



Parshas Terumah

For the week ending 8 Adar I 5757
14 & 15 February 1997

Overview

Hashem commands Moshe to build a *Mishkan* (Sanctuary) and supplies him with detailed instructions. The 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 Aaron. 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 Mt. Sinai. All of the utensils and vessels, as well as the construction of the *Mishkan*, are described in extraordinary detail.

Insights

THE FURNITURE WAS DIVINE

"They shall make an Ark..." (25:10)

In the desert kingdom of Mukhtar, things changed a lot after they discovered the oil. The sheik, eager to benefit his people and to add to his own prestige, built roads and hotels, palaces and airports. They had everything. Everything, that is, except water. The only liquid that was abundant in Mukhtar was black and viscous. It may have been black gold, but you still couldn't drink it.

Short of towing an iceberg from the Antarctic (a idea which was under consideration), no one had yet found a solution.

The sheik decided that he would go to America, for America was a country where there were solutions for people who didn't even know they had problems. So how much more must there be a solution for someone with a problem that he could easily identify! The sheik stayed in the Waldorf Astoria for less than a week. When it was time to leave, he summoned the bell-hop to take down his luggage.

The bell-hop's jaw dropped when he opened the door to the sheik's suite. There, sitting in the middle of the state-room, was an enormous sea-trunk. It was so improbably large that it looked almost like a stage prop. Realizing that he was easily out-manned by such an object, he retreated and returned with reinforcements. It finally took six able-bodied porters and a truck to move the trunk out to Kennedy airport.

In an era of roll-on luggage, the sheik's cabin trunk looked like a total anachronism. And sure enough, it caught the eye of watchful customs officer.

"Good morning, sir! May I ask you what you have in this trunk."

"Oh it's nothing officer, just a few presents for my people back home."

"Yes sir. Would you mind opening it up, please?"

"Well, really officer, this is most unnecessary. I will take this up at the highest levels."

"That's your privilege, sir, but I'm afraid you'll still have to open this trunk."

When the lid of the trunk opened, the officer's eyes widened in disbelief.

The entire trunk was filled with taps, faucets of all kinds and shapes, stainless steel, copper, modern, antique. Nothing but faucets. Faucets and faucets and more faucets.

"You see officer, in my country, we have no water. On my first day in this country, I went into the kitchen and turned one of these things, and miracle of miracles, water just started to pour out of it! So, now, I am taking home to my people this brilliant invention. You westerners know a thing or two, I have to admit!" Hashem told Moshe to go and tell Betzalel "Make Me a *Mishkan* (a Sanctuary), an *Aron* (holy ark) and *kelim* (the other furnishings of the Sanctuary)". When Moshe told Betzalel, he reversed the order and told him to build an *Aron*, *kelim* and a *Mishkan*.

Betzalel said to Moshe, "Moshe *Rabbeinu*, the way of the world is that a person builds a house, and then afterwards furnishes it. You're telling me to build the furnishings first. Where am I supposed to put them?" Why *did* Moshe change the order?

Moshe wasn't giving Betzalel building instructions. He wasn't talking to him like an architect to a building contractor. Moshe was speaking conceptually, stressing what was the essence and purpose of the *Mishkan*.

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The Aron was the centerpiece of the Mishkan. The word Aron comes from the word in Hebrew for light 'Ohr.' The Aron was the light of the Mishkan, for it contained the Holy Torah, which is the light of the world. Without the Aron, the Mishkan would have been merely a shell, merely a 'dry faucet' without the living waters of the Holy Torah.

ROLLING HILLS

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

The Torah is the portable homeland of the Jewish People. For most of their history, the Jews have been in exile. But whether that exile has been Babylon or Italy, Turkey or Maine, the Jew has always been able to roll up his homeland — the Torah — and take it with him.

It's not so much that the Jews have kept the Torah, than the Torah has kept them. When all the borders are closed to them, when no one will grant them a visa, the Torah welcomes them with open arms.

The staves of the Aron were never to be removed from the Aron. They were to remain in their place constantly. The first Beis Hamikdash stood for over 400 years. Throughout all those hundreds of years, the staves remained in their place; the Torah was ready to move at a moment's notice.

This was a constant symbol that the Torah is not tied to one place. Wherever the Jews go, willingly or perforce, they roll up their portable homeland and take it with them.

Haftorah: I Melachim 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 (King Solomon) 480 years after the Exodus.

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

This is what Hashem is saying to Shlomo Hamelech 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. All these are

SOUL FOOD

"... From every man whose heart will give, you shall take My portion." (25:2)

He looked just like the other pauper. His eyes were dull from lack of food; his garments sullied. He knocked on Rabbi Chiyah's door. "Give me bread!"

Rabbi Chiyah gave him some bread.

"My master gave bread to that other fellow. My master had mercy on him. Will not my master then have mercy on me? I am also poor. I am the angel of death."

The angel of death showed Rabbi Chiyah a rod of fire.

Then Rabbi Chiyah gave him his soul.

This event, which the Talmud records (*Mo'ed Katan* 28a) is very difficult to understand. After all, there's an enormous difference between giving someone a piece of bread and giving up your life?

How could the angel of death make such a comparison in the first place?

The angel of death knew Rabbi Chiyah well. He saw through to the depths of his heart. When Rabbi Chiyah gave bread to a pauper, he gave with such generosity of heart that he was really giving a piece of himself.

The angel of death was really saying to Rabbi Chiyah, "You didn't really give that pauper bread. That was just the way you gave to him. **What you gave was your soul wrapped up in a piece of bread.**"

"So just like you gave him from your soul, give to me too your soul."

Similarly, the whole essence of the Mishkan that the Jewish People built in the desert had to be with a giving heart and soul. For only in this way could metal and wood be transformed into a spiritual space. And only in this way would it be fit for Hashem to dwell in it.

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 the Bnei Yisrael, and I will not forsake My people Yisrael."

Sources:

- "The Furniture Was Divine" - Talmud-Berachos 55a; Rabbeinu Bachya; Rabbi Uziel Milevsky zt"l
- "Rolling Hills" - Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch
- "Soul Food" - Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz
- "Built To Last" - Kochav MiYaakov



INSIGHTS INTO THE ZEMIRO
SUNG AT THE SHABBOS TABLE
THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS.

ELIJAHU HANAVI - תחבב ונחכח
"ELIJAH THE PROPHET..."

He will soon come to us together
with Mashiach, son of David

במהרה יבוא אלינו
עם משיח בן דוד

bimhayrah yavo aleynu
im moshiach ben david

With the departure of Shabbos we mention the redeemers Hashem will hopefully soon send us.

We have already been promised, say our Sages, that Eliyahu will not arrive as a harbinger of Mashiach on Erev Shabbos so that the excitement of his arrival will not get in the way of our preparations for Shabbos. Once Shabbos has ended and the way is clear for him to come we sing our prayer for his imminent arrival together with our redeemer, Mashiach.

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