**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**MIDRASH ON THE *PARASHA***

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Dedicated by Mr. and Mrs. Leon Brum for the Refua Sheleima of

Dana Petrover (Batsheva bat Gittel Aidel Leba)

and Marvin Rosenberg (Meir Chaim ben Tzipporah Miriam)

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In memory of six friends and family,
strong pillars of the Montreal Jewish community,
who have left us in the past 7 years.
All were אוהבי עם ישראל, אוהבי ארץ ישראל, אוהבי תורת ישראל.

Joseph (Yosie) Deitcher

Avrum (Avy) Drazin

Rabbi Joseph Drazin

Leibel Frisch

Israel (Mutch) Yampolsky

Dr. Mark Wainberg

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**Parashat Vayakhel:**

**“And Betzalel Made the Ark”**

**The Making of the Ark in *Midrash Tanchuma***

*Tanchuma*-Buber is an early version of the *Midrash Tanchuma* from Eretz Israel, as opposed to the printed *Tanchuma* which contains many additions, including citations from the Babylonian Talmud.

A comparison of the content of the two works on *Parashat Vayakhel* indicates that the printed *Tanchuma* preserves the opening and closing framework of *Tanchuma*-Buber, while changing the *derashot* in the middle:

Let us see the texts side-by-side.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Tanchuma-*Buber 7-11** | **Printed *Tanchuma*** |
| "The opening of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" (*Tehillim* 119:130). | "The opening of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" (*Tehillim* 119:130). |
| "Give to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser" (*Mishlei* 9:9). | You do not find that Betzalel did anything with any of the vessels of the Tabernacle other than the Ark. All of the other work of the other vessels was done at his word and by his guidance.  |
| "For I will restore health to you" (*Yirmeyahu* 30:17). | For it was known to Him who spoke and the world came into being that Israel would sin at Shittim. |
|  | The Tabernaclewas built from the wood of a tree that does not give fruit. |
| The work of the Veil | The work of the Veil |
| Did Betzalel do it himself? | Did Betzalel do it himself? |

The following table presents the first part of the second section of the printed *Tanchuma* and its sources:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Printed *Tanchuma*** | **Tannaitic and Amoraic sources** |
| "And Betzalel made the Ark" (*Shemot* 37:1). You do not find that Betzalel did anything with any of the vessels of the Tabernacle other than the Ark. All of the other work of the other vessels was done at his word and by his guidance. Why does it specify his work only with the Ark and that he made it with his own hands? Because the shadow of the Holy One, blessed be He, is found there, as it is there that He contracts His Divine Presence. Therefore, he was called Betzalel, because he made the shadow (*tzel*) of the Holy One, blessed be He, between the two Cherubim, as it is stated: "And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you" (*Shemot* 25:22). But surely it is already stated: "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" (*Yirmeyahu* 23:24). |  |
| Rabbi Yehoshua of Sakhnin said in the name of Rabbi Levi: This may be likened to a cave located along the seashore, and the sea rushed forth and the cave filled with water, but the sea was not missing anything. So the Holy One, blessed be He, even though it is written: "And the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle" (*Shemot* 40:35), nevertheless: "His glory is above the earth and heaven" (*Tehillim* 148:13). | Rabbi Yehoshua of Sakhnin said in the name of Rabbi Levi: To what may the Tent of Meeting be likened? To a cave located along the seashore, and the sea rose up and flooded, and the cave filled with water, but the sea was not missing anything. So the Tent of Meeting filled with the glory of the Divine Presence.Therefore it is stated: "And it came to pass on the day that Moshe made an end" (*Bamidbar* 7:1). (*Pesikta de-Rav Kahana,* “*Vayhi be-yom kallot”*) |
| Rabbi Chanina of Tzippori said: Betzalel made the Ark of three boxes (*teivot*), two of gold and one of wood. He inserted that of wood into that of gold, and that of gold into that of wood, and afterwards he plated the rims with gold, to fulfill the positive precept, as it is stated: "And he overlaid it with pure gold within and without" (*Shemot* 37:2), and afterwards: "And he made a crown of gold to it round about" (ibid.). From here [we derive] that a Torah scholar's inside should be like his outside, as it is stated: "Within and without you shall overlay it" (*Shemot* 25:11).  | Rechava said in the name of Rav Yehuda: Betzalel made three arks: the middle one of wood, nine [handbreadths] high; the inner one of gold, eight high, the outer one of gold, a little more than ten high. But it was taught: A little more than eleven [high]? There is no difficulty: the one opinion agrees with the view that the thickness thereof was one handbreadth, the other was in accord with the view that the thickness thereof was not one handbreadth. And what purpose served the "little more"? It is the space of the crown. Rabbi Yochanan said: There were three crowns: that of the Altar, that of the Ark, and that of the Table. The one of the Altar, Aharon merited and received it. The one of the Table, David merited and received it. The one of the Ark is still lying and whosoever wants to take it, may come and take it. Perhaps you might think it is of little account, therefore the verse states: "By Me, kings reign" (*Mishlei* 8:15).Rabbi Yochanan pointed out a contradiction. It is written: "*zar* (alien)" (*Shemot* 25:11), but we read it: "*zer* (crown)." If he deserves it, it becomes a wreath to him; if not, it remains alien to him. Rabbi Yochanan pointed out another contradiction. It is written: "Make **you** an ark of wood" (*Devarim* 10:1), and it is written: "And **they** shall make an Ark of *shittim* wood" (*Shemot* 25:10). From here [we derive] that the inhabitants of his city are obliged to do the work of the scholar for him. "Within and without shall you overlay it" (*Shemot* 25:11). Rava said: Any scholar whose inside is not like his outside is no scholar.(BT *Yoma* 72b) |
| Rabbi Natan said: The work of the Ark is as precious as the Throne of Glory on high, as it is stated: "The site (*makhon*) O Lord, which You have made for You to dwell in; the temple, O Lord, which Your hands have established" (*Shemot* 15:17). The heavenly Temple corresponds to the earthly Temple, and the Ark corresponds to the Throne of Glory on high. As it is stated: "Your throne of glory, on high from the beginning" (*Yirmeyahu* 17:12). Where is “the place of our temple”? "Which You have made for You to dwell in; the temple, O Lord, which Your hands have established" (*Shemot* 15:17). Read not *makhon*, but rather *mekhuvan*, corresponding to the Throne of Glory, it is made above it. | "The site, O Lord, which You have made for You to dwell in." This is one of the places indicating that the earthly throne corresponds to the heavenly throne. As it is stated: "The heaven is My throne, and the earth My footstool" (*Yeshayahu* 66:1). And it is stated: "Son of man, this is the place of My throne, and the place of the soles of My feet" (*Yechezkel* 43:7). "The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord, His throne is in heaven" (*Tehillim* 11:4). And it is stated: "I have surely built You a house of habitation, a site for You to dwell in forever" (I *Melakhim* 8:13). The Temple is precious to the One who spoke and the world came into being, for the entire world was created at the word of the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is stated: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made" (*Tehillim* 33:6). But when he built the Temple, it was, as it were, an action of His: “The site, O Lord, which You have made for You to dwell in.”(*Mekhilta de-Rashbi*, 15) |
| See how precious is the Ark, for the entire Tabernacle was built only for the sake of the Ark, in which the Divine Presencedwells, and all the miracles that were performed were performed with the Ark, for the Divine Presence rested therein. See what is written about it: "And the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them three days' journey, to seek out a rest for them" (*Bamidbar* 10:33). And it would kill snakes and scorpions, and burn thorns, and kill the enemies of Israel…  | Precious is the Ark, for the entire Tabernaclewas made only for the sake of the Ark, and all the miracles that were performed were performed with the Ark, as it is stated: "And the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them," which would kill snakes and scorpions, and kill before them the enemies of Israel. (*Sifrei Zuta* chap. 10) |
| Know this, for when the Pelishtim captured the Ark and wished to return it, they immediately brought the cows and tied them in the customary manner, their rears to the Ark, and the cows immediately knew and understood what was placed on them, and they turned their heads toward the Ark, and they led the Ark before them, as it is stated: "And the cows went straight by the way to Beit Shemesh (I *Shemuel* 6:12). | Rabbi Yirmeya said in the name of Rabbi Shemuel bar Rav Yitzchak: Had one of their chickens been lost, would he not have gone back to bring it? And My Ark is seven months in the field of the Pelishtim, and you take no notice. I myself will see to it. "His right hand, and His holy arm, have wrought salvation for Him" (*Tehillim* 98:1). This is what is stated: "And the cows went straight (*vayisharna*)by the way to Beit Shemesh" — they walked straight, they turned their heads toward the Ark, and uttered a song (*shira*).(*Bereishit Rabba* 54, 4) |

Let us now examine the words of *Tanchuma-*Buber about how Betzalel makes the Ark*.*

**The Building of the Tabernacle and the Creation of the World**

I.

"And Betzalel made the ark" (*Shemot* 37:1).

This is what is stated in the verse: "The opening of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" (*Tehillim* 119:130).

Rabbi Shimon ben Yehotzadak asked Rabbi Shemuel bar Nachman:

You who are an aggadic master, tell me how the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world.

He said to him: When the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to create the world, He wrapped Himself in light, and created His world.

As it is stated: "Who covers Yourself with light as with a garment" (*Tehillim* 104:2).

And afterwards: “Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain].”

Therefore: "The opening of Your words gives light; [it gives understanding to the simple]."

Rabbi Yehuda said: To what may this be likened? To a king who wished to build himself a palace and the place was dark.

What did he do? He lit lamps, and afterwards built the palace.

So too when the Holy One, blessed be He, built the world, it was all darkness.

What did He do? He wrapped Himself in light, and created it. This is: "The opening of Your words gives light; [it gives understanding to the simple]."

The righteous learned from the Holy One, blessed be He, to start with light.

When the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "And they shall make for Me a temple" (*Shemot* 25:8),

Moshe said to Betzalel that he should make the Tabernacle.

What did he do first? The work of the Ark, "And Betzalel made the ark."

(*Tanchuma*-Buber *Vayakhel* 7)

The *derasha* that opens the matter of "And Betzalel made the ark" is a threefold *petichta* on the verse: "The opening of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" (*Tehillim* 119:130). This verse is expounded twice regarding the creation of light, and once regarding the building of the Ark. The third *derasha*, which closes the *petichta*, exploits the closeness in sound between the words *or*, light, and *Aron*, the Ark. In addition, it draws a parallel between the building of the Tabernacle and the creation of the world, and between Betzalel and his Creator. Thus, the mention of Betzalel's name in connection with the work of the Ark reflects the full conformity of his name to his essence, acting in the shadow of God.

The first two *derashot* brought in *Tanchuma-*Buber originate in the Midrash of Eretz Israel, in *Bereishit Rabba* 1, 3:

"And God said: Let there be light" (*Bereishit* 1:3).

Rabbi Yitzchak opened: "The opening of Your words gives light; [it gives understanding to the simple]" (*Tehillim* 119:130).

Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Nechemya [disagreed].

Rabbi Yehuda said: The light was created first.

[This may be likened] to a king who wished to build a palace, and that place was dark.

What did he do? He lit lamps to know how to set the foundation stone.

So too the light was created first.

Rabbi Nechemya said: The world was created first…

"And God said: Let there be light."

Rabbi Shimon bar Rabbi Yehotzadak asked Rabbi Shemuel bar Nachman.

He said to him: Since I have heard about you that you are an aggadic master, from where was the light created?

He said: The Holy One, blessed be He, wrapped Himself in it as a garment, and shined the splendor of His majesty from one end of the world to the other.

He said to him: In a whisper.

He said to him: It is an explicit verse: “Who covers Yourself with light as with a garment.”

The author of *Tanchuma*-Buber reverses the order of the *derashot,* putting the *derasha* of Rabbi Shimon bar Rabbi Yehotzadak before the *derasha* about the lighting of the lamps. So too in both of them he expounds the verse, "The opening of Your words gives light," whereas in the original, this verse is expounded only in connection with the parable of Rabbi Yehuda.[[1]](#footnote-1) The *derashot* appear in *Bereishit Rabba* as two independent *derashot* which express two different ideas: The lighting of the lamps is an outward-directed action undertaken for the sake of carrying out the work, as opposed to God's wrapping Himself in light which expresses the created world as a veiled expression of the Divine.[[2]](#footnote-2) It seems that the difference between the two *derashot* is blurred in *Midrash Tanchuma-*Buber, as is attested to by the phrase: "He wrapped Himself in light and created it," appearing at the end of Rabbi Yehuda's statement.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Building the Ark First**

II.

"And Betzalel made the Ark" (*Shemot* 37:1).

This is what is stated: "Give to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning" (*Mishlei* 9:9).

This refers to Noach when he built the *Teiva*.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "Of every clean beast you shall take to you seven and seven" (*Bereishit* 7:2).

When he went out, he sacrificed of the clean beasts. He said: The Holy One, blessed be He, ordered a larger number of clean beasts [be brought into the *Teiva*] only so that I should sacrifice of them. This is: "Give to a wise man" — this is Noach.

Another explanation: "Give to the wise man" — this is Moshe.

When the Holy One, blessed be He, gave him the Torah, he went and taught it to Israel, and he would improve His words.

Another explanation: “Give to the wise man” — t his is Betzalel. When Moshe said to Betzalel: Make the Tabernacle,

Betzalel said: For what end is the Tabernacle?

They said to him: To rest the Divine Presencein it, and to teach Torah to Israel.

Betzalel said: And where will the Torah be placed?

He said to him: When we make the Tabernacle, we will make an Ark.

But he started with the Ark, as it is stated: "And Betzalel made the ark."

(*Midrash Tanchuma-*Buber *Vayakhel* 8)

The second *derasha* is a *petichta* in which the verse "Give to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning" is expounded in three ways, the last of which relates to the work of the Tabernacle. The first section of the *derasha* is built on a *derasha* appearing in *Bereishit Rabba* 34, 9, where the word "*vayiven*" in the verse "And Noach built (*vayiven*) an altar to the Lord" is expounded in the sense of contemplation (*hitbonenut*).

It is written: “And he built” (*Bereishit* 8:20) — he contemplated. He said: What is the reason that the Holy One, blessed be He, ordered that more clean animals [be brought into the *Teiva*] than unclean animals? Is it not that He wants that I should sacrifice to Him of them? Immediately: “And he took of every clean beast.”

Based on this *derasha,* the author of *Tanchuma-*Buber creates a new *petichta.*

Similarly, Betzalel is presented in the Torah as possessing unique wisdom:

And Moshe said to the Israelites: See, the Lord has called by name Betzalel the son of Uri, the son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehuda.

And He has filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in contemplation, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship. (*Shemot* 35:30-31).

Betzalel contemplates what the heart of the Tabernacle should be, and in accordance with his conclusions, he plans how he will build it. The *derasha* relates not to the construction itself, but to the order of construction. The heart of the Tabernacleis the Torah, and therefore Betzalel begins with the Ark.

The Tabernacleis described in the *derasha* as an expanse for the resting of the Divine Presence and of Torah, both of which revolve around the Ark: the resting of the Divine Presence between the Cherubim on the Cover *(Kapporet)* on top of the Ark; inside the Ark sit the broken First Tablets, the complete Second Tablets and ultimately the first Torah scroll.

However, the *darshan* focuses on the Torah as the reason for building the Ark first, and not on the resting of the Divine Presence. This choice should be understood against the background of the educational objective of the *Midrash Tanchuma*, which relates to the life of the nation centuries after the destruction of the Temple.

Betzalel's decision to begin with the fashioning of the Ark stands in opposition to the words of the Babylonian Talmud:

Rabbi Shemuel bar Nachmani said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: Betzalel was so called on account of his wisdom.

At that time, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moshe: Go and tell Betzalel to make Me a Tabernacle, an Ark and vessels.

However, Moshe went and reversed the order, saying: Make an Ark and vessels and a Tabernacle.

Betzalel said to him: Moshe, our Master, as a rule a man first builds a house and then brings vessels into it.

However, you say: Make Me an Ark and vessels and a Tabernacle.

Where shall I put the vessels that I am to make? Could it be that the Holy One, blessed be He, said to you: Make a Tabernacle, an Ark and vessels?

Moshe replied: Perhaps in the shadow of God (*be-tzel E-l*) you were, that you know! (BT *Berakhot* 55a)[[4]](#footnote-4)

This opposition illustrates the fact the *Tanchuma*-Buber is a midrashic work that draws on the traditions of Eretz Israel.

**Making the Ark from *Shittim* Wood**

III.

"And Betzalel made the ark of *shittim* wood" (*Shemot* 37:1).

Yirmeya said: "For I will restore health to you, and I will heal you of your wounds" (30:17).

A king of flesh and blood wounds with a knife and heals with a plaster.

However, the Holy One, blessed be He, is not like that. With that which He wounds, He heals.

As it is stated: "And when they came to Mara, they could not drink of the waters of Mara, for they were bitter" (*Shemot* 15:23).

Rabbi Levi said: Why "for they were bitter"? The generation was bitter in its actions.

"And he cried to the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree" (*Shemot* 15:25). The Holy One, blessed be He, gave him a bitter tree, and he put it into the bitter [water], "and the waters were made sweet.”

This is: "And I will heal you of your wounds."

So too Israel when they sinned in Shittim, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: By your lives, through that with which you sinned, you shall be healed.

(*Tanchuma-*Buber *Vayakhel* 9)

The third *derasha* in *Tanchuma-*Buber is also a *petichta,* which expounds the building of the Ark from *shittim* wood, by way of the verse "For I will restore health to you, and I will heal you of your wounds, says the Lord; because they have called you an outcast: She is Zion, there is none that cares for her" (*Yirmeyahu* 30:17). The main idea, that the principle of "with that with which He wounds, He heals" characterizes God as opposed to man, is based on the *Mekhilta*, where we find the very same wording:

The Holy One, blessed be He, heals all people, as it is stated: "For I am the Lord that heals you" (*Shemot* 15:26); and it is stated: "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved" (*Yirmeyahu* 17:14); and it is stated: "Return, you backsliding children, I will heal your backslidings" (ibid.3:22).

Come and see that the healing of the Holy One, blessed be He, is unlike the healing of flesh and blood.

The healing of flesh and blood, with that with which he wounds, he does not heal, but rather he wounds with a knife and heals with a plaster.

However, the Holy One, blessed be He, is not like that, but rather with that with which He wounds, He heals.

(*Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael, Beshalach, Vayhi* 5)

What lies behind the presentation of God's work in the world as "with that with which He wounds, He heals"? It seems that what arises from here is a neutral attitude toward all created things, as they lack the power to harm or benefit, and all are merely tools in God's hands as needed. In addition, we have here a unified view that sees the life of an individual or a people as a process, during which one falls and rises up again, and through which one progresses, refines one’s character his traits, and elevates oneself. Israel's sin at Shittim at the end of the fortieth year in the wilderness and the Ark in the Tabernacle seem to be very distant from each other, but the Torah's wording points to a connection between them. Those who are precise about the Torah's language will reveal God's work in the world.

The *derasha* also gives shared significance to the means by which God works: "The generation was bitter in its actions… The Holy One, blessed be He, gave him a bitter tree, and he put it into the bitter [water]."

The three *petichtot* in *Tanchuma*-Buber are "woven" around a Tannaitic or Amoraic statement that appears in *Bereishit Rabba* or in the *Mekhilta.*

**Order and Wisdom in the Work of the Tabernacle**

IV.

What is written above? "And he made the Veil" (*Shemot* 36:35).

Our Rabbis said: The Veilwas one handbreadth thick, woven on seventy-two strands, and on each strand were twenty-four threads; its length was forty cubits, and it width was twenty cubits, and it had no knots.

And they would make two every year, and three hundred priests would immerse it. How would they immerse it? All of the priests went up and immersed it, and they went up and spread it out in the Corridor (*Cheil)*.

And after Moshe made the Veilthat was placed before the Ark, he then told Betzalel to make the Ark.

You find that everything that was in the Tabernacle was made in order.

He first made the boards and connected them. Afterwards he made the curtains that were spread over them, as it is stated: "And you shall make curtains of goats' hair" (*Shemot* 26:7). And afterwards he made the Veilthat was placed before the Ark. And after that he made the Ark. And after that he made the gold Coveron the Ark.

Rabbi Elazar bar Rabbi Yosei said: I saw it in Rome, and there were on it several drops of blood. I asked them: What is this blood on the Cover? They said: It is from the blood of Yom Kippur that the High Priest would go in and sprinkle.

Why is it called a Cover (*Kapporet*)? Because it would atone (*mekhapper*) for the sins of Israel.

And after that he made the Table, on which the showbread was placed. And after that he made the Candelabrum which would illuminate above the Table.

He made it like the order of a royal army. Therefore: "And Betzalel made."

(*Midrash Tanchuma-*Buber *Vayakhel* 10)

The fourth *derasha* opens with a description of the Veil found in the Mishna (*Shekalim* 8:4), but its main interest is in the statement: "You find that everything that was in the Tabernacle was made in order." According to the order described there, the Ark is not built first, in contrast to what is stated in the first two *petichtot* for *Vayakhel*.[[5]](#footnote-5) This contrast reflects the different orders in which the Tabernacle and its vessels appear in the final third of the Book of *Shemot*. It may be suggested that the main message arising from this *derasha* in its context is that there is order in the work of the Tabernacle, even if it is difficult to determine what that order is.

**Betzalel’s Devotion**

V.

"And Betzalel made."

Did Betzalel make it himself, that each time it says: "And Betzalel made"?

Rather, it is because he devoted himself greatly to the work of the Tabernacle.

Therefore, the Holy One, blessed be He, did not withhold his reward, and He makes him known each time, "And Betzalel made."

Similarly you find: "Only Yonatan the son of Asa’el and Yachzeya the son of Tikva stood up against this matter; and Meshullam and Shabbetai the Levite helped them" (*Ezra* 10:15). The verse made this known because Yonatan devoted his life to it. So too here: "And Betzalel made."

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: You made for Me curtains of goats' hair on the Tabernacle. When you left Egypt, I brought a cloud and it protected you. Even though you are repaying me, I will repay you in the World to Come. As it is stated: "And the Lord will create over the whole habitation of Mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day" (*Yeshayahu* 4:5).

You made before Me a Cover (*Kapporet*). I will atone (*mekhapper*) for you for your sins, as it is stated: "When I have granted you atonement for all you have done" (*Yechezkel* 16:63).

You made an Ark before Me. By your lives, I will illuminate for you, as it is stated: "Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun" (*Yeshayahu* 30:26). And it is stated: "Light is sown for the righteous" (*Tehillim* 97:11).

(*Midrash Tanchuma*-Buber *Vayakhel* 11)

The last *derasha* in the cycle relates to Betzalel's dedication to the building of the Tabernacle. The phrase, "And Bezalel made," appears only once, in connection with the fashioning of the Ark. Therefore, the wording found here, which implies that this phrase appears many times, is difficult. The conclusion of the *derasha* returns to beginning of the cycle of *derashot* on "And Betzalel made the Ark" — to the motif of light. The end of the *derasha* (and of the entire cycle of *derashot*) relates to anticipation of the redemption that will come in reward for the building of the Tabernacleand its vessels.[[6]](#footnote-6) If so, the content of this *derasha* is filled with typical markers of conclusion.

**Summary**

The study of these five *derashot* paints a picture of vibrant Midrashic creativity, deeply rooted in the Midrashic tradition up to its time, and adding to it. The entire unit is built on the format of the Amoraim of Eretz Israel: a series of *petichtot* appearing at the beginning, a central statement appearing after them, and a conclusion.

Does the author of *Tanchuma-*Buber want to make a comprehensive statement in this Midrashic unit? If so, how does the content of the third *derasha* (on *shittim* wood with which He wounds and heals) relate to the other *derashot*? We will conclude our study with these fascinating questions. You are invited to continue studying these *derashot* and also to share your insights with us. *Shabbat shalom.*

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. And Rabbi Nechemya. This *derasha* is comprised of two Tannaitic parables connected to the verse: "The opening of Your words give light" in the *derasha* of the Amora Rabbi Yitzchak. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See the commentaries of the Maharzav and *Yefei Toar* to *Bereishit Rabba* 3, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The connection to the Temple is found already in the continuation of the *derasha* in *Bereishit Rabba*:

Rabbi Berekhya said in the name of Rabbi Yitzchak: The light was created from the place of the Temple. This is what is stated: “And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east; and His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth did shine with His glory” (*Yechezkel* 43:2). His glory means the Temple. This is what is stated: “Your throne of glory, on high from the beginning, the place of our temple” (*Yirmeyahu* 17:12). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Maharzav to *Shemot Rabba* 50, 3, attributes these conflicting aggadot to Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Nechemya, who disagree on the question what was created first, the light or the world. What we have here is an example of conflicting Aggadot. It should be noted that the Babylonia Talmud continues:

Rabbi Yochanan said: The Holy One, blessed be He, gives wisdom only to one who already has wisdom, as it is stated: “He gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know contemplation” (*Daniel* 2:21).

Rabbi Tachlifa from the West heard this and repeated it before Rabbi Abahu. He said to him… We learn it from here, as it is written: “In the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom” (*Shemot* 31:6).

 These verses express the same idea as the verse chosen by the author of *Tanchuma-*Buber: "Give to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser." [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The order appearing here accords with what is stated in *Parashat Vayakhel* (*Shemot* 36-37), as opposed to the order of the vessels and the Tabernaclein *Parashat Teruma*. See the Maharzav to *Shemot Rabba* 50, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Concluding on a positive note is one of the characteristics of Rabbinic literature. An example of this is the conclusion of Tractate *Ta'anit* in the Mishna with the building of the Temple. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)