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## Become a Mishkan!

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### Not a One-Time Event

The Ramban explains the purpose and nature of the Mishkan in multiple places: at the beginning of *Sefer Shemos*, at the beginning of *Parshas Terumah*, and near the end of *Parshas Pekudei*. The Mishkan gave Bnei Yisrael the ability to access and relive the experience of *Mattan Torah*, the greatest revelation of the *Shechinah* in the history of the world. The Ramban notes that when the Torah describes the *gilui Shechinah* of *Mattan Torah* and of the Mishkan, even the wording is similar: וַיִּשְׁכַּן ה' מְלֵא אֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן (Shemos 24:17) and וַיִּכְבֹּד ה' עַל הַר סִינַי (40:35).

Chazal say that at *Mattan Torah* anyone who suffered from an ailment was healed. When a person draws close to Hashem, the source of all life, any illness or weakness in his vitality is replaced by *chiyus*. Bnei Yisrael were able to access this healing experience every time they entered the Mishkan.

As the Alshich *hakadosh* explains, Hashem wants to dwell within each and every Jew. He therefore described the goal of the Mishkan as וּשְׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם, not בתוכו.

Even now, after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, we can reach a *madreigah* similar to that of Am Yisrael at Har Sinai. Every *beis medrash* and *beis knesses* is called a *mikdash me'at*: each one is a miniature Beis Hamikdash. The *Zohar Hakadosh* states that the Torah reading on Shabbos is a manifestation of Har Sinai and that a person of *shleimus* can experience *Maamad Har Sinai* at that time, and this experience can also heal his ailments.

### Our Time to Give

The command וַיִּקְחוּ לִי תְרוּמָה was the first time Hakadosh Baruch Hu asked Bnei Yisrael to donate from their possessions. Until that point,

they had to strengthen their *emunah* in Hashem and His servant Moshe and attain the necessary exalted level of *kedushah* and *taharah* to experience Hashem's miracles. Now, it was their time to give.

Some of the people must have thought, "Does Hashem need our gold and silver? The whole world is His!" We can certainly understand this question. If Hashem wanted to construct a dwelling place for the *Shechinah* in this world, He could create it instantly. Why did He ask Bnei Yisrael to donate?

### An Eternal Gift

The very fact that Hakadosh Baruch Hu asked Bnei Yisrael to donate the materials for the *Mishkan* demonstrated that **its purpose was very different from the *gilui Shechinah* they had experienced until now.** The miracles in Mitzrayim and at the Yam Suf, the revelation at Har Sinai, and even the *mann* they ate for forty years, each lasted for a finite period of time. Now Hashem wanted to give them something that would last forever. (Although the physical presence of the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed because of our sins, the essence of the Beis Hamikdash is eternal; the third Beis Hamikdash will never be destroyed.)

Therefore, different rules applied to the construction of the *Mishkan*. In order for it to serve its purpose, there was a need for *מֵאֵת כָּל אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לְבוּ יִדְבְּנוּ לָבוֹ* – donations that came *from every person whose heart wanted to give*. The intention was not for people to simply donate money or materials. The primary aspect was, in Rashi's words, *רצון טוב* – **the positive desire to give**. Hakadosh Baruch Hu did not want to receive donations that were forced. (The half-*shekel*, used for the sockets of the *Mishkan* and for *korbanos* of the *tzibbur*, was obligatory for everyone, but the donations for the *Mishkan* itself were different). Hashem doesn't need gold and silver, but He does require our inner desire.

### Becoming a Vessel

This process is eternal, and it's meant to be part of our lives. There is a *nekudah*, that innermost point in each Jew's heart, that, when

awakened, enables the *Shechinah* to reside with him constantly. If that *nekudah* remains asleep, even a miracle like the splitting of the Yam Suf cannot leave a long-lasting impression. This is because *ruchmiyus* and *gashmiyus*, spirituality and physicality, contradict each other. Something spiritual cannot usually exist in our physical world. **The spiritual may be forcibly brought into our world, but it will only remain here for a short time.**

We can compare this to a child who is forced to do a household chore that he really doesn't enjoy. He may be compelled to do what he has to, but as soon as he finishes, he will run away. So too, spiritual entities don't enjoy being in our world. A person's *neshamah* does not want to be here; it finds the time it spends here painful. To a certain extent, the *Shechinah* experiences *tzaar* when it has to reveal itself in this world. The physical world is not its natural habitat; its place is really in the higher worlds. Therefore, as soon as possible, it returns to hiding, the natural way for it to reside in our world. It's like a tzaddik who comes to a wedding to drink *l'chaim* and give a *brachah* to the *chassan*. He won't stay long; it isn't his natural place.

There is one way to change this situation and cause the *Shechinah* to constantly reside among us in a revealed state. **That is to build a Mishkan.** How can we do this? Hakadosh Baruch Hu teaches us in *Parshas Terumah* that **if we transform our hearts into a source of giving rather than receiving, we can create that reality.** We transform the heart by deciding to give purely from *ratzon tov*, the desire to give, and not because we expect something in return. People who achieve that level of *ratzon* to give become spiritual people, and the *Shechinah* can then dwell among them continually.

Those who donated wholeheartedly to the Mishkan formed a connection to the Mishkan that made it possible for them to experience the presence of the *Shechinah*. Hashem wanted every Jew to form that connection. And so it was: Bnei Yisrael donated enthusiastically, and the world became a place where the *Shechinah* resided *b'isgalya* - in a revealed state. There was now a physical structure where the presence

of the *Shechinah* could be seen and felt; a place where *korbanos* would be brought, our sins would be atoned, and Klal Yisrael would come for Yom Tov on *aliyah l'regel*.

### In Hashem's Ways

A person who transforms himself into a giver becomes a vessel worthy of the *Shechinah's* presence because by doing so he follows Hashem's ways. Although it requires hard work to achieve that transformation, **in truth, giving is our natural state.** Our *neshamos* were hewn from under the *Kisei Hakavod* and therefore their nature is to give selflessly. It is only the body that interferes, because the body constantly wants to receive.

When a person begins to give, he awakens his *neshamah*, which naturally always wants to give more and more. **As the *neshamah* awakens and the desire to give continues to grow, the person becomes a *kli* for the *Shechinah's* presence.** On the other hand, when a person takes without giving, he becomes more and more physical and materialistic. Everything in the physical world is limited. At some point he will receive so much that he will be full, and, like any other physical vessel, he will have no more room to receive any more.

On the other hand, a person who constantly gives becomes more and more spiritual. A spiritual *kli* is unlimited, and it is therefore able to receive the *Shechinah*.

### Only after They Work

Chazal tell us in *Pirkei Avos*, אהוב את המלאכה – *Love work*. In *Avos D'Rabbi Nasan* we find an elaboration on this.

R. Yosi says: Work (*melachah*) is great, for the *Shechinah* did not dwell among Yisrael until they performed *melachah*. As the *pasuk* says (*Shemos* 25:8), וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכָם – *And they shall make for me a Mikdash and I shall dwell among them.*

This is surprising. It would seem that the *Shechinah* finally dwelled among them because they had brought donations and there was now



a Mishkan for the *Shechinah*. Why did R. Yosi say that it depended on their actually doing the work?

In fact, this is one of the sources for the idea that when a person works in his trade, he is not doing it simply to earn money. He is working to contribute to *yishuv ha'olam*, helping the world become a better place to live. The reason Hashem provides money to someone who works is because **a Jew who works with the right intention becomes a *nosein*, a giver, and only a *nosein* can receive *parnassah* from above.** He receives not only money but also food, intellect, and everything else he needs. This is what R. Yosi learned from the Mishkan. Even more than donating, it was *melachah* that made Bnei Yisrael worthy of *hashra'as haShechinah*.

### Many Followed the Example of Rashbi, Without Success

We learn that one who learns Torah will receive all he needs -- but these sources are also based on the same principle. A person who learns Torah *lishmah*, as it is truly meant to be learned, gives existence to the world. **That is a very significant form of *melachah*. However, that *madreigah* is only attained by someone who learns Torah in the right way**—and it is not at all easy.

This is why not everyone is suited to that life of full-time Torah learning; most people must combine their Torah learning with *melachah* or, at the very least, with helping others by learning with them. **If one's goal in learning is to achieve success, he isn't a *nosein*, and the *shefa* he needs won't be able to reach him.**

Certainly, we must learn Torah no matter what *madreigah* we are on. As Chazal said, "Always, a person must learn even *shelo lishmah*, not for the sake of heaven, for by learning *shelo lishmah*, he will come to learn *lishmah*." However, **along with learning, he must be involved in *melachah* in order to be a giver.** This is why Chazal teach us in *Pirkei Avos*, יפה תלמוד תורה עם דרך ארץ - *It is beautiful to combine Torah learning with derech eretz.*

Only R. Shimon bar Yochai did not have to involve himself in *melachah*. His Torah was on such a high level that every minute he learned Torah was an act of giving that surpassed the giving that anyone accomplished by *melachah*. However, Chazal warned us, הרבה בידם עשו כרשב"י ולא עלתה בידם - many did as R. Shimon did but were not successful. It is very difficult to achieve the *madreigah* of R. Shimon bar Yochai. Those who try to imitate him by avoiding *melachah* inevitably learn in order to receive.

The ideal path of a Jew begins with learning Torah. As Chazal taught us, although the beginning stages of Torah learning will always be *shelo lishmah*, learning Torah will bring him closer to Hashem. However, as he learns, he should not forget that in order to truly merit *hashra'as haShechinah*, he must also do *melachah*.

### Guidance from the Apter Rav

In his *sefer Ohev Yisrael*, the Apter Rav comments on the *pasuk*,

וְשַׁמֶּתָ אֶת הַשְּׁלֶחַן מִחוּץ לַפָּרֹכֶת, וְאֵת הַמְּנֹרָה נֹכַח הַשְּׁלֶחַן עַל צֶלַע הַמִּשְׁכָּן תִּימָנָה, וְהַשְּׁלֶחַן תִּתֵּן עַל צֶלַע צָפוֹן.

*And you shall place the Shulchan outside the paroches, and the Menorah opposite the Shulchan on the southern side of the Mishkan, and the Shulchan you will place on the northern side.*

The Torah is alluding to the way a person should act when his heart awakens to serve Hashem Yisbarach and engage in Torah and *yirah*. He should not say, "I will go and immerse myself in Torah day and night, and never mind where *parnassah* for my home will come from." Then, when it comes time to eat, and the children depend on him, his thoughts will be disturbed and he will be unable to learn Torah at all. He will also suffer from emptiness and madness, *chas v'shalom*, or he will steal from others, as the *yetzer hara* will convince him to do so. (It is well known that the *yetzer* presents a person with an array of *heteirim*, and the person accepts the offer. With so much financial pressure, he becomes unable to think rationally. He'll even feel confident relying on the friend who says he heard that it is permitted to steal in this way or the other.)

Therefore, a person should choose the best and straightest path. **He should first arrange a place to earn *parnassah* so as to sustain his family, and he should suffice with the necessary minimum that is needed to give life to himself and his household,** as the *pasuk* says, (*Mishlei* 13:25) צַדִּיק אֵכֵל לְשֹׂבַע נַפְשׁוֹ - *A tzaddik eats to satisfy his soul.* And he should not chase after *parnassah* from town to town. He should have *emunah* in *Hashem Yisbarach*, Who is able to arrange for him to receive enough to support his family, in his place, and by whatever form of *melachah* he practices. As the Torah promises, (*Devarim* 15:18) וַיְבָרְכֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה - *Hashem will bless you in whatever you do.*

Afterwards, he should bend his shoulder to bear the yoke of Torah, mitzvos and good deeds.

### The Straight and the Good

The *Ohev Yisrael* instructs us in charting a straight and good course in life. On one hand, he tells us to arrange a way of earning *parnassah*. Why should you think you can live like R. Shimon bar Yochai? It would have to be *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* Who reveals to you that you are able to live that way. Until you experience such a revelation, you do *melachah*, for you must be a *nosein*, a giver.

However, **at the same time, you need to make a solid decision to live simply and frugally as *kollel yungeleit* do.** (Many people mistakenly assume that they only need to live simply while they are in *kollel*. Then, as soon as they go out to work, they start spending freely, remodeling their houses in ways that exceed what is necessary.)

With that system in place, you will be able to undertake the yoke of Torah and mitzvos.

The *Ohev Yisrael* continues,

This is what Chazal meant by (*Avos* 2:2) טוֹב תוֹרָה עִם דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ - *It is good to combine Torah with derech erez.* Once he has prepared a means of earning *parnassah* and there is now a place upon which

the *brachah* of Hashem can reside, he should prepare himself to learn Torah and pursue Hashem's mitzvos with all of his understanding and all his strength.

In this way, his thinking and understanding won't be confused. His mind will be clear, pure and well-defined as he learns Torah in truth and advances higher and higher. This is the path Chazal recommended when they said (*Berachos* 35b), "Many did what R. Shimon bar Yochai did and were not successful."

However, a person should not get caught up in the desire for luxuries and pleasures, such as meals fit for a king, that others have. It is true that all Jews are royal princes, and it is befitting for them to live expansively, but if they do so, when will they have time to really learn Torah?

### Don't Repeat Mistakes

The words of the Ohev Yisrael are very precious. Sadly, because of the lifestyle that has become prevalent in the last decades, many people fall into the traps he describes. As he makes clear, the goal is certainly for a person to be seriously immersed in Torah, but first he should think about how he will earn a living and he should find a place of work.

Now of course, one is certainly allowed to learn in *kollel*. If a person is able to do so, that's wonderful! However, along with that, he must remember that Hakadosh Baruch Hu assigned each person individually a responsibility to fulfill his *shlichus* of working and making his unique contribution to the world.

### Hashem Does Not Need Superstars

Let's explore this further. We have learned from *Avos D'Rabbi Nasan* that until a person becomes a giver, he is not worthy of *hashra'as haShechinah*. We also learned from the Ramban that a person's spiritual accomplishments will only take root and become part of him if he is a *nosein*. Once he has transformed into a giver, each spiritual success

builds foundations that will empower him to truly learn and be *mechadesh* in Torah, and to live an authentic Torah-true life.

This leads us to the example of a *bachur* who was blessed with talent and grew up in a warm, supportive environment, with admiration and praise throughout his formative years. Being only human, he welcomed that adulation with open arms. (The natural desire for illusory *kavod* is as strong as the desire for physical pleasures, if not stronger.) After he gets married, he thinks to himself, "Is it even conceivable that I would go out to work? Heaven forbid! Work is for those weak *talmidim* with limited abilities. It would be a waste for me to join them in the workforce." He sees himself as a future *rosh yeshivah* or *dayan*.

He has decided to immerse himself in learning; he assumes that others will support him and his family. Who are those others? He doesn't let that question bother him right now; it will be one person or another. This young man has no plan of how he will be a *nosein* – someone who gives altruistically to the world.

A person must realize that no one asked him to be a superstar. Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't need superstars and has no specific use for them. He does need people who are Yidden, true Jews, and when it comes to developing into a true Jew, the rules are the same for everyone. Certainly, each person is different from another, and each person has his own unique *shlichus*. Nevertheless, the same rules apply to all of us.

**One of the most basic rules is that each Jew is an only child to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and must fulfill his individual shlichus in the world.** If you find yourself looking down at another *bachur* in your shiur, classifying him as untalented and insignificant, you need to realize that he is a *ben yachid* of Hashem. Just as you came into the world to fulfill your *shlichus*, he also came into the world to fulfill a unique *shlichus*. (It may be true that you have been more successful in fulfilling your *shlichus* over the last three years and in the limited setting of the yeshivah. Maybe, or maybe not. Nevertheless, each person has a *shlichus*, and success will be determined over the course of a lifetime.)

## True Growth

When a young man gets married, **the first thing he has to figure out is how and where he will be a giver. He must understand that a Jew is not simply a *prat*, an individual, but an integral part of Klal Yisrael.** The giving of the heart that was needed to build the Mishkan consists of giving something of yours to others, despite the difficulty involved.

When we see a four-year-old child grabbing a toy and refusing to share it with his siblings, we try to teach him that he needs to share. That learning process remains relevant to us throughout our lives.

The body is always a self-centered four-year-old. We see its influence when someone protests, "I want to learn day and night! Why are they telling me to earn a few dollars by tutoring someone at night? I don't need money! I just want to *shteig!*" You are correct. **You do need to *shteig*, but giving to others is an essential part of that growth.** If you don't make time to give to others and contribute to the world, you will never become a *kli* that is worthy of constant *hashra'as haShechinah*.

If you have a great talent for learning and for explaining complicated concepts to others, it may very well be that your *shlichus* is not in appliance repair. It may involve teaching or inspiring others. The fact remains that **you will not identify and fulfill your *shlichus* unless you search for it.** If you refuse to invest that effort, you may learn more and more, until everything explodes in your face. So many people keep learning and then suddenly find themselves drowning in debt, forced to ask for *tzedakah*. The *Ohev Yisrael* warned you of this danger.

He certainly didn't mean that you have to engross yourself in business dealings. His intention was that you must become a giver as soon as possible. Then you will be a *kli* that can receive the *brachah*,  
וּבְרַכְתִּיךָ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה - *I will bless you in everything that you do.*

## Be a Jew!

Each of us must have the central goal of becoming a true Jew who

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welcomes the ongoing presence of the *Shechinah* in his life. If someone's goal is to attain a certain position, but he doesn't transform himself into a *nosein*, he may have a title but he will not have *hashra'as haShechinah*.

It's important to clarify that there are as many ways to give as there are people. One person may sell an item or provide a service during the breaks in his yeshivah *sedarim*, while another may go out at night collecting money for widows and orphans. The possibilities are endless. **The decision of what type of giving he will do should not be based simply on what he wants to do. It should be based on what Hashem wants from him**, according to his best understanding and the advice of *daas Torah*.

The *Ohev Yisrael* explains very clearly that if a person doesn't arrange a means of *parnassah*, his desperation to pay off debts may lead him to dishonest behavior. One should not rely on partial quotations from *maamarim*. The *maamar* may indeed convey what Hashem wants from you, but you might be looking at only half of it. Someone who remembers that a Jew isn't meant to learn exclusively for his own benefit will remember to work simultaneously on giving and on Torah learning.

Rav Chaim of Sanz learned Torah with intense concentration and legendary *hasmadah*, but he also ran from place to place collecting money for orphans, widows, and other needy Jews. That was the way of *tzaddikim*.

### Sustainable Giving

A person may ask, "If the goal is to give, shouldn't I just give things to people without charging them, and spend the rest of my time learning Torah?" The answer is that it may be ideal to give without receiving anything in return, but a person should not begin his life of giving in that way. There are a few reasons for this. The first is that if someone starts giving without taking the customary payment, it won't take long for him to develop delusions of grandeur. Without noticing, he will start to expect other forms of payment, like *kavod* and publicity.

The second is that if he does not request payment, he will gradually forget the value of his giving, and he will stop fulfilling his *shlichus*. It is preferable for him to feel an obligation to give, knowing he must provide the goods or services in return for the money he receives. **That extra level of obligation will ensure that he truly commits himself to the process of giving.** Over time, that will become an integral part of his identity, and he will truly become a *mishkan* for the *Shechinah*.

A Jew with *yiras Shamayim* does not aspire to reach a specific destination. **His only desire is to be close to Hashem.** He learns Torah with the hope that the Torah will transform him into the person Hashem wants him to be. No matter how much Torah he learns, he mustn't lose sight of that goal.

Similarly, a person should realize that when Hashem wants him to give, it is because **a Jew who doesn't give cannot be a true Jew.** Sometimes a young man feels no need to work; perhaps his wealthy father-in-law supports him and bought him an apartment. When he comes to shul and sees his friend tutoring a boy, he thinks, "*Nebach*, look what he has to do to earn a living." That attitude is sorely mistaken. One need only look at such individuals a few years later and see what became of them.

There are many other examples of those who give and grow, and those who remain self-centered and stagnate. Our purpose in this shiur was to broach the topic and hopefully inspire people to turn to the writings of tzaddikim for guidance as to how a Jew is truly meant to live.











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