

THE WORLD IN MINIATURE

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Terumah

The World in Miniature

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)

"The keruvim shall be with wings spread upward, sheltering the Cover with their wings with their faces toward one another . . ." (25:20)

R' Michel Zilber shlita (rosh yeshiva of the Zvhil yeshiva in Yerushalayim) writes: We read in the book of Yechezkel that Hashem instructed that prophet to recite a lamentation over the King of Tyre, including the phrase (Yechezkel 28:14), "You were a great sheltering keruv." Rashi z"l cites a midrash that interprets that verse as referring to Adam (the first man). In effect, the prophet said to the King of Tyre, "Why are you so vain? Are you as great as Adam, whose reach extended from one end of the world to the other like the wings of a keruv? Were you in Gan Eden with Adam?"

What does it mean that Adam's reach extended from one end of the world to the other, and why is a keruv an appropriate metaphor? R' Zilber explains: The Zohar teaches that man's good deeds "strengthen" G-d, so-to-speak, and man's bad deeds "weaken" G-d, so-to-speak. Rashi (to Devarim 32:18) explains that G-d wants to do good for man, but man's bad deeds prevent Him from doing so; in this sense, man "weakens" G-d. R' Zilber continues: The keruvim are meant to remind us of the power that G-d gave man to influence events in the entire universe through his good deeds and bad deeds, his power to stretch out his "wings" until they reach the Heavens and cover the entire world. (Ba'yam Darech Vol. II p.18)

A related thought:

When explaining the Torah's statement that man was created "in G-d's image," R' Chaim of Volozhin z"l (1749-1821) writes as follows: Of course, this is not to be taken literally, for G-d has no image. Rather, the Torah means that man is like G-d in some respect. How so? Just as G-d has the power to create and destroy worlds, so man's actions--his good deeds and his bad deeds, and even his words--have the power to move the Heavens and create and destroy spiritual worlds.

R' Chaim adds: We read in our parashah (25:8-9), "They shall make a Sanctuary for Me so that I may dwell among them. Like everything that I show you, the form of the Tabernacle and the form of all its vessels; and so shall you do." What is added by the words, "and so shall you do"? R' Chaim explains that the Torah is teaching: Just as you have the power to build a mishkan, which kabbalists say is a microcosm of the universe [see front page], "so shall you do"--so you have the power through your actions and words to build and destroy real universes. This knowledge, of course, places a great obligation on a person. (Nefesh Ha'Chaim Part I, chapters 1 & 4)

"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)

"They shall make an Aron / Ark of acacia wood . . ." (25:10) "You shall make a Shulchan / Table of acacia wood . . ." (25:23) "You shall make a Menorah of pure gold . . ." (25:31) "You shall make the Mishkan of ten curtains . . ." (26:1)

As the order of these verses indicates, Moshe was commanded to make the major kelim / vessels before he was commanded to make the components of the Mishkan itself. However, the Gemara relates that when Moshe told Betzalel-- the chief craftsman of the Mishkan and its kelim---to make the kelim first and then the Mishkan, Betzalel challenged him, "Does one make furniture before building a house?" Moshe responded that Betzalel had divined G-d's intention. "Were you standing b'tzel e-l / in the shadow of G-d?" Moshe asked, making a play on the craftsman's name.

What did Moshe's response mean? After all, G-d did give the command to make kelim before He gave the command to make the parts of the Mishkan! R' Aharon Kotler z"l (Lakewood rosh yeshiva; died 1962) explains:

The first of the kelim listed in the Torah is the Aron, which housed the Luchot and also the Torah scroll that Moshe wrote. Our Sages teach that Hashem created the Torah before He created the world. Likewise, the Aron is listed before any other item from the Mishkan. But Hashem did not create the physical Torah before He created the world. To the contrary, the Torah was not given until the world was more than two thousand years old. Only conceptually did the Torah precede the world, but not physically. To paraphrase the expression with which our Sages describe the Sabbath day (another "later" creation), "Sof ma'aseh b'machshavah techilah" / "The end in deed was the first in thought."

Betzalel understood that, although the concept of an Aron preceded the rest of the Mishkan and its contents, the physical Aron was not to come first. It was mentioned first only to emphasize the preeminence of Torah. Because Betzalel divined this, Moshe said to him, "Were you standing in G-d's shadow that you came to understand these secrets?" (Mishnat Rabbi Aharon III p.124)

Shemittah

"One may not remove produce of shemittah from Eretz Yisrael to chutz la'aretz / outside the Land." (Mishnah: Shevi'it 6:5)

R' Ovadiah of Bartenura z"l ("Ra'av"; approximately 1450-1515; Italy and Eretz Yisrael) explains that produce of shemittah must remain in Eretz Yisrael so that the mitzvah of biur [see next paragraph] can be performed. R' Shlomo Adani z"l (17th century; Yemen) observes that Ra'av's explanation reflects the view of the sage Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar who requires biur to be performed in Eretz Yisrael. However, the sage Rabbi Yehuda Ha'nassi holds that biur can be performed anywhere in the world that the produce happens to be. According to Rabbi Yehuda Ha'nassi, there might be no prohibition on removing shemittah produce from Eretz Yisrael. (Melechet Shlomo)

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l (1910-1995; Yerushalayim) notes that poskim / halachic authorities have struggled to find a justification for the common practice of exporting etrogim of shemittah to the Diaspora. According to one early 20th century sage, Ra'av's comments provide that justification. Specifically, the requirement of biur is that one remove each type of produce from his possession whenever that specific type of produce is no longer found in the wild. Etrogim, however, remain on their trees year-round (if they are not picked). Therefore, etrogim might not be subject to biur and, according to Ra'av, there should be no prohibition on removing etrogim from Eretz Yisrael. (Chiddushei Minchat Shlomo; Shevi'it)

R' Eliyahu z"l (the Vilna Gaon; 1720-1797) disagrees with Ra'av and Melechet Shlomo, and maintains that Rabbi Yehuda Ha'nassi, as well as Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar, holds that exporting shemittah produce is prohibited. (Shenot Eliyahu)

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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