

# MEASURE UP

*by Rabbi Raymond Beyda*

The construction of the Tabernacle, a place for Hashem to reveal His presence amidst the people of Israel, is described in minutest detail in Parashat Terumah.

The walls and coverings, the courtyard and the utensils are described - outlining the measurements and the materials, as well as the crafts and artistic expertise needed to bring the whole complex together into a House of G-d. For many it would seem like an instruction manual and architectural plans for contractors - not part and parcel of a holy book of Hashem's instructions for life.

The lessons, however, are hinted at in each of the details of the plans. The Kli Yakar explains that the 3 main utensils - the Ark, The Showbread Table and the Alter all teach us important lessons for dealing with each other and with life. The measurements vary as follows. The Holy Ark that housed the Tablets that Moshe brought down from Sinai, were all incomplete sums. The length was 2-½ cubits; the width was 1-½ cubits as was its height as well. In contrast, the Alter had complete measurements: 1 cubit by 1 cubit by 2 cubits. The third key vessel, the Table had a mixture of complete and incomplete measurements. 2 cubits length by 1 cubit width by 1- 1/2 cubits height. What is the significance of these facts?

The Ark represents Torah learning, the Alter spiritual perfection and the Table material success. In spiritual matters a person should always see oneself only half way there. A person should not look back at those who are at a lower spiritual level but rather at those who are higher achievers in Torah learning and performance of misvot. These thoughts will prompt a person to push for more and more growth throughout life. One will never become self-satisfied and settle into a spiritual rut. In contrast, in regard to the material world one should look down at those who have less and gain from the vantage point a sense of satisfaction with whatever one has. One should realize that one can never fulfill all of one's physical desires - fulfillment will always be incomplete. The Alter that represents service to Hashem is the way to perfection.

These few hints at lessons for life are merely the tip of the iceberg. One who studies the Mishkan and all of its details will learn what one needs to measure up as a giant in the World to Come.

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