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| Boston       | 5:12 | Moscow        | 5:40 |
| Chicago      | 5:19 | New York      | 5:28 |
| Cleveland    | 5:56 | Paris         | 6:10 |
| Detroit      | 6:00 | Philadelphia  | 5:31 |
| Houston      | 6:00 | Phoenix       | 6:04 |
| Jerusalem    | 5:16 | Pittsburgh    | 5:50 |
| Johannesburg | 6:23 | Seattle       | 5:32 |
| Los Angeles  | 5:28 | Sydney        | 7:16 |
| London       | 5:17 | Tokyo         | 5:15 |
| Miami        | 6:03 | Toronto       | 5:45 |
| Montreal     | 5:19 | Washington DC | 5:39 |

## Weekly Parsha

# Terumah

**RABBI BERNIE FOX**

## The Significance of the Laws Governing the Design of the Mishkan

*As all I show you concerning the  
structure of the Mishkan and the  
structure of all of its utensils so you  
(continued on next page)*

## Weekly Parsha

**GOD**  
*is not*  
**HERE**

(page 6)

*Addressing the needs of the*  
**COMMUNITY**

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## Weekly Parsha

# JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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should do. (Shemot 25:9)

Rabbaynu Ovadia Sfrono explains that the command to build a Mishcan was not given until after the worship of the Egel HaZahav – the Golden Calf. Prior to this sin there was no institution for centralized worship.[1] It is for this reason that the incident of the Egel is inserted in the middle of the account of the construction of the Tabernacle.[2] Rashi agrees with this opinion. He explains that the Torah's account of the commandment to construct the Mishcan and the section describing the incident of the Egel are not a chronological presentation of events. The command of the Tabernacle was given only after the sin of the Egel.[3]

Many commentators disagree with Sfrono and Rashi. Nachmanides is among this group.[4] They maintain that these sections of the Torah are in chronological order. They argue that the commandment to build the Mishcan was given at Sinai prior to the incident of the Egel HaZahav. The commentators agree that the Torah is not a chronological history. However, they contend that there is a specific reason for every departure from the chronological presentation. In other words, the Torah does present events in chronological order unless there is some specific reason to deviate from this order.[5] On this basis, the position of Nachmanides is understandable. The command to construct the Mishcan is presented prior to the event of the Egel. He argues that there is no reason to assume that this order is not chronologically correct.

In addition to Nachmanides' objection, Sfrono and Rashi's position presents a problem. According to Rashi and Sfrono, the command of the Mishcan followed the sin of the Egel. This implies that the sin somehow occasioned the command to build the Tabernacle. This is difficult to understand. Was not the Tabernacle a blessing? Why should the people be rewarded for the sin of the Egel with the command to build a Tabernacle?

There are two important aspects of the Tabernacle. First, it is part of a detailed system of law. These laws define the exact manner in which we serve Hashem. Halacha dictates every aspect of the sacrifices. The appearance and clothing of the kohanim offering the sacrifices are described by the laws. Every element of the construction of the Mishcan is determined by halacha. Halacha leaves little opportunity for the intrusion of personal

interpretation into divine worship. Why does the Torah impose this detailed system of law upon the worshipper?

Maimonides indicates that the Torah is concerned with the possible intrusion of pagan worship into divine service. In order to prevent such perversions, the individual is prohibited from devising the mode of worship. We must follow the prescription of the Torah. Adherence to the sacred laws of divine service assures that no pagan influences enter into our worship.[6]

The second aspect of the Tabernacle is that its construction and structure reflected a profound system of wisdom. The Mishcan was not only physically beautiful—it also possessed an intellectual grandeur. The laws combined into a system of awesome wisdom. The halachah not only dictates every aspect of the Tabernacle's design and construction, but its structure also symbolically expresses various theological, scientific and philosophical ideas. [7] The worshipper, in contemplating the structure of the Tabernacle, was inspired by its wisdom. The desire to serve Hashem resulted in a profound transformation in the worshipper. The worshipper was transported from the mundane to a spiritual universe of ideas.

Nachmanides maintains that the essential element of the Mishcan is the abstract system of wisdom represented through the structure. In the Torah, divine worship is not merely a subjective expression of the need to appeal to and form a relationship with a higher power. Instead, through worship, the Torah seeks to foster an objective relationship with Hashem. This relationship is based upon wisdom and truth. The objective of elevating our relationship with Hashem is fundamental to the Torah. Therefore, Nachmanides maintains that the command to build a Mishcan was part of the Torah revealed to Moshe at Sinai. It was not a reaction to the Egel.

Sfrono and Rashi recognize that the laws of worship are a profound system of wisdom. This is true for the laws regulating every mitzvah. However, they maintain that the essential element of the Mishcan is the super-determination of every aspect of worship. The halachah is designed to prevent the intrusion of any pagan element. This objective became essential only after the Egel HaZahav. Therefore, Sfrono and Rashi argue that the command to build the Tabernacle was given after the sin.

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## The Poles Cannot Be Removed from the Aron

*The poles should be in the rings of the Ark. They should not be removed.* (Shemot 25:15)

A ring was attached to each corner of the Ark. Poles were passed through these rings. These poles were used to carry the Aron – the Ark. The Torah commands us that the poles must remain in the rings at all times. Even when the Mishcan is erected and the Aron is at rest the poles are to remain attached.

The poles were designed for the transport of the Ark. When the Aron was to be moved, the poles were needed. However, when the Ark was at rest, the poles did not have any apparent function. Why should they not be removed at such times?

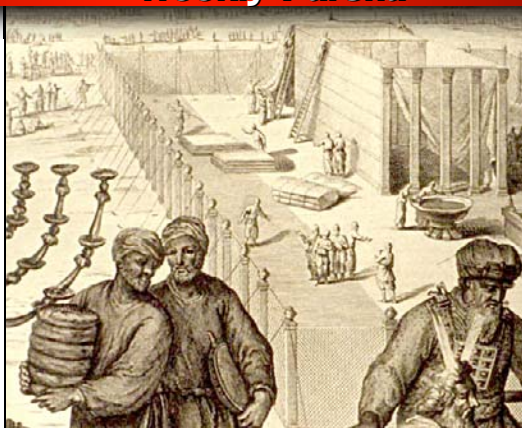
Gershonides discusses this issue. He explains that the Ark represented the Torah. The Torah is perfect. Therefore, the Ark must always be perfect. With the removal of the poles, the Ark would no longer be complete. An incomplete Aron is unfit to represent the Torah.[8]

Gershonides' explanation seems difficult to understand. In order for an object to be perfect, it must be complete. However, perfection also requires that the object have no extra, or meaningless, components. Imagine the perfect machine. Every part would serve a purpose; no needed component would be absent. No component would lack purpose.

When the Ark was at rest the poles had no purpose. They were extra, or unneeded, components. It seems the Aron would have better represented the perfection of the Torah without this superfluous component!

Gershonides is providing us with an important insight into the nature of the Aron. The Ark was constructed in the wilderness and was transported as the nation traveled. Therefore, the Aron was constructed so that it could be carried. However, this design was not merely a practical necessity. The portability of the Ark was essential to its very definition. In other words, the Ark was defined as a "portable" item. The Aron could only be considered perfect when it expressed this definition. Even at rest the Ark was required to conform to this definition. It must remain completely portable. For this reason, the Aron of the permanent Bait HaMikdash remained unchanged in design. The poles were part of the design and could not be removed.

Perhaps, this provides a message regarding the perfection of the Torah. This perfection, in part, lies in the portability of Torah. Torah is a way of life that applies to all times and places. Even when Bnai Yisrael are dispersed throughout the world, Torah is still to be the guide.



## Hashem's Presence in the Mishcan

*And they should create for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them.* (Shemot 25:8)

In this pasuk Hashem instructs Moshe to command Bnai Yisrael to construct the Mishcan. Hashem tells Bnai Yisrael that through this Mishcan, He will dwell among the people. This passage cannot be understood literally. In order to understand the difficulty presented by a literal interpretation of the pasuk, an introduction is needed.

Maimonides, in his commentary on the Mishne, enumerates the basic foundations of the Torah. The third of these basic principles is that Hashem is not, in any sense, material.[9]

Maimonides discusses this principle in further detail in his Mishne Torah. He again explains that Hashem is not material. He adds that it is also inappropriate to attribute to Hashem any of the characteristics associated with physical bodies. For example, Hashem does not have a front or back. One cannot ascribe physical actions to Hashem. Also, one cannot describe Hashem as occupying physical space in any material sense.[10]

This principle, identified by Maimonides, is a logical extension of the proposition that Hashem is a unity. The Torah clearly states that "Hashem is one".[11] This statement tells us that there is only one G-d. However, our Sages understand the passage to also mean that Hashem is a perfect unity. This means that He has no parts or aspects. He is not subject to division. He is an absolute representation of "oneness".[12] The principle of Hashem's unity precludes attribution of a material existence to Him. Any material entity has parts, or aspects. It has a front, sides, and a back, i.e., dimensions. These characteristics contradict the concept of absolute unity.

Furthermore, the Torah clearly states that Hashem is not material. This principle is communicated in Moshe's review of the Revelation. He reminds the nation that they had experienced Revelation at Sinai. In this experience, Hashem was not represented by any material image.[13]

We can now understand the difficulty presented by our passage. If our passage is interpreted literally, it contradicts this principle. Literally understood, our passage attributes a location to Hashem, stating that Hashem will dwell among Bnai Yisrael! This is impossible. Hashem is not material. Therefore, it is not correct to say He dwells in any place.

Unkelus is sensitive to this anthropomorphism. In his translation of our passage, he alters the problematic phrase. In his rendering, the phrase reads, "And I will cause the divine presence to dwell among them." Unkelus' intention is to remove any attribution of place to Hashem. According to Unkelus, the passage refers to Hashem's divine presence or influence. In other words, the passage describes a providential relationship without ascribing physical movement or locality to Hashem. In this rendition, Hashem calls upon "the divine presence" to dwell among Bnai Yisrael. Hashem will exercise His providence over the Mishcan and the people.

Rav Yosef Albo, in his Sefer Halkkrim, uses the same approach to explain various anthropomorphic expressions found in the Torah. A few examples will illustrate this approach. Hashem tells us, in reference to the Temple, "My eyes and My heart shall be there perpetually".[14] Hashem does not have eyes or a heart. The intent of the passage is to communicate that a special providential influence exists over the Mikdash.[15] The Torah states that at Revelation, "the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain".[16] This passage does not intend to communicate that Hashem was physically present at Revelation. This would attribute a place to Hashem. Instead, the passage is stating that the influence of Hashem was evidenced through a physical manifestation. In this case, the manifestation was the conflagration that appeared at the top of Sinai.[17] It should be noted that the pasuk refers to the "glory" of Hashem. This supports this interpretation. Hashem was not present. However, His "glory", or influence, was indicated by the fire.

One anthropomorphic expression has occasioned considerable discussion among the Sages. One of the names used for Hashem is HaMakom – the Place.[18] This is popularly understood to mean that the divine presence extends everywhere. However, our Sages provide a different explanation of the term. They explain that the term means that Hashem is the makom – the place – of the universe.[19]

This explanation is very difficult to understand. How can the Sages refer to Hashem as "the place" of the universe? Hashem is not material. He is not a place! Rav Yitzchak Arama offers a novel interpretation of the Sages' comments. He explains that the

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(Terumah cont. from previous page)

## Weekly Parsha

term “place” can be understood as the base upon which something rests or is supported. As an example, he cites the second mishne of Tractate Avot. The mishne explains that the world stands on three pillars: Torah study, divine service, and acts of kindness. The intent of the mishne is that these three activities are essential to the existence of the world. The mishne expresses this idea by representing the world as standing upon these activities. In other words, standing in a place (i.e., upon the pillars of Torah study, Divine service, and acts of kindness) represents dependency. Rav Arama explains that the name HaMakom communicates the universe’s dependency upon Hashem. He is the “place” upon which the universe stands. This means the universe only exists as a result of His continuing will. His will supports the universe’s existence. Without His will, the universe would cease to exist.[20]

*And they should create for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them. (Shemot 25:8)*

Our parasha discusses the construction of the Mishcan. The Mishcan was the portable sanctuary that accompanied Bnai Yisrael in the wilderness. Once Bnai Yisrael entered and conquered the Land of Israel, this Mishcan—Tabernacle—was replaced by a permanent structure. This structure was the Bait HaMikdash—the Sacred Temple—constructed by King Shlomo.

Our passage contains the specific command to construct the Mishcan. However, Maimonides indicates in his Sefer HaMitzvot that this passage is also the source for the commandment to build the Bait HaMikdash. This suggests an obvious problem. The passage is not discussing the Bait HaMikdash. It is specifically commanding the construction of the Mishcan. How can Maimonides contend that this passage is the source for the obligation to build the Bait HaMikdash?[21]

Minchat Chinuch offers an answer to this question. He suggests that our pasuk legislates the requirement to establish a sanctuary. This institution does not have a specific form. Instead, the structure of the sanctuary is flexible. This commandment includes the Mishcan constructed in the wilderness and the Bait HaMikdash constructed by Shlomo.[22] How are these different structures included in one mitzvah? Minchat Chinuch maintains that sometimes it is appropriate for this sanctuary to be a portable structure. At other times, a permanent structure is more fitting. The environment in which the sanctuary will be placed determines its specific form. When Bnai Yisrael were traveling in the wilderness, the nation was not permanently situated,

and so it was appropriate for the sanctuary to travel with the camp. Once Bnai Yisrael settled in the Land of Israel, the nation was permanently situated. At this point, a permanent structure became appropriate.

This answers our question on Maimonides. In fact, our pasuk is not legislating the construction of the Mishcan or the Bait HaMikdash. It is commanding Bnai Yisrael to create an institution of “sanctuary.” The surrounding “camp” will determine the exact form to be assumed by this sanctuary. In the wilderness, this camp was mobile because the nation was traveling to the Land of Israel. Therefore, the sanctuary described in our parasha was a portable Mishcan. When the surrounding camp is the nation that settled in the Land of Israel, the sanctuary must be a permanent structure—the Bait HaMikdash. Our pasuk requires a sanctuary. The Bait HaMikdash is a variation of this sanctuary.

This is a reasonable explanation for the derivation of the requirement to build the Bait HaMikdash from our passage. However, it does present one difficulty. Maimonides seems to indicate that the commandment to construct a sanctuary does not include the creation of the Mishcan. In describing the commandment to create a sanctuary, Maimonides quotes the Midrash Sifri. The midrash enumerates three commandments that came into effect when Bnai

Yisrael entered the Land of Israel: to appoint a king, to build a Mikdash, and to destroy Amalek. It seems that Maimonides is asserting that the commandment to construct the Mikdash—a sanctuary—is comparable to the other two commandments mentioned by the Sifri. These other two commandments did not apply in the wilderness. Similarly, it appears that the commandment to build a Mikdash did not apply in the wilderness. Instead, the commandment first became operative with Bnai Yisrael’s conquest of the Land of Israel.

According to this analysis of Maimonides’ comments, the creation of a Mishcan is not included in the commandment to create a Mikdash. However, this is problematical. The commandment to create a Mikdash is derived from our passage. Our pasuk is clearly referring to the Mishcan. How is it possible that the pasuk commanding us to create a Mikdash is a passage referring to the Mishcan – yet the Mishcan is not included in this mitzvah?

It must be noted that Maimonides’ position on the status of the Mishcan is not completely clear. As we have indicated in Sefer HaMitzvot, Maimonides seems to exclude the Mishcan from the commandment to create a sanctuary. However, his comments in the Mishne Torah are somewhat ambiguous.

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*The Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought*

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There, after describing the commandment to create a sanctuary, he immediately describes the Mishcan.[23] Maimonides does not explicitly state that the construction of the Mishcan is included in the commandment. However, his discussion of the mitzvah to build a sanctuary is immediately followed by his a description of the mishcan. This suggests that it is somehow included in this commandment. In short, the two treatments seem to be contradictory. No mention of the Mishcan is made in the Sefer HaMitzvot. But in his Mishne Torah, Maimonides seems to include the Mishcan within the mitzvah to build a sanctuary.

Gershonides offers an interesting but enigmatic explanation of the relationship between the Mishcan and the Bait HaMikdash. He suggests that the Mishcan was a preparatory institution. The nation was to create a sanctuary in the Land of Israel. They would serve Hashem in this Bait HaMikdash. The Mishcan provided an opportunity to prepare for this duty. The Mishcan was a practice facility for the activities to be performed in the Mikdash.

Gershonides explains that our passage refers to both the Mishcan and the Bait HaMikdash. However, the fundamental aspect of the commandment is to build the Bait HaMikdash. The Mishcan was merely a preparatory step towards this ultimate goal.[24] Perhaps, this is also Maimonides' position as well.

There are a number of problems with Geshonides' contention that the Mishcan was merely a preparatory institution. First, the Torah strictly regulates the services performed in the Bait HaMikdash. Each sacrifice and service must be performed precisely as described by the Torah. Deviations result in serious consequences and punishments. Of course, the same requirements apply to the performance of these services in the Mishcan. The objective of this practice is to perform a specified activity exactly as will ultimately be required. If the objective of the Mishcan is to create an opportunity to practice these services, the practice services should emulate the actual service that will be performed in the Bait HaMikdash. However, it is remarkable that deviations that occurred in the Mishcan were treated as seriously as those occurring in the Bait HaMikdash. They resulted in the same consequences and punishments as those occurring in the Bait HaMikdash! We would expect deviations in a practice service to result in lesser consequences and punishments.

Second, the completion of the Mishcan was followed by an initiation period. The purpose of this initiation was to train the Kohanim and Leveyim in the services they would perform in the Mishcan. It seems strange that the Torah required a practice, or

training process, for service in the Mishcan. The Mishcan was only a preparatory institution. It seems the Torah required training for a practice activity. This seems somewhat redundant!

The first step required to address these problems is to recognize that they suggest Gershonides does not completely disagree with Minchat Chinuch. He agrees with the fundamental premise that the Torah commanded the creation of a sanctuary. This sanctuary takes different forms. In the wilderness, the concept of sanctuary was expressed in the Mishcan. In the Land of Israel, the Bait HaMikdash embodied the concept of sanctuary. Therefore, service in the Mishcan was treated as seriously as service in the Bait HaMikdash.

If this is the case, what is Gershonides' meaning in his contention that the Mishcan was a practice facility? Gershonides is providing an insight regarding the reason for including the Mishcan in the commandment to create a sanctuary. On this issue, he differs dramatically from Minchat Chinuch. In order to identify their disagreement, let us focus on a specific aspect of Minchat Chinuch's position.

Minchat Chinuch assumes that the Mishcan and the Bait HaMikdash are of equal significance. They are two equally valid expressions of a single institution—a sanctuary. Gershonides disagrees, maintaining that the Bait HaMikdash is the ultimate expression of the institution of sanctuary. However, this does not mean that the Mishcan's sanctity was inferior to that of the Bait HaMikdash. Instead, Gershonides is asserting that the Mishcan is modeled after, and is a prelude to, the Bait HaMikdash. In other words, were there no requirement to create a Bait HaMikdash, there could not be a Mishcan. Gershonides does not intend to imply that the service performed in the Mishcan was merely "practice." Instead, he is explaining the relationship between the two versions of a sanctuary. The Mishcan was modeled after the Bait HaMikdash and was its prelude.

We can now fully understand Maimonides' position. Maimonides maintains that the essential definition of the mitzvah described in our pasuk is to create a Bait HaMikdash. This is the fundamental aspect of the mitzvah. However, this commandment engenders an additional obligation. This is the obligation to create a Mishcan in the wilderness. In Sefer HaMitzvot, Maimonides defines the fundamental aspect of the mitzvah. He explains that the essential element of the commandment only applies once the Land of Israel is conquered. Maimonides appreciates that our passage includes the Mishcan. However, he maintains that the obligation to create the Mishcan was engendered by the requirement of Bait HaMikdash.

We can now also resolve the apparent contradiction between Sefer HaMitzvot and the Mishne Torah. In Sefer HaMitzvot, Maimonides defines the essential component of the commandment. This is to build a Bait HaMikdash. However, in Mishne Torah, Maimonides acknowledges that this fundamental requirement engendered the obligation to create the Mishcan in the wilderness. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Shemot, 25:9.

[2] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Shemot, 31:18.

[3] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 31:18.

[4] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 25:1.

[5] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer VaYikra 7:2.

[6] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Moreh Nevuchim, Volume 3, Chapter 32.

[7] Don Yitzchak Abravanel, Commentary on Sefer Shemot, pp. 243 -254.

[8] Rabbaynu Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag / Gershonides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot, (Mosad HaRav Kook, 1994), p 342.

[9] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Commentary on the Mishne, Mesechet Sanhedrin 10:1.

[10] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Yesodai HaTorah, 1:11.

[11] Sefer Devarim 6:4.

[12] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Yesodai HaTorah, 1:7.

[13] Sefer Devarim 4:15. See Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Commentary on the Mishne, Mesechet Sanhedrin 10:1.

[14] Melachim I 9:3.

[15] Rav Yosef Albo, Sefer HaIkkarim, volume2, chapter 14.

[16] Sefer Shemot 24:17.

[17] Rav Yosef Albo, Sefer HaIkkarim, volume2, chapter 17.

[18] See, for example, Mesechet Avot 2:9.

[19] Midrash Rabba, Sefer Beresheit 68:9.

[20] Rav Yitzchak Arama, Akeydat Yitzchak on Sefer Shemot, Parshat Terumah.

[21] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Sefer HaMitzvot, Mitzvat Aseh 2.

[22] Rav Yosef Babad, Minchat Chinuch, Mitzvah 95, note 1.

[23] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Bait HaBeChirah 1:1.

[24] Rabbaynu Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag / Gershonides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot, (Mosad HaRav Kook), pp. 339-340.



## Weekly Parsha



RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Talmud Megilla 10b teaches in Rabbi Levi's name that the Ark of the Covenant "had no measure". This means that although its width was 1.5 cubits and its length 2.5 cubits...it diminished no internal space from the Holy of Holies in which it rested. The Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple was 20 cubits square. This is the room designated for the Ark. When placed in the center of that room, if one measured from the Ark's side to any wall, the distance should be less than 10 cubits. But it wasn't! No matter which wall one measured to, the distance was 10 cubits...as if the ark wasn't there! The Talmud said this was a miracle.

Why was this miracle essential? How can we begin to understand why God might have created this miracle?

As all God's ways contain deep wisdom, the first step is to examine the miracle from standpoints of both form and function. What type (form) of miracle was it? What did the miracle essentially do? (Function) Well, we know that this miracle rendered the Ark as if it did not occupy any place. There was no less room in the Holy of Holies when the Ark was there, than when it wasn't. The same inner dimensions were measured. So we arrive at the conclusion that "location" or place is what the Ark's miracle addressed.

Now, what about location, does this miracle point to? The miracle tells us that the Ark in some amazing manner did not partake of location. Hmmm...

Let's go further. The next matter we must address is what is unique about the Ark, and no other item. This we can readily answer. The Ark of the Covenant contained the both sets of the two sapphire tablets that Moses received at Sinai (the broken first set, and the whole second set). Written upon them are the Ten Commandments. Now let's refine our question: "What is it about the Torah (the Ark) that a miracle was necessary to render it as not taking up any location?" Furthermore, we know that God spoke to Moses from above the Ark, from between the two cherubs.

I suggest the following...

We must understand the Ark, but we must also appreciate that its location was inside the Temple. What was Temple? Temple – according to Sforno and I believe others – was a concession to man. As the Gold Calf demonstrated man's inability to relate to God abstractly after Moses' death, God responded by instructing us to build the Temple. This would allow man some concessionary, physical expression for his religious life, but it would also strictly guide and limit us from any idolatrous expression, as was the case of the Gold Calf.

Temple is where we relate to God. Now we might see the danger. We might assume God is "here". But that is impossible, for God is not physical and therefore, He does not take up any space or location.

We just got our answer!

Since man has a need to relate to God with physical expression, and Temple is in fact a location...man can very easily err and assume God is "in" Temple.

This I believe to be the fundamental lesson of the Ark's miracle. It did not diminish any measure from the Temple. This very Ark, over which a voice was created and spoke to Moses, was identified more with God, than all other items. Furthermore, the Ark housed the Torah, of which we require a clear reminder of its divine origin. We must know that the Torah's wisdom is truly God's wisdom. And His wisdom is not of this world. Therefore, it was necessary that the Ark demonstrated this fundamental that the knowledge it contained is divine; just as that which is not capable of Earthly measure. Just as we cannot measure something that is not physical, we also cannot measure the Ark's location. This miracle thereby equates immeasurability with divinity.

One more idea occurs to me here. This miracle differs from others. For example, once Aaron's rod converted into a snake, we can grasp what snake is...the same with all 10 Plagues. God used wind to deliver the locusts; we can grasp the idea of blood, frogs, and even the death of the firstborns. We know what death is. But how can I measure a room, obtain a measurement of 20 cubits. Yet, when I place the Ark in it, I still obtain the same measure as if it is not there?

This is a different type of miracle. What type? It seems to highlight man's inability to "comprehend". Using our knowledge and measurements, we find a contradiction here. The room contains the same space whether the Ark is there or not. I am forced to reject my measurement as accurate. In other words, God's Ark miracle forces man to reject human comprehension. He must bow to a greater wisdom, a wisdom he cannot fathom.

Again, we see another element of this miracle that teaches us the divine nature of God and His wisdom inscribed in His Torah. We appreciate that God wishes man to obtain only correct notions concerning Him. And most primary is that we cannot know what God is, and certainly, that He is not physical, He takes up no space; He is not in the Temple.

God is very real, but He is not "here" on Earth...or occupying any space. ■

# MESHENICHNASS ADAR MARBIM BSIMCHA

on it for every year. [22] As the days that the Jews rested on them from their enemies; and the month that was reversed for them from anguish to happiness, from mourning to a holiday, to make them days of drinking and happiness and to send portions [of food] each man to his friend, and gifts to the poor."

Rashi explains (Ibid) from these words commencing verse 22 "As the days", that Rabbi Samuel derived that there may be established two more days "As the days" that were already established. Now, since the days already established as Purim were the 14th and 15th of Adar, Rabbi Samuel concluded that another "pair" of days were hinted to here; days that will partake of Purim's character. Thus, it is now possible to read the Megilla on these additionally sanctioned days, the 11th and 12th. But we must now ask why Purim – and no other holiday – deserved this additional-day design. What exits in Purim alone that additional days are warranted?

Furthermore, as we know that in all Torah verses, each item is related, what is the relationship between all the items in verse 22, which include the additional days of the holiday, a reversed month, drinking, gifting meals, happiness, and charity?

You may readily suggest that Passover and Succos too have multiple days. However, the mitzvahs of eating matza and dwelling in the Succah have special significance on only their first days. The remaining Chol HaMoade does not share the first day's significance. And regarding Channukah, it has eight days due to the very nature of the miracle...none of those eight days are "extensions", as is the case with Purim. But Purim celebrates our defeat of the enemy on the 14th and 15th alone. Why then does the Megilla give additional significance to the 11th and 12th, making it permissible to read the Megilla then? Why is Purim alone an "extended" holiday? And can those country people also have their Purim feast that early? Rashi makes this clear that they must have their feasts on the 14th. This makes matter more difficult: what is the nature of the 11th and 12th, in that these country people may read the Megilla then, but not have their feasts?

The Megilla goes on to describe at length the nature of the lottery cast by Haman to select a day of genocide...even teaching us in verse 26 that we must call these days "Purim" (meaning lottery). As a Rabbi once taught, Haman wished to denounce any Divine Providence over the Jews by exterminating us based on a lottery, a "pur". Whichever month and day was selected randomly would be the beginning of our end. "Random" is

If you were told that three days before Passover you could fulfill the mitzvah to eat matza, you might find that difficult to accept. After all, matza forms part of Passover's mitzvot, and three days earlier it is not yet Passover.

You now understand the problem regarding Rabbi Samuel ben Nachmani's permission for some people to read the Megilla a few days before Purim (Tal. Megilla; 2a). This permission is based on a sensitivity to not burden country people to travel too much. In their small towns, it was not common to find a professional Megilla reader. Therefore, since Mondays and Thursdays were set times at which these country people visited the large cities for purposes of trying court cases (courts were found in larger cities) Rabbi Samuel allowed these country people to read the Megilla earlier, despite the fact that it was not yet Purim. But what source enabled Rabbi Samuel to make this allowance? Holidays – and all mitzvahs – have strict guidelines. And allowing a holiday-oriented mitzvah to be performed "before" the holiday...well...seems untimely!

Rabbi Samuel based his ruling on the second of these two Megilla verses (9:21,22):

"[21] To establish for them – that they shall make the 14th day of the month Adar and the 15th



RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

(continued on next page)



(Adar cont. from previous page)

## Holidays



*“Meshenichnass Adar,  
marbim b’simcha” –  
“From when Adar enters,  
increase in happiness”.  
It is not from Purim, but  
two weeks earlier that we  
start rejoicing.  
Perhaps this principle too is  
to embody this very idea,  
that an unbridled love is  
not time bound. Mere days  
cannot contain the true  
state of one living in line  
with Torah.”*

the key word here. As Haman wished to show that Jewish fate is random and not under any Divine Providence, he used a lottery to select the day. “We can die at anytime”. It then appears that the Megilla stresses the need to name Purim so as to highlight the opposite: we are in fact under God’s Providence. The holiday must embody the concept of Divine Providence.

The Megilla then states that the Jews reaccepted the Torah out of love, having first accepted it out of fear at Sinai. Once the nation witnessed the wisdom, and salvation achieved by Mordechai and Esther’s cunning, they reaccepted the Torah out of a love. “Kimu vKiblu” – “They arose and accepted”. (9:27)

A Rabbi taught years ago that drinking brings about euphoria, and unbridled feelings of love and happiness. Drinking was therefore commanded on Purim so as to mimic the euphoric state of the Jews back then. I don’t have proof but wish to suggest that this might be part of a larger picture on Purim...

Perhaps the lesson in all the laws of Purim is one thing: we must have an unrestrained and complete expression of joy and love in connection with God and His Torah. Why is Purim the day selected to embody this idea? It is because Purim was an event where a true attachment to Torah was first realized on a national level. “Kimu vKiblu” – “They arose and accepted”. The Rabbis saw Purim’s nature as deserving eternal commemoration, even to the point that Maimonides states that in the future, the Megilla will outshine all other works. The Rabbis instituted Purim for all times for this reason: on Purim the nation reached the height of attachment to Torah. The Shema describes this very goal: “And you shall love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might”. The operative word here is “all”. Man is obligated to reach a state where he is completely bound up in his love for God, and in “all” possible expressions. It is our life’s objective to attain this attachment to the Creator. And with study, we will be continuously amazed at His wisdom, and His existence.

Why does verse 22 describe the Jews’ victory in ‘monthly’ terms: “and the month that was reversed for them from anguish to happiness”? Surely they were victorious on the 14th and 15th, precisely why these are the holidays. What does “month” have to do with this?

Perhaps this answers why additional days were appended: one or two days of a holiday curtail the magnitude of what we are capable of. Rabbi Samuels’ opinion is that Purim is a holiday of “adding”. Meaning, the very nature of the Jews state was unbridled love for God and Torah. And to express this, we immerse in alcohol to mimic

those feelings. But we express this in the structure of the holiday as well...we keep adding days, as if to say; that which is unbridled seeks to be extended. The euphoria brought about by alcohol embodies an unbridled state “emotionally”. But to truly express unbridled love, one must also not be limited in “time”, and this is expressed by adding days to the holiday. The fact that the Megilla adds more days to Purim, in the very same verse as the law to drink, may very well be this lesson: both target the same, unrestrained love. We are also taught to share our food with close friend and give charity, to insure that all Jews achieve the happiness they require: each one on his own level. Therefore, we share meals with close friends, since nothing is more deeply moving than bonding with a dear old friend. And to the poor, we open our wallets and give them what is burning in their hearts.

“Meshenichnass Adar, marbim b’simcha” – “From when Adar enters, increase in happiness” also targets this goal. It is not from Purim, but two weeks earlier that we start rejoicing. Perhaps this principle too is to embody this very idea, that an unbridled love is not time bound. Mere days cannot contain the true state of one living in line with Torah.

Another lesson regarding “Meshenichnass Adar, marbim b’simcha” is that the wheels of Providence were in motion long before the events culminated in our salvation. The Talmud states that just as one minimizes happiness when the month of Av commences, we are to increase our happiness when Adar commences. A Rabbi once taught that in doing so, we recognize the concept of God’s reward and punishment. By postponing court cases during Av, we attest to God’s ability to punish us with poor verdicts. No one can deny the numerous tragedies which occurred on the 9th of Av: from the Jews who sinfully denied God’s ability to enter them into Israel safely, to the yearly deaths of those Jews; through both Temple destructions...we learn that these are not coincidences. These tragedies are God’s hand driving our history. In contrast, but embodying the same idea, we celebrate as Adar enters, as a testimony to God’s Divine Providence. Adar is a time of happiness, when God worked wonders, and will do so for His loyal servants. This is truly a Divine lesson for all of us that despair in any part of life is no option. “Even if the sword is placed on your neck, God can save you from it”. (Tal. Avoda Zara 18b)

May we all use this time to reattach ourselves to Torah and God out of a love, and abandon a life of fear. Of course, this is only accomplished if we too “arise and reaccept a Torah lifestyle”, beginning with the greatest mitzvah of all...Torah study. ■



# Addressing the needs of the COMMUNITY

*Our unparalleled economic crisis weighs heavy on many of us, adding to other stresses, like the equally unparalleled number of singles living without companionship. Much can be done to address both issues.*

*My intent with this letter is to initiate remedial action on these two fronts. I hope to ignite renewed inspiration among our Jewish leadership and in truly all of us. Many of us possess channels of broad communication; personalities that can direct others; and words that can move many. It's time to put these qualities to large use.*

*Bleak forecasts can kill our dreams...but only if we lack the resourceful and optimistic natures that historically make dreams come true. And we all have these traits. At times, the status quo makes our hearts static and paralyzes all hope...but as others overcame, we too can overcome. The possibility of a better day must squelch passivity and feelings that "matters are insurmountable". They are not.*

*Relentless courage and fresh ideas can eliminate our problems. Enthusiasm has enjoyed no company for some time, but it waits in each of us. Let us harness it together.*

**"Meshenichnass Adar, marbim b'simcha" – "From when Adar enters, increase in happiness".**

The wheels of providence were in motion long before the events culminated in our salvation way back when. The same can happen now as we express with our preempted happiness...we simply need to be worthy. And this applies to individuals, not only the nation. Our knowledge of God is synonymous with our faith in His omnipotence. God can do all. Adar is a time of happiness, when God worked wonders, as He will always work for His loyal servants.

God's abilities and our conviction in them render any form of despair antithetical to Jewish life. "Even if the sword is placed on your neck, God can save you from it". (Tāl. Avoda Zara 18b) Furthermore, there is much we can and must rightfully do to address our needs, without relying on God to step in. Just as it is foolish to pray to God to help us cross the street when our legs can do so without a miracle; it is also foolish to blame God for hard times, when we dug the pit we are in, and also have the tools to build the "ladders" affording our escape. Maimonides taught that self-inflicted pain is the majority of our woes. Most of our suffering—be it religious, financial, medical, or social—can be traced to our poor actions. But only someone not defensive and values truth will realize this. If you will defend your self-image instead of accepting your errors, these thoughts and ideas will not help you.

What I write is intended only for honest individuals whose objective is happiness. It is intended for a person who can say "I am wrong". It is intended for those of you who will take action to improve your affairs. And it is intended for Jewish community leaders to use as seeds to further ideas.

As Jews, we are fortunate to have many promises from the One and only One able to keep each of His promises. Ashray teaches we must have special focus on the words "You open Your hand and sustain the wants of all living creatures". This is because we must realize that He can. God supplied the Patriarchs with all their needs. He fed two million Jews in the desert for 40 years.

This also teaches that those who do not live in line with the will of the Creator have nothing to earn them God's Providence.

If we wish a change in our affairs, we must demonstrate that we live the life God demands. This means an orthodox life with Torah study and acts of kindness and charity at the forefront. God will not support those who reject or disobey Him...unless of course He wishes to give them their reward here, and not in the next world. Then, it is a sad state of affairs. Fortunate is he who receives his punishments here. And even more fortunate is he who has repented, holds no sin, and receives plenty here and in the next world.

The Torah records true history. It records God's promises. Be convinced that this history and His promises are truths. But also use your intelligence to do all you can on your own. Do not ignore the possibility that your problems are self-inflicted. And if you can see this as so, then you are on the fast track to recovery, since you have identified the anchor that weighs you down. You can unchain yourself.

Isaiah taught that the wicked are tumultuous as the raging sea. Happiness can only come to one who views Torah as his central focus. For if one has no Torah, then he lives in accord with his emotions, which shift as violent as the waves, and upset our equilibrium. Do not expect to find real happiness in the pursuit of anything else. In the book of Koheles, King Solomon used himself as an experiment to study which path leads to the happiest life. He didn't spare any expense, pleasure, or possession. And after all of his acquisitions and pursuits, he concluded that the Torah lifestyle surpasses all others. You owe it to yourself to experiment with Torah, and learn why this wise king concluded as he did. Do not think you are wiser than he, whose wisdom was granted miraculously by God.

*(continued on next page)*

## FINANCIAL CRISIS

*Here are some ideas to help in this crisis, upon which you should build using your own creativity and ingenuity.*

### Preferred Spending

Each shul, temple, school, organization and workplace can implement this immediately: Create a page on your respective websites that lists the professions (and details) of all members with their contact info and emails. Invite your members to redirect business and family expenditures towards other members. We have implemented this on our site at [www.Mesora.org/Classifieds](http://www.Mesora.org/Classifieds) and invite all to use this free. This will keep monies within your communities, and will limit what was previously spent on foreign providers. Now, as member businesses continue to regularly earn from companies outside your circle, and now use community members to replace old vendors, this cash influx will gradually spread among your community. Your community's collective funds will no longer be spent outside your circle, but these funds (earnings) will grow among everyone.

Make an area on these websites where unemployed individuals can post their resumes.

Successful community members should offer jobs like sales and marketing, which unemployed members can fill quickly and with little training.

Print out these website pages and post on bulletin boards.

Community leaders should announce in gatherings and in newsletters that they wish to learn of those seeking work. They can thereby match the unemployed with hiring companies.

Continually email all members of these and other activities.

### Think of Others

Keep others in the know about new job openings. Create email lists or bulletin boards with position listings.

### Smart Resumes

Insure your resume is up to date, professional, and compelling. Post your resume on all job boards like Monster.com, CareerBuilder.com, Dice.com and all others. Make sure you have a Microsoft Word resume which many headhunters request.

### Start New Businesses

Convene and start up new businesses locally, employing out of work members. Although a longer range goal, this will provide jobs to those in need, while performing the greatest form of Tzedaka.

### Advertise on Google and Yahoo!

For roughly one-two hundred dollars each week, you can drive much traffic to your website and grow your business. Look into advertising programs and get started. It's quick and easy.

### Give Tzedaka

God says in only in this one area may we test Him. Maimonides teaches that one must be more careful in this mitzvah than in all others. Giving your tzedaka can improve your income. This is a Torah principle. See Malachi chapter 3.

And on this topic, those who owe tzedaka could give sooner than later to community members in dire straits. Ask around; find out who needs and give him or her without their knowledge that it is you. This is one of the highest forms of Tzedaka.

### Website Donations

Yeshivas, institutions and non-profits are wise to create a dedicated link on your websites for tax-deductible donations. Amass emails of your members and ask them to visit your donations page. Making giving easier will generate additional funds in these times.

## SINGLES' CRISIS

*"God does not give a good woman to a man of poor character". We must be worthy of a good mate. We also must be proactive and intelligent in our search. I hope the following suggestions might help our singles locate companions very soon.*

### The Ideal Candidate

Reevaluate your priorities in a mate. Seek a person who is intelligent, reliable, enthusiastic, honest, God fearing, compromising, and generous. You will know she or he possesses these traits by speaking to his or her friends. Such a reputation will precede the person. But if you seek money, social status, black hats or Yeshivish externalism, you might become another statistic. For although many couples married the "type" of religious Jew they desired, their marriages still ended in divorces. Externals cannot help a relationship succeed, and clothing did not save those marriages. If clothing were vital, God would have commanded us in dress codes. But He did not. See Micha 6:8 and Radak on Tzefania 1:8 where God commands us in modesty. This refers to accepting our state as "created" beings, and that we are subjugated to the Creator. It translates in action as treating others as equals, as we are all creations. Tznius (modesty) means not externalizing our religiosity. Tznius does not mean one covers him or herself. For if this were so, then unwed women seeking to be tznius would not be able to expose their hair. If we are not humble before God and others, dress will not change that. And if we are humble, we will naturally express this in our dress.

Micha teaches that God does not seek our religious acts alone. If our relationship with God is combined with constant Lashon Hara or dishonest business dealings, then the God we serve is one whom we feel tolerates such sins. Our god is a false god. Our interpersonal values directly affect our relationship with God. Our approach to God is one where our "entire" nature serves Him. The Shema says "b'Chol livavicha uv'Chol nafshecha uv'Chol miodecha", "With all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might" serve Him. "All" is repeated three times to teach this lesson.

And not that skin color renders man any more or less perfect, but I ask who today would welcome their son or daughter marrying a black convert like Moses married? Or a convert as Joshua married? Did you know that Moshiach is a descendant of a convert?

*(continued on next page)*



Character is to be the primary consideration, not labels or externals. Don't limit yourself to those without children, for many divorcees and widows are of such high caliber...and their children might just warm your heart. For many years, a close friend refused to date a woman with children. When he finally abandoned that position, he met his dream and is now very happily married.

#### Internet

Many singles are still not using this great resource. Place your profiles on these sites to open doors to more people, and email your profile matchmakers or prospects. Don't be afraid to share your profile with others, since the one for you could be a friend of a friend. Tznius does not apply here. Use this great communications medium to help your search.

#### Discouragement

While it may be difficult at times to fight discouragement, keep the faith. God's abilities are not limited. Reflect on why previous relationships have not panned out. See if you can detect what errors you might have made. Correct your behavior. No one is perfect. Seek advice from an intelligent counselor; be it your Rabbi or a professional. Gain insight into yourself and you may learn that by changing one area, you will be married before you know it! And don't ever feel "it's too late for me". People marry at all ages.

#### Dating Dos & Don'ts

Arriving "fashionably late" sends messages of disinterest, "I have more important things to do". Just as you would show up promptly for a business meeting so as not to risk losing the job, express this same care when seeking a mate. Otherwise, you will be perceived in an accurate light as someone who does not take dating seriously and you may lose this chance.

Don't use your cell phone on dates. Turn it off before you meet.

Agree to a brief first date so if you truly are mismatched, not much time was invested.

Get as much info on your date before you agree to meet.

Don't break a date. It gives you a bad name and can jeopardize other dates.

If you meet someone and there isn't anything objectionable, give the person a few chances. Don't write him or her off after date #1. Many people do, and forfeit opportunities. I know stories of couples that were not initially compelled towards each other. But after a number of dates, feelings developed, and they eventually fell in love and married. The reasons many people don't give others a second chance, is because they are seeking the feelings they recall from previous relationships. But those feelings took time to develop, and it is unfair to you to assume such feelings can emerge on a first date. Give it time, as you had done before.

#### "I already know him/her."

So what? Explore people you are in touch with now. A good friend is a great start for a good spouse. Do not fear crossing the

line from "friend" to "date". You can only gain. And don't feel you are ever "settling". Whether you marry someone you know, or someone new, your focus should be on his or her character, not how long you know him or her. The Torah actually has a mitzvah for a man to remarry his divorced wife.

#### Matchmakers' Flaws

Matchmakers must be careful to satisfy the real needs of singles. Don't make quick suggestions...think through your matches so the dates you arrange have the best possible chance of success. Be considerate of singles, as you wish others to be considerate of you. Do not lecture to them. If you have carefully thought-out specific advice, ask him or her if they would like you to share it.

Matchmaking is a tough job. You must possess genuine care for others, a sense of equality and not superiority...and tremendous patience. It must not be viewed as a chance to socialize with other matchmakers, or done out of a need to feel good. Match others if and when you feel you have located two very compatible people.

#### Help Others

If you have a single friend whose actions you deem self-destructive, you must be a true friend.

How?

Risk your relationship and caringly advise your friend about their self-destructive behavior. Do so as you feel will be best received; at the proper time, with choice words, sensitively, and by first entering into conversation perhaps with a topic that will give them a smile. Then, after his or her heart is enjoying a laugh with you and they are now receptive, introduce your desire to assist them.

Be mindful that most people will be defensive when their flaws are being addressed, so make it clear from the outset that your intent is pure. Ask him or her if he or she wishes your input. Perhaps discuss your assessment of this single with another to first confirm your assumptions.

Inform the single that he or she is not alone, and that each person has his or her personal trials in life. Tell him or her that you may even need their assistance years from now. We're all in this life together, and we must all assist each other at some point. This approach will not demean the single. Kavod Habriyos (human honor) is paramount.

Purim celebrates the wisdom of Mordechai and Esther, as it reversed the tide from catastrophe, to great salvation and rejoicing. The key here is that Mordechai and Esther used wisdom to address their needs.

Use wisdom in these and all areas. For all elements of the world function according to a wise design, since the Designer is infinitely wise. Therefore, to successfully interact with this world, wisdom is that key to success. ■

—Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

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