**The Lair Of The Lion**

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

A couple of years ago a well-known 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 like this? 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.

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**BUSINESS AS USUAL**

“Take for Me an offering” (25:2)

“I have given you a good ‘deal’ (lit. ‘taking’) My Torah, do not forsake it.” (Tehillim, 132 8-10)
H

ashem 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.

“Parsha Overview

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

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 mitzvot 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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— Mesechta Sota 14a
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 singing for spiritual bankruptcy.

**Heart Is Where the Home Is**

“...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**

“He 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?”

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.

**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 Chananel
- Who’s Carrying Whom? - Rabbi Zev Leff, Outlooks and Insights

Hearing on Mount Sinai “...Don’t steal ... Don’t covet...” many Jews felt that they should return to Egypt to give back the gold and silver they had “borrowed” from the Egyptians. Therefore, Hashem told Moshe “Build Me a Sanctuary using the very same gold and silver that was taken from the Egyptians. For I, Hashem, would never allow ill-gotten gains to be used for My Sanctuary. The fact that I allow this gold and silver shows that they belong without question to the Jewish People. They are overdue payment which the Egyptians owe the Jews in exchange for hundreds of years of labor.”

**I Didn’t Know That!**

- Oznaim LaTorah by Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin
IMPULSIVE OR TRUSTING?

So engrossed was he in his study of Torah that the Sage Rava was completely oblivious to the fact that he was sitting on the fingers of his hand and causing blood to rush to the surface. A heathen observer exploited this opportunity to taunt the Sage.

“Impulsive people that you are!” he laughed. “You were impulsive when you put your mouths before your ears (when you declared at Sinai ‘we shall do’ before you said ‘we shall hear’), and you are impulsive now in your self neglect. You first should have determined whether the Torah you were being offered did not demand more of you than is possible and only then accept it.”

Rava well understood that the heathen was interpreting his seemingly superhuman concentration on Torah study as evidence that the Jewish People had bitten off more than they could chew in accepting the Torah which had been rejected by all the less impulsive nations as being too difficult a challenge. His response was to explain the difference between their improper attitude of suspicion toward Hashem’s offer of the Torah and the Jewish attitude of total trust. This is how Rashi so eloquently translates the reply of Rava:

“We related to Hashem with total trust in the manner of those who act out of love, and we relied upon Him that He would not impose upon us any responsibility which we were not capable of fulfilling.”

Whether it was in accepting a Torah sight-unseen or studying that Torah with such intensity as to be oblivious to physical pain, Jews were not guilty of being impulsive. They were rather the bearers of confidence that the Creator who offers a challenge also provides the power to meet it.

• Shabbos 88a

WHAT’S IN A NAME — SINAI?

When Rabbi Kahana was asked for an explanation of “Sinai,” the name of the mountain on which Hashem revealed Himself to the Jewish People and gave them the Torah, he offered several suggestions which were rejected as falling short of the mark.

Scrambling the letters would give us “Nisai,” a reference to the miracles that took place at the time of the Sinai revelation. But then why scramble the letters instead of just writing them in their intended fashion?

Perhaps “Sinai” approximates “Simnai” and is a reference to the “sign of good fortune” which was given to Jewry on that mountain. But then, why omit the “m” sound in the name of the mountain?

Rabbi Kahana’s challenger finally revealed his own explanation which he had heard from leading Sages.

“Sinai” sounds almost exactly like “Sinah” which means hatred. The name of the mountain communicates the fact that this is where “hatred descended to the nations of the world.”

Rashi explains this as a reference to Hashem’s attitude to all the nations who rejected the Torah He had offered them. Another approach has been offered by one of the Torah giants of the previous generation who was martyred in the Holocaust, Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman, zatzal:

“Sinai” and “Sinah” are two sides of the same coin. Once Jews accepted the responsibility of being a “holy nation” through acceptance of the Torah, there is no longer an option of coping out and being like all the other nations. It is our choice to preserve our uniqueness through the pleasant ways of “Sinai” Torah observance. Should we seek to assimilate and abdicate, Hashem made sure that “hatred descended to the nations” — that anti-Semitism would serve as a reminder that we are a people apart with a special destiny.

• Shabbos 89a
PARSHA Q&A?

1. How many times does the word “terumah” appear in the first verse of the Parsha? Why?
2. Onkelos translates “tachash” as “sasgona.” Why?
3. What kind of trees did Yaakov plant in Mitzrayim?
4. Describe two uses of: a) oil; b) spices; c) jewels.
5. The Aron was made with three boxes, one inside the other. Exactly how tall was the outer box?
6. What does the crown on top of the Aron symbolize?
7. Why is the Torah referred to as “testimony”?
8. What did the faces of the keruvim resemble?
9. What does the crown on top of the shulchan symbolize?
10. On what day of the week was the lechem hapanim baked?
11. What does miksha mean?
12. What was the purpose of the Menorah’s gevi’im (cups)?
13. In which direction did the flames of the Menorah cast their light?
14. How did Moshe know the shape of the Menorah?
15. What designs were embroidered into the tapes-tries of the Mishkan?
16. How long was the Mishkan?
17. How wide was the interior of the Mishkan?
18. How high was the copper Mizbe‘ach?
19. What were the dimensions of the courtyard of the Mishkan?
20. Which function did the copper yeseidos serve?

BONUS QUESTION?

Rashi never “just” comments; something in the text always impels him to do so. Rashi answers unspoken questions arising from a thoughtful reading of the Torah text. Anyone who wants a true understanding of Rashi’s classic Torah commentary must always ask: “What’s Bothering Rashi?”

“Speak to the Children of Israel, and they shall take for Me an offering...” (Exodus 25:2)
Rashi: They shall take for Me an offering: For Me means for My sake.

Why the need for this comment? Why can’t Rashi accept the simple meaning, that the Israelites should give an offering to G-d? What’s bothering Rashi?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week’s Questions!
All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 25:2 - It appears three times, alluding to three different types of terumah offered.
2. 25:5 - The tachash delights (sas) in its multi-colors (gvanim).
3. 25:5 - Arazim — cedars.
4. 25:6-7 - a) The oil was lit in the menorah and used for anointing. b) The spices were used in the anointing oil and for the incense. c) The precious stones were for the ephod and the choshen.
5. 25:11 - The outer box was one and a half amos plus a tefach plus a little bit, because it rose a little bit above the kapores. [The kapores was a tefach thick (see 25:17)].
6. 25:11 - It symbolizes the crown of Torah.
7. 25:16 - It testifies that Hashem commanded us to keep the mitzvos.
8. 25:18 - The faces of children.
9. 25:24 - It symbolizes the crown of royalty.
10. 25:29 - Friday.
11. 25:31 - Hammered.
12. 25:31 - Purely ornamental.
13. 25:37 - Towards the middle flame.
14. 25:40 - Hashem showed Moshe a Menorah of fire.
15. 26:1 - On one side a lion; on the other side an eagle.
16. 26:16 - 30 amos.
17. 26:23 - 10 amos.
18. 27:1 - There are two opinions. Rabbi Yehuda says it was three amos high. Rabbi Yossi says it was ten amos high.
19. 27:18 - 100 amos by 50 amos.
20. 27:19 - They secured the curtains against the wind.
Dear Sam Steinberg,

You should definitely try to do this very important mitzvah.

The Torah commands that all Jewish males be circumcised. G-d said to Abraham “This is My covenant which you shall observe, between Me and you and your future offspring: Circumcise every male ... An uncircumcised male who (purposely) does not circumcise himself, that soul will be cut off from its people — he has violated My covenant.”

You need to get an expert mohel (person who performs circumcision) who is knowledgeable in all Jewish laws concerning circumcision. The mere fact that someone is a doctor or surgeon does not qualify him to perform circumcision.

I recently met a mohel who is one of the most experienced people performing circumcision on adults. His name is Rabbi Y. Aron Fisher, Phone number 1-800-367-2747 or 914-425-3266. He told me he will be happy to help you, so feel free to contact him.

I applaud you for your efforts to reunite with your Jewish heritage. In the merit of this great mitzvah, may Hashem bless you with great success in all your endeavors.

Sources:
- Genesis 17:10-14
- Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 260

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Dear Elana Savader and Eliron,

Moses lived to the age of 120. This, by the way, is the origin of the blessing “may you live until 120.” My wife’s uncle always wishes people that they should live to be 122...so that they should not die suddenly!

G-d does not have any physical form, so he doesn’t “look” like anyone or anything. (See the prayer “Yigdal” on pages 12 and 13 in the ArtScroll Siddur.) Even though the Torah says things like “G-d took us out of Egypt with a strong hand” — this is the Torah’s way of telling us about G-d in a way we can understand.

The Kotel measurements are: 488 meters long, 55 meters high, and on the average 1.5 meters “fat.” (A meter is roughly three feet.)

May your son Eliron be a constant source of joy to you and your family, and may he scale the heights of Jewish knowledge and righteousness.

Sources:
- Deuteronomy 34:7

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Dear Name@Withheld,

Your sensitivity is admirable. You’re probably right to avoid doing anything he will feel is “pushing his heritage on him.”

It’s difficult via email to address your specific situation. As for a reference, I suggest you contact either of the two people listed below. I’m sure they will be able to refer you to a sensitive Torah-oriented professional.

Rabbi Binyomin Friedman or Rabbi Menachem Deutsch Atlanta Scholars Kollel (A.S.K.) 2191-A Briarcliff Road Atlanta, Georgia 30329 Phone: 321-4085, 636-3362 Fax: 325-3788.
Hillel said... “Don’t judge a friend until you reach his place.” (Pirkei Avos 2:5)

One of the obstacles to judging people favorably is our certainty that if we would be in that person’s place we would never behave that way: “You’d never catch me doing that...” “No one in my family would ever...” “I simply don’t understand how anyone could...”

Although we might feel our situation to be similar to that of another person, can we ever be in exactly the same situation? Can we bring to it the exact same background, experience and disposition and circumstance?

Sources:
- Rashi Deuteronomy 33:20, 22
- Rashi Genesis 49:9

Living in the Garden of Eden

Chaim Lichtenstein from NY, NY <wildmana@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Besides Elijah and Chanoch, who else went to heaven without dying?

Dear Chaim Lichtenstein,
Tractate Derech Eretz Zuta lists nine people who entered Gan Eden alive: Chanoch, Eliezer servant of Avraham, Eliyahu, Mashiach, Chiram the king of Tzur, Eved the king of Kushi, Yaavetz the son of Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi, Batya the daughter of Pharaoh and Serach the daughter of Asher (granddaughter of Yaakov). According to some, Yehoshuah ben Levi should be included in this list.

Sources:
- Tractate Derech Eretz Zuta 1

The Other Side of the Story

Hillel said... “Don’t judge a friend until you reach his place.” (Pirkei Avos 2:5)

An aide of the Skulener Rebbe, Rabbi Eliezer Zusia Portugal, once related: Among the many people whom the Rebbe had rescued from Europe was a woman who had informed the Rumanian government of his religious activities, which led to his arrest and imprisonment. Why go to such effort and expense to save a person of her ilk?

“You have no idea how much she suffered beforehand, and how tempting the authorities make it to inform,” the Rebbe said with tears in his eyes.

If we see someone stumble, we shouldn’t judge him until we have been in the same situation and successfully passed that test. Until then, we have no right to judge.

Sources:
- Based on “The Other Side of the Story” by Mrs. Yehudis Samet, ArtScroll Series
**Public Domain**

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous “Ask-the-Rabbi” features

**Re: “Who was the first person to die after the Mabul” (Ohrnet Vaera):**

I like the reasoning that leads to the fact that Haran was the first person to die after the flood. But not only Noach’s sons were on the ark. So were Noach’s wife and daughters-in-law. And their parents were dead. Granted that Noach’s children were all still alive but who says that his wife and/or daughters-in-law didn’t die before Haran?

- Avi and Dalia Davidowitz from Bait Vegan, Jerusalem

**Re: “Here’s Sneezin’ Atchoo!” — The ancient Jewish roots of saying “G-d bless you” when someone sneezes (Ohrnet Vaera):**

There is additional material regarding this type of thing in the Torah Temimah on Parshas Noach (7:22) on the words “ruach chaim b’apav — breath of life in its nostrils.”

- Micha <males@actcom.co.il>

**Re: What Maimonides says about Chanukah (Ohrnet Vaera):**

I believe you missed an important part of the Rambam you were quoting. The Rambam there says: “And sovereignty was returned to Israel for more than 200 years until the second destruction.” The return of Israel’s sovereign rule was also a great part of the miracle.

- Yehoshua and Rachel Seidenfeld from Efrat, Israel <gseiden@pangaea.co.il>

**Re: “Starry Starry Night — When does Shabbat End?” (Ohrnet Shemot):**

Actually I recently heard on the Daf Yomi shiur that 72 minutes refers to Nissan and Tishrei (presumably in Northern France where Rabbeinu Tam made his calculations) and that it should be even longer than 72 minutes in the summer.

- Carl Sherer <sherer@actcom.co.il>

**Re: Ohr Somayach’s website (http://www.ohr.org.il):**

Brilliant!!! The Ohr Somayach website is fantastic! What a great way to learn from the best minds on the planet! I love it! I have a small suggestion as well that I hope you will look into: I am a palmpilot user (small digital diary PDA) and there are text volumes available for it. I would love to see shiurim, or Torah works or notes that I could keep with me whilst on the go.

- Clifford Giesenow from Cape Town, South Africa <Cliff@is.co.za>

**Re: “Praying Out Loud — Saying the Silent Prayer for the Visually Impaired” (Ohrnet Vayeitzei):**

Hi. In our local shul in Maoz Zion / Kastel neighborhood of Mevasseret [a city just outside Jerusalem] on Friday nites the amida is said out loud by the sha”tz (prayer leader), apparently because people were both unfamiliar with the text for Friday nite and because Friday nite there is no repetition. The ethnic origin of the shul is from Kurdistan (the whole neighborhood is Kurdish, except for us interlopers).

- Ira (Gavriel Dov) Pollack <dov@optics.jct.ac.il>

continued from page five

**Bonus Answer!**

Answer: There are two difficulties: First the language is awkward: It should say “give Me an offering” and not “take for Me an offering.” Secondly, what sense does it make to give anything to G-d? The whole world is His. We can’t give Him anything. On the basis of these points, Rashi concludes that our act of “taking,” our offering, should be for G-d’s sake, i.e., intended for a G-dly purpose.

- Based on Dr. Avigdor Bonchek’s new book “What’s Bothering Rashi?” Feldheim Publishers

**Recommended Reading List**

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**OHR HACHAIM HAKADOSH**

| 25:8 The Shechina Within Jewry | | |

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