

EQUALLY OWNED BY ALL

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

This week's reading governs the construction of the *Mishkan*, or Tabernacle, as a "Holy Dwelling Place" for G-d. Although G-d runs through the entire world, nonetheless from our perspective we are obligated to create a place of special holiness to receive His presence. The entire reading discusses the requirements for constructing this structure and the items within it.

The "*Chofetz Chayim*," Rabbi Yisroel Mayer Kagan, notes a difference when G-d commands *Moshe* and Israel to create the *Aron*, the Holy Ark that would hold the stone tablets of the covenant - upon which would be written the Ten Commandments that said at Mt. Sinai. Throughout construction of the various elements, G-d frequently commands *Moshe* "And you will build..." - with 'you' said in the singular. However, concerning the *Aron* G-d says "And you will build..." in the plural. The obvious question: what is the difference between the *Aron* and anything else?

The answer, he says, is that as the tablets themselves were written by G-d, the *Aron* represents our closest approach to Torah. Therefore it was important that all have a share in its construction, in order that no one be able to say "I gave more than you, so I learn more *Torah*, and I have a greater portion of *Torah* than you... You gave nothing to the *Aron*? So you have nothing!"

The *Torah*, he writes, is the possession of the entire Nation of Israel - and not the exclusive province of any privileged class. We all, every one of us, have our own "portion" of Torah, which we are capable of grasping. No one else can receive our portions - they are there, waiting for us!

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