

# **BUILD A "COTTAGE" FOR HASHEM**

*by Shlomo Katz*

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## **Terumah**

In this week's parashah, we begin to read of the construction of the Mishkan/Tabernacle. The midrash explains the purpose of the Mishkan with a parable:

"There was a king who had an only daughter. Eventually, another king came and took her hand in marriage. After the wedding, when the new couple set off for the groom's land, the bride's father said, 'I can't part with my only daughter, but I cannot tell you not to take your wife home. Do me a favor - build me a cottage near your palace so that I can live near you.'

"Similarly," the midrash explains, "Hashem said, 'I have given you My Torah, but I cannot part with it.

On the other hand, I cannot tell you not to take it. Therefore, build Me a Tabernacle so that I may dwell amongst you'."

What does it mean to build a "cottage" for Hashem? R' Yosef Leib Bloch z"l explains that each person must clear out a place within himself which will be devoid of material concerns and reserved for holiness. Similarly, each person must have a time of day which is set aside for spiritual striving, a time for quiet meditation and concentration.

(Peninei Da'at)

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*"They shall make a sanctuary for Me so that I may dwell among them - like everything that I am showing you, the form of the Tabernacle and the form of all its vessels, and so you shall do." (25:8-9)*

R' Moshe Sternbuch shlita observes: These verses contain a fundamental lesson, i.e., that the only way Bnei Yisrael could cause G-d to dwell among them was to make the Tabernacle **exactly** as Hashem commanded.

On the last words of verse 8, "[A]nd so shall you do," Rashi comments, "Forever." R' Sternbuch explains: As in the Tabernacle construction was it necessary to follow G-d's instructions to the letter, so it is with all of our mitzvot. The only way to cause Hashem to dwell among us is to follow halachah to the letter.

(Ta'am Va'daat)

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*"The poles shall remain in the rings of the Aron/Ark, they may not be removed from it." (25:15)*

R' Yaakov Kamenetsky z"l writes: The Aron represents those who study Torah, and the poles represent their financial backers. The prohibition to remove the poles from the Aron alludes to the teaching of the gemara (Pesachim 53b) that those who support Torah study will be seated in Heaven right next to the scholars they supported.

But how can this be? R' Kamenetsky asks. In Heaven, souls "sit" and "discuss" Torah topics. And, since Torah knowledge can be acquired only with much toil, how will a person who spent his whole life toiling in business (and not in Torah) take part in the discussion with the great scholars that he sits amongst?

He explains: When a baby is in the womb, it is taught the entire Torah. Then, just before birth, it

forgets what it learned. Why? Because, in the words of the prophet (Iyov 5:7), "Man was born to toil." Man must toil in this world to reclaim the Torah knowledge which he forgot at birth.

A person who toils in business during his lifetime so that he can support Torah scholars has also toiled, R' Kamenetsky observes. Because he has toiled for the sake of Torah study just as the Torah scholar has, he, too, is able to reclaim his lost Torah knowledge.

(Emet Le'Yaakov: Shmot 25:15 & Devarim 33:18)

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*"You shall make two keruvim/cherubs of gold . . . (25:18)*

*". . . with their faces toward one another." (25:20)*

The gemara (Sukkah 5b) states that the word "keruvim" is related to the Aramaic word for "baby," teaching that the keruvim were baby-faced.

Regarding the second verse quoted above, the Ba'al Ha'turim explains that the keruvim faced each other "like two friends discussing a Torah topic."

R' Meir Rubman z"l (Israel; 20th century) asks: Aren't these mixed metaphors? Babies don't discuss Torah topics with each other!

He explains: Every person has hidden powers far in excess of his everyday abilities. These powers manifest themselves, for example, when a person is in danger. A person's powers are like a storekeeper's merchandise; a small amount is on display, and the rest is in the back room.

Most people use only their "visible" powers, but a great person strives to use his hidden powers. This is because the typical person feels no need to strive for greatness, while a select few do. Indeed, this is one way to differentiate between a "regular" person and a great one.

The lesson of the baby-faced keruvim who face each other like friends engaged in a Torah discussion is that every person, even if his powers are hidden like a baby's, can achieve greatness, like a person engaged in a Torah discussion with his friend.

(Zichron Meir)

Malbim (19th century) writes: The two keruvim were on the cover of the Aron, which held the two luchot. Thus, one of the keruvim covered one of the Tablets, and the other covered the second.

On one of the luchot were engraved five obligations of man to G-d; on the other were engraved five obligations of man to his fellow man. One of the keruvim represents the kohen gadol, whose role is to inspire man to perform his obligations toward G-d. The other cherub represents the king, whose role is to enforce man's obligations to his fellow man.

The two keruvim faced each other, to teach that Israel's political and religious authorities should

work together.

(Quoted in Sha'ar Bat Rabim)

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R' Meir Halevi Abulafia z"l

born approx. 1180 - died 1244

R' Meir, known by the acronym "Ramah," was a leading sage of his time, whose halachic opinions were sought even by Ramban (Nachmanides). ("Ramah" should not be confused with the 16th century Polish posek/halachic authority, "Rema"/R' Moshe Isserles.) R' Meir's Talmud commentary, which he called Pratei Pratin, has been lost, except for tractates Sanhedrin and Bava Batra. These two have been published under the name Yad Ramah.

R' Meir's father, R' Todros, was the rabbi of Toledo, Spain, and was given the title Nassi/"Prince." After his father's death, R' Meir succeeded to these positions. R' Meir strongly opposed the study of philosophy, and he attempted to convince the sages of Lunel, in the Provence region of France, to ban the study of certain works of Rambam (Maimonides). However, the sages of Provence, led by R' Aharon ben Meshulam, did not agree.

In addition to his Talmud commentary, R' Meir composed a kabalistic commentary on Bereishit, and a collection of Masoretic notes entitled Masoret Seyag La'Torah. [The term "Masoretic notes," or simply "mesorah," refers to the traditional spelling and pronunciation of words in the Torah, as well as to their number. This is important for preserving the connection of the Oral Law to the Written Law.]

R' Meir's work on mesorah is cited by R' Ovadiah Yosef regarding a word which is spelled differently between Ashkenazic and Sephardic Torah scrolls. R' Yosef writes: "I say we hold like Ramah, for we follow this sage in all his words, for he is bar samcha/reliable." (Sources: The Artscroll Rishonim, p. 84; She'eilot U'teshuvot Yabia Omer, Vol. VIII, Y.D. No. 25)

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