

BROKEN MEASUREMENTS

by Rabbi Aron Tendler

This week's parsha, T'rumah, deals with the construction of the Mishkan (Sanctuary) and its vessels - the place where the Shechinah (Hashem's holy presence) would rest. It begins with the command to collect the necessary materials for the construction. "V'yikchu lee t'rumah ma'ais kol ish asher yidvenu libo (and take for me a contribution from every person who's heart willingly offers) [25:2]." The Alshich Hakodesh explains that just as Hashem is eternal, so too each and every mitzvah is eternal. The next five parshios, taking us all the way to the end of Sefer Shemos, deal with the making of the Mishkan, its vessels and the garments of the Kohanim (priests who performed the Divine service). What element of eternity applies here? What Mishkan are we building and what can we learn and apply from these parshios?

After enumerating the materials which needed to be collected the passuk states: "V'asu lee Mikdash v'shachantee b'sochom (and they shall make for Me a Mikdash and I will dwell amongst them) [25:8]". Chaza"l point out that Hashem does not say that He will dwell in it but rather that He will dwell amongst you. In the midst of each and every individual. Each person is an entire world and is commanded to transform himself into a proper abode for that Presence. Let's see what can be gleaned from our parsha and how we can apply it.

There were three vessels which were adorned with a golden crown: the aron (holy ark), the shulchan (table upon which the showbreads were placed) and the mizbe'ach (altar). The Talmud [Yuma 72B] teaches that these correspond to the crowns of Torah, malchus (royalty) and Kehunah (priesthood). The Kli Yakar points out a discrepancy in the types of units which comprised their measurements. The aron's measurements were: two and a half by one and a half by one and a half (cubits). All were 'broken' measurements. The shulchan's measurements were: two and a half by one by one and a half. Some broken measurements and some complete. The mizbe'ach's measurements were: one by one by two. All complete measurements.

The Kli Yakar explains that the aron, which contained the Torah and the luchos (the tablets from Sinai), exemplifies the spiritual - the crown of Torah. When dealing with the spiritual we must look at those who are greater than we and strive to improve. When dealing with the materialistic we must look at those who have less than we and be grateful for that which we've been blessed with. That is the explanation of the statement that when one davens (prays) his eyes must be facing downward and his heart must be facing upward [Yevamos 105B]. The heart - the seat of wisdom, knowledge and feeling - must be facing upward. Looking enviously at those who are beyond us and praying for

heavenly help in growth. The eyes - the conveyors of materialistic desires and greed - must be looking downward. Focusing on those 'beneath' us and thanking Hashem for His kindness. All of the measurements of the aron are 'broken'. Incomplete. We must always feel the need for further growth. A striving for completion. We call a scholar a 'talmid chochom' - a student of wisdom. Only a person who views himself as a student can be a true scholar. As the Kotzker Rebbe said, "There is nothing more complete than a broken heart".

The shulchan which alludes to the crown of royalty - the materialistic successes of man - has some complete and some broken measurements. The length and width of the shulchan were complete measurements. All physical objects have their parameters and their limits. Don't lose perspective. See them for what they are worth. Feel yourself as being complete. Appreciate what you have.

The height of the shulchan was one and a half cubits - a broken measurement. Don't stand tall and haughty over those who have less. As we mentioned earlier the shulchan was adorned with a golden crown. Rabbenu B'chayai writes that the word zahav (gold) alludes to the first three blessings of the grace after meals. The first letter, 'zayin', alludes to the first blessing, haZan (thanking the One who feeds). The second letter, 'heyh', alludes to the second blessing, ha'aretz (thanking Hashem for the Holyland). The third letter, 'beis', alludes to the third blessing, boneh (asking for the ultimate rebuilding of Jerusalem). Regardless of the value of the materialistic 'golden crown' that we wear, as opposed to looking down on others we must be filled with blessing. Filled with a cognizance and an appreciation of where it came from and what's truly important in life. There were four rings on the shulchan. The cycles of life and wealth. Don't be haughty. All things come around. Today's lender becomes tomorrow's borrower. The height of the shulchan is a broken measurement.

The mizbe'achos - both the outer altar used for sacrifices and the inner altar used for incense - were comprised of all complete measurements. Its crown alludes to the crown of Kehunah. Their purpose is to bring a person to a state of completion, a state of perfection, through their atonement. The very realization that there needs to be a correction is the greatest step toward that correction. Then, the service of the Kohen upon the outer altar atoning for the body and the inner altar atoning for the soul, confer that completion. All of their measurements are complete.

Another building block in the construction of our personal Mishkan is nedivos ha'lev (a willingness to give). As we mentioned above, donations were only accepted by those "asher yidvenu libo (those whose hearts were willing)". By becoming givers we become G-d like. We make ourselves a welcome home for the Shechinah (Hashem's presence).

Rav Sholom Schwadron zt"l would tell the story of a Yerushalmi Jew by the name of Rav Yudel Holtzman. (This story can be found in the book entitled "The Maggid Speaks".) He was a very poor man and had no children but his heart would break for another man's troubles. At his insistence, the charity collectors were always at his home. No matter how desperate his own plight might have been, he always found a way to help others in need.

One time the neighborhood tailor, a very poor man himself, needed an operation. The considerable cost of sixty pounds was well beyond his means. The charity collector made his rounds and came to the home of Rav Yudel. As he explained the plight of the tailor, Rav Yudel sat dejected, constantly interjecting "how terrible, how awful".

When he had finished, Rav Yudel sighed and said "I wish so much that I could help but I really can't. You know how little money I have. All that I give comes from ma'aser (giving one tenth of one's earnings to charity). How then am I usually able to contribute? Being that there are so many people in need, I borrow against my future ma'aser account. Against money that I hope to earn. But now, what can I do? My policy is that I don't borrow against my ma'aser when I'm already a full year overdrawn against that account. I've already reached that point. I'm sorry. I feel so bad for him. All I can do is wish him a refuah sheleimah (a complete recovery)."

The charity collector understood fully and left Rav Yudel's home. He had walked only half a block when Rav Yudel came running after him. "Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Come back! Hashem has inspired me with a great idea!" Puzzled, he returned to Rav Yudel's home.

Rav Yudel began to speak excitedly. "I have a plan to enable me to help him. You go to one of the larger gemachs (interest free loan funds) in Yerushalayim and tell them to lend you twenty pounds in my name. I'll pay it back. You see, I realized that I spend half a shilling on wine for Kiddush (the prayer said over wine at the commencement of Shabbos) every week. Halacha (Jewish law) permits Kiddush to be recited over challah (Shabbos loaves of bread) on Friday night. If I make Kiddush on challah every Friday night, I'll have the extra money to repay the loan!"

For the next fifteen years (!) Rav Yudel made Kiddush over challah until the loan had been repaid! Nedivos ha'lev. Unbelievable!

After one of the times that Rav Sholom related this story, he was approached by a young man. "I'm Rav Yudel's nephew. I was at my uncle's house many times and it always seemed strange to me that he recited the Kiddush over challah. Now I know why."

I'm not sure which is more incredible. The fact that he did this or the fact that he didn't tell people why he was doing this. That man clearly fulfilled the commandment to build a Mishkan. The Shechinah felt very comfortably at home with him - even with challah instead of wine for kiddush!

"V'asu lee Mikdash v'shachantee b'sochom (and they shall make for Me a Mikdash and I will dwell amongst them)."

Have a great Shabbos. (I hope we can still enjoy our Kiddush wine...)

This is dedicated to a refuah shleima (a complete recovery) for my mother-in-law,

Esther bas Chava Golda, who is undergoing an operation. Any t'filos (prayers) on her behalf would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

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