

In this week's *Parashah*, *Bnei Yisrael* are asked to bring donations, out of which a *Mishkan* / Tabernacle will be built. R' Uri Sherki *shlita* (rabbi and educator in Yerushalayim) writes: Asking *Bnei Yisrael* to bring donations is the logical and necessary follow-up to the Giving of the Torah. How so?

R' Sherki explains: *Hashem* gave the Torah from from the Heavens in a very one-sided "ceremony" that left *Bnei Yisrael*, who craved an interactive relationship with *Hashem*, feeling left out. *Bnei Yisrael* may be compared to a child who sees *Shabbat* preparations taking place all around him, but he has no job to do. Seeing that he is restless, his mother asks him to peel potatoes for the *cholent*. The mother does not need the child's help, but to the child, the chance to participate is everything. Indeed, from this week on, peeling potatoes for the *cholent* will be this child's special job every Friday.

Similarly, *Hashem* does not need us, nor does He need any dwelling that we might build for Him. Rather, by commanding us to build Him a *Mishkan*, He is responding to our need to partner with Him.

Having said that, *Hashem's* Presence in the *Mishkan* was very real. However, that was not the ultimate goal. Rather, as commentaries note, the Torah says (25:8), "They shall make a Sanctuary for Me, and I will dwell among them." It does not say, "I will dwell in it," but rather, "among them." That is the ultimate goal. (*Ni'pagesh Ba'parashah*)

Shabbat

The *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 118b) teaches: If *Bnei Yisrael* had only kept the first *Shabbat*, no nation could ever have ruled over them. We learn this from that which is written (*Shmot* 16:27), "It happened on the seventh day that some of the people went out to gather [*Mahn*]," and soon after (17:8), "Amalek came." The *Gemara* continues: If only the Jewish People would keep two *Shabbatot* properly, they would immediately be redeemed, as it is written (*Yeshayah* 56:4), "For so says *Hashem* to the barren ones who observe My *Shabbatot* . . ." followed by (56:7), "I shall bring them to My holy mountain . . ." [Until here from the *Gemara*]

The *Gemara* seems to contradict itself. Is the key to the Jewish People's security keeping one *Shabbat* or two *Shabbatot*? R' Chaim Hakohen z"l (1585-1655; Aleppo, Syria) explains: If *Bnei Yisrael* had kept the first *Shabbat*, they would immediately have merited the Final Redemption. However, because they transgressed the first *Shabbat*, we now need to observe two consecutive *Shabbatot*--one to atone for the one that was transgressed, and a second in whose merit the Redemption will occur.

R' Chaim continues: But was the *Shabbat* when they went out to collect *Mahn* the first *Shabbat* in Jewish history? Do not our Sages teach that the *Mitzvah* of *Shabbat* was taught at Marah, *Bnei Yisrael's* first stop after the splitting of the *Yam Suf*?

He answers: Earlier, *Bnei Yisrael* were taught laws of *Shabbat*, but only when they were given the *Mahn* were they told (*Shmot* 16:23), "Tomorrow is a rest day, a holy *Shabbat* to *Hashem*." Violating *Shabbat* after being told of its significance demonstrated a lack of *Emunah*, which is a rejection of the entire Torah.

(*Tur Pitdah*: Introduction to *Hil. Shabbat*)

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring

לע"נ חנה שרה בת משה אהרן ע"ה

10815 Meadowhill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 / 301-775-9623

Send e-mail to: TheTorahSpring@gmail.com

Donate online: <https://thetorahspring.org/donate>

Donations to Hamaayan are tax deductible.



Sponsored by Mrs. Rochelle Dimont and family, on the *yahrzeits* of
father-in-law and grandfather

Harav Shmuel Elchanan ben Harav Binyomin Dimont a"h
and mother and grandmother

Chaya Feiga bat Harav Chaim Halevi a"h

The Vogel family, on the *yahrzeit* of uncle

Hirsh Feivish ben Aharon Shimon a"h

“You shall make the planks of the *Mishkan* / Tabernacle of *Shittim* wood, standing erect.” (26:15)

Why was *Shittim* wood in particular used in the *Mishkan*? R' Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson z"l (1880-1950; *Lubavitcher Rebbe*) explains:

There are two ways to use the physical world to serve *Hashem*--one known as “*Itkafya*,” from the word meaning “to subdue,” and one known as “*It'hapcha*,” from the word meaning, “to overturn.” As the names imply, *Itkafya* refers to subduing one's physical drives and downplaying one's possessions, while *It'hapcha* refers to elevating--i.e., overturning or changing the nature of--one's physical drives and possessions.

The service in the *Mishkan*, and later the *Bet Hamikdash*, was in the nature of *It'hapcha*. In particular, the sacrificial service elevated physical things--animals, flour, and wine--thereby changing them into something spiritual.

The word “*Shittim*” comes from the root that means “to tilt” or “to cause to turn.” Physical possessions can be “tilted” or “turned” towards fulfilling one's basest instincts, on the one hand, or towards spiritual ends, on the other hand. In the *Mishkan* and *Mikdash*, material things were turned toward a spiritual purpose, as just described. Indeed, the whole purpose of the *Mishkan/Mikdash* is to bring G-d's Presence into the world, thus “turning” the “darkness” of this world into “light.” Therefore, the *Mishkan* was made out of “*Shittim*” wood.

The *Lubavitcher Rebbe* adds: The word “*Shtut*” / “nonsense” or “foolishness” comes from the same root as *Shittim* and indicates that one has “turned” away from wisdom. Our Sages say (*Sanhedrin* 106a) that a person does not sin unless a “spirit of *Shtut*” has entered him. That spirit hides from a person the truth that sinning will distance him from G-d, and that, in turn, allows a person to “turn” toward sin, which would be impossible otherwise. (*Ma'amar Bati Le'gani*)

Midrash Rabbah teaches that the wood used for the *Mishkan* was taken from trees that Yaakov Avinu had planted in Egypt. Yaakov, in turn, had taken cuttings from trees that Avraham Avinu had planted in Be'er Sheva. Another *Midrash* records that the central bar that held up the *Mishkan's* planks was made from Yaakov Avinu's staff.

R' Zeidel Epstein z"l (1908-2007; *Mashgiach Ruchani* of Yeshivat Rabbeinu Yaakov Yosef (RJJ) and Yeshiva Torah Ore) asks: Why was it necessary to use objects that the Patriarchs had, in effect, sanctified? Would the *Mishkan* not be holy enough once *Hashem's* Presence rested there?

He answers: These *Midrashim* are teaching that, indeed, the most significant things in the world are those physical objects that man has sanctified and turned into something spiritual. (*He'arot*)

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

R' Mordechai Ilan z"l (1915-1981; *Av Bet Din* / Chief Justice of the Tel Aviv Rabbinical Court) writes: The primary donation to the *Mishkan* was not money; it was the donor's “heart.” If it was not accompanied by a deep understanding of the purpose of the *Mishkan*, that it was only for *Bnei Yisrael's* good, there was no value to a person's monetary donation.

(*Mikdash Mordechai*)

“They shall make an *Aron* / Ark of acacia wood, two and half cubits its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. You shall cover it with pure gold, from within and from without you shall cover it, and you shall make on it a gold crown all around.” (25:10-11)

The *Aron* was made of three layers: a wooden box plated inside and out with pure. The *Gemara* (*Yoma* 72b) teaches: “From here we learn that any Torah scholar whose inside is not like his outside is not a true Torah scholar.” Commentaries explain that a Torah scholar's outward actions must be matched by sincere thoughts inside.

R' Pinchas Halevi Ish Horowitz z"l (1731-1805; rabbi of Frankfurt, Germany; author of widely used commentaries on Tractates *Ketubot* and *Kiddushin*) asks: But are we not taught, “A person should always study Torah *Shelo lishmah* / not-for-it-sake, for studying *Shelo lishmah* leads to *Lishmah* / for its sake”? This implies that a person is permitted to study Torah even though his inner thoughts are not yet sincere!

R' Horowitz explains: There are two types of “*Shelo lishmah*.” A person should not study Torah for the sake of attaining wealth or honor. However, if a person studies Torah so that he will be recognized as a great scholar, which will, in turn, allow him to teach or influence others, that is permitted. Such a person is engaged in a proper behavior (learning Torah) and his ultimate intention is good (wanting to influence others); only his intermediate intention is not desirable (seeking honor). Nevertheless, the fact that such *Shelo lishmah* is permitted is alluded to by the design of the *Aron*--it was gold inside and out, but it included an intervening layer that was not gold.

R' Horowitz adds: There is another Talmudic statement that legitimizes similar mixed motives. The *Gemara* (*Rosh Hashanah* 4a) teaches: “If one says, ‘This coin is for *Tzedakah* so that my sons will live’ or ‘So that I will merit *Olam Ha'ba*,’ he is a *Tzaddik gammur* / completely righteous.” R' Horowitz writes: Although he has an ulterior motive, his statement is an expression of *Emunah* / faith in G-d, about which we read (*Chabakuk* 2:4), “The *Tzaddik* shall live through his *Emunah*.” Thus, his action is good and his innermost thoughts are good, while an ulterior motive intervenes between them. Nevertheless, he is considered a *Tzaddik gammur*. (*Panim Yafot* 25:12)