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פרשת תרומה
Parshat Terumah

Ashreinu | אשרינו

Enhancing your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

This week's Ashreinu is sponsored by Mark and Joanna Dennis and family in memory of Joanna's father, Mr. Barry Garfield, whose yahrzeit was on ב' אדר. May his neshama have an aliyah.

Parsha Summary

This week's parsha, Parshat Terumah, focuses on the building of the Mishkan. The Jews are asked to contribute materials, including different colors of wool, animal skins, wood, olive oil, spices, and gems, to be used for the building of the Mishkan. The parsha discusses, in detail, the various *keilim* that were built to be used in the Mishkan.

Redemption Redirection

Rabbi Avi Hochman

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Abby Dennis ('20)

Zachy Dennis ('23)

Adam Dennis ('21)

Our lives are full of symbols, from a school logo to a country's flag, the Statue of Liberty, or the Kotel, these all convey messages like identity and freedom. There are probably many symbols in our lives that instill within us hope and inspiration. This week's parsha has one of those symbols.

The Torah discusses the building of the Mishkan, one of the strongest symbols of hope and faith. Many of the items of the Mishkan were built with עצי שטים, acacia wood.

The Torah (Shmot 26:15) refers to these as "עצי שטים עומדים" – "acacia wood standing." Why are they referred to עומדים?

Rashi quotes a midrash that this wood was "standing for a purpose." What purpose? When Yaakov took his family and went down to Mitzrayim, he uprooted trees that Avraham had planted in Be'er Sheva and replanted them in Mitzrayim. He commanded his children to take these trees with them when they eventually left Mitzrayim, as Hashem would command them in the future to build a Mishkan using this wood.

Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky, in his sefer Emet L'Yaakov, points out that in theory the Jews could have taken similar wood from Mitzrayim; Yaa-

kov did not have to uproot Avraham's trees and replant them! Alternatively, Yaakov could have taken acacia wood from his hometown before departing to Mitzrayim. Why did he have to uproot what Avraham had planted?

Rav Kaminetsky explains that Yaakov wanted to instill a psychological message in his children. Yaakov was worried that his children would think that they would remain in Mitzrayim forever, so in order to remove that fear, he left them a symbol of hope and redemption. This wood would be a constant symbol for them to look at and give them faith and inspiration that the redemption would come. Specifically, the trees that Avraham planted, trees that were planted with chesed by the man who embodied *chesed*, would be the trees that would encase the Mishkan and its utensils.

Next week we will be reading Parshat Zachor and recall what the nation of Amalek (who Haman was a descendant of) did to Bnei Yisrael. We must ask ourselves, why the need for such a reminder?

Based upon Rav Kaminetsky's idea, I believe that we can suggest that remembering Amalek helps us recall that there are always people who will want to see the demise of our nation. It is our job to fight through it, through our faith and *tefillot*. As the Jews did with Moshe Rabbeinu and as they did with Esther and Mordechai in the Purim story, we too, must remain focused on the many symbols and messages that we encounter that we must carry throughout our daily lives. We must never lose hope. The same way this wood stood as a symbol of redemption, so too we must constantly be striving and optimistic that our own personal and communal redemption will come one day as well.

Invesment

Abby Dennis ('20)

In Parshat Terumah, all of Bnei Yisrael are asked to contribute an abundance of different materials to the Beit Hamikdash. Among the list are gold, silver, dyes, *techeles*, stones, etc. However, reading this list a question becomes quite obvious. Why couldn't Bnei Yisrael just "write a check" and leave Moshe with the responsibility to go out and buy everything needed for the Mishkan? It would certainly be more efficient and cost effective for Moshe to go and buy everything himself rather than Bnei Yisrael each bringing their portion of the materials.

Rabbi Shrier of Bnai Yeshurun offers a beautiful answer explaining that the reason Hashem specifically wanted Bnei Yisrael to donate their own materials was because He wanted them to be invested in the Mishkan. This way the Mishkan became Bnei Yisrael's project and each *Yid* was able to see their own personal contributions. From the precious stones to the plated gold, each Jew could point to objects in the Mishkan and know that this came from them, thereby fostering a stronger connection to the Mishkan.

This also helps explain why Hashem wanted the Mishkan to be a "group project". Hashem wanted Bnei Yisrael to feel involved and that they had a part in the building of the Mishkan. Through these actions the Mishkan then became close to Bnei Yisrael's hearts and was not just some random abstract thing that they had no relationship to.

Rabbi Shrier draws from this a fascinating and relevant message about *chesed*. So often when tragedies strike, we think we can just

throw money at a problem and hope it'll go away. That, though, is not how life nor *chesed* works. If we want to show that we truly care and do true *chesed*, it's not enough to just give money and call it a day. We have to be personally invested and find ways to give of ourselves physically and not just with our pocketbooks. To do true *chesed*, one must play an active and sincere role in doing their own part each and every day.

Elevate Yourself

Zachy Dennis ('23)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Terumah, Hashem commands us to start building the Mishkan. However, the sequence of events is recorded in a strange order as the reason given for building the Mishkan, that of "וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם", only comes after the list of all the materials to be used in building it. Normally when someone hires workers to build something for him, he tells them what the building is for, and only then do they go ahead and make a list of all the necessary materials. Similarly here, it should have first said the pasuk "וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ" and only then gone ahead and listed all the materials to be used. Why did the Torah flip the order here?

I saw in the sefer Chasdei Hashem an insightful answer to this question. He writes that the *yesod*, foundation, of the Mishkan contains a fundamental lesson we can learn and apply in the "building" of ourselves. The Torah specifically listed the building materials first to point out the importance of their role. The bricks, wools, and other materials all needed to be brought up in *kedusha* before they could be used in a Mikdash for Hashem to reside in. It was only after the *Yidden* elevated the mundane materials that the true purpose of the Mishkan could be revealed to them and achieved.

Similarly in our lives, in order to successfully build ourselves, we need to make sure to first elevate our mundane and physical surroundings. By making the physical and material things in our lives into *kadosh* objects, we allow Hashem to reside in them and with Hashem all around us, there's nothing a *Yid* can't accomplish. Good Shabbos!

The Ultimate Crown

Adam Dennis ('21)

One of the *keilim* of the Mishkan listed in this week's parsha is the Aron. The Aron, standing at a whopping 2.5x1.5x1.5 "cubits" (not including the *kapores*/lid or the *badim*/poles), housed the *luchos*, both the old and new. One of the unique aspects of the Aron is that its top was surrounded by a golden diadem, or "crown" in high school English (depending on Membean level). Rashi explains that this crown represents the *Keser Torah*, the figurative crown reserved for Torah scholars.

The Rambam in Hilchos Talmud Torah (3:1), based on Avos (4:12), explains that there are three crowns that were given to עם ישראל: The crown of מלכות (kingship), כהונה ("priesthood"), and תורה (Torah). He then explains that the crown of כהונה is reserved for Aharon and the Kohanim, and the crown of מלכות is reserved for Dovid HaMelech and his royal descendants.The only crown remaining is the כתר תורה, which he says is "מונח ועומד ומוכן לכל ישראל"– available to all, and even greater than the other two crowns which are acquired naturally. The idea of the holiness of this crown and the ones who

wear it is also supported by the fact that the Aron, the physical manifestation of this concept, was placed in the holiest part of the "Temple" – the Kodesh HaKodashim (Holy of Holies).

One point to take out of this is the importance of hard work. What's important in *Yiddishkeit* is that the effort is made. The results are in Hashem's hands and are much less valuable than the actual sweat involved.

There is another point to be made here though. Rashi later on says that the poles which were meant to help carry the Aron were to never be removed. The Emes L'Yaakov explains on this point that just like the Aron represents Torah, the poles are meant to represent those who support it. He goes on to say that they are considered one *keli* all together, with the supporters receiving *s'char* as well for their efforts, just like the actual *lomdei* Torah.

To connect the two points and put a bow on the *vort*, Chazal tell us that the Aron was never actually carried by the ones appointed to carry it, rather it carried itself. We see from here that even though poles were ready to be used to support the Torah, it wasn't them actually causing the Torah to be able to float, it was Hashem. As much as we put in effort in supporting and attaining the *Keser Torah* (and in regards to everything else we do in life, except I don't see that 6-pack or math test sitting in the Kodesh HaKodashim, but whatever!), it's important to remember that the final result is determined by Hashem, and as Chazal say (Niddah 70b), הא בלא הא לא סגיא – asking Hashem for a little help goes a long way. Good Shabbos!

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