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subject: Rabbi Hershel Schachter - Visiting, and Hosting, Hashem
Rabbi Hershel Schachter
Visiting, and Hosting, Hashem

The requirement to build a Beis Ha'mikdash is counted among the six hundred and thirteen mitzvos, and applies in every generation whenever possible. Yechezkel hanavi (11:16) told Bnei Yisroel that they would be exiled to Bavel, and even though they will not have the real Beis Ha'mikdash they will have a "mikdash me'at - miniature Beis Ha'mikdash." The gemarah (Megillah 29b) understands this to be a reference to all shuls and yeshivos in Bavel and all over the world. The Chayei Adam (quoting R' Eliezer Mi'mitz in Sefer Yerayim) says that kidushas beis ha'kneses and Beis Ha'mikdash are of biblical origin. Rabbi Dovid of Novardok (Teshuvos Galya Masechta) assumes that according to the Rambam who writes (Parshas Naso) that there is a biblical mitzvah to celebrate upon the completion of the building of the Beis Ha'mikdash, it would constitute a biblical mitzvah to celebrate a chanukas ha'bayis upon the inauguration of a new shul or a new beis ha'medrash.

Rav Soloveitchik (Shiurim Lezeicher Avi Mori, Vol. 2, pages 78-83) explained that one of the main purposes of the Beis Ha'mikdash is for us to have a location where we can get together with Hashem. The Beis Ha'mikdash is beis Hashem, Hashem's home, and we go there to "visit" Him. Shuls and yeshivos, however, are our home and Hashem "comes" to them in order to "visit" us. When one goes to visit the

King in his palace, one must be much more respectful than when the king is visiting in one's home. This is why the chumash speaks of morah ha'mikdash (extreme respect for the Beis Ha'mikdash) and the gemarah and Shulchan Aruch speak of k'vod beis ha'kneses, a slightly lower level of respect.

The Shulchan Aruch, quoting the Talmud Yerushalmi, says that bigdei yom tov must be fancier than bigdei shabbos. Rav Soloveitchik (ibid) explained that on the Shalosh Regolim we have an obligation to be oleh leregel, to visit the Ribbono Shel Olam in His palace. On Shabbos, on the other hand, the Shechinah comes to visit us. When we recite Kabbolas Shabbos, we are not only greeting the Shabbos Queen, but also the Shechina who is visiting us. Consequently the minhag in Europe used to be that everyone stood for Lecho Dodi; it was treated as a dovor shebikedusha, since the kohol was greeting the Shechina who was coming to visit us on Shabbos. Therefore, the bigdei yom tov should be more elegant than bigdei Shabbos because on the regolim we are visiting the King in his palace, as opposed to Shabbos when the King is coming to visit us. Copyright © 2017 by TorahWeb.org. All rights reserved.

from: Shabbat Shalom shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org 5773
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Lord Jonathan Sacks
Building Builders

As soon as we read the opening lines of Terumah we begin the massive shift from the intense drama of the exodus with its signs and wonders and epic events, to the long, detailed narrative of how the Israelites constructed the Tabernacle, the portable sanctuary that they carried with them through the desert.

By any standards it is a part of the Torah that cries out for explanation. The first thing that strikes us is the sheer length of the account: one third of the book of Shemot, five parshiyot – Terumah, Tetsaveh, half of Ki Tissa, Vayakhel and Pekudei, interrupted only by the story of the golden calf.

This becomes even more perplexing when we compare it with another act of creation, namely G-d's creation of the universe. That story is told with the utmost brevity: a mere thirty four verses. Why take some fifteen times as long to tell the story of the Sanctuary? The question becomes harder still when we recall that the mishkan was not a permanent feature of the spiritual life of the children of Israel. It was specifically designed to be carried on their journey through the wilderness. Later, in the days of Solomon, it would be replaced by the Temple in Jerusalem. What enduring message are we supposed to learn from a construction that was not designed to endure?

Even more puzzling is that fact that the story is part of the book of Shemot. Shemot is about the birth of a nation. Hence Egypt, slavery, Pharaoh, the plagues, the exodus, the journey through the sea and the covenant at Mount Sinai. All these things would become part of the people's collective memory. But the Sanctuary, where sacrifices were offered, surely belongs to Vayikra, otherwise known as Torat Kohanim, Leviticus, the book of priestly things. It seems to have no connection with Exodus whatsoever.

The answer, I believe, is profound.

The transition from Bereishit to Shemot, Genesis to Exodus, is about

the change from family to nation. When the Israelites entered Egypt they were a single extended family. By the time they left they had become a sizeable people, divided into twelve tribes plus an amorphous collection of fellow travellers known as the *erev rav*, the “mixed multitude.”

What united them was a fate. They were the people whom the Egyptians distrusted and enslaved. The Israelites had a common enemy. Beyond that they had a memory of the patriarchs and their G-d. They shared a past. What was to prove difficult, almost impossible, was to get them to share responsibility for the future.

Everything we read in Shemot tells us that, as is so often the case among people long deprived of freedom, they were passive and they were easily moved to complain. The two often go together. They expected someone else, Moses or G-d himself, to provide them with food and water, lead them to safety, and take them to the promised land.

At every setback, they complained. They complained when Moses’ first intervention failed:

“May the Lord look on you and judge you! You have made us obnoxious to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.” (Ex. 5: 21)

At the Red Sea they complained again:

They said to Moses, “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!” (Ex. 14: 11-12)

After the division of the Red Sea, the Torah says: “When the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and believed in him and in Moses his servant” (Ex. 14: 31). But after a mere three days they were complaining again. There was no water. Then there was water but it was bitter. Then there was no food.

The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.” (Ex. 16: 3)

Soon Moses himself is saying:

“What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.” (Ex. 17: 4)

By now G-d has performed signs and wonders on the people’s behalf, taken them out of Egypt, divided the sea for them, given them water from a rock and manna from heaven, and still they do not cohere as a nation. They are a group of individuals, unwilling or unable to take responsibility, to act collectively rather than complain.

And now G-d does the single greatest act in history. He appears in a revelation at Mount Sinai, the only time in history that G-d has appeared to an entire people, and the people tremble. There never was anything like it before; there never will be again. How long does this last? A mere forty days. Then the people make a golden calf.

If miracles, the division of the sea and the revelation at Mount Sinai fail to transform the Israelites, what will? There are no greater miracles than these.

That is when G-d does the single most unexpected thing. He says to Moses: speak to the people and tell them to contribute, to give something of their own, be it gold or silver or bronze, be it wool or

animal skin, be it oil or incense, or their skill or their time, and get them to build something together – a symbolic home for my presence, a Tabernacle. It doesn’t need to be large or grand or permanent. Get them to make something, to become builders. Get them to give.

Moses does. And the people respond. They respond so generously that Moses is told, “The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the Lord commanded to be done” (Ex. 36: 5), and Moses has to say, Stop.

During the whole time the Tabernacle was being constructed, there were no complaints, no rebellions, no dissension. What all the signs and wonders failed to do, the construction of the Tabernacle succeeded in doing. It transformed the people. It turned them into a cohesive group. It gave them a sense of responsibility and identity. Seen in this context, the story of the Tabernacle was the essential element in the birth of a nation. No wonder it is told at length; no surprise that it belongs to the book of Exodus; and there is nothing ephemeral about it. The Tabernacle did not last forever, but the lesson it taught did.

It is not what G-d does for us that transforms us, but what we do for G-d. A free society is best symbolized by the Tabernacle. It is the home we build together. It is only by becoming builders that we turn from subjects to citizens. We have to earn our freedom by what we give. It cannot be given to us as an unearned gift. It is what we do, not what is done to us, that makes us free. That is a lesson as true today as it was then.

To read more writings and teachings from the Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, please visit www.chief Rabbi.org.

from: Kol Torah Webmaster <webmaster@koltorah.org>

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subject: Kol Torah Parashat Terumah 2017

MiSheNichnas Adar Marbim BeSimchah: A Halachic Analysis by Rabbi Daniel Fridman

The rabbinic mandate, *MiSheNichnas Adar Marbim BeSimchah*, is, on the one hand, deeply familiar to all of us, and yet, at the same time, halachically speaking, puzzling. Indeed, when one examines the source of the dictum itself, a statement of Rav located towards the end of *Masechet Ta’anit*, “*KeSheim SheMiSheNichnas Av Mema’atin BeSimchah, Kach MiSheNichnas Adar Marbin BeSimchah*,” “just as we become less happy when Av arrives, so too we become more happy when Adar arrives,” [1] the difficulty is compounded. After all, the former clause, that the arrival of Av occasions a deliberate and systematic reduction of joy, is readily understandable: the city walls of Yerushalayim had already been breached, and the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash* was, at that point, a tragic inevitability.

Yet, the latter clause, mandating an increase in celebration with the arrival of Adar, *prima facie*, appears without the same kind of historical justification. On the contrary, the Jews of ancient Persia were in no position whatsoever to celebrate when the fateful month of Adar arrived. It was only their victory on the thirteenth of the month which enabled the celebration that would subsequently ensue. Surely, we would have imagined, the celebration ought to have been limited to the days of Purim themselves, with the first thirteen days of the month, if anything, defined as times of national distress and anxiety.

Second, even if we were to disregard the specific events of Purim itself, we do not, in the general sense, find any sort of parallel injunction concerning the rabbinic institution of Chanukah, in the spirit of, “when Kislev arrives, we begin to increase our joy,” raising further questions concerning the

source of this particular Halachah. Likewise, at the Torah level, we do not find any such concept regarding Shavu'ot.

Finally, in his brief comment on the Gemara, Rashi further complicates matters by surprisingly incorporating Pesach into the discussion: "Yemey Nisim Hayu LeYisrael: Purim U'Pesach," "Purim and Pesach were days of miracles for Yisrael."^[2] It would seem, based on the simple reading of Rashi, that whichever expressions of joy that are triggered by the mandate of MiSheNichnas Adar Marbim BeSimchah ought to continue through the end of the month, and into Nissan as well.^[3] And yet, Rashi does not seem to address the fundamental question at stake, namely, the reason that these expressions of joy should commence with the arrival of Rosh Chodesh Adar.^[4]

In light of these difficulties, it certainly bears mentioning that whilst Rambam codifies the first clause of Rav's statement, MiSheNichnas Av Mema'atin BeSimchah, he pointedly omits any mention of MiSheNichnas Adar Marbim BeSimchah. The same can be said for Tur and Shulchan Aruch as well.

It seems to me that some perspective on this question may be gained by examining the precise nature of Haman's lot. While, admittedly, the text is somewhat ambiguous, it seems likely that Haman cast his lot only with respect to the month in which he would seek the destruction of the Jewish people, not the day. The Pasuk states that Haman cast lots "MiYom LeYom UMeiChodesh LeChodesh Sheneim Asar, Hu Chodesh Adar," "[concerning] every day and month [until the lot fell on] the twelfth month, the month of Adar."^[5] Remarkably, the date of the intended destruction is not found in the text at all.^[6] The succeeding verses in the chapter reveal that Haman immediately approaches the king, the decree is issued, and the day merely happens to be the thirteenth of the month of Nissan.

As such, one can reasonably argue that Haman selected only the month of Adar without specifying the date. The precise date, namely the thirteenth, emerged idiosyncratically, purely as a result of the fact that it happened to be the thirteenth day of the month of Nissan when the lot was cast. This reading may be confirmed by a striking passage in the Gemara which relates that Haman was elated when the lot fell on the month in which Moshe died.^[7] While the Gemara goes on to wryly note that Haman was oblivious to the fact that Moshe was also born in that month, the entire premise of the Gemara is sensible only if we understand that Haman was singularly focused on the month of destruction, as opposed to the date. Had Haman been focused on the date as well, his reaction should not have been elation but frustration, as he had missed out on the date of Moshe's death, Adar 7th, by a mere six days, an experience akin to having four of five correct lottery numbers.

If it is indeed the case that Haman selected the month of Adar for the destruction of the Jewish people, while the date was merely a byproduct of the date upon which he happened to draw the lot, the expression towards the very end of the Megillah is far more understandable, "HaChodesh Asher Nehpach Lahem MiYagon LeSimcha UMeiEivel LeYom Tov," "the month that was transformed for [the Jews] from grief to happiness and from mourning to festivity,"^[8] with emphasis on the month of Adar, not the day. On the basis of this Pasuk, the Talmud Yerushalmi^[9] derives a shocking but profoundly illuminating Halachah: in theory, one may fulfill his obligation to read the Megillah at any point during the month of Adar. While the Talmud Bavli does not go quite as far as the Yerushalmi, the very institution of "Kefarim Makdimin LeYom HaKenisah,"^[10] permitting villagers to read the Megillah as early as the 11th or 12th of the month, equally points in the direction of a holiday localized less to two particular calendar dates than to an entire month: HaChodesh Asher Nehpach Lashem MiYagon LeSimcha.

The argument that the basis for Rav's extension of the Mishnaic statement, MiSheNichnas Av Mema'atin BeSimchah, to MiSheNichnas Adar Marbim BeSimchah is rooted in Haman's own lot may be strengthened by the following asymmetry between two cases. While there is a host of Halachic expressions of the reduction of joy commencing with Rosh

Chodesh Av,^[11] ranging from commercial activities, certain forms of planting and construction, and holding weddings, there is only one Halachic expression concerning increasing joy in the month of Adar: if a Jew has a legal dispute with a Nochri, he should feel most confident adjudicating the matter in Adar.^[12] Even this particular expression of MiSheNichnas Adar Marbim BeSimchah seems patterned, albeit at far less of an existential plane, on the confrontation between Haman and the Jewish people.

And yet, even if the transformation of the month of Adar can be traced towards Haman's lot itself, one might still argue that Chazal needed a precedent for an entire month to be transformed beyond the immediate days of celebration themselves. It is in this connection that Rashi's aforementioned insertion of Pesach in his explanation of the concept of MiSheNichnas Adar Marbim BeSimchah might be particularly instructive. Indeed, if there is a model for an entire month that is transformed beyond the immediate days of celebration contained within it, Nissan is certainly the paradigm. The restrictions on eulogies and recitation of Tachanun during the entirety of the month of Nissan,^[13] not limited to the days of Pesach themselves,^[14] may be conceptualized as a halachic precedent for the transformation of an entire month, a precedent upon which Rav's mandate, MiSheNichnas Adar Marbim BeSimchah, may well rest.

Furthermore, Rabbi Shimon ben Gamli'el's insistence, contra Rabbi Eliezer beRabbi Yosi, upon reading the Megillah during a leap year in the Adar which immediately precedes Nissan^[15] certainly underscores the fundamental connection between these months. It is certainly reasonable to interpret Rabbi Shimon ben Gamli'el's stated reason, "Mesameich Ge'ulah LeGe'ulah Adif," "it is preferable to juxtapose the redemption [of Purim] to the redemption [of Pesach]," on a more superficial plane, that both of these months contain redemptive moments for the Jewish people. However, I prefer to interpret this Halachah as a reflection of a more profound bond between Adar and Nissan, namely that the two months that have been transformed above and beyond the specific days of celebration contained therein. In this sense, the very words employed by Rabbi Shimon ben Gamli'el, "Mesameich Ge'ulah LeGe'ulah," can be interpreted in a far more precise way, not merely as connoting a general proximity between Purim and Pesach, but, quite literally affixing one month of redemption directly to the other.

While the rabbinic nature of both of these institutions, the prohibition against eulogies throughout Nissan and the definition of the entire month of Adar as one of happiness, precludes a direct application of the concept of "Kol DeTikkun Rabanan KeEin DeOraita Tikkun," that Rabbinic laws are patterned after Torah laws, the conception that Adar, as a month of celebration, was patterned after Nissan is certainly an analogue of this principle. The fact that the critical events of the Megillah--the three-day fast, Esther's approach to Achashveirosh, and the exposure of Haman--occurred on the days of Pesach themselves renders this connection that much more compelling.

Whatever its origins, Rav's halakha of MiSheNichnas Adar Marbim BeSimchah lends itself to one final interpretation. As the celebrated passage in Masechet Shabbat details, during the generation of Achashveirosh, "Kiyemu Aleihem Mah SheKiblu Kevar," the Jewish people reaffirmed their commitment to the eternity of Torah.^[16] A nation on the verge of total assimilation, whom the Talmud pointedly notes were fully represented and engaged in the debased orgy of Achashveirosh,^[17] rediscovered its spiritual footing. A people rightly accused of being "Mefuzzar UMeForad Bein HaAmmim," a fractious and discordant group,^[18] rediscovered its fundamental unity in three days of spiritual awakening, a unity which harkened back to the singularity of purpose originally manifested at Sinai, when they were described "Kelsh Echad BeLeiv Echad," "like one man with one heart."^[19] Inasmuch as the Jews of Shushan reconnected to the Torah, it may not be entirely out of place to suggest that the happiness of Adar relates to the ultimate source of joy, Torah, as is written in Tehilim,

“Pikkudei Hashem Yescharim, Mesamchei Leiv,” “the precepts of Hashem are just, rejoicing the heart.”[20]

[1] Talmud Bavli Ta’anit 29a

[2] Ibid.

[3] Cf. Elyah Rabbah Orach Chaim 685, who indeed argues that “Nisan is like Adar” in terms of it being a favorable time to pursue litigation against a Nochri in court.

[4] Note, for example the Sefat Emet (Ta’anit 29a), who rejects the link between Adar and Nissan, and interprets Rav’s statement to be an reference to the Beit HaMikdash: just as the mourning of Av centers around the destruction of Mikdash, the happiness of Adar stems from the collection of Shekalim for the upkeep of the Mikdash.

[5] Esther 3:7

[6] One might read the term MiYom LeYom as suggesting a lot cast for the date in addition to the month. However, one wonders, then, why the date is omitted from the end of the Pasuk, while the month is reported. Second, it is quite a coincidence that of thirty possible dates in the month of Adar, the lot happened to fall precisely on the thirteenth, the very day it happened to be in the month of Nissan when the lots were cast.

[7] Talmud Bavli Megillah 13b

[8] Esther 9:22

[9] Talmud Yerushalmi Megillah Perek 1

[10] Talmud Bavli Megillah 2a

[11] Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim Hilchot Tish’ah BeAv UShe’ar Ta’aniyot 551:1-2

[12] Talmud Bavli Ta’anit 29b, Magen Avraham Orach Chayim 686:5

[13] Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 429

[14] In fairness, the Chanukat HaMizbei’ach, covering the first twelve days of Nissan, is a factor in the transformation of the month of Nissan in its entirety--in combination with the days of Pesach, the majority of Nissan is festive, and one may employ the concept of Rubo KeKulo, following the majority, to transform the rest of Nissan. Yet, this makes the transformation of Adar, in which there are only two days of celebration, that much more remarkable.

[15] Talmud Bavli Megillah 6b

[16] Talmud Bavli Shabbat 88a

[17] Talmud Bavli Megillah 12a

[18] Esther 3:8

[19] Rashi Shemot 19:2 s.v VaYichan Sham Yisrael

[20] Tehilim 19:9

From Rabbi Mordechai Tzion toratravaviner@yahoo.com [ravaviner]
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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

From the teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva

Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit" a

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Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion Visit our blog: www.ravaviner.com

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SHUT SMS

Crossed Legs

Q: Is it permissible to sit with crossed legs in Shul?

A: No. We should sit with an awe of holiness. The same is true in a Beit Midrash. And when we learn Torah it should be with fear, awe and trembling. Berachot 20.

Bishul Akum in Tzahal

Q: If there is no military rabbi supervising the cooking on our base, what issue must one worry about regarding a non-Jewish soldier cooking?

A: For Ashkenazim, a Jew must light the fire, gas or electricity, and the non-Jew may place the pot or pan on it. Thus it will not be considered Bishul Akum (Rama Yoreh Deah 113:7). For Sefardim, the essence is that the Jew places the food on the fire (Shulchan Aruch ibid.). After the fact, if there is nothing to eat, one may be lenient and eat. A soldier has the same leniency as a servant. Today we do not have servants as laid out by the Torah, but when there were non-Jewish servants, it was permissible for them to cook. Non-Jewish soldiers are not servants in the legal sense, but the Rama [ibid. 4] says that our permanent workers have the same ruling as servants. We thus have a case of a double-doubt: perhaps the Halachah follows the opinion that a Jew lighting the fire is enough, and perhaps the permanent,

non-Jewish soldiers have the status of servants. It is thus possible to be lenient (Shut Yechaveh Da'at 5:54).

Religious Jew

Q: What is the definition of a religious Jew?

A: One who observes the Halachot written in the Shulchan Aruch. Yitzchak Avinu Erred...

Q: I heard that while it is true that the Rabbis forbid ascending to the Temple Mount, during his time, Yitzchak Avinu erred in wanted to bless Esav. So too the Rabbis err in this ruling.

A: You must go to Maarat Ha-Machpelah to ask forgiveness from Yitzchak Avinu and at the same from all the Rabbis of Israel.

Stop Smoking

Q: I smoke. I am not addicted but I enjoy it and cannot stop. What should I do?

A: Stop gradually. Smoke one less cigarette every week.

Room for Everyone After the Resurrection of the Dead

Q: How will there be enough room in the world for all of the people after the Resurrection of the Dead?

A: Maran Ha-Rav Kook said we will also live on other planets.

What is the Source?

A: What is the source for the answer I received?

A: I apologize. I received 400 questions a day and do not have time to note the source. If you want, the sources can be found in my books (She'eilat Shlomo, Piskei Shlomo, etc.).

Minhag for Adopted Child

Q: I was adopted. Do I follow the Minhag of my adopted parents or my biological parents?

A: The parents with whom you live.

Blessing on Food that Does not Taste Good

Q: I eat food for sports-related reasons which does not taste good to me. Do I recite a blessing on it or is it a blessing in vain?

A: You should certainly recite a blessing on it, since it sustains your body.

Loving My Son

Q: How do I love my son who rebels against the Torah and against me?

A: Learn from King David. His son, Avshalom tried to kill him, and nonetheless when he died, he cried: "My son Avshalom, my son, my son Avshalom, if only I could die in your place Avshalom, my son, my son... my son Avshalom, Avshalom, my son, my son". Shmuel 2 19:1-5. The Gemara in Sotah (10b) explains that David said "my son" eight times in order to raise him from the seven lower levels of Gehinom and have him enter Gan Eden.

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**Pass the Challah
by R. Gil Student**

There is a debate about the proper way to cut challah bread when cutting it for a group of people sitting at the table. May you cut pieces for everyone at first, or must you cut only for yourself, eat a little, and then cut for everyone else? And then there are variations in between. A neighbor of royal Bobov ancestry told me that his father has a letter from the previous Bobover rebbe saying that, based on kabbalistic sources, one may initially cut an extra piece for one's wife. Others cut a bunch of pieces and then the leader takes the last piece, implying that he had to cut all those pieces just to get to the one that he wants. And so on, with many variations. Personally, I don't get the whole debate.

The Gemara (Berachos 47a) states that when one person is reciting the hamotzi blessing on the bread for everyone at the table, the others may not eat until the one who recites the blessing takes his piece of bread. The

implication is either that the others may not take bread before the leader takes his piece or that they may not eat until he eats first.

Tosafos quote the Sar (R. Shimshon) from Coucy who ruled the first way, that people should not take their pieces of bread before the leader. But if he hands the pieces out, they may eat first. However, the Rambam and others rule the second way, that they may not eat first.

The Shulchan Arukh (167:15) quotes the words of the Gemara without explanation, while the Rema adds that the leader may give out pieces of bread but others may not eat their pieces until the leader eats first. This is clearly following the view of the Rambam and not the Sar from Coucy.

The Magen Avraham (34) raises a question on the Rema's ruling: The Talmud Yerushalmi states that Rav would eat and pass out the pieces of challah at the same time. While it is clear that Rav was acting above and beyond the law by doing both at the same time, he seems to have been of the view that the leader must eat first before distributing the pieces. The Magen Avraham leaves this question open but an answer can be found in the Bi'ur Ha-Gra (to se'if 17). The Gra explains this passage as meaning that Rav knew that if he handed out the pieces, no one would be able to eat them until he ate first (as above). In other words, Rav's actions were not because he could not hand out the pieces before eating but because the people could not eat until he ate first.

The Taz (15) also raises a question on the Rema's ruling. The Taz explains that only according to the Sar from Coucy may one hand out pieces of bread since, according to his view, the people may eat as soon as they receive it. However, according to the Rambam -- and this is how we rule in practice -- people may not eat until the leader eats first. Therefore, distributing the pieces of bread is a needless wait before the eating may begin. In practice, we are very strict about any waiting time between the blessing and eating -- even waits that are related to the meal and, therefore, technically permissible (see Rema, Orah Hayim 167:6). Therefore, passing out bread that no one can immediately eat is a needless wait and should be forbidden. This Taz is the starting point for anyone who wants to argue that one may not even cut bread for others, the argument being that cutting extra bread should be equivalent to handing it out.

However, the Taz, who is arguing based on the Rambam, seems to be against that very Rambam. The following is the Rambam's language in Hilkhos Berakchos (7:5):

The leader (ha-botzei'a) gives a piece to everyone and the other takes it in his hand. The leader does not put it in the eater's hand unless he is a mourner (avel). And the leader stretches out his hand first and eats. And those sitting down may not taste until the one who recited the blessing eats first.

It seems clear that, according to the Rambam, the leader places pieces in front of each person and then takes his own piece and eats it first. The only other way I can see reading this Rambam is according to the version which the Rema himself quotes and dismisses in Darkhei Moshe, that the word avel (mourner) should read okhel (eating). In which case the Rambam states that the leader may not distribute bread unless he is already eating. Otherwise, though, the Rambam -- who is supposed to be the source of this whole stringency -- seems to explicitly allow not only cutting pieces of challah for everyone but also giving it out.

The Bach, the Taz's father-in-law, recommends not giving out pieces to everyone because people will likely eat before the leader, which we rule is improper. That is my practice. But the Taz disagrees with his father-in-law by saying that it is prohibited to do so rather than just inadvisable. The Taz, and not the Bach, is what can lead to the stringencies regarding cutting pieces.

As always, direct your halakhic questions to your rabbi, not the internet.

Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting the following items:

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subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Home Weekly Parsha TERUMAH

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

One of the great deficiencies and dangers that face organized religions, and certainly Judaism as well, is its necessary connection to fundraising. In a perfect world, religion would be completely separate from the necessity to obtain and dispense money -- in fact, from any monetary consideration whatsoever. However since this perfect world has not yet been achieved, the problems and influence of money on religion, both individually and institutionally, are many and powerful.

The necessity to raise funds gives birth to all sorts of schemes in which the prevailing attitude often times is that the greatness of supporting Torah and Judaism justifies the use of otherwise questionable means. I need not identify or enumerate the numerous cases that have led to individual and institutional grief and public shame because of this type of mindset.

The building of the Tabernacle/Mishkan, the story of whose construction starts to be told to us in this week's Torah reading, was accomplished by the voluntary donations of the individual Jews encamped in the desert of Sinai, in response to the call and appeal of Moshe. We do not find that this fundraising effort was in any way sullied by graft, greed, commissions or overhead expenses.

Moshe will make a full accounting for all of the donations received and will detail exactly how they were processed and built into the construction of the holy edifice. And when it appeared to Moshe that there was sufficient material and donations to complete the task, he calls a halt to the fundraising efforts. Moshe's efforts were blessed by God and became the ideal paradigm, never again equaled in Jewish world history, of a completely notable and transparent fundraising campaign.

This was not the case in the time of the kings of Judah when funds were required to refurbish the Temple of Solomon. The fund-raising dragged on for years in the priestly clan and the public grumbled over the manner in which it was conducted. Finally the King had to acquiesce to some sort of looser arrangement regarding the accounting and spending of the funds that were donated in order to be able to finally complete the project.

Moshe and his generation and their ability to transcend the lure of money were no longer present. As the generations have declined since Sinai, that paradigm of Moshe has tended to recede even further. There is no practical benefit in bemoaning this fact. For religion and religious institutions to survive, expand and become influential, money is necessary. And when money becomes therefore necessary, all of the dangers that money brings with it enter our camp and unfortunately sometimes even seem to dominate it.

We should always demand transparency and honesty when dealing with public and charitable funds. Eventually Heaven separates the pure silver from the dross which always seems to encompass it. But we should insist, for our part, that holiness is built by holy means and just and responsible behavior.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

from: Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff <ymkaganoff@gmail.com>

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Various Kindling Kwestions

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Electric lights for Shabbos

"Unfortunately, I need to have a medical procedure performed which will require me to spend Shabbos in the hospital. Because of safety concerns, they will not allow me to kindle candles. Do I fulfill the mitzvah of kindling Shabbos lights if I light electric lights?"

Question #2: Rekindle for Shabbos?

“If lights are already burning Friday afternoon shortly before Shabbos, is there a mitzvah to extinguish and rekindle them for the sake of fulfilling the mitzvah of kindling Shabbos lights?”

Question #3: Unbelieving kindler

“My mother, who unfortunately does not believe in Judaism, kindles Shabbos candles every Friday evening, because ‘that is what Jews do.’ Do I fulfill the mitzvah when she lights?”

Answer:

All three of the above questions involve laws that result from understanding the rabbinic mitzvah to kindle lights before Shabbos. Several reasons are cited for this mitzvah:

Any place treated with pomp and ceremony is always suitably illuminated.

Certainly, the area where the Shabbos is celebrated, which commemorates the fact that Hashem created the world, should have plenty of light.

People will not enjoy the Shabbos meal if they eat in the dark. Therefore, the Sages required that the place where one intends to eat the Shabbos repast be properly illuminated.

Some provide a different and highly practical reason to require illumination on Shabbos. We do not want anyone to hurt himself by stumbling over or bumping into something on Shabbos.

Difference in halachah

There is a difference in halachah among these different opinions. According to the first two opinions, the main halachic concern is that the place where one eats should be lit. According to the last opinion, one must be careful to illuminate all places in the house that a person may pass through on Shabbos, so that he does not hurt himself by bumping into or stumbling over something.

Chazal were concerned that one not remain in the dark on Shabbos. Did they simply require everyone to be certain that his house is illuminated, or did they establish a requirement to kindle a lamp? The Rishonim dispute this question, some holding that Chazal were satisfied that one make certain that he have adequate lighting for Shabbos, whereas others contend that we are required to kindle a light specifically for this purpose.

What difference does it make?

Several halachic differences result from the above-mentioned dispute:

Rekindling lights – keep those candles burning!

1. If lights are already burning Friday afternoon shortly before Shabbos, is there a mitzvah to extinguish and rekindle them for the sake of fulfilling the mitzvah of kindling Shabbos lights? If the mitzvah is to make sure that there is illumination, then I am not required to rekindle lights, but may simply leave the lights burning on into Shabbos. However, if there is a special mitzvah requiring me to kindle the lights, then I must extinguish the burning lights and rekindle them!

The Rishonim dispute whether one is required to extinguish the lights and rekindle them or not. Those who contend that one may leave the candles burning maintain that it is sufficient if there is adequate illumination for Shabbos, and one has no responsibility to extinguish the light and rekindle it. Other Rishonim, however, maintain that Chazal required kindling lights especially for Shabbos. Thus, leaving lights kindled is insufficient, if I did not light them especially for Shabbos.[i] We rule according to the second approach.

Later authorities rule that we satisfy the requirement to kindle a special light in honor of Shabbos by kindling just one light. Thus, if there are many lights kindled around the house, one is not required to extinguish all of them and rekindle them all for the sake of Shabbos. It is sufficient to kindle one light for this purpose and leave the other lights burning.[ii] Similarly, if your house is situated in a way that street lighting illuminates your hallway, you are not required to leave lights on to provide additional illumination.

Reciting a brocha

2. Does one recite a brocha on the mitzvah of kindling Shabbos lights?

A second dispute that results from our original inquiry (whether the mitzvah is to kindle lights or to have illumination) is whether one recites a brocha

when kindling the Shabbos lights. According to those opinions that the mitzvah is simply to see that the house is illuminated, one would not recite a brocha when kindling Shabbos lights, even if he needs to kindle lamps before Shabbos. This is because, in their opinion, there is no special mitzvah to kindle lights.[iii] However, the conclusion of the poskim is that there is a mitzvah to kindle Shabbos lights, and that even if one has lights kindled already, one should extinguish and rekindle them.[iv]

Having a gentile light for me

3. A third result of this dispute is whether I can fulfill the mitzvah by having a non-Jew kindle Shabbos lights for me. What happens if I am unable to kindle the Shabbos lights myself? May I ask a non-Jew to kindle them for me? If the mitzvah is to kindle the lights, then I have not fulfilled a mitzvah this way, since a non-Jew cannot be my agent to fulfill a mitzvah. On the other hand, if the mitzvah is for the house to be illuminated, having a gentile kindle lights for me fulfills the mitzvah, since the house is now illuminated. Since we follow the second approach, I may not have a non-Jew light for me. Electric lights?

In our modern houses, the candles or oil lamps provide very little lighting, and our main illumination is provided by the electric lights. In most houses, one does not even notice when the candles go out, so overshadowed are they by the electricity. May we fulfill the mitzvah with electric lights?

Indeed, most authorities contend that one fulfills the mitzvah of kindling Shabbos lights with electric lights (Shu”t Beis Yitzchok 1:120; Eidus Leyisrael, page 122). There are authorities who disagree, because they feel that the mitzvah requires kindling with a wick and a fuel source that is in front of you, both requirements that preclude using electric lights to fulfill the mitzvah (Shu”t Maharshag 2:107).

The consensus of most authorities is that, in an extenuating circumstance, one may fulfill the mitzvah with electric lights (Shu”t Yechavei Daas 5:24; Shu”t Kochavei Yitzchak 1:2). Therefore, someone who is hospitalized for Shabbos may recite a brocha on electric lights, since hospitals usually forbid lighting an open flame.

Electricity and then candles

Since we are, anyway, primarily using electric lighting to fulfill the mitzvah, it is therefore a good idea that, immediately prior to kindling the Shabbos lights, one turn off the electric lights in the dining room and then rekindle them for the purpose of Shabbos, then kindle the Shabbos candles or lamps, and then recite the brocha, having in mind that the brocha includes both the candles and the electric lighting. (This is following Ashkenazi practice. Sefardim, who recite the brocha first and then kindle the lights, can recite the brocha, and then turn on the electric lights and light the Shabbos candles.)

Lady of the house

Although long-established custom is that the lady of the house kindles the Shabbos lights (see Mishnah Shabbos 31b), in actuality, each person is responsible for fulfilling the mitzvah (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 5:1). This does not mean that everyone should start kindling his own lights. It means that when the lady of the house kindles the Shabbos lights, she does so as the agent of the entire household. Should there be no lady of the house who can perform the mitzvah, a different member of the household should kindle the lights.

Preparing the lights

Although the lady of the house is the one who actually kindles the lights, her husband should assume the responsibility of preparing the lights for her to kindle. This approach, mentioned in the Zohar, is also implied by the wording of the Mishnah (Tosafos Rabbi Akiva Eiger, Shabbos 2:6).

Unbelieving kindler

At this point, we are in a position to begin analyzing the third of our opening questions:

“My mother, who unfortunately does not believe in Judaism, kindles Shabbos lights every Friday evening, because ‘that is what Jews do.’ Do I fulfill the mitzvah when she lights?” Let us understand the basis for the question.

Someone who does not observe all the mitzvos of Judaism certainly can and should be encouraged to observe whatever mitzvos they are willing and able to. The question here is that we are told that her mother “does not believe in Judaism,” which I presume means that she has actively rejected the assumption that Hashem has commanded that we observe His mitzvos. A great late authority, the Sho’eil Umeishiv (2:1:51; 2:3:91) discusses whether someone who does not believe that Hashem commanded to observe mitzvos fulfills them, since this person rejects that there are commandments. The Sho’eil Umeishiv concludes that, indeed, someone who does not accept the basis of mitzvos does not fulfill them. He bases this principle on the statement of the Rambam (Hilchos Melachim 8:11) that a gentile who observes mitzvos is considered a righteous gentile and is rewarded with olam haba, provided that he believes that Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu that the descendants of Noach are commanded to observe the mitzvos that apply to them.

According to the Sho’eil Umeishiv, someone who does not believe in Torah but kindles Friday night lights only because it is a Jewish practice, but without any belief that one is commanded to do so, does not fulfill any mitzvah. If this is so, then their kindling cannot function as an agent for someone else. This would mean that the daughter, who is observant, should also kindle Shabbos lights, and that she should recite a brocha when she does so, since she is the one fulfilling the mitzvah.

If she feels that this will offend her mother, she can turn on the dining room electric lights, which, as we noted above, fulfills the mitzvah. Based on what we have explained above, she could even recite a brocha on the electric lights.

In conclusion

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (Shemos 20:10) notes that people mistakenly think that work is prohibited on Shabbos in order that it be a day of rest. He points out that the Torah does not prohibit doing avodah, which connotes hard work, but melachah, which implies activity with purpose and accomplishment. Shabbos is a day that we refrain from constructing and altering the world for our own purposes. The goal of Shabbos is to allow Hashem’s rule to be the focus of creation, by refraining from our own creative acts (Shemos 20:11).

The Gemara (Shabbos 23b) teaches that someone who kindles Shabbos lights regularly will merit having sons who are Torah scholars. Let us hope and pray that in the merit of observing these halachos correctly, we will have children and grandchildren who light up the world with their Torah!

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subject: Rav Frand - Instructions for the Miraculous Menorah

Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Terumah

Instructions for the Miraculous Menorah

Parshas Teruma concerns itself with the Mishkan [Tabernacle] and the vessels used therein. The truth of the matter is that for the next five parshiyos — Terumah, Tezaveh, a good part of Ki Sisa, Vayakhel, and Pekudei — this is the primary topic of the Torah’s narration. Parshas Teruma discusses the construction of the Menorah, which was a very elaborate decorated structure made out of one piece of solid gold. At the summation of the ten pesukim that describe the construction of the Menorah, the pasuk says, “See and construct, according to their form that you are shown on the mountain.” [Shmos 25:40]

Rashi comments “This pasuk tells us that Moshe was perplexed by the construction of the Menorah until the Holy One, Blessed is He, showed him a Menorah of fire.” In other words, with all his great wisdom and understanding, Moshe Rabbeinu did not fully grasp how this complex structure was supposed to look until the Almighty miraculously showed him “a Menorah of fire.”

In fact, even that did not help. In the final analysis, Chazal say that Moshe could not even figure out how construct the Menorah after he saw the diagram of fire. Ultimately, G-d told Moshe to take an ingot of gold and throw it into the fire. Miraculously, the finished Menorah came out. There is an interesting Baal HaTurim on the pasuk “See and construct...” The Baal HaTurim writes that there are only three times in all of Tanach that Scripture begins a pasuk with the word “u’Reeh” [and see]. They are (1) this pasuk here; (2) “And see if I have a vexing way; and lead me in the way of eternity.” [Tehillim 139:24]; and (3) “And may you see children born to your children, peace upon Israel.” [Tehillim 128:6]. That is the end of the terse comment of the Baal HaTurim.

The obvious question is what is the common denominator between these three pesukim? Two out of the three pesukim clearly have a common theme: “And may you see children born to your children, peace upon Israel” is speaking about children. The pasuk “And see if I have a vexing way...” (u’re’ay im derech otzev bi...) is also speaking about children because the word otzev is a word that is associated with the concept of tzaar geedul banim [the pain involved in raising children]. This is because when the Almighty cursed Chava, He told her “b’etzev teldee banim” [with pain you will give birth to children]. Chazal say that this refers to the punishment of tzaar geedul banim. Anyone who has ever raised a child knows exactly what the pain of tzaar geedul banim is. But the mystery remains: What do all three pesukim brought down by the Baal HaTurim have in common?

I once saw in a sefer that if in fact — as Chazal say — Moshe Rabbeinu was ultimately incapable of constructing the Menorah on his own and the Almighty needed cause the Menorah to emerge miraculously, then why was it necessary for G-d to go through the previous nine pesukim providing elaborate detail of the design of the Menorah? Moshe was not going to be able to make the Menorah anyhow, so skip the description and go straight to the miraculous creation of the Menorah! Furthermore, what was the point of the “fiery diagram?” That also did not work. What was going on here with this whole charade?

The answer is that the Ribono shel Olam is teaching us a lesson: Even when something is impossible to do on our own, it is necessary to know at the outset what our eventual goal is. We need to have in mind from the beginning what we want the product to be. Once we know what the final product should be, despite the fact that we may be personally incapable of implementing it on our own and we need Siyata d’Shmaya from the Ribono shel Olam — we have the possibility of success. Knowing what we are striving for and having that final image in mind are essential for every endeavor, even those that we only accomplish through Divine Assistance. In business, they call this a “business plan.” If someone wants to start a successful enterprise, he needs a “business plan” to direct him. Many businesses do not meet the expectations of their business plans. The world is full of those situations. However, the plan, the goal, the image of what is going to be at the end of the day is essential, even if ultimately we are relying on great Siyata d’Shmaya.

This, then, is the connection between the “u’Re’eh v’aseh” of the Menorah, the “u’Ree’eh banim l’baneh”, and “u’Re’eh im derech otzev bi”. Raising children is the activity in which we need more Siyata d’Shmaya than any other human activity. A person can be the wisest and most successful person in the world but raising children is its own chapter entirely. It is impossible to be successful at it without Help from Heaven. However, that does not mean that a person should throw up his hands in futility and say, “What is the use?” We must have the mindset and the image of what we eventually want to see from our children. This is the lesson of the Menorah. At the end, it only happened through direct Siyata d’Shmaya, but first Moshe Rabbeinu needed to have a concept of what it is that he was trying to accomplish, what it is that he wanted. That is the way it is with children. We need unlimited Siyata d’Shmaya. We need to pray every day that we should have success with our children. However, we also need to know the goal of what we would like to see our children become and accomplish.

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Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Teruma

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

For the week ending 4 March 2017 / 6 Adar II 5777

Insights

Life is a Marathon

“...and let them take for Me a portion...” (13:17)

About two years after I arrived in Ohr Somayach I'd had enough.

I assumed that after many “mouth-breaking” months of hard work I would have mastered Hebrew and Aramaic, be fluent in both, and be well on my way to becoming a world-class Talmid Chacham.

It didn't quite work out that way.

I was standing outside the Beit Midrash when Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Mendel Weinbach (zatzal) came over to me and asked how I was.

My sister (a”h) used to say that the definition of a bore is someone who, when you ask them how they are – they tell you.

Ignoring my sister's dictum, I proceeded to unload my deep dissatisfaction on Reb Mendel.

He heard me out, then just said to me, “Yankev Osher. Sprinters are for the record books. Life is a marathon.”

Torah learning is like a business venture: A storekeeper can never close up the shutters once and for all, because however bad business is, the one sure way to fail is to give up.

Torah can be exasperating, exhausting, and unfathomable. But however difficult and frustrating it may be, someone who perseveres is guaranteed to win his own personal marathon.

Source: based on Rabbi Dovid of Kotzk

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Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

OU Torah

“My House, and His House” -

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

There is a well-known joke that is told about the Jews which I find particularly sad. The joke tells of a group of explorers who find a Jew who has been stranded on a desert island for years. As he takes them around the island and shows them how he survived, they find that he built two synagogues for himself. When asked why he needs two since he is all alone, he says that one is the one he prays in, and the other is the one he would never walk into.

This joke, if you can call it that, makes a discouraging comment about some of our people. Some of us seem to have a favorite house in which to worship and another house which we stubbornly shun.

It is true that every Jew needs at least two houses of worship. But he must enter both of them. One is his synagogue, and the other is his home.

Jewish worship takes place in the home to an even greater extent than in the synagogue.

It is in the home that we recite grace after meals, prayers upon awakening and before bedtime, special prayers before Shabbat candle lighting, and countless informal prayers and benedictions.

The synagogue, on the other hand, is the place for formal prayer and for communal worship.

In this week's Torah portion, Parashat Teruma, we learn of the very first house of worship: The Mishkan, or Tabernacle. We also learn about some of the furnishings which were essential to the construction of this house.

I want to suggest that these furnishings are not merely of historical import but are necessary in both the public synagogue and the private home.

The first three components mentioned in this week's Torah portion are the Ark, in which the tablets with the Ten Commandments, and according to some the entire Torah, are contained; the holy Table upon which twelve breads were placed every Sabbath; and the golden Menorah, exquisitely decorated.

These three vessels are also prominent features of both synagogue and home and indeed should be so.

Like the Tabernacle of old, every synagogue today has an ark in which the Torah scrolls, often along with scrolls of the Prophets and of the Megillot, are contained.

In our faith, traditional holy texts are at the core of our worship. The original holy texts were housed in the Tabernacle's Ark, and later in the Ark of the holy Temple in Jerusalem. So too, in the contemporary synagogue, the holy texts are central to our worship experience, and every occupant of the synagogue faces those texts as he or she prays.

Where, you might ask, is the analog of the Ark in one's private home? I maintain that the bookcase is the Ark of one's personal dwelling. Ideally, that bookcase contains the entire Jewish Bible, along with essential commentaries and classic Jewish texts.

So the Ark, which was situated prominently in the Tabernacle, is a feature of both of our “houses of worship”; our synagogue and our home.

So too, with the table. A wooden table covered over with a layer of gold occupied a place of honor in the Tabernacle. The food kept there, the “shew bread” was distributed to the priests on duty every Sabbath. This table symbolized the divine blessings of sustenance.

Every synagogue has a bima that is analogous in many ways to the table in the Tabernacle. The synagogue's table is the place from which the Torah is read and from which God's spiritual nourishment is shared.

In traditional synagogues, this table is not placed up front, on stage as it were, for spectators to behold. Rather, it is placed in the middle of the synagogue sanctuary, among the people. The message is clear: The table symbolizes God's spiritual providence and bounty and as such is something of which every member of the congregation should partake.

The table in the home, equally sacred, is the place for physical nourishment. A beautiful Talmudic expression has it that “the table is like an altar.” Whereas the Jew of old expressed his ultimate sense of worship by offering a sacrifice upon the altar, the contemporary Jew worships God by sharing the food on his table with other individuals. Again, like the Ark, the table which glorified the ancient tabernacle persists as a central feature of both of our modern houses of worship, our synagogues and our homes.

Finally, the golden Menorah which beautified the historic tabernacle and the later Beit HaMikdash. Just about every synagogue I ever attended features a menorah in a very conspicuous place. And Hanukkah menorot occupy a place of honor in the Judaic art collections of even the humblest Jewish home.

There is a symbolism to the Menorah which is even more apt when applied to the two houses of worship we have been discussing. The Menorah symbolizes light; the light of wisdom, the light of the intellect. A central feature of Judaism is that it is not a mystical religion based upon blind faith or irrational emotions. Quite the contrary. Our faith is largely based upon reason and is respectful of the power of the intellect and the gift of true wisdom. Thus, many commentators see a connection between the seven branches of the Menorah and the seven classical sciences, or categories of knowledge. The Torah is pre-eminently sacred, but other sources of wisdom are important and have their place. So too, in our two houses of worship. Our synagogues must allow for the expression of knowledge from all human sources. As Maimonides put it, “We must accept the truth from wherever it comes.” For him, that meant even from the ancient Greek philosophers.

Our private homes must be open to the truths of science, of literature, and of other cultures. The intellectual life should not be seen as threatening to our religious belief. A life of Torah is made more sublime when it is appropriately enriched by the wisdom of the world.

When some people read this week's portion, they are frequently put off by the details of an ancient religious structure which seems to have little relevance for their lives. But by looking a little more deeply, and with a dose of creative contemplation, there is much to be learned from even the most technical and seemingly outdated passages of our Torah. I hope that my suggestions in this week's column help the reader connect the Ark, the Table, and the Menorah of the Tabernacle in the wilderness to the ark, the table and the menorah of our own synagogues.

I hope, too, that the reader can take the further step and see his or her own home as a house of worship and discover, or construct, arks and the tables and menorot in the places dearest to us.

<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/>

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

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The Jerusalem Post

Parashat Truma: A human ‘temple’

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Adar, 4, 5777 | March 02 2017

This week's Torah portion deals with details of building the Mishkan, the Tabernacle. This was the temporary temple that accompanied the people during their wanderings in the desert, until the permanent Temple was built in Jerusalem.

We read of many details relating to the building of the Tabernacle, the exact measurements of its ritual objects, and the exact length and width of the Tabernacle itself.

The parasha begins with these words spoken to Moses: "Speak to the Children of Israel, and have them take for Me an offering..." (Exodus 25:2).

Moses was instructed to collect the funds needed to build the Tabernacle from the nation: "...from every person whose heart inspires him to generosity, you shall take My offering" (ibid.).

When we look at the name of the parasha – Truma (offering, contribution) – an interesting question pops out at us. One would think that the parasha should be named "Mishkan," not "Truma." Though the Tabernacle was built from the offerings of the nation and the generosity of those who contributed from their own pockets to have it built, the collection of funds was not a goal in itself. There was no need to raise money other than because without contributions from "the generous of heart," there would be no way to build the Tabernacle. The truma, the contribution, was only a means to get to the significant end – the construction of the Tabernacle.

The answer to this question lies in the words of the Sages of the midrash. They took the verse "And they shall make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst" (ibid. 25:8) and explained: "It does not say 'in its midst' but, rather, 'in their midst' – in the midst of each and every person."

Had God said "And they shall make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in its midst," that would have meant that God resides in the Tabernacle or Temple, where He reveals Himself. We can absorb His holiness only in the Temple, where God dwells. According to this outlook, there is no Divine revelation within us humans.

There is also no personal connection between us and God; that connection is possible only with the Temple as an intermediary.

But that is not what the words say. The sensitive and careful reading by the Sages accurately discerned the exact form of the verse, "I will dwell in their midst," and understood from this that God dwells within each of us. This teaches us that God reveals Himself in our hearts. We all recognize within ourselves the desire to be good, to be a better person. God's voice emanates from within us. Each of us carries the ambition to make the world more perfect, for people to smile at one another, for the world to be kinder.

The purpose of building the Temple is so we all recognize within ourselves the voice of God, that we are not meant to accept reality, but that we have the power to make it better.

For this reason, the Temple was built with everyone's truma. These contributions created the personal connection between each member of the Jewish nation and its most sacred site.

The Temple's holiness stemmed from it being constructed by everyone's desire to build a House of God, a place that would be a moral and spiritual beacon, a compass for all of humanity.

We are all connected to the building of the Temple, since it was built from contributions that came from each person in the nation, and therefore it symbolizes our desire to be a part of the lofty endeavor of Divine revelation in the world.

Though the Temple was destroyed about 2,000 years ago, the sense of holiness that enveloped all who entered it still exists somewhat until today. Whoever visits the Western Wall nowadays would probably sense a sort of transcendence that comes from the proximity of the Western Wall to the site of the Temple.

Visiting this place emphasizes that despite all our disagreements, humanity shares a wide common denominator around which it can create one society that is diverse but that can work in partnership for the greater good. The divisiveness, disputes and disagreements cannot negate our ambition to make ourselves and our world better and more complete.

The sense of transcendence one gets from a visit to the Western Wall must be maintained by internalizing the concept that God does not dwell in the Temple alone but in each of us. We can all become a small "temple" and discover inside ourselves the light, the goodness and the beauty that God bequeaths to the world.

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Rav Kook Torah

Mishpatim: Trust in God vs. Self-Reliance

The Tachash and the Erev Rav

The Talmud gives an account of the enigmatic Tachash, a mysterious creature whose beautiful multicolored hide was used as a covering for the Tabernacle:

"The Tachash that lived in the time of Moses was a unique species. The Sages could not determine whether it was domesticated or wild. It only appeared at that time for Moses, who used it for the Tabernacle. Then it vanished." (Shabbat 28b)

What is the significance of this unique animal? What was its special connection to Moses, that it made its appearance only during his lifetime? And why did Moses incorporate the colorful Tachash in the Tabernacle, albeit only for its outermost covering?

Mixed Blessings from Mixed Multitudes

In Aramaic, the Tachash is called Sasgona, for it was proud (sas) of its many vivid colors (gona). According to Rav Kook, the multihued Tachash is a metaphor, representing Moses' desire to include as many talents and gifts as possible when building the Jewish people — even talents that, on their own, might have a negative influence upon the people. The metaphor of the Tachash specifically relates to Moses' decision to allow the Erev Rav — "mixed multitudes" from other nations — join the Israelites as they left Egypt.

The Erev Rav were the source of much grief. They instigated the Sin of the Golden Calf and other rebellions against God in the wilderness. And their descendants throughout the generations continued to bring troubles upon Israel. Nevertheless, at the End of Days, all the troubles these difficult and diverse forces caused will be revealed as having been for the best, as the absorption of the Erev Rav served to enrich the Jewish people.

One disturbing aspect of the Erev Rav is the phenomenon of many dynamic forces abandoning the Jewish nation during its long exile among the nations. Yet this is not a true loss, since only that which was foreign to the inner spirit of Israel is cast off. These lost elements of the Erev Rav were ultimately incompatible with Knesset Yisrael, the national soul of Israel; thus they were unable to withstand the pressures and hardships of exile. It saddens us to lose that which we thought was part of Israel, but in fact, they were never truly assimilated within the nation's soul.

This outcome benefits the world at large. As these 'fallen leaves' join the other nations, they bring with them much of what they absorbed from the holiness of Israel. As a result, other peoples have become more receptive to Israel's spiritual message.

Could the Tachash be Domesticated?

The Sages were in doubt as to the ultimate fate of the multi-talented Erev Rav. Would they be truly absorbed within Israel, enriching the people and remaining forever a part of it? Or would they only serve as a positive influence on the world, outside the camp of Israel?

The Sages expressed this uncertainty by questioning whether the Tachash was a domestic creature. A wild animal cannot be trained and will not permanently join man's home. It can only be guided indirectly. A domesticated animal, on the other hand, is completely subservient to man and is an integral part of his household. Would the Erev Rav ultimately be rejected, like wild animals which can never be truly at home with humanity? Or would they be domesticated and incorporated into the house of Israel?

Moses and the Tachash

Just as the Tachash only made its appearance in Moses' time, so too, this absorption of foreign talents was only possible in Moses' generation. No other generation could have taken it upon itself to accept alien forces into the nation. Once the contribution of the Erev Rav to Israel is complete, the nation's spiritual restoration requires that they will be purged from the Jewish people. "I will purge your dross... and then you will be called the city of righteousness, faithful city" (Isaiah 1: 25-26).

We usually avoid destructive forces which may delay and hinder the ultimate good.

However, a far-reaching vision can detect the underlying purpose of all human activity, as all actions ultimately fulfill the Divine Will. The great hour of Exodus resonated with the highest vision; the first redemption of Israel initiated the historical process that will culminate with the final redemption. Moses, the master prophet, "the most faithful of all My house," saw fit to include those varied forces that ordinarily would be rejected. And yet, like the skins of the Tachash, they were only suitable for the most external covering. "The new heavens and the new earth which I will make are standing before Me." (Isaiah 66:22)

All of the wonderful forces of the future — "the new heavens and the new earth" — are not really new. They already exist. Even now, they are "standing before Me." By accepting the Erev Rav, Moses planted these diverse gifts within the Jewish people. Like seeds, they decay in the ground; but ultimately they will sprout and bring forth new life. The brilliant future light, with all of its spectacular colors and breadth, is not new; it was secreted away long ago. This resplendent light is hidden, like the multi-hued Tachash, until the time will come for it to be revealed once more.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. III, pp. 105-107)