

OHRNET

TERUMA, 4 ADAR, FEBRUARY 21, 2026
• VOL 33 NO. 20

PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

What's Inside the Box?

“...Take for Me a contribution; from every person whose heart inspires him...” (Shemos 25:2)

When somebody gives you a present, you're happy, but at the end of the day, it's really all about what the gift actually was.

Let's say you wanted the latest pair of super-duper *Grindley Gibbons Mark V ultra-light wrap-around headphones with duplex panavistic drivers*. But all you got was a pair of super-duper *Grindley Gibbons Mark IV super-light wrap-around headphones, without the duplex panavistic drivers*.

Very nice, but not exactly what you wanted.

When you give, on the other hand, it has really nothing to do with the thing itself. The thing itself is just the box. The container. What's inside the box is you. You give yourself. The gift is the giving. Receiving is about what you get. Giving is about giving yourself.

In Parshat Terumah, the Torah says: *“Take for Me a contribution ...from every person whose heart motivates him....”*

Why doesn't it say “Give for Me?” Why “Take for me?”

G-d already has everything. We can't give Him anything.

Except our hearts. All we can give is the giving itself.

The Torah repeats again and again that the people gave *“as their heart moved them.”* Because the Tabernacle, the *Mishkan*, was meant to be a dwelling place for the Divine Presence - the *Shechinah* - and the *Shechinah* does not dwell in objects. It dwells in our hearts. Where we give ourselves.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Hashem commands Moshe to build a Mishkan - Sanctuary - and supplies him with detailed instructions. The Jewish People are asked to contribute precious metals and stones, fabrics, skins, oil and spices. In the Mishkan's outer courtyard will be an Altar for the burning of offerings and a Laver for washing. The Tent of Meeting - *Ohel Moed* - is divided by a curtain into two chambers. The outer chamber is accessible only to *Kohanim*, the descendants of Aharon; it contains the Table of showbreads (Shulchan), the *Menorah*, and the Golden Altar for incense. Entrance to the innermost chamber, the Holy of Holies, was permitted only for the *Kohen Gadol*, and only once a year, on Yom Kippur. It contained 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 the utensils and vessels, as well as the instructions for the construction of the Mishkan, are described in much detail.

Ohrnet Magazine is a weekly Torah magazine published by Ohr Somayach Institutions, POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel · Tel +972-2-581-0315 · Email. info@ohr.edu

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Questions

1. How many types of items were the Jews to donate?
2. The donation of silver for the Mishkan differed from the donation of the other items. How?
3. What property do *techelet* and *argaman* share that *orot eilim m'adamim* do not share?
4. What property do the above three share that *shesh* and *orot techashim* do not share?
5. Onkelos translates "*tachash*" as "*sasgona*." Why?
6. What kind of trees did Yaakov plant in Egypt?
7. Describe two uses of:
 - (a) oil
 - (b) spices
 - (c) jewels
8. The aron was made with three boxes, one inside the other. Exactly how tall was the outer box?
9. Why is the Torah referred to as "testimony"?
10. What did the faces of the *keruvim* resemble?
11. On what day of the week was the *lechem hapanim* baked?
12. What does *miksha* mean?
13. What was the purpose of the menorah's *gevi'im* (cups)?
14. How did Moshe know the shape of the Menorah?
15. What designs were embroidered into the tapestries of the Mishkan?
16. What is meant by "standing wood"?
17. How long was the Mishkan?
18. How wide was the interior of the Mishkan?
19. Why was the altar coated with *nechoshet*, copper-bronze?
20. What function did the copper *yeteidot* serve?

Answers

1. 25:2 - 13.
2. 25:3 - No fixed amount of the other items was required. The silver was given as a fixed amount: a half-shekel.
3. 25:4,5 - They are wool; *orot eilim* are not.
4. 25:4,5 - They are dyed; *shesh* and *orot techashim* are not.
5. 25:5 - The *tachash* delights (*sas*) in its multi-colors (*g'vanim*).
6. 25:5 - *Arazim* -- cedars.
7. 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 for the choshen.
8. 25:11 - The outer box was one and a half *amot* plus a *tefach* plus a little bit, because it rose a little bit above the *kaporet*. (The *kaporet* was one *tefach* thick. -- see 25:17)
9. 25:16 - It testifies that G-d commanded us to keep the mitzvot.
10. 25:18 - The faces of children.
11. 25:29 - Friday.
12. 25:31 - Hammered.
13. 25:31 - Ornamental.
14. 25:40 – G-d showed Moshe a menorah of fire.
15. 26:1 - On one side a lion; on the other side an eagle.
16. 26:15 - The wooden beams were to be upright and not stacked one upon the other.
17. 26:16 - 30 *amot*.
18. 26:23 - 10 *amot*.
19. 27:2 - To atone for brazenness.
20. 27:19 - They secured the curtains against the wind.

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

Sheva Brachot (Part 1)

A husband and wife are one soul, separated only through their descent to this world. When they are married, they are reunited again.

Zohar HaKadosh*

Introduction

An authentic Jewish wedding encapsulates Judaism's whole approach to life:

The *chuppah*, on the one hand, is solemn and sacred. The enormity of the moment is palpable, as all those in attendance watch the *Chatan* and *Kallah* take their very first steps together, beginning their journey through life side by side. And each guest offers up a personal *Tefillah* to Hashem that the couple be blessed, that their marriage be imbued with reciprocal love, respect, harmony and continued growth. Many tears are shed, by the immediate family and by the many friends and acquaintances as well.

But, on the other hand, pure happiness and elation abounds.

This seeming dichotomy is reflected within the *Sheva Brachot* recited under the *chuppah* and throughout the week of celebration following the wedding, as we will explore.

But it isn't really a dichotomy. Jewish life embraces different emotions, often conflicting ones, at exactly the same time. In Judaism, life is not defined as "one or the other" – *either* solemnity *or* joy. We embrace the opportunity to live both simultaneously. And nowhere is this combination more discernable than at a wedding. The thrill of watching a new home being built on the foundations of Torah, mitzvot and *Yirat Hashem* is truly electrifying; at exactly the same time, the gravity of the moment is equally moving.

I once read in Yad Vashem the most astonishing statistic, one which, in a certain way, captures the vitality and eternity of the Jewish People:

Immediately after the Holocaust a DP [Displaced-Persons] camp was established next to the infamous Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany. It was vast, housing up to 12,000 Jewish survivors. In the first year alone *1,070 weddings* took place! Despite the horrors and tragedies that each individual had experienced; despite the loss of everything dear to them – their families, their homes, their friends, their communities, and often their very identities; despite their pre-Holocaust lives having been destroyed never to be reconstructed; and despite the myriad uncertainties about what *will be*, so many of the survivors wanted nothing more than to find someone with whom to build a home and a future together.

Which is exactly what they did. Standing under the *chuppah* each *Chattan* and *Kallah* began the process of establishing a Jewish home. Each couple, together, created a timeless testament, built from the ashes of destruction. Brand new homes that defied the natural course of history and declared the Jewish People's allegiance to the King of Kings. As they answered "amen" to the beautifully expressive *Sheva Brachot* together with their "guests", they linked themselves to the generations of the past and, by doing so, they allowed the generations that followed them – and still follow them – to become part of the eternal chain that is the Chosen Nation.

As Nachmanides so presciently and poignantly described approximately seven hundred years earlier in his *Igeret Hakodesh*, equally applicable to each and every new home established in the aftermath of Holocaust: "Know that this union is a holy and pure thing."

B'Ezrat Hashem, over the coming weeks we will explore the *Sheva Brachot* together in the hope of reaching new levels of appreciation for their beauty and their depth.

ע"ן זוהר ח"א דף פה ע"ב*

To be continued...

TAAMEI HAMITZVOS – Reasons behind the Mitzvos

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

REMOVAL OF THE ARON'S HANDLES

Mitzvah 96

The rods shall be within the rings of the ark; they may not be removed from [the rings]
(*Shemos 25:15*).

The mitzvah

The *Aron* (Holy Ark), the *Shulchan* (Table for showbread), and the *Mizbayach HaZahav* (golden incense altar) had rings on their sides, into which were inserted rods that served as handles. The handles of the *Shulchan* and the *Mizbayach* were inserted only when needed, only when the nation travelled; the *Aron's* handles, by contrast, were never allowed to be removed. Even once the *Aron* arrived in its permanent home, the *Beis HaMikdash*, the handles remained.

Reason one: Essential Symbols

The *Aron* is also called *Aron HaBris*, the Ark of the Covenant, because it contains the *Luchos HaBris* (the Tablets of the Covenant), which symbolize the covenant between Hashem and the Jewish People. The Sages explain that each part of the *Aron* symbolizes a different aspect of the covenant, as follows: The Ten Commandments that are engraved on the *Luchos* are a microcosm of the entire Torah. Thus the *Aron* symbolizes the Torah scholar, who contains the Torah within him. The *Aron*'s handles, which support it, symbolize the supporters of Torah study. If they were to be removed, this would suggest that supporters of Torah study do not share intrinsically in the Torah study that they support. They may receive a reward for their service, but the Torah that is studied is not *theirs*. The Torah therefore commanded us never to remove the handles, to demonstrate that those who support Torah are partners with those who study it, and they will share equally in the reward of the study in the World to Come.

Furthermore, since the *Aron* houses and represents the covenant, it is not fitting for it to be incomplete in any way at any time.

Sources: Shach to Shemos 25:13, based on Pesachim 53b; Chafetz Chaim; Ralbag.

Reason two: The Honor of the *Aron*

Since the *Aron* is the pride and glory of the Jewish People, we are commanded to treat it with the utmost respect and reverence. It would not be fitting, therefore, to manipulate it or to alter its form in any way, even by inserting and removing its handles. The prohibition to remove the handles also minimizes the possibility of the handles being improperly inserted and the *Aron* falling as a result.

Furthermore, inserting handles for the purpose of transportation would be disrespectful to the *Aron*, because it would imply that the *Aron* needed to be carried, when in fact, the Sages teach that “the *Aron* carried those who carried it.” Keeping the handles in place at all times implies that - just as the handles are unnecessary when the *Aron* rests - so they are unnecessary when it is carried. As to why the Torah commanded us to construct handles if they are not needed, this seemingly follows the principle that one does not rely on miracles.

We may suggest that the fact that *Aron* did not need to be carried indicates that the Torah does not actually require people's support; on the contrary, those who “support” it are supported *by* it.

Sources: Chizkuni and Bechor Shor. Chinuch.

Reason three: The Torah is Portable

Another reason the handles may not be removed is that the removal of an article's handles indicates that it is in its place. During the period of the Mishkan, however, the *Aron* did not have a set place. It was *usually* inside the Mishkan, but it was independent of it. It led the Jewish people through the Wilderness, and it accompanied them when they went to war. Furthermore, removing the handles of the *Aron* would suggest that the Torah — which the *Aron* represents — is limited to one place on earth.

The handles of the *Menorah* and of the *Shulchan*, by contrast, could be removed whenever the *Mishkan* was erect. These two articles represented Hashem's spiritual blessings and physical blessings, respectively, which are linked specifically to His Sanctuary and to our service to Him there. Thus, whenever they were at rest in the Mishkan, their handles could be removed, indicating that this was the place of these articles and that they served no function outside the *Mishkan*.

Sources: Berachos 8a; R' Hirsch.