

Parashat Terumah

Shemot 25:10-16

וַעֲשׂוּ אֲרוֹן עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים אֲמֹתַיִם וְחֻצֵי אַרְכּוֹ וְאֲמָה וְחֻצֵי רַחְבּוֹ וְאֲמָה וְחֻצֵי קִמְתּוֹ: וְצִפִּיתְ אֹתוֹ זָהָב טְהוֹר מִבַּיִת וּמְחוּץ תִּצְפְּנוּ וְעָשִׂיתְ עָלָיו זָר זָהָב סָבִיב: וַיִּצְקֶתְ לָּו אַרְבַּע טַבַּעֲתֵי זָהָב וְנִתְּתָה עַל אַרְבַּע פְּעֻמֹּתָיו וּשְׁתֵּי טַבַּעֲתֵי עַל־צִלְעוֹ הָאֶחָת וּשְׁתֵּי טַבַּעֲתֵי עַל־צִלְעוֹ הַשֵּׁנִית: וְעָשִׂיתְ בְּדֵי עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים וְצִפִּיתְ אֹתָם זָהָב: וְהִבַּאתְ אֶת־הַבַּדִּים בְּטַבַּעֲתֵי עַל צִלְעֵי הָאָרֶץ לְשֵׂאת אֶת־הָאָרֶץ בָּהֶם: בְּטַבַּעֲתֵי הָאָרֶץ יִהְיוּ הַבַּדִּים לֹא יִסְרוּ מִמֶּנּוּ: וְנִתְּתָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֶת הַעֵדוּת אֲשֶׁר אֶתֶן אֵלֶיךָ:

They shall make an ark of acacia wood, two and a half cubits its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. And you shall overlay it with pure gold; from inside and from outside you shall overlay it, and you shall make upon it a golden crown all around. And you shall cast four golden rings for it, and you shall place them upon its four corners, two rings on its one side, and two rings on its other side. And you shall make poles of acacia wood and you shall overlay them with gold. And you shall bring the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark with them. The poles of the ark shall be in the rings; they shall not be removed from it. And you shall place into the ark the testimony, which I will give you.

Jacob Kupferman- Class of 2023- Original Commentary

In this week's Parsha, parshat terumah, Hashem gives the Jewish people detailed instructions for how to build God's temporary dwelling on earth, the Mishkan. The parsha starts out with Moshe telling the Jewish people to donate materials for the building of the mishkan. Moshe lists 13 different materials that are needed to build the Mishkan which are: gold, silver, copper, blue wool, purple wool, red wool, flax, goat hair, animal skins, wood, olive oil, spices, and gems. He then proceeds to tell the Jewish people the detailed instructions on how to make the Ark, Menorah, Cherubs, Table (for show bread), sanctuary walls and curtains, and the copper altar. Throughout Jewish texts there is a measurement that is used called an "Amah" or in English a cubit. This measurement has always bothered me because of its imprecise nature due to the fact that it is the equivalent of the distance between a man's elbow and tip of his middle finger. Because it is based off of a person's body it can vary drastically from person to person. In the allotted verses we see the instructions on how the Ark is built and lo and behold they measure it in cubits, 2.5 cubits to be precise. I originally thought that it was crazy that Hashem wanted the most holy Jewish object to be imprecisely measured. Why would Hashem allow the most holy Jewish item to be able to have a margin of error in size. I think that the reason for this is that Hashem is trying to teach us that we don't have to be perfect. We should take away from this that as long as we have the right intention we are fine and we can all be holy in our own way.

Coral Yeudai- Class of 2021: Rashbam

Hashem told Moshe to tell Bnei Yisrael to contribute numerous amounts of materials for the purpose of building and utilizing the mishkan, such as gold, silver, copper, dyed wools, linens, goat hair, animal skins, woods, oils, spices, stones, etc. Hashem goes on to explain to Moshe how exactly to build everything, all the specific measures, and what everything will be used for, to ensure the Mishkan can be easily dismantled, transported, and reassembled as Bnei Yisrael continues their journey. In these specific pesukim, Hashem explains to Moshe the details of the construction of the ark, which should be made with the wood, being two and a half cubits at length, and a cubit and half its width and height. The ark inside and out will be covered in pure gold, with a golden crown all around, four golden rings on its four corners, and wood gold covered poles to be placed in the rings in order to carry the ark. Then, the testimony engraved with the ten commandments will be placed inside the ark.

Medieval Commentary:

Rashbam 25:10

(Rabbi Shmuel Ben Meir, France 11-12th century)

ועשו ארון – חוזר על בני ישראל המוזכרים למעלה ואמר אחר כן ויצקת לו וצפית אותו לשון יחיד כי משה כנגד כל ישראל ואמר תחלה לשון רבים שיהיו כלם משתתפי בעשייתו שהוא קדוש משכני עליון כדי שיהיו כלם זוכים לתורה: ג' ארונות עשה אחד של עץ וב' של זהב ומבית ומחוץ תצפנו ולא כתיב וצפית אותו זהב (?) כמו בשלחן שלא הי' מצופה צד העליון שלו

And they shall make an ark-This refers to Bnei Yisrael above (in pasuk ב') and it says afterwards he casted to him and expected it to be a singular language (just addressing Moshe, but should be understood as) because Moshe was representing all Israel (the Jewish people) and it (Torah) initially (used) plural language so that everyone would participate in its making for it is holy, uppermost Mishkan so that they could all be rewarded in Torah (each would get a share): Three arks, one to be made out of wood, and the two out of gold, (and) the outer and inner one cover it (with gold) and do not write on it and (just) cover it with gold just like the Shulchan that the top side will not be covered (with the gold)

Personal View:

While reading these few pesukim, I realized that all the instructions Hashem was giving to Moshe were all in the singular pronoun, except for the first verse that states, “They shall”. I understood that Hashem was instructed Moshe to instruct the people in regards to the building of the Mishkan, but why the switch of speaking directly to Bnei Yisrael? The Rashbam’s opinion is that the plural language was used in order for everyone to be able to participate in the holy making of the Mishkan, in order for the, all to be rewarded in Torah. Personally, I really liked this explanation, as it teaches a lesson of inclusion. I think it was very important, especially at that time, to ensure that every single individual part of the Jewish people felt included and chosen by Hashem. Hashem wanted to give everyone the opportunity to take part in building the Mishkan, and for no one to be excluded or to make it seem as if there were favorites.

Nissim Ruben- Class of 2023- Modern Commentary

This week's parsha is Parshat Teruma. The focus pesukim describe how the Aron was made. I got the honor of having the modern commentary, in which I found (with some help from Mrs Gelman) a commentary by Rabbi Yosef Hershman. (A brief bio on Rabbi Hershman: after graduating from Hebrew Academy of Five Towns & Rockaway, Rabbi Hershman studied in Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh. He went on to earn a Bachelor's degree in Molecular Biology from Yale University and J.D. from Harvard Law School. Upon graduation, he returned to Israel to spend several years learning in Mir Yeshiva, during which time he received Rabbinic Ordination).

His commentary on this section goes as follows: the Aron was made of a box made of wood and 2 boxes made of gold. He says that the wooden box represents Bnei Yisrael's ability to grow and learn from the Torah, and the gold boxes represent steadfastness and purity. Since there was one box inside the wooden box and one outside that could represent the stopping of the corrosion of the wood.

I really liked this commentary because it gives some reason why the Aron was built in the strange way that it was. Thank you and Shabbat shalom.

Ms. Liat Goldstein- Upper School Science Instructor

In this week's pesukim, Hashem is giving Moshe instructions on the construction of the ark, which the luchot will then be stored in. He gives Moshe the dimensions of the ark, as well as the materials it should be made from, and describes how the ark should be transported. Hashem also makes a point to state that the poles used for transportation should never be removed from the rings.

According to Chizkuni, the ark was originally intended to be built entirely of gold, but because it was to be transported by hand, the instructions were to construct one box from wood, then two boxes of gold that covered both the inside and the outside of the box. A "crown" of gold was also used to cover the open edge, so that none of the wood could be seen. I will admit that I have never been very good at analyzing texts like this, so I searched for more commentary that would help me understand the deeper meaning beneath what, on the surface, appears to be a simple set of instructions. In Yoma, Rava says that the act of covering the wood on the inside of the ark with gold, as opposed to just the visible outside, alludes to the saying that "any scholar whose inside is not like their outside is not a scholar." This means that one can study Torah and aspire to be a righteous person, but if they do not uphold the Torah's virtues internally as well as externally (within their own heads and hearts, as well as what they display to their peers), then they are not truly virtuous.

Another piece of commentary offered by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson discusses the fact that Hashem explicitly stated that they should never remove the poles used to transport the ark. Chizkuni states that, out of all the days spent in the desert once the ark had been constructed, the Jewish people stayed in place 99% of the time. Why, then, did the poles need to stay attached to the ark all of the time? The Rebbe explains that, despite the fact that the ark spent most of its time in the Holiest of Holies, it was always ready for transportation.

This can be taken as a metaphor for a person who studies Torah - one carries the ideals of the Torah deep in their heart, but should always be ready to "pick the Torah up and travel," i.e. take their knowledge of the Torah and teach it to others when needed.

פרשת תרומה