**S.A.L.T. – PARSHAT TERUMA**

**By Rav David Silverberg**

Motzaei Shabbat

The Torah in Parashat Teruma describes the altar that stood in the courtyard outside the *Mishkan*, and then later, in the courtyard outside the *Beit Ha-mikdash*. The altar’s dimensions are listed here in the Torah as being five *amot* long, five *amot* wide, and three *amot* high (27:1).

The Gemara in Masekhet Zevachim (59b-60a) cites different opinions among the *Tanna’im*, between Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Yossi, regarding the meaning of this verse, and one of the points of dispute is the height of the altar. While Rabbi Yehuda accepts the plain meaning of the verse, that the altar stood just three *amot* tall, Rabbi Yossi contends that it was, in truth, ten *amot* tall. When the Torah lists the altar’s height at three *amot*, Rabbi Yossi claims, this refers to the height of the top section of the altar, which extended beyond the *soveiv* – the “walkway” surrounding the altar where the *kohanim* would stand when offering the sacrifices. The *soveiv* stood six *amot* above the ground, and according to Rabbi Yossi, the altar extended three *amot* above the *soveiv*. The protrusions at the corners of the altar extended an additional *ama*, for a total height of ten *amot*.

In challenging Rabbi Yossi’s view, Rabbi Yehuda points to the fact that if, indeed, the altar stood this high, then the *kohen*’s service on the altar was visible outside the Temple courtyard. The curtains encircling the courtyard stood just five *amot* high (Shemot 27:18), and so if the altar extended higher than five *amot*, then the *kohen*’s service would be seen by the people outside. Rabbi Yehuda argued that this is inconceivable, and thus necessarily, the altar could not have been this tall. Rabbi Yossi responded that the curtains were also higher, and when they are described as standing just five *amot* tall, this means that they extended five *amot* beyond the height of the altar.

Rav Menachem Kasher, in *Torah Sheleima* (vol. 22, appendix 20), notes the significance of the fact that both *Tanna’im* found such a prospect – of the *kohen*’s service on the altar being visible to people outside – unthinkable. It was taken as an unchallenged assumption that the service was visible only to the people assembled in the Temple courtyard, and not to people outside. Apparently, Rav Kasher writes, it was presumed that the service in the *Mikdash* had to maintain a private quality, and was not to be publicized for all to see. Those who wished to visit the *Mikdash* to observe the service were able to, assuming they were in the required state of purity, but the service could not possibly be made into a public spectacle visible even to those outside the *Mikdash*.

This discussion reminds us of the critical importance of privacy in our *avodat Hashem*. Our service to our Creator should remain private, and not put on public display. Certainly, as Rav Kasher notes, there are certain communal *mitzvot* which are meant to be performed in public in order to bring glory to God. Generally speaking, however, if we approach *mitzva* observance with honesty and sincerity, then we should avoid turning them into public spectacles, and keep our *avodat Hashem* as a private matter between us and the Almighty.

Sunday

The Midrash (*Shemot Rabba* 33:1), commenting on the beginning of Parashat Teruma, cites the famous verse in Mishlei (4:2), “*Ki lekach tov natati lakhem Torati al ta’azovu*” – “For I have given you good merchandise; do not abandon My Torah.” God “sold” us the Torah, the Midrash explains, relinquishing ownership over it and handing it into our possession, as it were. However, unlike in other transactions, the Midrash comments, which results in the seller’s complete detachment from the merchandise, in the case of the Torah God sold Himself, so-to-speak, with the Torah. The command to construct a *Mishkan* after *Benei Yisrael* received the Torah expresses the fact that God wishes to reside with us after having giving us the Torah. He did not want to detach Himself entirely from the Torah, and so He instructed *Benei Yisrael* to build a place where He would “reside” among us and be close, as it were, to the Torah. The Midrash thus interprets the phrase, “…do not abandon My Torah” to mean, “Do not abandon the merchandise I have given you.” This merchandise is so valuable that God did not want to leave it after having “sold” it to *Benei Yisrael*. We therefore should never abandon this precious commodity, just as God Himself refused to abandon it.

The Kotzker Rebbe develops this comparison drawn by the Midrash between Torah and commerce, and suggests an explanation for the admonition to never “abandon” this enterprise. When a merchant finds that his endeavors are not succeeding, he does not simply despair. Earning a livelihood is too important for a person to simply give up after experiencing failure. When a person’s professional or commercial undertakings are unsuccessful, he will, in all likelihood, redouble his efforts and rethink his approach in order to increase his chances of success. As he needs to support himself and his family, he will not simply despair. He will do all he can to succeed.

This, the Kotzker Rebbe suggests, is the Midrash’s intent when it instructs, “Do not abandon the merchandise I have given you.” If our efforts in Torah study and observance prove unsuccessful, when we experience spiritual decline or moments of failure and shame, we must not despair. Our Torah endeavors must be afforded no less importance than our professional or entrepreneurial efforts, and thus when we find ourselves struggling or even failing, the only acceptable response is to keep on trying. As in a profession or business, we will likely have to make significant changes and pursue other avenues of success, but we cannot despair. Rather than feel discouraged, we must recognize that in all areas of life, we will experience both periods of success and periods of decline, and our job is to constantly invest effort and achieve to the best of our ability.

Monday

The *Minchat Chinukh*, in discussing the *mitzva* to build a *Beit Ha-mikdash* (95), takes note of an intriguing omission in the Rambam’s presentation of the laws relevant to the *Mikdash* and its various components. In Hilkhot Beit Ha-bechira, the Rambam presents the details of the construction of the *Mikdash* and the *keilim* (appurtenances), with one glaring exception – the *aron* (ark). Whereas the Torah in Parashat Teruma discusses the laws regarding the construction of the ark along with the rest of the laws concerning the construction of the *Mishkan* (Shemot 25:10-22), the Rambam does not discuss the *aron* in his presentation of these laws. The *Minchat Chinukh* concluded on this basis that in the Rambam’s view, there is no eternal command to build an *aron*. Whereas the commands in the Torah regarding the other *keilim* indeed apply for all time, as they must be constructed whenever circumstances allow for building a *Mikdash*, the command to build an *aron* does not apply for all time. Indeed, the Second Temple functioned for hundreds of years without an *aron.* (The Gemara in Masekhet Yoma (53b) cites a debate as to whether the ark was buried underneath the Temple towards the end of the First Commonwealth, or if it was brought to Babylonia after the destruction. All agree, however, that the *aron* was not present in the Second Temple.) The *Minchat Chinukh* leaves it as an unanswered question why the command to build an *aron* is not regarded as an eternal command like the commands to build the other *keilim*.

Rav David Rappaport, in his [*Mikdash David* (2:1)](http://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=14562&st=&pgnum=13), suggests an answer based on the Gemara’s comment in Masekhet Shavuot (15a) regarding the method whereby the *keilim* in the *Beit Ha-mikdash* became formally consecrated. The Gemara establishes that the initial *keilim* build in the wilderness in the time of Moshe became formally consecrated by being anointing with the *shemen ha-mishcha* (anointing oil). Later in Sefer Shemot (30:22-33), we read of the command to prepare this special oil with which the *Mishkan*, its appurtenances, and the *kohanim* were consecrated. The Gemara comments that this method of consecration was required for the *keilim* built at that time, at Sinai, but not for *keilim* constructed henceforth. In the future, whenever it became necessary to build a new altar or *menorah*, for example, the given article became formally consecrated by being used for the first time. Using the newly constructed article for its intended purpose conferred upon it a halakhic status of sanctity, in lieu of anointing with the *shemen ha-mishcha*.

On this basis, Rav Rappaport explained, we can easily understand why the Rambam does not recognize an eternal *mitzva* to construct an ark. The ark is unique among all the *keilim* in the *Beit Ha-mikdash* in that it is not needed for any ritual. Although sacrificial blood is sprinkled on the *aron* as part of the Yom Kippur service, the Gemara establishes explicitly in Masekhet Menachot (27b) that the blood needs to be sprinkled towards the site of the *aron*, regardless of whether the *aron* is actually present. And for this reason, the Gemara comments, the Yom Kippur service was performed even in the Second Temple, even though it did not contain the ark. As such, it was inherently impossible to ever use another *aron*. Since the only way to consecrate the *keilim* is to use them for their intended purpose, there is no possible method of consecrating the *aron*, which was not needed for any ritual in the *Mikdash*. For this reason, Rav Rappaport speculates, the Rambam worked off the assumption that no *aron* would ever be built after the original *aron* built in the wilderness, and so he did not include the laws of constructing the *aron* along the laws of the *Mikdash* and its appurtenances.

However, Rav Rappaport then notes that this approach depends on the question as to whether a formal *avoda* (service in the *Mikdash*) is necessary for the consecration of the *keilim*. The Gemara’s ruling could be understood to mean simply that the article in question needs to be used in the way it is intended to be used. This does not necessarily require the performance of a formal *avoda*. If so, then a new *aron* could be consecrated simply by being placed in its assigned location in the *Beit Ha-mikdash*. This consideration, then, would not be a reason for the Rambam to omit the construction of the *aron* from his discussion of the construction of the Temple and its furnishings.

Some have suggested that the source for the Rambam’s view – that there is no eternal command to construct an *aron* – is the opinion noted earlier that the *aron* was hidden beneath the Temple before the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem. The Rambam accepts this position, and writes in Hilkhot Beit Ha-bechira (4:1) that King Shlomo constructed the First Temple with underground vaults in which the *aron* would be stored and hidden when necessary. Notably, this was done only for the ark, and not for any of the Temple’s other furnishings. Apparently, it was understood that the original ark constructed in the times of Moshe in the wilderness was the only *aron* that would ever be built, and it thus had to be hidden as the specter of the Temple’s destruction loomed. This would prove that there is no eternal command to construct an *aron*, as the *aron* built in the wilderness was destined to be the only one ever constructed.

Tuesday

The Tosafists, in the *Da’at Zekeinim* commentary to Parashat Teruma (25:5), cite a Midrash commenting that the *beriach ha-tikhon* – the central beam of the *Mishkan* – was made from the wood of the walking stick used by Yaakov Avinu. In Yaakov’s prayer before his feared encounter with Esav (Bereishit 32:10), he reflects upon the fact that he left Canaan with just his walking stick, and was now returning to his homeland with a large family and a large fortune. This stick, the Midrash states, was used in producing the central beam of the *Mishkan* that extended from one end of the structure to the other (Shemot 26:28).

What connection might there be between this beam and Yaakov’s walking stick? What prompted *Chazal* to draw this association?

One explanation, perhaps, is that in Yaakov’s prayer, his stick represents the origin, so-to-speak, of his family. He began with nothing but his stick, and eventually this stick, which helped him travel to Charan where he married and begot children, produced a family. Symbolically, Yaakov’s staff represents the shared roots of all *Am Yisrael*, the fact that we all originate from one source, share the same destiny, and must therefore see and conduct ourselves as part of a single family unit. The central beam of the *Mishkan* represents unity among *Am Yisrael*, our joining together into a single cohesive group. Just as the *beriach ha-tikhon* encircled all the various components of the *Mishkan*, so is the Jewish Nation joined together by “Yaakov’s staff,” our shared origin, and we must all see and treat one another in this light.

There might also be an additional explanation. *Targum Onkelos* translates the word *be-makli* (“with my staff”) in Yaakov’s prayer as “*yechidi*” – “alone.” Yaakov’s staff signifies loneliness. The association drawn by the Midrash is perhaps intended to teach that the concept of a *Mishkan*, the experience of bonding with the Almighty, depends on a feeling of “*yechidi*,” that we are “alone” without a relationship with our Creator. Even when we are blessed with family and material possessions, we must feel that our lives would be deficient and lacking without the *Mishkan*, without a meaningful relationship with God. This feeling is the “*beri’ach ha-tikhon*,” the basis and foundation of the *Mishkan* experience. The notion of *hashra’at ha-Shekhina*, that God resides among our nation, is founded upon this basic premise – that we are “alone” if we do not feel the Almighty’s presence. Even as we must sense and express gratitude for all our blessings in life, we must also feel a genuine need for the presence of the *Shekhina*, for a meaningful and significant relationship with our Creator.

Wednesday

In God’s command to Moshe to build a *menorah* for the *Mishkan*, He instructs, “…*miksha tei’aseh ha-menorah*” – “the *menorah* shall be made of one piece [of gold]” (25:31). Rashi, based on the Midrash, explains this to mean that the *menorah* would be miraculously built on its own. Moshe had difficulty with the *menorah*, Rashi comments, and so God informed him that he can simply throw the gold into fire and the *menorah* would then miraculously emerge. The basis for this comment is likely the passive form of the word *tei’aseh* (“shall be made”), which suggests that the *menorah* would be made by itself, without anyone constructing it.

Rashi’s comment becomes very difficult to understand in light of the verse later in Sefer Shemot (37:17) that states explicitly that Betzalel made the *menorah*. Moreover, God concludes His commands regarding the *menorah* here in Parashat Teruma by saying, “Look and make [them] according to their structure which you are shown on the mountain” (25:40). This would certainly suggest that God commanded *Benei Yisrael* to build the *menorah*, and not that it was formed on its own through a miracle.

Another question arises as to why Moshe encountered difficulty specifically with regard to the *menorah*. What made the *menorah* more difficult to construct than the other parts of the *Mishkan*?

Rav Moshe Mordechai Karp, in his *Va-yavinu Ba-mikra*, offers an explanation of Rashi’s comments by noting the requirement to construct the *Mishkan* and its accessories from exactly one *kikar* of gold (25:39). After commanding that the *menorah* be made from a single block of gold, God then instructs that the people must also make various accessories – specifically, lamps, tongs and pans (25:37-38). All this, God then instructs, must be produced from exactly one *kikar* of gold. Rav Karp thus explains that what troubled Moshe was the need to both produce the *menorah* from a single block of gold, and ensure not to exceed the total amount of one *kikar* for the *menorah* and its accessories. The artisans needed to allocate a single block of gold for the *menorah* itself, and then use for the accessories the precise amount of gold that would bring the total to a *kikar*. This required precise calculations that Moshe found very difficult. God therefore commanded Moshe, in Rashi’s words, “Cast the *kikar* into the fire, and it would be made on its own.” Rav Karp explains this to mean that Moshe would cast the entire *kikar* of gold into the fire, and the fire would miraculously divide this amount of gold into a block from which to construct the *menorah*, and the remaining gold for the accessories. Thus, the artisans still needed to construct the *menorah*, as the miracle performed to help them was simply the precise distribution of the *kikar* of gold necessary to meet God’s specifications.

Thursday

Yesterday, we noted Rashi’s remark in his commentary to Parashat Teruma (25:31), based on the *Midrash Tanchuma* (Behaalotekha), that Moshe encountered difficulty when it came to constructing the *menorah*. God therefore told Moshe to take the entire *kikar* of gold and cast into fire, and it would then be produced on its own. We saw an approach that explained this comment to mean that Moshe had difficulty apportioning the *kikar* of gold. God required that the *menorah* be formed from a single block of gold (25:31), and that it and all its accessories be produced from exactly one *kikar* of gold (25:39). Moshe, or the artisans under his charge, had to somehow come up with a block of gold of the precise size that together with the *menorah*’s accessories would amount to one *kikar*. This was the difficult challenge that Moshe encountered. God therefore told Moshe to cast a *kikar* of gold into fire, and God would miraculously divide the gold into a block for the *menorah* and a smaller amount of gold for the accessories.

In light of this approach, we might perhaps suggest an explanation for the symbolic meaning of this Midrashic passage. We are all given a “*kikar* *zahav*,” a finite quantity of resources of time, energy and talent to use in our lives. One of the greatest challenges we face is knowing how to most effectively distribute these resources, how much to use for the “*menorah*,” for the essence of life, for the significant pursuits that lend meaning and purpose to our lives, and how much to allocate for the “accessories,” needs that are vital for living but secondary in importance. Too often, it seems that we live our lives backwards, allocating the bulk of our time and energy in securing and caring for our basic needs, leaving only a small amount of time for that which is truly important and meaningful. Indeed, this distribution is a very difficult task to master. We must not neglect our “accessories,” our practical needs, but we must also ensure not to allow them to become the focal point of our lives, such that they push the essential aspects of life to the periphery.

God’s response to Moshe, to cast the gold into the fire and allow God to divide the gold for him, should not be taken to mean that this distribution is something we do not have to bother with. Rather, it tells us that as we struggle with this constant challenge of properly allocating our time and resources, we can draw encouragement from our faith in the Almighty’s ever-present assistance, and feel confident that as long as we make our best effort, He will grant us success in this and in all our endeavors, and ensure that our lives will shine and radiate like the light of the golden *menorah*.

Friday

In the beginning of Parashat Teruma, God lists in detail the materials that *Benei Yisrael* needed to donate for the construction of the *Mishkan*, its furnishings, and the garments of the *kohanim*. The *Midrash Tanchuma* (7) comments that several of these materials allude to foreign nations that have oppressed *Am Yisrael* over the course of our history. Gold represents Babylonia; silver symbolizes Persia; copper corresponds to Greece; and the dyed ram skins allude to Edom. The Midrash cites verses that appear to draw associations between each of these nations and its respective corresponding material. The Midrash explains: “The Almighty said: Even though you see the four empires priding themselves and asserting themselves over you, I will produce salvation for you from amidst the subjugation.” As the Midrash proceeds to explain, the Torah lists after the aforementioned materials the oil needed for kindling the *menorah*, and this represents the light of salvation that we will experience with the arrival of *Mashiach*. This list, then, symbolizes the sequence of enemy nations that oppress us, and assures us that we will ultimately see the end of our oppression with the advent of the Messianic Era.

What connection might there be between this message of hope and the construction of the *Mishkan*? Why would the Midrash introduce God’s reassurance of our ultimate redemption specifically in this context?

The answer, perhaps, lies in the fact that the Midrash here speaks of the enemy nations who “pride themselves” (“*mitga’ot*”). We might suggest that the Midrash refers not to the fierce oppression that *Am Yisrael* has suffered at the hands of enemy nations, but rather to their taunting us over our “*Mishkan*,” our religious beliefs and practices. Our enemies have so often arrogantly ridiculed us for our traditions and our faith, and attempted to make us feel inferior because of our religious lifestyle. As we are constantly called upon to “donate” to the “*Mishkan*,” to make great sacrifices for the sake of Torah study and *mitzva* observance, we can easily be discouraged by the sneers of our adversaries, who condescendingly assert their moral and intellectual superiority over us, condemning and mocking our customs. The Midrash thus reassures us that despite the antagonism that we might have to at times endure, our sacrifices for Torah and *mitzvot* are valuable and precious, and the day will yet come when the light of our redemption will shine and make it clear to the world that God indeed resides among His beloved nation.

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