

In this week's "double-Parashah," the *Mishkan* / Tabernacle is assembled. Near the end of the *Parashah* (40:34), we read that *Hashem's Shechinah* / Presence rested on the finished structure: "The cloud covered the *Ohel Mo'ed* / Tent of Meeting, and the glory of *Hashem* filled the *Mishkan*."

The *Mishnah* (*Keilim* 1:6) enumerates ten levels of *Kedushah* / holiness that exist, the lowest being the holiness of *Eretz Yisrael* and the highest being the holiness of the *Kodesh Ha'kodashim* / Holy of Holies. R' Hillel Zaks z"l (1931-2015; *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Chevron Yeshiva in Yerushalayim) writes: In truth, all *Kedushah* is one, i.e., it is a manifestation of the Holiness of *Hashem*. However, the closer one comes to the source of that *Kedushah*, the greater its manifestation is and the greater is the level of one's own holiness. Why then does the *Mishnah* divide all holiness into ten discrete levels? Because of the *Halachic* implications associated with each level.

R' Zaks continues: When King Shlomo prayed at the dedication of the *Bet Hamikdash* (*Melachim I*, ch.8; *Divrei Ha'yamim II*, ch.6), he identified five levels of holiness, which are reflected in *Halachah*: One who is in *Chutz L'aretz* / the diaspora should direct his prayers toward *Eretz Yisrael*. If he is in *Eretz Yisrael*, he should direct his prayers toward Yerushalayim. In Yerushalayim, toward the *Har Ha'bayit* / Temple Mount. On the *Har Ha'bayit*, toward the *Kodesh Ha'kodashim*. In the *Kodesh Ha'kodashim*, toward the *Aron Ha'kodesh* / Holy Ark. R' Zaks notes that the holiness of the place of the Temple is eternal; it existed before the *Bet Hamikdash* was built and it remains after the physical building has been destroyed. Therefore, this *Halachah* applies even today. (*Ha'rofeh L'shvurei Lev* No.146)

Pesach

R' Moshe ben Maimon z"l (*Rambam*; 1135-1204; Spain and Egypt) writes: It is a *Mitzvat Aseh* / affirmative commandment from the Torah to tell on the night of the fifteenth of *Nissan* about the miracles and wonders that were done for our ancestors in Egypt. Even great scholars [who already know the story] are obligated to relate the story of the Exodus, and the more that one speaks about the events that happened, the more praiseworthy it is. It is a *Mitzvah* to inform one's children [about these events], even if they did not ask--each child on his own level.

(*Hil. Chametz U'matzah* 7:1-2)

R' Moshe Lewis *shlita* (educator in Yerushalayim) writes: The story of the Exodus is not merely a history; it is the foundation of all of Judaism. The more that one delves into the story, the more one's *Emunah* is strengthened and, along with it, all of his Divine service.

Another important message to take away from the story is the recognition and feeling--not just the abstract knowledge--that *Hashem*, the Creator of the world and its active Manager, loves us very much. By the end of the *Seder*, one should experience joy, the feeling [as we say in the morning prayers] that, "We are fortunate! How good is our portion, how pleasant is our lot, and how beautiful is our heritage!" How good it is to be a Jew! How happy we are to serve Him! (*Matamei Ha'shulchan* p.11)

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“Every wise-hearted woman spun with her hands; and they brought the spun yarn of turquoise, purple, and scarlet wool, and the linen.” (35:25)

Rambam z”l writes (*Hil. Bet Ha’bechirah* 1:11): The *Bet Hamikdash* may not be built at night, for it is written (*Bemidbar* 9:15), “On the day the *Mishkan* was set up”--it should be assembled during the day and not at night. Both men and women are obligated to build the *Bet Hamikdash* and to assist in its construction with their persons and their wealth, just as was done for the *Mishkan* in the desert. [Until here from *Rambam*]

R’ Avigdor Nebenzahl *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* and former Chief Rabbi of the Old City of Yerushalayim) asks: If the *Mishkan/Bet Hamikdash* may not be built at night (and also not on *Shabbat* or *Yom Tov*), then building it is a *Mitzvat aseh she’ha’zman gerama* / an affirmative commandment with a fixed time, from which women generally are exempt. Why, then, are women obligated in this *Mitzvah*?

R’ Nebenzahl offers two answers: First, a woman’s exemption from a *Mitzvat aseh she’ha’zman gerama* applies only to personal *Mitzvot*--for example, sitting in a *Sukkah*. However, building the *Bet Hamikdash* is an obligation on *Klal Yisrael*, the entire Jewish community. Women are an equal part of the community and, therefore, are obligated in the *Mitzvah*.

Alternatively, unlike the *Mitzvah* of sitting in the *Sukkah*, which involves an action, the *Mitzvah* here is to ensure that there is a *Bet Hamikdash*. While the physical construction may not be at night, ensuring that there is a *Bet Hamikdash* involves more than the actual construction. The preparations for the construction--for example, raising money and gathering materials--also are part of the *Mitzvah* and may be done at any time. Thus, this is not a *Mitzvat aseh she’ha’zman gerama*.

(*Shiurei Maran Ha’gra Nebenzahl Al Hilchot Bet Ha’bechirah* p.42)



“They brought the *Mishkan* to Moshe, the *Ohel* / Tent and all its utensils--its hooks, its planks, its bars, its pillars, and its sockets.” (39:33)

Why didn’t Moshe go to the place where the *Mishkan* was being built and save the workers the trouble of carrying all of these items to him? Isn’t that the behavior one would expect from the humblest of all men?

R’ Zeidel Epstein z”l (1908-2007; *Mashgiach Ruchani* of Yeshivat Rabbeinu Yaakov Yosef (RJJ) and Yeshiva Torah Ore) answers: The Aramaic translation and commentary *Targum Yonatan Ben Uziel* renders our verse, “They brought the *Mishkan* to Moshe, to his *Bet Midrash* / study hall, where Moshe, Aharon, and the latter’s sons were sitting, and Moshe was explaining to them the laws of the *Kehunah* / priesthood, and the elders of *Yisrael* were [also] sitting there . . .” Yes, writes R’ Epstein, Moshe was the humblest of all men. Perhaps Moshe would have gone to the builders of the *Mishkan* if he had been sitting alone. However, being humble does not give a person a right to waive the honor due others--in this case, Aharon, his sons, and the elders. (*He’arot*)

“Every man whose heart inspired him came, and everyone whose spirit motivated him brought the portion of *Hashem* for the work of the *Ohel Mo’ed* / Tent of Meeting for all its labor, and for the sacred vestments. The men came with the women; everyone whose heart motivated him brought bracelets, nose-rings, rings, body ornaments--all sorts of gold ornaments--every man who raised up an offering of gold to *Hashem*.” (35:21-22)

At first glance, these verses appear to contain redundancies--for example, “Every man whose heart inspired him” versus “Everyone whose spirit motivated him.” R’ Avraham Yosef Sherman z”l *Hy”d* (rabbi of Wojnicz, Galicia; killed in the Holocaust in 1941) explains:

The gold that was donated for the construction of the *Mishkan* / Tabernacle atoned for the Golden Calf. However, there were two different attitudes among *Bnei Yisrael*. Some donated to the *Mishkan* of their own good will, because they loved *Hashem*, Who wanted to dwell in the midst of *Bnei Yisrael*. Others donated reluctantly, motivated by fear that they would be punished for the sin of the Golden Calf. The former group is referred to in our verse as “every man whose heart inspired him,” while the latter group is described as “everyone whose spirit motivated him”--his “spirit” but not his “heart.”

Understandably, *Hashem* valued the former group’s donations more than the latter group’s, and He gave Betzalel, the *Mishkan*’s chief artisan, the ability to discern through *Ruach Ha’kodesh* / Divine inspiration which donations were given with which motivation, as it is written (35:31-32), “He filled him with G-dly spirit, with wisdom, insight, and knowledge . . . to think thoughts.” Those donations that were given with a pure motivation were used to make the *Ohel Mo’ed* and its vessels, while those that were given with a less pure motivation were used to make the garments of *Kohanim*, which have a lesser holiness. (Proof that the latter are less holy than the former is the fact that a *Kohen* is allowed to wear the priestly garments even when he is not actively engaged in the Temple service, thus deriving personal benefit from them. Deriving personal benefit from the *Mishkan* and its vessels is never permitted.) Our verse refers to this distinction when it says that the donations were used “for the work of the *Ohel Mo’ed* for all its labor,” on the one hand, “and for the sacred vestments,” on the other hand.

In the next verse, which refers to donations of women’s jewelry, only “everyone whose heart motivated him” is mentioned. R’ Sherman explains: Those who brought donations solely to obtain atonement for the Golden Calf did not permit their wives to donate their jewelry; after all, they reasoned, women did not participate in the sin of the Golden Calf and did not need atonement. Thus, only the wives of those who donated because their hearts motivated them allowed their wives to donate their jewelry.

(*Bet Avraham*)