



The Collective Conversation

*Weekly Torah Essays from the
Young Israel of Scarsdale Community*



Sefer Shemot

Parshat Term • Shabbat Zachor

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The Shulchan in the Mikdash

By Carole Daman

In Parshat Terumah, Hashem gives Moshe explicit instructions as to how Bnei Yisroel should make him a Mikdash so that He may dwell among them. The first object he describes is the Aron, the Ark. Immediately afterwards Hashem tells Moshe how to build the Shulchan, the Table. Some of the details of construction are very similar to the instructions for the Aron.

Why does the Shulchan have this place of importance in God's instructions to Moshe? It is described before the Menorah and the incense altar, the other two vessels in the Kadosh section of the Mishkan. Indeed it is only later in the parsha that we learn that this area is separated from the Aron and the Kodosh Hakodashim.

In the last verse prescribing the construction of the Shulchan, Hashem tells Moshe:

וַנִּתֵּן עַל־הַשֻּׁלְחָן לֶחֶם פָּנִים לְפָנַי תָּמִיד

“You will place on the Shulchan Lechem Panim before Me continuously.”

In Parshat Emor, the Lechem Panim are described as 12 loaves of bread arranged in two stacks which are set up each Shabbos. While Rashi understood the word “Panim” to refer to the sides of each loaf, Chizkuni and others interpreted the word to allude

to the requirement that the bread be displayed constantly before Hashem, resulting in the translation of Lechem Panim as “showbread.” As the previous week's bread was removed, it was simultaneously replaced by the new loaves in order that there be no interruption.

According to Abarbanel, the Netziv, and others, the Shulchan and the Lechem Panim were symbols of the sustenance and material prosperity with which Hashem constantly blesses humanity. In a story repeated in Chagiga 26b, and Menachot 29a and 96b, Chazal emphasized how the

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Lechem Panim, which remained fresh and warm all week, showed God's love for the Jewish people. They reported that when the pilgrims came to the Beit HaMikdash on the Shalosh Regalim in fulfillment of the commandment for them to "appear... before Pnei Hashem, (the face of Hashem)," the Kohanim would lift the Shulchan to show them the Lechem Panim, and say, "See how beloved you are in the eyes of the Omnipresent." Thus, the Israelites who had come to display themselves before God, each with his own offerings in gratitude for God's beneficence, were reminded of the constant blessings that Hashem bestows upon all of His people.

We no longer have the privilege of bringing our offerings to the Beit HaMikdash or seeing the miracles God performed there.

But reading about the 12 loaves of the Lechem Panim reminds us of God's love for His entire people and suggests that we are meant to be not just the recipients of that love but also God's

surrogates in conveying it to our fellows. In Chagiga 27a, Rabbi Yohanan and Reish Lakish tell us that since there is no longer an altar to atone for our sins, a person's own table — his shulchan — atones for him.

In other words, as Rashi explains, by fulfilling the mitzvah of Hachnasat Orchim and opening our homes to those in need, we make ourselves worthy of God's blessings. May we be inspired to share our blessings with those who are in need and may we soon merit to be able to open up our homes and share God's bounty with our guests.

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Carole and her late husband, Dr. Harlan Daman z"l, moved to the community in 1986. She follows in the footsteps of her children, Gila and Avi, who years ago as teenagers wrote Divrei Torah that appeared in the YIS weekly bulletin.

Want to write or dedicate a Parsha essay?

Please contact Steve Smith at LivingTorahFund@gmail.com

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