

SANCTUARIES ARE BUILT

by Rabbi Label Lam

"And they shall make Me a Sanctuary that I may dwell among them." (Shemos 25:8)

They shall make Me a Sanctuary: They will make a house of sanctity dedicated to My name! (Rashi)

The most critical ingredient in constructing the Tabernacle is that the actions should be done for the sake of HASHEM. Any other intention is clearly not a valid invite for the Divine Presence. It should be easy to understand why. Let's try!

The Talmud (Shabbos 30B) tells us that "the Divine Presence only settles in the midst of the Joy-Simcha of a Mitzvah." So the Sefer Charedim tells us that Rabbi Yitzchok Ashkenazi ztl. attributed his lofty spiritual attainments to "Simcha Shel Mitzvah". The Sages also inform us that "there is no joy-Simcha like the resolution of a doubt." Together these two statements educate about the need to gain clarity about the impact and import of the daily deeds we do.

A man who was held captive in a gulag for many years was made to push a heavy bar attached to a giant stone for hours each day and for many years. He was told that he was grinding wheat for the compound. That thought kept him going. When it was his time leave he asked to be shown how the turning of that giant wheel ground the wheat. The cruel guard laughed at him and told him that there was no connection and he had actually accomplished nothing. The man went insane from grief. See how defeated a person can be when he realizes all his labor is for naught. Not only would we like to feel, like some vague psychological balm, that all our strivings are for some grand and lasting purpose but it is worth plenty to be secure in the knowledge that it is so.

I remember when I was in Yeshiva and few of us wanted to make a movie to express and share with others our passion for Yiddishkeit. We gave up, perhaps too quickly, when it dawned upon us that the hardest and most important part to relay resides in the interior. What were we to show but some fellows with black hats swaying in prayer or swinging their thumbs? The invisible quotient would be conspicuously absent.

Moving seamlessly from the sublime to the ridiculous, it was told that Groucho Marx was invited to tour a wildly expensive mansion of some Hollywood celeb. As Groucho was led from room to room to the dismay of his host he kept that same wry expression on his face, showing no overt signs of being impressed. In desperation the host threw open the back-bay doors and there was the Pacific Ocean lapping the sand just a few feet from the magnificent villa. The host said to Groucho, "You know the three most important factors in real estate are location, location, and location. Well even if

you're not impressed with my house you can't argue that this is not a great location with the Pacific Ocean within reach of my private beach." To which Groucho, after tapping the ashes on his cigar replied in his typical sardonic tone, "Take away the ocean and what have you got?"

Obviously the ocean is going nowhere! It's a fixture! The same applies to learning Torah and doing Mitzvos and building the Tabernacle. The three most important features are location, location, location. So King David states, "Being close to G-d is what's good for me!" Take away HASHEM though and what have you got? How absurd! One of the names we use to refer to HASHEM is MAKOM-literally, place. HASHEM is the location of existence. It's more reality than any ocean or notion our minds can conjure. If one is moved by the wave of "tradition" alone, that point of proximity is lost. It is with a single reality based thought and a simple action that sanctuaries are built.

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