

# THE MISHKAN, PERFECT MAN

*by Rabbi Jeff Kirshblum*

When viewed from above, the Mishkan was a schematic representation of a man, the perfect man, as will be expounded.

The Mishkan was a large rectangular enclosure. This rectangle represented man. The upper area was enclosed in a tent and was called the Ohel Moed, the Tent of Assembly. The Ohel Moed represented the head of man, for that was the place where the main sensual and intellectual functions of man were focused.

The Ohel Moed was divided into two rooms. The back room was called the Kodosh HaKadoshim, the Holy of Holies. Placed in this room was the Aron, Holy Ark, the most sacred of the articles in the Sanctuary. The Holy Ark consisted of three boxes, one inside the other. The innermost box contained the two tablets upon which the Ten Commandments were engraved. These Commandments were the outline of all the mitzvos in the Torah. It represented the brain of the Perfect Man. Just as a brain has two hemispheres, the right and the left, so too there were two tablets. Just as the Perfect Man contemplates only Torah ideas and ideals, so too the Ark contained the essence of Torah. Just as the brain is triply encased in a skull with two membranes, the tablets were also encased in three boxes.

True Torah ideals can only be achieved through great sanctity and dedication. The Holy of Holies could only be approached and entered through great sanctity and preparation. Only the Kohen Gadol, High Priest, could enter this inner sanctum and only on Yom Kippur.

The front room of the Ohel Moed was called the Kodesh or Holies. It contained the Menorah, Shulchan (Table of the showbread), and the Golden Altar. The Golden Altar was located in the center of the room. It represented the nose of Perfect Man. Just as the nose is the organ of smell and is located in the center of the face, the Golden Altar was located in the center of the room and upon it the fragrant smelling incense was offered. The incense had great mystical meaning and represented the spreading of pleasantness among men. This offering brought atonement for gossip and tale bearing.

The upper portion of the room contained the Menorah, to the left, and the Shulchan, to the right. These two items represented the eyes of Perfect Man. The eyes are used for two purposes. One is used for intellectual pursuits- enlightenment, symbolized by the light of the Menorah. Just as the Menorah's fuel was the purest of oil, so too should man strive for the purity of enlightenment. According to the Kabbalists, there are seven areas of spiritual wisdom and the seven branches of the Menorah represent them.

The second function of the eyes is for survival: to see and avoid pitfalls, to search out food in order to live; this is symbolized by the showbread (Shulchan). The showbread remained on the table from Shabbos to Shabbos. On the second Shabbos new bread was placed there and the old bread was divided among the kohanim to eat. Each kohen received only a very small portion, yet it was enough to satisfy his desire for food. The Perfect Man should eat moderate amounts of food, motivated strictly for the purpose to endure, so that he may properly serve his Creator in every way.

The opening of the Kodesh was at the bottom of the room. It represented the mouth of Man. Here the kohanim stood when they uttered the priestly benediction every morning. G-d created the universe through words. His very utterance brought about the various creations. "And G-d said: Let there be light! And there was light!" (Bereishis 1:3) Man too has the power to create with his words. On the physical level he can negotiate peace or declare war. He can create harmony between himself and his fellow man. On the spiritual level, Man can create heavenly realms with his words of blessing and prayer.

Outside the Ohel Moed, in the center of the courtyard, was the main Altar upon which the sacrifices were offered and consumed. This represents the stomach and internal organs of Man. Some sacrifices were offered as atonement for a sin that was committed. Others were offered as a joyous expression of thanksgiving. As a general rule, a sacrifice that was brought on account of a sin, came with several restrictions. Some sin offerings were not eaten at all. Other sin offerings could be eaten but only by the kohanim, only on the grounds of the Mishkan, and only for one day. Offerings that were brought as an expression of thankfulness could be eaten by all Jews. It could be eaten

anywhere in the entire camp of the Israelites. Most offerings that expressed thankfulness could be eaten for two days and the night between them.

In conclusion, Man, by his very nature, has the potential to yearn for the best ideals. When he disciplines his thoughts, his senses and his energies to achieve their optimal performance in the pursuit of serving G-d, then he has dedicated his life ideally. He strives to be the perfect man. These are some of the lessons of the Mishkan (This section was based on the Malbim's R'mazai Hamishkan and The Holy Temple Revisited, Rabbi L. Reznick).

## **THE INNER CHILD**

Someone once asked a rabbi why he wore a yarmulke under his hat; wasn't one head covering enough. The rabbi answered that the difference between a home and a barn is that the room of a home has a ceiling and above the ceiling is a roof. A barn has no ceiling, only a roof. The rabbi continued that he preferred to be more like a home than a barn.

The Ark had a covering called the kapores. The kapores was the ceiling of the Ark. Above the kapores was the two Kruvim with outstretched wings forming a roof to protect the Ark and its kapores.

There are four questions regarding the Kruvim.

- 1) Why did G-d communicate to Moshe through the child-like Kruvim?
- 2) Why were both the cover of the Ark and Kruvim fashioned from one solid piece of gold?
- 3) Why was the protector of our holiest possession, the Ark, "entrusted" to two cherubic children?
- 4) In Bereishis (3:24), the verse says, "He drove the Man out and He placed to the east of the Garden of Eden the Kruvim and a flaming sword constantly turning to protect the way to the Tree of Life." Rashi says that these Kruvim were angels of destruction waving a flaming sword preventing Adam from returning to the Garden of Eden. How could it be that the Kruvim in Parshas Trumah are depicted as young innocent children and in Parshas Berashis they are depicted as angels of destruction?

The last question will be addressed first. The Kruvim in Parshas Trumah and in Parshas Bereishis are indeed the same set of cherubic children. G-d, however, is displaying the different outcomes of children related to the influences in the way they were raised. If a sword is placed in their hands they will become agents of destruction. If Torah is placed in their hands they will become innocent and respectful adults.

The answer to the third question is as follows: The Ark and its cover represent the Torah. The Kruvim represent the children who will be the next generation. The only way to protect and safeguard the Torah is to teach it to our children. We were taught Torah and Jewish values by our parents and teachers who in turn were taught by their parents and teachers, forming an unbroken chain that

stretches all the way back in time to Mount Sinai. We can never allow that chain to be broken. In order for Torah to survive, it must be handed over to our children who will be the leaders of the next generation. Our children must be taught at a very early age how precious the Torah is because their reverence for Torah will keep it alive. Our children, the Kruvim, are the protectors and guarantors of the Torah's survival.

The answer to the second question is as follows: Too often there are two sets of values in the home—one for the parents and one for the children. The parents compromise on their beliefs because they find it too demanding to live up to the ideal image of the Jew. Being the ideal Jew can also get in the way of living a fun lifestyle. Instead, the parents try to raise their children to be the people that they chose not to become. The parents will achieve perfection through their children. We give our children more toys than we had as children. We give them a more generous allowance than we had as adolescents. We give them a better education than we had in our youth. And, we expect more from them morally and ethically than we now demand from ourselves. The Ark's cover and the Kruvim were made from one solid piece of gold to illustrate that there can be only one set of values in the Torah home.

The answer to the first question is as follows: The voice of G-d emanated from between the cherubic images on the Ark. Perhaps we can understand the voice of G-d as addressing our own inner child. G-d is telling us that we must live according to the standards we have set for our children. The child that lies within each of us must live its life as a committed Jew.

### **Haftorah Terumah**

The haftorah is found in Melachim I, 5:26- 6:13.

The Mishkan was a portable sanctuary as required by the newborn nation of Israel as they traveled across the desert to the Promised Land. Four hundred and eighty years later, the Mishkan found a permanent home in Jerusalem. The magnificent edifice, now called the Bais Hamikdash, was constructed by King Shlomo. The major portion of the haftorah tells of the physical outlay and dimensions of the new Temple.

The haftorah begins with the verse, "And G-d gave wisdom to Shlomo as He had spoken to him and there was peace between Chiram (king of Tyre) and Shlomo, and the two of them made a treaty." This verse is the prelude to the building of the Bais Hamikdash. It is telling us that the construction of our Holy Temple must be preceded by overtures of peace with our neighbors. Only if we are living in harmony with those around us can we achieve a higher level of spirituality. Only then can we be worthy of having the Shechinah dwell in our midst.

In addition, it is remarkable to note that the verse makes a very distinct connection between King Shlomo's wisdom and the peace treaty with Chiram. It is telling us that only the wise can establish a lasting peace treaty. It is also telling us that a major function of wisdom is to create peace. Rebbe Elazar said in the name of Rebbe Chaninah: Students of the wise increase peace in the world

(conclusion of Berachos).

In the end of Parshas Mishpatim, in the section that immediately precedes the mitzvah of building the Mishkan as outlined in Parshas Terumah, we are told that "(Moshe) sent young men of the Children of Israel to offer burnt-offerings and sacrifice peace-offerings of oxen to G-d" (24:5). Again, we see that peace-offerings and overtures must precede the building of our sanctuary.

In our times, many new shuls are the result of whats commonly known as "the breakaway minyan." The new shul was preceded by contention and strife. The lesson to be learned here is that before the new shul is to be established, its founders must create peace between themselves and the members of the original shul.

One verse in the haftorah describes the windows of the Bais Hamikdash as being "wide from without and narrow from within" (6:4). Windows were usually narrow on the outside and wide on the inside in order to spread the sunlight into the room. However, the windows of the Sanctuary were built the opposite way. The purpose of the Bais Hamikdash was to spread its light to the world outside.

According to many authorities, the mitzvah to build the Temple applies even in our times.\* However, we are unable to fulfill this mitzvah because of the lack of political stability in the Middle East. This has been the situation for almost 2,000 years. Today, the Temple Mount is more under the control of the Jews than it has ever been since the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash. Yet, we cannot rebuild the Temple. Could you imagine what would happen if a group of Jews went on the Mount and began digging the foundations for the new Sanctuary. The riots and wars that would break out are unimaginable. We are so close, yet so far away. As we have learned from the haftorah, the building of the Bais Hamikdash must be preceded by peace, and peace can only emerge from the wise.

*\*For a lengthy discussion regarding this matter see Rabbi Y.M. Tuckachinsky's Ir Hakodesh V'Hamikdash, volume V, chapter 1.*

Have a great Shabbos!  
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