

DO YOU MEASURE UP?

by Shlomo Katz

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Parashat Terumah: Do You Measure Up?

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and Sheindel Rivka bat Shmuel Eliezer a"h

Today's Learning:

Parah 8:7-8

O.C. 168:17-169:2

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Chullin 36

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Ketubot 23

This week's parashah is the first of several that are devoted to the construction of the Mishkan / Tabernacle and its Keilim / utensils. Rabbeinu Chananel z"l (see page 4) observes that the dimensions and other attributes of the Mishkan and Keilim allude to various character traits that a person should cultivate. For example:

The Aron Hakodesh / Ark, which housed the Tablets and (according to some) a Torah scroll, was made of wood, but was covered with gold both inside and out. This hints that a Torah scholar should be 'tocho ke'varo' / equal inside and out. In other words, his public and private behavior and his innermost thoughts should all be consistent with each other.

The base of the Aron covered an area of slightly less than four square amot / cubits (i.e., 1.5×2.5). This suggests that a Torah scholar should deprive himself somewhat of physical things. [Ed. note: Rabbeinu Chananel refers to the commonly held view in pre-modern times that creation was based on four fundamental elements: fire, water, air and earth.]

The combined area of the four walls of the Aron was 12 square amot [i.e., $(2 \times 1.5 \times 1.5) + (2 \times 1.5 \times 2.5)$]. This alludes to the fact that a Torah scholar should have the 12 characteristics described in Tehilim, chapter 15, which opens: "Who may sojourn in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy mountain?" (In other words, this psalm describes the traits required to sojourn in Hashem's tent and dwell on His holy mountain.) [R' C.D. Chavel z"l (see page 4) suggests that R' Chananel would break the psalm into 12 traits as follows: "(1) One who walks in perfect innocence, and (2) does what is right, and (3) speaks the truth (4) [even] in his heart; (5) who has no slander on his tongue, (6) who has done his fellow no evil, (7) nor cast disgrace on his close one; (8) in whose eyes a contemptible person is repulsive, but (9) who honors those who fear Hashem; (10) who can swear to his detriment without retracting; (11) who lends not his money with interest; and (12) takes not a bribe against the innocent." (Peirushei Rabbeinu Chananel Al Ha'Torah)]

"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)

R' Pinchas Halevi Ish Horowitz z"l (18th century rabbi of Frankfurt, Germany; author of several widely used Talmud commentaries) writes that the entire construction of the Aron alludes to the founding fathers and leaders of the Jewish people:

The two keruvim allude to Avraham and Yitzchak. Two times the gematria of "keruv" equals 456, the gematria of "Avraham" and "Yitzchak."

The Aron itself alludes to Yaakov, who said (Bereishit 28:17): "How `nora' / awesome is this place." The letters of "nora" are the same letters that spell "Aron." [Ed. note: In addition, Yaakov is the Patriarch most associated with Torah study, and the Aron housed the Torah.]

The four walls of the Aron allude to the twelve tribes, which traveled in a four-sided formation. [Ed. note: In addition, as noted on page 1, the combined area of the four walls of the Aron was 12 square amot.]

The two poles for carrying the Aron allude to the two leaders -- Moshe and Aharon.

Finally, the Luchot Ha'berit / Tablets of the Covenant inside the Aron allude to Yosef because a person who guards his morality, as Yosef did in the face of Mrs. Potiphar's seductions, is traditionally referred to as a "Guardian of the Berit."

(Panim Yafot)

"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 bring out his full potential and achieve greatness, just as a person who is engaged in a Torah discussion with his friend uses all of his intellectual powers to prove his point.

(Zichron Meir)

R' Shimon Sofer z"l (19th century rabbi of Krakow, Poland) offers another reason why the keruvim were baby-faced. The appearance of the keruvim teach us that one should approach the Torah as a baby relates to his father, not with preconceived notions and faith in our own knowledge, but as completely blank slates and with trust in the Torah's wisdom.

(Michtav Sofer)

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 keruv 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)

R' Chananel ben Chushiel z"l

Rabbeinu Chananel was among the earliest of the Rishonim, the Torah scholars of the era when

Babylonia lost its special status as the preeminent center of Torah study and halachic decision-making. R' Chananel's father, R' Chushiel, had been one of the "Four Captives" -- Italian Torah scholars who were kidnapped by pirates and ransomed by Jewish communities around the Mediterranean Sea. After his ransom, R' Chushiel settled in Kairouan, Tunisia, where he died in about the year 1000.

R' Chananel studied under his father, and succeeded him as dean of the academy in Kairouan. R' Chananel is best known to us for his Talmud commentary, which abridges the Talmudic text and interweaves the comments of prior generations. Many later commentaries, including the Tosfot, quote from R' Chananel's work. (It appears, however, that Rashi did not have access to this commentary.) On many tractates, R' Chananel's commentary is printed in the margins of the Gemara itself alongside Rashi and Tosfot.

Although we do not possess a complete Torah commentary by R' Chananel, his interpretations of verses are frequently quoted by other commentaries, notably, Ramban, Rabbeinu Bachya and R' Yehoshua ibn Shuiv. In the 20th century, R' Chaim Dov Chavel z"l gathered these fragments into a work that he called *Perushei Rabbeinu Chananel Al Ha'Torah*.

R' Chananel had no sons, but was survived by nine daughters

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