

# DETAILING THE MISHKAN

*by Rabbi Berel Wein*

The book of Shemot that began with such high drama just a few months ago ends this week on a rather bland and apparently purely technical note. The Torah once more reviews and recounts for us the details of the construction of the Mishkan and an exact accounting of the material goods that were used in its construction.

Through the ages, the commentators have dwelt long and hard on these parshiyot in the holy Torah, where every letter and word is eternal, in an attempt to justify this seemingly superfluous repetition. I will not attempt to review all of the different approaches to explain this issue. They are all satisfactory and yet all are somehow short of the mark as well.

I certainly have no great or brilliant insight into the matter myself. But, there is an obvious teaching that all of the commentators agree with that does derive from this review and repetition regarding the construction of the Mishkan.

The Mishkan had the miraculous quality of being built exactly and unwaveringly according to its original plan. Many times in life people and institutions set out to create structures, organizations and policies that will be of great benefit to society upon completion. Rarely if ever does the finished product match exactly the plans and true intentions of those who planned and initiated the project.

All human plans and blueprints are subject to change, alterations and even to cancellation. The plans for the Mishkan, shrouded in the spirituality of God's commandments, were not subject to such changes. Therefore Bezalel and Ahaliav and the Jewish people were complimented for their strict adherence to the original plans given to Moshe for the construction of the Mishkan.

Every detail of the construction of the Mishkan is reviewed in the parshiyot of this week. All builders are aware of the importance of detail in their work. A missing screw or nail or hook can lead to later disaster. This is true in the physical mundane life of people. It is doubly true regarding the spiritual and moral character of a person and a community. Only in the completion of the details is the whole person or project seen.

The measure of an artist, whether in pictures or music, is always in the nuances - in the details. The avoidance of shortcuts that invariably lead to shabbiness is the true hallmark of the gifted performer. Moshe lovingly records for us every piece of material goods that came together as the holy Mishkan. In kabbalistic thought, every nuance of the construction of the Mishkan is truly an influence on the general world at large.

This only serves to reemphasize the importance of detail in dealing with the Mishkan. The Mishkan is no longer physically present with us but its lessons and greatness still abide within the Torah we study and in the value systems of the Jewish people. By reading the Torah's description of it and studying the underlying principles that it represents, the Mishkan gains life and influence within us individually and collectively. May we be strengthened by this eternal knowledge.

Chazak chazak v'nitchazek Shabat shalom

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