

FROM WITHOUT TO WITHIN

by Rabbi Label Lam

They shall make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell amongst them. (Shemos 25:8)

Intersecting the same time zone within these next few weeks we have the holiday of Purim and the building of the Tabernacle. Is there any commonality between these two subjects or are they merely coincidentally occupying the same space if even temporarily? There is an oft repeated question that might help jumpstart the discussion. The verse should have read; I shall dwell in "it". Why does it say, I shall dwell "amongst them"?

I recently heard a moving story about a certain Rebbe that had many followers that came to him for advice and blessings. His personal attendant was a particularly devoted servant who gave selflessly to the Rebbe all his days and nights. This servant suffered from a leg problem that caused him to limp noticeably and only with great effort was he able to move about. In spite of his obvious handicap his heroic dedication was unyielding.

One day the Rebbe approached this servant and launched a complaint. He told him, "I don't think you believe that I am a truly effective Rebbe!" The attendant was shocked and inquired as to where he had fallen short in his service. The Rebbe explained that many people come to ask advice and receive blessings for all kinds of personal and practical matters and that his loyal attendant had never asked him what to do about his own personal health issue. Obviously he didn't really believe that the Rebbe can be of any help.

The attendant realized the truth of his Rebbe's words and asked what he should do. The Rebbe invited him to join in the meal to be eaten immediately after Shabbos. At that meal, where it is customary to tell stories of great people the Rebbe called on his loyal servant and asked him to tell a story.

The servant looked at the Rebbe reluctantly and declared, "I'm no story teller! I only know one story that my father told me about how the Baal Shem Tov danced." The Rebbe insisted he tell the story. In the telling of the episode the servant became very animated and started to dance. By-the time he had finished the telling of the story he was walking and moving about normally!

The point here is not to tell about "faith healing" or anything nearly miraculous. What made this man better? He merely emulated, however superficially, the actions of a great person. In doing so he became improved. The "Path of the Just" states an important psychological principle, "Outward movements awaken a corresponding internality!"

Similarly the "Duties of the Heart" declares, "Thoughts are shaped by speech!" As one speaks or acts so the corresponding inner world is created. These are potent tools for shaping our very beings. Although, it may seem at first inauthentic or disingenuous, results are guaranteed. Also what might be authentic to the external part of our being may be incongruous with our deepest and truest inner yearning.

Therefore, we need not be surprised that the process of building a Sanctuary actually builds the inner world of its builders. With regard to Purim as well, although the name of The Almighty is conspicuously absent His presence is palpable in deed. Through the animated reading of the Megillah, by describing actions of greatness in the story of all stories, life's most powerful lessons are imbibed like an extra-fine wine and we are all automatically improved from without to within.

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