

# SYMBOLS

by Shlomo Katz

## Parshas Terumah

## Symbols

## Volume 26, No. 19

*Sponsored by Eli, Rachel Adina, Daniel Avraham, Yonatan and Chana Rutstein in honor of the birthday of wife and mother Galit Rutstein*

Mrs. Rochelle Dimont and family on the yahrzeits of father-in-law and grandfather Rabbi Shmuel Elchanan Dimont a"h (2 Adar) and mother and grandmother Mrs. Chaya Tarshish a"h (7 Adar)

Martin and Michelle Swartz on the 100th Yahrzeit of Martin's great-great-grandmother Regine (nee Paschkes) Oesterreicher a"h (6 Adar)

The Katz family on the yahrzeit of uncle Avraham Abba ben Avigdor Moshe Hakohen a"h

In this week's parashah, we begin to read about the design and construction of the mishkan / Tabernacle. R' Menachem ben Meir Tzioni z"l (Speyer, Germany; 15th century) quotes the kabbalistic midrash, Sefer Ha'bahir, as follows: The structure of the mishkan parallels the creation of the world. We read about Creation (Bereishit 1:1), "In the beginning of G-d's creating the heavens . . .," and regarding the mishkan G-d said (Shmot 26:7), "You shall make curtains of goat hair for a covering over the Tabernacle."

On the second day, G-d said (Bereishit 1:6), "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate . . .," and regarding the mishkan He said (Shmot 26:31), "You shall make a partition . . ."

On the third day, G-d said (Bereishit 1:9), "Let the waters be gathered," and regarding the mishkan He said (Shmot 30:18), "You shall make a copper basin . . . for washing."

On the fourth day, G-d said (Bereishit 1:14), "Let there be luminaries," and regarding the mishkan He said (Shmot 25:31), "You shall make a menorah."

On the fifth day, G-d said (Bereishit 1:20), "Let there be fowl that fly about over the earth," and

regarding the mishkan He said (Shmot 25:20), "The keruvim shall be with wings spread upward."

On the sixth day, man was created, and regarding the mishkan G-d said (Shmot 28:1), "Draw close Aharon, your brother . . ."

About the seventh day, it says (Bereishit 2:1), "The heaven and the earth were finished," and about the mishkan we read (Shmot 39:32), "All the work of the mishkan, the ohel mo'ed / Tent of Meeting, was finished."

In addition, R' Tzioni writes, the mishkan parallels the revelation at Har Sinai. For example, just as Hashem spoke at Har Sinai from within a fire, so in the mishkan, His voice seemed to emanate from between the keruvim made of fiery gold. (Sefer Tzioni)

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"They shall make a mikdash / Sanctuary for Me, and I will dwell among them. Like everything that I show you, the form of the mishkan / Tabernacle and the form of all its vessels; and so shall you do." (25:8-9)

Why does the first verse above use the term "mikdash," which suggests a relatively permanent structure, while the second verse uses the term "mishkan," suggesting a temporary structure? R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1784-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) explains:

A good intention makes a spiritual impression on the world in the same way that a good deed creates a physical impression. However, unlike a physical impression which might or might not be lasting, every spiritual impression that a person makes endures in some form for eternity.

As soon as Hashem commanded that a "house" be built for him, Bnei Yisrael resolved in their minds to contribute generously. This thought created a mikdash, a permanent spiritual structure. The next verse says, "So shall you do," referring to the physical act of building the "house." That created only a mishkan, a temporary structure. (Chochmat Ha'Torah)

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"Like everything that I show you, the form of the mishkan / Tabernacle and the form of all its vessels; and so shall you do." (25:9)

R' Shlomo Wolbe z"l (1914-2005) explains: Some commentaries attribute symbolic significance to the mishkan and its implements. In fact, though, the Torah's instructions for building the mishkan are specifications for bringing the Shechinah into our lives and our world. Our verse is teaching that the mishkan and its implements must be made exactly to the specifications described in the Torah; only then will the Shechinah "rest" there. If there is a single deviation from the Torah's specifications, the Shechinah will not rest in the mishkan.

R' Wolbe continues: This may be understood based on the teaching of the Kuzari (11th century work discussing the fundamental beliefs of Judaism) that there is no such thing as nature [in the sense of a world running on its own]; rather, everything is controlled by the Creator. "Nature" exists only in the sense that G-d has established certain principles by which the world runs. For example, a person who eats and sleeps can live, while a person who refuses to eat and sleep will die sooner rather than later. Another example: G-d has arranged that if parents engage in a reproductive act, then He can send a soul into this world; otherwise, there will be no child and no soul. These natural acts are not the causes of life, but they are rules by which G-d allows life to exist. (R' Wolbe adds: Thus, we can speak of "nature," but to ascribe intelligence to it [as in the phrase "mother nature"] is a mistake. Only the Creator has that intelligence.)

He continues: The specifications of the mishkan, and the particulars of the mitzvot in general, are the "laws of nature" of the spiritual world. If one builds the mishkan and performs the mitzvot exactly as G-d revealed in the Torah, then the Shechinah will rest on the Jewish People. If one makes changes, then the mitzvot will not have the desired effect and will not bring about the presence of the Shechinah. R' Wolbe quotes his teacher, R' Yerucham Levovitz z"l (mashgiach ruchani of the Mir yeshiva; died 1936) who said that one must study the laws of the mishkan as one studies the laws of tefilin. We don't know why tefilin must be square and black, or why the tefilin on the head must have four compartments while the tefilin on the arm have only one compartment. But, we don't need to know this. Rather, if one dons kosher tefilin and observes the particulars of the mitzvah, he will feel the resulting holiness; otherwise, he will not. This is simply a fact of "spiritual nature," just as a pharmaceutical prescription can work if it is taken as directed but can have dire negative effects if taken differently than directed.

R' Wolbe concludes: Perhaps the foregoing is not inconsistent with the idea that the mishkan has symbolic significance. In fact, we read in Shmuel I (2:2), "There is no Tzur / Rock like our G-d." Our Sages comment: "There is no Tzayar / Artist like our G-d." But, unlike an artist who paints with oil and canvas, G-d's works of art are very much alive. Thus, we must understand the "symbols" as being "interactive." When we interact with them as intended, we bring about positive spiritual consequences, and the opposite if we interact with them other than as intended. (Shiurei Chumash [unpublished manuscript])

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"On the Table you shall place lechem ha'panim / bread before Me, tamid / always." (25:30)

The Mishnah Berurah (1:2) quotes earlier halachic authorities who state that one should devote the specific moments when night turns to day and the day turns to night to the study of Torah. R' Reuven Margaliot z"l (Poland and Israel; 1889-1971) explains that this idea can be traced back to our verse, as follows:

The Talmud Yerushalmi (Yoma 1:5) presents several opinions as to how the lechem ha'panim could

remain on the Table "tamid" given that they had to be replaced (and eaten) every week. According to one opinion, the new bread would be slid onto the shelves of the Table simultaneously with the old bread being slid off the other side. The sage Rabbi Yose states, however, that this was not necessary. Rather, so long as there is lechem ha'panim on the Table at the moment of sunrise and sunset every day, that fulfills the requirement of "tamid."

The Talmud Bavli (Menachot 99b) extends Rabbi Yose's teaching to the obligation to study Torah. We read (Yehoshua 1:8), "This Book of the Torah is not to leave your mouth; you shall contemplate it day and night." How is this possible, considering that one must earn a living? Therefore, the Gemara says, so long as a person learns some Torah every day and every night, he has fulfilled the minimum obligation. From this, R' Margalioth writes, the custom developed to study Torah at the specific moments when night turns to day and the day turns to night. (Nefesh Chayah 1:1)

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## Letters from Our Sages

The letter below was written by R' Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler z"l (1892-1953), one of the leading figures of the mussar movement in the 20th century, first in London and Gateshead, England, and then at the Ponovezh yeshiva in Bnei Brak. The author's son, to whom the letter was addressed, was then living in Cleveland, Ohio, where he later served as a leading educator until his passing in 2011. The letter is published in Sefer Zikaron L'ba'al Michtav M'Eliyahu, vol. 1, p.83.

Wednesday, the 11th day of the month of Tevet in the year 5705 [1944]

Dear and beloved children, Nachum Zev and Miriam, may Hashem guard and protect you,

I received your two letters, dear Nachum Zev. It is now two days before your formal engagement. I could see the joy in your heart reflected in every letter [as in letters of the alphabet] which you wrote, and my heart was uplifted from joy and pleasure. May my heart be like a threesome with yours, through my love as a devoted father, which will be with you always. Certainly, that day will be a yom tov for me; it will give me joy and fill the void within me . . . [Ed. note: Due to the war, R' Dessler had not seen his wife or children for five years and had never met his daughter-in-law-to-be, Miriam.]

Know, my dear children, that I am not writing pretty expressions, but only the actual facts. . . Does only simple love, the love of a father to a son, bind me to you? Also, a unity of the soul, a spiritual union, connects me to you. There is no connection like a spiritual connection, and no union like the union of the spirit. When we share common aspirations and goals, then our lives are truly unified, carrying and uplifting each other with a love that does not end and does not change.

It is my hope that the two of you are united by love of the Torah, and that your life's goal is to study and teach, to work in the field of Torah without interruption and with all your energy. It is my hope

that this is what you have found in each other--a holy and pure fire which has fused your hearts into one. It is my hope that when you are of one heart, you will climb higher and higher on the steps toward a lofty life of the spirit; then you will be happy always.

Do not be simple people, not like the people in the streets. Do not let small things fill your home. No and no! Rather, build a house of Torah, with an atmosphere of a happy spirit. Rise, do not fall, nor stand still; rather, march forward to come close to Hashem from the depths of your heart . . . Could there be any Gan Eden on earth more beautiful than this? . . .

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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