

Parshas Terumah

For the week ending 2 Adar 5758
27 & 28 February 1998

Overview

Hashem commands Moshe to build a *Mishkan* (Sanctuary) and supplies him with detailed instructions. Bnei Yisrael are asked to contribute precious metals and stones, fabrics, skins, oil and spices. In the *Mishkan's* outer courtyard is an altar for the burnt offerings and a laver for washing. The Tent of Meeting is divided by a curtain into two chambers. The outer chamber is accessible only to the *kohanim*, the descendants of Aharon. This contains the Table of Showbreads, the Menorah, and the Golden Altar for incense. The innermost chamber, the Holy of Holies, may be entered only by the *Kohen Gadol*, and only once a year, on Yom Kippur. Here is the Ark that held the Ten Commandments inscribed on the two tablets of stone which Hashem gave to the Jewish nation on Mount Sinai. All of the utensils and vessels, as well as the construction of the *Mishkan*, are described in extraordinary detail.

Insights

THE LAIR OF THE LION

"They shall make a Sanctuary for Me." (25:2)

A couple of years ago a well-know Israeli daily newspaper, not known for its sympathy to religion, published a cartoon.

In the cartoon, a man was having a dream. Out of his head came the statutory "think-bubbles." The bubbles got larger and larger until the following scene unraveled: The man saw himself "upstairs" being questioned by winged angels wearing black hats: "But why didn't you keep Shabbos?" they asked. "You knew there was a thing called Shabbos didn't you? What about Kashrus? You knew there was something called Kashrus?"

In the following bubble, the man wakes up in a cold sweat. Then a close-up on his face. "Maybe they're right!" he says.

Why isn't everyone religious?

Why don't people think: "What if those religious fanatics *are* right? After all, if they're wrong, at least they have wonderfully rich and fulfilling lives, lovely families, etc. And if they're *right*, and I'm wrong? I'm going to lose out on something *eternal*. I'm going to get to the next world and I won't have the price of admission. I won't even be able to get a cheap seat! Maybe I will have to give an accounting in front of the real Supreme Court. I'll be religious just in case! Better safe than sorry!"

Why don't people think like this?

Continued on next page

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Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel
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Production Design: Lev Seltzer

Continued from first page

In this week's *Parsha* the Torah starts a lengthy description of the *Mishkan*. The sheer volume of this account outweighs almost every subject in the Torah. What was the *Mishkan* and why does it merit such voluminous expanse in the Book where nothing is merely descriptive and there is no place for literary embellishment?

The word *Mishkan* comes from the word "to dwell." It was the place where Hashem "dwelled" in this lower world. But how can a mere building house the One whose glory fills the universe. How can the Omnipresent have a "house?"

There is a difference between *existence* and *presence*. Hashem exists equally everywhere. He is no more in one place than another, because there is no place where He is not. Rather, the *Mishkan* was a place where the *presence* of Hashem was palpable. You could see He was there.

Imagine sitting at a computer. You are typing away, lost in the great American/British/Israeli novel. Unbeknownst to you, a lion enters your room. It's a very quiet, well-behaved lion, and you carry on typing in blissful ignorance.

The lion's existence is unaltered by whether you carry on typing or you turn around and give yourself a bit of a surprise. However, the *presence* of the lion has everything to do with whether you turn around or not.

The Mishkan allowed one to see and fear the Lion. Hashem's presence there was palpable.

The word for "sight" in Hebrew is from the same root as "fear" — *yirah*. What is the connection between seeing and fearing? A person only fears what he can see. Intellectual concepts don't frighten us. The biggest proof is that even if we're religious and we know that there is a world-to-come, a cosmic day of reckoning, even though we know these things clearly, *we can't see them, and so we don't really fear*. Fear only comes from seeing the Lion. Going into the *Mishkan* was like going into the lion's lair.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

"Take for Me an offering" (25:2)

"I have given you a good 'deal' (lit. 'taking') ¾ My Torah, do not forsake it." (Tehillim, 132:8-10)

The Torah is like business.

If you have a bad week in business, you don't close up the shop. Because if you close the shop and give up working completely you'll just sink lower and lower until you hit bottom.

Similarly in Torah study, even though there are times when we fail and we feel very despondent, we must continue to try harder and harder with an implacable

will. For if we stop studying the Torah, if we "close up the shop," we will find ourselves suing for spiritual bankruptcy.

HEART IS WHERE THE HOME IS

"And they shall make a Sanctuary for Me, so I may dwell in them." (25:8)

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

THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN

"You shall cover it (the Aron) with pure gold, from within and without, and you shall make on it a gold crown all around. (25:11)

The *Aron HaKodesh*, the Holy Ark, represents the Torah scholar. He must be as golden on the inside as he is on the outside — his inner character must be consistent with his public demeanor. Then the Torah will be his crown and he will be a crown for the Torah.

WHO'S CARRYING WHOM?

"The staves shall remain in the rings of the Ark, they may not be removed from it." (25:15)

In the description of the *Aron HaKodesh*, the Holy Ark, the Torah tells us that the carrying staves are never to be separated from the Ark itself. These staves represent the financial supporters of Torah. Just as the staves of the Ark may not be removed, so are the Torah's supporters and benefactors inseparable from Torah scholarship. However, the Ark never really needed the staves because, not only did it miraculously bear its own weight, but it would lift up those who were "carrying" it. When Rabbi Eliezer Gordon, the founder of Telshe Yeshiva, got married, his father-in-law, Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Neviezer wanted to support him so he could devote himself to study and become a great Torah scholar.

As Rabbi Gordon's family began to grow, he became increasingly uncomfortable with the feeling that he was burdening his father-in-law, and frequently asked Reb Avraham to allow him to accept one of the numerous rabbinical positions that were then being offered to him. Despite difficult financial times, Reb Avraham refused to let him accept. He insisted that Rabbi Gordon carry on studying.

Reb Avraham's wife asked her husband how long he intended to support their daughter and son-in-law. He replied "My dear wife, who knows who is supporting whom?"

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When finally Rabbi Gordon was offered the Rabbinate of Eisheshok, his father-in-law felt he could not restrain him from accepting such an important post.

The day after the Gordon family left for Eisheshok, Reb Avraham Yitzchak, Rabbi Gordon's father-in-law, passed away. It then became clear who had been supporting whom.

Haftorah: I Kings 5:26-6:13

BUILT TO LAST

“This Temple that you build — if you follow My decrees, perform My statutes, and observe all My commandments..” (6:12)

Just as in this week's *Parsha* the Torah speaks of the construction of the *Mishkan*, the Divine “residence” in the desert, so too the Haftorah describes the first *Beis Hamikdash* which was built by Shlomo Hamelech 480 years after the Exodus.

Even though the physical statistics of Shlomo's construction are staggering, what is important to Hashem is that the real construction be built from the giving heart.

This is what Hashem is saying to Shlomo in the above verse: Don't think that the construction of My house is by mere material means, by the lavishing of silver and gold. These are mere illusions — not the real Beis

Hamikdash. Rather, “if you follow My decrees, and perform My statutes” — this is what the *Beis Hamikdash* is really built of.

And since the “materials” of its construction are really spiritual, so the *Beis Hamikdash*, even after its physical destruction, even after its material components have disintegrated, continues to exist:

“I will dwell within Bnei Yisrael, and I will not forsake My people Israel”...

Kochav M'Yaakov

Sources:

The Lair Of the Lion - Rabbi Moshe Shapiro, Rabbi Mordechai Perlman and Rabbi Naftali Kaplan
Business As Usual - Rabbi David MiKotzk
Heart Is Where The Home Is - Alshich
The Jewel In The Crown - Rabbeinu Chanel

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael



THE MOTIVE OF MOSHE

Why did Moshe Rabbeinu so desire to enter *Eretz Yisrael*? Surely it was not in order to eat its fruits and enjoy its goodness!

Thus reasoned Moshe: Many of the *mitzvos* which the Jews have been commanded can be fulfilled only in *Eretz Yisrael*. I therefore pray to Hashem to allow me to enter the Land so that I will be able to fulfill all of them.

Mesechta Sota 14a

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