

Good Shabbos, everyone.

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May all the *neshamos* have an *aliyah*, and may the sponsors be rewarded for their support of the shul with *bracha* and *hatzlacha* and good health!

I would like to ask everyone to become an ambassador in the upcoming Shomrei matching campaign. It means signing up and spreading the word about the campaign to your contacts—family and friends. We need your help to make this campaign successful! Led by our President, people have been working hard for many months to lay the foundation of this campaign, and now it depends on you!

Parshas Teruma begins the construction of the *mishkan*. I heard an interesting observation—the story of Hashem's creation of the world, which has lasted over 5781 years, requires only 31 *pesukim*, while the Jewish people's construction of the *mishkan*—a temporary structure—requires over 450 *pesukim*!

What is the underlying message in this **very lengthy** and **extremely detailed** description of building the *mishkan*--with all the work and intricacies involved? And, after directing Moshe to carefully follow His detailed instructions for constructing the *mishkan*, Hashem adds *v'chen ta-asu*. And this is what you shall do...

שמות פרק כה רש"י: וכן תעשו – לדורות

Rashi understands this command to refer *l'doros*—for all times.

What is the relevance of the *mishkan* to "all times?" It was temporary, and never repeated.

To answer these questions, we must begin with a basic question: What was the **function** of the *mishkan*? What were they actually trying to build? *Build a mikdash and I will dwell among you*. Were they really building a home for Hashem? What does that concept even mean?

Yeshayahu Hanavi said:

כֹּה אָמַר ה' הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּסְאִי וְהָאָרֶץ הֶדְמִים רַגְלֵי אֵיזֶה בַּיִת אֲשֶׁר תִּבְנֶנּוּ לִי וְאֵיזֶה מְקוֹם מְנוּחָתִי:

Rashi explains: *The heavens are My throne. I do not need your Temple; which is the house that is fitting for My Shechinah.*

רש"י ישעיהו פרק סו פסוק א: (א) השמים כסאי - איני צריך לבית המקדש שלכם: איזה בית - אשר הוא כדאי לשכינתי:

The **Ramban** writes the following regarding the purpose of the *mishkan*.

רמב"ן שמות פרק כה

וסוד המשכן הוא, שיהיה הכבוד אשר שכן על הר סיני שוכן עליו בנסתר.

The essence of the *mishkan* was to be a vehicle through which the glory of Hashem, which they experienced at Har Sinai in a public way, would continue to rest upon them in a more subtle way.

But this still leaves us with a question: What does it take to house Hashem's presence?

I think that three main components of Mishkan's construction were crucial in bringing the *shechina* to our world. These components teach us timeless lessons about bringing spirituality to our world—about developing a relationship with Hashem.

The first component: **When it comes to spirituality—Hashem makes all the rules.**

Rav Shaul Yisraeli points out that the Torah stresses that even the smallest details of construction of the Mishkan were done *ka-asher tziva Hashem*, exactly as Hashem commanded. He notes that the natural world works within defined principles. While we can try to understand nature, we cannot change it. This is equally true of the metaphysical world. God built the world—including the intersection of finite and infinite with specific rules and guidelines, and we must work within that system.

שיח שאול עמ' ער"ב

הננו רואים התעסקות התורה בפירוט במנייה ובמשקל של כל המינים למלאכת המשכן ובתכנית המפורטת והמדויקת לבנייתו. ועל כל חלק וחלק חוזרת התורה "כאשר צוה ה'" התעסקה התורה בדברים שהם לכאורה קלי ערך, כגון קביעת פעמונים ורמונים ושאר פרטים ופרטי פרטים. . . כשם שיש חוקים לטבע, כך יש חוקים למה שלמעלה מדרך הטבע, וכשם שבטבע אין להסביר את החוק אלא להגדיר אותו, כך גם בחוקים של מעלה מהטבע אין להבינם אבל אפשר להגדירם וללומדם.

This idea was expressed in the *Sefer HaKuzari*, written by Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi. The sefer is centered around a non-Jewish king's search for truth. He has a recurring dream in which he is told "כַּנְתָּהּ רְצוֹנָה אֲצִיל" "Your intentions are indeed pleasing to the Creator, but not your deeds."

The *Sefer HaKuzari* expands upon this idea that spirituality has a set of defined principles, which must be adhered to. He compares someone inventing *mitzvos*, trying to create the parameters through which one achieves spirituality, to a lay person who watches a pharmacist dispense medicines that heal and then decides based on what he observes--without any training or knowledge--to begin dispensing medicines to sick people. Although his intentions are lofty, and he may help some people, he will inevitably end up killing some innocent people. He is not in a position to know what heals...

וְהִיא כְּפִסִּיל, אֲשֶׁר נִכְנַס בְּאוֹצֵר רוֹפֵא מְפָרָסם כִּי רְפוּאוֹתָיו מוֹעִילוֹת וְהָרוּפֵא אֵינְנוּ בוּ, וּבְנֵי אָדָם הֵיוּ מְכֻנְיִים אֶל הָאוֹצֵר הַהוּא לְבַקֵּשׁ הַתּוֹעֵלָה, וְהַפִּסִּיל הַהוּא הֵיךְ נוֹתֵן לָהֶם מִן הַפְּלִים הֵהֶם וְהוּא לֹא הֵיךְ מִפִּיר הַרְפוּאוֹת, וְלֹא כַּמָּה רְאוּי לְהַשְׁקוֹת מִכָּל רְפוּאָה לְכָל אִישׁ וְאִישׁ, וְהַמִּית בְּרְפוּאוֹת הֵהֶם אֲשֶׁר הֵיוּ מוֹעִילוֹת לָהֶם,

He is like an ignoramus who enters the surgery of a physician famous for the curative power of his medicines. The physician is not at home, but people come for medicines. The fool dispenses them out of the jars, knowing nothing of the contents, nor how much should be given to each person. Thus he kills with the very medicine which should have cured them.

The **Ramchal** develops this idea further and says that, in every aspect of our lives, we must weigh all our decisions in life carefully--using Torah guidelines to discern the will of God—and understand that a small detail can change everything. And everything must be done according to *chok haTorah*, the dictates of the Torah.

ספר מסילת ישרים פרק ג

כללו של דבר, צריך האדם להיות מתבונן בשכלו תמיד בכל זמן ובזמן קבוע לו בהתבודדו, מה הוא הדרך האמיתית לפי חק התורה שהאדם צריך לילך בו. ואחר כך יבוא להתבונן על מעשיו אם הם על הדרך הזה אם לא, כי על ידי זה ודאי שיהיה לו נקל לטהר מכל רע וליישר כל דרכיו

The summary of all the matter is that a man must contemplate with his intellect always, at all times, and also during the fixed appointed time of solitude, what is the true path according to the Torah that man must walk upon. And afterwards, to come to reflect on his own deeds to ascertain if they are traveling in this path or not. For through this certainly it will be easy for him to purify himself of all evil, and to correct all of his ways

Like the lay person dispensing pharmaceuticals—despite no knowledge of pharmacology--even the most well intentioned acts can be misguided, if not directed by the Torah.

This is what the Navi Shmuel told Shaul HaMelech in the *haftara* we will read today, after King Shaul ignored Hashem's directives and kept Amaleki animals to offer as *korbanos*. Shaul was told: Hashem doesn't want the animals you acquired by ignoring Him. He wants you to listen to HIM

א. וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל הַחִפִּץ לַיהוָה בְּעֵלּוֹת וּזְבָחִים כְּשֶׁמֶעַךְ בְּקוֹל יְהוָה הִגָּה שְׁמַע מְזַבַּח טוֹב לְהַקְשִׁיב מִחֵלֶב אֵילִים:

But Samuel said: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As much as in obedience to the LORD's command? Surely, obedience is better than sacrifice, Compliance than the fat of rams.

Rav Hirsch writes about this when explaining the Torah prohibition ולא תגרע ולא תוסיף not to add to, or subtract from, Hashem's commandments.

וכך מצאנו בימי שאול: נטיית לבו וסברתו הסובייקטיבית השפיעה על ביצוע הפקודה האלוהית שניתנה לו, ובמקום לקיים בדיוק את המצוה שנאמרה לו בבהירות, הרשה לעצמו לקיים פחות וגם יותר. "פחות": שהרי נמנע מלקיים באגג ובחלק מהשלל את המשפט האלוהי שנמסר לו; "יותר": שהרי הקדיש את מיטב השלל לקרבן, והוא דימה בלבו שהוא עושה מעשה טוב עוד יותר מן המעשה שנצטווה עליו. בכך עבר שאול על אזהרת "לא תוסיף ולא תגרע".

So we find in the case of Shaul: his own inclination and subjective opinion affected the way he carried out the Divine command that had been given to him, and instead of meticulously fulfilling the mitzvah that had been clearly communicated to him, he allowed himself to do both more and less than he had been commanded to do. Less: for he refrained from executing upon Agag and upon part of the spoil the Divine judgment that had been entrusted to him. More: for he dedicated the best of the spoil for an offering, and imagined that he was doing something even better than what he had been commanded to do. Thereby Shaul violated the warning לא תוסיף ולא תגרע.

The second component: Spirituality requires a tremendous amount of labor and hard work. All the work that went into creating the mishkan teaches us that Hashem requires us to actively contribute to our relationship with Him. People crave easy solutions and shortcuts to spirituality, but that does not lead to real relationships and genuine spirituality.

Let us look at the *mishkan* in its historical context. As the Jewish people left Mitzrayim, they received unbelievable gifts from Hashem. Materially, they left with riches. Spiritually, they merited miracles culminating in the presentation of the Torah on Sinai.

They saw spirituality, their relationship with Hashem, as something that happens to a person—a one sided relationship. They saw God as the One who is acting, and themselves as passive recipients in the pursuit of spirituality. **Like all real relationships, spirituality does not simply find a person or happen TO a person. It is the result of an active choice—a decision to make room for spirituality in one's life, and to become an active player in forming a relationship with God.**

The lesson of the *mishkan* is a strong statement by God about the nature of spirituality. If you want Him to come to **you**—and you want spirituality to be a part of your life, then you must put in the effort; you must build that relationship. **The Mishkan carries with it a timeless message that attaining spirituality takes preparation and hard work.** To attain spirituality, one must work at it and become fully invested in it. It is not something that just happens.

This lesson was not new in Jewish history. Avraham sought Hashem before Hashem appeared to him in a prophecy. He was willing to sacrifice and give up all his comforts to follow Hashem. He understood that achieving spirituality takes work. He followed Hashem's instructions to leave his land, his birthplace, and his family and to travel to the land of Canaan. Moshe Rabbeinu sought Hashem; Hashem did not just happen to find him. The Pasuk recounts that Moshe left Paraoth's palace, and risked his life to protect Jews, even before God revealed Himself.

Following 210 years as passive slaves and *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the Jews needed to learn this lesson themselves. God rescued them from *Mitzrayim* and performed other miracles for them. But they did very little to build their relationship with God. With the *mishkan*, Hashem instructed Moshe to change the dynamic in their relationship with Him. It was about the Jewish people investing in their relationship with Hashem, and thereby recognizing His place in their world, and in their lives. It was an opportunity for the Jewish people to invest in their relationship with Hashem. Hashem gave the Jewish people the chance to make something with their own hands, something they would value and internalize because, collectively, *they had made it, they had invested time and energy.*

For the first time, Hashem was asking them not just to follow His pillar of cloud and fire through the wilderness or to obey His laws, **but to be active:** to become builders and creators. And because it involved their own work, energy, and time, they invested something of themselves, individually and collectively, in it. In the same way, the effort that we put into something does not just change the object. It changes us. It

transforms us. It is the meaning behind the phrase we say when we make a bracha וצונו במצוותיו וצונו, doing *mitzvos* make us holy—because we have invested ourselves in spirituality and holiness.

As the **Mesilas Yesharim** teaches in Chapter 26, Kedusha, sanctity, begins with **our hishtadlus**, our efforts. ענין הקדושה כפול הוא, דהיינו: תחלתו עבודה וסופו גמול, תחלתו השתדלות וסופו מתנה. והיינו: שתחלתו הוא מה שהאדם מקדש עצמו, וסופו מה שמקדשים אותו, והוא משז"ל) יומא לט א: (אדם מקדש עצמו מעט מקדשים אותו הרבה. מלמטה מקדשים אותו מלמעלה.

The matter of holiness is dual. Its beginning is service of G-d while its end is reward; its beginning is exertion while its end is a divine gift. That is, its beginning is that which a man sanctifies himself, while its end is his being sanctified. This is what our sages, ob"m, said: "if a man sanctifies himself a little, he becomes much sanctified. If he sanctifies himself below, he becomes sanctified from above" (Yomah 39a).

We sometimes think that when we invest time and energy in *mitzvos*, we are doing something for God—when we are really doing something for ourselves. Hashem taught this lesson to the Jewish people when He introduced the concept of fundraising for the Mishkan. Hashem suggested that Moshe use the word *ve-yikchu li teruma*, “take donations for me,” when the expected word would be ויתנו לי תרומה, “give donations to me.”

Why would Hashem suggest that Moshe present his request for funds as if the Jewish people are getting something, when He really wants them to give up something, namely their valuable possessions...

The **Beis HaLevi** writes that Hashem was teaching them that when it comes to spirituality—what you give is exactly what you get, what you put in is what you achieve. Hashem urged them to look at the possessions they donated, and the hard work they put in, as investments—in themselves and in their relationship with Hashem. Hence ויקחו לי תרומה, **a person did acquire something very significant and permanent through giving to the construction of the Mishkan—a relationship with Hashem.**

The third component: It takes everyone working together to bring Hashem's presence into our world; everyone was given a chance to contribute to the mishkan, from whatever they had. There was a long list of construction materials: “gold, silver or bronze, blue, purple or crimson yarns, fine linen, goat hair, red-dyed ram skins, fine leather, acacia wood, oil for the lamp, balsam oils for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense,” jewels for the breastplate, and so on. And, while some donated these materials, others donated their labor and skills. Everyone had the opportunity to take part--women as well as men, the people as a whole, not just an elite group, because it takes everyone working together to bring real *hashraas ha-shechina* (God's presence) into our world. Ultimately, like the Har Sinai experience, the Purim miracle, and many other auspicious occasions in Jewish history, it takes Jews working together to truly bring God to their midst.

We no longer have a physical *mishkan*, so it is puzzling that after directing Moshe to carefully follow His detailed instructions for constructing the Mishkan, Hashem adds *v'chen ta-asu*, understood by Rashi as meaning *l'doros*—for all times. I believe the Torah is teaching us an idea beyond the creation of the *mishkan*. Even though the physical construction of the *mishkan* occurred only once, it represents lessons for all time—about how to bring real spirituality into our world; using the three components we just outlined...

One: The details make all the difference. The direction and guidance must come from Hashem. Religion and spirituality are not just about good intentions and a desire to connect to God.

Two: Spirituality takes hard work. We must be willing to invest in our relationship with Hashem.

Three: While working on perfecting ourselves, we can never lose sight of the fact that we are part of a community, and everyone is needed to accomplish our mission as a people.

May we apply the lessons of the *mishkan* to our own lives and soon merit the return of the ultimate *mikdash*, the third *Beis Hamikdash*...*bimhera viyamenu*...amen.