

# The Narrow Bridge

## גשר צר מאוד

### PARSHA PERSPECTIVES

#### Short Divrei Torah on Parshas Terumah

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לע"נ פעסל בת ישראל מנחם / לזכות חילינו

#### RECEIVING BY GIVING

##### Malbim

*"Speak to the Children of Israel and they shall take for Me a portion."* (25:2)

Why does the text read "that they *take* for Me a portion" instead of "that they *give* Me a portion"?

Because people are in no position to give anything to G-d. Whatever we have belongs to G-d - "all of it is from You and it is only from Your hand that we give to You." Only through the act of using our possessions for performing a good deed for G-d's sake do we truly acquire them (the Sages said that it is by virtue of the blessing we recite when making use of a gift of G-d that "He gave the earth to mankind"), and if we make a gift of these possessions to G-d it is as if we had given of our own property.

The foregoing was true also in the case of the *terumah*. G-d asked the Jews to "take for Him" an offering, implying that through the act of dedicating their possessions to G-d they "take" or acquire it so that the property, which actually belongs to G-d, becomes as their own.

#### FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE

##### Chiddushei HaRim

*"They shall take for Me a portion."* (25:2)

For me - for the glory of My Name. (Rashi)

This means that you shouldn't make the offering because you want your gifts to cause the *Shechinah* to dwell in your midst, but only for the glory of My Name, for no other reason but that it is G-d's will.

There is more merit in the resolve to obey G-d's command simply because it is His will, than there is in any other high resolve, no matter how noble.

#### ETERNAL PLEASURES

##### Degel Machaneh Ephraim

*"They shall take for Me a portion."* (25:2)

The world is analogous to a wedding. Some people come for the joy of being at a wedding, which is its essence; others come to eat, drink, and be merry. The Torah comes to tell us not to subordinate the essence.

"Take to Me a portion" means take the desires and pleasures of the mundane, which are a momentary aspect, and transform them "for Me," for the soul, for the spiritual life, which is the essence of life.

#### A PIECE FOR HASHEM

##### Zanzer Rebbe

*"They shall take for Me a portion."* (25:2)

The Almighty asks that wherever one goes or whatever one does, let him separate a little bit in his heart for His sake.

#### ELEVATING OUR DESIRES

##### Toldos Yaakov Yosef

*"From every man whose heart will motivate him you shall take My portion."* (25:2)

If a person is uncertain as to how he can best serve the Almighty, let him examine his basest desires and make use of them.

Thus, we can explain the *pasuk*: "From every man whose heart will motivate him you shall take My portion." From the longings of the heart, the desires of This World, take Hashem's offering. It is precisely from these desires that a person can elevate himself in the service of Hashem.

## THE TRUE RECIPIENT

### Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

*“Speak to the Children of Israel and they shall take for Me a portion, from every man whose heart will motivate him you shall take My portion.” (25:2)*

The midrash states that the poor do more for the *ba'al ha'bayis* than the *ba'al ha'bayis* does for the poor (Rus Rabbah 4). How can that be? If someone provides a poor person with a meal, the physical gift is a rather temporary thing. However, when one looks at the whole picture from beginning to end, he sees that there is a lot more to it. By giving to a needy person, one is in fact gaining a share in *Olam Haba*. Therefore, his act causes a long-term effect for himself as well.

For this reason, writes Rav Shlomo Breuer zt'l, by the command to donate to the *Mishkan* the Torah employs the word *“vayikchu* - and you shall take,” rather than *“vayitnu* - and you shall give.” By “giving” something to another, whether physically or financially, we are in fact “taking” something for ourselves.

The same word is used regarding the first act of *chessed* mentioned in the Torah: *Yukach na me'at mayim... v'ekchah pas lechem* - “Let water be taken... I will take bread” (Bereishis 18:4-5). Shouldn't Avraham have said that he would “give” water and bread? The answer is that Avraham was teaching us an eternal lesson: When you help someone else, you are in fact not giving, but taking.

Similarly, the *Aron* was to be carried by the *Leviim* on two poles, each inserted through rings, one pole on each side. However, the Gemara (Sotah 35a) tells us that, in actuality, the *Aron* didn't need carriers, for it really transported its bearers. A miracle occurred whereby the ark carried its own weight, easing the load of its bearers.

Rav Nosson Adler zt'l suggests that the same is true in a Yissachar-Zevulun partnership. The Zevulun appears to be “giving” by supporting the Yissachar, but in fact he is the one who is “taking.” This is a classic example of the “*Aron* supporting its bearers.” The Torah that the Yissachar learns is in fact supporting the Zevulun.

## MOST PRECIOUS COMMODITY

### Rabbi Aryeh Dachs

*“From every man whose heart will motivate him you shall take My portion... Gold and silver and copper...” (25:2-3)*

Parashas Terumah begins with perhaps the swiftest, most efficient fundraising campaign of all time. Moshe is charged with leading the effort to raise the material to establish a *Mishkan* - a structure built on earth in which the *Shechinah* could reside. There are several striking aspects regarding this campaign, and in general, the idea of our responsibility to build an elaborate “House for G-d.” Perhaps most jarring is the base mundanity of the project.

Why is it that for the Almighty to “reside” in this world He must have a physical resting place built with gold and other valuables? As Chaggai the prophet expressed (Chaggai 2:8), “[G-d declared,] the gold is Mine and the silver is Mine.” All the world's treasures were created and apportioned by G-d Himself. Why is a majestic structure of gold and silver necessary and appealing to Him?

Another note of interest is that in general, “cash is king.” When we receive donations for a project it is more convenient to receive money which we can use to purchase whatever supplies we need for the project rather than receiving physical supplies. However, when the Jewish People were charged with contributing the material for the *Mishkan*, the command was *“V'zos ha'terumah* - This will be your gift.” The Sforno, amongst others, understands that the word *v'zos*, this, implies that only the specific items that are delineated in the beginning of Terumah, that were functionally able to be used (such as gold, silver, copper, etc.) in the actual construction of the *Mishkan* were acceptable. Why was it necessary to build the *Mishkan* with the actual donated material?

The famed Maggid of Dubno, Rabbi Yaakov Kranz, in his *sefer* on Chumash, Ohel Yaakov, sheds light on these questions. He explains that the external cash value of the precious metal, stones, and fabric used to construct the *Mishkan* was obviously not meaningful to the Almighty. The Almighty has limitless access to any of the world's resources. G-d does not value physical treasures. Rather, the maggid explains, what G-d values most is our love, dedication, and commitment; our *ahavas Hashem*. The ideal place for G-d to reside is a place built and constructed entirely by this most precious commodity - *ahavas Hashem* - love of G-d.

*Ahavas Hashem* is not a physical item and cannot be used to build a physical structure. However, people value expensive items such as rare and beautiful stones and costly metals, and it is difficult for us to part with these items. The gifts, therefore, represented a lot more than the dollar value of the items. They represented the sincere dedication of the donor. The supplies used to build the *Mishkan* represented a real dedication and commitment from the entire Jewish People. In essence, the *Mishkan* was in fact built with the most precious material in the world: *ahavas Hashem*. This is what made the place special. This is why the structure was an appropriate resting place for the *Shechinah*, and this is why only the actual items given were to be used in its construction.

Only we know the personal sacrifices we endure in our individual quest to live a life of meaning, value, and connection to Hashem. We can learn from the *Mishkan* that the “currency” of Hashem, which Hashem values and cherishes, is our *ahavas Hashem*. Our sacrifices and our commitment unmask our deepest desire to connect to Hashem. This is the most valuable item in the world.

## UNITED CONTRIBUTIONS

### Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

*“Speak to the Children of Israel and they shall take for Me a portion, from every man whose heart will motivate him you shall take My portion.” (25:2)*

Parashas Terumah begins the detailed account of how the Jews were to construct the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle), the temporary structure that would house G-d's Presence throughout their travels. The details span five *parshiyos*, with only the story of the Golden Calf interrupting this narrative, while the monumental story of Creation only required thirty-four *pesukim* to communicate. Why would the Torah interrupt the many stories in Sefer Shemos dealing with the birth of a nation to thoroughly detail the construction of a temporary home for G-d's Presence?

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks explains that what united the Jews as a people was their collective past, namely their struggle to be freed from slavery. However, once they were free, they were lost because they lacked a common goal, which led them to bicker, complain, and even build a Golden Calf. What solved all this was asking everyone to donate and to give together. The project didn't have to be prominent or even permanent, but the fact that people were able to give generously as one brought them together and generated harmony.

Working together and inviting individual contributions were more effective in uniting people than the earlier grand miracles. While the *Mishkan* did not last forever, the lesson it taught us did: encouraging individual contributions enhances the group even more than it enhances the individual.

## HELPING OTHERS EXCEL

### Rav Chanoch Zvi of Bendin

*“Speak to the Children of Israel and they shall take for Me a portion.” (25:2)*

The midrash says that Moshe was anguished about not having brought a donation for the *Mishkan*. Hashem responded by telling him that his words were dearer to Him than the entire *Mishkan*.

Perhaps this can be understood with the dictum of Chazal (Bava Basra 9a): “The one who causes another to act is greater than the one who does the act.”

Why, indeed, did Moshe not donate? The answer is that since he knew that there was an exact amount of building materials required, by giving a donation he might cause another person's donation to not be used.

(In the end, though, when he saw that there should have been leftover materials and Hashem performed a miracle so that all that was donated was incorporated into the *Mishkan*, he was then pained for not having given any donation.)

## TORAH AND CHARITY

### Rebbe Nachman

*“...from every man whose heart will motivate him you shall take My portion.” (25:2)*

The letters of the word *Terumah* (תרומה, portion) may be rearranged to spell *Torah Mem* (תורה מ), in which the *mem* (מ) is understood by its numerical value to mean “forty.” This alludes to the Torah, which was given after forty days (Zohar III, 179a).

Thus, “take My portion” means that in order for a person to be able to “take” G-dliness, he must engage in learning Torah. (See Likutey Moharan II, 60)

When one gives charity, he can come to see G-d's Pleasantness, or Glory. This is alluded to in the word *Terumah* (תרומה, portion), which is an acronym for the final letters of the words *lachzot b'noam YHVH u'levaker beheikhalo* (לחזות בנעם ה' ולבקר בהיכלו, to see G-d's Pleasantness and enter His Sanctuary - Tehillim 27:4).

In order to be charitable, a person must open his heart. Once his heart is open to give to others, it can also receive blessings and bounty from the Supernal Heart of the *Noam HaElyon* (Divine Pleasantness).

[When one opens his heart to charity and kindness, he enables his “open” heart to receive ever greater blessings from on high, from the Supernal Heart.] (See Likutey Moharan II, 71)

## GLADLY GIVING

### Chasam Sofer

*““Speak to the Children of Israel and they shall take for Me a portion, from every man whose heart will motivate him you shall take My portion... Gold and silver and copper...” (25:2-3)*

Actually, all the gold and silver on earth belongs to G-d, as it is written (Chagga'i 2:8): “‘Mine is the silver, and Mine the gold,’ says G-d.” Hence, when a person offers these things to G-d, the gift given is not the wealth, because that is not really one's to give away, but the willingness of one's heart, the good intention that motivated the person to make the offering. These qualities are truly one's own, and one offers them to G-d.

But one who does not make an offering of silver and gold in this spirit really has given nothing, because the money is not really one's to give away and the spirit of willingness - which would have been the true gift - is lacking.

This is what the phrase “every man whose heart will motivate him” means: only from someone who gives with willingness of heart and with good intentions “shall you take My portion.” Do not take anything from someone whose heart does not seem willing to offer a gift to G-d.



## LIGHT OF CHARITY

### Baal HaTanya

*"From every man whose heart will motivate him you shall take My portion... Gold and silver and copper..." (25:2-3)*

Just like lightning breaks through heavy clouds and gives light to the earth, so does giving charity give light and understanding to the soul.

## ELEVATED BY SPEECH

### Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

*"Speak to the Children of Israel... From every man whose heart will motivate him you shall take My portion... Gold and silver and copper..." (25:2-3)*

We can interpret this verse based on the observation that the Torah introduces this command with the words "Speak to the Jewish people." This is the first time after the Giving of the Torah that G-d said, "Speak to the Jewish people." Why is that?

The answer seems to be as follows: Our Sages (Yoma 9b) relate that "anyone with whom the Sage Reish Lakish conversed in the street could be given merchandise without witnesses." [Since Reish Lakish was so trustworthy, anyone with whom he associated was also considered trustworthy and could conduct business transactions without being expected to produce witnesses to guarantee their honesty.]

The deeper meaning of this statement is that a *tzaddik* is very careful before speaking with just anyone, since conversation with an ordinary person can disrupt the *tzaddik's* attachment to G-d. The exception to this rule is when the *tzaddik* can elevate the person he is speaking with. Then the *tzaddik* may talk with him because then, on the contrary, by remaining attached to G-d while speaking with the person, the *tzaddik* makes an impression on him and he is drawn into holiness.

This was the case with Reish Lakish, who was a consummate *tzaddik*. He was wary of speaking with anyone unless the person could be elevated into the realm of holiness. This is why the Talmud says that anyone with whom Reish Lakish conversed in the street could purchase merchandise without witnesses. Such a person was certainly upright and decent.

Now, when the Jewish people sinned with the Golden Calf, they lost the holiness that had pervaded them when they received the Torah and reverted to an impure state (Zohar 1:52b). As such, Moshe was fearful of speaking to the Jewish people. This is why G-d now had to command him, "Speak to the Jewish people." G-d told him: "They are the offspring of Yisrael, i.e., the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yisrael. Consequently, when you speak with them, you will certainly be able to elevate them to the realm of holiness, and they will attach themselves to Me and to My Name." For this reason, G-d told Moshe to speak with them.

## ELEVATING THE SHECHINAH

### Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

*"From every man whose heart will motivate him you shall take My portion... Gold and silver and copper..." (25:2-3)*

Every individual must serve G-d with his actions and thoughts. Through devout intentions and holy thoughts, a person raises the *Shechinah* from the earth, and through deeds, he elevates and betters himself.

[In the imagery of the Zohar (1:191b), ever since the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, the *Shechinah* is rolling on the ground, so to speak, from the pain of the destruction and the subsequent exile, because the *Shechinah* dwells with the Jewish people in their suffering. Fulfilling the Torah properly raises the *Shechinah* from this lowly place and subsequently elevates the one who performed the *mitzvah*.]

This is the deeper meaning of this verse. The phrase "Every man whose heart will motivate him" alludes to serving G-d with thoughts. By doing so, as the verse continues, "you shall take My elevated portion," meaning, through this Divine service, the *Shechinah* is uplifted.

The phrase "This is the portion - literally, 'the elevation' - that you shall take from them" alludes to the elevation that the person himself "takes," so to speak, through action, as the verse continues, "gold, silver, and copper," which refers to the actual deed of contributing of gold, silver, and copper. Contemplate and analyze this well.

## TAKING THE NECESSARY STEPS

### Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

*"This is the portion that you shall take from them... tachash skins and acacia wood." (25:3, 5)*

Where did the Jews find cedar trees in the desert with which to build the walls of the *Mishkan*?

The Medrash Tanchuma informs us that Yaakov Avinu beheld through *Ruach HaKodesh* that his descendants would build a sanctuary as they traveled on their way to the Holy Land, so he arranged to have cedars brought down and planted in Egypt. He then commanded his children, before he died, to take the cedars with them when they would depart from the exile of Egypt.

But was this absolutely necessary for Yaakov to do? Surely, Hashem would not have insisted that in order to complete the construction of the *Mishkan*, a particular type of lumber would have to be used, if that type of lumber could not be found in the wilderness!

Yaakov Avinu was teaching us a tremendous lesson, explains R' Eliyahu Meir Bloch zt'l. When it comes to the practical necessities of life, such as sustenance for oneself and family, shelter and clothing to keep oneself warm and safe from the harsh elements, etc., we have no one other than our Father in Heaven to rely upon, for of course, He will see to our needs.

This is the basic principle of *bitachon* - trust in Hashem - to which every Jew, great and small alike, subscribes unquestioningly. However, it is in the area of *tzarchei kedushah* - spiritual (sacred) necessities, that a person must look ahead, take the proper precautions, and prepare in advance all that he needs to raise himself up spiritually.

When Yaakov Avinu saw the eventual inevitability of a consecrated sanctuary for the Jewish people, where the presence of Hashem Himself would rest, he didn't disinterest himself with the particulars and simply trust that Hashem would take care of things. Instead, he took it upon himself to prepare the supplies needed to create this hallowed edifice.

## TRUE VALUE

### Rabbi Aryeh Dachs

"Gold, silver, and copper; blue, purple, and crimson wool; linen and goat hair; ram skins dyed red, *tachash* skins, and acacia wood; oil for lighting, spices for anointing oil and for the incense; *shoham* stones and filling stones for the *Ephod* and for the *Choshen*." (25:3-7)

The currency of our world is valued differently in the spiritual realm. The Mishnah (Menachos 13:11) teaches: "*Echad ha'marbeh v'echad ha'mamit u'bilvad she'yechevin libo la'Shamayim*." This means that whether one contributes a large amount, or a small amount, it does not matter, as long as his heart has the right intent. When one brings an offering, the size of it is irrelevant. This idea also applies broadly in our day to day spiritual service. It's not about the actions you do as much as it is about the meaning behind your actions.

The Orchos Tzaddikim (8:8) extends this to a poor man's charitable gift. He writes that a poor man's gift is just as impressive in the eyes of the Almighty as a large gift from a wealthy person.

To demonstrate this point, in Parashas Terumah we read about the dedication of the material needed for the building of the *Mishkan*. The parashah begins by listing the fine materials needed for the construction (Shemos 25:3-7): "Gold, silver, and copper; blue, purple, and crimson wool; linen and goat hair; ram skins dyed red, *tachash* skins, and acacia wood; oil for lighting, spices for anointing oil and for the incense; *shoham* stones and filling stones for the *Ephod* and for the *Choshen*."

The Ohr HaChaim notes that the order of the materials needed seems to be value based. The more valuable gifts are listed first. However, the precious gems are listed at the end, even though they are more expensive than gold and silver; therefore, it would seem to be more appropriate for them to be listed at the beginning of the list. The Ohr HaChaim then explains that perhaps the reason the precious gems are relegated to the end of the list is because the *Nesiim*, the leaders of each tribe, were the ones that donated the gems. This begs the question, why would the expensive gifts of the *Nesiim* be listed last?

As an answer, the Midrash teaches that the *Nesiim* were somewhat lax in their dedication. They waited until the rest of the nation donated all the materials. This explains why the precious gems are listed at the end; the gift was extravagant, but the act of giving was deficient.

In G-d's eyes, the value of gold is not based on its inherent earthly worth. As Chaggai, the prophet expressed (Chaggai 2:8), "[G-d declared,] the gold is Mine, the silver is Mine." The Almighty does not care for gold and silver. The value of gold is solely defined by the dedication of the giver. A gift of gold is expensive; it therefore represents a strong commitment. The *Nesiim* were lax in their manner of giving, and therefore in the currency of G-d, their gifts were the least valuable.

Often, in our community, we are inundated with news of the exceptional achievements of "Jewish superstars." Those of us who are not blessed with any specific prowess or newsworthy accomplishments can be made to feel irrelevant (G-d forbid). The building of the *Mishkan*, which was made using the supplies gifted directly by all the Jewish People, teaches that this is not the way of G-d. G-d values hard work and dedication. The gifts of the inexpensive spices given by the regular folk were considered more precious than the expensive and rare precious gems gifted by the *Nesiim*. Only we can know the hard work we put into upholding our religious values. Our spiritual "contributions" are more precious than any gem. If we put in the effort, we are Jewish superstars.

## WHEN TO BE BOLD

### Rabbi Ari Ciment

"*This is the portion that you shall take from them... tachash skins, and acacia wood...*" (25:3, 5)

Yehudah ben Teima says: You should be bold as a leopard... to do the will of your Father in Heaven. He said: Bold-faced [people] go to Gehinnom. (Avos 5:20)

So is it good to be bold or not good?

The Midrash Tanchuma states:

*Acacia wood: Where did they get these [trees] in the desert? Rabbi Tanchuma explained that our father Yaakov foresaw with the holy spirit that the Israelites were destined to build a Mishkan in the desert, so he brought cedars to Egypt and planted them. He commanded his sons to take them with them when they left Egypt.*

Rabbi Yissocher Frand asks a great question, which I will paraphrase:

If much of the material used in the desert to build or adorn the *Mishkan* was in fact miraculously placed in the desert (e.g., the *Avnei Shoham* and *Avnei Miluim*, the precious stones adorning the *Kohen Gadol's* vestments), then why was it that Yaakov specifically ensured that the cedar trees were imported from Egypt?

I will try to relate this beautiful idea from the *sefer* Menachem Tzion and Rabbi Yissocher Frand:

A midrash on our parashah states that the “world would not ever have had a need for cedar trees had it not been for the *Mishkan*.” The question on the midrash is: What is so bad about cedar trees that they wouldn’t have needed to exist?

The Menachem Tzion answers that a Gemara in Taanis says: “A person should take on the personality of a reed and not of a cedar!” A reed is flexible and malleable, but a cedar tree is rigid by nature and inflexible. Therefore, when the midrash says that cedar trees are not desirable, the idea is that, in general, it is not a good trait to be rigid and inflexible. However, by the *Mishkan*, i.e., when it comes to spirituality, one needs to be rigid like a cedar and steadfast, committed without allowance. If one is a reed when it comes to their Judaism, the outcome is almost always irreligiosity.

Rabbi Frand beautifully continues with his idea (completely paraphrased): This may explain why Yaakov had to specifically import cedar trees from Egypt. Egypt was the very place that demonstrated the Jewish steadfastness in the environment of strangers (in that they didn’t change their language and clothing, etc.).

Yaakov Avinu perhaps purposely insisted that the cedars come from Egypt to remind the Jews of this lesson: Just like the cedar is strong and unwavering, and just like the Jews were unwavering in their traditions even in hostile Egypt, we must continue to be unwavering in our *Yiddishkeit*, as symbolized by the *Mishkan*.

Regarding the question asked about the contradiction in the above quote from Avos, it seems that there is a necessity to be bold when it comes to religious matters. In all other matters, though, we should be more “reed-like” and leave out the boldness!

Takeaway Messages: Why did Yaakov import cedar wood from Egypt if other materials for the *Mishkan* miraculously appeared in the desert? Why does the midrash on our parashah state that the “world would not ever have had a need for cedar trees had it not been for the *Mishkan*”? The answer is that in general, “a person should take on the personality of a reed and not of a cedar.” However, when it comes to the *Mishkan* (symbolizing spiritual matters), one needs to be steadfast like a cedar tree! Lessons of a cedar tree - be a reed most of the time, except when it comes to religion/tradition.

## TREASURED EFFORTS

### Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

“Gold, silver, and copper; blue, purple, and crimson wool; linen and goat hair; ram skins dyed red, *tachash* skins, and acacia wood; oil for lighting, spices for anointing oil and for the incense; *shoham* stones and filling stones for the *Ephod* and for the *Choshen*.” (25:3-7)

Parshas Terumah begins by detailing the funding campaign for the *Mishkan*. The verses mentioned above include the thirteen items that the Jewish People were requested to donate.

Usually, when a list is compiled in the Torah, the most important is stated first. Therefore, it is surprising that the precious *Shoham* stones and filling stones - which were so exquisite in their beauty that they were chosen to be placed in the *Ephod* worn by the *Kohen Gadol* - were placed at the end of the list, even after less expensive items like wood and incense. Surely they should have even been placed first?

The Ohr HaChaim answers this question from the Gemara which states that in Hashem’s display of abundant love for the Jewish People, He showered them with precious stones, including the *Shoham* stones, bringing them down with the Clouds of Glory (Yoma 75a).

Therefore, explains the Ohr HaChaim, even though the precious stones were far more expensive and precious than everything else in the list, because they came with the least amount of effort and self-sacrifice, their donation value was inferior to the other materials which were hard-earned.

Based on this message, Rav Moshe Sternbuch said that in Hashem’s eyes, someone who puts himself out to give a little bit of *tzedakah* can have more favor than a billionaire who donates a million dollars. For, while the million dollar contribution is very laudable and will go very far, if it comes with less self-sacrifice than a smaller donation of a poorer person, it remains secondary in Hashem’s eyes.

This concept was repeated by Rav Yechezkel Sarna to his family when they questioned him on why he takes up a considerable amount of his time every Friday morning to welcome a widow into his home in order to accept the few pennies that she had managed to save for the yeshivah that week. “It is true that the yeshivah may not financially depend on her contribution,” answered Rav Sarna, “but with the dry bread she deprives herself of every day in order to save those pennies to support Torah, she sustains the entire world!”

## SEEDS OF FREEDOM

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

“*Ram skins dyed red, tachash skins, and acacia wood.*” (25:5)

Where did the Jews find acacia wood in the desert? We are taught that the patriarch Yaakov, foreseeing that his descendants would need huge wooden beams to build the Tabernacle, brought with him acacia seedlings from the Land of Israel. Planting them in Egypt, he told his sons to pass on his instructions to cut these trees down and take them along when they would leave.

Thus, throughout their slavery, the Jewish people could look at these acacia trees from home and remember G-d’s promise to Yaakov that the time would eventually come for their redemption.

Allegorically, the tall, shady acacia tree alludes to righteous spiritual leaders, the sparks of Yaakov’s soul that are “planted” in every generation.

These leaders provide us with the inspiration necessary to build a “Tabernacle,” a home for G-d, out of our lives - and to do so even in the “desert,” our not-yet-redeemed world. In this merit, we will soon be able to see the entire world transformed into G-d’s true home. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 31, pp. 142-148) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

## ONLY WHAT WE CAN HANDLE

### Rabbi Moshe Schochet

*“And they shall make a Sanctuary for Me and I will dwell among (lit. within) them.” (25:8)*

There is a fascinating Medrash, quoted in the Pesikta D’Rav Kahana, which records a conversation between Hashem and Moshe. After hearing the instruction to build the *Mishkan* that will house the *Shechinah*, Moshe asked the obvious question: How is it possible to construct a building big enough to accommodate Hashem’s presence when Hashem has no boundaries? Hashem responded to Moshe that He does not expect Moshe to create an edifice that a human being would be incapable of building. Rather, Hashem shared the measurements of the *Mishkan* that were feasible to build and explained that He would limit the size of the *Shechinah* to fit into the *Mishkan*.

The Chofetz Chaim points out that we see from this dialogue that Hashem does not impose unrealistic and impossible goals for us to achieve. Instead, He commands us to do things that we can handle and includes instructions so that we can meet those expectations. Hashem, in His infinite wisdom, understands what we are capable of doing and provides us with a clear manual of how to achieve it.

During times of difficulty, we wonder how we can be expected to fulfill Hashem’s requests. Does Hashem really think we can overcome these seemingly insurmountable obstacles in front of us? The Chofetz Chaim is teaching us that Hashem knows us better than we know ourselves, and He knows what we are able to persevere through.

It is important for us to realize that if Hashem has brought us to it, He will bring us through it. If we follow the road map of the Torah through life’s ups and downs, then there is nothing that we can’t achieve!

## HOLY PLACE, HOLY THOUGHTS

### Koznitzer Rebbe

*“And they shall make a Sanctuary for Me and I will dwell among (lit. within) them.” (25:8)*

The knowledge that today synagogues have taken the place of the Holy Temple should govern our behavior when we enter them. Just as the *Kohen Gadol* had to focus all of his thoughts for the sake of Heaven, every Jew upon entering a synagogue or a house of study should concentrate all his thoughts for the sake of the Divine - so that “I shall dwell among them.”

## RELATIONSHIPS TAKE WORK

### Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

*“And they shall make a Sanctuary for Me and I will dwell among (lit. within) them.” (25:8)*

The Rambam begins *Hilchos Beis Ha’bechira*, the section of his work devoted to the *Beis HaMikdash*, by stating that the Torah commands building a place for the offering of sacrifices: מִצּוֹת עֲשֵׂה לַעֲשׂוֹת בֵּית לֵה' מוֹכֵן לִהְיוֹת מִקְרִיבִים בוֹ הַקֶּרְבָּנוֹת.

It seems from the Rambam’s formulation that the purpose of the *Beis HaMikdash* was the *korbanos*, the offering of sacrifices. However, here in Parshas Teruma, the Torah tells us very clearly the reason for building the *Mishkan* (the precursor to the *Beis HaMikdash*): וַעֲשׂוּ לִי - “They shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I shall reside in their midst” (25:8). The purpose of the *Mishkan* is הַשְׂרָאָה הַשְּׂכִינָה, that there would be a site where Hashem would reside, where we feel His presence in an especially powerful and intimate way. Why, then, does the Rambam describe the *Mikdash* as בֵּית לֵה' מוֹכֵן - a site for the offering of *korbanos*?

Rav Yechezkel Weinfeld explains that in order to achieve הַשְׂרָאָה הַשְּׂכִינָה, to be worthy of feeling and experiencing Hashem’s presence, we need to be prepared to sacrifice. Of course, the purpose of the *Mishkan* is for Hashem to reside among us. But the Rambam is emphasizing that in order for this to happen, we need to be willing to put in the work, to sacrifice, to invest, to give.

This is true of any relationship. A beautiful marriage does not happen on its own. It is built through lots of hard work, through compromise, through selflessness, through sacrifice, and through the devotion of time, thought and effort. For good reason, Chazal teach, אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה זָכוּ, שְׂכִינָה, if a husband and wife are deserving, the *Shechina* resides among them. If they put in the work to build a beautiful relationship, if they master the skill of making space for another, to sacrifice and to yield, to be selfless and giving, then they are worthy also of הַשְׂרָאָה הַשְּׂכִינָה, of a close, beautiful relationship with Hashem. Building a beautiful marriage takes the same kind of work and effort needed to build a beautiful bond with our Creator. If we want meaningful, fulfilling relationships with other people and with Hashem, then we must be prepared to invest the effort and make the sacrifices needed for this to happen.

## HOLY HOMES

### Amshinover Rebbe

*“And they shall make a Sanctuary for Me and I will dwell among (lit. within) them.” (25:8)*

Rashi comments: “They will make a house of sanctity dedicated to My name.” This means that it is the obligation of the Jew to bring holiness into his home and to develop a sense of holiness in his family.



## HOSTING HASHEM

### Rabbi Moshe Schochet

*“And they shall make a Sanctuary for Me and I will dwell among (lit. within) them.” (25:8)*

The Slonimer Rebbe (Nesivos Shalom) quotes a powerful insight in the name of the Divrei Shmuel. He explains that the word *mikdash* comes from the word “designated” or “set apart.”

For example, the Gemara (Kiddushin 2b) teaches that when two people get married, the man says to the woman, “*harei at mekudeshes li* - you shall be set aside for me.” Additionally, when it comes to food assigned to the *Kohanim* and *Leviim*, it is referred to as *hekdesh*.

The Divrei Shmuel explains that the Torah is communicating to us that for Hashem’s presence to dwell amongst us, we have to carve out a space for Him in which to reside. We have to make sure that our actions and behaviors are pure so that the *Shechinah* will feel comfortable amongst us.

As we progress through life, we are often confronted with difficult decisions, which can significantly impact our spiritual growth. When making tough choices, we need to ask ourselves if our decision will further our ability to host Hashem’s presence and bring Him closer or, *chas v’shalom*, push Hashem farther away. If we approach life with this mindset, we are sure to make the right decisions, which will help ensure that we grow closer to Hashem.

## REVEALING THE HIDDEN

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*“And they shall make a Sanctuary for Me and I will dwell among (lit. within) them.” (25:8)*

Not “within *it*” but “within *them*”: G-d told us to make a sanctuary so He may dwell within us. There are three types of sanctuaries included in this commandment: the physical Tabernacle that the Jews built in the desert; the personal, inner sanctuary that each of us must construct out of our lives and our sphere of influence in the world; and finally, the world at large, which we must transform into G-d’s home.

In all three cases, the task is possible only because we are simply revealing the hidden, true nature of reality. The world at large and everything in it exists only because of the Divine energy pulsing within them, so making the world into a place where Divinity is revealed is simply a matter of removing the obstructions that hide this reality.

Similarly, the essence of every one of us is our Divine soul, so making our lives into a Tabernacle for G-d is nothing more than allowing our inner essence to shine through the excess material baggage we have accumulated during our journey through life. (HaYom Yom, 21 Tamuz) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

## PUTTING IN THE EFFORT

### Rabbi Aryeh Dachs

*“And they shall make a Sanctuary for Me and I will dwell among (lit. within) them.” (25:8)*

There is a poignant story, a *mashal*, brought by the Midrash in Parashas Behalosecha, which tells of a king who asks a beloved, simple friend of his to prepare and host a feast for just the two of them in his friend’s home. The friend of the king is of course flattered and excited. He expends significant energy sprucing up his meager home to prepare for the king’s arrival. He arranges his simple couch, his simple candelabra, and his simple table. When the king arrives with his entourage, the friend of the king is astounded by the regal men, and he is further dazzled by the brilliance of their accompanying gold and silver. Ashamed of what he prepared, he quickly hides his couch, table, and candelabra. The king, seeing that his beloved friend had not prepared anything for him, questions him. Despondently, the friend responds that after he had come face to face with the glory of his majesty, he was ashamed of his own simple provisions. He realizes his simple belongings were not appropriate for a king. The king comforts his friend and assures him of his friendship. “So that I can dine with you, I will remove all of my trappings.”

There is a similar Midrash in Parashas Terumah where Hashem commands Moshe to lead the Jewish People in the building of the *Mishkan*. The Midrash (Pesikta Rabbasi 16; Tanchuma Ki Sisa 10) relates that Moshe was dumbfounded by this command; the task seemed impossible. Moshe proclaims, “How can we possibly build an edifice that can ‘house’ the Almighty?!” This same sentiment is repeated later in history. After building the First Temple, Shlomo HaMelech also struggles with this idea. In a public prayer where Shlomo inaugurates the Temple, he points out the ludicrous nature of the mission. The verse relates that Shlomo proclaims, “But will G-d indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain You; much less this Temple that I have erected.” A place built by man that can serve to house G-d’s Presence is obviously a philosophical nightmare.

The Midrash in Parashas Terumah relates Hashem’s reaction to Moshe’s disbelief. Similar to the king in the *mashal*, Hashem tells Moshe, “I am not requiring you to build according to My magnitude, ‘*lo lefi kochi*,’ rather you need to build the *Mishkan* according to your magnitude and ability, ‘*lefi kochachem*.’”

The paradox aside, G-d demands that the Jews build Him a resting place where His Presence would reside. The understanding is that Hashem can “fit” His Presence even where it shouldn’t fit; He does this provided that we do our part. When we have put our best effort to make a *Mishkan*, that *Mishkan* will indeed be able to “house” G-d.



Although we mourn that we no longer have a Temple to house G-d, G-d still rests in our world. There is a manifestation here of His Presence; the *Shechinah* resides amongst us. The lesson taught to Moshe applies to any spiritual-seeking person. To become spiritual, we need to do our best; our best is based on our capability.

Sometimes, our best may not seem especially worthy or significant. We may find ourselves with a similar disbelief to the beloved friend of the king. We may wonder, as Moshe and Shlomo HaMelech did, if our small advancements are really worthy of a connection to something as immense as the Almighty.

Hashem tells Moshe that the effort he puts into building the *Mishkan* is enough. Although our efforts may seem insignificant and distant in the terms of an infinite G-d, are our efforts any more insignificant than the efforts of the Jewish People to house G-d in a physical *Mishkan* or Temple?

## THE TRUE OWNER

### Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

*“And they shall make a Sanctuary for Me and I will dwell among (lit. within) them.” (25:8)*

On the surface it would appear that the holiness of the Sanctuary has to emanate from Hashem, and that humans can only build a physical structure which Hashem then makes into a Sanctuary by causing His Presence to dwell in it.

Nonetheless, this verse seems to imply that it was the task of the Jews to actually make a Sanctuary, and not just the building to house it. If so, the Torah teaches us here that it is within the power of humans to cause Hashem's Presence to dwell among them. How can we accomplish this?

I believe that the following verses, which list the materials to be used in the *Mishkan*, map out the process to be followed.

Really, the Torah should first have stated the *mitzvah* of building the Sanctuary, and only then specified the materials required for its construction. Had it done so, however, it would have been impossible to make a Sanctuary, for that can be done only if the donors are aware that everything they are giving really belongs to Hashem, and is entrusted to them only for safekeeping and to be used in accordance with the wishes of its owner.

Therefore, when He asked them to return it, they had no right to know what use He intended to make of it, just as a bank has no right to ask its depositors what they intend to do with their money after they withdraw it.

And this holds true for all issues which are imbued with holiness. Only when one gives with this understanding will the project merit success as a Sanctuary, for without this attitude it is difficult to gain merit for the construction of building something holy.

## DO YOUR BEST, HASHEM WILL DO THE REST

### Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

*“And they shall make a Sanctuary for Me and I will dwell among (lit. within) them.” (25:8)*

Chazal tell us that Moshe was concerned how he could possibly build the *Mishkan* - a spiritual entity - using mere physical tools. The Medrash (Medrash Rabbah 35:6) speaks of Moshe's dilemma with a parable of an exceptionally handsome king who told one of his artists to paint a picture of him. The artist responded, “How could I replicate the splendor of Your Majesty's face on mere canvas?” to which the king replied, “You with your paint and me with my glory.” So too, Hashem's response to Moshe was “Use the materials you have, and I will make sure that My glory rests there.”

The message here is that when we approach a daunting task that is necessary for us to do, we should put in all of our effort and not be discouraged by the difficulty of the task, for the outcome of our actions does not necessarily have anything to do with the effort we expend.

As the Mishnah in Pirkei Avos (2:21) says, “It is not up to you to complete the task,” which the Tiferes Yisrael translates to mean that we should not give up on working on something just because we feel that we are incapable of finishing the job.

This message was exemplified in recent years by Rav Noach Weinberg. Rav Noach saw that the Jewish People were being lost to assimilation and he believed that he had an obligation to turn the tide. He would often quote Rav Shach as saying, “if one man can kill six million Jews, then one man can save six million Jews.” Being such a tremendous *talmid chacham*, when Rav Noach first decided to open a Yeshiva for *Baalei Teshuva*, he was ridiculed; “They used to call me crazy Noach” he would say, “but I knew what I had to do. I set up Yeshiva after Yeshiva - with each one a bigger failure than the other, but I knew what the Creator wanted from me. I had a mission to change the world.” And eventually, Rav Noach succeeded in his mission when Aish HaTorah was established, a world-famous organization which has literally changed the world.

Rav Noach saw an impossible task ahead of him. He even went against his society and peers because he knew what Hashem wanted from him. And despite setback after setback, he ploughed ahead, never falling prey to despair. This is exactly what Hashem was saying to Moshe, “You do your best to build My Sanctuary and do not worry about the outcome, that is for Me to deal with, and when you do your very best then I will make sure that My glory rests there.”

Rav Doniel King, however, understands from the words, “use the materials you have, and I will make sure My glory rests there” that the *Mishkan* was never meant to be a purely spiritual entity, rather, it was built to be a physical reminder of the spiritual connection with Hashem that we achieved at Sinai.

To understand this, Rav Doniel gives the example of someone who visited the Statue of Liberty and purchased a miniature statue in the gift shop to remember the experience that he had there. Even though the physical value of this miniature statue is only worth a few dollars, its actual value is far greater, for it brings with it all of the emotions and feelings felt while he was there - it represents an eternal connection to that place!

So too, the *Mishkan* was built for us to relive our Sinai experience and continue our connection with Hashem by constantly reminding us of the relationship that we forged at Sinai and, thereby, allowing us to develop it further.

## INSTILLING SANCTITY

### Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

*"Like everything that I show you, the form of the Tabernacle and the form of all its vessels; and so shall you do." (25:9)*

Rashi comments that this verse is to be read together with the preceding one: "Make a Sanctuary for me like everything that I show you." If so, why does the Torah interrupt this thought with the promise *so that I may dwell among them*?

We must say that the Torah wishes to make the point that Hashem's explicit instructions apply only to creating this sanctity, the sanctity of the physical Sanctuary which is made of wood and stones. But there is also another sanctity, that which each Jew is required to bring into his heart and home by educating his children and instilling in his family the behavior and customs the Torah holds as proper and desirable behavior.

For this kind of sanctity there are no general instructions that apply to everyone equally; each person must develop for himself ways of educating his children or students that are best suited to his own individual nature, and to the personalities and abilities of the children or students. The essential point here is that everything one does must be for the sake of Heaven (however that can be accomplished in a particular situation), to drawing those around him close to Hashem and His *mitzvos*.

## ROOM FOR GROWTH

### Rabbi Noson Adler

*"And they shall make an Aron of acacia wood, two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height." (25:10)*

The measurements of the *Aron* of the Torah are given in fractional figures (two and a half and one and a half) rather than in whole figures to remind Torah scholars that even they still have not attained perfection and "wholeness" in their knowledge.

## ALWAYS ACCESSIBLE

### Binah L'Ittim

*"And they shall make an Aron... two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height." (25:10)*

The depth of the *Aron* was less than its length, to teach us that the Torah is not so deep as to be inaccessible.

## TORAH FOR ALL

### Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

*"And they shall make an Aron of acacia wood, two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height." (25:10)*

In formulating the commands regarding the *Mishkan*, G-d speaks in the singular form, as though directing these instructions to a single individual. The notable exception is the command to build the *aron*, which Hashem introduces by stating, ועשו ארון עצי שיטים - "They shall make an ark of acacia wood" (25:10). Rather than command, ועשית, in the singular form, Hashem instead instructs, ועשו - that "they" must build an *aron*.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks explained this nuance by noting that the *aron*, in which the *luchos* were stored, symbolized the Torah. Hashem wanted to emphasize that the Torah is for everyone, and not only for a privileged elite class. The service in the *Beis HaMikdash* was restricted to a particular group, the *kohanim*, but the study of Torah is for everyone, every man, and woman and child. In Rabbi Sacks' words:

*Unlike other aspects of service in the sanctuary or temple, Torah was the heritage of everyone. All Israel were parties to the covenant. All were expected to know and study its terms. Judaism might know other hierarchies, but when it came to knowledge, study and the dignity conferred by scholarship, everyone stood on equal footing.*

The Torah belongs to everyone. Schools must not cater only to the "elite," to the exceptional students, to those who excel. Everyone has a share in the Torah, and has an obligation to learn Torah, each person on his or her level, and so everyone must be equally encouraged to learn and given opportunities to do so.

One of the most important features of our shul is the page turner, which shows the number of the page in the siddur currently being recited during davening. If there is even a single person in attendance who needs to be told the page - then this is absolutely necessary. Because in shul, everyone deserves to be on the same page. Just as Torah learning is for everyone, so is *tefilla*. We cannot allow anyone to feel excluded because they are new and unfamiliar with the davening. As with Torah study, each person in shul must be on equal footing, together with everyone else on the same page.

## CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS

### Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

*"And you shall cover it with pure gold - on the inside and on the outside you shall cover it [with gold]..." (25:11)*

The Gemara (Yoma 72b) tells us that Betzalel made three Arks - a golden Ark for the outside, another golden Ark for the inside, and a wooden Ark in the middle. What was the point in putting wood in the middle? Since there was gold on the inside and gold on the outside, surely the Ark could have been made of one big solid gold piece?

The Daas Zekeinim answers very simply that if it would have been totally made of gold, it would have been too heavy to carry. From here we see an incredible insight into Hashem's attitude towards holiness. The Ark, which was the holiest object in the *Mishkan* and contained the broken tablets that Hashem Himself had created, together with the tablets that Moshe carved, was constructed with a layer of wood instead of gold to avoid causing undue difficulty to those who would have to carry it. The message from this is clear; even when it comes to holiness and religious devotion, one must always consider how his actions will affect the people around him.

This message was truly epitomized in the latter years of Rav Yisrael Salanter's life when he was too ill to supervise the city's matza baking before Pesach. He sent some of his best students to supervise the entire process. Before they departed for the bakery, they asked their teacher which religious stringencies they needed to be careful about in their task. Rav Yisrael just answered them as follows: "The woman who cleans the floors in between each baking is a widow, be careful how you speak to her."

## HUMBLY CROWNED

### Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

*"...and you shall make on it a golden diadem all around." (25:11)*

In His instructions for the building of the *Mishkan*, G-d tells us that both the *Aron* (an Ark that housed the tablets) and the *Shulchan* (the table that housed the twelve weekly loaves of bread) shall be made of acacia wood, covered with pure gold, and then covered with a "zer" (crown) also made of gold (25:11, 24). Rabbi Yochanan Zweig wonders why the word "zer" is spelled without the letter *yud*, making it curiously similar to the word "zar" which means "stranger." The alternate meaning would change the *pasuk* to read that you should overlay it with gold and put a stranger all around.

Rabbi Zweig suggests that there is purposeful similarity and ambiguity with the words *zar/zer* in order to highlight to us the importance of staying grounded. While the innards and essence of the acacia *Aron* and *Shulchan* are modest and reliable, adding gold components has the danger of creating a barrier between people and G-d and people and each other. We must be careful not to let our crowns take away from our modesty, because this is the quality that is truly our crowning achievement.

## SUPPORTING THE SCHOLARS

### Alshich HaKadosh

*"The staves shall remain in the rings of the Aron; they shall not be removed from it." (25:15)*

According to the Sages, the *Aron* denotes the "crown of the Torah," implying that all those who want to can acquire the Torah for themselves through study (which is likened to a "crown"). For this reason, the text (Shemos 25:10) reads *"they shall make an Aron"* rather than *"you shall make an Aron."*

But even as the *Aron* had to have staves by which it could be transported from place to place, so too, students of the Torah must have supporters who can provide them with sustenance. Accordingly, the Torah specifies that the *Aron's* staves must always be kept in the rings and never be removed from there to teach us in symbolic terms that those who provide the sustenance for Torah students must never withdraw their support, not even for a moment, for without their aid, scholars would not be able to continue their studies.

## ETERNAL BOND

### Koznitzer Rebbe

*"The staves shall remain in the rings of the Aron; they shall not be removed from it." (25:15)*

*Tabor* (rings) means the ring of marriage (*taba'as kedushin*). When a Jew performs the *mitzvos* and recites the blessing "Who has sanctified us with His Commandments," he betroths himself to the Almighty.

*Badim* (staves) represent *"am I'vadad yishkon"* (Bamidbar 23:9), a people separated from others because of their observance of *mitzvos*. "They shall not be removed" means that because of their observance, Hashem will never neglect or leave His people.

## TESTIMONY OF TORAH

### Reb Noson of Breslov

*"Place the Testimony that I will give you in the Ark." (25:16)*

The Torah is called "Testimony" - it is testimony to G-d. For whoever has a brain in his head can understand with his intellect the fact of the Reality and Unity of G-d.

From whence does such a Torah emanate? A Torah that begins with the Act of Creation and concludes with Devarim, with all of its laws and bylaws; all the Books of the Prophets and Hagiography; the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar, the Kabbalah and all the dialectics that accompany these works - how it all fits together with precision.

One who possesses even a small awareness of the Torah and its contents realizes that it is not a man-made presentation, but testimony to our Creator, from Whom the entire Torah emanated. Thus, the Torah is testimony to the Reality and Unity of G-d. (Likutey Halachot VI, p. 30)

## ENVELOPED BY LOVE

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*"You shall make a cover of pure gold [for the Ark]." (25:17)*

The tablets housed in the Ark signify the union with G-d that we achieve by studying the Torah. The Cover of the Ark signifies G-d's grace from above, which we require in order to maintain Divine consciousness at all times - even while uniting with Him through studying the Torah. G-d grants us this assistance in virtue of our intrinsic connection to Him, which exists independent of the connection that we forge with Him through studying the Torah and observing the commandments.

This intrinsic bond is alluded to by the fact that word for "Cover" (*kaporet*) is related to the word for "atonement" (*kaparah*). Atonement for sin is possible only when we invoke and evoke G-d's essential love for us, which overrides the deficiencies in our relationship to Him that we cause when we disobey the Torah's instructions.

Our constant opportunity to repair and renew our relationship with G-d (represented by the Cover of the Ark) transforms our study of the Torah (represented by the tablets within the Ark) from a purely intellectual pursuit to a springboard for spiritual growth. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 26, pp. 180-182) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

## THE INNER CHILD

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*"And you shall make two golden Keruvim." (25:18)*

The infant-like faces of the *Keruvim* signified that our intrinsic bond with G-d is akin to the essential bond between parent and child. Despite any fluctuations that might arise in their relationship, the bond between parent and child can never be broken.

The fact that the *Keruvim* were situated above the Tablets of the Torah and faced each other signified that by studying the Torah, we can reach the root of our Divine soul, allowing our consciousness to merge totally with G-d.

The infant faces of the *Keruvim* also alluded to the fact that the Torah as we know it is a diluted, simplified version of the heavenly Torah, G-d's infinite wisdom. G-d contracted His infinite wisdom into a form we can understand and digest, much as an expert teacher contracts his grasp of a subject in order to convey it to his pupils.

The fact that the *Keruvim's* wings were spread protectively over the Ark alludes to the fact that the Torah-education of young children ensures the preservation and continuity of the transmission of the Torah. (Torah Ohr 79d; Reshimot 108; Sichot Kodesh 5741, vol. 2, pp. 395-397; Likutei Sichot, vol. 26, pp. 180-182) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

## TWO SIDES OF YOUTHFULNESS

### Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

*"And you shall make two golden Keruvim." (25:18)*

The *aron* was built with the images of two *keruvim* ("cherubs") on top of it, with wings hovering overhead. The Gemara in Maseches Sukkah (5b) teaches that the word כרוב refers to a child, as in Babylonia, the word for "child" is רוביא. Thus, the images that were placed on top of the *aron* were the images of two small children, the symbols of purity, innocence and sweetness.

Interestingly enough, the word כרובים appears also earlier in the Torah, and there it has a drastically different association. After Hashem banished Adam and Chava from *Gan Eden*, He stationed כרובים by the entrance of *Gan Eden* to guard it (3:24). Rashi there comments that these *keruvim* were מלאכי חבלה - "angels of destruction."

Whereas the *keruvim* in the Mishkan were the symbols of innocence and pure goodness, the *keruvim* outside *Gan Eden* were the symbols of destruction and devastation. How could the word כרובים have two such opposite connotations?

The answer, perhaps, is that there are two opposite sides of youthfulness. Some people remain childish even as adults, in the sense that they are still self-centered, irresponsible, rash, impulsive and self-indulgent. They never develop qualities such as patience, self-discipline, generosity and selflessness that ought to come with adulthood, and they never accustom themselves to working diligently in order to achieve, produce and contribute.

This kind of youthfulness is destructive and harmful. Those who remain immature and petulant as adults are represented by the מלאכי חבלה, the "angels of destruction," as they bring ruin to the world around them.

There is, however, another side to youthfulness, and that is energy, enthusiasm, excitement, curiosity, ambition and idealism. Too often, adults become complacent and "stuck" in place, having decided that they are who they are, without any interest in continuing to learn, grow and achieve. The *aron*, which contained the Torah, was covered by *keruvim* because Torah life should be characterized by youthful passion and fervor, by the desire to explore and learn more.

The *pasuk* in Hoshea (11:1) says, כי נער ישראל ואוהביו, "For Yisrael is a youth, and I love him." Rav Yisrael Salanter explained that Hashem feels special love for us when we are like children, full of energy and excitement. Even as we grow older, we must remain youthful - not in the sense of immaturity and irresponsibility - but in the sense of greeting each day and each task with enthusiasm, and excitedly aspiring to learn and grow, without ever deciding that we're done, that we've had enough. We earn Hashem's special love through our youthful ambition, by energetically striving to learn and grow more and more, each and every day.



## **GOLDEN EDUCATION**

### **Rabbi Dovid Hoffman**

*“And you shall make two golden Keruvim, hammering them out of the two ends of the [Ark] cover.” (25:18)*

The Mechilta at the end of Parshas Mishpatim notes that although the Torah prescribes the use of gold in the construction of most of the vessels of the *Mishkan*, other metals may be used if gold is unavailable.

This applies to all vessels, except for the *Keruvim* which were unique in that no other substance besides gold was acceptable.

The question is: what is different about the *Keruvim* that Chazal were insistent that it shall be made only from pure gold? Why, unlike all the other vessels - the spoons, pans, utensils and even the Menorah and the *Shulchan* - which were permitted to be constructed from other metals, were the *Keruvim* prohibited to be made from any metal other than gold?

The Lubliner Rav, R' Meir Shapiro zt'l, provides us with a beautiful and telling explanation, one that applies to every Jewish home in every day and age. The *Keruvim*, with their faces formed like those of children, are symbolic of the young and impressionable children of *Bnei Yisrael*. Our children are our most precious asset, and therefore in addition to caring for their physical needs, the most important consideration that every parent must ensure, is the need to provide them with an uncompromising Jewish education.

Indeed, the position of the *Keruvim* on top of the holy Ark symbolizes the concept that our children's Torah education is to be placed in our highest regard. It is symbolic, therefore, that no other metal besides for pure unadulterated gold may be used to make the *Keruvim*, just as our children's education must be pure and unadulterated. For when it comes to teaching children Torah and supporting Jewish education for our youth, only our very best - golden - efforts will do.

## **STAYING YOUNG**

### **Rabbi Efrem Goldberg**

*“And you shall make two golden Keruvim.” (25:18)*

The *Aron*, the most sacred article in the *Mishkan*, was covered by the *kapores* which included two *keruvim* - images of young children.

If we would have been asked to choose which images to place above the ark, we might have chosen pictures of people like Rav Soloveitchik and Rav Moshe Feinstein, or perhaps Rav Chaim and Rebbetzin Batsheva Kanievsky. We would have assumed that the most fitting images for the covering over the *Aron* would be the greatest *tzaddikim*. Why did Hashem want the holy *Aron*, which was kept in the holiest place on the planet, to be covered by the images of young children, who have yet to learn or accomplish anything?

The Alter of Kelm explains that the *keruvim* over the *Aron* teach us that Torah life requires the vigor, enthusiasm, and energy of youth. Children are naturally driven, energetic, curious, adventurous, open to new ideas and new experiences, and eager to accomplish and do lots of different things. Adults, however, are typically more fatigued, more set in their ways, more resistant to change, more reluctant to take on something new. They usually feel that they're finished growing and are now the final product. We are to approach Torah with the excitement and energy of children, with a sense that we are still only in the beginning, that we have so much more to accomplish, and so much more to grow. This is the symbolic meaning of the *keruvim* above the *Aron*.

We have here in our *shul* people who are around 100 years old, but they are still youthful. They are still eager and excited to grow and to achieve. On the other hand, I have met people in their twenties who are already old. They live with fatigue, with apathy, without any drive or ambition, without excitement and without an interest in growing. Youthfulness has to do far less with age than with mindset. We can - and should try to - be “young” at every age.

The Alter of Kelm notes in this context that we refer to a great Torah scholar not as a חכם (“wise person”), but rather as a תלמיד חכם - “wise student.” The moment a scholar no longer sees himself as a תלמיד, as a student who still has so much more to learn, who is still in the beginning of his educational journey, he becomes nothing. We consider someone a חכם, an accomplished scholar, only if he still regards himself as a תלמיד, a student who is still learning and growing.

## **EMULATING THE CHILD**

### **Chida**

*“And you shall make two golden Keruvim.” (25:18)*

The Sages relate that the *Keruvim* had the form of a child's face. Thus, the two *Keruvim* on the *Aron* were to remind those who study the Torah that they must be like a child in two respects: They must accept the Torah's authority like an obedient child who has not yet begun to study, and they must be pure and innocent of sin just like a child.

## **NO MAN LEFT BEHIND**

### **Rabbi Jeremy Finn**

*“The Keruvim shall spread their wings upward, sheltering the lid with their wings, with their faces toward one another...” (25:20)*

The parashah deals with the building of the *Mishkan* and its vessels. Perhaps the holiest of all the *keilim* was the *Aron*, on top of which stood the two *keruvim*. The *pasuk* specifies that the wings of the *keruvim* were spread upward, while the base formed a single unit with the cover of the *Aron*.

What is the symbolism of this formation?

Rabbi Shalom Rosner quotes the Shem Tov, who suggests that the spread wings symbolize that the goal of every Jew is to strive upward toward greatness.

The base signifies that our spiritual yearnings need to be grounded in the Torah, which lies inside the *Aron* from which the *keruvim* grow. We must recognize that spiritual highs are only positive if they are grounded in the Torah.

Rabbi Rosner notes that there is another message in the *pasuk* that qualifies the first message: the *keruvim* must face each other. The Torah is teaching us that spiritual accomplishments must never come at the expense of others.

We must never step on someone else in order to improve our relationship with Hashem. We must bring others up with us, not push them down in order to raise ourselves. We must spread our wings but still face our fellow human beings. (Shalom Rav, p. 426)

Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson quotes the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who says that Jewish exile began with Reuven. In the episode of Yosef and his brothers, it was Reuven's idea that the brothers should not kill Yosef but place him in a pit. Chazal tell us that Reuven intended to return and help Yosef escape from the pit. The *pasuk* (Bereishis 37:25) tells us that after the brothers had placed Yosef in the pit, they sat down to have a meal. It was during this meal that a group of *Yishmaelim* came by, and Yehudah had the idea to sell Yosef to them, and the brothers agreed.

Later, the *pasuk* (ibid., v. 29) tells us that Reuven returned to the pit to save Yosef, and to his horror, he found the pit empty. Rashi asks where Reuven had been, seeing as he was not present at the sale. Where is he returning from?

Rashi answers that he had been engaging in fasting and wearing sackcloth to atone for the sin of moving his father's bed after the death of Rachel. He was involved in the process of *teshuvah* and spiritual refinement. He was working on himself to grow in spirituality and get closer to Hashem.

The Rebbe says that this was Reuven's error. How can a person allow himself the luxury of attempting spiritual perfection when a Jewish child is languishing in a pit!

When others are suffering - when Jewish girls and boys, men and women, are languishing in the pit of economic hardship, of low self-esteem, of alienation and emotional, physical, or religious pain - it is not appropriate to concentrate on the finer details of spiritual perfection while ignoring them. The path of refinement into a G-d-fearing Jew must include sensitivity to the hardships of others and a commitment to help them.

Had Reuven been aware of this message, he would have stayed to ensure Yosef's safety and only then concentrated on his spiritual refinement. He wasn't, and as a result, Yosef was sold down to Egypt, and galus began. Although our wings must face upwards, our faces still need to be turned toward each other.

## THINKING OF OTHERS

### Pardes Yosef

*"...with their faces toward one another..." (25:20)*

Yet another verse (Sefer Divrei Hayamim 3:13) says: And their faces to the House. How so? One way is if they do the Omnipresent's will and the other way if they will not do the Omnipresent's will. (Bava Basra 99a)

In seeking to do the Omnipresent's will, "each person's face must be turned to the other"; i.e., individuals must think not only of themselves but also of other Jews. We must take care that our siblings also remain true to Judaism, and that our siblings children, too, should be able to study the Torah.

If a person's "face is turned to the house," if we are concerned only with the spiritual needs of our own house, it is proof that we are not doing the Omnipresent's will.

## WHAT HASHEM DESIRES

### Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

*"The Keruvim shall spread their wings upward, sheltering the lid with their wings, with their faces toward one another..." (25:20)*

The Torah here describes the two *keruvim* as extending their wings upward - פורשי כנפיים למעלה - and facing one another - ופניהם איש אל אחיו -

The Gemara in Maseches Bava Basra (99a) notes that a different *pasuk*, in Sefer Divrei Hayamim (3:13), indicates that the *keruvim* were facing outward, away from one another. To reconcile these two *pesukim*, the Gemara explains that בזמן שישראל עושין רצונו של מקום, when *Am Yisrael* are fulfilling G-d's wishes, then the *keruvim* face one another, symbolizing Hashem's love for His nation. But when *Am Yisrael* do not fulfill Hashem's wishes, the *keruvim* turn away from each other, expressing distance and tension.

The Beis Yisrael (the fourth Gerrer Rebbe) developed this idea further. When the Gemara speaks of *Am Yisrael* failing to fulfill Hashem's wishes - אין עושין רצונו של מקום - it means that they are turning away from one another, that they fail to care for one another, to pay attention to each other's needs, to show sensitivity and respect to their fellow Jews, as symbolized by the *keruvim's* faces turned away from another.

Jews can have their "wings" spread "heavenward," they can be very "frum," insisting on only the strictest standards of *kashrus* and reciting the longest *shemoneh esrei* in shul, but still be considered אין עושין רצונו של מקום, failing to fulfill Hashem's will, if they do not "face" their fellow Jew, if they do not show empathy and extend kindness to their fellow, or shower their fellow Jews with love. The *keruvim's* faces turned toward one another when *Am Yisrael* were "facing each other," were caring for one another and treating each other respectfully - and this is רצונו של מקום, what G-d wants from us.

## MINDFUL OBSERVANCE

### Kli Yakar

*"The Keruvim shall spread their wings upward, sheltering the lid with their wings, with their faces toward one another..." (25:20)*

The positioning of the *Keruvim* on top of the *Aron* teaches us how a Torah-observant Jew must behave at all times.

He must be among those who "spread their wings upward," always mindful of the *mitzvos* between Hashem and man. At the same time, he must ensure "their faces face one another," that he is considerate and careful in *mitzvos* between man and his fellow man.

## PROTECTED BY THE YOUTH

### Tzvor HaMor

*"The Keruvim shall spread their wings upward, sheltering the lid with their wings, with their faces toward one another..." (25:20)*

The *Keruvim* on the *Aron* containing the Torah had the form of a child's face, implying that the Torah study in which children engage in the *cheder* serves as a shield of merit for the entire Jewish community, protecting it from evil ("sheltering the *Aron* cover with their wings").

The Sages said: "The world survives only by the merit of the children in the house of study, as it is written (Tehillim 8:3): 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have You established strength because of Your adversaries, so that You might silence the enemy and the avenger.'"

## PREREQUISITE OF LOVE

### Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

*"The Keruvim shall spread their wings upward, sheltering the lid with their wings, with their faces toward one another..." (25:20)*

The Gemara (Yoma 54b) teaches: "When the heathens entered the Temple to destroy it, they saw the *Keruvim* in embrace." This concept seems to be perplexing. The "embrace of the *Keruvim*," is an expression of Hashem's closeness and love for *Klal Yisrael*. How is it possible that at the very moment of severe punishment and destruction, the *Keruvim* would be in embrace?

The Maharsha, R' Shmuel Eidels zt'l, suggests that it is because *Bnei Yisrael* were being so severely punished that there had to be this manifestation of utter closeness and love. It is a testament to the pure and total righteousness of the *Ribono Shel Olam* that when He metes out Divine justice through punishment, He is first and foremost filled with compassion and love.

Therefore, only at the moment when the *Keruvim* were locked in an embrace of love, could the Almighty decree the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* and *Bnei Yisrael's* subsequent exile.

## INTELLECTUAL TRANSFORMATION

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*"You must have them make a Table of acacia wood, two cubits long, one cubit wide, and one and a half cubits high." (25:23)*

The three furnishings in the outer chamber of the Tabernacle - the Candelabrum, the Table for the showbread, and the Altar for the incense - signified the three components of the intellect - insight (*chochmah*), understanding (*binah*), and knowledge (*da'at*) - respectively.

*Binah* ("understanding") processes the insight of *chochmah*, analyzing it and integrating it into our already-existing mental picture of reality. Without *binah*, new flashes of insight will dissipate, leaving us with a fleeting sense of having glimpsed reality from a higher perspective, but grasping hopelessly for some way to retain that inspiration.

*Da'at* ("knowledge") then makes the mental picture of *binah* relevant. Without *da'at*, information remains abstract. We must always seek the practical implications of new knowledge, so it can help us remake ourselves into better human beings and ascend the ladder of Divine consciousness. (Reshimot 108) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

## PRIDEFUL SINCERITY

### Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

*"You shall place the showbread upon the table, before Me at all times." (25:30)*

*Mashal*: In the city of Tzefas, during the times of the Arizal, R' Yitzchak Luria zt'l, there lived a sincere fellow who once heard a shiur in *shul* about the importance of the *lechem ha'panim*. He became very excited. Inflamed with passion, he raced home and informed his wife that she should bake twelve *challos* each week, which he would then bring to *shul* on *Erev Shabbos* and offer up as a gift to the *Ribono Shel Olam*.

Each week, his wife would bake the *challos*, and he would deliver them to the *shul*. With a heartfelt prayer, he would silently place them inside the *Aron Kodesh* and then leave before anyone knew he had been there.

Unbeknownst to him, the *shamash* would come into the *shul* each Friday and see twelve *challos* neatly arranged inside the *Aron Kodesh*. Intrigued, he thought that perhaps someone was being kind to him and his family, as food was hard to come by on his meager salary. So each Friday, he took the *challos* home and used them for his *Shabbos* table.

This went on for quite some time until one Friday, when the rabbi of the *shul* happened to come in early and noticed the sincere fellow placing his gift of twelve *challos* inside the *Aron Kodesh*. Thinking the man had gone insane, he loudly berated him.

“What do you think you’re doing? Giving Hashem *lechem ha’panim*? Are you crazy?”

That very same day, the holy Arizal came across this rabbi and told him, “You should know that what you did was wrong. You had no right to berate this man; since the time of the destruction of the holy Temple, Hashem has not enjoyed such spiritual pleasure as from that sincere man’s *lechem ha’panim*!”

*Nimshal*: We don’t always know what we’re doing or if our actions are having the proper effect. But one thing is certain: If we approach our *Avodas Hashem* with true sincerity and generosity of heart, this is sure to bring about a *nachas ruach* to our Father in Heaven.

## CONSTANT AWARENESS

### Vizhnitzer Rebbe

*“You shall place the showbread upon the table, before Me at all times.” (25:30)*

When does one’s eating - his *lechem* - have a *panim* - an acceptability and fulfillment? When he does it לפני תמיד - when he is continuously aware of Hashem’s presence in front of him at all times.

## UNIQUELY UNITED

### Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

*“And you shall make the pure-gold Menorah, hammered out, the Menorah shall be made...” (25:31)*

The Torah details the intricate instructions for building the *Mishkan*, complete with utensils used for His service. Two of the items, however, were to be sculpted of one piece of gold: The *Keruvim* (the golden angels that rest on top of the *Aron*), and the *Menorah* (the candelabra with its seven branches to be lit daily), complete with upside-down goblets, knobs, and flowers along its many stems (25:31-37). What was so special about the *Menorah* that required it, in addition to the two *Keruvim*, to be made of one piece of gold when the *Aron* itself didn’t have that exact requirement (25:10-11)?

Rabbi Israel Greenberg suggests that the branches represent different segments of the Jewish nation, and that the ornaments on each stem represent diverse approaches to understanding the Torah, and that all people and all approaches contribute to a single goal of illuminating the world. Moreover, the upside-down goblets represent not receiving liquid but supporting the flame of our Torah; the knobs, resembling apples, represent the sweetness found from within; and the flowers symbolize the novel insights we discover hidden within the Torah text. Each of these factors represents all that the Torah has to offer, but only when they function as one unit - one segment of people inspiring another, and one form of study celebrating the other. We are all different, and those differences can make each of us unique and golden, as long as we function as a cohesive group of people.

## REQUIRING HASHEM’S ASSISTANCE

### Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

*“And you shall make the pure-gold Menorah, hammered out, the Menorah shall be made...” (25:31)*

Since the verse says that the *Menorah* “shall be made” in the passive form instead of repeating “you shall make,” we are being taught that initially Moshe was instructed to make the *Menorah*, but since he found it too difficult, the *Menorah* was made “by itself” (see Rashi and the *Mizrachi*).

Why would Hashem show Moshe how to create the *Menorah* if it would still be too hard for him to make?

The Sefas Emes (Parashas Terumah, 5631) answers that Hashem did this in order to teach us that no one - not even Moshe - can perform a *mitzvah* without Hashem’s help. Instead, we have to put in all of our effort and rely on Hashem to do the rest. This message corresponds to *Pirkei Avos* which tells us that it is “not our duty to complete the work,” since it is beyond us, but at the same time, we are “not at liberty to neglect it,” because all Hashem wants from us is to apply our best effort; whether or not the *mitzvah* is actually accomplished is only in His hands (*Avos* 2:16 with *Tiferes Yisrael*).

Although we may feel disheartened at the thought of not being able to achieve greatness by ourselves, we should in fact be filled with great excitement at the knowledge that, with Hashem’s help, we can achieve greatness way beyond our natural-born talents. We do not need to be the biggest genius to become great in Torah, for instance, because it is our effort that Hashem rewards with success. Similarly, if we wholly dedicate ourselves to fulfill a *mitzvah* despite the difficulty we anticipate facing, we will undoubtedly receive tremendous Divine assistance to help us succeed.

## LIGHT WITHIN THE DARKNESS

### Reb Noson of Breslov

*“And you shall make the pure-gold Menorah, hammered out, the Menorah shall be made...” (25:31)*

Moshe had difficulty understanding how the *Menorah* should be made; he had learned yet forgotten how to make it.

G-d told him, “Go to Betzalel; he will show you.” Moshe went to Betzalel, who immediately crafted the *Menorah*. Moshe exclaimed, “*Betzalel* (בצלאל), you must have been *b’tzeil Kel* (בצלל-א, in G-d’s shadow). G-d showed me and I could not grasp how. But you, you did it immediately.” (*Yalkut Reuveini*)

This episode raises many questions. If Betzalel, who was in G-d’s shadow, knew how to make the *Menorah*, surely Moshe, who had been taught directly by G-d, should have known how to make it? And how could it be that Moshe had such a difficult time understanding, yet Betzalel grasped it immediately?



Moshe's difficulty lay in grasping how it was possible to create a *Menorah* that would continually give forth light, despite the darkness of this world and the obstacles that face man in his spiritual quest. But Betzalel, Moshe's student, grasped right away that the light would shine forever.

Moshe's inability to understand stemmed from his deep humility. Although he had always nullified himself before G-d, which helped him attain the level of Divine Will and the ability to draw it down for all mankind, he believed himself unworthy of making the light shine for all. But Betzalel knew that Moshe was worthy, and immediately made the *Menorah*. (Likutey Halakhot I, p. 131a)

## FUELING OUR FIRE

### Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

*"And you shall make the pure-gold Menorah, hammered out, the Menorah shall be made, its base, its stem, its goblets, its spheres, and its flowers must be an integral part [of it]." (25:31)*

Rashi quotes the Medrash: "The *Menorah* shall be made on its own. Because Moshe was perplexed by the way in which it was supposed to be made, the Holy One blessed be He told him, 'Throw the block of gold into the fire, and it will be made by itself.'"

The *Menorah*, with its seven branches emanating from a single stem, formed in its entirety by a single block of gold, is symbolic of the wisdom of the Torah, as well as the seven wisdoms of the world, which all emanate from one single Divine source. Everything emerges from the Torah, for the sake of the Torah.

And this, in essence, was Moshe's problem: How can a mortal human being possibly grasp the profundity and complexity of incorporating all the wisdom of the world into one physical object - the *Menorah*? Thus, Hashem told him to throw the block of gold into the fire, and it would be made by itself. But how did this resolve Moshe's concerns?

R' Nison Alpert zt'l provides a wonderful understanding. The *pasuk* states, "*Halo koh devarai k'aish* - behold, My word is like fire" (Yirmiyahu 23:29). The Torah is compared to fire. A unique property of fire is that it destroys physical substances while also incorporating them into its flame. The more physical material that is added to the fire, the larger the flame becomes.

So, too, is a man's relationship with Torah. When a person delves into the Torah and becomes one with it, the Torah becomes akin to a flame that engulfs him entirely, purifying him, and, in a sense, making him into a torch which rises to Hashem. In the process, the person grows, just as a fire grows when it is fed with fuel. This lesson was implicit in Hashem's command to Moshe to throw the block of gold into the fire.

## LIGHTING UP THE WORLD

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*"And you shall make the pure-gold Menorah... its stem, its goblets, its spheres, and its flowers must be an integral part [of it]." (25:31)*

The stem of the *Menorah* alludes to the Written Torah, and the six branches that extend from it allude to the six orders of the Mishnah, the basic compendium of the Oral Torah. In this context, the spheres and flowers on the *Menorah's* branches allude to the extra-mishnaic teachings of the sages, which were later recorded and discussed in the commentary on the Mishnah known as the Gemara. The Mishnah and Gemara together are known as the Talmud.

The goblets on the *Menorah's* branches allude to the Torah's "wine" - its inner, mystical dimension.

The spiritual light of the *Menorah* - the Written Torah, the Oral Torah, and the Torah's inner dimension - are the means through which we acquire Divine consciousness and disseminate it throughout the world. (Torah Ohr 88b; Ohr HaTorah, Shemos, pp. 1486, 1491) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

## HASHEM'S HELPING HAND

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*"And you shall make the pure-gold Menorah, hammered out, the Menorah shall be made, its base, its stem, its goblets, its spheres, and its flowers must be an integral part [of it]." (25:31)*

We are taught that Moshe did not understand all of G-d's instructions how to make the *Menorah*, so G-d showed him an image of a fiery *Menorah*. But even so, the *Menorah* was still too complicated for Moshe to envision, so G-d told him to simply throw the gold into a fire and the *Menorah* would miraculously take form.

Besides the *Menorah's* physical construction, what Moshe found most difficult to grasp was how such a physical object could spread the light of Divine consciousness to the outside world.

By showing Moshe the fiery *Menorah*, G-d affirmed his hesitations. He informed him that indeed, using physical objects to spread Divine awareness in the world is impossible for us to do on our own. He therefore told Moshe to cast the gold into the fire and that the *Menorah* would take form by itself.

Similarly, G-d requires us to transform all our material pursuits and possessions into sources of Divine light, but He also knows that we cannot do this on our own. All He asks is that we cast it all into the fire of our hearts - i.e., to let our love for Him permeate all we do - and He will miraculously do the rest. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 1, p. 174) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

## LIGHT OF INSIGHT

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*“Observe and construct, according to their form that you are shown on the mountain.” (25:40)*

The Candelabrum signified insight (*chochmah*), the initial stage of the intellect.

The Tabernacle represented the notion of transforming our own lives as well as the world at large into G-d’s true home by increasing the world’s awareness of G-d’s presence in it. The Candelabrum thus represented the idea that opening ourselves up to new insights is a necessary component of spiritual life. Complacency and jadedness are the enemies of an inspired life characterized by spiritual growth and optimism.

We are taught that G-d’s detailed instructions regarding the fashioning of the Candelabrum were too much for Moshe to fathom, and that G-d therefore instructed him to simply throw the talent of gold into a fire, after which the Candelabrum emerged fully-formed on its own. This teaches us that only by being ready to relinquish our present way of looking at things (to “throw our preconceptions into the fire”), opening ourselves to Divine guidance and inspiration, can we attain new spiritual insight. (Reshimot 108) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

## UNDERCOVER TZADDIK

### Premishlaner Rebbe

*“You shall make panels of goats hair for a tent over the Mishkan...” (26:7)*

There are two kinds of *tzaddikim*: On the one hand, there is a *tzaddik* who is the same on the outside as on the inside. When you look at him, you know he is a *tzaddik*. On the other hand, there is a *tzaddik* whose righteousness is hidden. To the casual observer, this *tzaddik* is nothing special, a “regular” person. Which way is preferable?

The *pasuk* states: “You shall make curtains for a tent over the *Mishkan*.” This teaches us that a *tzaddik* should try to “cover” himself, for it instructs us to make a curtain to cover our inner *Mishkan* - our inner holiness.

## STANDING STRONG

### Avnei Ezel

*“And you shall make the boards for the Mishkan of acacia wood, standing erect.” (26:15)*

The world was unworthy to have the use of cedars, and the cedars were created solely for the *Mishkan* and subsequently for the *Beis HaMikdash*. (Midrash)

Cedar wood, which is quite hard, symbolizes firmness and toughness (“man should always be tender as a reed and not hard as a cedar”). The character trait of hardness should not exist in the world at all except for use for those

holy purposes symbolized by the *Mishkan* and the *Beis HaMikdash*.

In such matters, firmness and inflexibility are imperative, since these qualities will guard us against the influence of scoffers and seducers and keep us from being lured away from the path of Judaism.

## NEED FOR STABILITY

### Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

*“And you shall make the boards for the Mishkan of acacia wood, standing erect.” (26:15)*

When describing the material and process of creating the *Mishkan*, G-d instructs us to “make the planks of acacia wood, upright” (26:15). Why does G-d specify the type of wood to use, and what does the term “upright” add?

While the Gemara (Sotah 45a) explains that the acacia tree planks will last forever, the K’sav Sofer adds a deeper understanding of the particular species used. The acacia tree does not bear fruit, nor is it a particularly tall or beautiful tree. The acacia’s best quality is its sturdiness and dependability, critical ingredients for creating a home, upright. These qualities enable the acacia tree and the structures built with its wood to endure the test of time. What has staying power in our lives is not the flash or grandeur, but stability and reliability.

## OVERTURNING FALSEHOOD

### Reb Elimelech Lizhensk

*“...twenty boards for the south side southward.” (26:18)*

The letters of the Hebrew word *keresh* (“board”) can be rearranged to spell *sheker* (“falsehood”), indicating that if you succeed in overturning falsehood you will achieve the highest level of holiness - you will be worthy of becoming a part of the Sanctuary.

## FORMS OF CONTRIBUTIONS

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*“You must have them make forty silver bases...” (26:19)*

The ten-cubit-high planks forming the walls of the Tabernacle allude to the three facets of our intellect (wisdom, understanding, and knowledge) and our seven emotions (love, fear, compassion, confidence, sincerity, loyalty, and humility). The coverings forming the roof of the Tabernacle allude to our enveloping powers of will and delight. The bases, in contrast, allude to our ability to enforce the Torah’s code of behavior upon ourselves. Raw self-discipline is the lowest rung on the ladder of self-refinement, since it is devoid of any feeling or intellect. Nonetheless, just as the bases were the foundation that kept the Tabernacle’s structure standing firmly, self-discipline is the foundation of the character-structure in a well-built life.

Inasmuch as the norms of religious behavior ensured by self-discipline are the same for everyone, the bases were made out of the one contribution everyone gave equally. In contrast, since each of us relates to G-d differently via our delight, will, intellect, and emotions, the components of the Tabernacle alluding to these aspects of our personalities were made out of the contributions the people gave according to their individual means and desires. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 1, pp. 162) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

## UNITED AS ONE

### Rabbi Jeremy Finn

*“And the middle bar amid the planks shall extend and penetrate from one end to the other end.” (26:28)*

The Targum Yonasan explains that this middle bar inside the planks was made out of wood that miraculously had rubber-like qualities that allowed it to bend, and it was one piece that encircled the entire *Mishkan*.

Rav Zeidel Epstein, *Mashgiach* of Yeshivas Torah Ohr, asks the obvious question: why was this miracle necessary? If it is essential, why did it only apply to the middle bar and not to the top and bottom bars that did not go straight through but were comprised of different pieces that joined together?

Rav Epstein answers that Hashem wanted to show us the level of *achdus* to which we have to strive.

We need to aspire to be one unified block - not simply different pieces that are stuck together, even if they are stuck together with the strongest glue.

Items that are stuck together may create something that is one, but they are not completely one and lack unity.

Something that is one continuous piece is *achdus*.

Such a level of unity is an ideal not readily achievable. So, the other bars were made up of multiple parts to assuage our fears and assure us that any level of joining together is a step in the right direction.

Slowly and surely, each act of unity will lead us to achieve the degree that we seek, which is to be united as one and not just joined as one. (L'titecha Elyon, p. 452)

## TRANSCENDING INTELLECT

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*“And you shall bring there, inside the Curtain, the Aron of the Testimony, and the Curtain will separate for you between the Holy and the Holy of Holies.” (26:33)*

The outer chamber of the Tabernacle contained three furnishings: the *Menorah*, the Table of twelve loaves (both of which are discussed in this section of the Torah), and the incense Altar (which is discussed in the next section). The Holy of Holies, in contrast, contained only one furnishing: the Ark of the Covenant.

The two chambers of the Tabernacle signify the two stages of achieving Divine consciousness. In the Tabernacle's outer chamber, we begin to orient our consciousness toward Divinity by focusing our intellect on G-d. This is why there were three furnishings in the outer chamber; they signify the three components of the intellect: the ability to gain insight (*chochmah*, in Hebrew), the ability to comprehend (*binah*) the meaning of that insight, and the ability to make what we comprehend relevant to our own lives (*da'at*).

Once we arrive at an intellectual consciousness of G-d, we can proceed to the next level, supra-rational consciousness of Him. This is the consciousness of the inner chamber and the Ark contained within it. At this level, not only our intellect but our entire being is engulfed in Divine consciousness. (Reshimot 108) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

## INTELLECT VS. EMOTION

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*“The Curtain will separate for you between the Holy and the Holy of Holies.” (26:33)*

The outer and inner chambers of the Sanctuary correspond respectively to the emotions and intellect of the Divine soul. The Curtain dividing these two chambers corresponds to the quantum leap of consciousness that characterizes the difference between emotion and intellect.

Emotions require us to be quite aware of ourselves; otherwise, we cannot react emotionally to anything. In contrast, when we are absorbed in thought, we often lose all consciousness of ourselves. In fact, in order to fully grasp an idea, we practically must lose our self-awareness - if not, our preconceived notions will likely prevent us from experiencing and comprehending the new insight truthfully.

Thus, the Divine consciousness we experience when our intellect is absorbed in contemplating any given G-dly idea is entirely different than the Divine consciousness we experience when feeling some G-dly-oriented emotion. Realizing this difference can help us open ourselves up to new insights and thereby climb the ladder of spiritual growth. (Ohr HaTorah, Shemos, vol. 6, p. 2121) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

## PURPOSEFUL POSITIONING

### Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

*“The Menorah [placed] opposite the Shulchan” (26:35)*

We read about the placement of the various items used in the *Mishkan*. When describing the placement of all the items, the Torah tells us that “the *Menorah* [is to be placed] opposite the *Shulchan*” (26:35). What is the significance of the deliberate placement of these items opposite one another?

Kol Dodi suggests that the *Menorah* represents dedication to Torah and wisdom, while the *Shulchan* represents sustenance and wealth. They are placed opposite each other because each endeavor supports the other. Immersing ourselves in the study of the Torah and soaking up its vast wisdom prompts us to approach the physical world dutifully, as a proper means to an end. In turn, engaging in routine tasks and tending to our more material needs while keeping in mind the greater purpose empowers us with the mindset to rededicate ourselves to Torah. The message is that Torah is the ultimate reason for being here; it grounds us, reminds us of our purpose, and infuses meaning into everything we do. Our sustenance and wealth are sustained by our commitment to the Torah and our dedication to its eternal guidance.

## **FIREY ENTHUSIASM**

### **Rabbi Jeremy Finn**

*“The Menorah [placed] opposite the Shulchan” (26:35)*

Moshe Sternbuch quotes the Gemara (Bava Basra 25b) that says: הרוצה להעשיר יצפין והרוצה להחכים ירדים, וסמנך - שלחן בצפון ומנורה בדרום - “If one wishes to be wealthy, he should face the north, and someone who wishes to be wise should face the south,” since the *Shulchan* was in the north, and the *Menorah* was in the south.

Rav Moshe Sternbuch points out that between the *Menorah* and the *Shulchan* stood the *Mizbeach Ha’ketores* - the Golden Altar on which the incense was offered. It represents fire, the fire of passion, the *mesirus nefesh* that is necessary to be successful in both spiritual and physical matters. It represents the dedication needed to set aside quality time for learning and working on one’s *middos* in order to grow closer to Hashem, and the *mesirus nefesh* that it takes to use one’s hard-earned finances to give *tzedakah* and perform *hachnasas orchim*.

The simple message of these *keilim* is that there is no such thing as a free lunch. Everything, whether it is physical or spiritual, requires hard work if you are going to be successful.

Without the fire, the dedication, and the *mesirus nefesh* represented by the *Mizbeach*, then the physical blessings represented by the *Shulchan* and the spiritual bounty represented by the *Menorah* will be lost. (Taam V’Daas, p. 181)

Reb Saul Glasser noted that when a person enters the *Kodesh*, he faces the *Kodesh HaKodashim*, and his aim is toward spirituality and toward Torah. Therefore, as he walks, the *Shulchan* that represents physicality is on his right - the side of prominence - because if your focus is toward spirituality, then you can place a degree of importance on the physical.

However, as you turn to leave the *Kodesh*, turning your back on the *Kodesh HaKodashim* and making it no longer your focus, then the *Menorah*, representing spiritual blessing, is on your right, because you can no longer afford to emphasize the physical.

If our focus is toward the *Kodesh HaKodashim* and we are willing to put in the hard work and necessary *mesirus nefesh*, we have the recipe for spiritual success and the tools to enjoy material blessings.

## **DIVINE TAPESTRY**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*“You must make a Screen for the entrance of the Tent [out of] turquoise, purple, and scarlet [wool], and twined linen.” (26:36)*

The Tabernacle itself represents the realm of total Divine consciousness - the state we attain when absorbed in the study of the Torah, in prayer, or when preparing to perform one of G-d’s commandments.

In contrast, the Courtyard surrounding the Tabernacle represents the arena of self-consciousness - the state of mind we return to after these Divine pursuits, when we are once again aware of ourselves.

In order that the Divine consciousness we experience when “inside the Tabernacle” remain with us when we are outside of it, there has to be a Screen demarcating the two realms. The Screen was opaque enough to conceal the intense Divine consciousness that leaves no room for self-awareness, but translucent enough for a glimmer of it to radiate to the outside. Allegorically, it could be compared to a parable, which conveys an idea without expressing it explicitly.

The fact that the Tabernacle included a Screen teaches us that, on the one hand, we cannot remain “inside the Tabernacle” at all times; we must venture out of it in order to elevate the world. On the other hand, we must not cut ourselves off from our spiritual moments completely; we must ensure that their inspiration illuminates our mundane lives, as well. (Ohr HaTorah, Shemot, vol. 1, pp. 188-189) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

## **ABILITY TO REPAIR**

### **Rabbi Shlomo Ressler**

*“You shall make the Altar out of acacia wood, five amos long and five amos wide - the Altar shall be square.” (27:1)*

G-d’s instructions for the building of the *Mizbeach* dictate which materials to use, that the dimensions be equal on every side, and that the *Mizbeach* be square (27:1). What is the significance of the requirement for the *Mizbeach* to be square?

Rav Hirsch explains that structure and buildings with straight lines and angles represent the force of man, who is endowed with the freedom to create and master their surroundings (as opposed to circles that represent organic forces without reasoning).

The angles on the *Mizbeach* were so important because they represent the tools and freedoms that we were given to correct wrongs and improve ourselves.



## REFINING AND CONSECRATING

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*"You shall make the Altar out of acacia wood, five amos long and five amos wide - the Altar shall be square – and three amos its height." (27:1)*

The Outer Altar was used for offering three types of animals: cattle, sheep, and goats. The animal sacrifices we offer up in our personal, inner sanctuaries are the various facets of the "animal" side of our personalities.

Our inner "cattle" are our impulses to be confrontational, to oppose the directives of the Divine side of our personalities.

Our inner "sheep" are our impulses to conform, to follow the crowd in pursuit of creature comforts because we are too weak to assert our Divine nature.

Our inner "goats" are our impulses to be stubborn, brazenly refusing to budge from our preconceived notions.

We "slaughter" our inner animal by renouncing our animalistic orientation toward life. We "sprinkle its blood" and "place its fat" on the Altar by re-orienting our enthusiasm (warm blood) and sense of delight (fat) toward G-dliness.

We "burn up" our inner animal on the Altar by allowing the Divine side of our personality to consume our animal drives.

The fact that the sacrificial Altar was situated outside the Tabernacle, in the Courtyard, teaches us that refining the animal side of our personalities is prerequisite to entering the realm of holiness and Divine consciousness, represented by the Tabernacle itself. (Reshimot 108) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

## STUBBORN PRAYERS

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*"You shall make its horns on its four corners, from it shall its horns be; and you shall cover it with copper." (27:2)*

Copper is harder than gold and silver, the other metals that were used in the Tabernacle. In fact, the Hebrew word for "copper" (*nechoshet*) is related to the word for "stubborn" (*nachush*).

The Outer Altar is where sacrifices were offered up, and thus corresponds to the spiritual growth process of daily prayers, in which we incinerate the animal and vegetative aspects of our personality in the Divine fire of love and awe of G-d.

Elevating and refining these drives can be a difficult process, requiring stubborn determination and great strength of character. This is why the Outer Altar was overlaid specifically with copper. (Biurei HaZohar [Tzemach Tzedek] vol. 1, p. 302) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

## RETURNING TO THE GARDEN

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*"You must have them make [the Altar] a hollow structure." (27:8)*

We are taught that G-d created Adam out of the earth located at the future site of the Altar (Bereishis Rabbah 14:8; Yerushalmi, Nazir 7:2), indicating that the possibility for atonement and repentance is an intrinsic aspect of our humanity. This notion is also alluded to by the fact that the Altar was filled with earth, for the name of the original human being, Adam, means "earth." Metaphorically, then, just as humanity was formed from Altar-earth, the Altar was constructed out of the very humanity for which it was built to atone.

Similarly, when Adam was banished from the Garden of Eden, the Torah says that he was sent "to work the *earth* from which he was taken" (Bereishis 3:23). We use the earth to cultivate the food that powers our lives, to produce the clothes that protect our bodies, and to build the homes that shelter us from harm. When we do all this in order to devote ourselves to our Divine mission, we elevate the earth. This is how we restore the world's lost harmony and return to the Garden of Eden. (Ohr HaTorah, Shemos, vol. 3, pp. 1024-1025) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

## FLAX OF MONOTHEISM

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*"You shall make the Courtyard of the Tabernacle... [by enclosing with] nettings made of twined linen." (27:9)*

These nettings were made of linen because flax, from which linen is made, differs from other plants in that only a single stalk grows from each seed (Zevachim 18b). One of the words for "linen" in biblical Hebrew (*bad*) reflects this attribute, since it also means "alone." Inasmuch as the Jewish people are distinguished from other nations by virtue of our absolute monotheism, it is appropriate that the curtain separating the Tabernacle from the surrounding world was made of linen. (Likutei Torah 2:28b)

In addition, the flax plant alludes to our mission to spread of the knowledge of G-d's oneness to the world at large. Our sages tell us that "flax depletes the land," meaning that it drains the soil of its nutrients more than other crops do (Bava Metzia 109a). Allegorically, the "land" signifies the earthly, materialistic consciousness that opposes faith in one G-d. Thus, by "cultivating flax" - by spreading the knowledge of G-d's oneness throughout the world, we "deplete the land" - we help cure the world of its materialistic outlook.

Thus, while the linen nettings indeed functioned as the border between the holy and the mundane, they also expressed the ideal of refining the entire world with the perspective of holiness. - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

## **ALWAYS WITHIN REACH**

### **Rabbi Shlomo Ressler**

*"You shall make the Courtyard of the Tabernacle... [by enclosing with] nettings made of twined linen." (27:9)*

The courtyard of the *Mishkan* was enclosed by white mesh linen curtains that included six-ply thread (27:9). Since one of the materials to be used is called "*shesh*" (literally meaning six), it seems that the number six has some significance in the context of the courtyard. What is the significance?

Rav Hirsch explains that the courtyard represents the potential for purification and improvement, depicted as white linens. The number six symbolizes nature and creation, as the world was created in six days. Being surrounded by six, a representation of our nature, is meant to encourage us to do what we can to improve ourselves and our actions. The surroundings are meant to empower us with the knowledge that we are asked to do only that which we're capable of accomplishing.

## **TASTE OF THE FUTURE**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"There must be fifteen cubits of nettings on one side, with their three pillars and three bases." (27:14)*

The Tabernacle was the earthly embodiment of Divine consciousness. By entering the Tabernacle - even its Courtyard - one was transported from his or her usual, mundane consciousness into an awareness of Divinity so intense that mundane consciousness seemed to fade into the background, or even disappear completely. In this sense, the Tabernacle was a foretaste of the Messianic future, in which "the earth will be filled with the awareness of G-d as water covers the seabed" (Yeshayahu 11:9).

This taste of the future was alluded to in the entrance to the Tabernacle, which was flanked by two sets of nettings, each fifteen cubits wide. Two times fifteen is the numerical value of the word for "will be" (יִהְיֶה) in the verse (Zechariah 14:9), "On that day, G-d will be one, and His Name will be one."

Similarly, when we enter our personal "Tabernacle" - our set times for prayer and Torah study - we taste something of the Divine consciousness that will pervade reality in the Messianic future. (Sefer Ma'amarim 5747-5751, pp. 211, 214) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

## **FIRMLY ANCHORED**

### **Rabbi Moshe Feinstein**

*"All the stakes of the Courtyard shall be copper." (27:19)*

Rashi is at first uncertain as to whether the pegs were set into the ground or were instead simply tied to the flaps on the *Mishkan*, which were then held down by the sheer weight of the pegs.

Perhaps we can learn from this that each person must endeavor to remain firmly anchored in his faith and not to be blown about by the prevailing winds of the world, the winds of modern trends and beliefs. Ultimately he must rely on his own "weight," the Torah knowledge and understanding he has acquired to accomplish this; at first, however, before he develops the personal force to do this, he has to build himself through diligent study in a yeshivah with the support of his teachers and friends who influence him to be strong in the way of the Torah. In the course of time, however, his own strength will grow to the point that he will be able to stand firm against the winds of falsehood and change even when he is on his own and cut off from his earlier sources of support.

All of this we see from the pegs, which might have held the curtains down with their own weight, or may possibly have been anchored in the firmness of the earth around them.

## **INFUSING DIVINITY**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"All the stakes of the Courtyard shall be copper." (27:19)*

The stakes were hammered into the earth, indicating that the holiness of the Tabernacle actually penetrated the ground.

By building the Tabernacle in the desert, and by "building" our personal, inner Tabernacles, we infuse Divinity even into those places that appear to be, like the ground, inanimate and lifeless. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 6, pp. 166-168) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

## **HAFTORAH**

## **STURDY MATERIALS**

### **Kochav M'Yaakov**

*"As for this house that you are building, if you will walk in My statutes and execute My decrees and keep all My commandments..." (Melachim I 6:12)*

G-d said to Shlomo HaMelech: Don't think that the house that you built became a *Beis HaMikdash* just because you have made generous use of gold and silver in its construction. Only "if you will walk in My statutes and execute My decrees" can you build a place in which the *Shechinah* will dwell and thus turn that place into a *Beis HaMikdash*.

"My statutes and ordinances" these, and not silver and gold, are the true building materials for the *Beis HaMikdash*. If the Jews have these materials, they can have a *Beis HaMikdash* even though the visible edifice has been destroyed, and we have the assurance from G-d that He shall "dwell therein among the Children of Israel and will not forsake My people Israel."