

# A PLACE FOR HOLINESS

*by Shlomo Katz*

## Parshas Terumah

### A Place for Holiness

R' Meir Simcha Hakohen z"l (1843-1926; rabbi of Dvinsk, Latvia; author of Ohr Sameach) notes that the prohibition against working on Shabbat is mentioned several times in the Torah. In some verses (for example Shmot 20:9), the Torah uses the active voice, "Six days you shall work." In other verses (for example, Shmot 31:15: "For six days, work may be done," and Shmot 35:2: "On six days, work may be done"), the Torah uses the passive voice. Why?

He answers: Where the Torah uses the passive voice, the Torah also refers to the holiness of Shabbat. For example (31:14-15), "You shall observe the Sabbath, for it is holy to you. . . For six days, work may be done." Similarly (35:2), "On six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you." In contrast, the verses that use the active voice do not refer to the holiness of Shabbat.

What does this teach? R' Meir Simcha explains: Our Sages teach, "When you do the Will of Hashem, your work will be done by others. When you do not do the Will of Hashem, you will have to do your own work." If we infuse the Shabbat with holiness, that holiness will rub-off on us, helping us do the Will of Hashem all week long. Then our work will be done passively, i.e., by others. However, when our Shabbat is not infused with holiness, then we will have to do our own work actively. (Meshech Chochmah)

\*\*\*\*\*

"Speak to Bnei Yisrael and they shall take for Me a donation, from every man whose heart motivates him you shall take My portion." (25:2)

R' Elazar Lew (1758-1837; rabbi of several towns in Poland) writes: Many commentaries have asked why the verse says "they shall take for Me a donation" rather than "they shall give for Me a donation." Moreover, he asks: Why does the first part of the verse say "they shall take," while the second part says, "you shall take"?

He explains: The famous answer to the first question is that giving charity really is taking, because G-d repays generously those who give charity. Therefore, if you give Hashem a donation, you also are taking from Him a donation.

However, this is true only if one gives magnanimously, but not if one gives begrudgingly. And, since Hashem does not want there to be a desecration of His Name if someone gives and is not compensated, He commanded in the second half of the verse, "[Only] from every man whose heart motivates him you shall take My portion." (Sama D'chayei: Drush 11)

\*\*\*\*\*

"They shall make a Sanctuary for Me -- so that I may dwell among them." (25:8)

R' Yisrael Meir Hakohen z"l (the Chafetz Chaim; died 1933) quotes a midrash: When Hashem showed the prophet Yechezkel the structure of the future Bet Hamikdash and commanded him to describe it to Bnei Yisrael, the prophet replied, "Master of the Universe! As of now, we are in exile in the lands of our enemies. Yet, You are telling me to inform Bnei Yisrael about the structure of the Temple and to write it before them so that they may guard it and its laws! What are they able to do [with this information]? Let them be until they leave the exile, and then I will tell them."

The midrash continues: Hashem replied, "Just because they are in exile, My Temple should be nullified? Their study of its laws are as great as building it! Go tell them that they should study the laws of building the Temple, and, in that merit, I will view it as if they built it." (Torah Or p.10)

\*\*\*\*\*

"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)

Rashi comments: "And so shall you do"-for future generations.

R' Eliezer Zusia Portugal z"l (1898-1982; the Skulener Rebbe) asks: How can building a Temple be a mitzvah for future generations when, at least according to some opinions, the Third Temple will descend from Heaven as a building of fire?

He answers: The Temple that will descend is being constructed all the time from our mitzvot. Every good deed adds a course of "bricks" to that Temple. This verse is commanding us to do those good deeds. (Noam Eliezer)

\*\*\*\*\*

"You shall place in (literally: 'give to') the aron / ark the Testimonial-tablets that I shall give you."

(25:16)

R' Moshe Alshich z"l (Turkey and Israel; 1508-1593; known as the Alshich Hakadosh) asks: Why did the Torah use a word that literally means, "You shall give to the aron"? He explains:

The aron was made of wood plated with gold. As pretty as it was, it was hardly a fitting receptacle for the holy and priceless Torah! Therefore Hashem said to Moshe, "Give the Torah to the aron as a gift. Likewise, I will give the Torah to man as a gift, although he is not worthy of it." Indeed, notes R' Alshich, the Gemara (Shabbat 89a) applies to Moshe Rabbeinu's sojourn on Har Sinai the verse (Tehilim 68:19), "You ascended on high . . . you took gifts." (Torat Moshe)

\*\*\*\*\*

"You shall make a Menorah of pure gold . . ." (25:31)

Rashi z"l writes: The menorah will be made on its own, for Moshe Rabbeinu had difficulty with it. Hashem said to him, "Throw the block of gold into the fire and it will be made on its own."

R' Yerucham Levovitz z"l (mashgiach ruchani of the Radin and Mir yeshivot; died 1936) asks: What was so difficult about making the menorah? He explains:

Clearly, the act of making the menorah would not have been difficult for Moshe Rabbeinu. However, everything has its essence--the soul of the matter, so-to-speak. Moshe Rabbeinu had difficulty with that, i.e., with understanding the essence of the menorah, which prevented him from making the physical menorah. (Da'at Torah)

\*\*\*\*\*

## Introductions

The following is an excerpt from the introduction of R' Avraham Danzig z"l (1748-1820) to his halachic work Chochmat Adam. R' Danzig also wrote the popular halachic work Chayei Adam.

Now, I know that people will whisper about me and will say, "Is Shaul also among the prophets? [See Shmuel I 10:11-12.] Surely we know that this man [R' Danzig] was a merchant in the markets of Frankfurt and Leipzig for more than 15 years; if so, when was his Torah study accomplished? The Torah testifies (Devarim 30:13), 'It is not across the sea,' i.e., that Torah is not found among [traveling] peddlers and merchants." Know, my brother, that when I traveled long distances, it was not to amass wealth, G-d forbid. Rather, the Master of all will testify that it was only to support my family. My business dealings were an inheritance from my holy ancestors, my grandfather, the great rabbi, famous in his generation, R' Shmuel, author of Nechamot Zion . . . I followed in his footsteps; I have been actively involved in halachic decision-making for more than 20 years now, and nothing

significant has been done in our town without my agreement, though without my receiving any payment. However, two years ago, my business took a downturn and I have been forced to enter the rabbinate [as a dayan in Vilna] and to be paid, as is permitted for an elderly Torah scholar. Blessed is G-d, Who gave me this soul which has never loved money.

Know, my brother that Torah study is the main activity of the soul . . . If a Jew abandons the Torah and removes his thoughts from it, it will distance itself from him, and his soul will lose the ability to be productive in Torah study. But, if his intention is not to abandon it--rather, for reasons beyond his control, he is unable to study it and to attach himself to it--G-d forbid that it should leave him. I can say about myself that, though I have traveled great distances and was a merchant, my Torah wisdom has stood by me. This is because, when I travel on the road, I am thinking about it [the Torah] and when I sit in the store, I am thinking about it.

I even can say about myself that many times, in the middle of a business transaction, I was thinking about some commentary or a difficult question--in particular, about the six constant mitzvot which I list in Chayei Adam, chapter 1 [see below]. I fulfilled through myself (paraphrasing Mishlei 4:6), "Do not abandon her and she will protect you."

\*\*\*\*\*

There are six mitzvot that a Jew is obligated to fulfill at all times.

Every moment that a person thinks about them, he fulfills a positive commandment. They are:

- (1) To believe that there is one G-d that created everything, and that everything that occurred in the past, that occurs in the present and that will occur in the future is in accordance with His will, and that He took us out of Egypt.
- (2) To not believe in any false gods--rather, to believe that Hashem rules over everything. Also, to believe that He is the All-Powerful and that nothing else has strength to do anything against His will.
- (3) To believe that G-d, the Ruler of all, is One, without any partner.
- (4) To love G-d, which includes contemplating His commandments and His handiwork until one comes to feel joy when coming close to Him.
- (5) To fear G-d, so that one does not sin, if only out of fear of punishment.
- (6) Not to stray after what the "heart" thinks or what the eyes see, but to think only about truth and the ways of the Torah, which are good. (Chayei Adam 1:1)

---

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.

*Hamaayan needs your support! Please consider sponsoring Hamaayan in honor of a happy occasion or in memory of a loved one. The low cost of sponsorship is \$36. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.*