

PENINIM ON THE TORAH

PARSHA BOOKLET

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PARASHAT TERUMAH

Like everything that I show you...and so shall you do. (25:9)

The vov, and, of v'chein taasu, "And so shall you do," seems superfluous. It is not as if there is anything else mentioned here other than the building of the Mishkan. Therefore, it should have said, kein taasu, "so you should do." In the Talmud Sanhedrin 16B, Chazal teach us that this refers to the future. In the event any of the vessels or any aspect of the Mishkan needs to be replaced, their form and pattern should parallel the original design as stated here in the Torah.

Horav Aizik Ausband, Shlita, explains this idea homiletically. The pasuk alludes to the Mishkan which we all build: our Jewish home, which serves as our Mishkan me'at, mini Mishkan, our Sanctuary. When we build our home, it should be built along the same lines as the Mishkan in the wilderness. Its values, concepts, and leit motif should concur with those of the Mishkan.

Let us see how this plays out in our lives. In the average American home, the primary room is the living room. Others might consider the kitchen to be the preeminent room in their house. It all depends on where one spends the most time and to what one attaches greatest significance. We should be different from the denizens of contemporary society because, hopefully, our goals, objectives and values are different from theirs. The Mishkan was to be the symbol of holiness and the standard for the Jewish home. The room in the Mishkan which was considered the most holy was the Kodoshei Kodoshim, Holy of Holies, which housed the Aron HaKodesh which had the Keruvim on top. These Keruvim resembled the faces of little children. This teaches us that the focus in a home should be on the Torah, the seforim. The study-- or wherever the location of the bookcases that contain Torah literature--should be a child's primary room: it should be where he sees his father; it should be where he finds his reading material; it should be the focal point of the home.

If we want our homes to be a veritable sanctuary, where children grow up focused on the important things in Jewish life, then we have to set the standard. We have to set the example. We must change our priorities from plasma to Torah and from living room to study. Our children will learn to appreciate and value what we value.

In his book, "Touched by a Seder," Rabbi Yechiel Spero relates an inspiring story which I feel encapsulates the above idea. In the early part of the twentieth century, money was a scarce commodity, especially for Jews. Materialism was not the primary focus in life, and the little things that might not matter as much today, had much greater value at that time. Clothes were a luxury. One did not simply walk into a store - sale or no sale - and take a couple of suits or dresses off the rack, charge them to the credit card and wear it once or twice before the desire for a new fancy began to fester. Hard-earned

money was spent only for something important. A dress for the mother was important, but it was a process that took time. It entailed deciding on the fabric, design, and color. Then there were the measurements that were taken at different intervals of the garment's creation. In other words, purchasing a dress was an "event."

The story takes place in the early 1900's, as the family of Yitzchak, an outstanding young boy of eleven, waited in anticipation for the new dress the father had ordered for the mother. It would be the first new dress she would have in years. Pesach was coming soon, and what better time than Yom Tov to banei, put on the new dress for the first time. The entire family waited eagerly in anticipation of the arrival of the new dress. Finally, news came that it was ready, but the mother was not going to put it on until Yom Tov. It was just not right.

Yitzchak was an exceptional student who was very adept at his Torah studies. Although young in age, he had skipped a few classes and was already studying with boys much older than himself. He came home a few days before Pesach and matter-of-factly told his mother that he had just completed Meseches Bava Kamma. His mother kvelled, beamed, with pride. Yitzchak made nothing of the accomplishment, but his mother was thrilled.

The next evening, Yitzchak came home from the yeshivah to be greeted by an astonishing sight. The table, covered with Shabbos linen, was set with their finest china; the candles were lit; and - his mother was wearing her brand new dress that she had been saving for Yom Tov!

Understandably, Yitzchak was shocked. After taking a few moments to compose himself, he blurted out, "What is all of this? It is not Shabbos! It is not Yom Tov! Yet, you are wearing the dress that you were saving for Pesach. What is the happy occasion?"

His mother looked glowingly at Yitzchak, smiled and said, "You are correct. I was saving the dress for Yom Tov. What greater Yom Tov is there, however, than when my son completes a Mesechta, tractate in the Talmud? There is nothing more special to me than my son's Torah learning. If you are making a siyum, completing a Mesechta, then I want to celebrate with you."

Yitzchak never forgot this incident. He knew how proud his mother was of his achievements, and he was now acutely aware of the value she placed upon them. As he continued to complete one Mesechta after another, his mother's message reverberated within him. As Yitzchak grew into the venerable Horav Yitzchak Hutner, zl, Rosh Yeshivah of Mesivta Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin, he imparted this lesson to his thousands of students.

Having said that, let us ask ourselves: Do we demonstrate to our children the proper esteem in which we hold their Torah studies? What message do we send them? Do we attend their siyumim? Do we encourage their learning? Do we appreciate their rebbeim? Are we setting the proper example?

They shall make an Aron/Ark of shittim wood, two and a half cubits its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height... You shall make a Table of shittim wood, two cubits its length, a cubit its width, and a cubit and a half its height. (25:10, 23)

The Torah devotes an entire parshah to the construction of the Mishkan and its utensils. As the repository for the Shechinah, every aspect of the Mishkan contains profound esoteric meaning, much of which is beyond the limitations of our human comprehension. Nonetheless, the commentators derive

important lessons from various aspects of the design, measurements and materials used for the Mishkan. In Rabbi Sholom Smith's latest anthology of Horav Avraham Pam's ethical discourses, he cites a powerful thought that the Rosh Yeshivah heard from his father, Rav Meir Pam, who quoted from the Chafetz Chaim. It is a lesson that whoever studies Torah should acknowledge and constantly reiterate.

The measurements of the Aron which contained the Luchos were all presented in half-cubits. This contrasts the Shulchan which contained the twelve Lechem HaPanim, Shewbread, whose dimensions were not presented in fractions. The Aron symbolized Torah study, while the Shulchan was more representative of the physical dimension, serving as the source through which financial prosperity flowed to Klal Yisrael.

The Chafetz Chaim, zl, explained that the Aron represents Torah, and, as such, teaches us that regardless of an individual's diligence or acumen, no human being can claim that he has achieved sheleimus, perfection, in his knowledge and understanding of the Divine Torah. The Torah is Hashem's wisdom - a wisdom that is infinitely greater than anything man can conjure. We can attain more and delve deeper and understand better, but we will never attain perfection. We are human, and the material we are studying is Divinely inspired. Regardless of how often we study the same passage of Talmud, we will always derive new and deeper insights into the topic. One studies the same parshah numerous times in his life and never fails to discover new ideas and messages. Indeed, the more one learns the greater is his perception of how little he really knows, because now he has an inkling of the vastness of Torah.

Rav Pam suggests that this might be the reason that each tractate of Talmud begins on daf beis, page two, rather than on page one. This tells us that no matter how much we have learned, we have not yet begun. There is no beginning to Torah and certainly no end.

The opposite perspective applies with regard to our financial and material requirements. The Shulchan's measurements were presented in full amos, except for its height which was presented in fractions. Rav Pam explains that the length and width of the Shulchan were presented in full amos because in matters of parnassah, livelihood, a Jew should believe that whatever he has is exactly what he needs. Hashem has determined that his present financial state satisfies what he needs. This is why we bless Hashem every day, She'asah li kol tzarki, "Who has provided me with all my needs." While we all recite this blessing every day, how many of us stop to consider its meaning?

It is related that a man once noticed an indigent Jew reciting this blessing with unusual fervor and joy. The spectator was stunned. What about this person's life could have motivated him to recite the blessing with such intensity? Seeing the onlooker's questing glance, the poor man turned to him and said, "Apparently, Hashem has decided that my need in life is to be poor. Clearly, Hashem has given me a full measure of my needs. Therefore, I bless Him."

The Chafetz Chaim once walked by two people who were discussing their financial situations. "How is parnassah going for you?" one of them asked. The other man gave a sigh and said, "It would not hurt if parnassah would be a little better." The Chafetz Chaim turned to the man and asked, "How do you know that it would not hurt?"

Hashem Yisborach is tov u'meitiv, good and benevolent. He wants to do good and, thus, all of His actions are inherently good. Regrettably, we do not always understand this, because we do not see it. Nonetheless, our myopic vision does not change the fact that whatever Hashem does is good. Therefore, at times, when what we want does not coincide with what Hashem knows is good for us, we

will not receive what we want and this will often provoke us to complain or feel bitter. The next step is a laxity in mitzvah observance, coupled with a negative attitude against anything related to religious observance.

We must realize that the degree of wealth that we enjoy - regardless of its size - is custom-tailored for us, in accordance with our total needs. This is symbolized by the presentation of the Shulchan's measurements in complete amos. Whatever we have is complete.

The Shulchan's height is stated in half amos - one and a half amah. Rav Pam derives from here that one's table has potential for elevation. Two people can eat the same meal, but one of them has a "higher" table, because his meal has been sanctified, thus elevating his table. One person eats to fulfill his physical desires. The other eats in order to have the strength to serve Hashem properly. One eats to live; the other lives to eat. One has elevated his table to the status of a mizbayach, altar; the other has designated his to become like a trough. One has transformed the food he eats into a korban, sacrifice; the other has destroyed its potential and left it as nothing more than feed. One performs a Divine service when he eats, the other performs a self-service.

The Table's fractioned height teaches us that one can always elevate his materialistic needs into a venue for spiritual growth. Thus, one should never consider himself complete. He always has room for growth.

And they shall make an Ark of shittim wood. (25:10)

The Midrash questions the change in form from the singular to the plural concerning the making of the Aron. Regarding all other vessels, the command is expressed in the singular: "And you shall make," while concerning the Aron, the Torah writes, "And they shall make." They explain that when it involves the Aron, the symbol of Torah learning, it is important that all Jews have a part in its construction, so that they will all have a share in the Torah. The Ramban expounds on the Midrash saying that quite possibly the Torah is alluding to us that all of Klal Yisrael should in some way take part in making the Aron, so that they will all merit a share in the Torah. He concludes by stating three ways that the people could involve themselves in the Aron: by contributing gold towards the Aron; by assisting Betzalel in making the Aron; or by having kavanah, intention, for the construction of the Aron.

Horav Henschel Leibowitz, Shlita, derives an important lesson in avodas Hashem, serving Hashem, from the third form of endeavor. Apparently, having intention to participate in an endeavor means something. After all, the individual who is only "intending" is one who has no money and is unable to help. He cannot physically carry out his wishes, but he "wishes" nonetheless. He wants to help, although he does not intend to actually help because he is unable, either due to a lack of resources or a lack of talent. Nonetheless, he considers how much he would want to help, were he able to do so. The Rosh Yeshivah cites the Talmud Kiddushin 40A that teaches us that Hashem in His Infinite kindness values our positive intentions as actual deeds. This means that if one intends to perform a mitzvah, but has been prevented from seeing his intention achieve fruition due to an accident, Hashem credits him to some degree as if he actually did the mitzvah. Chazal are addressing one who has been prevented from carrying out his intention due to matters beyond his control. This implies that he was originally prepared, able and willing to do the mitzvah. In such a situation he

receives credit for his intention. The Ramban seems to go beyond this stipulation. According to his commentary, one can even have a share in mitzvos that are beyond his grasp, in circumstances in which there is no real possibility of performing them. Simply by sincerely wishing to do the mitzvah, one earns credit.

We learn a powerful lesson from the Ramban. How often do we throw up our hands in despair, giving up before we even begin, simply because we do not have the wherewithal, the talents, the capabilities to succeed? After all, it is not for me, why bother to get involved? We see from here, that even if we do not have the money, the aptitude, the ability, we can and should feel an overwhelming desire to do so. Just simply to wish, to express and feel an eagerness to do, to share in this mitzvah if Hashem would permit me to do so. We see from here that having positive thoughts, maintaining our yearning, indicates our love and demonstrates our sincerity and care. Hashem gives us credit for wanting to do - even if we do not carry out our wish.

It is all in the attitude. Hashem wants us to manifest an eagerness, an unquenchable thirst, an insatiable desire for Torah and mitzvos. We should not disassociate ourselves from a mitzvah just because we feel that we are not in the "parsha." It does not apply to us, either because we lack the funds or the ability. If we have a burning desire to perform a mitzvah, we will ultimately find some way to "grab" hold of it. Even if we do not actually carry out the mitzvah, our sincere yearning for it will guarantee that we earn a portion in the World to Come - just for trying.

You shall make the planks of the Mishkan of shittim wood, standing erect. (26:15)

Rashi notes the prefix hay preceding the word Kerashim (ha'kerashim), which causes the word to stand out: the Kerashim, as if there were unique significance to these beams. Rashi explains that the Torah is addressing Kerashim which are to be made from specific trees. Yaakov Avinu saw through Divine Inspiration that his descendants would erect a Mishkan in the wilderness. They would need shittim wood for this purpose. He planted the trees as he was leaving for Egypt, and he commanded his sons to see to it that one day when they would leave Egypt, they would take the trees with them: "This way when Hashem commands you to 'make for Me a Sanctuary;' you will have the wood prepared." This statement begs elucidation. Were the beams the only component of the Mishkan that would be lacking in the wilderness? What about the Shoham stones? They certainly were not available in the wilderness. Why was Yaakov not concerned about them?

Apparently, in his Heavenly vision, Hashem only showed him the shittim wood. Nothing was mentioned about the precious stones. The reason for this is that Hashem miraculously provided them with the stones through the medium of the clouds. The question still remains: Why was it necessary to notify Yaakov concerning the wood and not concerning the stones? The same miracle that brought the stones could have also delivered the shittim wood.

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, explains that the shittim wood which was used to create the beams/walls of the Mishkan served a unique purpose, unlike that of the stones. When we define a house, we refer to its walls, which are the primary agent for separating the interior and its contents from the external elements. Likewise, the Mishkan as a holy edifice is a reference to the walls or Kerashim. They set the parameters of sanctity, dichotomizing the holy from the unsacred, the consecrated from the profane. Encapsulated within these walls are the Mishkan's holy vessels: the Aron, Ark; Shulchan.

Table; Menorah, Candelabra; Mizbayach, Altar, etc. They are all part of the Mishkan which is separated from the outside world by the Krashim.

The purpose of the Mishkan is to infuse Klal Yisrael with kedushah, holiness. It is the power source from which the energy that illuminates the hearts and minds of all Jews emanates. In order for this source to inspire the people it must have an intrinsic bond with the people. This bond is created through the people's involvement in its creation. In other words, for the Mishkan to have a long-term effect on the Jewish People, it is necessary that the people play a primary role in its inception and formulation. A Mishkan that comes to us via miraculous intervention will not have an enduring influence. It will not be able to implant within us the kedushah necessary to withstand the test of time and the vicissitudes of life. When it is the product of man's blood, sweat and tears of bitter sacrifice, it is able to imbue holiness into the hearts of the people for generations to come.

And let them take for Me a portion, from every man whose heart motivates him. (25:2)

Rashi explains that the term, "for Me," tells us that the people should give for the Mishkan purely for Hashem's Name, not in response to outside pressure or as an opportunity to seek glory. What does it mean to give for the sake of Hashem's Name? Perhaps the following incident will shed light on this. The Torah in Sefer Devarim 15:10 states: "You shall surely give him (to the poor), and let your heart not feel bad when you give him." When one interprets this pasuk in its simple sense, he can understand it to mean that he should not resent the obligation to part with some of his hard-earned money when a poor man asks for charity. Horav Bunim, zl, m'Peshicha gives this pasuk an additional interpretation.

The Rebbe once visited a home which was characterized by extreme poverty. He immediately gave the family money for their needs. He later returned with an additional sum of money. His chassidim saw this and asked, "Rebbe, why did you return with more money?"

Rav Bunim's reply should catalyze our introspection concerning our attitude towards giving charity. He said, "When I saw the hungry look on the children's faces, their drawn skin and sunken eyes, my heart ached for them. I immediately gave them money, but this money only served to relieve my personal distress. I gave to them because they were in need, not because Hashem tells us in the Torah to give tzedakah."

"In that case, however, I was simply acting to quell my own feelings of inadequacy. I was doing something for my own comfort. I returned, therefore, to give them additional money, as it is a mitzvah to give tzedakah. Because my personal anguish over their plight had been assuaged, I was now able to give for the sake of the mitzvah."

When one gives charity, it should not be only because he feels sympathy for the poor. Even after the pain has been relieved, there is another reason to give: it is a mitzvah. This is especially noteworthy when we are asked to contribute to a cause that does not evoke great feelings of compassion within us. As long as the recipient is deserving, we must give because it is a mitzvah. Neither positive nor negative emotion should dictate how and to whom we give. Our primary motivation should be Hashem's command.

This is implied by the pasuk. At the first juncture in their nationhood, when Hashem requests of

Klal Yisrael that they contribute, He instructed them to give Li, "for Me," for Hashem's sake. They were to give because of the mitzvah, not because of the emotion or the attention they would receive as a result. Give because it is Li, "for Me."

This is the portion that you shall take from them. (25:3)

One who peruses the text will notice an ambiguity in the choice of words used to describe "them," the people who were to contribute towards the Mishkan. The Torah uses the word itam, which usually is translated as "with them," rather than the word meihem, which literally means, "from them." The commentators address this question. Horav Aizik Ausband, Shlita, offers a noteworthy explanation for this change in wording. Itam is a reference to the funds and possessions that are with them, those items with which they pride themselves and which are integral to their daily lives.

He explains this concept by citing an incident that occurred with the Maggid, zl, of Bialistock, who once came to a city to deliver one of his fiery drashos, inspirational lectures. Prior to speaking, he queried the community's leadership as to what they felt needed to be rectified. He desired to focus his address on those issues that were most vexing to the community's spiritual development. They responded that their greatest issue was in the area of malbish arumim, providing clothing for the needy. As in all communities in Europe, earning a livelihood was difficult, and for this reason, many Jewish families barely had enough food for their own subsistence.

Decent clothing was a rarity. People walked around in out-dated, worn-out clothes. The community's leadership, try as hard as they could, had a difficult time in providing them with proper attire. This was not due to a lack of clothing. The same well-to-do people, who shared their wealth with the poor, would also give their used clothing, but here was where the problem was prevalent. Often, when the tzedakah collectors came to ask for clothes, the contributors would look through their closets and select the most threadbare, used garments they could find. In most cases, the items were torn and dirty. When the collector would patiently ask, "Is it possible that you might have something else, perhaps a bit more presentable?" the usual response was, "What is wrong with these garments? True, the poor man would feel awkward walking down to the chupah in these clothes, but there is really nothing wrong with them. They are wearable."

Upon hearing this, the Maggid proceeded to castigate the members of the community concerning their deplorable attitude towards the poor. At the time, it happened to be Parashas Netzavim. The Maggid cited the words of Yeshayah Ha'Navi in 61:10, as he speaks to the people, "I will rejoice intensely with Hashem, my soul shall exalt with my G-d, for He has dressed me in the raiment of salvation, in a robe of righteousness has He cloaked me, like a bridegroom who dons priestly glory." When one gives clothing as tzedakah, it should be such that the poor man can wear it as a bridegroom to his wedding.

This is the concept to which the pasuk is alluding. When one contributes, it should be mei'itam, from (with) them, something that he himself would wear, when he goes out to his own simchah, joyous occasion.

How true are these words. It has become a common ailment that many who possess sufficient means are complacent regarding the needs of those who do not possess such means. For instance, have you ever entered a shul or bais ha'medrash and noticed that the furniture is mismatched, or that the cloth items are threadbare, or clearly obsolete? Are mechanchim and kolleleit supposed to dress like

immigrants? Must they drive old taxi cabs, or is there dispensation for them to own a car that is not in vintage condition? Regrettably, we want to come home to a comfortable nicely-furnished home, but do not feel the same need when it comes to Hashem's home. We dress, and expect our families to dress, as in an ad for a popular clothing manufacturer, but have no problem when those less fortunate wear clothes that we would not wear on Tisha B'Av. The list goes on. There is something, however, that is even more repugnant. I refer to those who cannot tolerate - or to use the popular Yiddish vernacular, fargin - an individual who devotes himself to meleches Hakodesh, holy endeavor, dressing and driving and living on an acceptable middle-class level. It is one thing not to give, but it is completely another not to tolerate. Let us take the lesson of itam to our hearts and wallets.

The poles shall remain in the rings of the Ark; they may not be removed from it. (25:15)

While a number of Klei ha'Mishkan, holy vessels that were used in the Mishkan, were to have rings affixed so that they could be transported, it was only the Aron that was to have the carrying poles that fit into these rings actually in the rings at all times. While this is understandable at a time when the Aron is being transported, why should the poles always remain in the rings? The Sefer HaChinuch states that the simple reason is to allow for the contingency in which Klal Yisrael would have to move on quickly. In that scenario, the poles could be put hurriedly into the rings, to prevent the situation that, in all of the rush, they would not be firmly placed in the rings, causing the Aron to fall. To avoid such a mishap, the poles were never removed. There are commentators who supplement this idea with the concept that the Aron symbolizes the makom hashroas haShechinah, place where the Shechinah reposes. The mere fact that the poles remain in the rings in case of any sudden movement suggests that the Shechinah is not a stationary presence, which is relegated to one specific place. The Shechinah is everywhere.

Horav Eliyahu Schlesinger, Shlita, comments that the poles remain in the rings, not as a means for carrying the Aron, but rather as an indication of the means by which one holds onto the Aron. The message is: hold on always; never let go. Therefore, the poles are always connected to the Aron, delivering a message that must impact us at all times.

He also cites an inspirational analogy from the Baal Shem Tov HaKadosh. A leaf on a tree bemoaned the fact that it was "stuck" to the tree and was not free to fly like a bird, so that it could explore the world around it. Finally, summer was over, and the wind and cold air of autumn emerged. The winds became stronger, and the temperature began to drop. Suddenly, a blast from a strong wind freed the leaf. Oh, how excited the leaf was to fly from its place. It went high and low and far and wide. It had freedom. The wind does not last forever, however, and when the wind stopped, the leaf fell to the ground, only to be trampled by pedestrians. The leaf began to weep. If only it could still be clinging to the tree, it would still be whole and undamaged.

A parallel applies to the Jew. As long as he clings to the tree of life, symbolized by the Torah, then the winds of the world, the free thinking winds, the winds of change, the winds of an immoral hedonistic society, cannot sway and destroy him. He is firmly anchored to the Torah, which is the only stable thing in life.

Eitz chaim hi la'machazikim bah, v'somche'ah me'ushar. "It is a tree of life to those who hold on to it, and its supporters are fortunate" (Mishlei 3:18). As long as one holds on to the Torah, he is

fortunate. When he lets go, he will end up like the unfortunate leaf, spiritually broken, disheveled and tread upon by the passerby.

You shall make the planks of the Mishkan of atzei shittim, acacia wood, standing erect. (26:15)

Acacia wood is a form of cedar wood that does not grow in the wilderness. Obviously, the Jewish People must have had access to this remarkably lightweight - but strong - wood prior to their coming to the wilderness. Rashi explains that Yaakov Avinu, perceiving that Klal Yisrael would one day be commanded to erect a Mishkan, provided for its construction. When he came to Egypt, he brought with him cedar trees that he had originally planted in Eretz Yisrael for this purpose. These unique trees had a long odyssey, from Eretz Yisrael to Egypt to the wilderness; they traveled with Klal Yisrael until they assumed their designated place in the Mishkan.

Another version found in the Midrash offers an earlier source for the atzei shittim. According to this version, Avraham Avinu had an eishal, a sort of rest area, where people could stop to rest, grab a bite to eat, and even spend the night. In order to provide a full-service eishal for the wayfarers, Avraham went so far as to plant an orchard of trees in which his guests could rest in the cool shade from their difficult trip. It was this orchard that provided the cedar trees for the Mishkan.

We have two sources for the wood that comprised the Mishkan - Avraham and Yaakov. Can we derive a lesson from the Mishkan's origins? My good friend, Reb Mordechai Krieger, presents an interesting perspective on this in his latest volume of commentary on the Torah. Avraham personified the middah of chesed, and this was his primary focus in his service to the Almighty. The cedars were a component of his chesed which he performed with wayfarers. Thus, there was a valid reason that Chazal included Avraham's atzei shittim in the Mishkan. They were planted for the purpose of chesed. What more appropriate use than to apply the middah of chesed to the Mishkan? After all, it was a place of chesed where people from all over came to receive spiritual sustenance.

Yaakov exemplified the attribute of emes, truth. Indeed, Yaakov's virtue was imbued in the trees. It was a period when paganism was rampant. Virtually every tree was transformed into an asheirah, idolatrous tree, as it became the focus of the people's worship. Yaakov guaranteed that the wood used for the Mishkan was kosher, b'tachlis ha'kashrus, absolute, without any embellishments. The middos of chesed and emes were integrated into the building of the Mishkan.

We may interpret this idea into the pasuk in Mishlei 16:6, "With truth and kindness, sin is forgiven." In the merit of kindness and truth, both working together, defining each other, sin can be erased.

We might, perhaps, take this a bit further to the point that in order to build an enduring Mishkan for Hashem, we need the middah that Yaakov represents. It is not emes upon which we should focus, but rather on Torah. Let me explain. We find in our parsha an incident that occurred during the darkness of night, when our Patriarch Yaakov was alone. The angel of Eisav, representing Eisav and everything for which he stood, attacked Yaakov. Why? Why did the Satan wait for Yaakov before he attacked? Why did he ignore Avraham and Yitzchak? His goal was to uproot and destroy Jewry. He could have fought with Avraham or Yitzchak, and he would have accomplished the same goal. Why did he wait?

Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl, gives an intriguing answer, which not only defines our mission

in the world, but also emphasizes our strength inherent in the only institution by which we as Jews will survive. Avraham sat at his tent, waiting to reach out to others in need. Surely, this was a noble and charitable character trait. Is it, however, the heart and soul of the Jewish People? As Hashem's chosen People, we have a role to fulfill in this world. While chesed is undoubtedly a magnificent middah, will it guarantee Jewish survival? Let us peruse history. The Jewish record concerning philanthropy is incredible: hospitals, shelters, homes for the aged, education. Jews are at the forefront of every philanthropic endeavor, both Jewish and secular, but has that ensured our future? Have the children of those who have initiated all of the wonderful and meaningful Jewish institutions remained true to their heritage? No, chesed does not scare Satan, because it is not a threat to him. He is opposed to Jewish continuity, and chesed does not necessarily promote this ideal.

Yitzchak personified avodah, service to Hashem, through prayer and worship. This was his primary approach to serving the Almighty. Prayer is a wonderful and necessary endeavor. Since time immemorial, devout Jews have attended the synagogue, prayed three times a day and recited Tehillim in between. All this was personified by Yitzchak and transmitted to us. It is his legacy. There have been those, however, who have repeated the age-old words by rote, out of habit, not bothering to explore the meaning of these words. They did not discover the comfort and strength in these words that their parents found and to which they clung. How often have we witnessed an aged father wrapped in his Tallis, tears falling from his eyes as he prays in rapt devotion, while his son has not even bothered to attend the service? The son was neither tied to his father's Tallis nor to his way of life. The father prayed, while the son strayed. The Satan does not see a threat coming at him from Yitzchak. Avodah will not sustain the Jewish people throughout the generations. They need more.

The Satan observed Avraham and Yitzchak, and, while he was not overjoyed with their work on behalf of the Jewish people, their ways of life did not guarantee an eternal people, a Jewry that could withstand the vicissitudes that would challenge the future generations. Along came Yaakov Avinu with his devotion to Torah study. The Torah describes him as, "A simple, wholehearted man, dwelling in tents." Wherever he was, he found a tent of study, or he made one. Torah study was his life; Torah coursed through his veins like blood. He lived in the bais ha'medrash. Yaakov served Hashem through Torah - the concrete teaching of specific belief and defined laws. He studied what we must do, what we may do and what we may not do. Avraham's chesed was great, but one can either accept kindness and respond to it - or not. Yitzchak accepted his father's belief; Yishmael eschewed it. Yaakov, on the other hand, incorporated chesed into Torah. The Torah teaches kindness, but it also goes further. Besides teaching us how and when to perform kindness, it addresses every aspect of our internal and external lives.

Yitzchak focused on prayer. One is either moved by prayer, or he is not. Yaakov accepted it, and he integrated it into his Torah way of life. Eisav had no time for prayer. He did not relate to it. Yaakov knew that prayer alone is not sufficient. The channel of communication between man and Hashem cannot be a one way street, where we ask and ask and hear only what we want to hear. We must also do and obey. This approach comes through Torah. Prayer is man's word to Hashem. Torah is Hashem's word to man.

Yaakov raised twelve sons, all of whom followed in his footsteps. Not one left the faith, because each had the Torah to which he adhered. It guided them and gave them the strength to continue their commitment, regardless of life's challenges. The Satan feared Yaakov, because Torah represented continuity. He attacked him when he was alone in the middle of the night. He felt that this was when he was most vulnerable. He inflicted his wound, but he did not succeed in besting the Patriarch.

Throughout the dark exile, Eisav's descendants have attempted to destroy us. Our devotion to the Torah has always given us the ability to prevail. He might wound us, but he will not win - ever.

Let us return to the Mishkan, the focal point for our avodah to Hashem. It is not enough to have Kerashim, wooden planks, from the chesed of Avraham, because they do not ensure our future. It is only when they are integrated with the Torah of Yaakov that the avodah in the Mishkan will endure.

This is the portion that you shall take from them: gold, silver and copper. (25:2)

The definition of the concept of kavod haTorah, the honor and reverence that should be accorded to the Torah, seems to elude us. The Aron Hakodesh was covered with gold, both internally and externally: the Menorah was comprised of one solid gold slab; the Shulchan, Mizbayach Haketores and Kerashim were all covered with gold. The Bais Hamikdash was a most impressive edifice, both from the architectural and aesthetic perspectives. There was certainly no shortage of gold in its outer trappings. Imagine the beauty and radiance of this monument to holiness! What is the lesson that we should derive from this unparalleled display of elegance and luxury?

We are to derive from here that the House of G-d "also" has to be exalted. Why is it that beauty, opulence and exceptional architecture are terms equated with secular structures, while religious institutions may often be housed in the most simple and austere repositories? If, indeed, we build an edifice that is a bit on the extravagant side, it becomes something to denigrate and even mock. Why should not our cultural/religious habitats be just as beautiful as theirs? Indeed, why should they not be even more impressive? This does not mean, of course, that we should waste money that is needed for other important necessities on structural and architectural extravagance. Why should those who live in mansions, however, settle for a shul in a storefront? Why should the Aron Hakodesh be a carpenter's nightmare, while the same baalei batim have no compunction about spending thousands of dollars on a dining room set?

Yeshivas Slabodka in Eretz Yisrael was going through a difficult financial period. It was weighed down with debt, and the banks were losing patience. The Rosh Hayeshivah, Horav Mordechai Shulman, zl, was relegated to visiting individuals personally on behalf of the yeshivah. One day, after returning from an unusually trying fund-raising trip, he came into the office and heard the administrator complaining bitterly about the yeshivah's financial straits. "Imagine, we are undergoing such extreme pressures just to survive, while a certain Chassidic dynasty is building a massive synagogue for millions of dollars, using imported Italian marble on their walls," he said.

When the Rosh Hayeshivah heard this, he turned to the administrator and said, "You have no idea what is the meaning of kavod haTorah." He was intimating that to build an impressive edifice for a makom Torah does not suggest a misappropriation of funds. If people are doing it for the correct purpose and with the right attitude, it manifests kavod haTorah.

Furthermore, I think that our generation of post-Holocaust survivors and their children must show the world that the Jewish nation which Hitler - with the assistance of a number of apathetic countries and individuals - sought to obliterate, did not succumb. We are back, and we are thriving. The study of Torah is at an all-time high. Mitzvah observance is an accepted and respected lifestyle. The baal teshuvah, return to Judaism, movement is accelerating. We have nothing of which to be ashamed,

and we have nothing to hide. We are a vibrant nation that is committed to Hashem, and, therefore, when we erect a repository to glorify Him - it is truly a glorious event.

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

The Badim, poles, that remain in place on the sides of the Aron are an allusion to the tomchei Torah, those who support Torah study. Just as the Badim were not to be removed from the rings on the sides of the Aron, so, too, should there be an unseverable relationship between the Torah supporter and the individual who studies the Torah. While the machazik Torah will certainly receive an incredible reward for supporting the one who devotes himself to studying Torah, it goes without saying that the Aron Hakodesh had greater distinction than the Badim. Regrettably, we have lost sight of this notion.

It was a number of years ago that the Vaad Hayeshivos, the organization under the direction of Eretz Yisrael's Torah leadership, prepared an inaugural dinner in honor of the presidium of the "Joint," American supporters of life in the Holy Land. These individuals were directly responsible for the aid that was dispensed to the Orthodox community in Eretz Yisrael. As a display of hakoras hatov, appreciation and gratitude, the dinner was attended by the leading Torah leaders of the day. Included were: Horav Yechezkel Abramsky, zl, president of the Vaad Hayeshivos; Horav Eliezer Yehudah Finkel, zl, Rosh Yeshiva Mir; Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl, Lutzker Rav; and many others. It was truly an impressive representation of hakoras hatov.

Various roshei yeshivah spoke from the podium, expressing their heartfelt gratitude on behalf of the many students who had been availed the opportunity to study Torah through the efforts of the "Joint." It was the turn of Horav Ezra Atiyah, zl, Rosh Hayeshivah of Porat Yosef, to speak. He rose and began to walk up to the podium. Suddenly, he stopped and appeared as if he was looking for something to say, but could not speak. A few moments went by before Rav Ezra broke out in bitter weeping.

Understandably, all those assembled were shocked and did not know what had occurred to motivate this strange behavior. The master of ceremonies ran over to the rosh yeshivah and attempted to assuage his feelings. "Did I say something wrong? Perhaps I offended the rosh yeshivah?" he asked.

"No, no. Nothing like that," responded Rav Ezra. "It is just that as I was walking up to the podium, I realized that we were still in galus, exile."

"Of course we are in galus," the toastmaster replied, "but is now the time or place for such a display of bitter weeping?"

"You do not seem to understand what I mean," Rav Ezra said. "If Moshiach Tzidkeinu would be here, and we would be making a dinner for the Torah supporters, would it have been similar to this one? It would certainly have been much different. Obviously, we are still in galus."

What the venerable rosh yeshivah meant was that, without a doubt, we have an obligation to pay gratitude to those that perform mitzvos. It is just that had Moshiach been here, the dinner would have been arranged in a different manner. It would have been the supporters that would have been making the dinner for the roshei yeshivah. Apparently, we are still in exile.

On the Shulchan shall you place show-bread before Me, always. (25:30)

The Mishnah in Meseches Menachos 99b describes the procedure of the weekly exchange of the Lechem HaPanim, show-bread. Since the halachah demands that the Lechem HaPanim rest continuously on the table, it was essential for the Kohanim to take great care that, as the previous week's bread was being removed, other Kohanim would simultaneously be placing the new bread on the table. This is the meaning of the word tamid, continuously: the Table may not be left without bread even for a moment. To paraphrase the Mishnah, "The handbreadth of this one takes the place of the handbreadth of this one." This means that as each handbreadth of space on the table was cleared of the bread of the previous week, it was immediately filled with that of the new week. Rabbi Yosi disagrees, contending that even if the Kohanim were to remove the old bread from the Table completely and the other Kohanim were to place the new bread on the Table, it would still be a fulfillment of the criteria of tamid, continuously. He feels that it is not necessary to have the bread on the table every single moment of the night and day. It simply means that, at some point during both the day and the night, bread should be on the Table. No full night or day should pass without panim, bread, being on the Table.

In other words, the dispute between the Tannaim is whether the word tamid mandates a constant presence or a regular presence. In the Talmud's commentary on the Mishnah, Rabbi Ami says that from the words of Rabbi Yosi we may derive that even if a person were to study one chapter of Torah in the morning and one chapter of Torah in the evening, he will have fulfilled the obligation of Lo yamush sefer ha'Torah ha'zeh mipicha, "This Book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth; rather, you shall contemplate it day and night" (Yehoshua 1:8). Just as one may fulfill the command of tamid, continuously, concerning the Lechem HaPanim by ensuring that no day or night go by without Panim bread, so, too, may a person similarly fulfill the command of V'higisa, "You shall contemplate it day and night by seeing to it that no day or night go by without the study of Torah."

With this in mind, Horav Yosef Sholom Elyashiv, Shlita, points out that we can derive a powerful lesson from Rav Ami's exegesis concerning Rabbi Yosi's definition of the word tamid. The Rabbanan who argue with Rabbi Yosi - and are of the opinion that a moment should not go by during which no Panim bread is on the Shulchan - will accordingly maintain a similar definition with regard to the "day and night" of Torah study. Just as concerning Lechem HaPanim, where "the handbreadth of this one takes the place of the handbreadth of this one," no moment should pass in which one does not study Torah.

Rav Elyashiv has exemplified this commitment to Torah study throughout his life. Is it any wonder that he has achieved such exalted status? His perspective on Torah study reflects his outstanding commitment.

You shall make curtains of goat hair for a tent over the Mishkan. (26:7)

The second covering over the Mishkan was called an Ohel, Tent, and was placed directly over the Mishkan. Indeed, the Mishkan was called Ohel Moed, Tent of Meeting, symbolizing the significance of the Yerios, coverings, as the essence of the Mishkan. This is similar to a Sukkah, which gets its name from the schach, covering/roof, which determines its halachic validity. We wonder why Hashem insisted that it be specifically the covering over the Mishkan which essentially establishes the

Mishkan's essence. Is there a reason why gold was not used?

Horav Tuvia Lisitzin, zl, cites the Midrash at the beginning of our parsha, which explains Hashem's desire for a Mishkan with the following analogy. A king had a daughter of marriageable age. One day, a king from a distant country came and asked for her hand in marriage. Her father was concerned, since his future son-in-law wanted to take his only child away with him to his home. The father said to his prospective son-in-law, "I cannot tell you that I do not agree to you taking my child with you, because, after all, she will be your wife, and a wife goes with her husband. I ask but one favor of you. Please make for me a small room wherever you live, so that I can be near my daughter."

Likewise, Hashem says to Klal Yisrael, "My Torah is like my only child. I cannot be away from her. On the other hand, you must take the Torah wherever you go. Please make for Me a small place where I can repose near My Torah." Hashem asked Klal Yisrael to make a Mishkan for Him so that He could be close to the Torah.

This Midrash begs elucidation. The king surely was not at a loss for funds with which to build a palace for himself. Why was he satisfied with a small room? He could have easily built himself a large palace on his son-in-law's property and still be within walking distance of his daughter. The answer is as simple as it is profound. The king had only one objective: to be near his daughter. He did not need a palace. Indeed, a palace might have conveyed the impression that he was near his daughter because of the palace. Therefore, he chose a small room to allay any doubts concerning his real purpose in living there.

Likewise, Hashem chose a simple goat-hair covered Mishkan, demonstrating that the Shechinah was here due to one reason: the Torah. This may be the underlying explanation of Chazal's maxim in Pirkei Avos 6:4, "This is the way of Torah: Eat bread with salt, and drink water in small measure, and sleep on the ground." In other words, we are being informed that one should not enjoy any other pleasures. Torah should be studied lishmah, only for its own sake, so great and unequivocal should be one's love for Torah. Any other benefit, even one of a spiritual nature, detracts from the singularity of one's love of Torah.

Many inspirational narratives depict the prodigious love for - and devotion to - the Torah that individuals throughout history have manifest. One very inspiring story that comes to mind is related by Rabbi Yechiel Spero in his *Touched By A Story*. The talmidim, students, of the Novordok Yeshivah were known for their intense religious observance. The communist government had a problem with this. They proceeded to arrest the entire yeshivah on trumped-up charges, with the intent that after some therapeutic discipline, their commitment would lose much of its fervor.

They were deprived of the basic physical provisions which were essential for survival. They were served the bare minimum of a meal that by some stroke of the imagination might be called food. With neither blankets nor coats, they were subject to the bitter cold night and day. These special young men, however, were not bothered by their lack of material essentials; what they yearned for most was their Gemaros, the volumes of Talmud that were so precious to them.

Aware that their families were permitted to bring them food packages, one of the young men came up with a clever plan. When they were arrested, the students had been studying Meseches Makkos, one of the shorter tractates in Shas. It is only twenty-two blatt, pages. They sent a message to their families that they could really use twenty-two packages of cheese, each package wrapped in a page of the Talmud Makkos. This ruse allowed them to have their precious Gemara smuggled into the prison. This was worth much more than food to them.

With regard to the halachic ramifications concerning tearing apart a Gemara and using it as wrapping paper for cheese, Horav Eliezer Rabinowitz, zl, the Rav of Minsk, stated emphatically that for pikuach nefesh, matters of life and death, it was certainly permissible. For these young men not to be able to study their precious Torah was, indeed, an issue of pikuach nefesh.

You shall make the planks of the Mishkan of Acacia wood, standing erect. (26:15)

The walls of the Mishkan were made of huge wooden planks of Acacia wood. The trees that provided this wood had a long and interesting history. Avraham Avinu was informed by Hashem that his descendants would one day, after being slaves in Egypt for two hundred and ten years, be liberated and travel to Eretz Yisrael via the wilderness. Hashem would command them to erect a Mishkan as a place for the Shechinah to repose. Avraham prepared the wood for the Mishkan by planting Acacia trees. These trees were cut down by Yaakov Avinu on his way to Egypt. When Moshe Rabbeinu informed the Jewish People that the time for their redemption had finally arrived, they were overjoyed, and, with great faith in Hashem, they prepared to leave. They did not even prepare food for the trip, because they were to be guests of Hashem. He would provide for them.

While they did not take along food, they did, however, take along the Acacia wood. On their shoulders, on their donkeys, in their wagons, wherever they could, they took Acacia wood. Why? If they were to rely on Hashem for food, why could they not have relied on Him for wood, as well? After all, Hashem seems to have been able to provide everything the Jews needed in the wilderness. What was their obsession with wood, that Avraham had to plant it, Yaakov had to cut it down and Klal Yisrael had to carry it with them from Egypt?

The answer is simple: the Mishkan is like no other edifice. It is the resting place for the Shechinah. It is the place where the Divine service is carried out. It is a holy place. It is the place from which our emunah, faith, in Hashem has its underpinnings. It is the center of our spiritual sphere.

It would be a grave mistake to view the wood that is the foundation and support of the Mishkan as mere construction material. This wood represents the real construction material which makes up the Mishkan: the Avos ha'kedoshim, holy Patriarchs. Their tears, their prayers, their utter devotion, their total commitment - this is the stuff that comprises the Mishkan. An essential prerequisite in building the Mishkan is the inclusion of the foundation of the past. Our future lies in our building of the present upon the foundation of the past, on the traditions and service, the commitment and dedication, expended and manifest by our forebears.

While I have reiterated this idea many times, there is another aspect to Avraham and Yaakov's actions that serves as a crucial lesson for us: they cared about their future. They prepared the materials, so that their future descendants could build with and upon them. It is our function and obligation to provide for the next generation, to show them the way and prepare for them the means so that they can travel the road ahead.

Chazal relate that Choni HaMaagel once met a man who was planting a carob tree. He asked him how long it would take for it to reach maturity. The response was, seventy years. "Do you think that you will be here in seventy years?" Choni asked. "No," the man responded, "but when I was born, I discovered a mature tree that was planted by my ancestors. I will do the same for my descendants." That is the story of life and our obligation to the next generation. Our parents have provided for us, and

now it is our turn to provide for our children.

And let them take for Me a portion. (25:1)

The root of the word *terumah* is *rom*, to uplift. Hence, one who contributes his wealth elevates it, as well as himself. The *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, charity, and *gemillus chasadim*, performing acts of loving kindness, is different from all other *mitzvos* in the sense that performance of any other *mitzvah* is a response to a Heavenly command. To observe the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, however, is more than a response; it is an act of representing Hashem. It is an opportunity to serve as Hashem's emissary, to be proxy for Him in carrying out acts of benevolence and compassion. If I do not help the poor and the needy, Hashem will. He is their protector, I am merely His agent.

There is another noteworthy aspect to the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*: its accompanying reward. Chazal tell us clearly that one who contributes freely, will himself be reimbursed, as Chazal say, *Aseir-bishvil she'tisasheir*, "Tithe, so that you will become wealthy." The Satmar Rav, zl, explains why this idea applies only to the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*.

The Torah teaches us that one who is a worker in another person's vineyard, may partake of the grapes only during the time that he is actually harvesting the grapes. Rashi explains that only when the worker is cutting down the vines and placing the grapes into the owner's vessels, is he permitted to eat from the grapes. Placing the grapes into the owner's vessels allows the worker access to the grapes. Likewise, when one contributes to a charitable endeavor, when he sustains a poor man, when he supports a Torah scholar, he is in the process of filling Hashem's vessels. The poor belong to Hashem. They are His vessels, so to speak. When one is placing fruits in his master's vessels, he is allowed to take for himself also. When one supports the poor, Hashem sees to it that the benefactor's pockets are also filled.

The Satmar Rebbe, zl, was well-known for his generosity. Every penny that reached his desk during the course of the day was handed to the poor and needy before the end of that day. Once a man came to him asking for financial assistance. He lamented to the Rebbe the various vicissitudes which plagued him. Broken-heartedly, he related how his wife had died, leaving him with a number of young orphans to raise single-handedly. He was himself physically infirm, ever since one of his legs was amputated due to a serious illness that left him weak and disoriented. Between his ill health and his many responsibilities at home, he found it difficult to hold down a reasonable job. He looked at the Rebbe pleadingly and stretched out his hand. The Rebbe did not let him down, giving him everything that had accumulated during the course of that day, which was a considerable sum of money.

A few moments after the man left, the *gabbai*, Rebbe's assistant, entered the room in a furor. "What is wrong?" asked the Rebbe.

"Rebbe, the poor man that was just here claiming to be an amputee - is not. I just saw him walking outside on two legs!" the *gabbai* exclaimed.

As soon as the Rebbe heard this, he stormed up from his chair. The *gabbai* was sure that the Rebbe would ask him to seize the charlatan and bring him back. How shocked was he when the Rebbe said, "You caused me such joy. Baruch Hashem he has both legs!"

A few minutes later, the *gabbai* returned once again and said, "Rebbe, that man is no widower. I

just saw him at the store with his wife." The Rebbe's second reaction paralleled his first - he was excited and filled with joy that the man had not lost his wife. This is what gedolei Yisrael reflected - true love of all Jews.

They shall make an Ark of shittim wood, two and a half amos, its length; an amah and a half, its width; and an amah and a half, its height. (25:10)

The architecture of the Mishkan and its Keilim, appurtenances, is not detailed in the Torah for the purpose of sharing with us the great beauty and splendor that was manifest in the Mishkan of old. Indeed, everything about the Mishkan is there to teach us significant lessons that should shape our ethical character and give meaning to our lives. This idea is demonstrated by the "broken", fractioned measurements of the Aron. Unlike the other Keilim, the Aron's measurements were in half amos, cubits. The Shlah Hakadosh tells us that this serves as a lesson portraying the stature of a talmid chacham, Torah scholar: His heart must be broken internally, symbolic of his humility and lowly spirit with respect to Hashem and the community. Regardless of his achievements and erudition, he must maintain an anivus, sense of humility, with regard to others. He must view himself as broken, not yet complete, whose achievements pale in comparison to what is expected of him.

A talmid chacham's unpretentiousness enhances and embellishes the Torah that he has learned. One cannot draw a parallel between the Torah studied with humility, with clarity, with a desire to listen to others, to the Torah studied with arrogance, with an air of contemptuousness and conceit. Torah studied with humility includes Hashem as part of the study structure. The arrogant person, however, causes the Shechinah, Divine Presence, to depart from his proximity.

Our Torah leaders reflected this demeanor. Indeed, the more they studied and the greater their erudition, the more profound was their sense of humility. They truly viewed themselves as simple people carrying out the will of the Almighty. Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zl, the legendary guardian of Yerushalayim, exemplified this character trait in every fibre of his being. At a young age, when the spirit of Torah and his genius began to inspire him, the first deficiency from which he sought to protect himself against was vanity.

He so truly despised vanity that an accurate portrayal of his true humility is difficult to depict. He viewed the outside world from a perspective of such complete humbleness that he sought to conceal his greatness even from his own mentors and family. Rav Yosef Chaim would use his incredible genius towards cultivating modesty to the point that even those closest to him often failed to realize that many of his activities masked his true purpose.

The issue of humility versus nobility came into play when circumstances caused it that Rav Yosef Chaim became leader of the religious community in Yerushalayim. Several of his closest associates maintained that, by downplaying the true extent of his greatness, he was playing into the hands of the secular elements who sought to undermine his opinions and religious positions. Alas, their protests did not accomplish much. Rav Yosef Chaim's humility had become so much a part of his nature that it was immune to change even when, according to the opinion of many, the exigencies of difficult times would have implored a different attitude.

Rav Yosef Chaim would truly despise reading or hearing titles and accolades heaped upon him by those seeking his advice in person or by letter. He would often quote his rebbe, Horav Avraham

Shaag, zl, who said that there was no person more foolish or degraded than one who sought the esteem of others, for then, his own self-respect was dependent on their whims. Such a person was a fool for placing his self-image in the hands of others, and he demeaned himself by constantly seeking their approval.

He never rendered judgment by imposing his view, but rather, by saying, "it seems that the proper course of action to take would be to...."

In his conversations, Rav Yosef Chaim always emphasized his feeling that he had still not achieved the purpose for his creation. This was said despite the fact that he spent every waking moment either learning Torah or performing acts of loving-kindness. He viewed himself as someone who had yet to succeed in serving Hashem properly. He would remark that he did not know what he would tell the Heavenly Tribunal when he would be called to task to justify his being created.

This feeling of worthlessness was manifest by a number of tzaddikim. Horav Avraham, zl, the Trisker Maggid, a scion of the Chernobler chasidic dynasty was noted for his piety. Thousands flocked to him for advice and guidance in all areas of life. One year, on the first night of Succos, he offered the following insight.

It was after Maariv and a group of his close followers walked with him to his Succah. As he came close to the door of the Succah, he stopped and went no further. The chasidim were puzzled by the Rebbe's behavior. They stood there and waited, watching for some sign from the Rebbe that all was well. After a short while, one of the chasidim queried the Rebbe as to why he just stood there.

The Rebbe smiled as he responded, "It was just a few days ago that we said that man is similar to an earthen vessel. Like the clay in the hand of the potter, so are we in Your hand. Out of respect for the sanctity of the Succah, it is forbidden to bring pots made of earthenware into a Succah. If so, how do we dare to enter the Succah - for we too are like earthenware?"

"The answer is," continued the Rebbe, "that the only way to remove tumah, spiritual contamination, from an earthenware vessel is to shatter it. Thus, if we accept upon ourselves to be humble and shatter the impurity of haughtiness from our hearts, we can merit to enter the Succah. Is it not David Hamelech who writes in Sefer Tehillim 51:19, 'A heart broken and humbled, O G-d, You will not despise?'"

When the Rebbe finished his remarks, he entered the Succah with a sense of awe and reverence, recognizing what he was and where he was going and before Whom he stood. Before entering the sanctity of the Succah, he had to prepare himself.

We may add that humility and lowering one's esteem does not apply across the board. It is applicable only to oneself. With regard to the respect we owe others, we must seek every opportunity to raise their esteem in our eyes and in the eyes of others.

From the Kapores shall you make the Keruvim and its two ends. (25:19)

Chazal say that the image of the Keruvim resembled that of a child. The Bais Halevi derives from here that the Torah chinuch, education, of children is the foundation upon which the Shechinah, Divine Presence, rests among Klal Yisrael. The Keruvim are the guardians over the Luchos, Ten Commandments, which are placed in the Aron Hakodesh, Holy Ark. The children are likewise the

guardians of our future. They are our destiny.

Indeed, Rav Yoshe' Ber, the Bais Halevi, lived what he preached. Jewish education was in his eyes the lifeblood of our People and he approached it with a sense of mesiras nefesh, dedication to the point of self-sacrifice. At a rabbinic conference in St. Petersburg, it was decided to nominate a superintendent of education who would oversee the Torah chinuch of the area, ensuring that it remained al taharas hakodesh, on a high level of spiritual purity and sanctity. The person that was selected for the position happened to be an individual who enjoyed a close relationship with Rav Yoshe' Ber. It was therefore very surprising to everyone when Rav Yoshe' Ber rose from his seat and declared that he was against their decision.

The various rabbanim immediately looked at Rav Yoshe' Ber and asked, "Brisker Rav, is this individual not a close friend of yours? How often have you expounded about his unusual virtue and piety. Why are you so negative about his assuming the position?"

Rav Yoshe' Ber replied, "True, he is G-d-fearing and virtuous. Nonetheless, I oppose his selection. Chazal tell us that if one deposits a gold coin with a woman, telling her that it is silver; if through her negligence, it is lost, she pays only the value of a silver coin, since the man indicated to her that it was only silver. She, therefore, accepted a guardianship for silver and not for gold. In other words, had the woman been aware that in fact this coin was gold, she would have watched it differently, with greater care and intensity. A person applies himself more for gold than he does for silver.

"I view the education of our children as a gold coin. It is sacrosanct and must be protected with the greatest care. My friend also cares about Torah chinuch, but he views it only as a silver coin. He does not agree with me that without Torah education our People will disintegrate. He can picture a Klal Yisrael without Torah chinuch. I cannot!"

There is no shortage of stories which portray Klal Yisrael's devotion to chinuch ha'banim. Parents throughout the millennia have sacrificed everything from money to their health and happiness to avail their children a Jewish education al taharas hakodesh. They understood that this was our future, without which our nation could not endure. I recently came across an insightful story of a grandfather's devotion to the education of his descendants.

A man who had been successful in life was getting on in his days and was concerned for the future of his grandchildren. He had raised his son well, but unfortunately his influence on him was no longer that compelling. Thus, the son's devotion to Torah ideals had waned. His father was concerned that, being given the option of sending his own children to a Torah day school or to a secular school, the Torah would lose out. He could not permit this to occur.

One day, the grandfather visited the local Day School which adhered to the proper hashkafos, Torah views and values, and was known to prepare its students well for a life of Torah and mitzvos. He spoke with the principal about his hopes and aspirations for his grandchildren who were yet very young. Then he asked, "How much is full tuition for each child - for the duration of their stay in the school?" After the principal calculated the amount, the grandfather took out his checkbook and wrote a check for the complete amount of tuition for each child for the duration of their education in the school!

The grandfather did not live much longer. In his will, he wrote that any grandchild who chose to study in that Day School, could do so for free. He supplemented this saying that any grandchild that received a Torah education would also receive a special bequest from his grandfather's estate. When the

man's son and daughter-in-law took note of their father's commitment to Torah chinuch, they themselves changed their own perspective, as they readily raised a generation of Torah loyal Jews.

No paper about Torah chinuch would be complete if mention was not made of those who lay down their lives daily in the field: the mechanchim, Torah educators, both men and women, who have traded opportunities for financial success for a life of Torah dissemination. Horav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, zl, the architect of Torah in America, felt that the only cure for American Jewry was Jewish education. Accordingly, he encouraged his close students to seek positions in the field of Torah chinuch. Nonetheless, he felt this was a vocation as any other, and hence, demanded professionalism and expertise. His mandate to his talmidim then should serve as a mantra for all mechanchim today, as well. He would say that, "Only those capable of crying over the state of American Jewry, would be able to change it." Only those who were aflame with the desire to bring Torah to America Jewry that had lost its connection with its glorious heritage would find the necessary means to convey the Torah legacy. "How are we to teach Torah?" he would ask. "The answer is to be found in the first paragraph of the Shma. 'And these words that I command you this day shall be al levavcha, on your hearts, and you shall teach them to your children.' From an overflowing heart, from your heart to their souls - there is no other way."

This mandate has not changed.

Speak to Bnei Yisrael and let them take for me a portion. (25:2)

The Baal Haturim makes an interesting play on the word terumah. He says terumah consists of the same letters as Torah/ mem, which is a reference to the Torah that was given to us after Moshe Rabbeinu's spending forty days and forty nights on Har Sinai. What does the Baal Haturim mean, and what relationship exists between terumah and the forty days and nights that preceded the giving of the Torah?

The Bais Yisrael explains that when one contributes terumah, a donation, to a worthy cause, not only does he give, he also takes. Commensurate with how much he has given, he develops a partnership in the endeavor to which he has contributed. Clearly, he who gives a larger sum will assume a greater share in the partnership. This is alluded to with the words, "And let them take for Me a portion." By giving to the Mishkan, one actually takes for himself a portion in its construction.

This may be the case in regard to charity. When it comes to Torah study, however, the effort, diligence and dedication one applies to studying Torah seems secondary and extrinsic to the actual study. If anything, the effort expended supplements the actual Torah study. The Baal Haturim addresses this misconception by comparing terumah to Torah. When one studies Torah, the effort and diligence is an intrinsic component of the learning, and thus, his portion in Torah is dependent upon the effort and dedication which he expends in this study. He earns his share in Torah in the manner that he studies it.

This idea is underscored by the comparison to Torah, which was given in forty days and forty nights. This refers to those forty days about which Moshe Rabbeinu said, "I ate no bread, nor did I drink water." Moshe demonstrated how one develops a share in Torah - with extreme dedication and self-sacrifice.

And let them take for me a portion. (25:2)

Horav Chaim Plagi, zl, cited by Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, notes that the word *terumah*, which is interpreted here as a contribution, has the same letters - taf, raish, vav, mem, hay - as the word *hamosar*, that which is a luxury. He derives a noteworthy lesson from the similarity between these two words. When Hashem sees that a Jewish home is replete with luxuries, He "tells" its owner, "I see that you do not worry about how you spend your money. You are prepared to open up your wallet for all kinds of luxuries, items that are not essential, objects that reflect unnecessary indulgence on your part. Do you do the same for the poor man that comes to your door begging for alms? Do you manifest the same 'open door' policy for your *terumah* as you do for *mosar*?"

We do not realize that when we spend on ourselves, when we indulge ourselves in opulence, we open ourselves to criticism. Do we do the same for the poor, or do we assure them that suddenly we have no liquid assets available? If there is money for extravaganzas, we are obligated to have funds available to assist those who are in need.

Speak to Bnei Yisrael and let them take for Me a portion. (25:2)

The Midrash expounds on the uniqueness of the Mishkan and Klal Yisrael's relationship to it, via their contribution towards its creation. The Midrash expresses a beautiful and noteworthy analogy. "Hashem says to Klal Yisrael, 'I sold you My Torah. I sold Myself with it, as it says: Take for Me a portion. This may be compared to a king who had an only daughter. A prince from a distant land came and asked for her hand in marriage. The king responded, "I have one daughter. I will gladly give her to you in matrimony. It is difficult, however, for me to let her out of my sight. Yet, I know that she must leave with you when you return to your home. I ask only that you provide for me a room in your palace, so that I can be near to my daughter." Likewise, Hashem has given us His Torah. He cannot separate Himself from it. While He certainly wants us to have and use it, He seeks an opportunity whereby He can also be part of the equation. Consequently, He has asked us to make for Him a Mishkan, which will be 'His' room so that He can be near His Torah.

This Midrash conveys to us Hashem's unique relationship with the Torah and the character of His Presence in the Mishkan. There is a deeper message, however, that we are to derive from Chazal. Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, gleans from Chazal the significance of a *makom Torah*, place where Torah is studied. Hashem says that He cannot separate Himself from His only child, the Torah. He, therefore, asks that we provide for Him a place where He can be close to His Torah. In other words, in a place where there is no Torah - there is also no place for Hashem! For the Shechinah to repose among us, we have to have the Torah close by. It must be an integral part of our daily lives if we want Hashem included. Incredible!

And you shall make on it a gold crown all around. (25:11)

In the Talmud Yoma 76b, Chazal say that the attachment of a golden rim/crown projecting upward and encircling the top of the Aron symbolized the crown of Torah which is available to

whomever "wants it." What is the meaning of "wanting" the crown of Torah, and how does one demonstrate his desire to achieve this status? Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl, explains this concept with the following story, related to him by an elderly Jew, concerning one of the distinguished rabbanim of their generation. When this Jew was a young man, he studied in a small yeshivah in the city of Krason, which was situated on the outskirts of Kiev. Among the student population there was a young boy who strived very hard to achieve knowledge in Torah. His diligence was incredible. He had one problem, however - his mind was far from astute. His ability to grasp even the most simple Talmudic logic was extremely weak. He would go from student to student asking them, begging them, to assist him in understanding the Talmud. It was to no avail. As soon as he understood one halachah and he continued to the next, he forgot the first halachah. This went on and on until the students in the bais hamedrash lost their patience with him.

The elderly Jew who was relating the story said that he continued to take pity on this boy and told him that he would always be available to him to answer questions and explain the Talmud's passages. This continued on a regular basis until he could no longer study for himself. He was always being pestered by the boy who, regrettably, did not retain what he was being taught. Finally, he lost it and said, "I also have to learn something!"

Hearing this, the boy walked away, dejected. After a short while, the young man wanted to see what had happened to the boy. Did he approach someone else, or did he just go study by himself? He looked around and there in the corner of the bais hamedrash sat the boy, his head bent over a small sefer. Creeping up behind the boy, the young man saw it was a Siddur, and the young boy was reading from the Tefillah of Ahavah Rabbah, which precedes Shma Yisrael. He was praying to Hashem, V'sein b'lebeinu l'havin, "and instill in our hearts to understand." "Hashem, please help me that I should no longer have to beg others to teach me the Torah lessons. Open my eyes to the light of Torah. Help me to understand. Please, Hashem!"

When the young man heard this broken-hearted entreaty, he sat down next to the boy and said, "Do not worry. I will study with you. I will always be there for you." The elderly gentleman concluded, "Look what became of that young boy. He is today one of the gedolei hador, preeminent Torah scholars of the generation, and I am just an old man."

Rav Shach concluded, "That young boy demonstrated what it means to want the crown of Torah."

You shall make the planks of the Mishkan of Acacia wood, standing erect. (26:15)

Chazal in the Talmud Yoma 72a, interpret the term "standing erect" homiletically, as a guarantee that the Jewish nation will survive in the worst times. "Perhaps you will say that their hope of return is gone and their expectation is frustrated? But it is written, 'acacia wood, standing erect' - they will stand forever!" What is unique about acacia wood that Chazal saw in the term "standing erect" a portent for Klal Yisrael's endurance and steadfastness? Is it the nature of the wood, or is it the manner in which it was placed in the Mishkan that conveys the message?

This wood was special, and its uniqueness is what catalyzes the message and concomitantly the reason that Klal Yisrael has survived. According to the Midrash Tanchuma, there is a very special history to these planks. Yaakov Avinu anticipated the need for such lumber. Knowing that acacia trees

do not grow in the wilderness, he planted these trees in Egypt and instructed his children that when they left their exile, to take the trees with them. It was Yaakov Avinu's foresight that enabled his descendants to have the materials needed to erect the Mishkan. Throughout Jewish history, it has been the foresight and planning of the previous generation that gave the next generation the opportunity and the foundation to persevere and triumph over the vicissitudes that have challenged us. Whether they were of a spiritual or a physical nature, be it internal conflict or external persecution, it was the lessons taught to us by our forbearers, directly or by example, that have made the difference in our lives. We truly stand upon the shoulders of those who preceded us.

The ability to stand up erect, resolute and with fortitude against the prevalent obstacles and forces that undermine and degrade the Torah way of life, is part of our national character. We have been fighting against the incursion of alien thought into our way of life throughout the millennia. The challenges brought on by the exile are not only spiritual, moral and philosophical. The component of suffering, persecution and anguish has had a detrimental effect on the Jewish psyche. Yet, in every generation, we have been blessed with giants of Torah, men of the spirit, whose piety, virtue, and faith comprise a spiritual force that has the compelling power to uplift, embolden and transform his followers into believing, committed, stalwartly observant Jews. One of the lowest periods for our People was only sixty odd years ago during the terrible years of the European Holocaust. Six million perished, while many who survived succumbed spiritually. Those who were saved were fortified by towering individuals whose mind and spirit triumphed over pain and torture and rallied others with their indomitable conviction. The Klausenberger Rebbe, Horav Yekusiel Yehudah Halberstam, zl, was such a giant. Clearly, he saved thousands from spiritual extinction by virtue of his love for all Jews that was manifest throughout his every endeavor.

Wherever the Rebbe went, he felt Hashem's Presence with him. When he arrived in Auschwitz, confronted by the heinous Nazi soldiers with their disparaging comments and brutal beatings, he would encourage his fellow Jews, "Do not fear them. Hashem Yisborach is with us. He preceded us here, and He is waiting to receive us. There is no place in the world that is devoid of His Presence."

This was the Rebbe's message to everyone. "Hashem is here with us." The pasuk in Sefer Tehillim 23:4, immortalized by so many of our People, was the Rebbe's catchphrase that he would recite constantly: "Though I shall walk in the valley of death I shall not fear, for You are with me." No matter what happened to the Rebbe, he firmly believed in the Almighty's salvation.

Even during those terrible times, the Rebbe maintained his focus on avodas Hashem, serving the Almighty. Right beneath the searching eyes of the Nazis, he studied Torah, davened and observed mitzvos. Without regard to his personal safety, he would avoid even the most minor transgression. He refused to eat non-kosher food. He even managed to smuggle his Tefillin into camp, and he donned them every day. He avoided desecrating Shabbos and made sure that no one else did the work imposed on him.

The kapos could not tolerate the Rebbe's observance and would beat him viciously. He accepted these beatings as Hashem's judgment. He would often murmur, "This is because I did not serve You with joy." Slowly the kapos changed their attitude, as they began to recognize the Rebbe's unique character, principles and total devotion to Hashem. Looking at him with renewed respect, they began to treat him favorably.

When one remains resolute in adhering even to customs that have been transmitted through the generations, he has the foundation to maintain that fortitude for observing all the mitzvos. Those who

have viewed our People's customs as a tradition that could be eliminated, soon had a similar attitude towards mitzvah observance in general. The Klausenberger Rebbe once related, "In Auschwitz, I wore only a torn, thin garment, even in the bitter cold. I preferred it to the other rags we were given, because the buttons were sewn on the left coinciding with the custom followed by my holy ancestors. Who knows? Perhaps I was permitted to continue living because I was careful about what I wore."

We now have an idea of the meaning of standing "erect." It was individuals of such indomitable spirit that have transmitted the legacy of Torah life to us.

You shall make a table of Acacia wood. (25:25)

The Kesav Sofer cites his father, the Chasam Sofer, who related that he saw in the sefer of one of the Rishonim a reason that the Torah prioritizes the construction of the Shulchan before that of the Menorah. The Shulchan represents the machazik Torah, one who supports Torah study, while the Menorah symbolizes the Torah scholar, who actually studies the Torah. When Moshe Rabbeinu blessed Klal Yisrael prior to his demise, he spoke first to Zevulun, the tribe which is characterized as the Torah supporter, prior to speaking to Yissachar, the Torah scholar. Without Zevulun's assistance, Yissachar would not be free to study Torah. If this is the case, however, why does the Torah prioritize the construction of the Aron, the symbol of the consummate talmid chacham, Torah scholar, before that of the Shulchan?

The Kesav Sofer explains that there are two types of Torah scholars. There is the righteous talmid chacham who does not need anyone's support. In fact, he is our source of sustenance. Chazal tell us that Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa was so great that the entire world was sustained in his merit. There are also Torah scholars who have not achieved this lofty spiritual plateau. They need the Zevuluns of every generation to support them.

The Aron Hakodesh, which contained the Luchos and was placed in the Kodosh Hakodoshim, Holy of Holies, symbolizes the "Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa" type of scholar, the quintessential talmid chacham, whose Torah study and piety take him above the realm of this physical world. It is in his merit that Zevulun is successful and is able to support Torah endeavor. This individual is sequestered in his four cubits of Torah law and does not benefit from the physical world around him. The Menorah, on the other hand, symbolizes the other type of talmid chacham, the one who must come on to Zevulun's support. Therefore, the Shulchan follows the Aron, but precedes the Menorah.

They shall make a Sanctuary for Me - so that I may dwell among them. (25:8)

The kedushah, sanctity, of the Mikdash, Sanctuary, is commensurate with the amount of "li," for Me, that one puts into it. When we refer to kedushah, invariably we tend to think of something spiritual, surreal, with no tangibility. Consequently, it cannot have any effect on us. This is where we are wrong. That something is intangible does not preclude its ability to suffuse us with its properties and values. Let me take the liberty to illustrate this idea.

The Midrash in Parashas Toldos relates an incident that took place during the Roman destruction of the Bais Hamikdash. The Romans knew that destroying the Jewish Temple was a prerequisite to their success in destroying the Jewish State. They, however, needed a guide, since they did not know their way around. They had a Jew by the name of Yosef Meshisa, a traitor to his G-d and to his People, show them around the Bais Hamikdash. This is a sad commentary on our history, in which often it has been the assimilated secular Jew, who - due to his insecurity concerning his own disavowal of Judaism -- is provoked to act in such a traitorous manner. The Romans told him that as payment for his "noble" work, he could take for himself anything that he wanted from the spoils of the Bais Hamikdash.

Yosef Meshisa did something indescribable: he took the golden Menorah for himself. This demonstrates the nadir of depravity to which this Jew had sunk. The Romans, however, had more decency than he did. They refused to give it to him, claiming that it was inappropriate for a commoner to have such a holy object in his house. "Go back and take something else - anything - just not the Menorah," they said.

One would think that he would have run right back and grabbed something else. He did not. He replied, "I cannot return; I cannot go back in." They became upset. All of a sudden, he was becoming frum, observant. After all, let us be realistic: this was the epitome of evil. They promised him that the income from the next three years' tax collection would be his, as long as he went back in. He persisted. "I cannot go back in. Is it not enough that I angered my G-d 'once' and defiled His Temple; I should have to do it once again? No! I will not return."

The Romans became quite incensed. He had no right to become frum. He was an apostate. They tortured him, and he continued to refuse to go back. Finally, his heart gave out, and he died. During the entire time that he was being tortured, he kept on crying out, "Woe unto me, for I have angered my Creator!"

"What happened here?" asks the Ponevezher Rav, zl. What made Yosef Meshisa do teshuvah? Why did he suddenly make an about-face and repent? He was clearly a scoundrel, who manifest no sensitivity towards Jewish values. Suddenly, he repented and died a martyr's death. What transpired that would create such a metamorphosis from a rasha merusha, evil incarnate, to a tzaddik, righteous person?

The Ponevezher Rav answered that the mere fact that Yosef Meshisa entered the Holy Sanctuary, his exposure to kedushas Bais Hamikdash transformed him. He confronted holiness. He entered the Bais Hamikdash for the worst of reasons and with the worst of intentions; yet, he exited a changed person. The rasha that entered did not exit -- someone else did. One cannot be in the Bais Hamikdash without becoming inspired. There is something real about kedushah u'taharah, holiness and purity. Exposure to the Shechinah can and does change a person's life.

Yes, kedushah is real - its power is dependent on how much of Hashem we allow in, how much "li" there is. Horav Yissachar Frand, Shlita, adds that this power is not restricted to the Bais Hamikdash. Even today, something comparable exists, perhaps on a smaller scale, which can instantaneously affect one's spirituality. He cites the following true story: Franz Rosenzweig, who died in 1929, records this story about himself in his book, *The Star of Redemption*. He was a totally secular German Jew, a prolific author, thinker, a great philosopher. He was so far-removed from his People that he was preparing to convert to Christianity as part of his engagement to a non-Jewish woman. As a captain in the German Cavalry during World War I, he was stationed in a Polish town on what

happened to be Yom Kippur night. He figured since he was Jewish and it was Yom Kippur, he might as well enter the Polish shtiebel, small synagogue, as an observer, to see what it was like.

He entered the shul out of curiosity; he walked out of that shul as a baal teshuvah, a repentant returnee, to Judaism. Consequently, he broke his engagement and became an observant Jew, committed to the religion of his ancestors, the religion that he had totally rejected until that fateful Yom Kippur night. Rav Frand points out that this was not America in 1990, where it was a common phenomenon for acculturated and assimilated Jews to return to their faith. This was Germany in 1915, where it was almost unheard of for a secular Jew to embrace the faith that he had heretofore shunned.

What occurred in that shtiebel? Was it the davening, fervent prayer, the outpouring of Jewish emotion, the tears streaming down the faces of pure Jews on the holiest day of the year? No. That was not necessarily the factor that transformed Franz Rosenzweig. It was the same as the situation involving Yosef Meshisa. He was exposed to kedushah, introduced first-hand to taharah. A person who was totally secular, who was about to marry out of the faith and accept another religion, went into a shul for one purpose - to observe - not to pray, not to participate in any way - merely to be a casual observer. Yet, this exposure changed him. It must be because kedushah is real, taharah is real.

Kedushah is not only found in the Bais Hamikdash. A minyan of genuine Jews, praying with sincerity and heartfelt emotion to Hashem Yisborach imbues the walls of a building with kedushah. Kedushah is manifest in spiritual integrity. It takes "li," lishmi - for My Name - Hashem's Name.

They shall make an Ark of Shittim wood. (25:10)

The commentators note the Torah's emphasis on the "they," plural use of "v'asu" - "They shall make." This implies that the building of the Aron HaKodesh, the symbol of Torah among the Jewish People, is a collective, general command. Everybody is to be included. Horav Tzvi Hirsh Ferber, zl, explains this idea further. We find paradoxical statements made by Chazal in regard to the relationship of full time Torah study vis-?-vis earning a livelihood. On the one hand, we are instructed to study Torah "always": V'higisa bo yomam va'layla, "Rather you should contemplate in it day and night" (Yehoshua 1:8) is the standard by which Torah study is measured. Furthermore, Chazal in Pirkei Avos (2:6) state, Lo kol hamarbeh bisechorah machkim, "Anyone excessively occupied in business cannot become a scholar." Yet, elsewhere (3:21) they teach, Im ein kemach ein Torah, "If there is no flour (sustenance) there is no Torah." Apparently, the relationship between Torah and parnassah is understood. How is this apparent contradiction resolved?

Rav Ferber feels the latter is alluding to the Yissachar-Zevulun relationship whereby one studies full-time, while his partner -- who is earning a livelihood -- supports and sustains him. The merit of Torah study applies to both. This is the meaning of the brachah, blessing, Borei nefashos rabbos v'chesronan...l'ha'chayos bahem nefesh kol chai, "Who creates numerous living things with their deficiencies...with which to maintain the life of every being." Hashem created the various "groups" with their individual deficiencies: the lomdei Torah are in need of sustenance; and those who toil in the field of commerce, etc. need to avail themselves of the opportunity for Torah study. Why did Hashem do this? L'ha'chayos bahem nefesh kol chai, so that all life will be maintained. He who studies Torah relies on the baal parnassah to help him continue his studies. Similarly, he who is out there living by the "sweat of his brow" needs the support of the lomeid Torah.

Chazal teach us that when a person leaves his earthly abode, he is not accompanied with gold and silver, only his Torah study and good deeds. Why would anybody think that his money and silver accompany him to the Olam haEmes, World of Truth? Rav Ferber explains that Chazal are teaching us that the only gold and silver coins that one takes with him are that which were spent for the support and maintenance of Torah and mitzvos.

Thus, the Torah says 'v'asu' - "They shall make an Ark." "They" is a reference to the Torah which was ensconced in the Aron. It takes a partnership to acquire it. We may add that while Yissachar may need the support of Zevulun, Zevulun has a greater need for Yissachar's support.

The Torah instructs us to see to it that the Aron is covered "with pure gold, from within and from without, shall you cover it." This, says Rav Ferber, hints that the Torah scholar must be supported in an appropriate manner - within and without. There has to be sufficient funds for him and his bayis, house/family, to live as human beings. What greater degradation is there than a talmid chacham who is relegated to beg for his upkeep?

They shall make an Ark. (25:10)

The use of the plural "they" implies that Hashem's command to make an Aron is directed towards the entire nation. Notably, this is the only instance where we find the command given in the plural; the rest of the chapter is in the singular. Chazal derive from here that everyone should be involved and, therefore, deserves a share in the Aron HaKodesh, Holy Ark, they symbol of Torah. The other vessels can be made by individuals. In order to bequeath Torah to the entire nation, it is incumbent that everybody be involved in the making of the Aron.

What about the Menorah - the vessel that symbolizes the light of Torah and its ability to illuminate the minds and hearts of the nation? Horav Nissan Alpert, zl, distinguishes between the Aron, which denotes the concept of Kabbolas HaTorah, receiving the Torah, and the Menorah, which alludes to nesinas HaTorah, giving of the Torah. Each member of Klal Yisrael is commanded to become a vessel for receiving the Torah. Every Jew should prepare himself so that he can receive the Torah. Not everyone, however, is fit to be a tzinor, pipeline/vehicle for transmitting Torah to others. The ability to reach out and inspire others, to study Torah, to teach and disseminate Torah to the masses, is not something that anybody or everybody can successfully achieve. Therefore, in regard to the Menorah, the Torah writes v'asisa, and you shall do, denoting the exclusiveness of he who disseminates and inspires Torah to others. Furthermore, we derive from here the importance of first preparing the vessel for receiving the Torah. In other words, we must first prepare the student by imbuing him with a desire for Torah - then we will be able to light the Menorah and illuminate his life with the Torah.

You shall make the planks of the Mishkan of shittim/acacia wood, standing erect. (26:15)

Rashi tells us that the shittim wood was set aside for quite awhile for this unique purpose. Yaakov Avinu planted these cedar trees in Egypt. Prior to his death, he instructed his children to take them along with them when they left the Egyptian exile. Hashem would one day command Klal Yisrael to erect a Mishkan, Tabernacle, in the desert -- specifically from shittim wood, and these would serve

that purpose. These shittim trees had a history. They were originally planted by Avraham Avinu in Be'er Sheva. When Yaakov left to Egypt, he first went to Be'er Sheva to cut them down, and then took them with him to Egypt.

We wonder why Yaakov had to make such elaborate arrangements. He could simply have planted trees in Egypt upon arriving there. Why did he take Avraham's trees, cut them down, and transport them to Egypt? Horav Yaakov Kamenetsky, zl, explains that Yaakov understood that unless his descendants would have something tangible in which to believe, they would give up hope of ever leaving Egypt. All they had were promises. They needed some type of proof, something that served as a constant reminder that they would one day be able to leave this bitter exile. Yaakov brought Avraham's shittim trees in order to emphasize that they were not going down to Egypt forever. They would one day leave. The shittim trees would serve as their reminder. They were a sign that they would be redeemed.

We know now why Yaakov brought the shittim trees with him. He needed to allay his fears as he was leaving for Egypt. Why did he have to take Avraham's trees? Why could he not settle for taking his own trees? Was there something special about Avraham's trees? Rav Yaakov explains that the Mishkan was to be built from "scratch" with kedushah, holiness and taharah, purity, untainted and unblemished. Yaakov Avinu was acutely aware that Be'er Sheva was the place where Avraham Avinu called out b'shem Hashem, in the name of Hashem. It was the place which was considered by the avos, Patriarchs, as the center of kedushah. The Mishkan was to be built from one hundred percent purity. This could be found only in Be'er Sheva.

Alternatively, we suggest a profound lesson is being conveyed. If one seeks to imbue his children with the significance of remembering the past by taking the wood bequeathed them by their grandfather, Yaakov, then Yaakov has to set the standard by himself taking from his grandfather. I take my grandfather's trees, because I want you to do the same. If parents forget about their parents, how do they expect their children to remember them?

It is there that I will set My meetings with you, and I will speak with you from atop the kapores, from between the two keruvim. (25:22)

The pipeline/medium through which Hashem's words passed to Moshe Rabbeinu and through which Hashem's influence went forth to Klal Yisrael was mi'bein shnei ha'Keruvim, from between the two Keruvim. Horav Shmuel Rozovksy, zl, derives a profound lesson from this phenomenon. In the Talmud Sukkah 5b, Chazal teach us that the faces of the Keruvim were similar to the face of a child. Why is this? Because the ideal bais kibul, receptacle, for receiving Hashem's word -- the perfect place for it to be cherished and saved and to exert the greatest influence -- is a child. A child is a mekabel, accepts/receives. He is willing to listen. He does not have preconceived notions.

It is this type of attitude, childlike, open and ready to listen and accept, that should prevail in every individual who wants to hear and be inspired by the dvar Hashem, word of Hashem. Hashem's voice is certainly powerful. It is without question the most awesome and compelling sound one can hear. One must be willing to listen, however. Otherwise, the sound falls on deaf ears.

And let them take for Me a portion. (25:2)

Tanna Dvei Eliyahu says that when Klal Yisrael declared "Naaseh v'Nishma," "We will do and we will listen," in regard to their commitment to accept the Torah, Hashem responded, "Veyikchu Li terumah," "Let them take for Me a portion." This statement has been a rich source for homiletic exposition. The Bobover Rebbe, Horav Shlomo Halberstam, z.l., takes a novel approach towards explaining this Chazal. He cites the Talmud Megillah, 29a, where Abaya explains "At first, I would study at home and pray at shul. When I heard David HaMelech's statement, 'Hashem, I love the shelter of Your House' (Tehilim 26:8), I began to study in the shul." He also cites a famous anecdotal exposition of the venerable Ropshitzer Rebbe, z.l., regarding the pasuk in Tehillim 95:10, "V'heim lo yadu drachai" "And they did not know My ways." The Rebbe read the first word, "v'heim," as the Yiddish word "heim," home, as a reference to those who study at home as opposed to studying in the bais hamedrash. This is not the derech, way, that Hashem wants us to choose. We are to study Torah in the place designated for Torah and tefillah, prayer - the bais hamedrash.

This is also the underlying meaning of Chazal's statement in the Talmud Kiddushim 30b, "If this menuval (despicable wretch, a reference to the yetzer hora, evil inclination) meets you (and seeks to lead you astray), pull him into the bais hamedrash." The only place where you will have the power to overcome the overriding influence of the yetzer hora is in the bais hamedrash. We return now to the words of the Tanna Dvei Eliyahu. When Klal Yisrael responded with a resounding, "Naaseh v'Nishma," indicating that they were willing and prepared to accept the Torah, Hashem immediately instructed them to contribute for the construction of the Mishkan. The Mishkan and the latter day beis medrash, which is called a mikdash me'at, miniature Sanctuary, are the places where Hashem reposes His Shechinah. Thus, the yetzer hora has no control in such a place, if one connects solidly with it.

In an alternative exegesis, when the Pupa Rebbe, z.l., spoke on behalf of his yeshivah on Parashah Terumah, he would focus on the above Chazal. He explained that Hashem was teaching Klal Yisrael an important lesson when He asked them to open their wallets right after they declared their unequivocal acceptance of the Torah. Some individuals, although they are committed, observant Jews, often hesitate when it comes to mitzvos that demand a financial commitment. He was wont to use the word "b'tzedek" - bais, tzaddik, daled, kuf (referring to the pasuk, "b'tzedek echezah panecha," "with righteousness I will gaze upon Your Countenance") as an acronym for the Yiddish words "biz tzu di kesheneh", "until it comes to the wallet." In other words, people talk much about their commitment and dedication - until they are asked to share some of their material assets. Thus, Hashem tells Klal Yisrael that saying "Naaseh v'Nishmah" is not a sufficient commitment. One must also be willing to give a Terumah, to part with his money, for the purpose of mitzvah observance.

They shall make an ark of acacia wood. (25:10)

The Aron Ha'kodesh, holy Ark, the repository of the Torah, has long been viewed as a symbol of Torah learning and the talmid chacham, Torah scholar. Indeed, upon perusing the Midrashim and ensuing halachic requirements for building the Aron, one develops a sense of the character traits that should comprise the talmid chacham's personality.

Of all of the vessels that were constructed for use in the Mishkan, only the Aron was made of specifications and measurements that were not whole. The Aron measured two and a half amos, cubits, long, one and a half cubits wide, and one and a half cubits high. A number of lessons may be derived from this criteria. First, we infer that the scholar's goal is never complete. Torah knowledge is vast; it is endless. The only goal is to learn - and to continue learning. Of course, one should have definite goals. After these goals have been realized, however, one should know that he is only beginning to understand Torah.

A talmid chacham should be humble, of a lowly spirit, always acutely aware of the uncompleted, never-ending task before him. He should derive the importance of humility - not only in knowledge - but also in character. Torah does not coincide well with one who has a haughty character. Our greatest gedolim, Torah giants, who have illuminated our minds with their brilliant expositions of Torah, never perceived themselves to be any better than the students that they taught. They were a vehicle for imparting Hashem's Torah to the next generation. They were soldiers in Hashem's army, serving a mission.

One wonders why the measurements were "broken." If the purpose was to impress the need for humility, why could the measurements not simply have been small? The Aron should have been the smallest vessel, with small measurements, rather than a large vessel with broken measurements. I think the reason is as follows. I once knew an interesting individual who was very wealthy. He was also very short. He often remarked, "I may be short, but when I stand on top of my money, I am taller than anyone." What a remarkable lesson there is to be derived from this arrogant statement. There is a distinction between one who thinks "low" of himself and one who views himself as incomplete. The Aron's measurements were fragmented to teach us the paradigm for anivus, humility. There is nothing as whole and as complete before Hashem as a "broken" person, one who considers himself incomplete.

We may go a bit further in developing an understanding of the Torah's idea of humility. Moshe Rabbeinu is known as the "anav mikol adam," the most humble of all men, the paragon of humility and modesty. How does one achieve such distinction? We suggest that the answer lies in the words, "mikol adam," of all men. The true anav, humble person, sees virtue in everyone and places each individual on a pedestal above him. In other words, an anav is not necessarily a person who puts himself down, but rather elevates everybody else. Thus, if everyone is greater than he, how could he even conceive of himself as better than anyone else?

While it is absolutely essential that the Torah scholar be of a humble spirit, this sense of humility should be contained within an aura of self-respect and dignity. Indeed, the Aron's foundation was made of wood and covered with a layer of gold on the inside and outside. Why was it not made of all gold? This teaches us that the Torah should not be equated with gold. It must be ensconced in beauty. Hence, the gold layers reflect its value and glory.

In the Talmud Yoma 21a, Chazal tell us about a remarkable aspect of the Aron's measurements. Rabbi Levi says that it is a tradition transmitted through the generations that the Aron is not "min ha'middah," "part of the measurement". In other words, miraculously, the Aron did not take up any space. Whatever area the Aron covered was still available as if the Aron were not there at all. The Sefas Emes queries this statement. We know that every aspect of the Mishkan and its Keilim, appurtenances, was a contribution from Klal Yisrael. Every ethical character trait that the people possessed was imbued into the Mishkan. From the Aron's broken measurements to the gold crowns around the various vessels, each reflected a quality and virtue inherent in the people which was essential for spiritual/moral development. Where in their contributions do we find a quality that is expressed in the

Aron's apparent vacuum, the fact that they do not take up any place in the Kodshei Kodoshim.

The Sefas Emes explains that it was an expression of Klal Yisrael's good will. The Torah teaches us that the people contributed much more than was necessary for the construction of the Mishkan. In fact, some individuals wanted to donate above their means. It was not, however, needed. Klal Yisrael contributed admirably, so that there was more than enough material available for the Mishkan. These retzonos, well-meaning and pure intentions, could not be realized because there was enough material. This created the concept that, despite its corporeality, the Aron did not take up any space. When an individual's intentions are so well-meaning and filled with extreme devotion, they create an edifice that reflects their conviction.

There are countless stories told about the humility of our gedolei Yisrael, Torah giants. The ones who are the greatest and most erudite are generally the most humble. The following two narratives demonstrate for us that the humility evinced by these gedolim was much more than an exhibition of their unpretentiousness; it was actually inherent in their personality. They truly believed that they were not worthy of any special accolades.

The first episode concerns the relationship between the revered Chasam Sofer, z.l., rav and posek, halachic arbiter, of Hungarian Jewry and an undisputed gadol hador, and his father-in-law, the venerable Horav Akiva Eiger, z.l., whose erudition in Talmudic jurisprudence and in all areas of halachic literature was unparalleled. The Chasam Sofer's first wife, a woman who was well-known for her exemplary character traits, righteousness and piety, was suddenly taken from this world at a young age, leaving her saintly husband bereft of his life's partner. She was eulogized by the greatest Torah luminaries for her unique qualities, especially her devotion to her husband, allowing him to spend his time in Torah study and devotion to the Almighty.

As soon as the shivah, seven-day mourning period, ended, he was besieged with offers of shidduchim, suitable matches. At the same time, Rav Akiva Eiger's son-in-law died, leaving his daughter -- who was a well-known baalas chesed, involved in numerous activities to help others, and a pious, virtuous woman -- alone. Unaware of the Chasam Sofer's personal tragedy, Rav Akiva Eiger wrote to him, asking if he knew of anyone who would be suitable for his daughter.

The Chasam Sofer immediately gave the letter to a close colleague and asked him to "follow up" on the letter. The colleague understood that the Chasam Sofer had a personal interest in this matter and followed up accordingly. It did not take long before the shidduch of Rav Akiva Eiger's daughter was officially proposed to the Chasam Sofer, who immediately wrote a letter to her father asking him for "information" about his daughter. After all, who would know more about the young lady than her father?

Rav Akiva Eiger sent back a glowing description of his daughter's character traits, as well as the wonderful acts of loving kindness in which she excelled. He lauded her piety and virtue. He ended his letter stating that the Chasam Sofer, as a Torah scholar, would certainly follow Chazal's criteria for a shidduch: to seek a bas talmud chacham, daughter of a Torah scholar. "Regrettably," wrote the Rav Akiva Eiger, "I am sorely deficient in this area. I will, therefore, understand if you will not accept my daughter."

The Chasam Sofer responded in kind, appreciative of the wonderful qualities of Rav Akiva Eiger's daughter. He, of course, was not in agreement with Rav Akiva Eiger concerning his level of erudition. He did add that there was one problem that might hinder the shidduch - his own lack of Torah knowledge!

Incredible! We all know that the match reached fruition, and the Chasam Sofer became Rav Akiva Eiger's illustrious son-in-law. What should impress and inspire us is the humility of these two outstanding Torah giants. It was not a show - they truly believed that they were not talmidei chachamim. What should we say?

Our second episode is about the Chozeh m'Lublin, the famous "Seer," elder statesman, one of the founders of the Chassidus movement. He was undisputed as a talmid chacham and tzaddik, a person who reflected Ruach HaKodesh, Divine Inspiration, in his every movement. While he was the spiritual leader of the chassidic community of Lublin, the rav of the city was a strong misnagid, standing firmly in opposition of Chassidus. One day, the rav asked the Chozeh, "Why is it that everyone flocks to you, and I am unsuccessful in attracting a following?" "I have no idea why they come," said the Chozeh. The rav said, "My suggestion to you is that on Yom Tov, when a substantial number of people are in the shul, that you ascend the bimah, lectern, and declare to the chassidim that you are not worthy of their following. You are not a scholar, nor do you possess any wisdom. Perhaps they will stop coming to you."

The Chozeh took the rav's advice and made the announcement in shul. To the rav's chagrin, the Chozeh's self-effacing declaration impressed the assembly and raised the Chozeh's esteem in their eyes even more. When the rav saw what had happened, he told the Chozeh, "I have another idea. At the next opportunity, announce to the chassidim that you are a brilliant scholar and a great man. The Chozeh listened to the rav's suggestion and responded, "I may not be a talmid chacham, nor am I brilliant. One thing is certain, however, I am not a liar!" This sincere statement was made by an individual whose brilliance and piety has radiated on for generations. It illustrates the idea that only a great man can be truly humble.

Speak to Bnei Yisrael and let them take for Me Terumah. (25:2)

Chazal translate the word li, (for) Me, as, "You are taking Me," suggesting that by constructing the Mishkan, we are taking Hashem to us. The Midrash explains this with a parable. There once was a king whose only daughter became engaged to a king from a distant country. While the father was overjoyed with his future son-in-law, he was chagrined at the thought of his daughter's leaving. He told his prospective son-in-law, "I have given you my only child. It is very difficult for me to part with her. I ask that you do one thing for me: Wherever you live, please build a small room for me, so that I may dwell in it. This way I will not be separated from my dear child." Likewise, Hashem says to Klal Yisrael, "I have given you My most precious Torah. I cannot part from it. Thus, I ask you to build for Me a house wherein I may reside among you." This is consistent with the pasuk, "They shall make for Me a Mikdash, Sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them."

How are we to understand this Midrash? Does Hashem have feelings? Does He have emotions that respond to given situations as ours do? How can one say that Hashem could not bring Himself to be separated from the Torah? Hashem created the Torah. He made it. Apparently, before He created it, He existed in a satisfactory manner. What is the meaning of Chazal's ambiguous statement?

Horav Mordechai Gifter, z.l., explains this Midrash and simultaneously teaches us a fundamental lesson about the meaning of Torah and its relationship to us. When Chazal imply that Hashem could not bear to be separated from the Torah, they mean that the Torah and Hashem are

intrinsically one unit. Hashem is an indivisible part of the Torah. The goal of the Torah is to infuse this world with kedushah, holiness, rendering it a receptacle in which Hashem could repose His shechinah. In essence, Hashem did not need the Torah. Rather, He gave it to us so that we would use it to provide a "home" for Him in this world. What relevance is there to Torah without its ultimate goal: Hashem?

Rav Gifter uses this thesis to explain why the Torah first instructs us to give the money - then tells us its purpose. The correct sequence should have been first to notify us of the mitzvah, building the Mishkan, and then to instruct us how to finance its construction. We now understand that the purpose of the Mishkan is to provide a place for Hashem. Taking Terumah, collecting money for its construction, is not merely a preliminary stage; it is actually the first step in the process of constructing this edifice. Giving one's material possessions for the purpose of building the Mishkan means elevating the mundane, sanctifying the material, raising it to a level of kedushah heretofore not realized. Hence, the Torah instructs us to take the Terumah prior to the command to build the Mishkan, because to do so exemplifies the essence of the Mishkan.

And let them take for Me a portion, from every man whose heart motivates him. (25:2)

Parashas Terumah is preceded by *Parashas Yisro* and *Mishpatim*, both *parshios* that focus on the *halachic* aspects of our lives. *Parashas Yisro* details the Revelation at *Har Sinai* and the *Aseres Hadibros*, Ten Commandments. Next is *Parashas Mishpatim*, containing many laws, most of which focus upon man's relationship with his fellow man. *Parashas Terumah* follows with Hashem's command that everyone is responsible to contribute towards the building of the *Mishkan*. A lesson can be derived from the sequence of the *parshios*. In order for *Torah* to survive, we must be willing to sustain it. *Hachzokas ha Torah*, sustaining those that study *Torah*, supporting those institutions in which *Torah* is taught and studied, ensures *Torah's* future.

The *Midrash* tells us that *Klal Yisrael* uttered the words, "*Naase v'nishma*", "*We will do and we will listen*," indicating their overwhelming dedication to the *Torah*. Hashem responded with the enjoinder, "*V'yikchu Li Terumah*," "*and they shall take for Me terumah*." Simply, Hashem was telling them: If you want to guarantee that the *Torah* which you have just accepted will remain a part of your future, then you must be willing to give *terumah*, to give up something to support the *Torah*.

The notion of donating towards the *Mishkan* reflects a deeper perspective. Indeed, as the commentators ask: If Hashem was asking for a contribution, the Torah should have said, "*V'yitnu*," "*and they shall give*." Why does it say, "*V'yikchu*," "*and they shall take*"? **Horav Eliyahu Schlessinger, Shlita**, cites **Horav Eliyahu E. Dessler, zl**, in the *Michtav M'Eliyahu*, who teaches us a profound lesson regarding the concept of "giving." It is commonly accepted that in order to achieve a relationship of affection, one must receive gifts from the other. For instance, children love their parents when they receive gifts from them; people develop an affection for others who give them gifts - regardless of the nature of the gift. *Horav* Dessler opines that this is not correct. It is the converse. One develops a feeling of affection for someone whom he has helped or bequeathed a gift on. When one devotes himself - his strength, effort, skill, his valuable time - to somebody, he develops a feeling of closeness, a feeling of kinship, a feeling of love. No, it is not by taking, but rather by giving, that one achieves this level in a relationship.

In the *Talmud Bava Metzia 38a*, *Chazal* say, "A man wants/would rather have his own *kav* (a

small measure) than nine *kavim* of someone else's." *Rashi* explains that even though what he has is very little - it is still his; he has worked for it. We develop a relationship with the object of our own personal effort. In the *Talmud Shabbos 88b*, *Chazal* tell us that Hashem raised *Har Sinai* over the heads of *Klal Yisrael* saying, "If you accept the *Torah*, it will be good, but if you do not, here will be your grave." According to *Chazal's* statement, the original acceptance of the *Torah* was under coercion. We are taught that on Purim, *Klal Yisrael* accepted the *Torah* willingly and unequivocally. For a complete treatment of this concept, we would have to dedicate another paper. Suffice it to say: *Klal Yisrael's* original acceptance of the *Torah* is enigmatic. One can be forced to accept those *mitzvos* that are action-oriented. This is not true of those *mitzvos* that are heart-oriented, that focus upon one's emotion, such as loving Hashem and believing in Hashem. How can one be pressured to act in a way which comprises a response to a spontaneous emotion? Either one feels the emotion or he does not.

Horav Schlessinger explains that this was the underlying reason for the command to "take *terumah*" for the *Mishkan*. By availing *Klal Yisrael* the opportunity to give towards the *Mishkan*, Hashem was giving them the opportunity to develop *ahavas Hashem* and *ahavas Torah u'mitzvos*. The love would develop as they gave from their pockets and of themselves. By giving, one establishes a bond with the recipient. The *Mishkan* atoned for the sin of the Golden Calf. The origin of the sin lay in their lack of love for the Almighty. Had they manifest true *ahavas Hashem*, they would not have sinned.

All of the *mitzvos* that Hashem grants us are to fulfill this goal: to develop our *ahavas Hashem*. By performing His *mitzvos*, our love for Him becomes greater and more pronounced. This is consistent with the famous words of *Chazal*: *Rabbi Chananya ben Akashiyah* says, "Hashem wanted to confer merit upon *Yisrael*. Therefore, He increased for them *Torah* and *mitzvos*." Hashem sought to give His nation the opportunity to love *Torah* and *mitzvos*. To accomplish this, He granted them a multitude of *mitzvos*. The more one performs *mitzvos*, the greater will be his desire and love for Him. Unfortunately, the converse is equally true.

They shall make an Ark of shittim wood... You shall cover it with pure gold...and you shall make on it a gold crown all around. (25:10,11)

Three of the four primary *Klei haMishkan*, appertenances of the *Mishkan*, had crowns/ golden rims, decorating them: the *Aron HaKodesh*; Ark; the *Shulchan*, Table; and the *Mizbayach*, Altar. The *Menorah*, candelabra, did not. This fact corresponds with the words of *Chazal* in *Pirke Avos, 4:13*, "There are three crowns: the crown of *Torah*, the crown of *Kehunah*, priesthood, and the crown of *malchus*, kingship. The crown of *shem tov*, a good name, is greater than them all. " The *Aron HaKodesh*, which contained within it the two *Luchos* upon which were inscribed the *Aseres Hadibros*, Ten Commandments, corresponds with the *kesser Torah*, crown of *Torah*. The *Mizbayach Hazahav*, Golden Altar, upon which the *Kohanim* offered incense, corresponds to the *kesser Kehunah*. The *Shulchan*, upon which the special shewbread was placed, corresponds to the *kesser malchus*. The *Menorah* had no crown. It is parallel to the *kesser shem tov*, which uniquely does not need a crown. Why is this? What distinguishes the *Menorah/shem tov* from the other primary *Klei Hamishkan*?

The **Shem Mishmuel** offers a profound explanation, which is based upon an understanding of the concept of the "crown", that is represented by these objects of holiness. The *Torah* uses the word "*zer*" for the decorative crown. This word is closely related to the word "*nazir*," as in the nazirite who

vows to dedicate his life to holiness. He maintains a sublime lifestyle, abstaining from wine and avoiding contact with a corpse for the designated period of *nezirus*. The reason for this is stated by the Torah, "*For the nezer (crown) of G-d is upon his head.*" (*Bamidbar 6:7*) **Ibn Ezra** explains that while all human beings are subject to their earthly desires, the *Nazir*, who bears the crown of G-d, transcends these desires. He is a true king, for he reigns over himself. The "*zer*" signifies transcendence. It implies one's ability to raise himself above the common desires which captivate the average human being. As the crown of a king sits above his head, so, too, does the spiritual diadem set a person above the behavior pattern typical of the mundane physical world.

The three vessels which are surrounded by a *zer*: *Aron - Torah*; *Shulchan - Malchus*; *Mizbayach - Kehunah*, all suggest areas in which the individual must rise above potentially harmful elements. The foundation of Jewish life and observance is *Torah* study. Yet, this lofty experience can present a compelling challenge for one who is insecure. Superiority in *Torah* erudition may lead to arrogance and feelings of false superiority. The king also might permit the respect and honor accorded to him to go to his head. He might overrate himself so that he expects -- or even demands -- undeserved deference from his subjects. The *Torah* places specific restrictions upon the Jewish king in order to circumvent this risk. The *Kohen* also holds a position of importance. The community needs his spiritual guidance, his atonement and service in the *Bais HaMikdash*. To the unscrupulous, this can be an opportunity to take advantage of others. Whenever one has power, he has the potential for abuse. Thus, these three gifts to *Klal Yisrael* demand special safeguards to prevent their misuse. The crowns on the *Aron*, *Shulchan* and *Mizbayach* represent this constant challenge.

The *Menorah* which represents the *shem tov*, good name, which is attainable by everyone, has no crown. The lamps of the *Menorah* shine forth with the glow of the pure Divine light for all who wish to share in its brilliance. No potential for impropriety is associated with the *Menorah*. It is inherently good, shining its light for those who are prepared to receive it. Hence, the *Menorah* does not need the protective nature of the "*zer*."

The *Shalosh Regalim*, Three Festivals, are each associated with judgement. The *Mishnah* in *Rosh Hashanah 1:2* tells us that the world is judged at four junctures of the year: On *Pesach* for the grain; on *Shavuot* for the fruit; on *Succos* for the water. The *Shem Mishmuel* applies this thesis to the three festivals vis-a-vis *Shabbos*. Each of the Festivals can be related to one of the crowns. On *Pesach*, *Klal Yisrael* achieved nationhood. They became a royal nation, as a result of their unique relationship with the Almighty King. Thus, the crown of *malchus* is linked to *Pesach*. *Shavuot*, the Festival commemorating *Kabolas HaTorah*, corresponds with the *kesser Torah*. *Succos*, by its nature, represents the all encompassing embrace of the Almighty for all Jews. *Succos* is closely connected to *Aharon HaKohen* who embraced all Jews equally. Furthermore, the *Ananei Ha'kavod*, Clouds of Glory, which were granted to *Klal Yisrael* as a result of Aharon's merit, are commemorated by our *succos* until this very day. In these ways, *Succos* and *Kehunah* are strongly linked to each other.

As a result of the risk of danger associated with the three concepts, we must take care to ensure that one does not "lose it" on *Yom Tov*. The possibility for spiritual abuse is greater during these times. Thus, the need for constant introspection, and the added knowledge that Hashem is scrutinizing our behavior, lends an air of solemnity to the Festival.

In contrast, *Shabbos* contains no element of judgement. *Shabbos* is similar to the *Menorah* that has no golden rim, whose light shines pure and clear to all who seek it. Indeed, the **Arizal** states that there is no potential for abuse in the atmosphere that prevails during *Shabbos*. It is a day during which one can experience a feeling that is *me'ein Olam Habah*, of the spiritual pleasure of *Olam Ha'Bah*.

Everything can be used for spiritual growth on *Shabbos*. May we all merit that day when this experience will be enjoyed by all of *Klal Yisrael*.

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And let them take for Me a portion, from every man whose heart motivates him. (25:2)

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"And tachash skins and shittim wood." (25:5)

Rashi says that the *Mishkan*, its vessels, and the priestly garments were made from thirteen types of raw materials. When we count the materials, however, we find that there were actually fifteen. The commentators offer a number of explanations to reconcile this disparity. Interestingly, *Rashi* questions the desert origin of two of these materials. *Rashi* specifically wonders how *Bnei Yisrael* were able to obtain the *shittim* wood and the *tachash* skins in the desert. He explains that Yaakov Avinu brought the *shittim* wood to Egypt for the sole purpose of using it in the future *Mishkan*. The *tachash* was a beautiful, multi-colored animal that existed only at that time and later became extinct. These two materials were different in the respect that the people did not actually bring them. They may have been gifts from Hashem Who created the *tachash* for this purpose. Alternatively, Yaakov *Avinu* might have bequeathed them.

Bearing this in mind, **Horav David Shneur, Shlita**, suggests that this is the underlying meaning supporting *Rashi's* count of thirteen materials. While there were actually fifteen materials, only thirteen of them were direct contributions of the people. The other two either came from Hashem or were handed down from their ancestors.

Horav Shneur infers from this *pasuk* that when we are about to create a *Mishkan*, we must consider the notion that no edifice can have viability if a single person believes that he alone is its initiator and builder. If an individual thinks this way, he falls prey to the devastating spiritual malady of, "It is my power and the strength of my hand that has made for me this army." Delusions of grandeur, arrogance and feelings of invincibility are among the most self-destructive attitudes. In building the House for Hashem -- or any edifice or other endeavor -- one should include three ingredients: his own portion, be it material or personal, his ancestor's portion, and Hashem's portion. These three components must be included, for they all play a vital role in the continued existence and success of the endeavor. This idea applies whether we are about to build a *shul*, a home, a school or any function we undertake. We must maintain our belief that only if Hashem sends His blessing will the endeavor succeed. We also supplement our personal endeavor by building upon the foundation which

our ancestors laid for us, with their devotion to Yiddishkeit.

We have only to open our eyes to perceive that the success of the organizations that have been blessed with *Siyata Dishmaya*, Divine assistance, may be attributed to their dedication *l'shem Shomayim*, acting for the sake of Heaven. If one acts solely for the sake of sanctifying His Name, he will be accordingly blessed. Those who foolishly believe that their own power and strength effected their success will achieve only temporary fulfillment.

The area of *z'chus Avos*, merit from our ancestors, is also an integral component upon which to build. The *Briach Ha'Tichon*, middle bar, that extended through all of the beams of the Mishkan originated with Avraham *Avinu*, who planted it in Be'er Sheva. Yaakov replanted this tree, which eventually *Bnei Yisrael* took with them when they left Egypt. This beam miraculously wound itself around the corners through all of the beams. When the *Mishkan* was dismantled, it stood erect once again like the wooden beam that it was. Why was this "beam" *zocheh*? What merit did it have that it should be the prime catalyst for "holding up" the *Mishkan*? Obviously, it was the *z'chus Avos*, the ancestral heritage of Avraham *Avinu* and Yaakov *Avinu* that gave this beam unique qualities.

In comparison to the *Batei Mikdash*, the *Mishkan* was built with very little material expense. Yet, it was never destroyed; it never fell into the hands of our enemies. It was built by Moshe *Rabbeinu*, Betzalel, and our ancestors who were determined to infuse it with a legacy from the past. Neither the money nor the aesthetics alone will bring the *Shechinah* to rest in an abode. The incorporation of man and *z'chus Avos* will bring the third component - Hashem. When a *chasan* says to the *kallah*, "*K'das Moshe v'Yisrael*," according to the law of Moshe and Yisrael," he implores Hashem that his adhering to the laws passed on through the generations will render him worthy of having the *Shechinah* rest in his new home. Only after the Divine component is included in the marriage, will all the blessings which are conferred upon the *chasan* and *kallah* be fulfilled.

"And shittim wood." (25:5)

Rashi cites the *Midrash* that explains how *Bnei Yisrael* were able to secure *shittim* wood in the desert. These trees did not grow all over the wilderness. Yaakov *Avinu* had brought these cedars to Egypt. He "saw" that one day his descendants would leave Egypt and build a *Mishkan* which would require this type of wood for its construction. Let us take a moment to think about Yaakov's foresight. He prepared for his children's spiritual future. What about their material/physical existence? What did he provide for them? Nothing! Indeed, *Bnei Yisrael* are lauded for following Hashem into the desert, trusting in Him for sustenance and relying on Him for their physical needs.

Horav Eliyahu Meir Bloch, zl, derives a profound lesson from here regarding the *Torah's* perspective in distinguishing between spiritual and physical needs. In regard to spiritual needs, concerning building a *Mishkan* or any edifice that serves a spiritual function, one should not rely on a miracle. He must go out and act, doing whatever is in his power to create a *m'kom kedushah* that will inspire himself and others with spiritual ascendancy. When it comes to material necessities, however, one should be *bote'ach b'Hashem*, trust in the Almighty, that He will sustain, support and provide for his needs. Yaakov *Avinu* concerned himself with the spiritual needs of his descendants. For the fulfillment of their physical needs, he relied upon Hashem.

"And they shall make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them." (25:8)

The *Midrash* tells us that when Moshe was commanded to build a Sanctuary for Hashem, he trembled and asked, "How can a man make a house for G-d if even the heavens cannot contain You?" Hashem responded, "I do not ask them to make anything commensurate with My capacity. I ask of them only that they build in accordance with their own capacity." The words of the *Midrash*, are "according to their own unique abilities." They must attain their own potential - theirs and not another's! When Hashem asked Moshe to sacrifice upon the *Mizbayach*, Moshe asked, "If all the animals in the world were assembled would that then be considered a fitting enough sacrifice to You?" Hashem responded, "It is not as you think, for Me one lamb a day will suffice, for the rich man an ox and for the poor man a sheep." But if a rich man brings that which is fitting for a poor man to offer, it is a desecration

Horav Moshe Swift, zl, claims that herein lies the lesson of the *parsha*. Every man must act in accordance with his own ability and capacity. If the rich man gives *tzeddakah* like a poor man, he profanes the *mitzvah*. If one has the ability to be an active participant in the Jewish community and instead he is passive, he degrades both himself and Judaism. If one exchanges attending a *shiur*, *Torah* study class, for a sports event or any other form of media entertainment, he has failed to execute his duty.

In order to bring the *Shechinah* into our midst, we must do our part by maximizing our potential. Whatever our ability, we must demonstrate a proclivity to go "all the way" in serving Hashem. When we reorganize our priorities in accordance with the will of Hashem, we will succeed in having the *Shechinah* reside among us.

"And they shall make an ark of shittim wood... and you shall plate it with pure gold, from inside and out shall you plate." (25:10,11)

In the *Talmud Yuma 72b* *Chazal* emphasize that one must cultivate an inner purity. They derive this from the *Aron Ha'Kodesh*, the symbol of *Torah*. It was to be plated with pure gold, inside and out. *Chazal* infer from this *pasuk* that "any *talmid chacham*, *Torah* scholar, whose inner essence is not in consonance with his outward purity/appearance can not justifiably be considered a *talmid chacham*. One must be "*tocho k'baro*," maintain a symmetry between his essence and the image he projects. All too often, we focus upon our external image and the impression we make upon others, while we seek to conceal our inner faults and deficiencies.

We may question *Chazal's* source, the *Aron Ha'Kodesh*. If one's inner self must be coordinated with the personality he projects outward, why was wood used in the *Aron* altogether? Should it not have been fashioned completely out of gold? **Horav Yosef Leib Bloch, zl**, suggests an insightful explanation which takes human nature into account. Regardless of his ability to attain and achieve spiritual distinction, man must reckon with his physical dimension. We must note that we are a composite of both physical and spiritual elements. It is impossible to totally divorce ourselves from our physical component with the desires that accompany it. Consequently, the inner essence and its metaphor, the inner section of the *Aron Ha'Kodesh*, cannot consist entirely of gold. We must make room for wood, which symbolizes man's human instinct and personality.

Why is wood the material that serves as a metaphor for the human component? We suggest that

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wood is a natural material that grows from the ground. It symbolizes growth and development. Hence, the lesson is that even the physical aspect of man can serve a higher potential. Under the influence of the gold/spritual dimension, one can sanctify his physical self, using it as a vehicle with which to reach greater spiritual heights.

What actually is the meaning of "*tocho k'baro*"? What transforms a *talmid chacham* into an inferior person? **Horav Avraham Grodzensky, zl**, offers a remarkable insight into the meaning of inconsistency within a *Torah* scholar. One does not have to sin excessively to be inconsistent. It is possible for one to study *Torah* with intensity and still be considered corrupt. A *Torah* scholar must be in total harmony with himself so that he performs all his actions in accordance with the *Torah*. His actions/deeds must be in consonance with his level of *Torah* scholarship, in congruence with his acquired wisdom and stature. Any form of evil or inconsistency is viewed as unsuitable to his essential character. The litmus test of a *talmid chacham* is whether his heart acts in concert with his good deeds, whether his outward actions truly reflects them in consciousness. One's internal perspective, motivation and intentions must be in harmony with his outward appearance. To have a sterling reputation for scholarship and erudition, while one's inner motivation is not absolutely good, is considered an inconsistency. If one's deeds do not emanate from a source of truth, if they do not reflect the feelings of his inner heart, then they are false. Such a scholar is not a *Torah* scholar.

The *Torah* scholar must be totally symmetrical, his good deeds emanating from the heart with an *emes*, truth. Otherwise, while they are not considered *aveiros*, they are blemished *mitzvos*. They do not reflect the truth, indicating, therefore, that the individual is not "*tocho k'baro*."

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