, my secretary informed me of a larger than usual contribution from a new donor, named Gavriel. I took the man's contact in order to call and thank him.

After the pleasantries, Gavriel asked me if he could come visit our office on the following Sunday. As he lives about an hour and a half from Bet Shemesh, we found a mutually convenient time to meet and set the appointment.

After a short tour, Gavriel and I sat down to talk. I told him that I was impressed that he wished to visit and made the 3 hour round trip, after having already donated to the cause.

Gavriel told me that he is an investment strategist and that he had received a "good tip" that we were a very sound organization. After donating, he now wanted to see first-hand how we operated, as this was

his practice with all the companies in which he invested.

Before I could remind him that we were non-profit, not NASDAQ, he explained that in life, just as one has a financial portfolio, so too they must build a "spiritual" one. That portfolio contains his charitable "investments", such as acts of kindness and socially beneficial projects as well as the good deeds that occupy his time.

As he was planning a long-term "investor" relationship, he had no choice but to do his research on us as well.

The "man of the world" had just taught the rabbi a lesson in charting a full spiritual life within the material world.

After giving it much thought, I firmly believe that this idea comes from Parshat Teruma.

Teruma begins with the command to launch a major project. Moshe is tasked to enjoin the new nation to contribute a wide array of materials. These materials, including precious gems and metals, wood and cloth, were to be communal property. Some for the construction of the Mishkan, the mobile House of G-d, while the rest for other vital needs.

The Jewish people, who after years of slavery had only recently acquired these material possessions, gave with a warm heart and an open hand. Each person donated the item that "spoke to them". For some it was the precious metals while others found fulfillment in giving the raw building materials. Each person, as the commentators relate, gave with the best intentions from the best place in their heart.

The response to the appeal resulted in the greatest fundraising campaign in the history of the world.

So much so that Moshe had to say at one point, "enough, we don't need anymore".

I would surmise that this was the first and last time in history that a "fundraiser" uttered such words.

This group, who suffered the affliction of slavery and then the joy of freedom, realized that there is a formula to live a wonderful life and create the perfect society.

Although their windfall came in the blink of an eye, they were prepared to share of it for the greater good. Be it building a Mishkan, the ultimate House of God or for helping those less fortunate.

Our ancestors in the desert paved the way for us to living a balanced life.

Most of us have been blessed with the basic resources to cover our expenses and feed our families. Others have been fortunate to realize amazing success in their financial endeavors.

Our existence is based on parallel tracks as the human being is made of the physical as well as the spiritual. No matter how you relate or whether you call it soul, karma, conscience, etc. both sides do exist.

Do we pay enough attention to our spiritual/conscience/karmic well-being and development as we to the material?

A seasoned investor would be thrilled to answer a call from his stockbroker after hours with a new opportunity in a foreign market. Would that same person relish a call from me offering the opportunity to help someone in crisis or to fund a new school or youth program?

Financial achievements can make a person live great. What they choose to do with that success can make them a great person.

A person's entire life will be summed up in a newspaper obituary or short speech at their funeral.

What do we want written as our life's summary?

Is it the number of homes, cars and boats that we might have amassed? Or would we rather wish to be extolled as a loving parent or grandparent or friend and model citizen? Those are the things that build your investment in making this world a better place.

The "Nidivei lev" (generous of heart) in Teruma understood that we are given wealth in order to enrich. We must "enrich" the lives of those around us as well as taking care of ourselves.

They say "you can't take your money with you". That's true. There is no Amazon or Walmart in the hereafter. Your financial portfolio can't help you any longer.

What you created with that money, time or talent, however, will be a "portfolio" whose value is everlasting. © 2021 Rabbi A. Leventhal. Rabbi Leventhal is the Executive Director of Lema'an Achai lemaanachai.org

