

# על דשע

**Alei Deshe - Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on  
the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit" a of Gur**

## Living With the Mishkan

Hashem commanded Moshe that donations be made for the construction of the *Mishkan*: ויקחו לי תרומה—and let them take for Me an offering (Shemos 25:2). The Midrash<sup>1</sup> comments: “Any place where the Torah says לי—for Me, it is an eternal, everlasting matter.” How can this be understood? After all, the collection for the *Mishkan* was a one-time event; in which way was it everlasting?

The Gemara (Megillah 10b) teaches: “It is a tradition in our hands from our fathers: the place of the *Aron* does not take up space.” The dimensions given for the *Kodesh HaKodashim* did not leave space for the *Aron*; it was not necessary, because it did not consume space.

*Sfas Emes* wonders about this: the Gemara continues by citing *pesukim* to prove that the *Aron* could not have fit into the *Kodesh HaKodashim* by natural means. If so, why does this concept necessitate a “tradition in our hands from our fathers”? *Sfas Emes* answers that the *pesukim* the Gemara cites are relevant only to the *Beis Hamikdash*; however, regarding the *Mishkan*, the principle is known by tradition.

This is difficult to understand. Firstly, since the miracle pertained to the dimensions of the *Aron*, why would there be a difference between the *Mishkan* and the *Beis Hamikdash*? Furthermore, the wording of the Gemara, “The place of the *Aron*,” implies that it was a miracle specific to the *Aron*. If so, why would there be a difference where the *Aron* was situated?

1 Yalkut, Shemos 364.

*Sefarim hakedoshim* say that whereas the *kedushah* of the *Beis Hamikdash* was transient, having ended with its destruction; the *Mishkan*, which is everlasting<sup>2</sup>—it was not destroyed, but hidden away<sup>3</sup>—is a testament to the eternal holiness and the constant presence of the *Shechinah* among

*Klal Yisrael*. As the Chiddushei HaRim said,<sup>4</sup> it is this testimony that accompanies Yidden and keeps them strong throughout the ages.

We may now understand the *Sfas Emes*'s answer. True, the Gemara proves from *pesukim* that the *Aron* doesn't take up space. But that pertains only to the *Beis Hamikdash*, which was short-lived. Regarding the *Shechinah* of the *Mishkan*, which is everlasting within *Bnei Yisrael*, we could not know this principle without an explicit tradition.

How can we tap into this reservoir of continual *hashra'as haShechinah*?

The pasuk (38:27) states regarding the *Mishkan*: מֵאֵת אֲדָנִים לְמֵאֵת הַכֶּכֶר—one hundred sockets for one hundred talents

(of silver). The *Sfas Emes*<sup>5</sup> points out that it was actually the other way around—the one hundred talents were for the one hundred sockets. Why is it written this way?

It is because the construction of the *Mishkan*, and all its measurements, depended singularly on the generosity of heart of *Bnei Yisrael*. The one

2 Sukkah 44b.

3 Sotah 9a.

4 See *Lekutei HaRim*, Nissan p. 269.

5 Pekudei 5646.

“**We may not have access to the Mishkan today, but our longing for it is not mere wishful thinking; through our yearning for the Mishkan we construct it in our own hearts.**”

לעילוי נשמת  
מרת  
עקא עדנה  
צפודה ע"ה  
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל

hundred sockets were, in fact, because of the one hundred talents. This is how we can access the *Shechinah* of the *Mishkan*: by strengthening our generosity of heart, our *Yiddishe retzanos*.

Our opening Midrash may now be understood. What was it about the collection for the *Mishkan* that was everlasting? Not the one-time collection of its materials, but the eternal collection of *Klal Yisrael's* hearts, their innermost desires, which they give up for Hashem for all time. We may not have access to the *Mishkan* today, but our longing for it is not mere wishful thinking; through our yearning for the *Mishkan* we construct it in our own hearts. A Yid's yearning for *kedushah* rises beyond all natural impediments.; after all, the *Aron* is not constrained by physical space. In fact, the primary resting place of the *Shechinah* is in the hearts of Yidden.

This is our main job in this world: to have a strong desire and longing for Hashem. There is a saying, "Nothing can stand before a will." My father<sup>6</sup> quoted his father, the Imrei Emes, as explaining that nothing can prevent a person from yearning for positivity—one can always have a will. This is

6 See *Pnei Menachem*, Bereishis p. 6 and other places

7 Koheles Rabbah 6:6

difficult to understand. What good is there in desiring something when it is unattainable? The answer is that one's willpower is the very essence of his soul. This is clear from the pasuk (Bereishis 23:8): אַם יִשְׁאָת נַפְשְׁכֶם, literally, *if it is of your soul*; Rashi explains *your soul as your will*. We must fill our soul—our willpower—with yearning and pining for Hashem.

Only this manner of desire can satiate our souls; the various other cravings one feels do not represent the person. This is illustrated by the following Midrash,<sup>7</sup> on the pasuk (*Koheles* 6:7): כָּל עֵמֶל הָאָדָם לְפִיָּהוּ וְגַם הַנֶּפֶשׁ לֹא תִמְלֵא—*All man's toil is for his mouth, yet his wants are never satisfied*. "This is comparable to a commoner who marries a princess. Even if he will give her everything the world has to offer, it will be worthless to her, since she is a princess. Similarly, even if one gives his soul all the good of this world, it is worthless to the soul, since the soul is from the Upper Worlds."

We must fill all our willpower with longing for Hashem Yisbarach.

(בנאות דשא – תרומה תשפ"ב)

## Of Coatings and Trappings

וְעָשׂוּ אֲרוֹן עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים וְגו' וְצִפִּיתָ אֹתוֹ זָהָב טָהוֹר מִבֵּית  
וּמִחוּץ הַתְּצַפְנֶנּוּ—*They shall make an Ark of acacia wood... You shall cover it with pure gold, from within and from without shall you cover it* (Shemos 25:10-11).

The Gemara (Yoma 72b) relates: "Betzael made three arks; he placed the wooden one within the golden one and the [other] golden one within the wooden one." The Kotzker Rebbe wondered about this: doesn't the pasuk prescribe the opposite order, that it first be covered from the inside and then from the outside?<sup>8</sup>

We may suggest that in fact, Betzael first placed the wooden box inside the outer golden box, coating it on the outside first, as the Gemara states. But at that point, it would not be clear which box was the main one—was there a wooden box coated on the outside with gold,

or was there a golden box coated on the inside with wood? Only once another box of gold would be placed inside the wooden box would it become clear that the gold—both inside and outside—was only a coating for the wood. Thus, *from within and from without shall you cover it*—the inner gold would demonstrate that the outer gold, too, was merely a cover.

What is the lesson for us? It is very difficult to begin learning Torah *lishmah*, with nary an ulterior motive, straightaway; the lure of *Olam Hazeh* is simply too strong for most people to overcome. One usually needs to begin by allowing himself ulterior motives for his studies. This stage can be compared to the outer coating of gold around the *Aron*. And just as with the *Aron*, at this juncture it isn't clear which is the primary factor—is it the Torah itself or is it the trappings? Only upon

reaching the level of *lishmah*, by tapping into the inner essence of Torah, does it become clear that the motivation for reaching this level was merely a "gold coating" for the Torah itself.

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The above Gemara teaches, as well, that the *Aron's* coatings contain a lesson: a *talmid chacham's* inside must match his outside. But this doesn't mean that his inside should be visible from without; it means that he must act on the inside just as he acts on the outside. This is why the *Aron* was first covered on the outside and then on the inside. If it had been the other way around, we might mistakenly deduce that a *talmid chacham's* inside should be apparent on the outside.

(בנאות דשא – תרומה תשפ"ב)

8 See *Sifsei Tzaddik* 18

## When Nature Reigns Supreme

וְאֵל הָאָרֶן תִּתֵּן אֶת הָעֵדוּת  
—and into the Ark you shall place the Testimonial Tablets (Shemos 25:21). Rashi wonders why these words are necessary, as the very same instruction is given earlier (25:16). Rashi answers that these words contain a message: the *Luchos* must be placed into the *Aron* when it is only an *Aron*—before the *Kapores* is placed upon it. The *mefarshim* ask the obvi-

the *Mishkan*. When positioning the vessels of the *Mishkan*, every movement had a profound impact upon the Upper Worlds. Thus, had the *Kapores* first been placed on the *Aron*, only to be removed for the *Luchos*' insertion when no miracle was performed, the initial for-naught placement would have spoiled the perfection of the *Mishkan*'s inauguration, in which every move was for a purpose.

**Ruchniyus is not attained with miracles. It must be earned with one's blood, toil, sweat, and tears—through hard work and perseverance.**

ous question: when else could the *Luchos* be inserted? Surely not once the *Aron* is covered by the *Kapores*!<sup>9</sup>

The *Imrei Emes*<sup>10</sup> answers that since there were ongoing miracles relating to the *Aron*<sup>11</sup>—the *Aron* did not take up space,<sup>12</sup> and the *Keruvim* stood miraculously<sup>13</sup>—one might have supposed that the *Luchos* may be inserted into the *Aron* miraculously, too—after the *Kapores* was placed upon it. Thus, the *pasuk*, as explained by Rashi, instructs that the *Luchos* be placed inside the *Aron* before the placement of the *Kapores* upon it.

This seems difficult to understand. If the Torah wanted the *Luchos* placed before the *Kapores*, Hashem could simply refrain from performing a miracle to enable it otherwise. Why must there be a specific instruction to this end?

Perhaps this is illustrative of the extreme significance of every act during the inauguration of

We may offer another, practical approach. The Torah's instruction that the *Luchos* be inserted into the *Aron* by natural means is a message to us: our *avodas Hashem*, through which we are illuminated with the *Luchos*' light of Torah, is a byproduct of our own actions. *Ruchniyus* is not attained with miracles. It must be earned with one's blood, toil, sweat, and tears—through hard work and perseverance.

There is an additional lesson as well. The *Aron* and the *Kapores* could not be considered complete until the Torah was placed inside. One may erect a structure, surround it with a protective wall, and think himself protected from the winds of the outside. But unless his edifice is full of Torah, it is critically flawed, and will afford him no protection.

(בנאות דשא – תרומה תשפ"ב)

## Who Is Proud?

וְעֵרַת תְּחָשִׁים  
—and tachash skins (25:5). Rashi comments that the *tachash* was an animal which existed only at the time of the construction of the *Mishkan*,<sup>14</sup> and had many colors. This, explains Rashi, is why Targum renders it “ססגונא,” because it was שש ומתפאר—joyful and proud of its colors.

Why could the *tachash* take pride in its colors? Because it existed only at the time of, and for the purpose of, the construction of the *Mishkan*. Only someone whose entire existence is dedicated to *mitzvos*, to *avodas Hashem*, can allow himself pride. This, as well, was the *tachash*'s cause for joy. True joy is experienced only by one whose every action is taken for Hashem's sake, towards the pursuit of *mitzvos*. In fact, such a person feels joy even when performing the mundane activities that he must tend to.

(בנאות דשא – תרומה תשפ"ב)

9 See Rosh.

10 See *Lekutei Yehudah*.

11 As well as many miracles that related to the *Mishkan* itself; for example, the placement of the middle bar (*beriach hatichon*) and the erection of the *Mishkan*, which took place miraculously (Shabbos 98b).

12 Megillah 10b.

13 Yoma 21a, Bava Basra 99a.

14 Shabbos 28b.



# Holy With Holes

וְיָהִי תְמִימִים—*and together shall [the kerashim] match* (Shemos 26:24).

The Gemara (Chullin 17b) lists several matters of imperfection, including פְּגַמַּת מוֹם בְּקֹדֶשִׁים, a blemish in *kodashim*. Rabbeinu Gershom explains this (in one approach) as referring to the *kerashim* of the *Mishkan*, about which is written וְיָהִי תְמִימִים, which can be understood as *they shall be complete*—they are rendered unfit if damaged. This would explain Rashi's statement<sup>15</sup> that the *kerashim* were not tossed when moved, so that they would not be ruined; if they would be thrown, perhaps they would be damaged and deemed invalid.

The Mishnah (Shabbos 102b) states that one transgresses the Shabbos *melachah* of *boneh* (building) even by building a *kol shehu*, any amount. The Gemara wonders about this: what use is there in a *kol shehu*-sized construction? The Gemara answers that it can be useful when one needs to stuff up a hole in his house. The Gemara continues that this was true of the *Mishkan*—if one of the *kerashim* would develop a hole due to insects, it would be filled with lead.<sup>16</sup>

Following Rabbeinu Gershom's explanation, since a *keresh* is invalidated by an imperfection, when its hole is filled, the *keresh* is made valid again. Thus, it may be understood that this *kol shehu*-sized construction is considered a significant act of building.

However, Rashi elsewhere<sup>17</sup> offers a different reason why the *kerashim* were not thrown: they were simply too heavy. According to this, it would seem that their damage was not a concern.<sup>18</sup> If so, perhaps repair to the *kerashim* is considered a significant act of building since it is necessary in order for the *kerashim* to be *mehudar* (beautiful for the mitzvah). However, this would be contingent on a disagreement among the *Rishonim* whether *hiddur mitzvah* applies to a covered substance.<sup>19</sup>

Since the *kerashim* were coated with gold, some would maintain that an imperfection in their wood would not render them non-*mehudar*.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, even if damage to the *kerashim* would not render them unfit or non-*mehudar*, their repair could still be considered a significant act, no less than repairs to the walls of one's home.

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The Sfas Emes<sup>21</sup> raises a difficulty with the above statement of the Gemara that an insect-damaged *keresh* would be repaired for use. The Mishnah (Middos 2:5) states that insect-damaged wood is unfit to be burned on the *Mizbe'ach*. Why would this law not apply to the *kerashim*, as well? We may add that logic would seem to dictate the reverse: if insect damage invalidates wood which is to be completely burned, certainly it should invalidate *kerashim*, which are meant to be long-lasting, as the repair could eventually become undone. In fact, Chazal<sup>22</sup> derive from the pasuk (26:15) וְעֵצֵי שֹׁטֵיִם עֹמְדִים—*upright* (literally: standing) *acacia wood*, that the *Mishkan* will stand forever.<sup>23</sup> Why, then, does insect damage not render a *keresh* permanently invalid?

We may suggest that the reason wood for the *Mizbe'ach* is invalidated by insect damage is because it maintains the status of a *korban*, or at least of *machshirei korban* (preparatory items for a *korban*).<sup>24</sup> Just a *korban* must be complete and in prime condition,<sup>25</sup> so must the wood of the *Mizbe'ach*. *Kerashim*, on the other hand, do not have this status, so they are not invalidated by insect damage.

In another approach, perhaps theoretically, the *kerashim* would in fact be invalidated by insect damage. But since, as Chazal say,<sup>26</sup> the *kerashim* were constructed from the wood of cedar trees planted by Yaakov Avinu, they are permitted to remain in use even if insect-damaged, due to their irreplaceable distinction and *kedushah*. The wood of the *Mizbe'ach*, conversely, could simply be replaced if insect-damaged, and is therefore invalidated.<sup>27</sup>

(בנאות דשא – תרומה תשכ"א, תרומה תשכ"ב)

15 Chullin 4b.

16 Sfas Emes wonders why a hole in the *kerashim* would be filled with lead and not gold. Perhaps it is in accordance with the Gemara's (Sotah 48b) statement that lead is a good filler.

17 Shabbos 96a.

18 See *Hagahos Ben Aryeh*, ad loc; *Mekor Baruch*, 29; *Tzafnas Pa'anei'ach*, second edition, p. 51 column 4, and to Sanhedrin 108b.

19 See *Mordechai* to end of Megillah, cited by *Rama*, O.C. 147:1 and *Magen Avraham* ibid 4; *Rama* 32:4; *Sedei Chemed, Klalim, Ma'areches 7 Klal 12*, from ד"ה וכתב מרן.

20 If, in fact, damaged *kerashim* would be considered non-*mehudar*, we may consider whether or not repairing them would restore their *hiddur* status. Perhaps, even if not, they would be used once repaired, since their wood—taken from cedar trees planted by Yaakov Avinu—was irreplaceable (see further above).

21 Shabbos 102b.

22 Yoma 72a, Sukkah 45b.

23 We do not understand the meaning of this statement, but it is indicative of the great *kedushah* of the *Mishkan*.

24 See *Minchas Chinuch*, 285; *Otzar Hasifra*, mishnah 7 no. 17.

25 See Rambam, *Issurei Mizbe'ach* 6:1-2.

26 Rashi 26:15 citing Midrash Tanchuma.

27 Some maintain that if wood for the *Mizbe'ach* is found to be insect-damaged, that part of the wood is removed, and the remainder could then be used. See *Chazon Ish, Menachos* 42:25. If so, our initial difficulty is simply resolved.

Published by Machon Alei Deshe of America

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