YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA

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Yeshivat Har Etzion invites you   
to join us for its Annual Dinner

which will be held Tuesday, March 21st  
at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in NYC.

Rabbi Ari Berman - Rabbinic Tribute Award

Dr. Mark and Brenda Gardenswartz - Parents of the Year

Elana Stein and Tova Warburg Sinensky - first American alumnae   
of the Stella K. Abraham Beit Midrash for Women in Migdal Oz,

Yeshivat Har Etzion Classes of 1985 and 1986

For more information contact the NY office at [etzion@att.net](mailto:etzion@att.net) or call 1212-732-4874

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Dedicated in memory of Matt Eisenfeld z"l and Sara Duker z"l whose 10th yahrzeit is this motzaei Shabbat. Though their lives were tragically cut short their memory continues to inspire. Yehi zikhram barukh.

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PARASHAT TERUMA

SICHA OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"A

"I Shall Dwell in their Midst"

Summarized by Shaul Barth

Translated by Kaeren Fish

"Let them make Me a Sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst." The *Rishonim* debate the purpose of the *Mishkan*. Rambam maintains that the *Mishkan* offers optimal closeness to God, and is a special place dedicated to His worship. Ramban, on the other hand, argues that the *Mishkan* is a continuing symbol of the revelation at Sinai and the acceptance of the Torah. In order to verify Ramban's approach, we must investigate whether the characteristics which lent the events at Sinai their unique nature, existed in the *Mishkan* and the Temple, too; this will clarify whether the *Mishkan* indeed symbolizes a return to that awesome experience at the foot of Mount Sinai.

When we examine the revelation at Mount Sinai, we see that its most significant feature is the attainment by *Am Yisrael*, at its finest hour, of the greatest possible measure of closeness to God. This closeness is characterized by two seemingly contradictory aspects, which in truth complement each other.

The Midrash (*Shir Ha-shirim Rabba* 6:3) recounts that, with each Commandment that issued from God, the souls of Israel departed, and were returned to them for the next Commandment. Clearly, when the midrash speaks of their souls "leaving them," it does not mean merely that they fainted. Rather, they experienced a desire for absolute cleaving to God a sense of such powerful yearning for closeness that each and every Jew was elevated to the extent that his or her soul could no longer exist within the body, and it departed: "My soul departed as He spoke" (*Shir Ha-shirim* 5:6).

In contrast, the Gemara (*Shabbat* 88b) tells us that with each and every Commandment, *Bnei Yisrael* moved twelve *mil* backwards. Why, at their greatest moment, would *Am Yisrael* distance themselves to the very outskirts of the camp? This seemingly puzzling retreat is, in fact, an expression of the greatness of *Am Yisrael* at this most auspicious time. The feeling that led the nation, on the one hand, to come close to God and to cleave to Him – a desire that, in its highest form, caused their souls to depart, so intense was their desire and love – was accompanied by an opposite yet complementary feeling: awe of God and His greatness, which moved them to distance themselves.

These two emotions – love and awe – characterize every person in the course of his or her coming close to God. When they prevail simultaneously, they are the best possible reflection and expression of the situation in which man, finite and mortal, encounters the immortal God Who "fills all worlds."

This feeling – which so typified the revelation at Sinai – was experienced again, in a somewhat diminished form, in the Mikdash, which was indeed intended to re-enact the experience of receiving the Torah. The Gemara (*Yoma* 54a) describes that the two poles on the sides of the Ark in the Holy of Holies protruded into the curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy, looking to the kohen standing in the Holy "like a woman's two breasts." This description, astounding in its power, tells us that when the *Kohen Gadol* approached the Holy of Holies for the most intimate possible encounter with God, he would feel such closeness to God that it could be described only by employing imagery from the love between husband and wife. On the other hand, when the *Kohen Gadol* entered the Holy of Holies, he proceeded in fear and trembling. These emotions, although opposites, accurately express a person's feelings as he or she draws close to God. Thus, as stated, they recall the experience of Sinai.

The *Mishkan* existed not only during the course of the Jews' wanderings in the desert, nor only in the form of the Temple in Jerusalem, but – in a certain sense – is meant to exist within each of us, as the poem says, "*Bi-levavi Mishkan evneh*," "In my heart I shall build a Sanctuary." Each one of us is meant, in the course of his inner service of God, to come close to God and cleave to Him. This attempt manifests itself, in each of us, in the form of these two emotions – awe and love. Each one of us must try to relive the experience of Sinai within himself and to hear the voice of God. On the other hand, we know that we are unable to do this; ultimately, we are forced to hide from God's glory and acknowledge the distance between ourselves and Him. "Let them make Me a Sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst" – within each and every person.

[This sicha was delivered on leil Shabbat parashat Teruma 5763 (2003).]