

## Potomac Torah Study Center

Vol. 13 #19, February 20-21, 2026; 4 Adar 5786; Terumah 5786.

**NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning more than 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his untimely death.**

---

**Congregation Beth Sholom in Potomac, MD welcomes Rabbi Dr. Jason Weiner, senior rabbi and director of the Spiritual Care Department at Cedars Sinai Hospital Center in Los Angeles, as Scholar in Residence for the 23rd annual Herbert Lieberman & Ruben D. Silverman Memorial Shabbaton.**

---

**May Hashem protect Israel and Jews everywhere. May Hashem's protection shine on all of Israel, the IDF, and Jews throughout the world. We celebrate the return of all our hostages from Gaza and mourn those of our people who perished during the last two years. May a new era bring security and rebuilding for both Israel and all others who genuinely seek peace.**

---

**Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) at [www.PotomacTorah.org](http://www.PotomacTorah.org). Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah archives.**

---

The final 16 chapters of Sefer Shemot, starting with Terumah, provide detailed instructions on how to build the Mishkan and the way that B'Nai Yisrael follow these instructions precisely and successfully. Terumah is a sudden transition from the end of Mishpatim, where Moshe is on the top of Har Sinai for forty days receiving instructions and the luchot from Hashem while the people wait below for Moshe to return.

Ramban interprets the Torah as proceeding primarily chronologically, and he states that Terumah comes immediately after Moshe returns from the top of Har Sinai. Rashi, however, maintains that Terumah comes after the sin of Egel Zahav (golden cow), which the Torah places two portions later. For a detailed explanation of this dispute, see Rabbi Menachem Leibtag's Dvar Torah, which I attach to my email this week. In brief, Ramban states that God directed B'Nai Yisrael to build the Mishkan to keep the Sinai experience vividly in the minds of B'Nai Yisrael while Rashi states that the reason for the Mishkan is to atone for the sin of Egel Zahav.

Regardless of the order of the next several chapters or the reason for building the Mishkan, we end up at the same place at the end of Sefer Shemot – the dedication of the Mishkan and return of Hashem's presence among B'Nai Yisrael. My focus here is on the vision of the Mishkan and how that vision has changed over time – first with the Mikdash (Temples in Jerusalem) and second after the destruction of the Second Temple. (According to Chabad, the Romans destroyed the Temple 1957 years ago, in the year 3829.)

A basic problem for humans, especially in the context of the ancient world, is that God, who created the universe, is not of the human world. God cannot live in the human world, and humans cannot survive in God's world. How are humans to understand the concept of a Deity that we cannot see, or with whom we cannot talk directly? Hashem brought His presence and voice to the top of Har Sinai for the Revelation – an experience that virtually no humans felt capable of

surviving. God commanded Moshe to build a structure (Mishkan) and arranged to bring His presence to dwell above the structure as a fire that humans could see. God also brought His fire and cloud to lead B'Nai Yisrael in the Midbar, and the people could understand that these were signs from Hashem.

The Devrei Torah this week consider the role of the Mishkan and later the Mikdash over Jewish history. During the Babylonian exile and after the destruction of the second Temple, the Jews had to find a way to continue our religion without the symbols of God's presence in our midst. When the Babylonians destroyed the Temple in 586 BCE, our ancestors lost the very place where they served Him. How could B'Nai Yisrael sing the songs of Hashem in a strange land? (Psalm 137) Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks states that the memory of the Temple was strong enough to support changing the focus of our prayers from korbanot to prayer. Also, as Jews became more dispersed in geography, not all Jews could have access to a central place to pray. Synagogues became small sanctuaries where Jews could express their monotheism and prayers. As Rabbi Sacks states, "wherever we gather to turn our hearts towards heaven, there the Divine Presence can be found, for God is everywhere."

Rosh Yeshiva Dov Linzer reminds us that Mishkan comes from the root sh-k-n, which means to dwell. We Jews build a space in the human world for Hashem's presence to dwell among us. While God is not of our world and cannot live in the human world, Hashem permits evidence of His presence to dwell so we can see and understand His oversight and impact in our world. Rabbi Yehoshua Singer reminds us that when we seek our special, regular seat in shul, we are selecting our private places for our mature relationship with our Creator. Rabbi Marc Angel calls this place our *makom kavun*, our designated place for prayer, where we can experience Hashem's presence.

Rabbi Haim Ovadia generalizes the concept of a personal Mishkan by stating that our real Temple is our home and our family. Our daily life centers on our home and family. When we bring sanctity, mutual respect, intimacy, and loving kindness into our homes, we are bringing the Divine Presence into our lives.

Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander reviews the vision of what a holy space is to accomplish. It is to be a living center for national and spiritual life, a place for learning and teaching, and a place to collect and distribute charity and social responsibility. Shuls fill these roles and are centers for life cycle events, both joyous and sad. Especially with Jews widely dispersed all over the world, shuls have taken the place of the Mishkan and Mikdash.

While we still pray every day to rebuild the Temple and return to the korbanot system, we do not know the structure of prayer in the Third Temple, when it is finally built, hopefully speedily in our days. There is an active campaign to prepare to reinstate Kosher korbanot for this time. However, with millions of Jews, and more than half of them living far from Jerusalem, how will fellow Jews respond to korbanot being performed in only one location? I certainly have no concept of changes that may or may not occur when the Temple is rebuilt. How will our shuls fare when we have only one central venue for Jewish ritual? I fear that the answers are likely to come after, not during, my time.

My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, always found a way to make the Torah exciting, a trait that came through especially in legal sections of the Torah where the topics could seem very foreign to Americans in a modern world. The Mishkan section of the Torah certainly requires a reader's guide for us in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Hopefully some of the excitement of the sort that Rabbi Cahan brought to his Torah discussions comes through with the insights in the following Devrei Torah.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah and Alan

---

**Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at [www.alephbeta.org](http://www.alephbeta.org). Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during and since the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.**

---

**Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Velvel David ben Sarah Rachel; Moshe Aaron ben Leah Beilah (badly wounded in battle in Gaza but slowly recovering), Daniel Yitzchak Meir HaLevy ben Ruth; Avram David ben Zeezl Esther, Avraham Dov ben Blimah; Ariaah Ben Sarah, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Reuven ben Basha Chaya Zlata Lana, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Miriam Bat Leah; Rena Michal bat Sara, Yehudit Leah bas Hannah Feiga; Miriam bat Esha, Chana bat Sarah; Raizel bat Rut; Rena bat Ilsa, Riva Golda bat Leah, Sharon bat Sarah, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, and all our fellow Jews in danger in and near Israel. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.**

---

## **Haftarat Parshat Teruma: The Sanctuary as a Beacon**

By Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander \*  
President and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone

Parshat Teruma details the design of the Mishkan, while its haftara describes the construction of the Beit Hamikdash in Jerusalem by King Shlomo. Yet these architectural descriptions are not merely technical records of sacred design. They offer a vision of what a holy space is meant to accomplish.

The Temple in Jerusalem was far more than just a site of prayer and sacrifice. It was a living center of national and spiritual life, a place where men and women fostered their relationship with God in diverse and meaningful ways. When we recognize the full range of the Beit Hamikdash's roles, we better understand the significance and responsibilities of our own batei kneset, which have succeeded the Temple as epicenters of Jewish life.

Rabbinic sources reveal a strikingly multifaceted institution. In addition to being a site of worship, the Beit Hamikdash was a place of learning and teaching for adults and youth (Tosefta Sanhedrin 2:6 and Bavli Pesachim 26a), a center of charitable distribution and social responsibility (Mishna Shekalim 5:6 and Rambam Sanhedrin chs. 1 and 3), and a model of socially and environmentally conscious institutional management (Mishna Midot 3:2). The Temple was not isolated from daily life; it enhanced it.

Our synagogues also have the potential to fill these roles. They host shiurim, provide space and resources for independent learning, and have the capacity to coordinate educational initiatives with local families and schools. They organize tzedakah campaigns, provide a forum for communal mediation, and collaborate on community-wide initiatives supporting important social and environmental causes. Like the Beit Hamikdash, synagogues too can be engines of education, responsibility, and moral leadership in addition to mere houses of prayer.

Crucially, the Temple was also the site of life cycle events such as marriages and bereavements. There were two special offices ensconced in the eastern wall of the Temple where residents of Jerusalem could come and extend words of condolence to mourners or bestow congratulations and blessings to brides and grooms (Soferim 19). These offices positioned the Temple as a spiritual anchor not only for national worship, but for private joy and grief, sanctifying the rhythms of daily life.

This legacy also lives on in our synagogues: marriages are marked by an aufruf, where the groom is called up to the Torah. The Maharil (15th century) recounts a custom in which the community would dance the bride and groom home from the synagogue after Shabbat services. And when a community suffers loss, the whole congregation pauses its prayers at the start of Shabbat to offer words of comfort to the recently bereaved. These are not incidental traditions, they are echoes of the role originally filled by the Temple, affirming that the Jewish life cycle is not merely social rhythm, but a framework through which we connect with God.

There is a verse in our haftara that beautifully captures this vision: “*And for the house he [Shlomo] made windows wide without, and narrow within*” (I Kings 6:4). In most ancient buildings, windows were designed to draw light inward. But here, the architectural design was the opposite. God, after all, does not require illumination. The role of the windows was to allow the divine light to radiate outward.

The Midrash (Vayikra Rabba 31), explains the metaphor more explicitly. **The role of the Beit Hamikdash is to channel the radiant values of the Torah into the world. Its light was not meant to remain contained within the sacred walls, it is meant to project morality and divine vision to the world.** [emphasis added]  
So too with the Jewish people. Our calling is not merely to take in and reflect surrounding culture, but rather to shape it, to serve as a light unto the nations by embodying and promulgating the Torah’s divine values.

Viewed through this lens, the synagogue as a *mikdash me’at* must embody this idea, modeling for our communities principles of sanctity, justice, and social responsibility. When our batei kneset embrace this mission, they become more than just meeting places and prayer houses. They become beacons of light.

And when that light radiates outward, illuminating homes, communities, society, and the world, we are continuing the sacred work of the Mishkan and the Beit Hamikdash: bringing God’s presence into the world and serving as a light unto the nations.

Shabbat Shalom.

\* Ohr Torah Stone is a modern Orthodox group of 32 institutions and programs. Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin is the Founding Director, and Rabbi Dr. Brander is President and Rosh HaYeshiva. For more information or to support Ohr Torah Stone, contact [ohrtorahstone@otsyny.org](mailto:ohrtorahstone@otsyny.org) or 212-935-8672. **Donations to 49 West 45<sup>th</sup> Street #701, New York, NY 10036.**

<https://ots.org.il/haftarat-parshat-teruma-rabbi-brander-5786/?pfstyle=wp>

---

### Ohr Torah Stone reaches out:

In the days following the arson attack on Beth Israel Congregation in Jackson, Mississippi, Rabbi David Kalb, Director of Ohr Torah Stone's Jewish Learning Center in New York, traveled south with a simple intention: “*for OTS to show some small measure of solidarity.*”

Before traveling to Jackson, he asked the synagogue's president, Zach Shemper, if there was anything he could bring. Shemper, who also serves as the congregation's Baal Tokeia, had one request: a shofar.

Standing outside the damaged synagogue, Shemper blew the shofar Rabbi Kalb had brought. Its layered notes – whole, broken, then whole again – echoed against the building's scarred walls, a powerful reminder that brokenness is not the final note of Jewish history.

In reflecting on his visit, Rabbi Kalb wrote about how differences like geography, background or affiliation can distinguish Jewish communities, and how quickly those differences faded in Jackson. What remained was a shared heritage and a shared responsibility for one another.

The attack did not extinguish Jewish life in Jackson, Shemper noted. If anything, it *ignited “a spark of Jewish identity”* locally, and far beyond Mississippi.

At Ohr Torah Stone, we believe Torah leadership carries with it this responsibility: to strengthen Jewish unity across distance and difference, and to ensure that no individual or community stands alone. We sent Rabbi Kalb to Jackson to

exemplify this principle. The spark in Jackson was not only the resilience of one congregation, it was the affirmation that when we stand together, Jewish life is strengthened and our values endure.

– Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander

---

## **Terumah: Connecting with HASHEM**

By Rabbi Label Lam © 5778

*And HASHEM spoke to Moshe saying: “Speak to the children of Israel, and have them take for Me a portion; from every person whose heart (LIBO) inspires him to generosity, you shall take My portion.” (Shemos 25:1)*

*And its pillars [shall be] twenty and their sockets twenty of copper; the hooks of (VAVEI) the pillars and their bands [shall be of] silver. (Shemos 27:10)*

There is a letter that is found more often than any other letter at the beginning of a word in the Torah. Almost every time it is being used as a prefix. Finally we reach the middle of the book of Shemos and the letter VAV appears at the beginning of a word not as a prefix. Not only is it a word that begins with a VAV, but the word itself is the name of the letter VUV.

These are two keys that help explain the meaning of every letter in the Holy Tongue, the original language of the world, Hebrew. The name of the letter and the first time it appears at the beginning of a word reveals aspects of the letter's meaning. Each letter is also a picture, a symbol as well.

The western languages are idiographic languages. The letters spell out sounds that when pronounced awaken concepts and pictures in our mind. The name of the letter and the shape of the letter are of little or no import. They are simply sounds.

The eastern languages are pictographic. They portray pictures of a flower or friendship but no pronunciation. Those pictures bestir a memory of sounds associated with it. It's no mistake that the primary language in the world from which every other language splintered has both of these qualities.

The letter VAV used as a prefix means “*and*.” It is a connector. It connects events past, present, and future. In the construction of the Tabernacle, the VAV is employed as “the hooks” of (VAVEI) the pillars. A VAV looks like a hook, a straight line with a slight bend on the top.

The Zohar describes it as the “*letter of knowledge*.” When somebody knows something or somebody well they are intimately connected with them. It's the letter that connects.

The name of the Hebrew letter LAMED means to learn. Lamed is used often as a prefix, and in that position it indicates “to.” It is a letter of direction. A person is lost on the road. Rather than drive in circles or get more lost, he pulls over to the side of the road and consults a map. After studying for a while, he gets clarity and continues to drive now with confidence in a chosen direction. The Letter LAMED is a portrait, a profile, a silhouette of a person learning. Learning gives a person conviction to move in a certain direction.

The name of the letter BEIS means house. It has the basic shape of a house. However, it is not the outside of the house that gives it its name. One Tanna only referred to his wife as his house. What did he intend to say? When we look through the Torah, the first time that the word BEIS is used is when Noach is preparing the Ark to withstand the hot waters of the great flood. He is described as putting the pitch and tar, “*MeBais u BaChutz*” – from the inside and the outside. BEIS means the inside, the world of internality. His wife was his home, the spirit of that building called house.

Peak inside a letter PEH in a Mezuzah or a Sefer Torah, and see if you can perceive a white letter BEIS embedded within. PEH is the mouth, the interface between the internal and external realm. The BEIS is the universe within.

Maybe now we can begin to appreciate that the gift that HASHEM seeks must not be given through coercion or pressure. The Talmud tells us, "*HASHEM wants the heart!*" The heart must inspire the generosity. He cannot only be living by the letter of the law but by the law of the letter. LIBO...LAMED/BEIS/VAV... His mind is focused and directed inwardly, there, within his heart he is connecting to HASHEM.

Good Shabbos!

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/dvartorah-5778-terumah/>

---

## Can God Dwell on Earth?

By Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2015, 2020

Why did God command the People of Israel to build a Mishkan? The answer seems obvious: "*They shall build Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in their midst*" (Shemot, 25:8). The Mishkan, from the root sh'k'n, to dwell, was to be a place where mere mortals could feel God's actual presence, a place in which God could dwell in the physical realm.

Logically, this should not be possible. How can an infinite and transcendent God inhabit a physical space? The very reality of the Mishkan, the very purpose it purports to serve, is a religious absurdity and, thus, also a religious wonder. It is this absurdity and this wonder to which King Solomon gives such powerful voice in his dedication of the First Temple:

*The Lord has said that He would dwell in a dark cloud; I have indeed built a magnificent temple for you, a place for you to dwell forever... But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain You. How much less this temple I have built? (Melachim I, 8:12-13,27)*

There is no way for God to dwell on the earth or for us to feel God's actual presence, yet God allows it to happen for our sake. We are physical beings, and we cannot connect to something that is not part of our physical world. This is the attraction of idolatry: it allows for a physical, concrete image to represent God and thus provides a means of tactile connection.

The Torah recognizes this human need but forbids any physical representation of God as a corruption of God. The solution is to create a Mishkan, a physical abode, a structure in which we can worship and offer sacrifices and a place toward which we can direct our prayers. But this does not address the theological problem, for the significance of this place is that it is God's abode. For God to dwell there, God must have some actual physical presence on Earth.

This theological paradox is not solved in Melachim; King Solomon states the impossibility and moves on. It is therefore not surprising that the Rabbis of the Talmud addressed the issue as well. Their first step in grappling with this problem was to introduce the idea of Shekhina, a word and concept not found in Tanakh. Like Mishkan, the word Shekhina derives from the verb to dwell, sh'k'n. Shekhina is not God but God's presence. God cannot be present on earth but the Shekhina can. The concept of Shekhina is a paradox: it is God's presence without God being present.

But for some the problem still remained, for how could even a manifestation of God be a part of our world? Perhaps it could not. Thus, in the Talmud we read:

*Rabbi Yossi stated, Neither did the Shekhina ever descend to earth, nor did Moshe or Eliyahu ever ascend to Heaven as it is written, 'The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth hath He given to the sons of men.'*

*But did not the Shekhina descend to earth? Is it not in fact written, And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai? – That was above ten handbreadths (Sukkah 5a).*

For Rabbi Yossi, even the Shekhina never truly dwelt in the Mishkan. It always remained above the earth, hovering on top of the Ark but never entering into the human sphere. This should be understood not just physically and geographically but theologically as well. The gulf between the human and the divine is ultimately unbridgeable. No matter how great the human being, she will never escape her corporeal bounded-ness and rise above her physical reality. And although God descended upon Mount Sinai and God's presence dwelled in the Mishkan, God, infinite and divine, can never truly be present in our physical reality.

Not everyone agreed with Rabbi Yossi. The anonymous voice of the Talmud and other passages reflect the belief that Moshe did in fact ascend to heaven and that God did in fact descend to earth. In this view, points of contact are indeed possible. In other words, in the Creation of Adam, should Michelangelo have painted God's and Adam's fingers touching rather than leaving an unbridgeable gap between the two?

This debate has continued for centuries. In many ways it is a debate between rationalists and mystics or the mystically inclined. For the Kabbalists, contact was possible. One could enter into an ecstatic state and rise up into the supernal realms. More significantly, God was present in this world. Not only could one encounter God in the physical world, but the very performance of the mitzvot, done with the right intentions, could bring about the unification of the sephirot and shape God's nature. Rationalists like Maimonides would have none of this. For Maimonides, the Torah's use of human language and qualities may have been necessary to describe God, but this was already a major concession in relating to the divine. The idea that God could be anything but wholly transcendent was anathema to him.

Think about the question of God in nature. For a Kabbalist like Ramban, the laws of nature do not exist. God "*renews every day the acts of creation*" (commentary on Shemot, 13:16). In contrast, Rambam states that the entire natural order – including miracles – was preprogrammed, and he devotes a large section of the Guide to rejecting the position that nature is constantly renewed (*Guide for the Perplexed*, II, 29). Ramban sees God in nature by seeing God's constant activity; Rambam does not see God in nature but is in awe of God's wisdom and of how God set everything in motion (*Laws of Foundations of the Torah*, 4:12). For Rambam, God remains ultimately transcendent.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that Ramban and Rambam disagree as to the purpose of the Mishkan. Ramban understands the verses literally: the Mishkan is the place for God's presence to dwell. At its center is the Ark, upon which the Shekhina rests and where Moshe encounters God and hears God's word (commentary on Shemot, 25:1). Rambam frames things differently: "*It is a positive commandment to construct a House for God, prepared for sacrifices to be offered within, and to celebrate there three times a year, as it states: 'And you shall make Me a sanctuary'*" (*Laws of the Chosen House*, 1:1). Notice that he talks only about the practical functions of the Temple: it is a place for sacrifices and a place to which the people can make festivals of pilgrimage. There is no sense that this House is in any way an actual dwelling place for the Divine presence. Notice, too, how Rambam significantly truncates the verse from our parasha, quoting the first part, "*You shall make Me a sanctuary,*" but dropping the last, "*that I may dwell therein!*"

This also explains the debate between Rambam and Ramban regarding prayer. For Rambam, there is a Biblical mitzvah to pray daily, while for Ramban, prayer is a religious experience but not a commanded obligation (Rambam, *Positive Mitzvot*, 5). If God is wholly transcendent, as Rambam understood, then an obligation to pray – a duty to recognize God and our dependency on God on a daily basis – makes sense. But as a religious experience this makes less sense: What type of connection could be achieved with a fully transcendent God? On the other hand, if God truly dwells in this world as Ramban understood, then the religious person attuned to God's presence would be inwardly compelled to reach out and forge a connection. This is a self-propelled, intrinsically valuable religious experience which need not be commanded and which is lessened when it is the result of an external obligation. The religious person prays to God because she has the opportunity to do so, not because she has the duty to do so.

We must acknowledge that both types of people exist within a community. There are those who are more religious, more spiritual, who feel and connect to a sense of God's presence in this world. And there are those who are less religiously inclined but who can relate to a transcendent God through a sense of commanded-ness and duty. But then there are also



commitment to self-transformation. The conscious, striving person becomes the greatest location for holiness, far surpassing the limits of any grand, remote structure.

\*\*\*  
\*\*\*

However, even if the precise wording of the drash is a later teaching, originating with the Shlah HaKadosh and championed by Chassidic thought, the fundamental idea, that holiness is unconfined and meant to infuse the world, is the driving force behind the Sages' response to the ultimate crisis of the )the destruction of the Temple.

In Masechet Brachot )35a(, we find the Rabbinic mandate that a person may not benefit from the material world without first saying a blessing, an act invoking the Divine Name. This is often viewed as a heartbroken response to loss: the place of service is gone; at least we can invoke God's Name in our everyday lives.

But beneath this simple view lies a revolutionary theological move. For generations, the Divine Presence was centralized in a single Temple. With its destruction, the Rabbis refused to concede that God had abandoned the Jewish people. Instead, they took a bold, audacious step: God, they declared, has simply relocated.

With the Temple's centrality erased, they replaced the notion of a geographically-confined Presence with the expansive concept that Godliness is everywhere, echoing the verse, *The whole earth is full of His glory* )Isaiah 6:3(. The radical invention of בְּרָכּוֹת was the brilliant, practical mechanism to teach this new, unbounded theology. Constant invocation of the Divine Name over our food, nature, and daily experiences serves as a perpetual, systemic reminder that the Sacred Presence is universally accessible.

In this profound re-imagining, the Rabbis instituted the Universalization of God's Presence. They were like the child who runs after an angry parent and lovingly yet firmly grabs them, refusing to let them leave the family. Through the mechanism of בְּרָכּוֹת, the Sages affirmed the Divine Presence's enduring reality within the world, asserting, *"The destruction of Your home means Your dwelling place is now all of nature, and our new form of encounter will be a blessing every time we experience You there."*

This is the organic junction where the two concepts, the Rabbinic and the Chassidic, converge into a single, seamless message. Both are complementary responses to the same profound truth: that the Sacred cannot be contained. The בְּרָכּוֹת sacralizes the world, transforming every natural resource into an occasion to meet and bless the Divine, effectively making the world itself a miniature sanctuary. The "ה הקדוש" של"ה's drash on b'tocham, championed by the Chassidic masters, simultaneously sacralizes the person, making each human being a potential, living dwelling place for Godliness, the personal מְקוֹם שֶׁמֶט מְקוֹדֵשׁ.

In this light, the ultimate aspiration to which the Beit HaMikdash pointed was the widespread spiritual architecture of a sanctified people living in a sanctified world. While the Temple was the necessary first step, its true, world-changing purpose was to teach us that holiness is not limited to one place. The end goal is for our lives, filled with conscious blessings over the natural world and awareness of the indwelling Sacred within ourselves, to become the permanent, living, and universal Sanctuary. Our existence, consecrated from the inside out, is the full and final realization of וְשִׁכְנֵנוּ בְּתוֹכְכֶם: within and among us!

Shabbat Shalom.

[note: because of problems formatting across different word processing problems, I had to omit most Hebrew text, and some remaining Hebrew text will end up out of order, depending on word processing format.]

\* Chair of the Talmud Department and the Director of the Lindenbaum Center for Halakhic Studies, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, Bronx, NY

## My Place, Your Place: Thoughts for Parashat Terumah

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel \*

When you attend synagogue, do you usually sit in the same seat? Even in synagogues where there is no assigned seating, do you find that you and almost everyone else ends up in their usual places? Why?

Jewish tradition refers to the importance of a *makom kavua*, a fixed location where we say our prayers. Ancient wisdom recognized that we need to achieve a comfort level when we come before God. Sitting in the same place provides a sense of continuity and solace. It generates a Pavlovian feeling: when we sit in this spot, our minds and souls are immediately tuned in to prayer. Even when we pray at home, halakha urges us to have a *makom kavua*, a designated place for prayer.

But isn't God everywhere? Isaiah envisioned God's glory as permeating all the land, *melo khol ha'arets kevodo*. We can — and often do — feel the Divine Presence everywhere we go.

However, Ezekiel's vision reminds us that God's glory can seem very remote; we bless God *mimekom*, from God's place i.e. in the heavenly spheres. In fact, our spiritual lives are subject to fluctuations — sometimes feeling that God is closer to us than we are to ourselves; but sometimes feeling that God is far removed from us.

Jewish tradition, well-aware of our spiritual ups and downs, proposes that we have a *makom kavua*, a designated place where we can relate to the Almighty in our own special space. Whether we are on a spiritual high or on a depressing low, when we pray from our *makom kavua* we are more likely to find spiritual balance.

This week's Torah reading tells of the construction of the Mishkan, the sanctuary of the Israelites, during their journey in the wilderness. The Mishkan was the forerunner of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem. Synagogues are the successors of the ancient Temples. Why did God command the construction of the Mishkan? Surely God's glory fills the universe and cannot be limited to one building. The answer: God does not need a Mishkan/Temples/Synagogues: We do! Understanding human nature, God provided a *makom kavua*, a designated sacred space, so that we can better experience the presence of the Divine.

It has often been pointed out that when God instructed the Israelites to build the Mishkan, it was so that God will dwell among the people. The Mishkan/Temples/Synagogues are designated spaces where people can more readily sense God's presence.

The next time you are in synagogue )and sitting in your own spot!(, take a few moments to reflect on the privilege of being in the presence of God. Your *makom kavua* is a physical place ...and a spiritual launching pad.

\* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals. and rabbi emeritus of the historic Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of New York City.

**The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals needs our help to maintain and strengthen our Institute. Each gift, large or small, is a vote for an intellectually vibrant, compassionate, inclusive Orthodox Judaism. You may contribute on our website [jewishideas.org](http://jewishideas.org) or you may send your check to Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2 West 70th Street, New York, NY 10023. Ed.: Please join me in helping the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals during its current fund raising period. Thank you.**

<https://www.jewishideas.org/node/3414>

## Thoughts for Purim

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel \*

The Megillah pays close attention to what Mordecai wears. When he learns of the evil decree against the Jews, *"Mordecai rent his clothes and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry."* Mordecai had been one of the regulars at the king's gate – but the king did not allow people dressed in sackcloth to enter the royal precincts. In her distress, Esther sent Mordecai a change of clothes, which Mordecai rejected.

Mordecai's sackcloth was a blatant symbol of sadness; and also of defiance. He wanted people to see that something was very wrong, and to be outraged by the scandalous decree of the king against the Jews. Mordecai was practicing non-violent protest; his shabby clothes were a visible alarm signal to the public at large.

Later in the story, Mordecai is rewarded for having saved the king's life. Haman is made to walk Mordecai through the streets, while Mordecai is riding the king's horse and wearing clothes that the king had worn. This must have struck the public as very odd. Mordecai – who had recently been wearing sackcloth and who was a member of a people doomed to destruction by the king – is being honored by wearing the king's own clothes! Perhaps the situation of the Jews has improved.

What was Mordecai thinking as he was shown such honor? Perhaps he thought that he might now have greater access to the king; after having worn the king's clothes, maybe there was a possibility for him to seek an audience with the king and try to convince him to rescind the evil decree. Or perhaps Mordecai sensed that his wearing the king's clothes made the general public view the Jews with greater favor and respect, and that somehow things would turn out all right.

After Esther had successfully intervened on behalf of the Jews, Mordecai became the Grand Vizier. *"And Mordecai went forth from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a robe of fine linen and purple."* From wearing sackcloth, to wearing clothes borrowed from the king, Mordecai now is dressed in the lavish clothing of a top government official. His clothing symbolizes his power in the kingdom. It reminds Jews and non-Jews that a Jewish man is second to the king.

In spite of his various garbs, Mordecai is the same person inside. He is *"ish yehudi"* – a Jewish man deeply committed to his people. The Megillah ends with a description of Mordecai as *"seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his seed."* This inner dignity and strength characterized Mordecai in good times and bad, regardless of the clothing he wore. His garments might be different, but he was always the same trustworthy and faithful Mordecai.

When Jews can emulate Mordecai's steadfastness of purpose, inner poise, and unshakeable commitment – then the Jewish people will be blessed with *"light and happiness and joy and honor."*

\* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals. and rabbi emeritus of the historic Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of New York City.

**The Insitute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals )www.jewishideas.org( wishes you and your loved ones a happy Purim**

**The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals needs our help to maintain and strengthen our Institute. Each gift, large or small, is a vote for an intellectually vibrant, compassionate, inclusive Orthodox Judaism. You may contribute on our website [jewishideas.org](http://www.jewishideas.org) or you may send your check to Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2 West 70th Street, New York, NY 10023. Ed.: Please join me in helping the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals during its current fund raising period. Thank you.**

<https://www.jewishideas.org/thoughts-purim-5770>

---

## Solid Wood

By Rabbi Mordechai Rhine \*

*May this Dvar Torah be a Zechus Refuah Shileima for Cholei Yisroel*

One of the most fascinating materials used in building the Mishkan was the Shitim wood. Shitim is a type of tree that grows tall and wide and could live for many years. Besides being used in fashioning the Aron (25:10) and the Shulchan (25:23), Shitim wood was used for the beams that formed the walls of the Mishkan (26:15). These beams were 10 Amos tall and one and a half Amos wide. That places these beams at around 18 feet tall, by 27 inches wide. This prompts the Medrash to ask: Where did they get such beams to build the Mishkan? The answer is remarkable.

Regarding the verse in Parshas Vayigash (Bereishis 46:1) that says that Yakov went to Be'er Sheva before he went to meet Yosef in Mitzrayim, the Medrash (Rabba 94) explains he made this stop to get Shitim wood from that which Avraham planted many years before (Bereishis 21:33). Besides taking wood, Yakov also took seeds from that plantation and instructed his children, *"There will come a time when Hashem redeems you from Mitzrayim and He will ask you to build a Mishkan. Plant the trees now so that when Hashem calls upon you to build the Mishkan you will have the material with which to do it."*

The wood used to build the Mishkan had quite a pedigree. The wood was from the plantation of Avraham, some wood in a literal sense from what Avraham planted and some from trees planted from their seeds. These trees weren't just old. They were rich with merit having been planted by Avraham centuries before as part of his kindness to provide shade and hospitality to humanity and teach them about Hashem.

Likewise, Rav Matisyahu Salomon pointed out that Yakov attended to this even as he desired so much to see Yosef. Yakov had not seen his beloved son for 22 years. But before he would proceed with that reunion he needed to attend to the plans for the Mishkan, which represents the love between us and Hashem. This wood was rich with spiritual energy born from putting Hashem first.

The idea is that items in this world are not just what meets the eye. "What does this item represent? What are its origins? What devotions or sacrifices were made to bring it into being?" are all questions worth asking. Because this wood that was used for the Mishkan was really solid on every level of its being.

This approach of using materials that are really solid was proposed by Rav Chiya as an approach to rejuvenate Torah among the people. Rav Chiya said (Baba Metziah 85), *"If Torah was in danger of being forgotten, I would plant flax and make nets. I would catch deer and I would give the meat to orphans. Then I would use the hide of the deer to make parchment and form that into scrolls upon which I would write Torah. I would go from town to town, and I would teach the children sections of Torah and then instruct them to teach each other."*

Why was it important for Rav Chiya to involve himself so diligently in all the steps of the process? Why did he have to give the meat to orphans? Couldn't he just take scrolls and teach Torah?

The commentaries explain that Rav Chiya knew the power of doing a mitzva in a solid way. Like the Shitim wood, he wanted each step to be devotional. And he wanted there to be a step that involved caring for people who would otherwise not be properly provided for. So catching a deer and feeding its meat to orphans was critical to his plan. Rav Chiya knew the power of a solid mitzva.

Many years ago, Rabbi Wein zt'l related that an interesting request was made of him. A certain shul that had been around for three generations was closing down because the new generation had moved away. The remaining trustees of the shul wanted to sell the shul and gift the assets to a shul in an up and coming, young neighborhood. They had only one condition. They asked that the shul that received their considerable assets also accept the many Yartzeit plaques that had been sponsored over the years.

The shul which they hoped would accept the assets was made up of young families who were objecting to the condition. They could certainly use the money to help jumpstart a vibrant shul providing programming for families. But they didn't want to accept old plaques in their new shul.

Rabbi Wein was asked to talk to them.

Rabbi Wein met with the young families and he told them, *"Torah succeeds when it is rich with history. Your shul may look young and fresh, but its success is not starting now. Torah is a legacy and connection, and it needs to recognize the Mesiras Nefesh of previous generations that brings us to where we are today. Find a place for those plaques. Build a shul of vibrancy with the richness of generations of devotion."*

Regarding the building of the Mishkan, the commentaries say that the nations wondered, *"Could it be that mankind can really build a house for G-d and connect with Him?"* Even the angels wondered if this was possible.

The answer is that indeed, if someone just tried a pop-up sanctuary out of the blue, it is doubtful that he would succeed. But the Mishkan wasn't a quick one-two start up. It was a project that was in the making for close to a thousand years. It spanned the lives of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yakov. It spanned the decades in Mitzrayim where the Jews tended to those trees as they yearned for the day that the promised redemption would come and they would be called upon to build a house for Hashem. The project Moshe informed them of was something they had been preparing for. When it came, they were ready with some of the most solid materials ever to exist in creation.

For Family Discussion:

Yakov stopped to gather wood before reuniting with Yosef after 22 years. Have you ever had to delay something you really wanted in order to do something more important first? How did that feel?

Is there a person from a previous generation — in our family or community — whose "plaque" we should be making more room for?

Wishing you a wonderful Shabbos.

\* Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of more than 20 years. Based in Maryland, he provides services internationally via Zoom. He is the Director of TEACH613: Building Torah Communities, One family at a Time, and the founder of CARE Mediation, focused on Marriage/ Shalom Bayis and personal coaching. To reach Rabbi Rhine, his websites are [www.care-mediation.com](http://www.care-mediation.com) and [www.teach613.org](http://www.teach613.org); his email is [RMRhine@gmail.com](mailto:RMRhine@gmail.com). **For information or to join any Torah613 classes, or to help sponsor his Torah insights, contact Rabbi Rhine.**

---

**Parshas Terumah – G-d's Respect For Man**  
by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer \* © 2021

The Tabernacle in the desert and later the Temples are difficult for us to comprehend. We understand them in a general sense as places of elevated devotion, with many symbolic and mystical references to G-d and our subservience to Him. A more sacred version of a shul perhaps, where G-d's Presence is more present and we offer Him sacrifices, which we perhaps understand as an elevated form of prayer.

Yet, this concept remains difficult for us. How can G-d's Presence be housed in one building, no matter how grand or how much mystical significance its structure contains? Furthermore, what purpose does it serve? What meaning is there in our offering gifts to G-d? What need is there for our service?

The Medrash Yalkut Shimoni (Remez 365) tells us that Moshe himself asked these questions. Three commands overwhelmed and frightened Moshe in the magnitude of what they demanded, all dealing with the Tabernacle. When Hashem told Moshe we were to build a Tabernacle where Hashem's Presence would dwell, Moshe was overwhelmed. "The Heavens and the highest Heavens can't contain You, and You say, 'Make for Me a Tabernacle?!'" Similarly, Moshe was astounded when told we were to bring a daily sacrifice as G-d's daily meal. "Were we to bring all of the animals in the world, would it be one offering? If we were to bring all of the wood in the world, would it be one pyre?!" Moshe was again astounded when told that we were to donate to the building of the Tabernacle as an atonement for our souls, an act in return for the gift of life. "Who can possibly give payment for his life?" The structure, the service and all the devotion, what could any of it mean?

Hashem responded to Moshe's questions with one message. The structure does not need to be large. "Twenty planks on the north, twenty planks on the south, and eight planks on the west." The sacrifice for G-d's daily meal does not need to be significant either, just lambs. "And not two at the same time, but one in the morning and one in the evening." The redemption also need not be so significant. Just a half shekel coin each.

The Medrash explains G-d's response with a parable of a king who had a young daughter. So long as she was young and not yet matured, the king would see her in the alleys and marketplaces and speak with her. However, once she began to mature and become a young woman, "It is not respectful for my daughter that I speak with her publicly. Rather make for her a private place where I can speak with her." As she matured, her conversations and her relationship with the king matured, as well. In respect for the deeper and more nuanced nature of their relationship, he wished for a private place to meet with her.

So, too, says the Medrash, was Hashem's relationship with us. In Egypt, we saw Hashem and we connected with Him as He passed throughout Egypt. As we passed through the sea, we saw Hashem. When we came to Har Sinai, we saw Hashem and connected with Him. All of these were outside and in the open. However, once we accepted the Torah and became G-d's nation, with a permanent, special and unique relationship, we had matured as a nation and our relationship and connection with G-d had matured. It was no longer appropriate for G-d to speak with us out in the open. Rather, said G-d "Make for Me a Tabernacle and I will dwell amongst them." G-d was telling Moshe that the Tabernacles were not structures which would enable anyone to properly show respect to G-d. Rather, they are structures to show G-d's respect for us. G-d is displaying His love and respect for us and how He cherishes our relationship.

The Medrash concludes beautifully, that this is our ultimate honor, even in the face of all persecution or claims that G-d has abandoned us. When we sinned with the Golden Calf, barely a month after receiving the Torah, G-d didn't destroy us. Rather, it was then after that grave sin, that G-d declared "Make for Me a Tabernacle." We had still accepted His Torah. We remained, and always will remain, His cherished nation.

\* Co-founder of the Rhode Island Torah Network in Providence, RI. Until recently, Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD., and then associated with the Savannah Kollel.

## Mishkan and Home

What can the Mishkan be analogized to? When I present this question at a class, the first, intuitive answer, is that the Mishkan resembles a home, and the second, which comes after a minute of contemplation, is the Garden of Eden. Like a home, the Mishkan has a table, a candelabra, a place for preparing food, and private chambers. The word Mishkan is derived from the root שכנ, to dwell, which is also the root of the Hebrew word for a personal dwelling. This connection is evident in Balaam's praise of the Israelites )num. 24:5(:

*How beautiful are the tents of Yaakov and the dwellings of Israel!*

Balaam was speaking of the personal tents of the Israelites, but the double entendre did not escape the commentators. This is how Targum Yerushalmi translates it to Aramaic:

*How good are the tents where Yaakov prayed, the Mishkan of Gathering you made in honor of My Name, and your tents which surrounded it, oh House of Israel.*

The Targum uses the analogy of the Mishkan and the home, the Divine and the individual dwelling, and connects the personal tent to the Mishkan and the synagogue. Because of that special connection, Rav Amram Gaon writes in his Siddur that we should recite this verse when we enter the synagogue. In some communities, this verse is also chanted as an introduction to the wedding ceremony. This symbolizes the sanctity with which the bride and groom are going to imbue their new home.

## Home is Mishkan

Most people understand this resemblance as suggesting that our homes should emulate the Mishkan, but Nahmanides offers an opposite energy flow. In his introduction to Shemot, he explains that the life of Israel in Egypt and the desert replay the life of the forefathers on a grander scale. Genesis is the Book of Individuals, while Exodus is the Book of the Nation. In Genesis, Avraham seeks refuge in Egypt because of the famine, his wife is captured by Pharaoh, who is punished with plagues, and who then sent Avraham and Sarah free with great riches.

Does this summary sound familiar? Of course! It is the trajectory of the journey of the Israelites. They went down to Egypt because of the famine, they were captured by Pharaoh who was punished with plagues, and he then sent the Israelites free with great riches.

But wait, there's more. The Israelites, as a nation, had to follow in the footsteps of their forefathers until reaching perfection. Writes Nahmanides:

*The exile is not over until they reclaim their place, at the same level of their forefathers... when they came to Mount Sinai, and built the Mishkan, the Divine Providence dwelt among them. Then they returned to the level of their forefathers, in whose tents God was present, and who themselves were the Divine Throne. With that, the Israelites were fully redeemed and that is why this book concludes with the construction of the Mishkan and with the constant presence of God in it.*

Note that Nahmanides doesn't say that our homes emulate the Mishkan but rather that the Mishkan is a replica of the home. He says that only when the Israelites built the Mishkan they achieved the spiritual level the forefathers had at their homes.

## Portable Mishkan Gives Hope

This is a very powerful message. The Jews who were exiled from Spain after living there close to a thousand years, and who lost their homes and their synagogues, could find hope and encouragement in Nahmanides. His words were also comforting to his contemporaries, who longed for the rebuilding of the Temple and who were already suffering under Christian persecution. This message is also empowering and uplifting for modern-day Jews, and as a matter of fact, all people.

Religious life today revolves around the synagogue, the mini-Mishkan. If there is no synagogue in your vicinity, or if you are not a regular visitor to the synagogue, your religious life is considered, by you or by others, as incomplete. Even if you have a synagogue nearby and you visit it regularly, the Temple of Jerusalem is still missing from your life. But the eye-opening interpretation of Nahmanides tells us that we may pray and wish for the reconstruction of the Temple, and we may be prompted to go to synagogue, but the real temple is with us at all times. It is our home, our family.

This interpretation is anchored in the Tanakh and in history. Daily life in ancient Israel did not revolve around the Temple. As an agrarian society, people were working in the fields most of the time and would visit the Temple only three times a year. The real Mishkan was their home, and they were expected to fill it with sanctity. That is why there are so many laws governing the treatment of the land and the crops, our behavior towards others, and the responsibility for the sojourner, the widow, and the orphan. These laws are the daily service. They are meant to transform us into holier people, and our home into a sanctuary, a Mishkan. When we invest our home with sanctity, mutual respect, intimacy, and loving kindness, we also, like our forefathers, can become the throne of the divine Shekhina. Adhering to the behavior code and discipline of the Torah helps us elevate ourselves, become better people, and develop a connection with God.

## Mishkan and Eden

The Mishkan also takes us to the creation of the world and to Eden. The connection to creation is beautifully presented in Proverbs 3:19-20, a book which in some ways is a commentary on Genesis:

*YHWH through wisdom founded earth, set heavens firm through discernment, through His knowledge the deeps burst open...*

The creation of the earth, the heavens, and the abyss, was accomplished by the same character traits used by Bezalel to build the Mishkan (Ex. 35:31):

*He [God] imbued him [Bezalel] with the spirit of God, with wisdom, discernment, and knowledge, and with all crafts.*

Bezalel's qualities, given to him by God, circle back to creation. They are bookended by the Spirit of God, which appears in the opening verses of Genesis 1:2, and the word מלאכה, which is found in the last passage of the story 2:3:

*In it [Shabbat] God ceased of all his craft which he created to be made.*

The analogy is not only textual, but also visual as well. Eden was surrounded by four rivers, and the Mishkan by four walls. In Eden lurked the serpent, while within the walls of the Mishkan the central bolt was coiling. The Hebrew word for bolt – בריח, appears twice in the Tanakh – is the sense of serpent (Job 26:13, Is. 27:1).

In both Eden and the Mishkan, the remedy for the serpent's poison is the Tree of Life. We know that the woman and Adam were lured by the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge because it was forbidden. When God places in Eden the Tree of Life guarded by the Cherubim, He is inviting mankind to come and get the fruit. In the Mishkan, the Tree of Life, the Torah (see

Prov. 3:18(, was placed in the Ark and guarded by the Cherubim. The Tree of Life is physically inaccessible in both places, but after the Torah was given to the Israelites on Mount Sinai, it is always available to us. In our darkest moments, when our temples and synagogues were destroyed, when our scrolls of Torah and tefillin were burned, and when our bodies and minds were targeted by our enemies for annihilation, we carried the words and memory of the Torah with us, and wherever we went, we built a Mishkan at home, looking forward to restoring Eden.

The Mishkan is an analogy to the home and to Eden. This triple connection tells us that our home, our family, can become both Eden and a dwelling place, a Mishkan, for the Divine Shekhina. When we place those three on a time-continuum axis, the Mishkan is our past, our home is our present, and Eden is our future. We should remember what we had in the past and aspire to what we can achieve in the future. The vessels of the Mishkan are the table where we eat and the light that shines on our home. The holy Ark can be found in the intimacy of our home, where it holds the Torah, the Tree of Life. With its power we could turn our lives in the present into the Garden of Eden.

Shabbat Shalom.

\* Judaic faculty, Ramaz High School, New York; also Torah VeAhava. Until recently, Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan )Potomac, MD( Faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school(. **Many of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah are now available on Sefaria:** <https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets> . The Sefaria articles include Hebrew text, which I must delete because of issues changing software formats. Rabbi Ovadia retains all rights )copyright( to this and all other Devrei Torah that he permits me to share.

---

## A Bissel of Torah from a Tiny Jewish Community

By Rabbi Natanel Kaszovitz \*

Auckland, New Zealand Hebrew Congregation \*\*

*M'shenichnas Adar Marbin B'Simcha* – When Adar begins, we increase our joy.

With the arrival of the month of Adar, we are given a special mitzvah: to actively add more simcha, more joy, into our lives as we prepare for the immense happiness of Purim in just a couple of weeks.

Baruch Hashem, we've already had a beautiful start to this month of joy. We celebrated the wedding of Zander and Ariel, joined by five rabbis possibly the largest gathering of rabbis in Auckland, as Rabbi Lawrence recalls! Shortly after, we witnessed the long-awaited conversion of the Haq family, Susan and Najam, now Shoshana and Nune – together with their wonderful children. And then, their wedding! Two weddings in one week - what an incredible way to begin Adar.

I also had the opportunity to travel to Wellington for some Kosher Kiwi work, including a meaningful visit to the Israeli Embassy, where I had a wonderful meeting with Maya, the Deputy Ambassador. And on a personal note of simcha, my parents have come to Auckland and will be here for the next three Shabbatot, an added blessing for our family.

All in all, it has truly been a joyous beginning to the month of Adar.

Adar reminds us of a powerful truth: even when things seem dire and hopeless, everything can turn around and transform into celebration. The story of Purim teaches us that what appears dark can become light in the blink of an eye. Let us bring the energy of Adar and Purim into our own lives - increasing joy and optimism, remembering that everything is in Hashem's hands, and trusting that even difficult situations can change suddenly for the good.

Shabbat Shalom and a truly happy Adar.

Bahavat Yisrael,

Rabbi Netanel

\* Rabbi Kaszovitz is now posting his Devrei Torah and classes on You Tube: <https://youtube.com/c/TheNairobisher> .

]Editor's note: If you became Rabbi of the only synagogue in a small, isolated Jewish community, at what level would you direct your Shabbat message for the congregation?{

\*\* Rabbi Kaszovitz, an Israeli ordained at Ohr Torah Stone, previously served as Rabbi in Nairobi, Kenya. He became Rabbi of Auckland Hebrew Congregation in September 2025. Rabbi Moshe Rube, whose remarks I previously posted in this space, is in the process of starting a new Rabbinic position in Australia. Rabbi Rube is waiting for his visa to enter Australia, when he will be able to start his new position. I plan to use this space to include messages from Rabbi Kaszovitz and Rabbi Rube going forward.

---

## **Rav Kook Torah Terumah: Rising Above Ten Handbreadths**

What is so important about the construction of the Tabernacle that the Torah describes in such loving detail its measurements and furnishings? Was it not just an interim precursor to the Temple? What eternal message does this temporary structure have to impart?

The Tabernacle enabled the Jewish people to express their devotion and love of God. But the Tabernacle was more than just a hallowed place to serve God. By examining its structure and parts, we may reveal the paths by which the human soul draws close to its Maker.

### **The Mishkan, the Altar, and the Ark**

The two largest objects of the Tabernacle were the mishkan structure, composed of upright wooden beams, and the copper altar that stood in the courtyard. These parts of the Tabernacle symbolize the path of contemplation and reflection. The design of the mishkan reflects the overall structure of the universe. Careful examination of its dimensions and details, like contemplation of the universe in which we live, leads us to recognize the world's spiritual foundations. Through His creative acts, we gain awareness of the Creator.

The altar is a continuation of this path of reflection. The soul's meditation on the inner nature of the universe awakens within us love and awe for God and the desire to serve Him. This was the function of the altar, the focal point for serving God in the realms of emotion and deed.

Together, the mishkan and the altar formed a complete framework of Divine service. Thus, Talmudic tradition (Shabbat 92a) connects them with a hekesh, teaching that both reached full stature: *"Just as the mishkan was ten cubits tall, so, too, the altar was ten cubits tall."*

The third major furnishing of the Tabernacle was the aron, the gold-plated ark encasing the stone tablets from Sinai. The ark represents the path of Torah, enlightenment through God's word that transcends the limitations of the human mind.

### **Carrying with Poles**

The copper altar was not lifted directly but via wooden poles. So, too, our reflection on the inner nature of the universe

does not come naturally, without effort. The service of God as represented by the altar is performed by using the analytic and contemplative faculties of the soul.

The ark containing the tablets was also carried with poles, indicating that we approach the Torah with our physical senses and intellect. However, these paths go beyond the overt abilities of the soul. The Sages taught that “*anything carried by poles, one third is above [the porter’s height] and two thirds are below.*” Two thirds are within the realm of our revealed faculties, the senses and the intellect. One third, however, rises above the human mind. It comes from the hidden recesses of the soul; we are able to connect to the Torah only through spiritual gifts.

### **Above Ten Handbreadths**

The Sages taught that the furnishings of the Tabernacle were carried ten handbreadths )about 90 cm.( above the ground. What is the significance of this height? Ten handbreadths designate an individual’s place and legal domain )reshut(. This measurement signifies our binds to the physical realm. Our ties to the material world are so powerful that even Moses and Elijah were unable to escape the constraints of ten handbreadths )Sukkah 5a(.

Rabbi Elazar taught that, in general, people carry their loads above ten handbreadths, like the Levites who were charged with transporting the Tabernacle furnishings )Shabbat 92a(. By extension, we may say that the calling of every individual is like the mission of the Levites; our purpose in life is to carry our load above ten handbreadths.

We must aspire to transcend the physical forces that bind us to the earth, going beyond our material needs. Just as the Levites carried the altar and the ark above ten handbreadths, we too should utilize these two paths — contemplation of the universe, with its resultant emotional and practical service, and the study of Torah, God’s elevated word — to transcend the material binds of our physical nature.

)*Gold from the Land of Israel*, pp. 149-151. Adapted from *Ein Eyah* vol. IV, pp. 232-233.(

Note: 90 cm is approximately 3 feet.[]

[https://ravkooktorah.org/teruma\\_65](https://ravkooktorah.org/teruma_65)

---

## **Terumah: A Portable Home (5769, 5779)**

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z”l, Former UK Chief Rabbi\*

The 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. ]emphasis added[

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, there the Divine Presence can be found, for God is everywhere.** ]emphasis added[

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 the following verse:

*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.* Psalm 139

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. ]emphasis added[

**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. ]emphasis added[

#### AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

]1[ Why was the destruction of the Temple such a deep crisis for Jews and Judaism?

]2[ Why was the reorientation of Judaism from the Temple to the synagogue a "revolution"?

]3[ What do you think Rabbi Sacks means when he says the synagogue is "*the ultimate expression of monotheism*"?

]4[ Why is today's synagogue closer to the Tabernacle as a concept than the Temple in Jerusalem?

]5[ If God lives in the human heart, why do we need buildings in which to worship Him?

<https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/terumah/a-portable-home/> Footnotes are not available for this Dvar Torah. Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Devar.

---

### Kissing G-d Outside

By Aharon Loschak \* © Chabad

I was recently talking to someone who has quite a morbid job: performing taharachs (the ritual halachic cleansing of a Jewish body prior to burial). Together with a network of 20 or so colleagues, he performs taharachs on hundreds of bodies a year, serving a wide geographic area. He's been doing this for over 40 years.

He told me an interesting thing:

*"I don't pray for Moshiach to come anymore. Instead, I ask for the resurrection of the dead to happen now! Whatever was supposed to happen in between the arrival of Moshiach and the resurrection must have already happened, and I'm ready to stand at the cemetery gates and greet all those people on their way back!"*

A powerful sentiment from someone who unfortunately faces death every day.

It got me thinking. I know so many people — myself among them — who, to different degrees of conviction, regularly declare their wishes for *"Moshiach now!"* Motivations for such declarations vary, but I've never heard it quite like I did from this particular gentleman.

Spending so much time on the dark side makes one want the bright side that much more. More importantly, the force of his sincerity hit me. This man really meant what he said! And that makes a lot of sense. After all, his firsthand, personal experience brings him face to face with death far more often than anyone should ever have to. Spending so much time on the dark side makes one want the bright side that much more.

### **Brotherly Cherubim**

That hanging out on the dark side can serve as a powerhouse for light is a truth many of us fail to properly appreciate. Luckily, the Torah reminds us of this truth in many different ways.

As we shall see, one example lies between the wings of two baby-faced figurines in the Temple — the cherubim described in our parshah. *"The cherubim shall have their wings spread upwards, shielding the ark cover with their wings, with their faces each one to his brother,"*<sup>1</sup> the verse tells us.

What is the significance of their wings spreading upwards? And what are we to make of the description as two brothers facing one another?

A relevant verse in arguably one of the most poetic books of the Bible is our ticket to discovery. *"O, that you were like my brother, who sucked my mother's breasts! I would find you outside, I would kiss you, and they would not despise me,"*<sup>2</sup> says King Solomon in *Songs of Songs*. Once again, we see the reference to brothers. What is this pining for brotherly love all about? And how does it connect back to the cherubs?

### **Pining for Steady Love**

In a wonderful essay,<sup>3</sup> Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi dissects each part of this succulent verse, using Kabbalah to explain how it speaks of our relationship with G d.

You see, as Jews, the very baseline of our entire religion is about creating and cultivating this relationship. Instead of a laundry list of dos and don'ts, the entire body of Jewish practice is for us to move from simple people minding our own business into people who have a relationship with the Master of the Universe.

Now, as with all relationships, there are gradations: good days and bad days, ups and downs. Times of intense passion and open displays of romance, and other times of grind and grit, boredom and dreariness.

The request, *"O, that you were like a brother to me!"* is our fervent wish to G d that our relationship with Him be as natural, comfortable, and steady as that of siblings. A desperate plea that despite the "off" times, those moments, days, or even years when we feel distant and spiritually numb, we should still be like siblings with G d.

In Temple times, such requests were not necessary. There, in that magnificent edifice in Jerusalem, the Jewish people enjoyed an unprecedented level of comfort with G d. The Temple stood as testimony to G d's love for us, a place where G dliness rolled around for all to see like confetti littering the floor at a birthday party.

Thus, the baby-faced cherubs looked lovingly at each other with the natural and easy love of two siblings. Their wings extended upwards, signaling the emotional comfort of two parties who love one another and can soar together ever higher.

Such was the spiritual euphoria of Temple times.

### **“Find Him Outside”**

Alas, the Temple was ransacked, and the spiritual honeymoon along with it. And from then on, our relationship with G d has been subjected to trying times, indeed. There have been great highs and terrible lows.

So we beg, “*O, that you were a brother to me!*” We wish to restore that level of natural, easy love, but unfortunately, it's just not always there.

Where, then, do we find it?

*“I would find you outside, I would kiss you,”* says the Singer of Songs.

Outside. That's where you can kiss G d.

Here we are privy to one of the great gifts of Chassidic teachings: the notion that “*outside*” is specifically where you will find that relationship with G d.

Too many make the grievous mistake that to enjoy a passionate relationship with G d, to win the spiritual game, they must be very... well, spiritual. He or she who is privileged to pray for hours, to learn for even longer, and to be a person of the cloth — they are the one! They are really in love with G d. They are G d's sibling, the veritable cherub whose wings are touching the face of G d Himself.

Nonsense.

It is actually those who are outside who win this game. You, whose prized possession is a mortgage and a bone-crushing job, you are the one who is kissing G d.

Yes, on an average day, your mind is held hostage by a million worries, ranging from health, to family, to finances, to the environment, and back around to politics. And a whole lot more than that. It may feel that your mind and your heart are not the most intuitive places for a G dly kiss, as it were.

It is actually those who are outside who win this game. You, whose prized possession is a mortgage and a bone-crushing job, you are the one who is kissing G d. Yet, the song states, *“I would find you outside, I would kiss you.”* When in the middle of the day, you slowly pass your hand across your forehead and clear your head for just a moment to pray — you have not only stretched your wings upwards; you have leapt up to face G d and have given Him a huge kiss. And vice versa.

After all, those pious ones swaying and praying for years don't really know what it means to struggle with religion, to be faced with temptation, and to stare down corruption and licentiousness. They're ensconced in their cocoon of holiness, and as such, their prayers lack the passion and devotion that can only come from one who has been to the dark side and back.

But you? You've been there and back. In fact, you were just there this morning in the office. Or at the park. Or online when you checked Facebook or looked at yet another bill you couldn't pay. And now you're here, donning your tallit or swaying with your siddur, ready for a moment with your true love: G d.

You have found Him outside.

And those who find Him outside are the ones who kiss Him.

#### FOOTNOTES:

1. Exodus 25:20.
2. Songs of Songs 8:1.
3. Torah Ohr, Terumah 79c-80c.

\* Writer, editor, and rabbi; also editor of JLI's popular Torah Studies program.

[https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/5036738/jewish/Kissing-G-d-Outside.htm](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/5036738/jewish/Kissing-G-d-Outside.htm)

---

### Terumah: The Table of Transformation

By Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky \*

The first furnishing that G-d instructed the people to make was the Ark of the Covenant, which housed the two tablets upon which G-d had engraved the Ten Commandments. Next, G-d commanded the people to make a golden Table, specifically designed to hold 12 loaves of bread that would be placed on it every Sabbath.

*You must have them make a Table of acacia wood, two cubits long, one cubit wide, and one and a half cubits high. )Ex. 25:23(*

The three furnishings in the outer chamber of the Tabernacle – the Candelabrum, the Table for the showbread, and the Altar for the incense – signified the three components of the intellect – insight )chochmah(, understanding )binah(, and knowledge )da'at( – respectively.

Binah )“understanding“( processes the insight of chochmah, analyzing it and integrating it into our already-existing mental picture of reality. Without binah, new flashes of insight will dissipate, leaving us with a fleeting sense of having glimpsed reality from a higher perspective, but grasping hopelessly for some way to retain that inspiration.

Da'at )“knowledge“( then makes the mental picture of binah relevant. Without da'at, information remains abstract. We must always seek the practical implications of new knowledge, so it can help us remake ourselves into better human beings and ascend the ladder of Divine consciousness.

\* Insights by **the Lubavitcher Rebbe** on the weekly parashat from Chabad's *Daily Wisdom #3* by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky.

— from *Daily Wisdom #3*

Gut Shabbos,

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman  
Kehot Publication Society  
291 Kingston Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11213

---

To receive the complete D'Vrai Torah package weekly by E-mail, send your request to [AfisherADS@Yahoo.com](mailto:AfisherADS@Yahoo.com). The printed copies contain only a small portion of the D'Vrai Torah. Dedication opportunities available. Authors retain all copyright privileges for their sections.

# Likutei Divrei Torah

Gleanings of Divrei Torah on Parashat Hashavuah  
via the Internet

Sponsored by Lily & Saadia Greenberg  
on the occasion of the yearzeits of  
Lily's mother, Tziporah Nadel, a"h,  
and Saadia's grandfather, Aharon Mordechai Greenberg, a"h

Volume 32, Issue 19

Shabbat Parashat Teruma

5786 B"H

## Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

### The Architecture of Holiness

From 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 Shechinah, the Divine Presence, liable to mislead? A transcendent God cannot be contained in space. Solomon said so:

“But will God 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 God 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

To sponsor an issue of Likutei Divrei Torah:  
Call Saadia Greenberg 301-649-7350  
or email: [sgreenberg@jhu.edu](mailto:sgreenberg@jhu.edu)  
<http://torah.saadia.info>

So no physical space, however large, is big enough. On the other hand, no space is too small. So says a striking Midrash: When God 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?’... God 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 God. 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 the same as that used to describe God’s creation of the universe. The Tabernacle was, in other words, a micro-cosmos, a symbolic reminder of the world God made. The fact that the Divine Presence rested within it was not meant to suggest that God is here not there, in this place not that. It was meant to signal, powerfully and palpably, that God 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”. [1]

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

**What Does Judaism Say About ... Podcast**  
with Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel. The week’s topic is: **Christianity and Judaism**  
Next week: Deeper Concept in Understanding Purim  
Search for “Nachum Amsel” on your podcast app or go to:

Apple: [tinyurl.com/applejudaismsays](http://tinyurl.com/applejudaismsays)  
Spotify: [tinyurl.com/spotifyjudaismsays](http://tinyurl.com/spotifyjudaismsays)

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. God 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 God 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.

God 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. [1] See Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, III:54

---

### **Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

**The Construction of the Sanctuary and the Shabbat – The Pursuit of a Living or a Life?** “And let them make Me a Sanctuary that I may dwell among them.” [Exodus 25:8] What does it mean for God to dwell among the people? Does this not sound anthropomorphic, as if God were in human form dwelling on our street? And would the concept of a dwelling place for the divine not have been more appropriately expressed with a verse saying: “And let them make Me a Sanctuary that I may dwell in it”? Moreover, what is the strange textual link between the Sanctuary and Shabbat? This portion and the following one, Tetzaveh, deal with the Sanctuary. The third portion of the sequence, Ki Tisa, suddenly features a ringing declaration to keep Shabbat (Ex. 31:14), apropos of nothing.

What is the relationship between the Sanctuary and Shabbat?

According to the Talmud [see Shabbat 49b ], the aspect of Shabbat that is intimately linked to the construction of the Sanctuary is the

fundamental definition of precisely which activities are prohibited on Shabbat. Similarly, in the portion of Ki Tisa, in the midst of God saying the following to Moses about Bezalel the great architect of the Sanctuary: “...whom I have filled with the spirit of God in wisdom and in understanding and in knowledge and in all manner of workmanship.” [Exodus 31:3]

The Torah suddenly moves from the Sanctuary to Shabbat: “But verily you shall keep My Sabbath, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you...” [Exodus 31:14]

Aside from the general declaration forbidding creative activity (melakha) on Shabbat [Exodus 20:10], the Written Torah is virtually silent on specifically what is included under the rubric of creative activity. By virtue of the fact that an additional Shabbat injunction appears precisely within the context of constructing the Sanctuary, the sages derived the definition of creative activity or “work” from the different categories of labor involved in the construction of the Sanctuary. They taught that whatever was involved in the construction of the Sanctuary is forbidden on Shabbat.

From a traditional perspective, one might therefore explain the linkage by saying that the Sanctuary expresses sanctity of space and Shabbat expresses sanctity of time. Sanctity of time is on a higher level than sanctity of space, so the Sanctuary cannot be built on Shabbat and all the activities necessary for the building of the Sanctuary became the paradigm for prohibited Shabbat activity.

But let us look more deeply into the activities forbidden on Shabbat and I believe we shall discover an even more profound linkage between the Sanctuary and Shabbat. The Mishna [Shabbat 7:2] lists thirty-nine forbidden creative activities, beginning with seeding and plowing – basic agricultural activities. On the surface, there seems to be little relationship between these activities and the building of the Sanctuary. Rashi suggests that the initial group is related to the planting of herbs whose dyes were used for the Sanctuary curtains. However, if this is the case, then the eleventh listed category, baking, poses a difficult problem. According to Rashi's interpretation, it is cooking rather than baking that should have been included; after all, extracting the different ingredients needed to dye the linens required the cooking or the boiling of the herbs – not baking.

The Talmud [see Shabbat 74b ] explains that baking replaced cooking because the author of the Mishna, R. Yehuda HaNasi, wanted to list the processes involved in the manufacture of

### **Likutei Divrei Torah**

bread; hence the Mishna lists baking rather than cooking. This Talmudic response may very well be used to shed a fascinating light on all of the thirty-nine activities. If the first group of forbidden activities in the Mishna is to be looked upon from the perspective of bread manufacture, then the next grouping of prohibited activities centers around clothing manufacture, the third around leather manufacture and the fourth around building construction.

From this perspective, R. Yehuda HaNasi, the compiler of the Mishna, is adding another dimension to the prohibited Sabbath activities: Not only are they the activities involved in constructing the Sanctuary, but they are also the activities involved in producing food, clothing and shelter. He is informing us that although the human pursuit of food (bread, the “staff of life”), clothing and shelter (leather may be used for garments, shoes and tents) is legitimate and even mandatory for physical survival and certainly appropriate for the weekdays. Even animals require food and some form of protective clothing from the elements and shelter! The Shabbat, however, is to be dedicated to God. The Shabbat is to be sanctified for the soul and the mind. The Shabbat is the means to the end for which God created human beings above animals: to catapult us into more exalted and spiritual realms of involvement. Shabbat is the key to essence and not mere existence!

The story is told that the famed Hassidic Rebbe Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev once saw a Jew running very quickly. “I am running to make my living,” explained the harried businessman. “But perhaps in the process you are losing your life,” remonstrated the rebbe.

Indeed, the biblical explanation of the divine gift of desert manna teaches us that “...not by bread alone does the human being live but by that which comes forth from God's mouth does the human being live.” [Deuteronomy 8:3]

Targum Onkelos (in the more precise readings of the text) translates the passage thus: “Not by bread alone is the human being meant to exist (kayam), but by that which comes forth from God's mouth is the human being meant to live (hayei)”. [Onkelos on Deuteronomy 8:3]

“Existence” (kiyum) refers to the physical necessities of food, clothing and shelter, while “life” (hayim) is the purpose of human creation, the fellowship with God which teaches us to emulate His traits of compassion, graciousness, tolerance and truth, the hallmarks of His essence. The Sabbath is given as a day in which we can free ourselves from the “rat-race” pursuit of a living, and dedicate ourselves to the more human pursuit of a life in the context of sacred time, “time off” which

is really “time in,” time dedicated to family, to Torah, and to God.

The building of the Sanctuary is the preparation, the means, just as the six days of the week are days of preparation, the means. The Sanctuary and the Sabbath are the goal, the purpose. To slightly change the apt phrase of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, the Sabbath is our Sanctuary in time, and the Sanctuary is our Sabbath in space. The days of the week are not yet holy time, whereas the Sabbath is a foretaste of the world to come. The world is not yet perfect, and we must transform it into a Sanctuary in which God and humanity can dwell together.

Once we understand that the Sanctuary and the Sabbath are parallel, we can readily see the similarity in language between the two. The Hebrew root khl (vayekhulu, vatekhel, to complete) and the Hebrew noun melakha (labor) appear almost exclusively in the two contexts of the Sabbath and the Sanctuary. Also, there are key verses in each context that are almost identical (for example, Genesis 1:31, Exodus 39:43). The biblical goal is for all space to become Sanctuary, all time to become Sabbath.

---

### **The Person in the Parsha** **Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb**

---

#### **A Place for Religious Experience**

It was at a post-graduate seminar many years ago that I first became aware of the distinction many make between “religion” and “spirituality.” The members of the seminar were all PhDs in psychology with varying degrees of experience and expertise. They were of a wide range of religious persuasions. Some identified with a specific faith system or denomination. Others claimed allegiance to no formal religion but insisted that although they were not particularly “religious,” they were “spiritual.”

The text that was referred to during this discussion was *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, by the noted American philosopher William James. That book could serve as a prooftext that at least one major thinker considered purely “spiritual” experiences to be “religious” experiences. The author makes it quite clear that atheists and agnostics can have “religious” experiences

I must add, parenthetically, that some time ago I found a Hebrew translation of James’ book in a Jerusalem bookstore and came away from that translation with a different understanding of what the author was trying to say.

Most of all, I was impressed by the extent to which the translator used terminology that helped me understand that the Jewish expressions of religiosity with which I was

personally familiar were the same as the “religious experiences” described by James, who incidentally was quite unfamiliar with Judaism.

The only difference between the two was that what James called “religious experience” we would call “the presence of the Shechinah,” or the sensation that the Almighty is close to us, sees us, hears us, teaches us, and comforts us.

The concept of “religious experience” helps us understand a distinction made by several commentators on the weekly portions that we are now “experiencing,” the parsha that we read two weeks ago, Yitro, and this week’s parsha, Terumah (Exodus 25:1-27:19).

The distinction was, to my knowledge, first made by Rabbi Ovadiah Sforno. He is impressed by the contrast between two verses, one near the end of Parshat Yitro and one which begins this week’s parsha.

The first verse, Exodus 20:21, reads, in my loose translation, “In every place (...b’chol makom) where I will mention My Name, I will approach you and bless you.”

The phrasing is an assertion of the Shechina’s presence in the world at large. “In every place”!

On the other hand, in this week’s parsha we read of the construction of the mishkan, or tabernacle, a physical structure with walls and a ceiling, a very constricted space indeed. Note that the root of the word mishkan is the same as in the word shechinah. The message seems clear: God is only accessible in this single space, this limited structure, and nowhere else.

Rabbi Sforno, an Italian scholar of the late Middle Ages, wonders about this contradiction between the ease of attaching oneself to the Almighty everywhere and anywhere versus the scarcity of His availability anywhere but in the relatively tiny tabernacle.

To deal with this contradiction, Sforno distinguishes between the time prior to the sin of the Golden Calf and the time subsequent to that atrocious sin.

Before that idolatrous and orgiastic display, closeness to the Shechinah, the religious experience of encounter with the Divine, could be achieved anywhere. But after such a scandalous and rebellious offense, substituting a Golden Calf, a graven image, for the Master of the Universe, the Almighty, so to speak, made Himself scarce. Now He would confine His presence to extremely limited venues, especially holy places.

### **Likutei Divrei Torah**

Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz, an early twentieth century inspirational teacher whom I’ve quoted frequently in these weekly columns, accepts Rabbi Sforno’s distinction but broadens it somewhat. In his words, in an essay entitled, “In Every Place”:

“Before the sin of the Golden Calf our forefathers experienced the presence of the Shechinah everywhere. They were shepherds and felt the Almighty with them in the fields. They felt the Shechinah in their interactions with others, and felt enabled by the Shechinah as they went to war. The entire world was holy!

“But after the great sin the world was no longer holy. It was desacralized, ordinary, mundane. The Shechinah retreated from the world at large to the tiny desert structure, the Mishkan. There, and only there, was a “religious experience” possible.”

The distinction introduced by Sforno, whose surname is pronounced “Siporno” by some, always captivated me. The expansion of his thesis by Rabbi Levovitz held my attention for a long time.

But over the years, I began to be irritated by the pessimism inherent in their approach. Is the Shechinah so elusive? Are authentic “religious experiences” so hard to come by? Must we restrict our attachment to the Almighty only to the tabernacles of our era, synagogues and holy sites?

What about by the bedside of a dear friend who is suffering from a terrible illness? Are we not taught that the Shechinah hovers over the head of the choleh, the sick person? As I stand respectfully by the bedside of my barely conscious friend and silently utter a prayer, am I deluding myself if I sense a “religious experience”? Frankly, if I offered a communal prayer for my friend in synagogue, I would not have felt nearly as emotionally impacted as I do at his sickbed!

Ask yourselves, or ask others around you, when they last felt the Shechinah’s presence. I wager that if you receive a sincere response, it would not have been in a tabernacle or anything like it. It would more likely be the result of some poignant human interaction, perhaps the birth of a baby, or the celebration of a significant birthday, or the satisfaction of a difficult achievement.

The Jewish people have been amid a most challenging set of circumstances for well over a year. Listen to the returning soldiers and hear their stories of “religious experiences” on the battlefield.

Or, even more impressive, listen to the thankfully freed former hostages and the “religious experiences” that they so modestly share.

Speak to the women soldiers who lit Shabbos candles beside an armored vehicle and experienced the comforting presence of the Shechinah in a tank!

Or join in the joy of reunited families whose dear ones have been freed. You too will sense the Shechinah and participate in a “religious experience.”

The Shechinah was present in the tunnels of Gaza, as it is in the homes of the bereaved widows and orphans whom we must support in every way we can, assured that in assisting them we are participating in a “religious experience” of the highest order.

“Religious experience” is not a “high,” as those who have attempted to achieve such experiences by ingesting narcotic substances have, often tragically, discovered.

No. “Religious experiences” are not always pleasurable in a physical sense. They are spiritual occurrences, often provocative and challenging, requiring a response adequate to the experience, which generally means great changes in our lifestyles. But we can be comforted by the many phrases in our sacred works that express assurances like this one:

“True sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit.  
“God, You will not despise  
“a broken and crushed heart.” Psalms 51-19

---

#### **Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand**

##### **“And You Shall Take for Me Teruma” — Doing for Oneself**

When the Jewish people were commanded to bring a donation to Moshe Rabbeinu for the purpose of erecting a Mishkan (Tabernacle), the pasuk (verse) uses the expression, “v'yikchu Li (and take for Me) a donation...” (Shemos 25:2). The obvious question is that this is a peculiar choice of words. The more appropriate expression would have been “v'yitnu Li (and give to Me) a donation...”

On a simple level, since Hashem really owns everything (as it says “...to Hashem is the Earth and all that it contains...” (Tehillim 24:1)), it is impossible to give Him anything. Giving usually implies that I have ownership and I transfer that ownership to someone else. Therefore, when we talk about giving to Hashem, we don't use the expression “giving.” Instead, we use the expression “taking.” In other words, Hashem already owns everything, we are merely ‘allowing’ Him to take that which is already His.

In Parshas Vayera, Rav Shlomo Breuer shares a beautiful thought on this concept of “v'yikchu Li.” Whenever we ‘give,’ whether by doing chessed (kindness) with our bodies or with our money, every giving is actually ‘taking.’ Whenever a person performs chessed, he is really doing more for himself than for the person to whom he is giving.

The Medrash in Parshas Vayikra says, “More than what a ba'al habayis does for a poor person, the poor person does for the ba'al habayis.” (Literally, a ba'al habayis is the master of the house, but in this context, it means a benefactor.) When someone gives a donation, the money is very temporary. Perhaps it pays for the next meal. Perhaps it pays for the rent. In actuality, it is very, very finite. On the other hand, a person who ‘gives,’ in addition to acquiring olam haba (the world to come), he accumulates something else as well... He acquires that which giving does to his personality, his soul, and his self-esteem. A person who helps another person is taking far more than he is giving.

Rav Breuer points this out the first time that the Torah describes an act of chessed: by Avraham Avinu and the malachim (angels). The invitation extended by our Patriarch Avraham to the malachim, offering them a place to eat and sleep, is the first overt mention of an act of chessed in the Torah.

In that parsha, the Torah repeatedly uses expressions such as “yukach nah me'at mayim” (let water be taken) (Bereishis 18:4) and “va-ekcha pas lechem” (I will take bread) (18:5)? What kind of expressions are these? Avraham should have said “I will give water. I will give bread.”

The answer is that Avraham Avinu is instructing and teaching his children, “My children, you should know for all future generations, that when you help someone else, you are not giving. You are taking!”

When a person helps someone, he does more for himself than he does for the other person. This is what the Torah is teaching us with the expression “V'yikchu Li teruma.” Whether a person gives to an individual or to an institution, he is really receiving more than he is giving.

**Getting Our Priorities Straight: Kemach vs Torah** - When the Torah explains how the kaylim (vessels) of the Mishkan were set out, the pasuk says: “You will then place the cover on the Ark of Testimony in the Holy of Holies. And place the Table outside the curtain and the Menorah should be placed opposite the Table, toward the southern wall; and the Table should be toward the northern wall.” (26:34-35)

### **Likutei Divrei Torah**

Anyone who examines the pasuk carefully sees a redundancy. The Torah first says to put the Shulchan (Table) in front of the curtain and then immediately says to put the Menorah opposite it on the southern side. Any person with the power of deduction knows that as a result, the Shulchan is on the northern side. Why does the Torah need to repeat and reiterate the fact that the Shulchan is on the northern side?

I once heard a beautiful interpretation of this from Rav Kulefsky (previous Rosh Yeshiva of Ner Yisroel). The sefer “Sifsei Kohen” asks the following question: We know that the Shulchan symbolically represents parnasa (livelihood), the ability for the Jewish people to sustain themselves physically and materially. The Menorah symbolically represents Torah. The light of the Menorah symbolizes the light of Torah. Why then, asks the Sifsei Kohen, was the Shulchan placed first, before the Menorah? After all, the Menorah is more significant than the Shulchan.

Rav Kulefsky answers, “If there is no kemach (flour), there is no Torah” (Mishna Avos 3:17). If there is no livelihood, there can be no Torah. Therefore, first we put out the Shulchan, representing parnasa and then we put out the Menorah, representing Torah.

Rav Kulefsky asks further that the same Mishna says, “If there is no Torah, there is no kemach!” So what did the Sifsei Kohen accomplish by quoting the Mishna? The question remains, why give the Shulchan priority over the Menorah?

Rav Kulefsky quotes a very important comment from the Gaon of Vilna's commentary on Mishlei. The Mishna also says “If there is no chochma (wisdom), there is no yirah (fear) of G-d.” Then the Mishna says, “If there is no fear of G-d, there is no wisdom.” The Gaon asks, what does this mean? Which way is it?

The Gaon answers that when we speak in terms of chronological priorities, wisdom needs to precede fear of Hashem, because “the ignoramus cannot be pious” (Avot 2:5). Simply, someone who does not know anything, cannot be observant. However, in terms of ‘tachlis – in terms of our goals and purpose in life, priority is given to fear of Hashem. In other words, if wisdom is not going to lead to observance, (for example, writing ‘chidushei Torah’ (novel insights into Torah) on Shabbos while smoking a cigarette), the wisdom is worthless. The person can learn a blatt Gemara, but if he is not an honest person, his learning is not worth much.

The same is true here as well. In terms of chronological priorities, unless a person establishes a viable means of supporting himself — one way or another — if there is no kemach, there is no Torah. If a person must go around begging, he is not going to be able to sit and learn.

But in terms of ultimate goals and purposes, in terms of tachtis, if it doesn't lead to Torah, if someone is just accumulating money for the sake of making money, then the money is worthless. If a person does not use his kemach for the right reasons, it is of no value.

This is what the Torah is teaching: First we place the Shulchan, because "If there is no flour, there is no Torah." Then we put the Menorah opposite the Shulchan because we need the Shulchan to be there for the Torah, represented by the Menorah, to exist.

Then the pasuk reiterates that the Shulchan should be on the northern side. Now that we have reached the point where we have established the Menorah / Torah, we must realize that the Shulchan's only purpose is to be opposite the Menorah. At this point, we need to realize that the Shulchan's reason for existing is only to support the Menorah. Merely having a Shulchan, in and of itself, serves no purpose. We need to have our priorities straight: Without Torah, the kemach serves no purpose!

---

#### **Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis**

This Shabbat we are reading Parshat Terumah and we recently entered the month of Adar. There is a teaching from the Talmud that relates to the beginning of this month. In Masechet Taanit, daf kaf tet, amud aleph, it famously says: "Mishenichnas Adar marbim b'simcha"—with the start of the month of Adar, our joy increases. Because of this, it is often said that Adar is the happiest month of the year.

But is that really the case?

Let's think about the next month—Nissan. Adar has two major celebrations, Purim and Shushan Purim. However, during the entire month of Nissan, we do not recite Tachanun because so many days are festive. Clearly, Nissan has even more days of happiness than Adar. So, one might wonder: is Adar really the happiest month?

I believe we can find an answer by looking at Rashi's commentary on this Gemarah. Rashi explains that the reason joy increases with the beginning of Adar is because, in the past, two great miracles occurred for the Jewish people: Purim and Pesach. While Purim makes sense because we're talking about the month of Adar, why does Rashi mention Pesach?

The answer lies in understanding Rashi's perspective: when the month of Adar begins, it signals not just the joy of this month, but the start of a continuous process of joy. This joy doesn't stay confined to Adar—it builds, deepens, and intensifies.

As we move from the happiness of Adar, we continue on to even greater joy in Nissan.

Moreover, we are fortunate to have two additional festivals on the calendar, Yom HaZikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut, both in the month of Iyar, which follows Nissan. This gives us even more opportunity to increase our joy.

Considering the traumatic events we have recently faced, our hope is that with the beginning of this month of Adar, our joy will not only grow throughout this month but continue to increase as we move forward.

May our joy gather momentum, and may Hashem bless our people with peace, happiness, and joy always.

---

#### **Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah** **Balancing Duty and Generosity – A Lasting Legacy - MK Moshe (Kinley) Tur-Paz**

About twenty years ago, while on a fundraising mission for the Ne'emanei Torah Va'Avodah movement, where I was then serving as its volunteer chairman, I found myself at a Shabbat dinner in New York, graciously hosted by a distinguished American family. The hostess, Mrs. Blu Greenberg, opened the evening with words of Torah, noting that it was both symbolic and fitting for someone engaged in fundraising to do so precisely during the portion of Terumah.

She shared a cherished tradition from her parents' home: on this particular Shabbat, they would host emissaries from the Land of Israel who traveled abroad to raise funds for institutions in the Holy Land. Her words, rich with historical and personal significance, offered me a sense of encouragement in my mission. With this meaningful introduction, our conversation unfolded, weaving together Torah insights and contemporary discussions.

During the meal, my hosts emphasized a fundamental principle: those blessed with financial means bear an inherent responsibility to give to those in need as well as to support worthy public causes. Mrs. Greenberg's husband, Rabbi Yitz Greenberg, a man of exceptional refinement and profound Torah knowledge, posed an intriguing question: Is it preferable to view such giving as an obligation, or should it be preserved as a privilege?

#### **Likutei Divrei Torah**

Our portion opens with the words: "Speak to the children of Israel, and let them take for Me a donation; from every man whose heart moves him to generosity, you shall take My donation." (Shemot 25:2)

The Torah here speaks of a very specific endeavor—the collection of resources for the construction of the Mishkan. This command to contribute is directed at the entire nation, yet it carries multiple dimensions. On the one hand, the call extends to all of Israel, urging them to give; on the other, it specifies "from every man whose heart moves him to generosity." Our Sages and classical exegetes have long explored the intricate relationship between voluntary giving (nedava) and obligatory giving (chova), shedding light on the tension between generosity and duty.

Rashi, in keeping with the Gemara in Megillah (29b), explains: "Three offerings are mentioned here: one, the offering of a half-shekel per person, from which the foundations of the Mishkan were made; another, the offering for communal sacrifices, also a half-shekel per person, which was collected for the general fund; and one, the offering for the Mishkan, which was a voluntary donation from each individual."

In other words, drawing from the Gemara, Rashi emphasizes that two of these offerings were mandatory: the first—a half-shekel tax—was used to cast the foundation sockets of the Mishkan, while the second funded communal sacrifices. The third offering, however, was voluntary, and from it, the rest of the Mishkan and its utensils were constructed.

At first glance, the distinction appears clear: the foundations—the very sockets upon which the Mishkan's beams stood—were an absolute necessity, as were the ongoing communal sacrifices. Here, there was no room for personal discretion; every member of Am Yisrael, rich and poor alike, bore equal responsibility. In contrast, everything beyond the foundations and the korbanot tamid—the beams, coverings, utensils, and decorations—was left to the generosity of the people. The more they gave, the more splendid the Mishkan would be.

Would such a voluntary system turn out to be successful?

In the portion of Vayakhel we read that enthusiasm for contributing was so overwhelming that Moshe had to issue a proclamation throughout the camp: "Let no man or woman do any more work for the donation of the sanctuary." So the people ceased bringing. And the work was sufficient for them for all the labor needed, and there was even surplus. (Shemot 36:6-7)

In other words, the collective zeal to contribute was so great that Moshe was compelled to halt the donations.

If that is the case, why was a mandatory tax established for the Mishkan when all its needs could have been met through voluntary contributions? Moreover, why did the Torah institute two obligatory offerings alongside only one voluntary one, placing greater emphasis on obligation rather than generosity?

It seems that our parsha conveys a foundational lesson for generations to come regarding Judaism's perspective on the balance between duty and free will, between obligation and voluntary action. Zeh le'umat zeh asah Elokim—"God has made one in contrast to the other"—there is space for both, and perhaps even an imperative to maintain both.

The Sages deliberated extensively on the relationship between duty and generosity, establishing the principle that "greater is the one who is commanded and fulfills than the one who is not commanded and fulfills" (Kiddushin 31a).

I vividly recall studying this passage in 11th grade at OTS 'Neveh Shmuel Yeshiva High School in Efrat. As a critical and somewhat rebellious teenager, I instinctively resisted this notion. How could obligation surpass generosity and volunteering in value? At the time, I was actively volunteering with Magen David Adom, dedicating myself to mentoring youth in Bnei Akiva, and had just joined the Civil Guard. To be honest, my evening study sessions at yeshiva engaged me far less than my volunteer work, which gave me a deep sense of purpose. Could it really be that the Sages considered my actions less significant than those of someone performing the same deeds merely because he was obligated to do so?

Years later, I encountered Hanan Porat's commentary on our portion, where he draws a critical distinction between explicitly commanded actions—such as Torah study—and those classified as acts of piety, for which "greater is the one who is not commanded and fulfills." Porat explains that the well-known principle in Kiddushin applies specifically to cases where one person is obligated while another is not—for instance, Torah study, which is a binding commandment for men but not for women (though he underscores that women's Torah study holds significant value in its own right). In such cases, the greater merit lies with those who act out of obligation. Porat cites the Talmud in Avodah Zarah (3a), which offers a psychological insight into this principle: "Because he is constantly anxious to overcome his inclination and fulfill the

command of his Creator." It is precisely the struggle to rise above youthful defiance—the very defiance that led me, as an 11th grader, to challenge this idea—that makes fulfilling a commandment so meaningful.

On the other hand, when it comes to acts of kindness and piety, which are not imposed upon one person more than another, the Torah encourages the cultivation of generosity and love. Here, one who acts freely, without obligation, is indeed considered greater than one who acts out of duty.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, in his commentary on our parsha, highlights precisely this distinction and its profound implications. He argues that King Solomon failed to grasp this balance when constructing the more advanced iteration of the Mishkan—the First Temple. According to Rabbi Sacks, King Solomon was engaged in the sacred mission of building God's House, yet in doing so, he conscripted the people of Israel into a vast workforce of forced laborers, effectively reducing them from free men to slaves. Though his intentions were noble—the establishment of the Temple—he overlooked a fundamental principle: "Every person whose heart moves him shall bring an offering... and I will dwell among them" (Shemot 25:2,8). For Rabbi Sacks, Judaism is meant to be an expression of freedom. The foundation of the Temple's construction should have been voluntary contribution, not coercion. The moment King Solomon transformed faith into forced labor, he sowed the seeds of rebellion. In the days of his son, the people cast off their yoke, Israel was divided into two kingdoms, and the nation was never reunited again.

As someone currently engaged in deliberations on the Military Draft Law in the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, I find these issues as relevant today as they were then. The building of the Land and the State demands that we dedicate a significant portion of our time to upholding the Zionist and Jewish enterprise. This sacrifice carries an element of obligation, yet it is also deeply intertwined with voluntarism. My three years of service in the IDF during the bloodstained 1990s in southern Lebanon, along with thirty years of reserve duty in various roles—including during this war—were all mandated by the Military Draft Law which applies to all Israelis. Yet within that duty lay a profound sense of choice—not only because I have been officially exempt from military service since the age of 45. Like many in my generation, we continue to bear the burden of national security, paying an immense price in blood and otherwise. It pains me that this reality is not self-evident to certain segments of Israeli society.

## Likutei Divrei Torah

A week ago, I attended the first memorial for Yuval Nir z"l—a fellow graduate of Neveh Shmuel, my comrade-in-arms in the Shualei Marom Reconnaissance Battalion, and my neighbor in Kfar Etzion. At the age of 43, despite being officially exempt, Yuval chose to go to battle. He fell in close-quarters combat in Gaza, leaving behind his wife, Ayala, and their five children. Like hundreds of thousands of others, he did not see military service as a burden but as a privilege—and he carried it with all his might.

At the memorial, many spoke of Yuval's dedication to Torah study and how he transformed life's challenges into a daily commitment to serving God.

May we find the delicate balance between duty and choice, between necessity and privilege. May we see our commitment to defending this land not only as an obligation but as a privilege—and may we strive to be worthy of those who gave their lives so that we may have the freedom to choose our own path in the ever-renewing State of Israel.

---

### Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

#### Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg The Foundation of the Mishkan

The pasuk says, "And you shall make the planks from shitim wood" (Terumah 26:15). Rashi comments that the Torah does not say "you shall make planks," but rather "you shall make the planks" because the beams of the Mishkan were not made from any ordinary wood; they were made from the trees that Yaakov Avinu planted in Mitzrayim. Chazal elaborate further (Midrash Rabbah, Vayigash 94:4) that Yaakov Avinu stopped in Be'er Sheva on his way down to Mitzrayim to take trees from Avraham Avinu's "eshel" so that he could replant them in Mitzrayim and later Klal Yisrael would be able to use wood from those trees for the planks of the Mishkan, and specifically for the middle beam, the briach ha'tichon, which kept all the planks together (see Targum Yonason, Terumah 26:28, for a different version of this Midrash).

Why did Yaakov Avinu want the middle beam to be made from Avraham Avinu's eshel? Chazal (Sotah 10a) cite two opinions as to whether the eshel was an orchard or an inn, but either way it was a place where Avraham Avinu would invite guests to eat and rest. This was where Avraham Avinu, the pillar of chessed, engaged in acts of kindness and generosity. It would seem that Yaakov Avinu wanted Klal Yisrael to use this eshel in building the Mishkan in order to infuse the middah of chessed in the very planks of the Mishkan, and especially in the briach ha'tichon, the middle beam, which kept the Mishkan together.

Why did the Mishkan require a foundation of chessed? The Ramban writes in his introduction to Parshas Terumah that the Mishkan was intended to be like Har Sinai; the goal was that the Shechina which rested on Har Sinai should dwell in the Mishkan. Before kabbolas haTorah, the pasuk says, "And (Bnei) Yisrael camped there (Yisro 19:2)" Chazal comment that the word "camped" - vayichan - is written in singular form to teach that Klal Yisrael camped before ma'amad Har Sinai "as one man with one heart" (see Rashi there).

In order for Klal Yisrael to experience the Divine Revelation of ma'amad har Sinai, they first had to unite as one because the Shechina dwells among Klal Yisrael in its fullest sense only when they are united. This is the kind of perspective that Yaakov Avinu wished to instill in the Mishkan by using wood from Avraham Avinu's eshel. When Klal Yisrael would see the planks that symbolize the values of kindness and sensitivity, they would draw closer together and that would cause the Shechina to dwell in the Mishkan.

This idea is also highlighted by the keruvim that were placed on top of the aron. The pasuk says, "And the keruvim should be with their wings spread upward...with their faces toward each other (ufneihem ish el achiv)...It is there that I will set My meetings with you and I shall speak with you...from between the two keruvim" (Terumah 25:20,22). Hashem spoke with Moshe and rested his Shechina so to speak between the two keruvim. Why specifically in that place?

The Kli Yakar (Kedoshim 19:18) suggests that the wings of the keruvim were spread upward to symbolize mitzvos bein adam l'Makom, while their faces were turned toward each other to symbolize mitzvos bein adam l'chaveiro. Both types of mitzvos must be fulfilled properly in order to achieve perfection - shleimus. That is why, says the Kli Yakar, the ten commandments are split equally; the first five are bein adam l'Makom, while the second five are bein adam l'chaveiro. This shows that the two types of mitzvos are of equal importance.

When a prospective convert approached Hillel and asked him to teach him all of Torah on one foot, Hillel responded, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your friend. (Shabbos 31a)" In other words, he told him, "You should love your friend as yourself." The Kli Yakar explains that by asking to be taught all of Torah on one foot, the prospective convert was not playing games. He was really asking, "What is the one foundational principle of the Torah, on which everything else stands?" Hillel responded with the pasuk, "You should love your friend as yourself; I am Hashem. (Kedoshim 19:18)" This pasuk encapsulates

the two types of mitzvos that encompass the entire Torah. "V'ahavta l'rei'acha kamocho" is the basis for mitzvos bein adam l'chaveiro, while "ani Hashem" underscores the importance of mitzvos bein adam l'Makom.

The positioning of the wings and faces of the keruvim on top of the aron reflected this duality of mitzvos as well. Perhaps that is why Hashem specifically chose that space between the keruvim as his meeting place with Moshe, to emphasize that his Shechina will rest on the Mishkan only if Klal Yisrael maintains a proper balance between mitzvos bein adam l'Makom and mitzvos bein adam l'chaveiro. It is not enough for them to focus their attention on serving Hashem through the avodah of korbanos and tefillah, with their arms outstretched to the heavens. Their faces must also be "ish el achiv" - acting toward each other with compassion and sensitivity.

The more we internalize the dual message of the keruvim, the more we can hope to merit the protection and the blessing of the Shechina.

---

### **Mizrachi Dvar Torah [Excerpt]**

**Rav Doron Perez**

The spirit of volunteerism is what the Jewish people are about – not because you have to, but because you feel you have to. That's what Parashat Terumah is about – a contribution from a spirit of volunteerism. The important things in life can't only come from external obligations, but from inner feelings of the right thing to do.

---

### **Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam**

**Torah with a MEM in the Mix**

And HASHEM spoke to Moshe saying; "Speak to the Children of Israel and let them take for (Li) Me (TERUMA) a portion, from every man whose heart motivates him, shall you take My portion. (Shemos 25:1-2)

Take for Me...: For Me (Li), for My sake. (Rashi)

Can it be a mere coincidence or a quirk that the word TERUMA which refers to a gifted portion that will be used to build a Mishkan, a place for HASHEM to dwell in our very midst, that that word is made up of the same letters that spell TORAH with a MEM in the mix?! After all what is Torah but a guide book on how to relate everything in the universe back to HASHEM. What does the letter MEM add to the equation? The letter MEM reminds us that everything comes from HASHEM. How so?!

On both Rosh HaShana and Purim HaMelech is the operative word. Rav Hirsch ztl. pointed out that the word Melech -King is comprised of three letters each of which can be used as a

### **Likutei Divrei Torah**

prefix. Together they give a portrait of The King. The letter MEM means "from" because everything comes from HASHEM. The letter LAMED means "to" or "for" because everything is ultimately for and goes back to HASHEM. The letter CHOF means "like" because everything reflects and bears a likeness to the Creator. The Zohar states, "Koach HaPoel B'Nifal" – "The power of the actor is in his actions. The signature of the artist can be found throughout his artwork. Then we can tag the letter HEY at the beginning," the HEY HaYedia" – "The HEY of Knowledge" because we are meant to know that HASHEM is not just a king but "The only King"!

Maybe now we can appreciate that after Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur and Sukkos we are left with one tiny souvenir that we carry until Pesach, and that is the phrase, the insert in our prayers, "Mashiv HaRuach v Morid HaGeshem – He makes the wind blow and He makes the rain descend". HASHEM is credited with guiding the winds that deliver rain clouds to thirsty populations of people, animal, and plant life. That is the simple meaning. There is another deeper hint here as well.

Mashiv means to return and HaRuach refers to Ruchnios – spirituality. Morid is to bring down and Geshem refers to Gashmios – physical matter. HASHEM made and constantly makes the world Yesh M' Ayin, something from nothing. Before HASHEM willed a world into being there were no laws of physics. There was only HASHEM! From a material perspective HASHEM takes the ultimate spirituality and makes it into matter. From a spiritual vantage point HASHEM made the world Ayin M'Yesh –nothing from something, because HASHEM is eternal and all in this world is temporal.

Our task in this world is defined by Mashiv HaRuach v 'Morid HaGeshem. We take the material stuff of this world which is really dense Ruchnios/spirituality and though eating and drinking and learning Torah and Davening and serving HASHEM we convert this physicality back into Ruchnios – Mashiv HaRuach. We return to material back to HASHEM by revealing the ultimate spirituality within. Since we are making the best use of the goodness of this world, HASHEM then brings down and delivers to us more Gashmuis, material stuff to work with, – U'Morid HaGeshem.

The Magdanus Eliezer explains the verse from Chagai (2:8); "The silver is mine (Li) and the gold is mine (Li) says HASHEM of the Hosts." We usually take this to mean that HASHEM is the supernal banker and the keeper of all money. Every cent that flows in our direction is from HASHEM. HASHEM is

in charge of all money and it's true. However, another explanation emerges based on the first verse mentioned above and the Rashi that accompanies it.

The Navi is expressing in the persona of HASHEM, "What is the best use of money that is already in your possession? How is it best spent? The is "Li" – for ME, for MY sake, to create a place for HASHEM to dwell in our midst. That is the ultimate purpose and the optimal way to invest your silver and gold". So, it is written in Pirke Avos, "Give to HIM what is HIS because you and what's yours are HIS." Shakespeare tells us what the Pharaoh's futilely tried to do, "You can't take it with you!" Maybe we can, via Teruma, Torah with a MEM in the mix!



BS"D

To: parsha@groups.io  
From: Chaim Shulman <cshulman@gmail.com>  
& Allen Klein <allen.klein@gmail.com>

## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON TERUMAH - 5786

[parsha@groups.io](mailto:parsha@groups.io) / [www.parsha.net](http://www.parsha.net) - in our 29th year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to [parsha+subscribe@groups.io](mailto:parsha+subscribe@groups.io). Please also copy me at [cshulman@gmail.com](mailto:cshulman@gmail.com). A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net>. It is also fully searchable.

Sponsored by **Dr. Phil & Leah Kazlow**  
in memory of Leah's mother  
**Matil bas Dovid - Mrs. Moshe Stern**  
whose Yahrzeit is Vav Adar.

To sponsor a parsha sheet contact [cshulman@gmail.com](mailto:cshulman@gmail.com)  
(proceeds to tzedaka)

**Rav Moshe Feinstein**  
**Darash Moshe**

[Rav Moshe Feinstein's 40th Yahrzeit is next Sunday 12 Adar]  
Parashas Terumah

ויקחו לי תרומה מאת כל איש אשר ידבנו לבו תקחו את תרומתי

The Torah uses the phrase "and let them take for Me a gift", which suggests that the donations for the Mishkan were taken by force. This is puzzling, because the historical reality was that the people gave so willingly, they exceeded the required amount. Why would the Torah hint at coercion in such a generous context? This phrasing teaches us a vital lesson about mitzvos like tzedakah or supporting the Mishkan. It's wrong to perform these deeds out of a cold sense of obligation or resentment. Instead, we must use our yetzer tov to force our yetzer hara to agree with a generous attitude. By mobilizing our Torah knowledge and past good deeds, we can change our very nature until we truly want to be generous.

Alternatively, the choice of the word "take" instead of "give" highlights the true nature of ownership. Hashem only wanted contributions from those who believed their wealth belonged to Him rather than themselves. While Hashem grants us the freedom to use money as a test of faith, it's actually a trust fund under our care. A person with this mindset doesn't feel like they're giving; they feel as if they're simply allowing a collector to reclaim what's already Hashem's. For the Mishkan, Hashem was unwilling to accept gifts from anyone who felt they were giving from their own pocket. This mirrors King David's words regarding the Beis Hamikdash, where he told Hashem that "from Your hand we have given it to You".

This idea helps explain why the Torah specifies that gifts come from "every man whose heart motivates him". This suggests that the actual command to donate applied only to those with truly giving hearts. While less generous people could still contribute and receive a mitzvah, they weren't the primary target of the command. They earned only the lesser reward of those who act without being commanded to do so. There's a profound difference in reward between a voluntary act and one done in fulfillment of a divine decree.

We see this same principle in the Talmud's discussion of Yehoshua, whom Hashem told to reflect on the Torah day and night. The Sages view this command as a blessing rather than a burden. Because Yehoshua loved the Torah so much, Hashem deemed him worthy of a formal command to study it constantly. This allowed him to earn the greater reward reserved for someone who performs a mitzvah because they're commanded to. We should all strive to learn and act with such enthusiasm and love for Hashem. The more we love the mitzvos, the more we become obligated to do them, which ultimately leads to a far greater reward.

### The Precious Stones of the Manna

**Rav Yechiel Michel Kossowsky zt"l**\*

“דבר אל בני ישראל ויקחו לי תרומה וגו'” — “Speak to the Children of Israel and let them take for Me an offering...” (Ex. 25:2). The Torah lists gold, silver, copper, rare stones, and all the materials for the Mishkan. How could a recently redeemed people in the wilderness provide all this?

Chazal (Shemos Rabbah) teach that the stones were wondrously supplied. When Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded Moshe regarding the Mishkan, Moshe asked, “Are Bnai Yisrael capable of this?” Hashem replied that even one Jew could do so — “מאת כל איש אשר ידבנו לבו.” Chazal add that when the מן descended, precious stones descended with it; they gathered and set them aside. The means were given — but the deeper question remained: were Bnai Yisrael spiritually ready?

Having just received the Torah, Bnai Yisrael required a unifying center that would bind them together in avodas Hashem. That was the Mishkan — a מקום השראת השכינה. Every Jew contributed so that the Mishkan would belong to all of Klal Yisrael, binding each individual to the Shechinah. Yet Moshe wondered: can an entire people truly rise to become a dwelling place for the Divine Presence?

The answer lay in מתן תורה and in the daily miracle of the מן. The manna did more than sustain; it shaped Bnai Yisrael. Dependent each day upon Hashem, they learned emunah, discipline, and refinement. This is the meaning of the jewels descending with the manna — through it they were formed into a holy people “וראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה' נקרא עליהם” — not through power or might, but through a life visibly sustained by Hashem.

Only through this gradual formation did the Shechinah rest upon them. Faith that begins as simple receiving matures into inner strength and wholeness. This message applies in every generation. A person cannot rise higher than what he is nourished by. Without sustained Torah, one remains limited and spiritually coarse. When Klal Yisrael live with Torah and the Shechina, they reveal the “precious stones” within them — treasures that elevate themselves and the world.

The manna is also inseparably linked to Shabbos. “ויברך אלקים את יום השביעי” — Hashem blessed the seventh day with a double portion on Friday and sanctified it by withholding manna on Shabbos (Rashi; Mechilta). Shabbos teaches that success does not stem from human effort alone but from Divine will. One may toil endlessly and achieve nothing; one may refrain and still receive abundance.

Chazal teach (Shabbos 118b): “If Bnai Yisrael would keep two Shabbosim properly, they would be immediately redeemed.” Shabbos is not merely about reward and punishment; it instills awareness — that the world stands upon Torah, and that Bnai Yisrael, who bear the Torah, sustain it.

\* Rav Yechiel Michel Kossowsky studied at the Mir Yeshiva in Poland, where he developed a close relationship with Rav Yeruchem Levovitz and with his uncle, Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski. At the age of twenty-five, he received semicha and was appointed Rav of Volkovisk, later serving as Rav in Zelva. In 1936, he married Chiena Garber, daughter of the Rav of Horodok. In the end of 1940, through a remarkable series of providential events, he and his family escaped war-torn Europe. He subsequently settled in Johannesburg, South Africa, where he served as Rav and Dayan and founded the first Yeshiva high school in the country. Rav Kossowsky was known as an innovative and eloquent speaker, a distinguished Torah scholar

and a devoted and warm community leader and he worked tirelessly to ensure that Torah continued in South Africa after WW2.

### **Rav Schachter on Parshas Terumah The Mikdash Me'at**

Rav Schachter on the Parsha I - Based on the shiurim of Rav Hershel Schachter - Adapted by Dr. Allan Weissman -

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0FL5876LH> - Reproduced with permission.

The Ramban, in his introduction to our parsha, writes that the main purpose of the Mishkan and the Beis HaMikdash was to serve as a continuation of the hashra'as haShechinah (Divine Presence) that was revealed at Ma'amad Har Sinai. Therefore, since Bnei Yisrael received the luchos ha'edus at Har Sinai, the Mishkan, referred to as Mishkan Ha'Edus, served as a sanctuary to house those luchos.

The Gemara in Yoma (52b) tells us that towards the end of the period of the First Beis HaMikdash, Yoshiyahu HaMelech hid the luchos in a special vault beneath the Temple Mount, constructed for this purpose by Shlomo HaMelech. The Gemara (53b-54a) brings a dispute among the Tanna'im as to whether the luchos remained in this location during the period of the Second Beis HaMikdash or whether they were removed and taken to Bavel. The Rambam (Hilchos Beis HaBechirah 4:1) rules in accordance with the first opinion.

Rav Soloveitchik noted that the Rambam's ruling indicates that this was not merely a historical issue, but one with halachic significance. The dispute centers on whether it is possible to have a Beis HaMikdash without the presence of the luchos. The accepted opinion maintains that in order for the Beis HaMikdash to be invested with kedushah, it must function as a Mishkan Ha'Edus, housing the luchos. Accordingly, the Second Beis HaMikdash must have housed the luchos, albeit in an underground vault.

The Ramban, quoted by the Ran in his commentary to Maseches Megillah (8a in Dapei HaRif), claims that kedushas Beis HaKnesses is similar to the status of tashmishai mitzvah (objects used in the performance of a mitzvah). A sukkah or esrog is considered huktzah lemitzvaso during the duration of Sukkos. A Beis HaKnesses enjoys this same status because it enables a more enhanced performance of the mitzvah of tefillah. According to this approach, on a d'oraisa level, once a Beis HaKnesses falls into disuse and will no longer be used for mitzvah performance, it does not retain its kedushah. The Ran disagrees and maintains that the nature of the kedushah of a Beis HaKnesses is similar to that of the Beis HaMikdash, which has a status akin to tashmishai kedushah. This is based on the pasuk referring to a time when Bnei Yisrael will be in galus: "Va'ehi lahem leMikdash me'at" ("Yet I will be for them a miniature sanctuary") (Yechezkel 11:16). The Gemara in Megillah (29a) explains that this refers to "batei knessiyos u'vatei midrashos she'b'Bavel" — the synagogues and study halls in Bavel that will remain available to Klal Yisrael even in exile.

While the Ran writes that this interpretation is only an asmachta, the Sefer Yere'im (siman 394) maintains that kedushas Beis HaKnesses is d'oraisa in origin. The Chayei Adam (17:6) rules that we should follow the opinion of the Yere'im and therefore be stringent to abstain from non-mitzvah functions within the Beis HaKnesses.

Rav Soloveitchik and the Sdei Chemed pointed out that the Rambam (Minyan HaMitzvos at the beginning of the Mishnah Torah) appears to share this view. In listing Lo Sa'aseh 65, "Lo sa'asun kein laHashem Elokeichem" ("You shall not do so to Hashem, your G-d") (Devarim 12:4), the Rambam writes that it is forbidden to remove a stone from the mizbe'ach or from batei knessiyos or batei midrashos. The Beis HaKnesses thus seems to be included in this prohibition on a d'oraisa level.

We can therefore understand why the Rambam (Hilchos Tefillah 11:2), in discussing the dinim of kedushas Beis HaKnesses, writes that there should be a designated aron hakodesh in which to house the sefer Torah. This requirement reflects the idea that kedushas Beis HaKnesses parallels kedushas haMikdash, which stems from the presence of the aron housing the luchos. Even if a room is regularly used for tefillah, it would not attain the

status of Beis HaKnesses as a Mikdash Me'at without an aron hakodesh containing a sefer Torah.

Tosfos (Nazir 23b) implies that kedushas Beis HaKnesses stems from the Torah SheBichsav — the presence of a sefer Torah inside the aron hakodesh. Tosfos further suggests that kedushas Beis HaMedrash emanates from the study of Torah SheBe'al Peh there. The Gemara in Megillah (27a) records a dispute as to which possesses greater kedushah, a Beis HaKnesses or a Beis HaMedrash, and rules that a Beis HaMedrash possesses greater kedushah. Tosfos may understand this as reflecting the greater importance of Torah SheBe'al Peh.

In what sense is a Beis HaKnesses classified as a Mikdash Me'at? Rav Soloveitchik (Shiurim LeZecher Abba Mari Z"l) explained that the stricter din of mora (reverence), forbidding even the wearing of shoes, applies to the Beis HaMikdash, in contrast to the requirement of kavod (respect) that applies to a Beis HaKnesses.

The Gemara in Berachos (63a) states that one may not use a Beis HaKnesses as a shortcut, just as such conduct would not be tolerated in "beiso" — one's own house. A Beis HaKnesses must be treated with the same degree of respect as one's own home. Just as it was customary to remove galoshes before entering one's home, entering a Beis HaKnesses wearing galoshes would violate kevod Beis HaKnesses.

Thus, a Beis HaKnesses is our house, to which Hashem comes to visit. In contrast, the Beis HaMikdash is termed Beis Hashem, where we come to visit Him. In both places, Man has a rendezvous with Hashem; the difference lies in who is the visitor and who is being visited.

The Rav drew a parallel between Shabbos and Yom Tov. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 529:1), based on the Talmud Yerushalmi (Kiddushin 1:4), rules that while weekday clothing may not be worn on either Shabbos or Yom Tov, Yom Tov clothing should be superior. On Yom Tov, there is an obligation of simchah, as we appear lifnei Hashem in His home to fulfill the mitzvah of aliyah laregel. When visiting the King in His royal palace, one must dress most splendidly.

On Shabbos, however, when we say "Bo'I Kallah" ("Bride, come") and greet the Shechinah that comes to visit us in our home, less regal clothing suffices.

-----  
from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> date: Feb 19, 2026, 10:00 AM

Parshas Terumah

The Place for Atzei Shitim's Firmness in This World

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1370 They Want To Build A New Shul? N.I.M.B.Y. (Not In My Backyard) A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail [tapes@yadyechiel.org](mailto:tapes@yadyechiel.org) or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Good Shabbos!

#### **The Place for Atzei Shitim's Firmness in This World**

The next five parshiyos deal with the building of the Mishkan. The walls of the Mishkan were built with boards that were made from atzei shitim (acacia wood), which, according to the Medresh, is a type of erez (cedar) tree. Whether erez and shitim are similar or different types of trees, they both represent very strong, hardy types of wood. There is an interesting Medrash Rabbah (Shemos 35) which states, "The world was unworthy to use the wood of the cedar tree, which was created only for the sake of the Mishkan and the Beis Hamikdash.

On a homiletic level, I saw an interesting interpretation of this Medrash in a two-volume sefer called Menachem Tzion, which was written by Rav Menachem ben Tzion Zachs. His interpretation is based on the Gemara (Taanis 20a), which states "a person should always be 'soft' like a reed and not be 'hard' like a cedar." The intention of this Gemara is that people should be flexible. Reeds bend with the wind. They are flexible, not rigid. They compromise and go with the flow. On the other hand, the mighty cedar is erect. It is straight and inflexible. It doesn't bend.

Chazal say that a person should not be firm like a cedar. In life, a person must learn to compromise and make concessions. People need to learn to bend a little. People who are set in their ways and inflexible don't go very far. In most situations, a marriage or a friendship or business cannot work like that. A person simply cannot fit into society if it always has to be "my way or the highway!"

The Menachem Tzion suggests that the message of the aforementioned Medrash is that, in general, people should not be like cedar. As a rule, cedar's firmness is unworthy for this world. But there is one situation where we are supposed to use cedar and we are supposed to be inflexible, standing by our principles, and refusing to compromise. That is in the building of the Mishkan and the Beis Hamikdash.

When it comes to matters of the faith, we need to stand up for what is right. People can argue about certain things – are they right or not? But there is no compromising regarding matters of faith that are unequivocal! Once you start compromising, you don't have a religion left.

All that is necessary to confirm this concept is to look at other "forms of Yiddishkeit" that have compromised over and over until they don't even look like Yiddishkeit anymore.

I recently saw something that shocked me. This month, the Catholics celebrated "Ash Wednesday," marking forty days before Easter and the start of the season of Lent, a time of repentance and introspection, l'havdil. There is a church in Baltimore that had "Glitter Ash" for certain members of their community who engage in immoral behavior. They could commemorate the date, not with traditional ashes, but using ashes with glitter mixed in, to accommodate "people of that persuasion."

Now this is a church! This church commemorates Ash Wednesday, which is supposed to be about repentance and introspection, with glitter! We know what is going to happen to such a religion. We know what happens to religions that keep on making compromises on their principles and their matters of faith.

This is what the Menachem Tzion sees as the meaning of the Medrash about the cedar's inflexibility being useful only for the Mishkan and the Beis Hamikdash.

Rabbi Avrohom Buxbaum from Miami, Florida wants to extend this idea one step further.

Rashi, in our parsha (Shemos 25:5), asks where the Jews found atzei shitim (acacia wood) in the wilderness. Rashi quotes a Medrash Tanchuma that Yaakov Avinu foresaw prophetically that Bnei Yisrael would build a Mishkan in the wilderness and would need this kind of wood to build it. Therefore, Yaakov brought down trees with him from Eretz Yisrael when he descended to Mitzrayim and planted them there. He further instructed his children to cut them down and take them with them when they left Mitzrayim.

The truth of the matter is that this began even before Yaakov Avinu. The Medrash says on the pasuk "And he planted an eshel in Be'er Sheva" (Bereshis 21:33) that Avraham Avinu already was the one who originally planted the trees that would eventually be used for the Mishkan. Yaakov Avinu moved his grandfather's trees and replanted them in Mitzrayim and told his children to take them out with them.

Rabbi Buxbaum suggested that the message is the same. When Avraham Avinu planted the trees, it was also symbolic. Avraham Avinu was the original iconoclast. Iconoclast in the original sense of the word, means a person who broke the icons. That was what Avraham did! He broke the idols. He is called Avraham the "Ivri" (Hebrew) because "the entire world was on ever echad (one side) and he was m'ever ha'sheni (on the other side). He took on the entire world. He debunked paganism. It was a revolution. That takes a man with a steel level of courage. That takes a man who is going to be inflexible. Avraham Avinu planted those trees because it symbolized what he was about. Perhaps he knew that Yaakov Avinu would take these same arazim and plant them in Mitzrayim, not only for the Mishkan, but also because Yaakov Avinu knew that his descendants would be in Mitzrayim, a hostile spiritual environment of idolatry and immorality.

The avos instructed their descendants: Remember the arazim (and/or atzei shitim). Remember the ability for a Jew to be on one side and withstand the pressures of the people of the entire world, who remain on the other side of the moral divide. That is what defines us.

Yaakov felt that he needed to remind his descendants that they would need to adopt this hallmark of inflexibility of Avraham Avinu in Mitzrayim – that same characteristic of being strong like a cedar (and/or acacia). Under normal circumstances, this is not an admirable quality, but regarding the Mishkan and matters of religion – that's the time to emulate its firmness.

#### **Why Is the Story of Building the Mishkan in Sefer Shemos?**

I heard the following very interesting observation in a lecture from Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, the late Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth, which someone passed on to me via CD:

In sefer Shemos, from this point on, the parshios of Teruma, Tezaveh, half of Ki Sisa, all of Vayakhel and all of Pekudei, are about the Mishkan. Off handedly, we would assume that the story of the construction of the Mishkan belongs in Sefer Vayikra. Sefer Vayikra, after all, is "Toras Kohanim" – all about avodas hakorbanos (the sacrificial service), which was done in the Mishkan. Why then is the story of the building of the Mishkan put in Sefer Shemos?

Rabbi Sacks makes the following suggestion: There is something constant throughout the opening parshiyos of Sefer Shemos: Shemos, Vaera, Bo, Beshalach, and Ki Sisa as well: Throughout, people are complaining. In Shemos, they complain – rightfully so – about the slavery. Moshe Rabbeinu goes to Pharaoh and tries to improve the situation. It gets worse. The people complain. When they reach the Yaf Suf in Parshas Beshalach, they complain "Why did you take us out of Egypt?" After Krias Yam Suf, they complain about what Jews always complain about: They don't like the food. They complain about the water. The water is too bitter. The Ribono shel Olam gives them the Torah in Parshas Yisro. Forty days later, Moshe Rabbeinu is late in returning – at least according to their calculation. They complain: What happened to our leader? They make an eigel hazahav (golden calf). Complaining, complaining, complaining, complaining.

How can a nation be formed out of such people who are constantly arguing and complaining? Sefer Shemos is about "ish u'beiso ba-oo" (Shemos 1:1). This is about building Klal Yisrael. How can you build Klal Yisrael when everyone is always complaining?

Rabbi Sacks says that the Ribono shel Olam provided a plan: Build a Mishkan and then everyone works toward the common goal of building it. One person brings money, another person brings talent, another person brings time. They have a communal-wide project to build a Mishkan. The complaints stop because now they have a common purpose and a common goal. That is how a nation is formed.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky suggests a similar insight in Parshas Bamidbar. In Parshas Bamidbar, Klal Yisrael was given the mitzva of setting up degalim (flags) for each shevet (tribe) specifying their travel formation. He notes that this mitzva was only given in the second year following Yitziyas Mitzraim. What about the first year? How did they travel before the mitzva regarding the camps and the degalim?

Rav Yaakov explains that the concept of different degalim for each shevet could be a cause of rivalry and dissension. Had the unique degalim for each shevet been assigned the first year, it would have been counter-productive. The shevatim would again be at each other's throats! But once the Mishkan that rests in the center of the camp was inaugurated and everyone was focused on that one Mishkan, that provided a binding force which unified the disparate elements of the nation, such that the various shevatim could now tolerate the concept of different groupings under different degalim, all rallying around the same Mishkan in the middle.

That is why the construction of the Mishkan belongs in Sefer Shemos. Sefer Shemos is about creating Klal Yisrael. The creation came to fruition only after there was something present in their midst to unite them. That something was the construction of the Mishkan.

I once heard an observation from Rav Nachum Lansky: With the exception of Sefer Bereshis, every one of the five Chumashim all end with exceedingly similar closing words. In Sefer Shemos it is “I’einei kol Beis Yisrael b’chol ma’aseihem” (in sight of the entire House of Israel throughout their travels). Sefer Vayikra ends with the pasuk: “Eleh hamitzvos asher tzeevah Hashem es Moshe el Bnei Yisrael B’har Sinai” (These are the commands that Hashem commanded Moshe to the Children of Israel on Mt. Sinai). Sefer Bamidbar ends with: “...asher tzeevah Hashem b’yad Moshe el Bnei Yisrael B’arvos Moav al Yarden Yericho” (...that Hashem commanded in the hand of Moshe to the Children of Israel in the wilderness of Moav by the Jordan – Jericho). Finally, Sefer Devorim ends with the words “...I’einei kol Yisrael” (to the eyes of all of Israel).

There is only one Sefer which ends specifically with the formula kol Beis Yisrael. That is Sefer Shemos. That is because the essence of Sefer Shemos is building the house of Israel, building Klal Yisrael as a nation. A nation is built with individual batim (houses), the conglomerate of which is kol Beis Yisrael (all the households of Israel). In order to accomplish that, in order to join them all together, they needed a common goal. They needed the building of a Mishkan. We are all in this together. This common project unifies us as a nation.

That is why the building of the Mishkan needed to appear in Sefer Shemos, rather than in Sefer Vayikra.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem [DavidATwersky@gmail.com](mailto:DavidATwersky@gmail.com)

Edited by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD [dhoffman@torah.org](mailto:dhoffman@torah.org)

-----  
from: **Rabbi Chanan Morrison** <[chanan@ravkooktorah.org](mailto:chanan@ravkooktorah.org)>

date: Feb 19, 2026, 8:34 AM

subject: **Rav Kook** on Terumah

**Terumah: The Tachash and the Erev Rav**

The Talmud gives an account of the enigmatic Tachash, a mysterious creature whose beautiful multicolored hide was used as a covering for the Tabernacle: "The Tachash that lived in the time of Moses was a unique species. The Sages could not determine whether it was domesticated or wild. It only appeared at that time for Moses, who used it for the Tabernacle. Then it vanished."(Shabbat 28b) What is the significance of this unique animal? What was its special connection to Moses, that it made its appearance only during his lifetime? And why did Moses incorporate the colorful Tachash in the Tabernacle, albeit only for its outermost covering?

Mixed Blessings from Mixed Multitudes In Aramaic, the Tachash is called Sasgona, for it was proud (sas) of its many vivid colors (gona). According to Rav Kook, the multihued Tachash is a metaphor, representing Moses' desire to include as many talents and gifts as possible when building the Jewish people — even talents that, on their own, might have a negative influence upon the people. The metaphor of the Tachash specifically relates to Moses' decision to allow the Erev Rav — “mixed multitudes” from other nations — join the Israelites as they left Egypt.

The Erev Rav were the source of much grief. They instigated the Sin of the Golden Calf and other rebellions against God in the wilderness. And their descendants throughout the generations continued to bring troubles upon Israel. Nevertheless, at the End of Days, all the troubles these difficult and diverse forces caused will be revealed as having been for the best, as the absorption of the Erev Rav served to enrich the Jewish people.

One disturbing aspect of the Erev Rav is the phenomenon of many dynamic forces abandoning the Jewish nation during its long exile among the nations. Yet this is not a true loss, since only that which was foreign to the inner spirit of Israel is cast off. These lost elements of the Erev Rav were ultimately incompatible with Knesset Yisrael, the national soul of Israel; thus they were unable to withstand the pressures and hardships of exile. It saddens us to lose that which we thought was part of Israel, but in fact, they were never truly assimilated within the nation's soul. This outcome benefits the world at large. As these ‘fallen leaves’ join the other nations, they bring with them much of what they absorbed from the holiness of Israel. As a result, other peoples have become more receptive to Israel's spiritual message.

Could the Tachash be Domesticated? The Sages were in doubt as to the ultimate fate of the multi-talented Erev Rav. Would they be truly absorbed within Israel, enriching the people and remaining forever a part of it? Or would they only serve as a positive influence on the world, outside the camp of Israel? The Sages expressed this uncertainty by questioning whether the Tachash was a domestic creature. A wild animal cannot be trained and will not permanently join man's home. It can only be guided indirectly. A domesticated animal, on the other hand, is completely subservient to man and is an integral part of his household. Would the Erev Rav ultimately be rejected, like wild animals which can never be truly at home with humanity? Or would they be domesticated and incorporated into the house of Israel? Moses and the Tachash Just as the Tachash only made its appearance in Moses' time, so too, this absorption of foreign talents was only possible in Moses' generation. No other generation could have taken it upon itself to accept alien forces into the nation. Once the contribution of the Erev Rav to Israel is complete, the nation's spiritual restoration requires that they will be purged from the Jewish people. “I will purge your dross... and then you will be called the city of righteousness, faithful city” (Isaiah 1: 25-26).

We usually avoid destructive forces which may delay and hinder the ultimate good. However, a far-reaching vision can detect the underlying purpose of all human activity, as all actions ultimately fulfill the Divine Will. The great hour of Exodus resonated with the highest vision; the first redemption of Israel initiated the historical process that will culminate with the final redemption. Moses, the master prophet, “the most faithful of all My house,” saw fit to include those varied forces that ordinarily would be rejected. And yet, like the skins of the Tachash, they were only suitable for the most external covering. "The new heavens and the new earth which I will make are standing before Me." (Isaiah 66:22)

All of the wonderful forces of the future — “the new heavens and the new earth” — are not really new. They already exist. Even now, they are “standing before Me.” By accepting the Erev Rav, Moses planted these diverse gifts within the Jewish people. Like seeds, they decay in the ground; but ultimately they will sprout and bring forth new life. The brilliant future light, with all of its spectacular colors and breadth, is not new; it was secreted away long ago. This resplendent light is hidden, like the multi-hued Tachash, until the time will come for it to be revealed once more. (Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. III, pp. 105-107)

-----  
From: **Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein** <[ravadlerstein@torah.org](mailto:ravadlerstein@torah.org)>

to: [targumim@torah.org](mailto:targumim@torah.org)

date: Feb 19, 2026, 10:18 AM

Parshas Terumah

**Divrei Shaul** - When the Chips Are Down, It's All Relative[1]

**Make one cherub at the end of one side, and one cherub at the end of the other.**[2]

Rambam's observation[3] about human nature is well known: personality traits and characteristics vary wildly between people, and you will find some who take those characteristics to the limit. The humility of some people can be so extreme, that no barb directed at them, no pain or inconvenience leads them to react with emotion. Some people are so full of themselves, that they never show compassion or deference to anyone at all.

Rambam's prescription for this finding has become known as the Golden Mean. The Torah Jew should avoid extremes, and locate himself at in the middle ground between the extremes of personality.

Yet, he argues, it is important not to abandon these extremes. There is a time and place to make use of them. The extremes, which we properly dismiss as beneath us, are important in serving Hashem. In dealing with dangerous sinners, it is improper to react with one's humility and compassion. To the contrary, a person must gird himself with a spirit of devotion to Divine honor. He should display anger, and even vengeance, against them. It is in this way that the Rambam[4] explains R. Yehuda ben Teima's instruction: “Be bold as a leopard, light as a griffon-vulture, fast as a deer, and strong as a lion to do the will of your father in Heaven.” The animals all

signify the more debased character traits. But these, too, must be employed in the service of Hashem.

This, I believe, is the symbolic message of the two cheruvim atop the aron. Each sat at “the end” of a side, i.e. represented midos taken to an extreme. In the next pasuk we learn that the cheruvim’s wings were “spread upwards.” All midos should be used to raise up, to elevate a person towards perfection. Therefore, they need to be focused on the aron and luchos. In doing so, they find the middle ground between the extremes. Each midah can look at its opposite, and together create a balance. “With this shall Aharon come into the Kodesh/Sanctuary.”[5] Once this balanced is achieved, one can enter into the holiness of Torah and mitzvos.

When the extremes of midos cannot coordinate with each other, the cheruvim do not look at each other, but past each other. They are not restrained; they don’t find the middle ground; extremes flourish. This is the meaning of the gemara’s[6] declaration that when Klal Yisrael acts in consonance with Hashem’s Will, the cheruvim face each other, and appear like a male and female intertwined in embrace. They coordinate with each other, each making their separate contributions of character. Despite their differences, they can create and raise a child between them.

However, when Klal Yisrael acts in opposition to His Will, the cheruvim remain apart, with different leanings and reactions, not noticing each other. That same gemara reports that when the conquerors entered the Kodesh Kodashim, they found the cheruvim locked in embrace. How could this be? We had acted so terribly, that Hashem’s anger was kindled against us, to the point that He reduced His house to rubble. We were certainly not acting in consonance with His Will!

The answer, I believe, is that He wanted to make it known that even when we were disappointing Him so thoroughly, we still showed greater perfected character than was found in the nations who had been allowed to conquer them. A consolation – even if small – at the time of great tragedy.

1. Adapted from Divrei Shaul by R. Yosef Shaul Nathanson, the Shoel U-Meishiv ↑ 2. Shemos 25:19 ↑ 3. Deos 1:1 ↑ 4. Perush HaMishniyos, Avos 5:20 ↑ 5. Vayikra 16:3 ↑ 6. Yoma 54a ↑

-----  
from: Kol Torah Webmaster <webmaster@koltorah.org> date: Feb 12, 2026, 9:56 PM

subject: Parashat Mishpatim

**Hachazarah** [חזרה]

**By Rabbi Chaim Jachter**

Halachah, Volume 35

5786/2026

**Hachazarah Part 1.**

Although we say Ein Bishul Achar Bishul, Chazal forbade returning food to the fire even if the food was totally cooked. Thus, one cannot take fully cooked chicken from the refrigerator and place it directly on a lit stove to reheat for Shabbat lunch. One who does so violates the rabbinic prohibition of Hachazarah.

The Rishonim articulate two reasons for the Hachazarah prohibition. Rashi (Shabbat 36b s.v. Lo Machzirim) explains that Hachazarah is prohibited because it “appears as if it is cooking” (Meichzi K’Mevashel). Rabbeinu Tam (Sefer HaYashar 235) writes that Chazal were concerned that one may come to stir the coals. Any manner of reheating food on Shabbat must address these two concerns, as Rav Mordechai Willig explains (The Laws of Cooking and Warming Food on Shabbat, pp. 89-93). We must emphasize that we permit reheating food on Shabbat only if the solid food is entirely cooked, and Ein Bishul Achar Bishul applies.

Permitted Ways to Return Cooked Food to the Fire on Shabbat – The Blech The Mishnah (Shabbat 36b) teaches that one of the requirements to permit returning fully cooked food to the fire on Shabbat (Hachazarah) is that the fuel source of the stove is either removed or covered with ashes (גרירי או קטורה). Either option alleviates concern for stirring the coals. Rashi (ibid., s.v. Oh Ad) explains that placing ashes on the coals cools them. The Ran (15b in the pages of the Rif, d”h Oh Ad) explains that by removing the coals or

covering them with ashes, one demonstrates that he has resolved not to stir the coals.

The Mishnah Berurah (253:81) cites the Magen Avraham, who rules that placing a Blech over the fire is the equivalent of placing ashes on the coals. The Blech both cools the fire by diffusing the heat and concretely expresses that one has resolved not to stir the coals. The Chazon Ish (Orach Chaim 37:11) appears to be the lone authority to question this. He argues that the Blech merely covers the stove but serves no Halachic purpose since it does not directly impact the heat source. The Chazon Ish is not widely accepted. There is some question, though, about the Blech structure for modern gas ovens. Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe O.C. 1:93) writes that covering the fire suffices, even if the knobs are not covered. Covering the fire sufficiently demonstrates that one will not adjust the flame. He writes, however, that it is preferable to cover the knobs as well, because this further eliminates concerns about changing the flame. Rav Moshe firmly asserts, though, that it is insufficient to cover only the knobs.

On the other hand, Rav Aharon Kotler (cited by Rav Shimon Eider, Halachos of Shabbos, p. 338, note 800) adopts the opposite approach. Rav Kotler believes that while it is preferable to cover the fire as well as the knobs, it is vital to cover the knobs. Rav Kotler rules that, in the event of difficulty, covering only the knobs is sufficient. Rav Hershel Schachter (The Laws of Cooking and Warming Food on Shabbat, p. 181) told me that Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik agrees.

A major ramification of this dispute is whether covering the knobs of a crockpot suffices to permit Shehiyah and Hachazarah. Rav Mordechai Willig told me that he believes that covering the knobs of the crockpot is insufficient.

Additional Requirements to Permit Hachazarah

The Shulchan Aruch and Rama (Orach Chaim 253:2) codify the two Talmudic opinions (Shabbat 38) that there are two other requirements to permit Hachazarah. These requirements are that the pot remains in one’s hand (Odo B’Yado) and that one intends to return the food to the fire (Da’ato L’Hachzir). Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe O.C. 4:74:Bishul: 33) clarifies that, based on the Rambam (Hilchot Shabbat 3:10), that one is not required to keep the pot from touching the ground to permit Hachazarah.

Rather, it suffices to keep one’s hand on the pot, even if the pot touches the ground. Rav Zvi Sobolofsky reports that Rav Mordechai Willig implemented this ruling at the Morasha Kollel when the Shabbat afternoon Chulent was served on Friday night.

Significantly, the Mishnah Berurah (253:56) rules that in case of need, either Odo Be’Yado or Da’ato L’Hachzir suffices. Although the Rama (Orach Chaim 253:2) requires both conditions, the Bi’ur Halachah (253:2 d”h Vlo Hinichah) notes that many Rishonim, such as the Meiri, Ra’ah, and Ri’az, suffice with either condition. The Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata (1:73) and Rav Mordechai Willig (The Laws of Cooking and Warming Food on Shabbat, p. 141) follow the Mishnah Berurah. However, Rav Hershel Schachter (The Laws of Cooking and Warming Food on Shabbat, pp. 181-182) notes the many major Rishonim, including the Rambam, Rashi, the Rashba, and Tosafot, who require both Odo B’Yado and Da’ato L’Hachzir. Thus, Rav Schachter concludes that one may be lenient only in case of pressing circumstances.

For Sephardic Jews, Odo B’Yado is the critical requirement (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 253:2, Bi’ur Halachah 253:2 d”h V’Lo Hinichah, and Yalkut Yosef Orach Chaim 253:8).

The Magen Avraham (253:36) believes that there is another requirement to permit Hachazarah. He requires that the food not cool down completely, even if the food is fully cooked and solid. The Vilna Gaon (Biur Hagra O.C. 253:5 s.v. U’bilvad, as explained by Biur Halachah d”h U’bilvad) disagrees.

He believes that Hachazarah is permitted for a completely cooked solid food that remains in one’s hand if he intends to return it to the fire, even if it is completely cooled. The Mishnah Berurah (253:68) and Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe 4:74:Bishul:31) follow the Magen Avraham. Rav Yosef Adler and many others report that Rav Yosef Dov

Soloveitchik follows the Vilna Gaon. Significantly, the Magen Avraham does not cite the Gemara or Rishonim as support. Rather, he argues that if the food is completely cooled, it is equivalent to an initial placement on the fire, not returning it.

Permitted Means to Reheat Food for Shabbat Lunch – The Controversial Ran

The above conditions for Hachazarah only facilitate returning food to the fire soon after it is served. However, what can be done to reheat food for Shabbat lunch? One way is to rely on the controversial Ran and the aforementioned Vilna Gaon.

The Rama (O.C. 253:2) cites a great leniency from the Ran (Shabbat 17b in the pages of the Rif, s.v. U'mihu). The Ran derives from the Yerushalmi that the Odo B'Yado and Da'ato L'Hachzir requirements apply only when the food was removed from the fire before Shabbat. However, if the food was on the Blech at the beginning of Shabbat, one may return it to the fire later on Shabbat, even if the food did not remain in his hand and he did not intend to return the food to the fire. The Ramban (Shabbat 38b, s.v. Machzirin) agrees. However, the Rambam, Rif, and Rosh do not record this leniency.

The Rama (ibid.) records the custom of relying on the Ran. However, the Rama recommends that one should be strict and not rely on this lenient ruling. This is primarily because most Rishonim disagree (Taz Orach Chaim 253:12). Similarly, the Aruch HaShulchan (253:19) notes that the custom is to rely on the Ran, but recommends stringency because most Rishonim reject the Ran's opinion. However, Rav Yosef Adler quotes Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, who permits relying on the Ran. Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe O.C. 1:94) disagrees.

According to Rav Soloveitchik, one may remove fully cooked solid food from the refrigerator and place it on the Blech if the food was already on the Blech at Shabbat's beginning. He follows the Ran and the Vilna Gaon's leniencies.

Although some follow Rav Soloveitchik's approach, it is best to avoid it. Even Rav Hershel Schachter ("Hilchos Bishul B'Shabbos," min. 52-55) and Rav Mordechai Willig (Am Mordechai, Shabbat, p. 47), leading Talmidim of Rav Soloveitchik, do not advocate following it. They note that the Sheyarei HaKorban (to the aforementioned Yerushalmi) interprets it differently than the Ran, noting that the Ran's Yerushalmi text differs from ours and that the Chazon Ish (Orach Chaim 37:8) supports the Sheyarei HaKorban.

The Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata (1:20) only permits relying on the Ran in case of great need (he will not have hot food for Shabbat). However, the Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata does not allow this if the food is completely cooled. Moreover, he prefers that in such a case, he at least place the pot on an upside-down plate.

In this manner, he satisfies some opinions regarding Kedaira Al Kedaira, a topic we shall address in our next section, where we present practical and well-accepted ways to warm food for Shabbat lunch.

### **Hachazarah Part Two**

In the previous discussion, we began discussing practical ways to reheat food for Shabbat lunch. We cited Rav Soloveitchik's approach, but recommended not following it since most Poskim do not accept it. In this section, we present a range of practical and widely accepted options.

**Kedaira Al Gabei Kedaira**

The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 253:5) rules that one may place fully cooked solid food on top of a pot filled with food cooking on the fire (Kedaira Al Gabei Kedaira) "because this is not the way of cooking (Ein Derech Bishul B'Kach)." Since people do not cook food this way, Kedaira Al Gabei Kedaira obviates concern for Hachazarah. It does not appear like cooking, and the fact that one is reheating the food in this unusual way demonstrates that he is not interested in stirring the coals (or adjusting the flame).

"Kedaira Blech"

The "Kedaira Blech" has been introduced with the approval of Rav Hershel Schachter to implement the Kedaira Al Gabei Kedaira method conveniently. It is a rectangular metal box with a flat surface. One places water in it

before Shabbat so that it is considered a pot that contains food. Placing food on its large and flat surface is a practical way to warm fully cooked solid food than putting the food on top of a cooking pot.

However, Rav Mordechai Willig (Am Mordechai, Shabbat, p. 28 and "Cooking and Warming food on Shabbat" p. 108), though, questions this ruling since the water inside the "Kedaira Blech" is not meant to be consumed, unlike the traditional Kedaira Al Gabei Kedaira. Rav Dovid Ribiat (the 39 Melochos, 2:624-625) strongly argues against the Kedaira Blech, arguing that Kedaira Al Gabei Kedaira is permitted only because a pot is made for cooking the food contained in it and not food placed on it. Therefore, since there is no intent for the Kedaira Blech to cook its contents, Rav Yisrael Belsky rejects it as a valid form of Kedaira Al Gabei Kedaira. Rav Ribiat cites Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv and other Poskim who reject the Kedaira Blech.

**Hot Tray or Warming Table**

Contemporary authorities debate whether a non-adjustable hot tray or warming table constitutes a permissible method for reheating food on Shabbat. Those who adopt the lenient approach argue that since people do not cook on a hot tray or warming table, it is a permissible method to reheat food, similar to Kedaira Al Gabei Kedaira. Rav Mordechai Willig (The Laws of Cooking and Warming Food on Shabbat, pp. 145-148) and Rav Hershel Schachter (The Laws of Cooking and Warming Food on Shabbat, p. 182) rule leniently, but the Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata (1:25) rules strictly. The debate is whether we can say Ein Derech Bishul B'Kach regarding such devices. If the hotplate is adjustable, the knobs must be covered with multiple layers of tape to make it extremely difficult to remove, thereby preventing mistaken adjustments to the temperature (see The Laws of Cooking and Warming Food on Shabbat, pp. 124-127).

**Rav Ovadia Yosef and Blechs**

Rav Ovadia Yosef (Teshuvot Yechaveh Da'at 2:45) wholeheartedly endorses the lenient opinion, arguing that a non-adjustable hot plate avoids concern for adjusting the flame and the appearance of cooking. Moreover, he argues that even simply placing a Blech successfully obviates these concerns. Other authorities do not accept this last point, since the Bi'ur Halachah (253:3, s.v. V'Yizaheir) follows the Pri Megadim, who argues that Kedaira Al Gabei Kedaira does not appear as cooking only if the bottom pot is filled with food. Rav Ovadia, on the other hand, follows the Magen Avraham (318:26), who permits Kedaira Al Gabei Kedaira for solid food even if the bottom pot does not contain food.

Rav Benzion Abba Sha'ul (Teshuvot Or Letzion 2:30:13) agrees with Rav Ovadia but is only lenient if one does not place the food directly over the fire.

However, Ashkenazim should follow Rav Schachter (The Laws of Cooking and Warming Food on Shabbat, p.180) and Rav Willig (The Laws of Cooking and Warming Food on Shabbat, p. 111), who follow Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik's ruling like the Pri Megadim.

**Warming Drawers**

The Chicago Rabbinical Council follows Rav Shmuel Fuerst and Rav Gedalia Schwartz, who permit reheating foods in a warming drawer whose temperature is low (i.e., one never cooks at that temperature, such as below 225 degrees Fahrenheit) and whose knobs are covered. Rav Fuerst sees warming drawers as identical to hot plates. On the other hand, Rav Moshe Heinemann sees warming drawers as Halachically identical to conventional ovens, and forbids returning food to a warming drawer at a temperature higher than 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

Rav Mordechai Willig (The Laws of Cooking and Warming Food on Shabbat pp.124-125 and 127) permits reheating food in a warming drawer but requires placing "many pieces of tape on the warm drawer's adjustable knob in a way that they cannot be all be pulled off at once so that is extremely inconvenient to remove the tape to adjust the temperature." Merely covering the knob is insufficient in his view since one is not covering the fire (following Rav Moshe Feinstein's understanding of a Blech), and does not create a Grufa/Ketuma equivalent. Rather, what one is doing is

making an equivalent of Tach B'Tit, plastering the oven opening. The Gemara (Shabbat 18b) states that Tach B'Tit eliminates concern for stoking coals.

#### Conclusion – Hot Food for Shabbat Lunch

One may be tempted to survey the many options for preparing hot food for Shabbat afternoon and conclude that, since it is challenging to find a practical solution that satisfies all opinions, he will settle for cold food on Shabbat afternoon.

However, this is not acceptable. The Rama (following the Ba'al HaMaor to the third Perek of Shabbat) writes that it is a Mitzvah to make sure there is hot food for Shabbat afternoon as part of the obligation to honor and enjoy Shabbat. He even writes that there is concern that those who refrain from doing so are heretics who reject belief in the Oral Law. One should consult with his Rav to develop a protocol on how to manage the many issues raised in this series.

Postscript – Ovens and Timers Although some permit reheating food in ovens under certain circumstances or using timers, or Nochrin, in the Jachter home, we avoid these controversial steps. We follow the guidance of Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim 1:94), Rav Schachter (The Laws of Cooking and Warming Food on Shabbat pp. 180, 181, and 185), and Rav Willig (The Laws of Cooking and Warming Food on Shabbat pp. 97, 127, and 149-152) to steer clear of these options.

from: **Rav Immanuel Bernstein** <ravbernstein@journeysintorah.com>

date: Feb 19, 2026, 7:00 AM

subject: Morals and Meanings in Terumah

#### Where does the Divine Presence Reside?

When commanding the Jewish People regarding the construction of the Mishkan, Hashem says: וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכָם They shall make for Me a Sanctuary, and I shall dwell in their midst.[1]

The commentators note that Hashem does not say He will dwell בתוֹכוֹ — in it, i.e., the Mishkan, but rather בתוֹכָם — in them, i.e., the Jewish People.[2] What is it exactly about the Mishkan that will cause the Divine Presence to dwell within the Jewish People? The Vilna Gaon explains that the very fact that the people are united around the holy endeavor of building the Mishkan is what will cause the Divine Presence to dwell among them.[3] In other words, it is not the existence of the Mishkan per se that brings Hashem close to His people, but the fact that it serves as a focal unifying point around which they encamp and live their lives! Moreover, this unification continues to a certain degree even if the Mishkan or Beis Hamikdash is not there. There is a well-known halachah that when we pray we face toward Israel, and if we are in Israel we face toward Jerusalem. Why is facing Israel when we pray so important? On a simple level, it is because of the special sanctity of the Land of Israel, making it the place through which we wish to direct our prayers to Hashem. However, the Vilna Gaon explains that here, too, the idea is that since everyone is facing toward the same place, Jews from all over the world are united in their prayer, which, as mentioned above, has the effect of bringing the Divine Presence close to us and helping to ensure that our prayers will be accepted. This is a truly fascinating concept, for it is certainly very easy for someone to face toward Israel in an entirely personal and private capacity without it ever occurring to him that in so doing he is joining together with the rest of the Jewish People. According to the Vilna Gaon, he has missed the point. With this idea we can appreciate why our strength or vulnerability as a people depend on whether or not we are unified. The source of the success and well-being of the Jewish People is their special connection with Hashem. This basic idea is so fundamental it literally runs through the entire Torah, Nevi'im, and Kesuvim. When Hashem is with us, we are unstoppable; when He is distant from us, we are vulnerable. Everything depends on our connection with Him. As we have seen, this connection is only meaningfully attained when the Jewish People are united as one, and this is why unity is such a crucial prerequisite for our national success. This fundamental theme forms much of our path toward salvation in the Purim story, and is one we should endeavor to emulate as we

seek to be victorious over those who harbor evil designs toward us – in those days, in our times!

[1] Shemos 25:8. [2] See e.g. Commentary of Alshich to our verse. [3] Vilna Gaon to Shir HaShirim 1:17.

-----  
Terumah 5786: From Mikdash to Beis Knesses **By Michal Horowitz** on February 19, 2026 michalchorowitz@gmail.com

With Parshas Terumah, we begin the third and final section of Sefer Shemos, also known as Sefer Ha'Geula - the Book of Redemption.

In essence, Shemos is divided into three main chalakim (sections): Shibud v'Yetzias Mitzrayim - the enslavement and Exodus from Egypt. This section is narrated in the first four parshios of the sefer: Shemos, Va'eira, Bo and Beshalach. This chelek tells the story of our physical redemption and freedom from slavery. Matan Torah - the second section of Shemos is made up of the parshios of Yisro and Mishpatim. These two parshios - different, yet complementary - relay to us the great Revelation at Sinai, our acceptance of the Torah, and the many laws related to the nation in the aftermath of Revelation. This chelek tells the story of our spiritual freedom. For as the Sages teach us "ein lecha ben chorin elah mi she'osek b'talmud Torah - a free person is only one who lives a life of Torah" (Avos Ch 6). Meleches u'binyan ha'Mishkan - the work, and building of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). The final, and third, section of Shemos begins in our parsha, Terumah, and continues through the end of the sefer: Tetzavah, Ki Tisa, Vayakhel and Pekudei. Our freedom is only complete once the Shechina descends (keviyachol) and dwells in our midst. When we build an abode for HKB"H to dwell amongst us, and within us, our freedom is fully realized. As the pasuk tells us in our parsha (Shemos 25:8): "And they shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell within them." Hence, the entirety of Sefer Shemos narrates our journey to freedom, through these three stages: physical, spiritual, and dwelling alone-together with G-d.

The Mishkan that was built in the desert was a precursor to the Batei Mikdash that stood in Yerushalayim Ir Ha'Kodesh. Though mortal man cannot understand how Infinity can contract (metzam'tzem) to dwell in a finite space, HKB"H did so to dwell amongst us. Even King Shlomo wondered at this great act of Divine tzimtzum, when he said: Ki ha-umnom yeisheiv Elokim al ha'oretz? Hinei hashamayim u'shmei hashamayim lo yechalkelucha, af ki habayis hazeh asher bonisi. But will G-d indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You; much less this temple that I have erected (Melachim I 8:27).

And this entire narrative - Klal Yisrael and the Shechina dwelling alone-together - began in our parsha, with the command to Moshe to instruct the nation regarding Mishkan.

However, with the destruction of the Batei Mikdash - the first by Bavel in 586 BCE and the second by Rome in 70 CE - what happened to the intimacy between Am Yisrael and the Shechina? How would we maintain our kesher - our connection - to Hashem throughout the lands of our dispersion and places of our exile? Without a central place of worship, how would our nation survive, and thrive?

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks z'l writes that, "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 G-d 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 G-d, and how could they turn to G-d if the very place where they served him was in ruins?" (Covenant & Conversation, Exodus, p.189). Rabbi Sacks notes that it was in Bavel, the very land of the first catastrophic national exile, that an answer began to take shape. It is the navi Yechezkel - unique amongst the prophets, for he prophesied in Bavel, outside the land of Israel - who references "a radically new institution that eventually became known as the Beit Knesset, the synagogue" (ibid., p.190).

Thus, so says Hashem Elokim Ki hirschaktem ba-goyim, vechi hafitzosim ba-aratzos, va'ehi lohem le-mikdash me'at ba-aratzos asher bo'u shom.

Although I have removed them far off among the nations and although I have scattered them in the lands, yet I have become for them a minor sanctuary in the lands where they have come (Yechezkel 11:16). Rabbi Sacks teaches that “The synagogue... came into being not through words spoken by G-d to Israel, but by words spoken by Israel to G-d (C&C, Exodus, p.190) ... The Divine Presence lives not in a building but in its builders; not in a physical space but in the human heart. The Sanctuary was not a place in which the objective existence of G-d was somehow more concentrated than elsewhere. Rather, it was a place whose holiness had the effect of opening hearts to the One worshipped there. G-d exists everywhere, but not everywhere do we feel the presence of G-d 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 G-d.

“If the concept of the Mishkan is that G-d 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 that of the idea that if G-d is everywhere, He can be reached anywhere... The frail structure described in this week’s parasha 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” (ibid., p.192).

May all our tefilos be answered la’tova, from the recesses of our hearts, the thoughts of our minds, the yearnings of our souls and the mikdashai me’at that we have constructed for Hashem in our lands of exile. And in the merit of our prayers, and our limud Torah, may we welcome the final redemption, and the building of the third Temple, speedily and in our days.

בברכת בשורות טובות ושבת שלום  
Michal

-----  
from: Ira Zlotowitz <Iraz@klal.govoa.org>

The first opportunity for Kiddush Levanah was at 8:30 PM EST on Thursday night, February 19th. The final opportunity is Monday night, March 2nd. Daf Yomi - Shabbos: Bavli: Menachos 41 Perec Hacheles Shabbos Parashas Zachor is next week, Shabbos Parashas Tetzaveh, February 28th. Taanis Esther is on Monday, March 2nd. Purim is on Tuesday, March 3rd.

-----  
from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>

date: Feb 19, 2026, 8:53 PM

**Rabbi Mordechai Willig**

Yeshiva University: A L’chatchila Vision

I. The Gemara teaches in Maseches Ta’anis (29a):

“Just as when Av enters we diminish our joy, so too when Adar enters we increase our joy.” At first glance, this comparison is perplexing. What is the connection between Av and Adar? Av marks tragedy, the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, while Adar culminates in Purim, a time of celebration. Why are they linked in a single formulation of Chazal?

HaRav Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht ז”ל, Rosh Yeshiva of Kerem B’Yavneh, suggested (Asufat Ma’arachot, Purim, p.95-102) that the roots of Av’s tragedy go back far earlier than the churban. The Mishnah (Ta’anis 26b) lists five tragedies that occurred on Tisha B’Av, the first of which was the sin of the spies. When the nation wept that night, Hashem declared: “אתם בכיתם בכיה - you cried a baseless cry” (ibid 29a). But what exactly was the sin? Chazal note that the spies were leaders, “כולם אנשים ראשי בני ישראל המה.” (Bamidbar 13:3) They feared that upon entering Eretz Yisrael they would lose their positions of prominence. At face value, this sounds like a crass concern for power and privilege. But Rav Goldvicht explained it differently. The generation of the wilderness lived in a wholly spiritual reality. They were sustained by manna, protected by the Clouds of Glory, given water from Miriam’s well. They did not farm; they did not wage ordinary war. They were the dor de’ah, immersed in Torah study in a rarefied, almost angelic atmosphere.

Entering Eretz Yisrael meant exchanging that incubator for a life of planting, building, governing, fighting, a life embedded in material reality. And yet, that was precisely Hashem’s will.

The Kotzker Rebbe famously interpreted the verse “וּאֲנֹשִׁי קֹדֶשׁ תְּהִיִן לִי” - You shall be men of holiness to Me” (Shemos 22:30, see Iturei Torah). Hashem says: I have enough angels. What I want are anshei kodesh, human beings living within the world, sanctifying it.

The Medrash Rabbah (Parshas Kedoshim 25:2) teaches that when we enter the Land, “וּנְטַעְתֶּם כָּל עֵץ מֵאֲכַל”, we must plant trees (Vayikra 19:23). It likens Hashem to a bird who feeds and protects her young while they are vulnerable. When they mature and return for food, she nudges them away: go, provide for yourselves. So too in the wilderness Hashem provided for us miraculously. But upon entering the Land, He commanded us to work, to cultivate, to fight, to build, to live as holy human beings within the natural order.

The sin of the spies was the mistaken belief that the desert existence was the l’chatchila, the ideal. They viewed engagement with the material world as a spiritual decline. Hashem declared the opposite. The mission was to enter the Land and live as anshei kodesh in the fullness of human life. This misunderstanding is the root of “כַּשֶּׁם שֶׁנִּכְנַס אֶבְרָהָם מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּשִׂמְחָה.” It was a rejection of the Divine plan.

II. What, then, is the connection to Adar? Rav Goldvicht explained that Amalek represents the ideological opposite of anshei kodesh. Amalek insists there is no synthesis between the physical and the spiritual. If you are worldly, you cannot be holy.

Chazal describe a symbolic “agreement” between Esav (ancestor of Amalek) and Yaakov: you take olam haBah, I will take olam haZeh (Tana Dbeei Eliyahu Zuta, 19). Esav separates heaven and earth. He said “הֲלֵעֵיטְנִי נָא מִן הָאֲדָמָה הַזֹּאת” (Bereishis 25:30) a demand for immediate gratification. On that same day, he committed adultery and murder (Bava Basra 16b).

Some explain the name Amalek from the root “melika,” severing the head from the body. Indeed, Chazal teach that Esav’s head rolled into the Me’aras HaMachpelah (Targum Yonasan, Bereishis 50:13). His body lived a life of depravity.

Judaism rejects that dichotomy. We do not choose between heaven and earth. Through Rivka’s intervention, Hashem’s hashgachah arranged that Yaakov received both berachos, the physical, (טל השמים ומשמני הארץ) (Bereishis 27,28), and the spiritual, ברכת אברהם (28:4).

Chazal tell us (Menachos 73b) that if a nochri wants to bring a korban shelamim, we’re allowed to accept the korban but we bring it as an olah, a burnt offering. The whole idea of shelamim is ואכלתם לפני השם אלוקים, to eat before Hashem (Devarim 12:7). A non-Jew can’t grasp this concept. No anshei kodesh. If you’re someone who’s holy, you have to separate yourself from the world. In certain religions, the spiritual leaders are supposed to remain celibate. It’s the opposite of what we stand for. Kedoshim tihyu (Vayikra 19:1) in all of our aspects of our lives, in our married lives, in our eating, in our drinking, bechol derachecha da’ehu (Mishlei 3:6), וְכָל מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה לִשְׂמֵימִים (Avos 2:12).

On Purim we are marbim besimcha, we celebrate through eating and drinking, achilah u’shtiyah. Even here, halachah disciplines joy: the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 695:2, see Biur Halachah) speaks of measured drinking, only a revi’is or two of wine (Am Mordechai, Moed, p. 113), and only during the day.

This is our victory over Amalek. When Adar enters, we increase our joy, not because we escape the world as the meraglim did, but because we affirm that the world itself can be holy.

III. Our Yeshiva embraces this as a l’chatchila vision. We educate talmidim to sanctify Hashem’s Name in every sphere of life, in two categories. One is parnassah, earning a livelihood.

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 156:1) teaches that after prayer and Torah study, one must go to work. Chazal state (Avos 2:2): “כָּל תּוֹרָה שֶׁאֵין עִמָּה” מְלָאכָה סוֹפָה בְטִילָה וְגוֹרֵרָת עוֹן

Yes, Torah is primary and work secondary, both in importance and, ideally, in time allocation. In the Rambam's era, a person might work three hours and learn nine (Hilchos Talmud Torah 1:12). Today's professional world rarely allows such ratios. But the principle remains: career choices must preserve space for Torah, family, and spiritual growth.

The Bi'ur Halachah cites the Gemara (Berachos 35b): "זה וזה נתקיים בידו." Following Rabbi Yishmael, working and learning can be fully l'chatchila. There are select individuals, yechidim, following Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who devote themselves entirely to Torah. They too serve Hashem l'chatchila. But the overwhelming majority serve Hashem l'chatchila through engagement in the world. The Shulchan Aruch does not present employment as a concession. It is the normative path.

Chazal (Ta'anis 21b) tell of Abba Umna, a bloodletter who received heavenly greetings daily, more frequently than Abaye or Rava. Through modesty with his female patients, and care for others, especially talmidei chachamim, he sanctified Hashem's Name. Professional life, lived properly, is itself avodas Hashem.

IV. The second dimension is the Hirschian model - Torah Im Derech Eretz. On the verse (Vayikra 18:4) "את חקתי תשמרו ולכת בהם," Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch quotes the Sifra "עשם עיקר ואל תעשם טפילה", make Torah primary, not secondary. Says Rav Hirsch: it is clearly implied that as a tfeila, as something secondary, it is allowed and even lechatchila. This as we well know was the Hirschian view, which the Hirschians to this day say was not a hora'as sha'ah as some would say. But this was Rav Hirsch's approach, which, I believe, we here in our yeshiva, perhaps, continue that legacy more than any other place.

A beautiful sefer called Shaarei Talmud Torah was written by a former neighbor of ours here in Washington Heights. His name was Professor Leo Levi, Harav Yehuda Levi, who himself wrote a number of beautiful seforim and ma'amorim based on his <דרך ארץ> background that he received here in this community. After citing Rav Hirsch (p. 251), he describes the beautiful things, the wonderful mitzvos that can be accomplished not merely in the pursuit of parnasa, but in the Hirschian view of having the chochmas umos ha-olam as tfeilos la-Torah.

Of course, if these chochmos contradict the Torah, Torah wins. But by and large, there are large segments of these chochmos which do not contradict the Torah. To the contrary, they complement the Torah. Those who have these other chochmas umos ha-olam, as the Rambam (Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah 2:2) writes, can appreciate Hakadosh Baruch Hu better. The Rambam asks, "V'hei'ach hi haderech l'avhaso v'yiraso – what is the path to loving Him and fearing Him?" He answers: by understanding the incredible wisdom of the world at large, biology, chemistry, physics, the natural sciences (Shaarei Talmud Torah, p. 256-258).

There is also the importance of history. "זכור ימות עולם בינו שנות דור ודור שאל" (Devarim 32:7, ibid p.283). And yes, there's the written and spoken language which are taught here in this college, which are important to be able to express yourself properly (ibid p. 284-285), to be a greater kiddush Hashem when you're out in the world (ibid p. 262-265). All these things are taught here.

The Rambam, Rabbeinu Bachya, the Vilna Gaon, all use the same mashal, rakachos tavachos ve-ofos (ibid p. 252). These are the types of wisdom which are all centered around Torah. Secondary to it, certainly in importance, and when possible, even in time allotted. We continue the Hirschian model in this yeshiva. This too is l'chatchila.

Not every individual must study these disciplines, just as not everyone must go to work. A yachid can devote himself exclusively to Torah study. So too engagement with general wisdom varies by individual calling. But properly integrated, it is a vehicle for ahavas Hashem and kiddush Hashem.

Our Yeshiva is not perfect. No institution is perfect. No individual is perfect. Only Hashem and His Torah are perfect. But imperfection does not mean that our vision is not l'chatchila. Our l'chatchila vision is to produce anshei kodesh, people of holiness living and involved in the world.

We avoid repeating the cheit hameraglim of Av, which diminishes simcha, and increase simcha in Adar, by eating and drinking on Purim as anshei kodesh.

When every one of our actions, physical and spiritual, is lesheim shamayim, we defeat Amalek. When the head and body reunite in sanctity, Amalek will be erased (Shemos 17:14). "כסא שלם" will replace "כס י"ה" (Rashi 17:16). May we merit that fulfillment speedily in our days.

## **Parshas Terumah: A Continual Offering**

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

### **“THEY SHALL MAKE FOR ME A MIKDASH”**

Hashem spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the people of Israel, that they bring me an offering; from every man that gives it willingly with his heart you shall take my offering. And this is the offering which you shall take from them; gold, and silver, and bronze, And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, And rams' skins dyed red, and goats' skins, and shittim wood, Oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil, and for sweet incense, Onyx stones, and stones to be set on the ephod, and on the breastplate. And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all its utensils, so shall you make it. (Sh'mot 25:1-9)

Rambam (MT Beit haBechirah 1:1), quoting what is arguably the most famous verse in our Parashah, sees in it the Toraic command to construct the Beit haBechirah (Beit haMikdash):

It is a Mitzvat 'Aseh to build a house for Hashem, constructed to bring offerings; we congregate there for celebration three times a year, as it says: “They will build for Me a Mikdash”. The Mishkan constructed by Mosheh Rabbenu was already explicated in the Torah – and it was only temporary, as it says...

Rambam's adumbration clearly presents the Mishkan as being the forerunner of the Mikdash. This can be stated in one of two ways:

The Mishkan was the “temporary” Mikdash OR  
The Mikdash is the permanent Mishkan.

While there are significant distinctions between these approaches – chiefly, which of the two abodes is seen as the “essential” one – both assessments share a common premise: That the Mishkan and the Mikdash are essentially, functionally and teleologically one and the same. This is, by and large, the conventional understanding, prevalent both in classical Rabbinic writings and more recent homiletic literature.

I would like to suggest that a closer look at the Mishkan and Mikdash, as they are presented in T'nakh, reveal a different relationship between the two, one that, if properly assayed, can help us appreciate the significance of each structure in its own right, as well as clarifying a number of troubling textual and extra-textual difficulties relating to these edifices.

Before continuing, it is prudent to point out that it is not a consensus in the exegetical tradition to interpret our verse as referring to the Beit haMikdash:

Granted that Mikdash is called Mishkan, for it is written: And I will set My Mishkan among you; but whence do we know that Mishkan is called Mikdash? Shall we say, because it is written: And the Kohathites, the bearers of the Mikdash set forward? This refers to the Ark, Well then, from this verse: And let them make me a Mikdash, that I may dwell among them; and it is written: According to all that I show thee the pattern of the Mishkan. (BT Shavuot 16b)

First of all, I'd like to point to several difficulties which the “conventional” approach generates within T'nakh.

## **II. THE QUESTIONS**

### **A: AND IT CAME TO PASS IN THE 480TH YEAR...**

The first glaring problem raised by the “Mishkan=Mikdash” approach is one of timing. If the Mishkan is simply the “temporary solution” to the Mikdash, i.e. that until the B'nei Yisra'el are settled in their land, they need a portable “mini-Mikdash”, then why isn't the Beit haMikdash constructed as soon as they enter the Land. We see that the B'nei Yisra'el began implementing those commands which are Land-dependent (Mitzvot haT'luyot ba'Aretz – see Kiddushin 1:9) immediately, or as soon as it was feasible. For instance, as soon as the B'nei Yisra'el entered the Land, they performed the Pesach (see Yehoshua 5 – see also Sh'mot 12:25). Why, then, did they not construct the Mikdash immediately? Note

how long it took:

And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the B'nei Yisra'el came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Sh'lomo's reign over Yisra'el, in the month Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of Hashem. (I M'lakhim 6:1)

In other words, it took four hundred and forty years after entering the Land before the Mikdash was built.

The immediate and nearly visceral defense to this challenge is one of specific location – although they had entered the Land, they had not yet arrived at Yerushalayim – thus prolonging the reality adumbrated by Mosheh:

For you are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which Hashem your God gives you. (D'varim 12:9)

And yet, this defense does not stand up well to the testimony of the text. Among the first wars fought by Yehoshua (perhaps, as I argued in the essay in Parashat Beshalach this year [V'shinantam 3/16], his first real war of conquest), the king of Yerushalayim, who organized the “southern alliance” of five kings, is vanquished. One might counter that even though he was defeated, that doesn't mean that the city was conquered – but the text is quite clear in the summary of wars (Yehoshua 12):

And these are the kings of the country whom Yehoshua and the B'nei Yisra'el struck on this side of the Yarden on the west, from Ba'al-Gad in the valley of L'vanon to the Mount Halak, that ascends to Se'ir; which Yehoshua gave to the tribes of Yisra'el for a possession according to their divisions...The king of Jerusalem... (Yehoshua 12:7,10)

Yerushalayim was in Yisra'eli hands as early as the first all-out war fought in the Land – and it remained a Yisra'eli town throughout the period, as indicated by the verse at the beginning of Shof'tim:

And the sons of Binyamin did not drive out the Yevusi who inhabited Yerushalayim; but the Yevusi live with the sons of Binyamin in Yerushalayim to this day. (Shof'tim 1:21)

The next counter-argument is that since Yerushalayim was not totally under Yisra'eli control – and rid of any foreign citizens – the Beit haMikdash could not yet be built. This argument rests on three questionable premises:

1) The situation changed in the times of David or Sh'lomo; i.e. that David drove the Yevusi out of the city such that it was a totally Judean city. Every indication of the text, up to and including the purchase of Aravnah the Yevusi's granary (the future site of the Mikdash) by David (II Sh'mu'el 24:24) points to a continued Yevusi presence in the city.

2) Absolute control of the city is necessary in order to build the Mikdash. Again, the testimony of the text clearly refutes this. We need go no further than the rebuilding of the Mikdash by Zerubavel and Yehoshua (c. 518 BCE), when the city itself, inhabited by Cutean enemies and controlled by the Persian empire, was still a valid location for construction of the Mikdash. Even if one were to posit that this is only true once the first Mikdash was constructed (following the argument that the first sanctity was eternal – see MT Beit haBechirah 6:15-16), we still come back to the presence of the Yevusi, as a significant population in the city, during the times of David.

3) Yerushalayim was always destined as the place of the Mikdash. This is the conventional way of explaining the oft-repeated reference to “The place that I will choose to place My Name”, which is nearly anthemic in Sefer D'varim (12:5, 11, 14, 18, 21; 14:23, 24, 25; 15:20; 16:2, 6, 7, 11, 15, 16; 17:8, 10; 18:6; 26:2; 31:11). It is generally understood as a veiled reference to Yerushalayim. For instance, Sifri identifies The place which Hashem will choose (12:18) as “Yerushalayim”. This is consistent with the Rabbinic interpretation of a key verse which appears in the earliest context of “the place that I will choose”:

For you are not as yet come to the Menuchah (rest) and to the Nachalah (inheritance) (D'varim 12:9) – Our Rabbis taught: Menuchah alludes to Shiloh (the site of the Mishkan from Yehoshua's time until the end of the period of the Shof'tim);

Nachalah, to Yerushalayim. (BT Zevahim 119a)

Haza"l understand that the presence of the Mishkan in Shiloh was merely a "rest"; whereas the arrival in Yerushalayim was the "inheritance" i.e. final settlement. It is prudent to note that there are four opinions regarding the interpretation of these two terms, only one of which is quoted by Rashi (and thus is the "famous" one):

- a) R. Yehudah: Menuchah = Shiloh; Nachalah = Yerushalayim
- b) R. Shim'on: Menuchah = Yerushalayim; Nachalah = Shiloh
- c) The school of R. Yishma'el: Menuchah = Shiloh; Nachalah = Shiloh
- d) R. Shim'on b. Yohai: Menuchah = Yerushalayim; Nachalah = Yerushalayim

However we may wish to understand these four divergent interpretations, one thing seems clear and unanimous: that Yerushalayim is the proper understanding of "the place that I will choose". I would like to suggest that this is not necessarily the case – that these Midrashim reflect the historical reality that Yerushalayim was chosen as the site of the Mikdash. In other words, instead of reading these Midrashim as "the place that I will choose means Yerushalayim", we should understand them as "the place that I will choose turns out to be Yerushalayim". This idea will be explicated further down.

In any case, the argument that the Mikdash could not be built immediately after Yehoshua's conquest due to the "foreign" presence in the city of Yerushalayim is a difficult one.

One final argument might be mustered to explain the delay in building the Mikdash.

The Halakhah clearly states that the B'nei Yisra'el were given three commands which took effect upon their entry into the Land:

R. Yose said: Three commandments were given to Yisra'el when they entered the land;

to appoint a king;

to cut off the seed of Amalek;

and to build themselves the chosen house [i.e. the Temple]

and I do not know which of them has priority. But, when it is said: The hand upon the throne of Y-H, Hashem will have war with Amalek from generation to generation, we must infer that they had first to set up a king, for throne implies a king, as it is written, Then Sh'lomo sat on the throne of Hashem as king. (BT Sanhedrin 20b)

Since they could not (or perhaps were not obligated to) build the Mikdash until a king was anointed, the delay is now understandable – but is it?

First of all, this Halakhah itself begs the question – especially if we accept the underlying premise that the Mikdash is the "permanent Mishkan". Why would the Mitzvah of building a Mikdash be dependent on the prior anointing of a king? We do not find that other "Land-dependent" Mitzvot require a monarch and his throne to activate obligation or allow fulfillment – why does making the temporary Mishkan a permanent edifice have this prerequisite?

We have already addressed the second question raised by this Halakhah – why it took so long for the B'nei Yisra'el to appoint a king (see V'shinantam 1/27).

If we are to understand the role of the Mikdash, we must also find a solution to this "Halakhic sequencing" – something we will endeavor to do in this essay.

In sum, the first set of problems we have encountered if we accept that the principle of identity applies to the Mishkan and the Mikdash is the lengthy delay in building that great building.

## **B: THE ARON**

It is abundantly clear that the Aron (ark), which houses the Edut (testimony – the tablets of the covenant) is the central “vessel” in the Mishkan. It is the first item listed in the order of building (Sh’mot 25:10-16) and, more significantly, it is the base of the Keruvim, from where God will communicate with Mosheh:

And there I will meet with you, and I will talk with you from above the cover, from between the two Keruvim which are upon the ark of the Testimony, of all things which I will give you in commandment to the people of Yisra’el. (25:22)

In addition, the Aron (with attendant Kapporet and Keruvim) is the only vessel which sits in the Kodesh Kodashim, that most intimate and holy of locations.

If the Mikdash serves the same function as the Mishkan and is its permanent housing, we would expect the Aron to play a similarly central and significant role in the Mikdash. The text is quite clear on this point – the significance of the Aron changes dramatically (yet subtly) and its role is diminished once the Mikdash is constructed. This can be most easily seen from Rambam’s description of the building of the Mikdash and its appurtenances (MT Beit haBechirah 1-4). Whereas Rambam lists the Shulchan (table), Menorah, incense altar, copper (outer) altar etc., there is no mention of the Aron. Rather, Rambam relegates the Aron to a somewhat historical presentation:

There was a rock in the west of the Kodesh Kodashim upon which the Aron rested. In front of it stood the vessel with the Mahn (see Sh’mot 16:32-34) and Aharon’s staff (see Bamidbar 17:25). When Sh’lomo built the House and he knew that it would ultimately be destroyed, he built a place to hide the Aron, underneath in a deep and crooked hiding place and Yoshiyahu the king commanded and hid it in the place that Sh’lomo built as it says: And he said to the L’vi’im who taught all Yisra’el, who were holy to Hashem, Put the holy ark in the house which Sh’lomo the son of David king of Yisra’el built; it shall not be a burden upon your shoulders; serve now Hashem your God, (II Divrei haYamim 35:3) Along with it, Aharon’s staff, the vessel which held the Mahn and oil of anointment were hidden – and they were never retrieved for the second (rebuilt) House... (MT Beit haBechirah 4:1)

Why was the Aron hidden? We understand Sh’lomo’s concern – that when the Mikdash would be plundered, the Aron would not fall into enemy hands. Yet the practical implementation of this is difficult – how could a king (or anyone else) take it upon himself to remove (or pre-arrange for the removal of, as in Sh’lomo’s case) the central vessel of the Mikdash? Aren’t we commanded to maintain a proper Mikdash – and if God allows the enemy to plunder, so be it? How can we remove the central vessel from its place?

Our second question relates, then, to the Aron and its role. If the Mikdash is the “settled” Mishkan, why doesn’t the Aron play the same prominent and central role in Yerushalayim as it did in the desert – and in Shiloh?

## **C: DAVID’S REQUEST**

The key passage relating to the initiative to build the Mikdash is found in Sefer Sh’mu’el:

And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and Hashem had given him rest from all his enemies; That the king said to Nathan the prophet, See now, I live in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within curtains. And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in your heart; for Hashem is with you. And it came to pass that night, that the word of Hashem came to Nathan, saying, Go and tell My servant David, Thus said Hashem, Shall you build Me a house for Me to dwell in? Because I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the people of Yisra’el out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places where I have walked with all the people of Yisra’el spoke I a word with any of the tribes of Yisra’el, whom I commanded to feed my people Yisra’el, saying, Why do you not build Me a house of cedar? And therefore so shall you say to My servant David, Thus said Hashem of hosts, I took you

from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Yisra'el; And I was with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from your sight, and have made you a great name, like the names of the great men who are in the earth. And I have appointed a place for my people Yisra'el, and have planted them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; nor shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as formerly, From the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Yisra'el, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also Hashem tells you that He will make you a house. And when your days are fulfilled, and you shall sleep with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who shall issue from your bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with such plagues as befall the sons of men; But My mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Sha'ul, whom I put away before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you; your throne shall be established forever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak to David. (II Sh'mu'el 7:1-17)

This selection raises a number of difficulties:

1) At the beginning of Nathan's prophecy, God seems to reject the notion of a dwelling place – “spoke I a word...saying, Why do you not build Me a house of cedar?” Yet, further on, God acceded to David's request. Does the Mikdash have Divine approval or not?

2) When God approves of David's initiative, He promises that the house will be built – by David's son. Why isn't David allowed to build it himself? Keep in mind that this prophecy occurs during the early part of David's career as “full monarch” (post-Sha'ul) – a career which spans 40.5 years. The commonly assumed reason for this generational delay is found in a passage in Divrei haYamim:

And David said to Sh'lomo, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build a house to the name of Hashem my God; And the word of Hashem came to me, saying, You have shed abundant blood, and have made great wars; you shall not build a house to My Name, because you have shed much blood upon the earth in My sight. (I Divrei haYamim 22:7-8)

This is, however, not found anywhere in the contemporary texts (Sh'mu'el/M'lakhim) and reflects the overall perspective of Divrei haYamim (composed during the Second Temple era – see BT Bava Batra 14a), which heightens the “spiritual/religious” nature of the Yisra'eli monarchy. If this is a piece of the reason for prohibiting David from building, it is certainly not the whole story – for, if it were, why would it not be mentioned either by Nathan, by David (to Sh'lomo – see I M'lakhim 2) or by Sh'lomo (in his words to Hiram [I M'lakhim 5:17, 19] and to the nation [ibid. 8:17-19])

Why is David prevented from building the house himself?

## **D: URIM VETUMIM**

An ancillary question, one which does not – at first blush – seem relevant to our discussion, revolves around the role of the Kohanic breastplate – the Hoshen – more commonly and directly known as the Urim veTumim.

Through the first post-Mosaic eras, the Urim veTumim played a central role in leading the nation – whenever the leader (be he Kohen, Navi or Melekh) had to resolve a crucial military or political matter, he would turn directly to God through the office of the Urim veTumim. (Indeed, it was the lack of response from the Urim veTumim [I Sh'mu'el 28:6] that drove Sha'ul to go- incognito – to the sorceress at Ein-Dor).

Here are a few examples of the use of this direct form of Divine guidance through the early political and military history of settlement:

1) The apportionment of the Land by Yehoshua and Elazar was accomplished through the breastplate (Bava Batra 122a, interpreting “Al Pi Hashem” in Yehoshua 19:50).

2) And it came to pass, after the death of Yehoshua, that the people of Yisra'el asked Hashem, saying, Who shall go up for us against the K'na'ani first, to fight against them? And Hashem said, Yehudah shall go up; behold, I have delivered the land into his hand. (Shof'tim 1:1-2 – see Ralbag and Rabbenu Yeshaya ad loc.)

3) And Sha'ul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the P'lish'tim? Will you deliver them into the hand of Yisra'el? (I Sh'mu'el 14:37)

4) And he inquired of Hashem for him, and gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine. (I Sh'mu'el 22:10 – see, however, the animadversion of R. Yeshaya ad loc.)

5) Therefore David inquired of Hashem, saying, Shall I go and strike these P'lish'tim? And Hashem said to David, Go, and strike the P'lish'tim, and save Keilah. (I Sh'mu'el 23:2)

6) And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of Hashem, saying, Shall I go up to any of the cities of Yehudah? And Hashem said to him, Go up. And David said, Where shall I go up? And He said, To Hebron. (II Sh'mu'el 2:1)

Curiously, the Urim veTumim – or any direct address to God for this type of guidance – disappears during David's career.

Our final question, then, seems to be unrelated to the analysis of the relationship between the Mishkan and Mikdash: Why are the Urim veTumim “put to rest” during David's career?

It should be noted that Haza”l maintain the continued use of the Urim veTumim throughout the First Commonwealth (see, inter alia, Sotah 9:12 and Shavu'ot 2:2 and the Bavli ad loc.), nonetheless, they were used in a different fashion than earlier. Whereas in the pre-Davidic and Davidic examples noted above, the individual leader approached God via the Urim veTumim on his own, the Rabbinic description of the use of Urim veTumim necessitates the participation of the king and the Beit Din haGadol (Sanhedrin).

Regardless, the T'nakh makes no mention of their use after this period – and this certainly is a sea change in the relationship with God and in His direct leadership of His people. How can we understand this change?

## **E: SH'LOMO'S TEFILLAH**

This, again, is a question which may not seem to relate to our question but its resolution is most certainly a piece of this puzzle.

In the beautiful T'fillah offered by Sh'lomo at the dedication of the Mikdash (I M'lakhim 8), Sh'lomo describes the apparent futility of attempting to “house God”. He goes on to (apparently) describe the future function of the Mikdash, pointing out how His people will face His house in prayer when in need, at war etc. What is curiously missing from this T'fillah is any mention of offerings (Korbanot) – although that is certainly a most central and critical function of the Mishkan. How can we explain this omission?

## **III. SUMMARY**

We noted that conventional wisdom holds that the Mishkan was the temporary forerunner to the Mikdash – or that the Mikdash was the permanent version of the Mishkan. Although these two formulations are not identical and reflect distinct understandings of the focal point of the Mishkan/Mikdash, they share a perspective which raises difficulties in several passages in T'nakh.

We asked why there was such a delay (nearly half a millenium) between entering the Land and the construction of the Mikdash – and that Yerushalayim, the eventual site of the Mikdash, was already in Yisra'eli hands during the early parts of Yehoshua's career. We also questioned whether Yerushalayim was the pre-determined location of the Mikdash, a topic we will expand upon next week, and pointed out that there was never a requirement of absolute Yisra'eli control over the

town in order to build the Mikdash.

We then noted that the Aron seems to lose its role as the centerpiece of the Sanctuary within the context of the Mikdash – a role which is unquestioned and clear in the Mishkan.

We further pointed out the difficulties arising from David's request to build the Mikdash – and God's response through the prophet Nathan. It is unclear whether the "House of God" is even a desideratum, and once God agrees to David's request, he delays the construction until David's son will ascend the throne.

We concluded our questions with two apparently unrelated issues in T'nakh – the dramatic shift in the use of the Urim veTumim after the Davidic period and the omission of offerings from Sh'lomo's prayer at the dedication of the Mikdash.

In next week's essay, we will analyze the distinct functions of the Mishkan and the Mikdash, clarifying each and thereby responding to these difficulties.

Text Copyright © 2010 by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom and Torah.org. The author is Educational Coordinator of the Jewish Studies Institute of the Yeshiva of Los Angeles.

## **Parshat Terumah: Moshe's Mishkan**

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

### **HOW SEFER SHEMOT IS "BUILT":**

The first half (chaps 1-24) of Sefer Shemot (Exodus) recounts:

- 1) The story of the enslavement and exodus.
- 2) The establishment of a covenant between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael through the Decalogue (known affectionately and inaccurately as "The Ten Commandments") and the laws of Parashat Mishpatim.

The second half (chaps 25-40) of the sefer (book) recounts Hashem's instructions for building a movable Temple (the "Mishkan") and the implementation of these instructions by Bnei Yisrael.

This week, we stand at the opening of this second half. This part of the sefer contains five parshiot: the first two and last two focus on the Mishkan, while the middle parasha (or at least the middle of the middle parasha) tells the infamous story of the Egel (Golden Calf):

- 1) Parashat Teruma: Mishkan
- 2) Parashat Tetzaveh: Mishkan
- 3) Parashat Ki Tisa: Egel
- 4) Parashat Va-Yak'heil: Mishkan
- 5) Parashat Pekudei: Mishkan

Or, divided by perakim (chapters):

25-31: Hashem commands Moshe to build the Mishkan and its contents, create clothing for the Kohanim (priests), and anoint the Kohanim.

- 31: a) Hashem tells Moshe to command Bnei Yisrael to observe Shabbat.  
b) Moshe receives the Luhot ("Tablets") while the people create and worship the Egel.

32-34: Aftermath of the Egel: punishment, forgiveness, a new covenant (including Shabbat).

- 35: a) Moshe commands Bnei Yisrael to observe Shabbat.  
b) Moshe commands Bnei Yisrael to build the Mishkan, Kelim, clothing, etc.

36-39: All of the work is done as instructed and brought to Moshe for inspection.

40: Assembly of the completed parts of the Mishkan, and investiture of the Shekhinah (divine presence).

### **THE TWO HALVES OF SEFER SHEMOT:**

The first half of Sefer Shemot progresses from the arrival of Ya'akov's family in Egypt to their enslavement there, then to the birth and rise of Moshe, the plagues, the exodus, the miracles at the sea, the people's complaints, the visit of Yitro, the revelation at Sinai, and finally the laws of Parashat Mishpatim. Although what unites all these components of the story is the development of the nation and its relationship with Hashem, these events are all independent narrative/legal units.

For instance, while the story of Moshe's birth and development into adulthood is related, to some to degree, to the account of the plagues, and both of these are related to the splitting of the sea, and all of these themes are related to Hashem's increasing level of Self-revelation (climaxing at Sinai), and all of these have some connection to the visit of Yitro and the laws of Mishpatim, we can see that despite the connections between these units and the larger themes toward which they contribute, they are all distinct units.

In contrast, the second half of Sefer Shemot is unified and tightly cohesive, narrowly focused on one topic: how and whether Hashem will maintain an intimate Presence among Bnei Yisrael in the movable Temple, the Mishkan. Instead of looking at this unit piece by piece, parasha by parasha, this week we will take a bird's-eye view of the whole Biblical terrain before us.

## **THE MISHKAN PLAN -- AND THE EGEL:**

In the end of Parashat Mishpatim, Moshe ascends Har Sinai to receive instructions from Hashem. In extraordinary detail, spanning Parshiot Teruma, Tetzaveh, and the beginning of Ki Tisa, Hashem lays out for Moshe the plan for His residence within the camp of Bnei Yisrael. All of these details come together to accomplish a fantastic (as in "fantasy") goal: "They shall make a Temple for Me, and I shall dwell in their midst" (25:8). Hashem plans to pitch His tent among the people's tents; He will be their next-door Neighbor.

## **HERE WE GO AGAIN!**

Many people have wondered (some of them great biblical commentators, some of them bored shul-goers who can't believe they're hearing all of the innumerable details of the Mishkan, which they heard in Teruma and Tetzaveh, repeated almost word for word in Va-Yak'hel and Pekudei) why the Torah repeats all of the descriptions of the Mishkan and its peripherals. Is it not enough for us to "listen in" on Hashem's conversation with Moshe in Teruma and Tetzaveh, in which He goes through all of the details? What need is met by the nearly verbatim repetition of these details in Va-Yak'hel and Pekudei, where we hear that the Bnei Yisrael did all that Hashem had commanded? Why not just tell us, "Bnei Yisrael built the Mishkan exactly as Hashem had commanded Moshe at Har Sinai. They assembled the parts, and then Hashem's glory filled the Mishkan" -- end of sefer?

One oft-quoted answer is that the Torah wants to contrast the people's total obedience to the instructions for building the Mishkan with their disobedience in building and worshipping the Egel. There is some textual support for this idea in Parashat Pekudei: every time the Torah reports that the people finish working on a particular piece of the Mishkan, it ends by saying that they did the work "as Hashem had commanded Moshe." Some examples:

(39:1) . . . they made the holy clothing for Aharon, JUST AS HASHEM HAD COMMANDED MOSHE.

(39:5) . . . gold, blue, purple, and red, and fine-twisted linen, JUST AS HASHEM HAD COMMANDED MOSHE.

(39:7) . . . on the shoulders of the Efod as a reminder of Bnei Yisrael, JUST AS HASHEM HAD COMMANDED MOSHE.

This refrain appears so many times in Pekudei -- fifteen times! -- that one begins to feel that it cannot be incidental, and that the Torah is using this device to contrast the people's complete obedience to Hashem's commands with their earlier "Egel behavior."

This is a tempting reading, but there are at least two reasons why it is not a satisfying explanation for why the Torah repeats the intricate descriptions of the Mishkan and its contents:

1) All of the "just as Hashem had commanded Moshe" formulations appear only in Parashat Pekudei; none of them appear in Parashat Va-Yak'hel, where the Torah begins to repeat all of the Mishkan descriptions. If the purpose of the repetition of the descriptions is to drive home the "just as Hashem had commanded Moshe" point, this phrase should be hammered to us again and again starting in Parashat Va-Yak'hel, where the Mishkan repetition starts, not 118 pesukim (verses) later, when Parashat Pekudei begins.

2) If the point of the "just as Hashem had commanded Moshe" formulations is to emphasize the \*people's\* obedience, it is strange indeed that of the fifteen times the phrase appears, seven of its appearances refer to action done by \*Moshe\* himself, not the people. If the Torah is emphasizing \*Bnei Yisrael's\* obedience, this makes little sense.

While the "just as Hashem had commanded Moshe" is an important pattern and surely communicates something, it is difficult to use it to explain the repetition of the Mishkan's details. (Next week I will offer an explanation of this pattern which I believe works better than the above idea.)

## **THE EGEL AND THE MISHKAN:**

Our question -- why the Torah repeats the Mishkan instructions in Va-Yak'hel and Pekudei -- may be answered by examining the relationship between the two poles of the second half of Sefer Shemot and the fulcrum between these poles; or, to put it in English, if the second half of Sefer Shemot is a sandwich, with Mishkan Description #1 (Teruma and Tetzaveh) and Mishkan Description #2 (Va-Yak'hel and Pekudei) as the "bread" sandwiching the Egel Disaster (Ki Tisa) between them, what is the relationship between the "bread" and the "filling" of this sandwich? How does the Egel disaster affect the Mishkan plans?

While Hashem is communicating the plans to Moshe, Bnei Yisrael are busy worshipping the Golden Calf. Hashem, of course, becomes infuriated; first He threatens to destroy the people completely, but then, somewhat appeased by Moshe, He spares them. But He refuses to accompany the people on their journey to Canaan:

### **SHEMOT 33:2-3 --**

"I will send an angel before you -- and I will drive out the Canaanites, Emorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, Yevusites -- to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked nation, and I might destroy you on the way!" The people heard this evil news and mourned.

### **EVERYBODY OUT OF THE POOL:**

Hashem's decision to not accompany the people on their trip to Eretz Canaan is not simply a moment of discomfort in the developing relationship between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael; it brings the relationship screeching to an emergency stop. In response to the people's rejection of Him through their worship of the Egel, Hashem 'recoils,' completely cancelling the plan for the Mishkan! All of the intricate blueprints we have traced through Ki Tisa become, well, doodling paper. Since He refuses to dwell ("shokhen") among people who worship idols, what purpose would a dwelling ("Mishkan") serve? If there will be no "ve-shakhanti," then obviously there can be no "Mishkan." Ibn Ezra makes this point explicit:

### **IBN EZRA, SHEMOT 33:3 --**

"I [Hashem] will not accompany you [to Canaan]": they should not make a Mishkan, for I will not dwell among Bnei Yisrael.

### **THE "OHHEL MO'ED" -- AND THE OTHER "OHHEL MO'ED":**

That the sin of the Egel spells the end of the Mishkan is not only logical and intuitively suggestive, it is also implicit in the way the Torah refers to the Mishkan throughout these parshiot. The Mishkan is referred to by several different names; one of the most prominent names is "Ohel Mo'ed," "The Tent of Meeting," which appears thirty-two times in Sefer Shemot in reference to the Mishkan. (Despite the fact that some people \*do\* go to shul in order to meet their friends, the "meeting" meant here is the meeting between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael.)

The word "mo'ed," "meeting," shares the same root as the words "no'adti" and "iva'ed," a word which Hashem uses in sentences like, "I will meet you ["ve-noadti"] there [in the Mishkan] and speak to you from atop the Kaporet [covering of the Ark], from between the two cherubs on top of the Ark of the Testament . . ." (25:22). The name of the movable Temple communicates its function: a place to meet with Hashem and stand before Him in worship and communication.

But then the people worship the Egel. Moshe descends the mountain, smashes the Tablets, punishes the chief offenders, and chastises Aharon for his role in the catastrophe. Hashem spares the people's lives but refuses to accompany them on their journey to Canaan. Then the Torah reports (in Ki Tisa) that Moshe creates a new "Ohel Mo'ed":

### **SHEMOT 33:7 --**

Moshe took the tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the "OHHEL MO'ED." Anyone who sought Hashem would go to the "OHHEL MO'ED" outside the camp. In place of the real "Ohel Mo'ed,"

- a) a structure of beauty, grandeur, and complexity, with gold and silver, exquisite weavings, coverings, and architecture,
- b) intended as a national center to meet with Hashem and
- c) located in the center of the camp,

there is now instead

- a) a plain tent where
- b) only individuals, not the nation as a group, can seek Hashem,
- c) far outside the camp.

**Moshe does not name this tent "Ohel Mo'ed" by accident. He is chastising the people, showing them what they must live with (or without) now that they have lost the Mishkan.**

But the people do teshuva, and Moshe pleads their cause before Hashem. In several incredible scenes in Ki Tisa (which we will examine in microscopic detail when we get there), Moshe intercedes with Hashem and "convinces" Him to return His presence to the people and lead them "personally" to Cana'an. Hashem's agreeing to once again accompany the people means that the plan for the Mishkan is restored: His agreement to maintain His presence in their midst means that He will "need" the Mishkan to live in. (For some elaboration on whether Hashem needs a Temple or not, see this past week's haftara, "Ha-Shamayyim Kis'i," Yeshayahu 66:1-2.) The next two parshiot, Va-Yak'hel and Pekudei, detail Moshe's instructions to the people about the Mishkan and their faithful obedience to the instructions. And since Hashem has forgiven the people and restored His Presence, the Torah returns to using the term "Ohel Mo'ed" to refer to the grand Mishkan where He will reside (the term appears 15 times post-Egel in Sefer Shemot as a reference to the Mishkan) rather than the forlorn tent of the period of His anger.

#### **WHY THE REPETITION?**

With the understanding that the second half of Sefer Shemot is a cohesive "Mishkan unit" with the Egel at its core and "Mishkan sections" on both sides, we may have an explanation for why Va-Yak'hel and Pekudei repeat Teruma and Tetzaveh: the details of the Mishkan are repeated in order to powerfully communicate to us the total restoration of the plan of infusing the camp of Bnei Yisrael with Hashem's presence. If the audience of the Torah (i.e., us) were emotionless, purely intellectual beings, it might have sufficed to say simply, "Hashem forgave the people for the Egel at Moshe's behest and reinstated the plan to build the Mishkan. The people built the Mishkan, assembled it, and Hashem moved in." But the Torah's audience is people, emotional beings; we need more reassurance than just the stated fact of Hashem's return.

**To illustrate with a cliched joke about Jews: a middle-aged Jewish couple come to see a marriage therapist. They have been married for thirty years. "What seems to be the trouble?" asks the therapist. "My husband doesn't love me anymore," the wife complains. "Ridiculous!" barks the husband, "of course I still love you! How could you say such a thing?!" The wife turns to her husband in surprise: "You still love me? You never tell me you love me!" The husband raises his finger in the air and says indignantly, "Thirty years ago, on our wedding night, I told you I loved you. If anything had changed, don't you think I would have told you?!"**

It is not enough to just be told. Having read of the Hashem's murderous fury at Bnei Yisrael, then the severing of the close connection between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael, we need powerful reassurance to feel that He has truly forgiven us for our rebellion, that He has truly come back. The way the Torah communicates that Hashem is with Bnei Yisrael once again is by offering the Mishkan again in all of its detail. In a sense, we have 'lost our faith' in the first rendition of the Mishkan command; that command was taken away when we were unfaithful. We need to hear it again to believe that Hashem is again willing to live among us.

If this still seems far-fetched, perhaps an illustration will help. In Tanakh (the Bible), the relationship between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael is often compared to a relationship between a man and a woman. Midrash Tana de-Vei Eliyahu Zuta, chapter 4, offers the following parable to convey the impact of the Egel on this relationship:

". . . To what is this comparable? To a king of flesh and blood who had betrothed a woman and loved her completely. What did the king do? He sent for a man [i.e., Moshe] to serve as an intermediary between him and her. He showed him all of his marriage canopies, all of his rooms, all of his secret places [i.e., all the divine secrets revealed to Moshe during his seclusion with Hashem atop Sinai], and then he said to the intermediary, 'Go to the woman and tell her that I do not need anything of hers; except that she should make for me a small marriage canopy [i.e., the Mishkan] so that I can live with her, and all of my servants and the members of my household will know that I love her completely.' While the king was still busy commanding the intermediary about the marriage canopies and preparing to send many gifts to the woman, people came and said to him, 'Your fiance has committed adultery with another man!' [i.e., the Egel]. Immediately, the king put

everything aside, and the intermediary was thrown out and left in haste from before the king. And so it was with the Holy One, Blessed be He, and Yisrael, as it says, 'Go down now, for your nation has strayed . . .' (Shemot 32)."

To summarize and extend this mashal: Hashem sits in private (Har Sinai) with his closest confidant, telling his friend (see 33:11) how he plans to make permanent his relationship with the 'woman' he loves. He talks in great detail about his plans for the home in which they will share their relationship and excitedly shows his friend drawings of the home and the furnishings he has designed for it (Parashat Teruma and Tetzaveh). But while he is eagerly sharing this dream with his friend, the woman he loves is in someone else's arms (Ki Tisa). A messenger interrupts the man's conversation with his friend to report his lover's betrayal. In a flash, his love turns to rage. He shreds the plans for the home they were to share.

Slowly, over time, the man's friend succeeds in convincing him to forgive the woman (latter half of Ki Tisa); he is also moved by her regret for what she did in a moment of weakness and insecurity ("We have no idea what happened to Moshe . . ."). But she is overcome by guilt; she cannot forgive herself, cannot believe that he has truly forgiven her. In order to convince her that he has forgiven her, the man re-draws for her all of the intricate drawings he had made of the home they were to share and all the things with which they would fill it (Va-Yak'hel and Pekudei). He presents her with the images in all of their detail and intricate beauty -- and now she can believe it.

**This may be why the Torah repeats the details of the Mishkan: we need to see the "drawings" again in all of their detail in order for us to believe that despite our infidelity, Hashem can forgive us when we do teshuva.**

If you are one of the bored shul-goers, wondering at all this repetition, maybe thinking about the Mishkan in this way will help. Besides the repetition, we may be put off by the 'ritualistic' tone of the sections of the Torah which describe the korbanot (sacrifices, coming up mainly in Leviticus/VaYikra) and the technical-sounding sections of the Torah which describe the structure and contents of the Mishkan. But the essence of the Mishkan is not the ritual/technical, it is the place where Hashem 'goes' to be near us and where we go to be near Him. This is not a "modern" theme we are reading into a ritual/technical text, it is explicit in several places in the plans for the Mishkan, where Hashem articulates the theme that the Mishkan in general and the Aron (ark of the covenant) in particular are where "I will meet with you": see Shemot 25:22, 29:42, 29:43, 30:6, and 30:36. Obviously, then, both parties (Hashem and us) should be deeply caught up in the details of the encounter we experience when we visit Hashem at 'home.' Next week we will examine some of the technical details -- the special clothing of the kohanim -- and consider how this clothing contributes to the relationship between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael.

Shabbat Shalom

Emphasis added

**PARSHAT TERUMA**

Had it not been for **chet ha-egel** [the sin of the Golden Calf], would Bnei Yisrael have needed a **mishkan**?

Many claim that the answer to this 'philosophical' question lies in the famous 'exegetical' controversy between **Rashi** and **Ramban** concerning **when** the commandment to build the mishkan was first given, **before** or **after** the sin of the golden calf.

In this week's shiur, as we study this controversy and its ramifications, we will show how the answer to this question is not so simple. While doing so, we will also try to make some sense out of the thorny issue of 'ein mukdam u-me'uchar ba-Torah'.

**INTRODUCTION - FOUR UNITS**

To understand the source of this controversy between Rashi and Ramban, we first divide the last half of Sefer Shmot into **four** distinct units. In last week's shiur, we defined and discussed the first of these four units - chapters 19-24, the unit we refer to as **Ma'amad Har Sinai**.

Chapters 25-31 [i.e. parshiot Teruma, Tetzaveh, and the first half of Ki Tisa] also form a distinct unit, as this section includes a set of laws whose sole topic is God's commandment to build the mishkan.

Similarly, Chapters 32-34 [the 2nd half of Parshat Ki Tisa] also form a distinct unit, as they contain a narrative that describes the incident of chet ha-egel.

Lastly, chapters 35-40 [parshiot Vayakhel/Pekudei] form the final unit in Sefer Shmot, as they describe the mishkan's actual construction.

The following table reviews these four units:

CHAPTERS	TOPIC	PARSHA
(A) 19-24	<b>Ma'amad Har Sinai</b> [the <b>first luchot</b> ]	Yitro/Mishpatim
(B) 25-31	<b>The commandment to build the mishkan</b>	Teruma/Tetzaveh/ 1st half of Ki Tisa
(C) 32-34	<b>Chet Ha-egel</b> [the <b>second luchot</b> ]	2nd half of Ki Tisa
(D) 35-40	<b>Building the mishkan</b>	Vayakhel/Pekudei

The above table can help us better understand the basic controversy between Rashi and Ramban. While Ramban keeps Chumash 'in order' [A-B-C-D], Rashi claims that God ordered the mishkan's construction [unit 'B'] only after the events of chet ha-egel [unit 'C'], and hence the order would be A-C-B-D. [See Rashi on 31:18.]

At first glance, Ramban's opinion appears most logical. To understand and appreciate Rashi's opinion, we must first explain more fully the basis of Ramban's approach.

**THE FIRST FORTY DAYS - FOR WHAT?**

Recall that at the conclusion of Parshat Mishpatim [the end of Unit A], Moshe ascended Har Sinai to receive the "**luchot, torah, & mitzva**" (see 24:12). As we know, the **luchot** are the tablets (upon which God inscribed the Ten Commandments). It is unclear, however, to what the words **torah & mitzva** refer. [Note how many different opinions are found among the commentators on 24:12!]

However, when we study the above chart, it may provide a simple answer to this question. If we simply follow the simple order of narrative in Chumash, then the **torah & mitzva** mentioned in 24:12 must be the mitzvot that follow, i.e. - **unit B!**

In other words, 24:12-18 tells us that Moshe ascends Har Sinai to receive the **torah & mitzva**, and then 25:1 continues by explaining what God told Moshe. Those commandments continue until the end of chapter 31.

[For those of you familiar with computers, this is similar to the

concept of 'WYSIWYG' - What You See Is What You Get. What the Torah records when Moshe goes up - is exactly what Moshe received at that time.]

Furthermore, Moshe ascends Har Sinai first and foremost to receive the **luchot** (see 24:12) - the symbol of the covenant at Har Sinai (see 19:5, 24:7). Considering that these **luchot** are to be housed in the **aron**, then it is only logical that the **torah & mitzva** refer to the laws of the **mishkan**.

Finally, considering that God informs Moshe that once the mishkan is assembled he will continue convey His mitzvot from above the 'kaporet' (see 25:21-22), it stands to reason that the laws of the **mishkan** are not only the first - but also the **only** mitzvot transmitted to Moshe during those forty days. Once the mishkan is built, the remaining mitzvot can be transmitted to Moshe via the kaporet!

[In fact, note that once the mishkan is assembled (see Shmot chapter 40), immediately afterward God transmits an entire set of mitzvot to Moshe from the 'kaporet in the ohel mo'ed - better known as Sefer Vayikra! (See 1:1.)]

Despite the simplicity of this approach, not a single commentator advances it, for two very good reasons:

- \* First of all, it would not require **forty days** for God to teach Moshe just the laws of the **mishkan**. There must have been something else as well.
- \* Many other sources later in Chumash imply that Moshe Rabeinu learned many other mitzvot on Har Sinai. See, for example, Parshat Behar (see Vayikra 25:1) and the mitzvot in Sefer Devarim (see 5:1-28 and 6:1).

For these reasons, the commentators must explain why specifically the laws of the mishkan are recorded at this point in Sefer Shmot, even though many other mitzvot were also given to Moshe during those forty days.

Ramban (see 25:1) offers a very comprehensive and emphatic 'pro-mishkan' approach. Drafting both textual and conceptual arguments, Ramban claims that the mishkan serves as a vehicle to perpetuate the experience of **Ma'amad Har Sinai**; it is therefore the **first** mitzva that Moshe receives when he ascends Har Sinai. Even though Moshe received other mitzvot at that time as well (see Ramban on 24:12), Sefer Shmot focuses specifically on the mishkan because it reflects the unique level that Bnei Yisrael attained when they accepted God's covenant at Har Sinai.

Furthermore, at the focal point of the mishkan lies the **aron**, which contains the **luchot** - the symbol of that covenant at **Har Sinai**. [Hence the first mitzva is to build the **aron**.]

To summarize Ramban's approach, we will quote a few lines from his commentary [though it is highly recommended that you read the entire Ramban inside]:

"After God had given the Ten Commandments **directly** to Yisrael and instructed them with a sampling of the mitzvot (i.e. Parshat Mishpatim)... and Bnei Yisrael accepted these laws and entered a covenant (24:1-11)... behold they became His nation and He became their God, as was originally stipulated [at brit mila and Har Sinai]... Now they are worthy to have a house - His dwelling - in their midst dedicated to His Name, and there **He will speak with Moshe** and **command Bnei Yisrael**... Now the 'secret' ('sod') of the mishkan is that God's **glory** ('kavod') which dwelled on **Har Sinai** will now dwell [instead] on the **mishkan** 'be-nistar' [in a more hidden manner, in contrast to Har Sinai]..." (see Ramban 25:1).

**RASHI'S APPROACH**

Despite the beauty and simplicity of Ramban's approach, Rashi claims exactly the opposite (see 31:18): that the commandment to build the mishkan came not only **after**, but actually **because** of, chet ha-egel. In other words, Rashi posits that the parshiot are not presented according to their chronological order. Rashi goes even further, claiming that during the first forty days Moshe received **all** the mitzvot of the Torah

**except** the laws of the **mishkan!**

At first glance, such an interpretation seems untenable. Why should the Torah record at this point specifically the mitzvot that Moshe **did not** receive at this time, while omitting all the mitzvot which he **did** receive at this time? What could possibly have led Rashi to this conclusion?

To answer this question, we must first explain the exegetical principle of 'ein mukdam u-me'uchar ba-Torah' [literally: there is **no order** in the sequence of parshiot in the Torah]. Despite the common misunderstanding to the contrary, this principle does not imply that Chumash progresses in random sequence. Rather, it simply means that the arrangement in which Chumash records its parshiot does not necessarily reflect their chronological order.

[Most commentators, and especially many of the Midrashim quoted by Rashi, employ this approach. **Ramban**, however, consistently disagrees with this assumption, arguing that Chumash **does** follow in **chronological** order. Unless a certain technical detail 'forces' him to say otherwise, he will assume that the order in which Chumash is written corresponds with the precise chronological order of the events as they took place.]

The principle of ein mukdam u-me'uchar implies that when Moshe wrote down the Torah in its final form in the fortieth year (see Devarim 31:25-26), its parshiot were organized based on thematic considerations, and hence not necessarily according to the chronological order of when they were first given. By doing so, the Torah conveys its message not only by the content of each parshia, but also by intentionally juxtaposing certain parshiot next to one another.

[See Chizkuni on Shmot 34:32 for an important insight regarding this explanation.]

Rashi, following this approach, assumes that Chumash (at times) may prefer a conceptual sequence over a chronological one. Therefore, Rashi will often explain that a certain parshia actually took place earlier or later when the progression of theme implies as such.

With this background, we can better understand Rashi's approach in our context. Employing the principle of ein mukdam u-me'uchar, Rashi always begins with considerations of theme and content in mind. He therefore cannot overlook the glaring similarities between the construction of the mishkan and **chet ha-egel**. It cannot be just by chance that:

- \* Bnei Yisrael must collectively donate their gold to build the mishkan (compare 25:1-2, 32:2-3);
- \* Betzalel, Chur's grandson, is chosen to build the mishkan; [Rashi follows the Midrash which claims that Chur was killed because he refused to allow Bnei Yisrael to build the **egel**. (See Chizkuni 31:2.)]
- \* The opening pasuk concerning the mishkan - "and they shall make for Me a **mikdash** and I will  **dwell in their midst**" (25:8) - appears to rectify Bnei Yisrael's situation in the aftermath of chet ha-egel, when Moshe must move his tent (called the **ohel mo'ed**) far away - outside the camp (33:7);
- \* Aharon must bring a **par** (a bull / an **egel** is a baby bull) for a **chatat** offering during the mishkan's dedication ceremony. [The requirement of a **chatat** implies the committal of a sin; see Rashi 29:1.]

Rashi therefore explains that the commandment to build the **mishkan** came **after** chet ha-egel (during the last forty days), for it served as a form of atonement for that sin.

[Nevertheless, it remains unclear according to Rashi **why** the Torah chose to record these parshiot out of chronological order. We'll return to this question later in the shiur.]

## LECHATCHILA or BE-DI'AVAD?

It is very tempting to consider this dispute between Rashi and Ramban a fundamental argument regarding the reason behind the mishkan.

Clearly, according to Ramban, the mishkan is 'lechatchila' [ideal]. In other words, even had chet ha-egel never occurred, it

still would have been God's desire that Bnei Yisrael build a **mishkan**, for it serves as a physical representation of God's presence in their midst.

How should we understand Rashi? Can we infer from his interpretation that the mishkan is 'be-di'avad' [a compromise]? In other words, had it not been for chet ha-egel, would there never have been a commandment to build a **mikdash**? Was the mitzva to build the mishkan simply an 'after-thought'? Was it only in the aftermath of Bnei Yisrael's sin that God realized the people's need for a physical representation of His presence?

Despite the temptation of this conclusion, we must first prove that, even according to Rashi's interpretation, one **can** (and **must**) agree that God had originally intended that at least some form of physical symbol be used to represent Him.

## TEMPLE TERMINOLOGY

To reconcile Rashi's interpretation with Ramban's explanation of the mishkan, we must differentiate between two concepts:

- (1) **MISHKAN** and
- (2) **MIKDASH**.

Although both words describe a **sanctuary** dedicated to the worship of God, for the sake of clarity, each word (in our explanation that follows) will be given a more specific meaning.

- \* The **mishkan** is a **temporary** sanctuary (a Tabernacle), a portable, tent-like structure. [Good for travel.]
- \* The **mikdash** is a **permanent** sanctuary (a Temple), such as the massive stone structure built by King Solomon.

We posit that both Rashi and Ramban must agree that the concept of a Sanctuary, a symbol of God's **Shchina** (the divine presence) dwelling with Bnei Yisrael, is lechatchila and in fact comprises a fundamental theme throughout the entire Tanach. To prove this, we must return to some basic concepts previously discussed in our shiurim on Sefer Breishit.

Recall that we first encountered the theme of **mikdash** when Avraham Avinu builds a **mizbeiach** in **Bet-El** and "calls out in God's Name" (see 12:8 & 13:4). Later, at this same site, Yaakov Avinu awakes from his dream and exclaims:

"Alas, this is the site for a **Bet Elokim**, for it is the gate to the heavens" (Br.28:17).

Yaakov then erects a 'matzeva' (monument) and vows that upon his return to Canaan he will establish the site of his matzeva as a **Bet-Elokim** - a House for God. [See Breishit 28:17-22.]

Thus, the very concept of a **Bet-Elokim** clearly preceded the golden calf.

Furthermore, even in 'shirat ha-yam', the song that Bnei Yisrael sung after they crossed the Red Sea, we already find an allusion to the establishment of a **mikdash** immediately upon their arrival in the land:

"Teveimo ve-titaeimo be-**har** nachalatcha, machon le-shivtecha... - **mikdash**, Hashem konanu yadecha..." (See Shmot 15:17, and its context!)

Finally, in Parshat Mishpatim we find conclusive proof that the basic concept of a **Bet-Elokim** is totally unrelated to the events of chet ha-egel. Recall that even according to Rashi, the laws recorded in Parshat Mishpatim were certainly given **before** chet ha-egel. [See Rashi on 31:18, where he explains that these laws were given to Moshe Rabeinu during his first forty days on Har Sinai.]

Recall as well that within that set of laws we find the mitzva of 'aliya la-regel' - to '**visit** God' three times a year: "Three times a year you shall celebrate for Me... Keep chag ha-matzot... and do not **visit me** empty-handed... Three times a year all your males **shall appear before me**..." (23:14-17).

First of all, the very existence of a mitzva to 'be seen by God' implies that there must be some type of sanctuary that would represent Him! Hence, without some sort of a **mikdash**, this mitzva of aliya la-regel could not be fulfilled.

However, the next pasuk provides conclusive proof that this sanctuary corresponds to the concept of a **Bet-Elokim**:  
"Your first fruits must be brought to **bet Hashem Elokecha** - the **house** of Hashem your God..." (23:19).

This commandment to bring the 'bikurim' to the Bet Elokim clearly implies that there would have to be some sort of 'sanctuary' that will serve as God's House.

Hence, even Rashi must agree that there would have been a need for a **Bet-Elokim** even had Bnei Yisrael not sinned at chet ha-egel.

Furthermore, there is no reason why Rashi would have to argue with Ramban's explanation that the primary function of the mikdash was to perpetuate Bnei Yisrael's experience at Har Sinai.

Instead, we posit that the dispute between Rashi and Ramban stems from a less fundamental issue - concerning the need to construct a **temporary** sanctuary before Bnei Yisrael entered the Land of Israel.

According to Rashi's interpretation, we can assume that God's original intention was for Bnei Yisrael to build a mikdash only after they conquered the Land of Israel. However, because of their sin, conquest of the Land would now be delayed. Therefore, God ordered them to build a **temporary** mikdash [= mishkan] while they remained in the desert.

Ramban would argue that even had Bnei Yisrael not sinned, it would still have been necessary for them to build a temporary **mikdash** before they embarked on that journey.

Let's attempt to explain why.

#### THE WAY IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN

Rashi's position may be based upon God's original plan that Bnei Yisrael would conquer the land through supernatural, divine intervention (see 23:20-28). Assisted by God's miracles, Bnei Yisrael would have needed only a very short time to complete at least the first wave of conquest. Had that actually occurred, there would have been no need to build a temporary mishkan, for within a very short time it would have been possible to build a permanent mikdash instead.

However, in the aftermath of chet ha-egel, the entire situation changes. As God had removed His **Shchina**, Bnei Yisrael must first bring the **Shchina** back to the camp **before** they can conquer the Land. Hence, according to Rashi, the actual process of building the mishkan could be considered a form of 'spiritual rehabilitation'. Furthermore, the mishkan would now provide Aharon and Bnei Yisrael with the opportunity to offer korbanot and thus achieve atonement for their sin.

One could also suggest that due to chet ha-egel and the 'lower level' of the 'mal'ach' that will lead them into the land (see Shmot 33:1-5 and shiur on 13 midot), it may now take much longer for Bnei Yisrael to complete the conquest. Therefore, a temporary mikdash [= mishkan] is required, until a more permanent mikdash can be built.

#### A CONCEPTUAL JUXTAPOSITION

According to this interpretation, we can now suggest (according to Rashi) a beautiful reason for why the Torah places the commandment to build the mishkan out of chronological order:

Even though the mitzva to build the 'temporary' mishkan should have been recorded **after** the story of chet ha-egel, the Torah intentionally records it earlier - immediately after Ma'amad Har Sinai - to emphasize its thematic connection to that event! In other words, Rashi, like Ramban, can also understand that the primary function of the mikdash was to perpetuate Ma'amad Har Sinai. In fact, had Bnei Yisrael not sinned, the laws of the 'permanent' mikdash may have been recorded at this spot in Chumash. However, now that a mishkan was needed (due to the events of chet ha-egel), the laws of this temporary mikdash are recorded at this point in Chumash, to emphasize the very same thematic connection that Ramban describes in great detail!

Now that Rashi makes so much sense, why wouldn't Ramban agree? To answer this question, we must return to our

discussion of the differing approaches to 'mukdam u-me'uchar'.

Ramban prefers his principle that Chumash follows chronological order. Despite the similarities between the mishkan and the story of chet ha-egel (as listed above), they are not convincing enough to warrant, in Ramban's view, a distortion of the order of these parshiot. Therefore, Ramban maintains that even had it not been for chet ha-egel, there still would have been a need for a temporary mishkan.

In fact, one could suggest a very simple reason for the immediate need of a temporary sanctuary. As we explained earlier, Bnei Yisrael must still receive many more mitzvot from God. A mishkan - with the **aron** and **keruvim** at its center - is therefore necessary as the medium through which God can convey the remaining mitzvot to Moshe. Furthermore, once the **Shchina** descended upon Har Sinai, some sort of vehicle is necessary to 'carry it' with them as they travel from Har Sinai towards Eretz Canaan.

[Accordingly, Ramban explains that most of all the mitzvot recorded in Sefer Vayikra and Sefer Bamidbar were actually given from the ohel mo'ed (mishkan). See Ramban Vayikra 1:1 & 7:38. In regard to Sefer Devarim, see Ramban on 24:1 & 24:12.]

To summarize, the dispute between Rashi and Ramban stems from their different exegetical approaches and pertains only to **why** a **temporary** mishkan was necessary. However, both would agree that a **permanent** mikdash would have been necessary even had Bnei Yisrael not sinned at chet ha-egel.

In our shiur on Parshat Tetzaveh, we will analyze the internal structure of this unit of chapters 25->31 in order to uncover additional parallels between the **mishkan** and the events of Ma'amad Har Sinai. Till then,

shabbat shalom  
menachem

#### FOR FURTHER IYUN:

**A.** In the shiur we argue that even according to Rashi, the concept of a required mikdash for serving Hashem existed even prior to the worship of the golden calf. Along similar lines, Rav David Pardo, in his supra-commentary on Rashi entitled, "Maskil le-David", writes that even in Rashi's view, the general command to build a mishkan was transmitted to Moshe during his first forty days atop the mountain. Only the details of the construction, as presented in parshiyot Teruma & Tetzaveh (and the beginning of Ki Tisa), were transmitted later. Rav Pardo proves this from the repeated reference in parshat Teruma to Hashem's having shown Moshe the appearance of the mishkan "on the mountain" (25:40; 26:30; 27:8). In the final two of these three references, Hashem employs the past tense ("you have been shown"), suggesting that Moshe viewed the image the mishkan before receiving these detailed instructions. Apparently, as Rav Pardo argues, Moshe learned of the mishkan - albeit only the generalities - during his first forty days on the mountain, even before the calf. Thus, Rashi clearly did not view the mishkan as necessary only in response to the sin of the egel ha-zahav.

#### B. RAMBAN / RASHI - earlier sources

The argument as to whether Hashem ordered the construction of the mishkan before or after the sin of the golden calf predates Rashi and the Ramban; conflicting views appear already in the Midrashim. Rashi's view, that the parshiyot appear out of order, is the position of the Midrash Tanchuma (Teruma 8, Pekudei 6), Yerushalmi (Shkalim 1:1) and Midrash Hagadol to Shmot 25:17. The Ramban's opinion is found in Seder Eliyahu Rabba 17, which states explicitly that Hashem ordered the construction of the mishkan after Bnei Yisrael declared 'na'aseh ve-nishma'. Ibn Ezra (25:1) adopts the Ramban's approach, as do the Abarbanel (31:18) and the Netziv (29:20). Despite his general affinity for the Ramban's commentary, on this issue Rabbenu Bechayei adopts Rashi's approach (25:6)

#### C. Mikdash Before Chet Ha-egel: Midrashic Sources

Several Midrashic passages support our contention that a mikdash would have been necessary even had it not been for the golden calf. Bemidbar Rabba 12:12 compares the world before the mishkan to a chair with two legs, which cannot stand; the construction of the mishkan added the third leg, so-to-speak, which enabled the world to stand independently. However one understands the image of the chair, it clearly points to the indispensability of the mishkan - regardless of chet ha-egel. Similarly, Bemidbar Rabba 13:6 describes that from the time of creation, Hashem wished ('kivyachol') to reside on earth. When the mishkan was consecrated, Hashem announced that on that day the world was created. Once again, we see that the construction of the mishkan marked a critical stage in the history of the world and was necessary since the dawn of creation. In the same vein, Bemidbar Rabba 13 writes that when Bnei Yisrael left Egypt, Hashem wished to "bring them into His quarters", and thus instructed them to build the mishkan. This Midrash makes no mention of the incident of the golden calf as necessitating a mikdash. A similar passage appears in the Tanchuma Yashan - Bechukotai 65.

We suggested in the shiur that according to Rashi, the Torah presents Parshat Teruma immediately following Matan Torah - despite its having occurred later, after the egel - to emphasize the thematic relationship between the mishkan and Matan Torah. Rabbenu Bechaye (25:6), however, explains that the Torah rearranged the sequence in order to demonstrate how Hashem is "makdim trufa le-maka" (recall that, as cited earlier, Rav Kasher reads this explanation into the Midrash Lekach Tov). Rav Zalman Sorotzkin (Oznayim La-Torah) mentions this explanation without quoting Rabbenu Bechaye. A different answer was suggested by the late Lubavitcher Rebbe ("Be'urim Le-perush Rashi al Ha-Torah" - Shmot 31:18). The Torah specifically wanted to juxtapose the tzivuy ha-mishkan with the end of Parshat Mishpatim - the formal establishment of the 'brit' between Bnei Yisrael and Hashem. As the residence of the Shchina in the mishkan marked the complete fulfillment of that brit, it is only fitting that the parsha of the mishkan immediately follows that of the covenant. (This explanation, too, seems to point to the fact that the mishkan is lechatchila even according to Rashi.)

#### D. SEFARNO

The Seforno takes a particularly extreme approach to the concept of the mishkan. Already in his comments to 19:6, he notes that as a result of the egel, Bnei Yisrael forfeited "all the goodness of the future" promised to them before Matan Torah. As we will see in his comments elsewhere, this refers to God's direct revelation, which was supplanted by the mishkan. In his commentary to the final psukim of Parshat Yitro (20:20-22), the Seforno interprets these psukim as informing Bnei Yisrael that they have no need to construct a sanctuary to God. Matan Torah demonstrated that Hashem would descend, as it were, and reside among them even without any physical mediums. Commenting on 25:9, Seforno writes that after the incident of the golden calf Bnei Yisrael were required to construct a sanctuary; the direct communication experienced at Har Sinai could no longer be maintained. Seforno expresses his position even clearer in 31:18, where he describes more fully Bnei Yisrael's spiritual descent as a result of the golden calf, as a result of which they did not achieve the divine plan initially intended at Matan Torah. In this passage, he alludes to an interesting interpretation of the promise in 19:6 that Bnei Yisrael would be a 'mamlechet kohanim' (a kingdom of priests): that they would have no need for kohanim to serve as intermediaries. God had originally intended for all of Bnei Yisrael to serve God directly as kohanim. (Curiously, however, this is not how the Seforno explains the term in his commentary to 19:6 - "ve-tzarich iyun".) He develops this idea even further in Vayikra 11:2. There he explains that in response to the golden calf, Hashem decreed that He would remove His Shchina entirely from Bnei Yisrael. Moshe's intervention succeeded in restoring a very limited measure of 'hashra'at ha-Shchina', by which God would reside among Bnei Yisrael only through the structure of the mishkan. (In this passage, Seforno spells out more clearly what he meant by "the goodness of the

future" of which he spoke in his comments to Shmot 19:6 - the direct presence of the Shchina, without the need for a physical representation.) Later in Sefer Vayikra, in his commentary to the brachot of Parshat Bechukotai (26:11-12), Seforno describes the ideal condition of God's constant presence among Bnei Yisrael without it being confined to any specific location and without requiring any specific actions on Bnei Yisrael's part. In direct contradistinction to the Ramban, Seforno there reads the pasuk in Truma, "Ve-asu li mikdash ve-shachanti betocham", as a punishment, confining the presence of the Shchina to the mishkan. Seforno's most elaborate development of this notion appears in his treatise "Ma'amar Kavanot ha-Torah" (published as a separate volume by Rav Yehuda Kuperman in 5754; the relevant material for our topic is found primarily in chapter 6 in Rav Kuperman's edition).

This position of the Seforno, of course, requires some explanation in light of the proofs mentioned in the shiur to the necessity of a mikdash even prior to the egel. In fact, the Seforno himself identifies Yaakov's Bet Elokim (Breishit 28:17) and the mikdash in the Shirat Ha-yam (Shmot 15:17) as the beit ha-mikdash. How could the concept of a mikdash be discussed before chet ha-egel - if it was never to have been necessary?

The Seforno does not address this question, but in at least two instances he alludes to what may be understood as a moderation of his approach. Commenting on the pasuk "be-chol ha-makom asher askir et Shmi avo eilecha" ("every place where I will have My Name mentioned I will come to you" - Shmot 20:21), the Seforno explains, "[Every place] that I will designate as a meeting place for My service". He then adds, "You will not need to draw My providence to you through mediums of silver and gold and the like, for I will come to you and bless you". Apparently, even according to this original plan, there would still be a place designated as a mikdash of sorts, only Bnei Yisrael would not need to invest effort in its lavish and intricate construction. In Ma'amar Kavanot ha-Torah, Seforno makes a somewhat similar comment in explaining this same pasuk: "In any place that will truly be called a Bet Elokim, such as batei midrash and the like - I will come to you and bless you." Here, too, he implies that there would be a special location - or perhaps several or many special locations - for avodat Hashem, only not what we know as the mishkan or mikdash. However, in his commentary to Parshat Bechukotai (Vayikra 26:12), the Seforno strongly implies that in the ideal condition Hashem reveals Himself anywhere, without any need for an especially designated location - 've-tzarich iyun'.

**E. RAMBAM** - Review Devarim chapter 12. Note the repeated use of the phrase "ha-makom asher yivchar Hashem" and its context. Pay special attention to 12:5-12, noting when is the proper time to build the mikdash. Relate this phrase to the concept of a **permanent** mikdash, as discussed in the above shiur. Considering that Sefer Devarim contains the mitzvot that God originally gave Moshe at Har Sinai (before chet ha-egel), explain why Sefer Devarim makes no mention of the **mishkan**, yet mentions "ha-makom asher yivchar Hashem" numerous times.

Although the Rambam did not write a commentary on Chumash, we can infer his understanding of certain psukim based on his psak halacha in Mishneh Torah.

The opening Rambam in Hilchot Beit Ha-bechira (Sefer Avoda) defines the source of the commandment to build a **mikdash** (see 1:1). Read that Rambam (and, if you have time, the first five halachot). What is difficult about the Rambam's wording in 1:1? What is the source of our obligation to build a **mikdash**? Why, according to the Rambam, is the phrase "ve-asu li mikdash" (25:8) insufficient as a source for this obligation?

Why does the Rambam include the criteria, 'ready to offer upon it korbanot' and 'to celebrate there **three** times a year'? Can you relate these phrases to Shmot 23:14-19 and this week's shiur? Why does the Rambam quote the pasuk from Devarim 12:9-11? Read those psukim carefully!