

In this week's *Parashah*, we read about the commandment to build a *Mishkan* / Tabernacle. The *Gemara* (*Berachot* 55a) relates: Betzalel, the lead artisan of the *Mishkan*, is named for his wisdom. When *Hashem* told Moshe, "Go tell Betzalel to make me a *Mishkan*, *Aron*, and *Keilim* / implements," Moshe went and reversed the order, telling Betzalel, "Make *Keilim*, an *Aron*, and a *Mishkan*." Betzalel replied, "Our teacher Moshe! When one builds a house, he builds the house first and then puts furniture in it. Yet you are telling me to make the furniture first and then the house! Where will I store the *Keilim* until the *Mishkan* is made?" Moshe answered, "Indeed, *Hashem* told me to make the *Mishkan* and then the *Keilim*. Were you perhaps *B'tzel Kel* / in the shadow of G-d--a play on the name 'Betzalel'--and so you knew?" [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R' Yaakov Moshe Charlap z"l (1882-1951; rabbi of Yerushalayim's Sha'arei Chessed neighborhood and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav) explains: There is an expression, "Last in deed was first in thought." (We say this, for example, about *Shabbat*, in the poem *Lecha Dodi*. *Shabbat* was created last, but it was first in G-d's "thought.") Here, the ultimate goal of building the *Mishkan* was not the structure itself, but its contents; therefore *Hashem* said, "Make me a *Mishkan*, *Aron*, and *Keilim*"--the *Mishkan* first in deed and the *Keilim* last in deed, but first in thought. Of course, Moshe knew that the *Keilim* should be made last. However, being very attuned to G-d's "thoughts," he understood that the *Keilim* were the essence of the *Mishkan*, and he focused on them in transmitting *Hashem*'s command to Betzalel.

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Shabbat

R' Aharon Eliezer Zilberman *shlita* (Brooklyn, N.Y.) writes: When the Torah describes the sacrificial offerings brought in honor of *Shabbat*, it says (*Bemidbar* 28:10), "The *Olah-offering* of each *Shabbat* on its own *Shabbat*." What is meant by "on its own *Shabbat*"? R' Tzaddok Hakohen Rabinowitz z"l (1823-1900; *Chassidic Rebbe* in Lublin, Poland) explains that every *Shabbat* has its own unique holiness, as reflected in the fact that every *Shabbat* has a different Torah reading. In this vein, R' Alexander Ziskind z"l (Grodno, Belarus; died 1794) writes in *Yesod V'shoresh Ha'avodah* (8:12) that a person should undertake some new service of *Hashem* every *Shabbat*. (R' Alexander Ziskind explains that this new service need not be something dramatic or momentous; it could be something as simple as formulating a new insight on the *Parashah* or clarifying, through studying commentaries, a *Talmudic* passage that one did not understand clearly before. Other suggestions that R' Alexander Ziskind offers include: making an effort every *Shabbat* to pray with more concentration, trying to purify one's thoughts a little bit more each week, undertaking to dedicate oneself to more and higher quality Torah study, and committing to being a bit more honest in business each week.)

R' Zilberman continues: R' Chaim ben Attar z"l (1696-1743) writes in his work *Ohr Ha'chaim* (*Bereishit* 2:3) that *Hashem* created the world with only enough staying power to last for six days. Each week, when we observe *Shabbat*, the world is recreated for another six days. Thus, *Chassidic* works note, every *Shabbat* truly is unique; there never was a *Shabbat* like this one, and there never will be another like it.

R' Zilberman concludes: Many works write that *Shabbat* is a time for *Teshuvah*. This need not refer to repenting from sins. Rather, if a person is always growing, he recognizes that his service of *Hashem* in the past, while appropriate for the level he was on at that time, was inadequate compared to his service today. This type of *Teshuvah* is attributed to R' Sa'adiah Gaon z"l (882-942; Egypt, *Eretz Yisrael* and present-day Iraq; author of the earliest known work on Jewish Thought), and it is something that every person can practice as he grows with every *Shabbat*. (*Ner Zahav* p.662)

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“Speak to *Bnei Yisrael* and let them take a donation for Me, from every man whose heart motivates him you shall take My donation.” (25:2)

Why does the verse switch from “a donation for Me” to “My donation”? R’ Gavriel Wolf Margolis z”l (1847-1935, rabbi of Grodna, Belarus, and later Boston, Massachusetts) explains: The *Midrash Yalkut Shimoni* states that a blessing rested on the donations for the *Mishkan* so that a small amount went very far. Indeed, this must be so, for how else could the fundraising be completed in only two days?! As a result, even those who otherwise could not afford to make meaningful contributions were able to make significant donations. “From every man whose heart motivates him”—whether he can afford a large donation or not--“you shall take My donation”—I, *Hashem*, will turn it into something meaningful. (Torat Gavriel)

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When Betzalel “corrected” Moshe, Moshe said to him, “Were you perhaps *B’tzel Kel* / in the shadow of G-d.” Shadows create contrast that enables us to tolerate and even use an otherwise blinding light. You, Betzalel, are apparently able to see that the bright light of the *Keilim*--first in *Hashem*’s thought--needed to be filtered by being inside the *Mishkan*--first in deed. This parallels Creation itself, for our Sages say that *Hashem* “thought” of creating the world with the Attribute of Justice, but He saw that it could not be tolerated. Therefore, in practice He tempered the Attribute of Justice by filtering it through the Attribute of Mercy. This understanding is the wisdom of Betzalel to which the *Gemara* quoted above refers.

R’ Charlap continues: The *Geulah* / ultimate redemption will also dazzle us like a blinding light, as we read (*Yeshayah* 60:1), “Arise! Shine! For your light has arrived, and the glory of *Hashem* has shone upon you.” Therefore, R’ Charlap writes based on the *Zohar*, the *Geulah* needs to be accompanied by shadows, which enable us to tolerate the great light. These shadows may take the form of support from the nations of the world--such as when King Cyrus of Persia supported the construction of the Second Temple or, in modern times, when the nations supported the creation of a Jewish homeland. Sometimes, to our sorrow, these shadows take the form of painful losses.

R’ Charlap adds: When we see shadows, *i.e.*, when we see that the redemption appears to be coming about through natural means (*e.g.*, the support of foreign nations) that conceal the miracles taking place, we should not view that as diminishing the redemption’s light. To the contrary, we should see it as nature being elevated. This is what the *Gemara* (*Yoma* 29a) means when it says: “Esther is the end of all miracles.” Before the Purim story, we were accustomed to open miracles that did not occur within nature; they overpowered nature. *Megillat Esther*, in contrast, is the ultimate story of a miracle occurring completely within nature. It represents the “perfection” of miracles, so-to-speak, and hence it is the climax, the “end,” of all miracles.

(*Haggadah Shel Pesach Mei Marom* p.82)

“Speak to *Bnei Yisrael* and let them take for Me a *Terumah* / donation.” (25:2)

A *Midrash* asks: Why does *Parashat Terumah* follow *Parashat Mishpatim*? The *Midrash* answers: Thus it is written (*Tehilim* 119:121), “I practiced *Mishpat* / justice and *Tzeddek* / righteousness.” [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R’ Yitzchak Klein z”l Hy”d (rabbi of Kosice, Slovakia; killed in the Holocaust) explains: The word *Tzeddek* (literally, “righteousness”) reminds us of *Tzedakah* / charity. Some people rationalize earning money dishonestly by saying that they will donate the profits to charity. No! says the *Midrash*. *Parashat Terumah*, which deals with making donations to the *Mishkan*, follows *Parashat Mishpatim*, which consists primarily of laws concerning financial dealings. “*Mishpat*” must precede “*Tzedakah*,” the *Midrash* is teaching.

R’ Klein adds: This is why our verse says “Take for Me a *Terumah*.” When one gives charity, he should picture himself presenting it directly to *Hashem* Who, in the words of *Yeshayah* (61:8), “hates an offering [acquired] through robbery.” (Birkat Avraham)

Rashi comments: “For Me” means “*Li’Shmi*” / “for the glory of My Name.” [Until here from *Rashi*]

R’ Yosef Karo z”l (1488-1575; Greece and *Eretz Yisrael*; author of the *Shulchan Aruch* and other works) writes: It says in our *Parashah*, “Take a donation for Me,” and (verse 8), “Make a Sanctuary for Me.” These verses hint that every act done for a holy purpose should include a declaration, “I am doing this for a holy purpose.” This is similar to the custom that, when preparing a chair for *Eliyahu Ha’navi* at a *Brit Milah*, we speak the words, “This is the chair of *Eliyahu Ha’navi*.” (*Maggid Meisharim*)

Similarly, R’ Avraham Abele Gombiner z”l (influential *Halachic* authority; Poland; died 1682) writes: One should say about each item one buys for *Shabbat*, “This is in honor of *Shabbat*.” (*Magen Avraham* 250:1)

Our Sages say, “Engage in Torah study and *Mitzvot* even if it is not *Li’smah* / with the proper intention, for by acting not *Li’smah*, one will eventually act *Li’smah*.”

R’ Yaakov Niman z”l (*Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Ohr Yisrael in Lida, Poland and Petach Tikvah, Israel; died 1983) asks: Why, then, does *Rashi* emphasize here that donations toward building the *Mishkan* / Tabernacle should be given *Li’smah*?

He answers: Our Sages teach that *Hashem* does not deny any person reward for his good deeds. Even a *Mitzvah* performed not *Li’smah* is deserving of some reward, and that reward will be paid.

Nevertheless, writes R’ Niman, creating a place for the *Shechinah* / G-d’s Revelation to reside requires *Li’smah*, as we read (25:8), “Make a Sanctuary for Me” --for My sake alone. (*Darchei Mussar*)