

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Terumah

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In memory of Rose Litwack, Rachel bat Meyer haLevi z"l

Mishkan: More than a Mega-Shul

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

The "mega-church" seems a particularly non-Jewish phenomenon: thousands of members throng to the same space, read from the same page, are inspired by the same spiritual leader and dance to the same music. With our myriad jokes about oxymoronic Jewish unity, it is difficult to imagine how Jews could have reacted positively to our original mega-shul, the Mishkan, a central house of worship for millions of Jews.

The story told by our legal literature is littered with cases of micro-shuls, congregations convened in private homes. For example, Rabbi Moshe Isserles ruled, "A community may not alter the status of a house which has hosted a congregation for a long time." (Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 149:31; see Pitchei Teshuvah Choshen Mishpat 149:4 and 162:6 for more). On the whole, the "house minyan" seems to have been far more popular than the mega-shul. Even during the days of the Mishkan, house minyanim were a reality in the form of the *bamah* [platform; private altar]. The Mishkan served as a central site for sacrifices, but there were periods when Jews were permitted to bring certain private offerings upon a *bamah*. (Mishnah Zevachim 14:4-8)

The appeal of the house shul and *bamah* is logical; people will find greater attachment to G-d in a more personal environment, and particularly among their close friends. Rabbi David ben Shlomo Abi Zimra wrote in the 16th century, "When a person looks at someone with whom he is at peace, his spirit is aroused into complete focus and his mind expands and his heart is

joyous and the spirit of G-d then rests upon him, as we state regarding prophecy."

Did the large Mishkan and Beit haMikdash find a way to offer an intimate and personal experience? Or, given our preference for more intimate houses of worship, did Jews complain, "The Beit haMikdash has gotten so big, I hardly know the person standing next to me during the korban musaf"?

Perhaps these ritual centres were simply not designed to provide the religious fulfillment we expect in a synagogue; after all, the obligation to attend was limited to special occasions. However, it is also possible that the Mishkan and Beit haMikdash presented a unique attraction, via the kohanim.

In a hypothetical impersonal mega-shul, the Jew could arrive on his own, pray at his seat, listen to a dvar torah, eat at kiddush and leave, remaining in his personal bubble unless called to the Torah or asked to lead davening. Communal prayer is an example of parallel play. Socializing is available, but is not part of the religious ritual.

In the Mishkan, on the other hand, a staff of kohanim interacted with each attendee. Jews who brought personal offerings were at the centre of a service, and there were additional *maamad* roles for Jews who came to the Beit haMikdash throughout the year. Kohanim served as judges for personal disputes. (Devarim 17:9; Sifri Devarim 153:9) The kohen was expected to be a teacher, a role model, and an agent of justice and peace. (Malachi 2) The

kohen represented G-d within the Mishkan and Beit haMikdash, and his personal interaction with the nation converted the space from mega-shul into sanctuary.

The same personalization was employed in the one recorded historical instance of a successful mega-shul. The Talmud (Succah 51b) describes a very large synagogue in Alexandria, Egypt: "At times it held double the number that left Egypt.. There was a wood platform in the center, on which the designee of the gathering would stand, holding scarves. When the time came to respond 'Amen', he waved the scarf and the nation would respond 'Amen'." How, then, did people feel any intimacy? The Talmud continues, "The goldsmiths sat in a group, the silversmiths sat in a group, the blacksmiths sat in a group, the copper smelters sat in a group, and the weavers sat in a group. When a pauper entered, he recognized the practitioners of his craft and turned to them. There he found his support and the support of his household." Perhaps the personal support of a guild provided intimacy, too.

Our synagogues might learn an important lesson from the success of the Mishkan and the synagogue in Alexandria. The satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the individual is not determined by how few or many bodies are present; rather, personal contact with synagogue representatives who act as teachers and role models is a way to mirror the Mishkan and Beit haMikdash. This may make our synagogues more successful, and, more importantly, help every Jew feel welcome in shul.

torczyner@torontotorah.com

Make sure to catch our 7 Pre-Purim shiurim, listed in bold on our calendar on the back page



Next week, look for our Purim Torah edition!

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Much of Parshat Terumah describes the building of the Mishkan and its vessels. At the beginning of the parshah, G-d tells Moshe, "Make for Me a Sanctuary, and I will dwell among them." (Shemot 25:8) Rambam learns from this verse that there is a mitzvah to build the Beit HaMikdash. Not only is the mitzvah to build the sanctuary, but it also includes the vessels that are contained in the sanctuary. (Sefer haMitzvot, Aseh 20)

Ramban strongly objects to the Rambam's inclusion of the vessels in the mitzvah to build the sanctuary; he writes that just as furniture is not part of a house, so too the vessels are not part of the sanctuary. Rather, these are two separate mitzvot: to build the Mikdash, and to build the vessels inside of it. (Comments to Sefer HaMitzvot 33) Parenthetically, we may understand the Ramban based on the contemporary laws of real estate; typically, furniture is not included in a sale of a home unless the contract specifically includes it.

Rabbi Asher Weiss suggests that Rambam and Ramban are arguing about the main purpose of the Beit haMikdash. (Minchat Asher, Shemot pg. 335) According to Rambam, the purpose is to serve G-d by bringing sacrifices. In his description of this mitzvah, Rambam writes, "There is a mitzvah to build a house of **worship**," thereby emphasizing that the nature of the site is to be a place of worship. In his Mishneh Torah, Rambam similarly writes, "There is a commandment to build a house for G-d, one that is ready for the bringing of sacrifices." (Hilchot Beit HaBechirah 1:1) Thus Rambam includes the vessels in the mitzvah to

build the Beit haMikdash, because without the vessels, there is no function for the space.

On the other hand, Ramban writes that the purpose of the Beit haMikdash is for G-d's Presence to dwell among the Jewish people. (Shemot 25:2) If so, the vessels are not necessary to accomplish this goal. The building itself is the only requirement for accomplishing this goal. Thus the Ramban does not include the vessels within the mitzvah of building the Beit haMikdash.

Rabbi Herschel Schachter, in a slightly different context, points out that these two approaches to the sanctuary impact our relationship with G-d. (MiPninei HaRav pp. 385-386) He says that if we view the Beit haMikdash as the place to bring korbanot, then we relate to G-d as distant from us; sacrifices are accepted even when brought by a proxy. However, if we view the Beit haMikdash as the place where G-d dwells, then G-d is close to us. This is more akin to prayer, which requires closeness to G-d. The lesson is that we must feel that G-d is infinite, which means that He is inherently distant, but we must also feel that G-d is close, and that we can have a relationship with Him.

ymanas@torontotorah.com

Hitoriri:
Jewish Spirituality
Taking and Giving
Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

"Speak to the children of Israel, and have them take for Me an offering; from every person whose heart inspires him to generosity, you shall take My offering." (Shemot 52:2)

Rabbi Yitzchak Karo [1458-1497, Rabbi Yosef Karo's uncle, who raised him after Rabbi Yosef Karo's father passed away] asks the obvious question: Why does the Torah say 'to take', instead of 'to give'? After all, we speak here of a donation from a person 'whose heart inspires him to generosity'!

Rabbi Karo answers that the Torah alluded here to marriage, regarding which the Torah uses the language of taking, "When a man takes a woman." (Devarim 24:1) What is the purpose of this comparison?

Rabbi Karo suggests the Torah wants us to understand that the construction of the Mishkan is equivalent to the creation of an intimate relationship between G-d and Am Yisrael.

Perhaps we may continue further with this linkage of marriage and the contribution to the Mishkan. Ran (Nedarim 30a) points out what seems to be a contradiction: a man cannot marry a woman without her agreement, implying that the woman is an active party, but the Torah's language of 'take' seems to indicate that only the man is acting!

Ran addresses this by explaining the fundamental nature of the halachic marriage transaction: the marriage contract is created by the man, but the woman's decision to comply is what empowers the contract. In the terminology of the sages, the man is the *koneh*, while the woman is the *makneh*.

Ran's model for marriage can also explain the type of donation sought in our parshah. A donation to the Mishkan (or any important cause) should not be seen as an act of 'giving', which has connotations of patronizing hubris. Instead, the donor should see himself as a *makneh*, empowering the Beit haMikdash to take his property, and use it for the cause.

bweintraub@torontotorah.com

613 Mitzvot: #244-245

Kilayim

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

"Kilayim" is the Torah's term for mixed or joined species, whether from the animal kingdom or plant kingdom. The Torah prohibits interbreeding animals (#244), planting seeds of different species too close together and grafting a branch of one species to a tree of a different species (#245).

There are quite a few legal complications related to this law, including the matter of which practices are prohibited only in Israel, and the question of defining "species". The Chazon Ish (Kilayim 3:4-8) discusses whether fruits may be

viewed as members of the same species based on structural, visual or botanical characteristics.

Numerous explanations for these laws are provided; for example, Ramban (Vayikra 19:19) explains that G-d implanted various forces in the world's plant and animal kingdoms at Creation, and mixing those forces would be dangerous. Ultimately, though, these are laws for which we have been given no rational explanation.

torczyner@torontotorah.com

Torah in Translation Mordechai and Haman

Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar

Rishon l'Tzion to Esther 3:4

Translated by R' Ezra Goldschmiedt

[Rabbi ibn Attar addresses Esther 3:4-5 - "And when it came to pass, that [the servants of the king] spoke to [Mordechai] daily and he did not listen to them, they told Haman, to see whether Mordechai's words would stand, for he had told them that he was a Jew. And Haman saw that Mordechai would not bow or prostrate himself towards him, and Haman was filled with rage."]

This is difficult: What is meant when it says, "they told [Haman about Mordechai's refusal to bow]"? Was Haman blind, that he didn't see this with his own eyes? Further, what is the meaning of "to see whether Mordechai's words would stand"? It was obvious that Mordechai could not override the authority of the king [who had issued this law]! Further, what is meant by "for he had told them [he was a Jew]"? How was this a reason? And if the meaning is that they wished to know if, what [Mordechai] told them, that he was a Jew, would stand [i.e. was true], they should have asked this of common pedestrians, not Haman! Further, what is meant by the words "would stand," which lacks any meaning? Further, why was Haman not filled with rage until now, when many days had passed? Further, let us examine the words "towards him," which seem superfluous.

Indeed, it seems that this fits with our sages' statement that Haman kept a statue with him, and therefore Mordechai refused to bow towards him. (Esther Rabbah 7:5) When the servants of the king saw that everyone bowed toward Haman and Mordechai demonstrated that he did not wish to bow, they asked him, "Why...", and each time he responded appropriately, as the verse explains at the end, that it is forbidden for Jews to prostrate themselves towards *avodah zarah*, and presumably the king would not have decreed that his subjects alter their religious beliefs. Therefore, Mordechai was exempt from the law of bowing to Haman.

This was the reason Mordechai gave to the servants of the king. They schemed regarding this and told Haman to create a situation to see if Mordechai's claims were true, if "his words would stand," that the reason why he wouldn't bow was a matter of religious belief. This is what was meant by "to see if his words would stand," and it explains what were "the words of Mordechai." This is why it says "he told them..." and this is why he would not bow. This would be clarified by Haman removing the statue from before him; if he [Mordechai] would then bow, [his

Rabbi Chaim ben Moshe ibn Attar, better known as the Or HaChaim (the name of his monumental commentary on the Torah), was born in Sali, Morocco in 1696, into a wealthy family. He established a yeshiva in his hometown, but troubles ranging from being falsely accused of crimes and imprisoned by the government, to experiencing a devastating famine in 1738, forced him and many of Morocco's remaining Jews to flee. Rabbi ibn Attar decided to emigrate to Eretz Yisrael. The journey took him through Italy, and there he published the Or haChaim in 1741. In Elul of 1741 he reached the shores of Israel, but a plague in Yerushalayim prevented him from entering the holy city. Only a year later was he able to enter, eventually establishing a small yeshiva there before moving to Akko. Unfortunately, Rabbi ibn Attar passed away shortly after, on the 15th of Tammuz, at the age of 47. He was buried on Har HaZeitim.

It is reported that in 1948, when Har HaZeitim fell in the hands of the Jordanians, the invaders began building a road through the cemetery. When the tractor reached the grave of the Or HaChaim it broke down and could not start again. Repeated efforts to clear the path failed, and plans were altered to build the road higher up on the mountain. The beginning of that earlier road is still visible today.

Along with his commentary on the Torah, Rabbi ibn Attar wrote *Chefetz Hashem* compiling his novellae on the gemara, *P'ri Toar* on the Yoreh Deah section of Shulchan Aruch, and *Rishon L'Tzion*, a collection of commentaries on Nevi'im, Ketuvim, Rambam's Mishneh Torah, and Shulchan Aruch.

dteller13@gmail.com

actions] would clearly be in line with his words, and "his words would stand," that the reason was that this was a matter of Jewish faith. If he would not bow, his words would not stand.

Then, when Haman orchestrated the situation and saw that Mordechai still would not bow or prostrate himself towards him - "towards **him**" and not the idol - [he saw that] the *avodah zara* was not the obstacle to his bowing. Then Haman was filled with rage.

Mordechai's reasoning for instigating this dog against himself and the Jewish people was because he was concerned that the evil Haman still had *avodah zarah* hidden in his bosom, or tattooed in his skin, as the sages have said.

This Week in Israeli History Adar 9 1949 The Flag of Ink

Hillel Horovitz

9 Adar is Tuesday

The "Flag of Ink" was an improvised flag flown by Israeli soldiers after the successful Operation Uvda. On this day, the ninth of Adar (March 10), 1949, soldiers of the Palmach took control of Eilat, then known as Umm Rashrash and under Jordanian control. A photograph of the event became one of the great symbols of Israel's War of Independence, and over the years the moment became an Israeli version of the raising of the American flag at Iwo Jima. This symbolized the end of the War of Independence.

Operation Uvda was launched on March 5, 1949, in an attempt to enable the capture of the Negev before the truce with Jordan would be signed. Nachum Sarig, commander of the Negev divisions, realized that he had no Israeli flag, and so he instructed his communications officer to create one. The unit secretary, Puah Erel, found a white sheet; according to her testimony, she drew Israel's star and stripes on the flag by hand. In another version, Puah drew the two stripes, and the star was taken from a First Aid kit and stitched to the flag.

Commander Sarig received information indicating that the commander of the Arab Legion had instructed his soldiers to leave western Israel, at which point Sarig instructed his own soldiers to move on Umm Rashrash. Once it became clear that the British authorities had abandoned their posts as well, the soldiers raised the flag. Avraham Adan climbed a flagpole and attached the "Flag of Ink" he held. The ceremony concluded at 4 PM, with the singing of Hatikvah.

A Golani brigade reached Umm Rashrash at 5 PM. These better-equipped soldiers replaced the Flag of Ink with an official flag, and then the two commanding officers sent a telegram presenting the Gulf of Eilat to the State of Israel.

hhorovitz@torontotorah.com

Who is the prophet of our haftorah?

The book of Melachim ("Kings") records the history of Jewish life in Israel from the end of King David's reign until the Babylonian destruction of the first Beit haMikdash. The Talmud (Bava Batra 15a) says that it was recorded by Yirmiyah, who lived through the last decades recorded in the book. In our editions of Tanach, Melachim is split into two parts; the first part begins with the end of King David's reign and continues until shortly after the death of King Achav of Yisrael, and the second part continues from there.

What is the message of our haftorah?

Our parshah describes the plans for construction of the mishkan, the portable "Temple" in which the Jewish nation would commune with G-d on their way from Sinai to Canaan. The Jews used a mishkan as their central site of worship upon entering the land; incarnations of this structure were built in Gilgal, Shiloh, Nov and Givon. Our haftorah describes the plans for the successor to the Mishkan, the first Beit haMikdash, built under the authority of King Solomon. As the haftorah notes (Melachim I 6:1), the construction began in the month of Iyyar, 480 years after the departure of the Jews from Egypt.

Why didn't King David build the Beit haMikdash?

In the verses preceding our haftorah, King Solomon approaches Hiram, king of Tyre, for help in building the Beit haMikdash. He explains that King David, had wished to build the Beit haMikdash, but had been unable to do so because of the burdens of war. (5:17-18) This differs from the explanation given by King David himself (Divrei haYamim I 28:3), that his hands were filled with blood from warfare. Perhaps King Solomon omitted the explanation regarding blood when speaking to King Hiram out of deference to his father's honour. Alternatively, Abarbanel (Shemuel II 7) suggests that the reference to blood was simply another way to say that wartime was not the time to build the Beit haMikdash, and the explanations offered by King Solomon and King David were identical.

The Shamir

Our haftorah describes the stones used for the walls of the Beit haMikdash as "complete", adding that no hammers or iron tools were heard during the construction. (Melachim I 6:7) As the Talmud explains (Gittin 68a), King Solomon solicited the services of a unique *shamir* creature which carved the stones on its own. The nature of this creature is unknown to us.

The Talmud (Sotah 48a) claims that the *shamir* disappeared when the Beit haMikdash was destroyed. However, Tosafot (Avodah Zarah 23b and Zevachim 54b) notes that this must refer to the destruction of the second Beit haMikdash, since the *shamir* was needed during the second Beit haMikdash for the gems used on the kohen gadol's breastplate. [For other views, see Meiri Kiddushin 31a and Minchat Chinuch 95:6.]

The Windows

According to our haftorah (Melachim I 6:4), the window spaces in the walls of the Beit haMikdash were both *shakuf* (transparent) and *atum* (sealed). Rashi (based on Menachot 68b) suggests that the window openings were wide, as seen from the exterior of the Beit haMikdash, but they narrowed through the thickness of the wall, such that they were only slits on the inside. Thus the walls were 'transparent' in letting light out of the Beit haMikdash, but 'sealed' in letting minimal light into the Beit haMikdash. This demonstrated that G-d's Beit haMikdash has no need for external sources of light. [For other explanations, see *Parshah Answers*, Toronto Torah Terumah 5771.]

torczyner@torontotorah.com

Highlights for February 16 – February 22 / 6 Adar - 12 Adar

Shabbat, February 15-16

Friday night dinner R' Mordechai Torczyner, The Pros and Cons of 'Just Jewish', FHJC

7:45 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, Reasons for mitzvot and the parshah, Or Chaim

After Hashkamah Yair Manas, **The Evolving Philosophy of Amalek, Shaarei Shomayim**

Derashah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Raising Kids as 'Just Jewish', FHJC

10:20 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, Parshah, Clanton Park

4:40 PM R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, Daf Yomi, BAYT

After minchah R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, **Megilah Censorship, BAYT**

Seudah Shlishit R' Mordechai Torczyner, Creating my own brand of Judaism, FHJC

Sunday, February 17

9:15 AM Hillel Horovitz, **Purim!, Zichron Yisroel, Hebrew (Shacharit 8:30 AM)**

After maariv R' Baruch Weintraub, Contemporary Halachah in Israel, **Hebrew**, Clanton Park, **men**

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Contemporary Halachah in Israel, **Hebrew**, 4 Tillingham Keep, **mixed**

Monday, February 18

8 PM Monday night Beit Midrash: Bnai Torah, Clanton Park

8 PM Hillel Horovitz, Melachim I:15-16, Bnai Torah

8 PM R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, Mesilat Yesharim, Bnai Torah, *high school students*

9 PM Hillel Horovitz, Rav Kook's Ein Ayah, Bnai Torah

Tuesday, February 19

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daniel: Nevuchadnezzar's Statue, Part 2, Shaarei Shomayim, **Mekorot**

7:30 PM Hillel Horovitz, David and Batsheva III of III, KST

8 PM R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, **"What would you do? The Difficult Choices of Megilat Esther, Part 2"** Thornhill Community Shul

8 PM Yair Manas, Chaburah: Sanhedrin, 33 Meadowbrook

8 PM Adam Frieberg, **Achashverosh: The king you thought you knew, Shaarei Tefillah**

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, **Rambam's Laws of Kings: Amalek: War and Remembrance, Shomrai Shabbos, men**

Wednesday, February 20

8:00 PM Hillel Horovitz, **Purim: Living in the Matrix, Bnai Torah**

Thursday, February 21 Taanit Esther (mukdam)

10 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Jonah: Week 5, BEBY

8:00 PM Adam Frieberg, Blessings on Torah Study, Village Shul

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Sotah, Clanton Park

Coming Up

Starting February 27: Prepare for Pesach! Three Wednesday Nights of Interactive Learning at BAYT