



תורת חיים Torat Chayim

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בס"ד

Vayakhel/Shekalim

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This issue of Torat Chayim is dedicated to the soldiers of the IDF, the hostages, and the wounded.

Ramban on Our Parshah: A Constructive Partnership

Is the Mishkan **Divine** property, a celestial embassy among humanity? After all, Hashem refers to the mizbeiach (altar) as "My mizbeiach" and the building as "My sanctuary;" see Shemot 20:23 and Vayikra 19:30. More, we are commanded to treat the Mishkan and Beit HaMikdash with awe, dressing and conducting ourselves there in a reverent way (Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 254). It seems to be Hashem's creation and property.

Or is the Mishkan **our** construct, our generous dedication of earthly space for Hashem? Didn't **we** build the Mishkan? Didn't we dedicate the material ourselves? And didn't Hashem say explicitly to Dovid HaMelech that He never asked for a house (Shemuel II 7)? It seems to be our initiative.

In a comment on our parshah, Ramban expresses a mystical view that supports both of these positions. Moshe states regarding the materials for the Mishkan, "All who are of generous spirit will bring the materials, **et** the *terumah* of Hashem. (Shemot 35:5)" The word **et** allows for two translations, and Ramban brings both:

- "All who are of generous spirit will bring the materials, **which are** the *terumah* for Hashem." We consecrate our own, generous gift, for Hashem. According to Ramban, this is the *peshat* layer of the text.

- "All who are of generous spirit will bring the materials, **with** the *terumah* of Hashem." There are **two** gifts. The second gift comes not from us, but from Hashem. As Ramban explains here and on Shemot 25:3, Hashem gives *Himself* as a contribution toward the Mishkan. Ramban describes this as the mystical truth behind the text.

The mystical layer speaks to a truth expressed by King David in Tehillim 127:1, "If Hashem will not build a house, its builders work in vain." We are responsible to contribute our part; Hashem expects it of us. But Hashem is the Builder whose collaboration determines the success of the project.

Looking ahead, our Sages have presented two visions for the third Beit HaMikdash. Rambam (Hilchot Beit HaBechirah) detailed laws for us to follow when **we** build the Beit HaMikdash. On the other hand, Rashi (Succah 41a) stated, "The future Temple, for which we long, will be revealed constructed and fully formed, and it will come from Heaven." Ramban's mystical comment suggests that both of these are correct. We will be obligated to bring our materials and make our contribution, and Hashem will contribute as well. יחד ננצח, together we will build an eternal House.

Parshah Riddles for Kids (answers on the back)

Age 4-8: Who was Betzalel's partner in creating the Mishkan? A) Oholiov B) Hiram C) Master Po

Age 8-12: At the start of the parshah, which melachah did Hashem say not to perform on Shabbat?

Age 12+: According to Rashi, why did Hashem begin the instructions for the Mishkan by teaching us to keep Shabbat?

Journey Through Tanach: Yehoshua, Perek 21

Chapter 21 concludes the division of Eretz Yisrael, assigning cities for the Leviyim. In Bereishit 49:6 Yaakov declared that the Leviyim would be scattered because of the anger and violence of their ancestor, but Sefer HaChinuch (#342 and #408) notes two positive reasons to spread the Leviyim around the tribes:

- To have the tribes take care of the Leviyim;
- To have the Leviyim educate the tribes.

The Levite cities were guaranteed permanent aesthetic zoning; Sefer HaChinuch suggests that the goal was to make these cities the pride of the Jewish people. Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (commentary to Vayikra 25:34) adds that the zoning may not be changed because the current generation has no right to damage the land for future generations. [According to the Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shemitah v'Yovel 13:5), the prohibition against converting agricultural areas and open space for other use actually applies to all Israeli cities.]

The chapter begins (21:1-2) with the leaders of Levi approaching Yehoshua, and Elazar the kohen gadol, to re-

quest their cities. Each tribe dedicated cities; there were approximately four cities per tribe. As detailed in 21:3-40, the families of Levi with the most sacred tasks lived closest to the Mishkan in Shiloh, as well as Jerusalem:

- The kohanim lived in Yehudah, Shimon and Binyamin, closest to Shiloh and the eventual Beit HaMikdash.
- The clan of Levi's son Kehat, who carried the holiest items in the wilderness, lived in Ephraim, Dan and West Menasheh, near Shiloh and Jerusalem.
- The clan of Levi's son Gershon, who carried the Mishkan roof in the wilderness, lived in the northern lands of Yissachar, Asher, Naftali, and East Menasheh.
- The clan of Levi's son Merari, who carried the Mishkan boards in the wilderness, lived in Reuven and Gad east of the Yarden, and Zevulun near the Mediterranean.

Chapter 21 concludes (21:41-43) by telling us that Hashem fulfilled all of His promises, giving us the land and defeating our enemies. Ralbag notes that some enemies did remain, due to our own lethargic approach to uprooting them. This became a problem for ensuing generations.

The 613 Mitzvot: #24 - Techum Shabbat

In the wilderness, after some of the Jews attempted to collect manna on Shabbat, Hashem warned, "No one shall leave his place on the seventh day. (Shemot 16:29)" This is the basis for the law of *techum*, which prohibits travel beyond a certain distance outside of a residential area on Shabbat. The *Sefer HaChinuch* counts this as the Torah's 24th mitzvah, explaining that it enables us to focus on observing Shabbat as testimony to Divine Creation.

Because of the law of *techum*, we don't travel more than 2000 *amot* – approximately one kilometer – from the limits of a town. We measure from the last house in town. Contiguous municipalities are a single "town" for this law.

The Talmud (Eruvin 35b) debates whether *techum* is actually a biblical law or a rabbinic law. See also Tosafot Sotah 30b, and Ramban to Shabbat 2a & Shabbat 87b. In addition, there is debate regarding the actual distance of the *techum* limit; see Yerushalmi Eruvin 5:4, among other sources. Ramban rules that the biblical *techum* is twelve *mil* (about 13.2 km); the rabbinic *techum* is the aforementioned 2000 *amot*. (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shabbat 27:1-2)

Israel's Chief Rabbis: Taxing Torah Scholars, Rabbi Ben-Zion Uziel

Rav Yosef Raphael Uziel was the head of the Sephardic beit din of Jerusalem at the end of the nineteenth century. His son Ben-Zion Meir was born in 1880, and was married to Rosa Baruch in 1893. In his twenties Rav Ben-Zion Uziel founded a yeshiva, *Machazikei Torah*, for Sephardic students. In 1911 he was appointed Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Yafo. Throughout his career, "Love truth and peace," from Zechariah 8:19, was framed and hung in his office.

During World War I Rav Uziel lobbied the Ottoman government so persistently that they exiled him to Damascus. He remained politically active, becoming President of Mizrachi in 1919. He joined delegations to the League of Nations (1926), Iraq (1927) and the US (1929). In 1939 he joined protests against the British plan to convert the Mandate into a binational Jewish/Arab state.

Rav Uziel left the Holy Land to become Chief Rabbi of Salonika for three years in the 1920's, before returning to become Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv. In 1939 he was appointed Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Mandate Palestine. He continued in this post through the end of the British Mandate, and until his death in 1953 he served as Sephardic Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel.

Regarding taxing Torah scholars for communal needs,

Rav Uziel wrote that scholars are under the same obligation as everyone else. He cited the annual half-shekel collection as evidence (*Mishpitei Uziel* II Yoreh Deah 41):

We may extrapolate proof from the half-shekel. For any mitzvah of tzedakah aiding the community, kohanim, and likewise Torah scholars, are obligated. The half-shekel is called "ransom for one's life," and we don't argue that the kohanim don't need this ransom. We certainly shouldn't say that kohanim and Torah scholars don't need the reward for tzedakah. It is true that Torah scholars don't need [human] protection, but the walls of the city and the towers of Jerusalem are not for personal protection. They are for the structure and splendor of Jerusalem.

Since the Torah obligates them in the half-shekel, we may extrapolate that the Torah obligates them in any mitzvah of communal tzedakah... From the half-shekel we may extrapolate to every communal matter which is for public needs, like guarding the walls of Jerusalem, etc., that all of the residents, including Torah scholars, must participate. Our sages did not exempt Torah scholars other than from the tax for building the walls of the city as per Rashi, but for any communal need all of the residents participate. So the halachah has been ruled (Choshen Mishpat 163:4), and no one disagrees.

Upcoming Learning!

All classes are open to men and women and free of charge, unless otherwise noted

5:55 PM Shabbat March 9

Are Embryos Minors? Halachah and the Alabama Decision, Part 2, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, at Eitz Chayim

8:30 AM to 9:15 AM Sunday March 10—**Now with bagels and spreads!**

Fourteen Centuries: Rav Sherira Gaon, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, in the lobby at Eitz Chayim

NEW TIME: 8:30-9:30 PM Monday March 11 at Eitz Chayim and on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/medhal>
Halachah in Healthcare Settings: Davening for Patients with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

8:15-9:00 PM Tuesday March 12

Gemara Makkot with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, for men, at 693 Knollwood

8:00 PM Wednesday March 20 **Sisterhood Pre-Purim Shiur!**

Vashti: Villain or Victim? with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, for women, at 737 Evergreen

Age 4-8 A: Ohlloiv
Age 8-12 Lighting a fire
Age 12+ To teach that one may not build the Mishkan on Shabbat; see Rashi Shemot 35:2

Answers to Parshah Riddles

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