



Building Our Own Mikdash

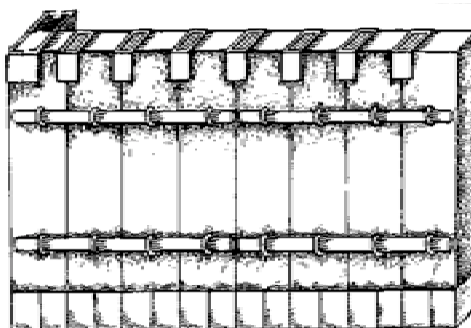
The *briach ha'tikon* (middle bar) inside the boards shall extend from end to end" (Shemos 26:28). This *briach ha'tikon* performed a very important function in the Mishkan. It connected the *kerashim* (boards) of the Mishkan together so that they formed solid walls. The north and south walls each contained 20 *kerashim*, and the west wall had eight *kerashim*. Each *keresh* was 1 1/2 *ammos* (cubits) wide, therefore the total length of the walls (including corner overlap) was 70 *ammos* (approximately 110 feet). The *briach ha'tikon* was therefore a very long piece of gold-plated wood.

There were many miracles associated with the *briach ha'tikon*. The Targum Yonason Ben Uziel elaborates upon them. The wood for this middle bar came from the "eshel" of Avraham Avinu. "He (Avraham) planted an 'eshel' in Beer-Sheva, and there he proclaimed the name of Hashem, God of the Universe" (Bereshis 21:33). Rashi cites a dispute in the Gemora between Rav and Shmuel as to the exact nature of the "eshel." One said that it was an orchard that bore the fruits that Avraham served to his guests. The other said that it was the inn where the guests stayed. Either way, the word "eshel" is an acronym for the words "achila" (eating), "shitia" (drinking), and "lina" (lodging). These are the three "chassodim" (acts of kindness) that Avraham provided for his guests.

The heavenly angels cut down the *eshel* and set it afloat on the sea. Another angel announced that this was the tree that Avraham planted in Beer-Sheva. The Bnei Yisrael made the *briach ha'tikon* from the wood of this tree. It was one straight pole, 70 *ammos* long. This was puzzling. The three walls of the *Mishkan* formed three sides of a rectangle. The corners were at 90° angles. How could one straight pole connect three 90° angle walls? It was a miracle. The Targum Yonason says that when the *Mishkan* was being erected, the *briach ha'tikon* bent like a snake around the corners of the walls. When it was taken down, this miraculous middle bar straightened out again. The connecting bar that held the planks together and stabilized the entire *Mishkan* was one big miracle!

How appropriate this miraculous bar was for the place that housed the *Shechina* (Divine Presence)! Similarly, how appropriate it is for our own homes, the "*Mikdash Mi'at*" (miniature *Mikdash*) that we strive to build within our own four walls. The "*briach ha'tikon*" gave

rigidity to the walls, which prevented them from toppling over. It was made of the "eshel" of Avraham Avinu. That tree which symbolized *gemilus chassodim* (acts of loving kindness) held up the *Mishkan*. So too, *gemilus chassodim* must be the foundation of our homes, our "*Mikdash Mi'at*." The "*briach ha'tikon*" would not have been able to do its job without bending around the corners. That flexibility; the principle of "*vitur*" (giving in to the other point of view) enabled the "*briach ha'tikon*" to hold the walls together, even though they were at different angles. Similarly, the *middah* (character trait) of "*vitur*" allows varying opinions and customs to co-exist in our "*Mikdash Mi'at*."



Kinderlach . . .
 We want our homes to be holy, like the *Mishkan*. We want the *Shechina* to rest upon our dwellings. How do we accomplish this? By building our homes with the same spiritual tools that built the *Mishkan*. Our homes must be bastions of kindness, as symbolized by Avraham's "eshel" tree, whose wood made the "*briach ha'tikon*." We must all practice the *middah* of *vitur*, which allows us all to live in harmony within the four walls. The "*briach ha'tikon*" bent itself around to hold up the walls. *Kinderlach*, you can participate in building your own *Mikdash* within your own four walls by making your home a bastion of chessed and cooperation.

Open Your Heart

Yitzy, just one more mouthful and your finished your cereal. Open up Yitzy! Here comes the airplane! Zoom! Wonderful Yitzy! Yum yum! You finished the whole thing!"

Yitzy's mother is surely the happier one when he eats all of his cereal. Rav Leib Chasman zt"l points out the irony in this little scene. The eating is surely good for the baby. He needs the nourishment, not the mother. Yet, we see how the mother has to coax him to eat his food. He needs persuasion to do something for his own good!

This is also the situation with the Jewish people, continues Rav Chasman. In Egypt we were poorer than poor. Yet, we left with great wealth. Each Jew took along eight donkeys laden with gold, silver, and precious stones. Who bestowed this wealth upon them? Hashem. Now He is asking us to give a small part of this wealth to build the *Mishkan*, a structure that will house the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) upon this earth. This will be a great *zechus* (merit) and *kapora* (atonement) for us. Yet, how does He instruct Moshe Rabbeinu to ask for the donations? "Speak to the Bnei Yisrael and let them take for Me *Trumah*, from every man whose heart motivates him you shall take *Trumah*" (Shemos 25:2). The tone is a soft request, not demanding in any way.

Why is the soft approach necessary? Hashem knows how strong the *Yetzer Hara* (Evil Inclination) of selfishness is. People do not want to give up their money for anything. Therefore, they needed coaxing, even to build the *Mishkan*, whose holiness and purity was solely for their good. What will happen when this *Mishkan* is built? "And I will dwell in your midst" (Shemos 25:8). That is the power of opening your heart and overcoming the *Yetzer Hara*. Just taking a little money out of your pocket can bring the *Shechina* to dwell among us.

Rav Chasman concludes, "How many 'pockets' does a man have? The 'pockets' of jealousy, desire, and honor. All of them need coaxing to open up. Take heart! If the opening of one pocket to give a little charity has the power to bring down the *Shechina*, just imagine how much *kedusha* (holiness) a person can generate if he overcomes all of his *Yetzer Haras* and serves Hashem with his whole heart."

Kinderlach . . .
 Do not let an opportunity to give *tsedaka* (charity) pass you by. Whenever you receive a gift, make sure to set aside some of it as *tsedaka* for poor people. Similarly, it is important to share your possessions with others. Lend your toys to other *kinderlach*. This will open your heart and make you more generous. We do not want to be coaxed to give. We want to learn to give freely, and bring down the *Shechina*!

- Parasha Questions:
- What was the fourth wall of the *Mishkan* composed of? (26:36,37)
 - What were the dimensions of the *kerashim* (planks)? (26:16)
 - How many "*brichim*" were there altogether? (26:26-28)