

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH ANNOUNCEMENTS

TERUMAH

FEBRUARY 25, 2012 2 ADAR 5772

DEDICATIONS: In memory of Isadore (Ezra–Nuri) ben Shafiha Dayan

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PLEASE PRINT COPIES FOR SHUL THIS SHABBAT AS DAVID IS AWAY!

This Shabbat – Parshat Terumah, we welcome our resident scholar Baruch Abittan.

Kiddush this week is sponsored by Matthew and Hindy Mizrahi in honor of Bobby Birthday. Abal 120!

Rabbi Colish will be away in Memphis (anyone have any friends or relatives for Yosef and Leah to see?). Chantelle and I will be away celebrating a Simcha for our nephew Isaac Jemal.

We want to wish a Refuah Shelema to Meyer Kalderon who is recovering from Spinal Surgery. There is a long period of recovery and I am sure Meyer would appreciate your calls and visits. His number is 516-965-9652

SCHEDULE

FRIDAY NIGHT

- Mincha at 5:25 – Followed by Kabalat Shabbat and Arbit (Candle Lighting: 5:22)
- Short Devar Torah by Rabbi Aharon Seigel

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

- Shaharith: 9:00 followed by Kidush (Please say Shema by 8:41AM at home)

- Benai Asher Youth Program – Expanded

- Mincha following Kiddush – Amidah not before 12:36

- Women’s Learning Group 4:15 Alternating speakers, seudat shlishit served, at the Lemberger’s 1 East Olive. Class is always cancelled if there is inclement weather.

- Arbit at 6:40pm followed by Havdalah – Shabbat ends at 6:23pm

- Class with Baruch Abittan and Movie night for the kids 7:00

- Sunday Fun Day continues WHEN?

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

- Shaharit Sunday 8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

- “Mystical Torah Insights” 9:00 – 9:30 Sunday Mornings with breakfast with David Bibi or Rabbi Colish CANCELLED THIS WEEK

- Kosher Kitchen Series 6:30pm – Led by Rabbi Colish – CANCELLED THIS WEEK

- “Pathway to G-d” Mon-Fri 6:30 AM – based upon the Ramchal’s Derech Hashem with Rabbi Colish

- Men’s Halacha Class Tuesday Nights 8:30-10:30: Basar BeChalav

- “Sephardic Women’s Prayer” Tuesday nights at the Bibi’s @ 8PM with Rabbi Colish. - deep insights, simple translations and a how to guide.

The Young Israel of Long Beach will be holding their annual Scholarship Concert on Motzaei Shabbos, February 25th 2012 at 8:30 PM. It will take place in an intimate setting at the YILB Social Hall, 120 Long Beach Boulevard, Long Beach, New York. The concert will feature the renowned musical entertainer Benny Friedman who will entertain the audience with their vast repertoire of popular and Chassidish Jewish music. For further information or to order tickets please call (646)285-5301

- February 26 –Ski Trip – CANCELLED

- March 2 – Friday Night Dinner in the Shul celebrating Shabbat Across America. Please try to reach out to at least one friend/co-worker/neighbor/family member who may not otherwise experience the beauty and joy of Shabbat and invite them for the meal @5:45. Speak to Rabbi Colish for more details or to volunteer. We are looking for a dozen sponsors at \$101 each. Sponsors to date are: The Sisterhood, Ely Altarac, Azizo, Bibi, Cohn, Kahn, Barbara Levy,

Mizrachi, Ovadia, Elisheva Reinheimer, Wagner, And Waldman families. Tizkeh Lemsvot. Please let us know if you will be coming and how many as we are limited to 100.

- Joint Movie Night with and AT The Lido Synagogue continues on Motzei Shabbat, March 3rd at 7:30PM. Coordinated by Elsa Farbiarz. \$5 a person. The movie is Turn Left at the End of the World... As a family from India moves into a desert neighborhood in Southern Israel in the 1960's, the family's eldest, beautiful daughter discovers friendship and romance with the lovely local French girl. The film also explores the hardships and surprises that come with the integration of multiple families from different ethnic backgrounds (from the diaspora) and their struggle with immigration and prejudice.

- FROM THE YOUNG ISRAEL OF LONG BEACH: March 10th from 7:30-10:30 pm. The Young Israel of Long Beach in partnership with Gush Etzion, Har Bracha, Kadesh Barnea and Wellner Wineries Natural & Kosher, Sugar River and Les Petites Fermieres Cheeses Osem and Pereg Are thrilled to invite you to our annual Pre-Passover Wine & Cheese Tasting Event 120 Long Beach Blvd

- PURIM IS APPROACHING! Many of our members have requested that we send out Purim cards to members of our Synagogue in lieu of Mishloach Manot in order to save so much food from being wasted. Herman

and Rebecca Ovadia have graciously accepted to undertake this project. The Purim cards will be delivered in person to members at the reading of the Megillah. We will mail cards to those not with us for Purim. The cost is \$1 a name or \$54 to send to the entire congregation. Checks should be made out to Sisterhood of the Sephardic Congregation. Email your list to Rebecca at uft183@yahoo.com. If you have any questions feel free to call Rebecca 516-432-5690 or Hindy 516-431-8664. The list of names is attached to the email and was sent this week. If you notice anyone missing who should be on the list, please email back the Name, Address, Phone and Email address. We will B'H add them to our list. AND DON'T FORGET ... the cards don't absolve each of us of the misvah of Mishloach Manot so that on the day of Purim each of us must still send two items of food to at least one person.

- Ilana Austin wishes to remind everyone to send in their Amit lists. She notes: "We are having our best participation this year and the baskets will be beautiful (as always). This is a great opportunity to support Amit, an amazing tzedakah that does fabulous things for the youth of Eretz Yisrael."

- PURIM – This year Taanit Esther is on Wednesday March 8th and we read the Megilah on Wednesday night. The Sisterhood invites all to a post Megilah break fast meal along with entertainment for the children). We read the Megilah again

Thursday morning. Times to follow.

- ZECHER LeMachatzit Hashekel - It is customary during the month of Adar to make a charitable donation to commemorate the "Mahasit Ha'shekel," the annual half-shekel tax that every Jew would give during the times of the Bet Ha'mikdash to fund the expenses of the Temple. When one gives this money, he should not say that he gives it as "Mahasit Ha'shekel," since the actual Misva of "Mahasit Ha'shekel" does not apply nowadays, in the absence of the Bet Ha'mikdash. Rather, one should say that he makes the donation "Zecher La'mahasit Ha'shekel" – in commemoration of the "Mahasit Ha'shekel." One should give three silver half dollars (minted before 1964) or the equivalent 9 grams of silver or \$10 based on current value for each member of the household. We will be collection on Taanit Esther and before the Megilah.

- We are again collecting money for Matanot LaEvyonim. We would like to give support to a number of needy families in our own Long Beach community and in Eretz Yisrael. Contact DavidBibi@gmail.com to donate or give to ELY ALTARAC

Editors Notes

"Ve'asu Li Mikdash, Veshachanti Betochem" "And they shall make a Mikdash for ME and I will rest in THEM". This week we learn about the construction of the Mishkan and its contents. And in summation we are told, it's not so that Hashem can dwell within a portable building, its so that He will dwell within the people. The point is that each of us can be, should be, is a resting place for the Hashem.

What an incredible responsibility! How powerful must each of our actions be? We often don't know and we don't consider that every action has a reaction. Sometimes though we hear a little story that points at something one might consider very small, but which has the power to change someone else's world.

Rabbi Mendel Weinbach sent a story this week telling of an incident that happened in the lobby of a Swiss hotel. An Israeli visitor active in charitable causes noticed a family parked on lobby sofas at a late hour of the night. Upon inquiring he learned that the father, mother and daughter had an early morning return flight to Israel. In order to save the expense of another night in their hotel room they had checked out and were spending the remaining hours till their ride to the airport parked in the lobby.

When they refused his invitation to come to his room for some refreshments he brought some cookies and chocolates to them in the lobby. Upon his return to Israel he forgot the entire incident until some months later when he received an invitation to the daughter's wedding referring to him as the main mechutan (title usually reserved for the parents of the bride and groom).

Unaware of his connection he called for clarification. He was told that the bride had strayed and had become engaged to marry a non-Jew. The trip to Switzerland was a desperate attempt by her parents to dissuade her but she refused to budge.

It was only on the flight back to Israel that she kept talking about how wonderful that religious Jew was to them in the hotel lobby. She was so moved by his thoughtfulness that she decided that she wanted to return to a lifestyle which had such values.

The result was that she called off the intermarriage and soon became engaged to marry a fine, religious Jew.

When you consider that she must have heard speech after speech about how she would be ruining her life, how confused her future children might be, how she was breaking the chain that extended thousands of years, it was none of the words, none of the tears and none of the threats that made her reconsider, it was the simple action of one person.

The fact is that every one of our actions is a cause in some way and results in an effect somewhere else. There is no action without a reaction. We are simply unaware of it. But if we remember that G-d is dwelling within us and this brings tremendous responsibility and that everything we do will result in something just as amazing as changing this girl's life, then we'll consider every move we make more carefully.

Rabbi Abittan would often tell me about simple pious Jews from the old country. People who didn't know much, but lived with a tremendous simple faith and connection to Hashem whose value was beyond measure. He

told me to appreciate these people and have great respect for them, for surely they were the ones who lived and hosted the Holy Spirit. A favorite story he would tell is as follows: (reprinted from Moreshet Avot III courtesy of Rabbi YIsrael Pesach Feinhandler).

A Portuguese Marrano, who had settled in Safed, listened carefully to the Rabbi's lecture about the lechem hapanim (showbread), which used to be offered in the Bet Hamikdash every Shabbat. In his lecture, the rabbi sighed and said with anguish that now, due to our many sins, we do not have the Bet Hamikdash and we do not offer lechem hapanim. This Marrano, who had not learned Torah and was very naive in his service of Hashem, heard this, went home and innocently told his wife that every Friday she should prepare for him two loaves of bread sifted thirteen times. He requested that she kneads the dough in purity and bake it well in the oven, because it was his desire to offer the bread before the aron kodesh (the ark), and perhaps Hashem would accept the loaves which he would set before Him.

His wife baked him the loaves, and every Friday after making sure he was alone, he would stand before the aron kodesh in the shul and pray and plead with Hashem to accept his offering. He would offer his supplication like a son entreating his father, after which he would set the two loaves down and leave.

The shamash would come every Friday and remove the two loaves, without inquiring where they came from. After arbit, this G-d-fearing Jew would run to the aron kodesh, and since he wouldn't find the loaves, he would be elated and full of joy, and he would go home and tell his wife,

"Praise and thanks to Hashem, may He be blessed, for He has accepted the bread. For Hashem's honor, don't be lax in making the loaves next week and be very careful, because we do not have any means of honoring Him other than with these loaves. And so we are obligated to give Him pleasure through them." This custom of the Marrano couple continued for a long time.

One Friday, the rabbi who had given the lecture about the lechem hapanim lingered in the back of the shul. At the same time, this man came into the shul, as he did every Friday, with the two freshly-baked loaves. Thinking the Shul was empty, he approached the aron kodesh, and began to pour out his heart in prayers and supplications, without noticing that the rav. He was filled with such enthusiasm and happiness as he brought this gift before Hashem that he didn't pay attention to anything else.

The rabbi kept quiet, and saw and heard everything the man said and did, and it angered him greatly. He called to him and rebuked him: "You fool! Does Hashem eat and drink? Of course it is only the shamash who takes these loaves, and you are foolish enough to think that Hashem is the one who accepts them."

The rabbi continued to rebuke the man until the shamash came as usual to take the loaves. The rabbi called the shamash over and he admitted that he was the one who removed the two loaves every week. Upon hearing this, the poor simple Jew began to cry and asked the rabbi to forgive him, since he had erred in understanding his lecture. Although he thought he had been doing a mitzvah, he now understood that he was really doing an aveirah – a sin.

Immediately after this, a special messenger came to the rabbi from the holy Ari, and told him: "Go home and leave a will for your household, because tomorrow, at the time when you are scheduled to give your lecture, you will die, for this decree has already been set." Upon hearing these dreadful tidings, the rabbi was frightened and went to the holy Ari to ask him what had happened. The Arizal replied: "I have heard that your sin was that you have put a stop to Hashem's pleasure. From the day that the Bet Hamikdash was destroyed, Hashem never experienced pleasure as he did when the Marrano in his innocence would bring the two loaves of bread and offer them to His aron kodesh with the conviction that Hashem accepted them from him. Because you stopped him from bringing the loaves, death has been decreed upon you, and there is no way to avert this decree."

The rabbi went home and left a will for his family. On Shabbat, when it was time for him to give his lecture, he died, just as the holy Ari had foretold.

I asked what we can learn from this strange story. We supposed that one needs to be very careful when rebuking someone else. We can also learn from this story how important it is to do something LeShem Hashem, for Heaven's sake. Even when someone may be doing something wrong, look at the pleasure Hashem takes in the person who is faithful and attempts to serve Hashem with all his heart. Rabbi Abittan would say that the key in our Avodat Hashem in our service to G-d, is to ponder everything we do and to always act with complete faithfulness to Hashem.

If we maintain the thought that G-d dwells within each of us, how can we do wrong?
Shabbat Shalom, David Bibi

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: A list of raw materials necessary for building the Mishkan was presented to the Bnai Yisroel: gold, silver, copper, wool dyed sky-blue, dark red, and crimson, linen, goats wool, ram skins, acacia wood, oil, spices, incense, and precious stones. The Ark is described in detail.

2nd Aliya: The cover of the Ark and the Cherubim are detailed. The weight of the cover alone, without the Cherubim, is between 150 lb. and 2500 lb. of pure gold! The Shulchan - Table and the Showbread are described.

3rd & 4th Aliyot: The Menorah and her utensils are described. Her weight was 1 Talent = 3000 Shekels = 150 lb. of pure gold. The basic structure of the Mishkan, consisting of beams, decorative materials and leather coverings, is outlined.

5th Aliya: The Paroches- dividing partition separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Mishkan is described.

6th & 7th Aliyot: The ramped, copper, Mizbeach is described. The outer enclosure surrounding the entire Mishkan is described.

This week's Haftorah from Kings I- 5 and 6, describes the construction of the first Bais Hamikdash. Shlomo Hamelech - King Solomon, assembled the necessary materials and laborers to accomplish this monumental task - the building of Hashem's home! 30,000 men were conscripted into the labor force, along with 70,000 transporters and 80,000 stonemasons.

In 2928, four hundred and eighty years after leaving Egypt, the construction began. The connection to this weeks Parsha is obvious. The Bais Hamikdash replaced the Mishkan as the one place upon earth where G-d's presence was overtly manifest. It was during the 1st Temple when actual "miracles" occurred in the normal functioning of the Bais Hamikdash.

The whereabouts of the Mishkan is a matter of great historical controversy. Some claim that it was destroyed. Others claim that it was hidden within the Temple Mount in a great cavern directly beneath the Bais Hamikdash, and that it was placed there fully assembled. At present, a major archeological dig is underway to uncover the hidden Mishkan

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"And you shall make two Cherubim of gold." (Shemot 25:18)

As we begin to study the interesting subject of the Mishkan in the desert, we are told of the two Cherubim. These are two angelic forms of pure gold. These two statues are part of the Kaporet, the cover of the Aron, the Ark that contains the two tablets. The Cherubim have large wings that spread over the entire Ark of the Torah.

What do these two Cherubim represent? Rabbi Shimshon Pincus z"l explains that these Cherubim symbolize the relationship between us, the Jewish people, and Hashem. As we know, the concept of the existence of Hashem is not an exclusively Jewish concept. The nations of the world know and acknowledge the existence of Hashem. On every American dollar it says, "In G-d we trust." Any thinking person who opens

his eyes to look will see the existence of Hashem. Judaism, however, introduces a new concept. In the heart of mankind, it is difficult to conceive that there is a personal connection between man and Hashem. The gap between man and Hashem is too great. Jews, however, differ and say that Hashem dwells in the heart of man. It is possible to have a connection with Him, even speak directly to Him through prayer, when we say blessings and when we study Torah.

Furthermore, Hashem loves His Jewish nation with a great love, "Ahabat Olam," and we and Hashem are like a married couple! Therefore, one Cherub represents us and one represents Hashem. But, the most amazing part of this is that the two are equal. In Shir Hashirim we and Hashem are described as twins (5:2). In what way can we possibly be equal to Hashem?

Take, for example, the great Ben Ish Hai. He was a genius, a holy man and a great kabbalist. Imagine if his little son comes to him to ask him for some little thing. He will tell the child to ask his mother. He is a gaon, he knows the entire Torah, he fasted for forty years. His wife, as great as she was, was not functioning with him on these levels. But, the boy must ask Mommy. Because when she married him she became the one in charge of the house and in this realm they are like "twins." What is the bond of marriage? It is the love between them, and that is the love between us and Hashem. All this is represented by the Cherubim. It takes some doing but it is possible for us to feel this love and get close to Hashem.

Rabbi Reuven Semah

"Cedar wood, standing erect" (Shemot 26:15)

We were told to take cedar wood trees for use in the

Mishkan as beams. The word "omdim" is taken by the Midrash to mean "standing forever", that the beams and all components of the Mishkan will never fall into foreign hands. Even when not in use, they will be hidden until the great revelation, and they will then be put in use again! Why did these objects merit to be safeguarded from all our enemies while the two Batei Mikdash did not have this zechut?

The Rabbis tell us that to give for the Mishkan or the Temple is really not necessary since Hashem owns all the gold and silver in the world. He can construct anything He wants. In fact, the third Temple will come down from Heaven already built! The reason He wants us to build it is that He wants our hearts and souls behind the actual giving! Hashem desires to see if we will carry out His will and the attitude in the giving makes the donation last forever. Moshe and Bnei Yisrael were able to give with all their hearts and souls so their donations lasted forever.

We are a most generous community. We give and give, Baruch Hashem, for many causes. We have to make sure that if we're giving anyway, we should give with our hearts. Our attitude should be positive and we should especially not cause grief to the one collecting by making him wait and come back again and again! If we're going to give anyway, let us give in a way which will make our donations last forever! Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR Don't Ever Stop

The Torah in Parashat Teruma describes the Mishkan, at the center of which was the Aron, the holy ark which contained the tablets from Mount Sinai. In describing the Aron, the Torah (25:12) tells us that rings were attached to the four "Pe'amot" of the ark. Poles were then inserted through these rings, and the Leviyim would use the poles to transport the ark.

What is the definition of the word "Pe'amot"? Rashi explains this word to mean "corners," and thus the Torah refers here to the four corners of the Aron. Ibn Ezra, however, disagrees, noting that the word "Pe'amot" elsewhere in Tanach means not "corners," but rather "legs." One example is a verse in Shir Hashirim (7:2): "Ma Yafu Fe'amayich." Accordingly, Ibn Ezra asserts that, contrary to conventional thinking, the Aron had legs, and the rings for the transport poles were affixed to the legs of the Ark. Ibn Ezra notes that it would be disrespectful to have the Aron, the holiest of all objects, sit directly on the floor, and it therefore stands to reason that it had four legs on which it stood.

The question arises, however, according to Ibn Ezra's theory, why did the Torah refer to the ark's legs with the unusual term "Pa'amotav"? Why didn't it use the more common word for legs, "Raglayim"?

The answer, perhaps, is that these two words have different connotations. They both refer to legs, but to different contexts. "Regel" is used in reference to a leg that is stationary and stays in place, whereas "Pa'am" refers to a leg that is walking, that is in motion.

If so, then the Torah's use of the word "Pa'amotav" in reference to the Aron's legs becomes very significant. The Aron, which contained the Torah, had legs that were, symbolically, always moving. The message to us is that in Torah life, we must never stand still. There is never a point where we've learned enough or accomplished enough. Until our final breath of life, we must be striving to grow, to improve, to progress, to advance to the next level.

The Gemara teaches us how the Yeser Ha'ra (evil inclination) attempts to lead us to sin: "Today he says, 'Do this,' tomorrow he says, 'Do this,' until eventually the person worships idols." The simple reading of the Gemara's comment is that the Yeser Ha'ra works incrementally, luring us to make one minor compromise in our religious standards, and then another, until eventually we commit grave sins, Heaven forbid. But there is also another interpretation of the Gemara. "Today he says, 'Do this,' tomorrow he says, 'Do this'" – each day, he tells us to do the same thing we did yesterday, to be the same person we were the day before. The Yeser Ha'ra's greatest asset, according to this reading, is the natural tendency to feel complacent, to remain in one's comfort zone, to continue doing what he has always done, rather than putting in the effort to grow and advance.

There is a saying in the business world that if you're not making money, you're losing money. This is true in Torah, as well. If we're not growing, then we're falling. The vain pleasures of the world draw us like a magnet, and we resist this pull only by actively pursuing higher aspirations. If at any point we just sit back and relax, we will fall.

This is why great Torah scholars are referred to with the term "Talmid Hacham" – "bright student." Even the generation's leading scholars are called "students" because they still have more to learn and are always trying to reach new levels of achievement. The process never ends, and is never supposed to end. Human beings in this sense are greater than angels. The angels will always be who they already are, whereas we, by definition, have the unlimited capacity to grow. No matter what we've achieved, we can achieve even more, and we must try to achieve even more.

The Aron did not have "Raglayim," it had "Pa'amot," to teach us to always "be on the move." It would be a terrible mistake to feel satisfied with the Rabbi's weekly sermon and reading an occasional English book about Torah concepts. The majority of us can and must do more than that. We have to set our sights higher, and work to achieve more. Like the Aron, we must always be working to move, to progress, reaching ever higher standards of Torah study and observance.

Rabbi Wein

The detailed description of the dimensions and materials of the mishkan/tabernacle as listed in this week's parsha must contain great cosmic, if murkily unknown importance. The question of the purpose of these myriad details being included in the Torah has been asked by all students of the Torah over the ages. While the answers advanced have also been many, few of them have been truly satisfactory. The matter remains a mystery.

It is an example of the continuing inscrutability of the Creator and the finite and limited ability of His

creatures to divine His methods and instructions. And perhaps this itself is the greatest and strongest message of the parsha. God does not need structures to be built to His service. The words of the prophets of Israel make this point abundantly clear. Yet somehow the building and its exact method of construction and its size and dimensions are part of the service of Israel to its God.

The very mystery of it, the difficulty of human rational logic to encompass and understand the entire subject, is the object lesson of the parsha. Humankind has always attempted to create gods in its own image – to have a human god that we can somehow recognize and deal with.

However the Torah states that the opposite is true - humans were created in the image of God, so to speak, and throughout life and the ages, the quest to reach and understand that image has been the focal point of human history and existence. God will soon tell Moshe that no human being can "see" Him and remain alive. The mystery of the mishkan/tabernacle is part of that quest to "see" Him and understand our relationship to the Creator.

The mishkan/tabernacle also illustrates the partnership, so to speak, between God, Israel and humankind generally. The mishkan/tabernacle required human effort and resources. People had to, of their own volition, give material of great value and labor of great talent to the project. This fact alone signifies the relationship between God and Israel.

If there is a movement of goodness and spirituality on the part of us here in the lower world there will be a commensurate response in the Heavenly world

above as well. The famous parable is the phrase in Psalms, that the Lord is the shadow of our right hand. When a human being moves his hand, the shadow it makes moves with it. So too do our actions and behaviors here on earth call forth a movement and response from Heaven. Thus the words of the rabbis that the Temple built below is parallel to the Temple built above in Heaven.

Therefore the dimensions and instructions given to us for building our earthly Temple are meant to allow it to match, in exactly, the Heavenly Temple that it is to mimic. This is part of the goal of humans to imitate, so to speak, their Creator in attitude, values and behavior. The mishkan/tabernacle stands as the symbol of this symbiotic relationship between Heaven and humans that is in itself the basic axiom of Judaism and Jewish life

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky - Parsha Parables

Something Old...Something New

This week, the Torah begins to elaborate upon what has now become a ritual in virtually every Jewish community; the building campaign!! Hashem instructs his people to donate the proper materials in order construct the Mishkan, the Tabernacle used by the Jews in the desert. The Posuk begins "and this is the terumah (offering) that you shall take from them, gold, silver and copper..." (Exodus 25:2). The Torah then continues to enumerate other various materials that were necessary to build the Tabernacle. All of these were available to the Jews from the booty of their miraculous liberation from Egypt and the spoils taken at the Reed Sea. However the last two items listed

are quite out of the norm. The Torah mentions that the Jews were also required to bring both "the skin of the Tachash animal (used to cover the Tabernacle) and Acacia wood", used to make the pillars upon which the covering shall rest.

I could not imagine where in the desert did these staples exist. There are no trees in the desert and I surely have no recollection of them bringing Tachash animals out of Egypt. I don't even know what a Tachash animal is!!

Rashi helps us on both accounts. He explains that our forefather Yaakov, before his sojourn to Egypt, foresaw that his descendants will travel back through the desert upon their return to the land of their inheritance. He decided to plant acacia trees in Egypt to benefit the future generations. As far as the Tachash, Rashi also comments that the "tachash" was an animal that only existed for the generation of the desert wanderers and became totally extinct afterwards.

That is quite an antithetical combination. The beams that were used to support the covering were hundreds of years old, yet the skins used for the covering of the Mishkan were made from the tachash, an animal, newly discovered, and never to be seen again. It sounds like the tachash skin was a new-fangled fad that faded as quickly as it came.

Of what is the Mishkan made? Is it made of ancient beams representing the heritage of yesteryear or is it made from a new-found breed that represents elements of modernity?

The Story

I once overheard a conversation of a vibrant young Rabbi, who was a scion of generations of

Rabbanim. He was on the phone with someone who was arguing with a certain decision that the young rabbi had made. The young Rav was a confident young man, but the person on the other end of the line was questioning his credentials.

"How long have you been a rabbi?" chided the skeptic.

The young Rav answered. "I may have received my semicha just a few years ago, but I have been a Rabbi for 400 years!"

The Message

There is a tremendous lesson for us in the melding of these two materials. When building the sanctuary of the Almighty one must realize that in addition to all the gold, silver, copper and fine wool we must utilize two items that will both cover and support the sanctuary.

The ancient acacia wood and tachash skin represent the combining of the elements of the new and the old, both the visions of the previous generations and the fleeting ingenuity of the present. For our spiritual growth we must utilize the seeds that Yaakov planted hundreds of years before our existence, together with a cover that represents the immediate contemporary generation, can be combined to create the place of Hashem's presence. And though the cover of the tent, may be that of a technological modernity or a passing fancy, one must always remember that the beams that support the tent must be made of the age old ideals that our forefathers planted to support and enhance today's latest "tachash" skin.

Sir Jonathan Sacks Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

The Architecture of Holiness

From here to the end of the book of Exodus the Torah describes, in painstaking detail and great length, the construction of the Mishkan, the first collective house of worship of the Jewish people. Precise instructions are given for each item – the tabernacle itself, the frames and drapes, and the various objects it contained – including their dimensions. So for example we read:

"Make the tabernacle with ten curtains of finely twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, with cherubim woven into them by a skilled worker. All the curtains are to be the same size—twenty-eight cubits long and four cubits wide ... Make curtains of goat hair for the tent over the tabernacle—eleven altogether. All eleven curtains are to be the same size—thirty cubits long and four cubits wide ... Make upright frames of acacia wood for the tabernacle. Each frame is to be ten cubits long and a cubit and a half wide ..." (Ex. 26: 1-16)

And so on. But why do we need to know how big the tabernacle was? It did not function in perpetuity. Its primary use was during the wilderness years. Eventually it was replaced by the Temple, an altogether larger and more magnificent structure. What then is the eternal significance of the dimensions of this modest, portable construction?

To put the question more sharply still: is not the very idea of a specific size for the home of the Shekhinah, the Divine presence, liable to mislead? A transcendent God cannot be contained in space. Solomon said so:

"But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built." (1Kings 8: 27)

Isaiah said the same in the name of God Himself: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be?" Isaiah 66: 1

So no physical space, however large, is big enough. On the other hand, no space is too small. So says a striking midrash:

When God said to Moses, 'Make Me a tabernacle,' Moses said in amazement, 'The glory of the Holy One blessed be He fills heaven and earth, and yet He commands, Make me a tabernacle?' ... God replied, 'Not as you think do I think. Twenty boards on the north, twenty on the south and eight in the west are sufficient. Indeed, I will descend and confine My presence even within one square cubit.' (Shemot Rabbah 34: 1)

So what difference could it make whether the tabernacle was large or small? Either way, it was a symbol, a focus, of the Divine presence that is everywhere, wherever human beings open their heart to God. Its dimensions should not matter.

I came across an answer in an unexpected and indirect way some years ago. I had gone to Cambridge University to take part in a conversation on religion and science. When the session was over, a member of the audience came over to me, a quiet, unassuming man, and said, "I have written a book I think you might find interesting. I'll send it to you." I did not know at the time who he was.

A week later the book arrived. It was called *Just Six Numbers*, subtitled *The deep forces that shape the universe*. With a shock I discovered that the author was the then Sir Martin, now Lord Rees, Astronomer Royal, later President of the Royal Society, the oldest and most famous scientific body in the world, and Master of Trinity College Cambridge. In 2011 he won the Templeton Prize. I had been talking to Britain's most distinguished scientist.

His book was enthralling. It explained that the universe is shaped by six mathematical constants which, had they varied by a millionth or trillionth degree, would have resulted in no universe or at least no life. Had the force of gravity been slightly different, for example, the universe would either have expanded or imploded in such a way as to preclude the formation of stars or planets. Had nuclear efficiency been slightly lower the cosmos would consist only of hydrogen; no life would have emerged. Had it been slightly higher there would have been rapid stellar evolution and decay leaving no time for life to evolve. The combination of improbabilities was immense.

Torah commentators, especially the late Nechama Leibowitz, have drawn attention to the way the terminology of the construction of the tabernacle is the same as that used to describe God's creation of the universe. The tabernacle was, in other words, a micro-cosmos, a symbolic reminder of the world God made. The fact that the Divine presence rested within it was not meant to suggest that God is here not there, in this place not that. It was meant to signal, powerfully and palpably, that God exists throughout the cosmos. It was a man-made structure to mirror and focus

attention on the Divinely-created universe. It was in space what Shabbat is in time: a reminder of creation.

The dimensions of the universe are precise, mathematically exact. Had they differed in even the slightest degree the universe, or life, would not exist. Only now are scientists beginning to realise how precise, and even this knowledge will seem rudimentary to future generations. We are on the threshold of a quantum leap in our understanding of the full depth of the words: "How many are your works, Lord; in wisdom You made them all" (Ps. 104: 24). The word "wisdom" here – as in the many times it occurs in the account of the making of the tabernacle – means, "precise, exact craftsmanship" (see Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, III: 54).

In one other place in the Torah there is the same emphasis on precise dimensions, namely, Noah's ark: "So make yourself an ark of cypress wood. Make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around" (Gen. 6: 14-16). The reason is similar to that in the case of the tabernacle. Noah's ark symbolised the world in its Divinely-constructed order, the order humans had ruined by their violence and corruption. God was about to destroy that world, leaving only Noah, the ark and what it contained as symbols of the vestige of order that remained, on the basis of which God would fashion a new order.

Precision matters. Order matters. The misplacement of even a few of the 3.1 billion letters in the human genome can lead to

devastating genetic conditions. The famous "butterfly effect" – the beating of a butterfly's wing somewhere may cause a tsunami elsewhere, thousands of miles away – tells us that small causes can have large consequences. That is the message the tabernacle was intended to convey.

God creates order in the natural universe. We are charged with creating order in the human universe. That means painstaking care in what we say, what we do, and what we must restrain ourselves from doing. There is a precise choreography to the moral and spiritual life as there is a precise architecture to the tabernacle. Being good, specifically being holy, is not a matter of acting as the spirit moves us. It is a matter of aligning ourselves to the Will that made the world. Law, structure, precision: of these things the cosmos is made and without them it would cease to be. It was to signal that the same applies to human behaviour that the Torah records the precise dimensions of the tabernacle and Noah's ark.