

The Parshah in a Nutshell

Parshah Terumah

Exodus 25:1-27:19

The people of Israel are called upon to contribute **fifteen materials** -- gold, silver and copper; **blue, purple** and **red**-dyed wool; flax, goat hair, animal skins, wood, olive oil, spices and gems -- out of which, G-d says to Moses, "They shall make for Me a Sanctuary, and I shall **dwell** amidst them."

On the **summit** of Mount Sinai, Moses is given detailed instructions on how to construct this dwelling for G-d so that it could be readily **dismantled, transported and reassembled** as the people journeyed in the desert.

In the Sanctuary's inner chamber, behind an artistically woven curtain, was the **Ark** containing the Tablets of Testimony engraved with the Ten Commandments; on the Ark's cover stood two winged **cherubim** hammered out of pure gold. In the outer chamber stood the seven-branched **Menorah** and the Table upon which the "**showbread**" was arranged.

The Sanctuary's three walls were fitted together from 48 upright wooden boards, each of which was overlaid with gold and held up by a pair of **silver foundation** sockets. The roof was formed of three layers of coverings: (a) tapestries of multi-colored wool and linen; (b) a covering made of goat-hair; (c) a covering of ram and tachash **skins**. Across the front of the Sanctuary was an embroidered screen held up by five posts.

Surrounding the Sanctuary and the copper-plated **Altar** which fronted it was an enclosure of linen hangings, supported by 60 wooden posts with

silver hooks and trimmings and reinforced by **copper stakes**.



Parshah Terumah

Exodus 25:1-27:19

At Mount Sinai, the people of Israel experienced an all-consuming, if brief, revelation of G-d. Now, they are instructed to build a *mishkan* or "**dwelling**" (also called a *mikdash*, "Sanctuary," and commonly referred to as "the Tabernacle") in which G-d will "dwell amidst **them**" as a perpetual presence in the Israelite camp.

The people are told to make an "**uplifting**": (*terumah*) to G-d consisting of:

Commentary

dwelling: *They shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell amidst them (25:8)*

G-d desired a dwelling place in the lower realms.

(Midrash Tanchuma, Naso 16)

This is what man is all about; this is the purpose of his creation and of the creation of all the worlds, higher and lower--that there be made for G-d a dwelling in the lower realms. (Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)

them: *They shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell amidst them (25:8)*

The verse does not say, "and I will dwell within it," but "and I will dwell within them"--within each and every one of them.

(Shelah)

uplifting: *Speak to the Children of Israel, that they should take to Me a terumah ("uplifting") (Exodus 25:2)*

Every created entity has a spark of G-dliness within it, a pinpoint of divinity that constitutes its "soul", its spiritual function and design. When we utilize something to serve the Creator, we penetrate its shell of mundanity, revealing and realizing its divine essence. Thus we elevate these "sparks", reuniting them with their Source.

(The Chassidic Masters)

Gold, silver, and copper;

Blue, purple, and scarlet [-dyed wool], fine linen, and goat [hair];

Rams' skins dyed red, tachash skins, and shittim wood;

Oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense

Shoham stones, and gemstones for setting in the *efod* and in the breastplate.

Of these fifteen **materials**,

Commentary

Gold: *Gold (25:3)*

The world was not considered worthy to make use of gold. So why was it created? For the Mishkan.

(Midrash Rabbah)

materials: *Gold, silver, and copper... (25:3-7)*

The materials donated for the Mishkan correspond to the components of the human being. "Gold" is the soul; "silver," the body; "copper," the voice; "blue," the veins; "purple," the flesh; "red," the blood; "flax," the intestines; "goat hair," the hair; "ram skins dyed red," the skin of the face; "tachash skins," the scalp; "shittim wood," the bones; "oil for lighting," the eyes; "spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense," the nose, mouth and palate; "shoham stones and gemstones for setting," the kidneys and the heart.

Rabbi Shmuel said: The materials donated for the Mishkan correspond to the heavens. "Gold" is the sun; "silver," the moon; "copper," the western horizon at sunset; "blue," the sky; "purple," the clouds; "red," the rainbow; "flax," the seraphim; "goat," the constellation of capricorn; "ram skins dyed red," thunder; "tachash skins," lightning; "shittim wood," shooting stars; "oil for lighting," the seven planets; "spices for the anointing oil and for the incense," dew and rain; "shoham stones and gemstones for setting"--hail and snow. Said G-d: "My dwelling is in the heavens; if you make Me a Sanctuary on earth, I shall dwell in it."

(Midrash HaGadol)

They shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I shall dwell amidst them

The remainder of the Parshah of Terumah consists of G-d's detailed instructions to Moses

Commentary

The Mishkan is the equivalent of the universe.

Regarding the work of the first day of creation, it says, "He who stretches out the heavens like a curtain" (Psalms 104:2). Regarding the making of the Mishkan it says, "And you shall make curtains of goat's hair for a tent over the Tabernacle" (Exodus 26:7).

Regarding the work of the second day of creation, it says, "Let there be a firmament... and let it divide between the waters and the waters" (Genesis 1:6). Regarding the making of the Mishkan it says, "And the veil shall divide for you between the Holy and the Holy of Holies" (Exodus 26:33).

Regarding the work of the third day of creation, it says, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together" (Genesis 1:9). Regarding the making of the Mishkan it says, "And you shall make a copper basin, and the base thereof of copper, for washing" (Exodus 30: 18).

Regarding the work of the fourth day of creation, it says, "Let there be luminaries in the heavens" (Genesis 1:14). Regarding the making of the Mishkan it says, "And you shall make a Menorah of pure gold" (Exodus 25:31).

Regarding the work of the fifth day of creation, it says, "Let fowl fly above the earth" (Gen. 1:20). Regarding the making of the Mishkan it says, "The cherubim shall spread out their wings upward" (Exodus 25:20).

On the sixth day man was created [to inhabit and cultivate the earth]. Regarding the Mishkan, G-d says to Moses, "Bring near Aaron your brother [to perform the service in the Sanctuary]" (Exodus. 28:1).

Of the seventh day we have it written, "And the heaven and the earth were completed... And G-d completed His work... and G-d blessed... and G-d sanctified..." (Genesis 2:1-3). Regarding the making of the Mishkan it says: "Thus was completed all the work of the Tabernacle... And Moses blessed them... And it came to pass on the day that Moses completed the Tabernacle... and sanctified it" (Exodus 39:32-43; Numbers 7:1). (Midrash Rabbah)

on how to construct and assemble the various components of the Mishkan.

According to all that I show you, the form of the tabernacle, and the form of all its vessels--so shall you make it.

The Ark

Before detailing the construction of the edifice itself, G-d instructs Moses on the making of its "vessels"--the various furnishings that the Tabernacle housed.

The Ark is to be constructed in the form of an open-topped box, **2.5 cubits** (approximately 45 inches) long, 1.5 cubits wide, and 1.5 cubits high. It should be made of *shittim* wood covered **within and without** with pure gold, with a gold "crown" around its rim. The function of the ark is to house the two

Commentary

2.5 cubits: *They shall make the Ark... two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height (25:10)*

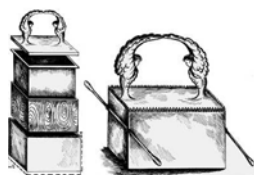
The measurements of the Ark were all in fractions, indicating that to become a vessel for Torah, a person must first "break" his ego. (Rabbi Natan Adler)

The measurements of the Ark were all in halves, indicating that no matter how much one studies Torah, one never masters its whole; "Longer than the land is its measure, and broader than the sea" (Job 11:9). (Pardes Yosef)

within and without: *And you shall overlay [the Ark] with pure gold, inside and outside (25:11)*

Any Torah scholar whose interior is not like his exterior is no Torah scholar. (Talmud, Yoma 72b)

Tablets of Testimony, engraved with the Ten Commandments, "which **I shall give** to you."



The Ark

Two poles, also of gold-covered shittim wood, are to be inserted into four gold rings affixed to the four corners of the ark, with which the ark is to be carried from place to place.

*The poles shall be in the rings of the Ark; they shall **not be removed***

Commentary

I shall give: *They shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell amidst them (25:8)*

There was once a king who had an only daughter, and one of the kings came and married her. When her husband wished to return to his country, her father said to him: "My daughter, whose hand I have given you, is my only child; I cannot part with her. Neither can I say to you, 'Do not take her,' for she is your wife. This one favor, however, I ask of you: wherever you go to live, prepare a chamber for me that I may dwell with you, for I cannot leave my daughter."

In the same way, G-d said to Israel: "I have given you the Torah. I cannot part with her, and I also cannot tell you not to take her. But this I request of you: wherever you go, make for Me a house wherein I may dwell."

(Midrash Rabbah)

not be removed: *The poles shall be in the rings of the Ark; they shall not be removed (25:15)*

This is actually one of the 365 prohibitions of the Torah-- never to remove the carrying poles from the ark, even when the Mishkan is in a state of rest, as it often was for several months at a time. Indeed, the poles remained in the Ark for the more than 380 years that it stood in the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem! This particular law applies only to the Ark, and not to any of the other vessels of the Mishkan.

A *Kaporet* ("cover")-- also 2.5 by 1.5 cubits--should be made for the Ark.

*And you shall make two **cherubim** of gold... at the two ends of the cover.*

*And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings on high, overspreading the cover with their wings, and their **faces** shall look one to another.*

The *Kaporet* with its two cherubim should be hammered out of a single block of pure gold.

Commentary

The Ark, which served as the depository of the Torah, was the most secluded of the Mishkan's vessels, expressing the ideal that the Torah scholar (who serves as an "Ark" for the Torah) must remove himself from all worldly endeavors. At the same time, however, he must be in a constant state of "portability"--even more so than the other "vessels."

If there is a soul thirsting for the word of G-d in the ends of earth, the Torah scholar must be prepared to leave his inner sanctum to transport the Torah to that place. So even when he sits in his "Holy of Holies," he must have his "carrying poles" inserted in his "rings"--always at the ready to venture out at a moment's notice, constantly aware of his responsibilities toward the world outside.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

cherubim: *Make two cherubim of gold (25:18)*

The cherubim had the faces of children (Rashi). They were representations of the images seen by Ezekiel in his vision of the divine "chariot" (Nachmanides).

faces: *And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings on high... and their faces shall look one to another (25:20)*

But in another verse (II Chronicles 3:13) it says, "they faced [the walls of] the room"? When the people of Israel fulfilled G-d's will, the cherubim would face each other; and when the people of Israel did not fulfill G-d's will, the cherubim would face the walls of the room. (Talmud, Bava Batra 99a)

"And there I will commune with you," says G-d to Moses;

I will speak with you from above the Kaporet, from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of the Testimony, of all things which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.

The Table and the Menorah

"Make a table of shittim wood; two cubits shall be its length, and a cubit its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height." Like the Ark, the Table is to be overlaid with gold, given a gold **crown** along its rim, and have four gold rings affixed to its corners for its two carrying poles.

Commentary

crown: *Make for it a rim of gold round about (25:24)*

There were three crowns: that of the Altar, that of the Ark, and that of the Table. The one of the Altar (representing the priesthood), Aaron deserved and he received it. The one of the Table (representing the wealth of royalty), David deserved and received. The one of the Ark (representing the Torah) is still available, and whosoever wants to take it, may come and take it. (Talmud, Yoma 72b)

The function of the **Table** is to hold the *lechem hapanim* ("showbread"), which were arranged on it in two tiers of six loaves each. The Table's accessories should include pans (for holding the specially shaped breads), vertical side-frames and horizontal supports on which these were arranged, and two small bowls for the *levonah* (incense) placed on the tabletop between the two tiers of showbread---all made of pure gold.

*And you shall make a **Menorah** of pure gold. Of **beaten work** shall the Menorah be made---its*

Commentary

Table: *And you shall set upon the Table showbread before Me always (25:30)*

The Table stood in the Tabernacle, and there rested upon it the blessing from Above, and from it issued nourishment to the whole world. Not for a moment was that Table to remain empty, since blessing does not rest upon an empty place. Therefore the showbread had always to be renewed upon it each Sabbath, in order that the blessing from Above might always rest upon it, and that food and blessing, because of it, might emanate from that Table to all the tables of the world.

So, too, should every man's table [have bread on it] when he says Grace After Meals: in order that the blessing from Above should rest upon it, it must not be empty.

(Zohar, part II, 153b)

Menorah: *And you shall make a Menorah... its shaft, and its branches, its goblets, its bulbs, and its flowers... (25:31)*

The height of the Menorah was eighteen handbreadths. Three handbreadths for the base and the flower upon it; two handbreadths of unadorned stem; one handbreadth for cup, bulb and flower; again two handbreadths of unadorned stem; one handbreadth for a bulb out of which two branches come forth, one on each side, extending and rising to the same height as the Menorah; one handbreadth plain; one handbreadth for a bulb out of which two branches come forth, one on each side, extending and rising to the same height as the Menorah; one handbreadth plain; one handbreadth for a bulb out of which two branches come forth, one on each side, extending and rising to the same height as the Menorah; and then two handbreadths plain. There now remained three handbreadths, in which space were three cups, a bulb and a flower (in each of the seven branches).

Commentary

The cups were like Alexandrian goblets (wide at the top and tapered down towards the base); the bulbs like Cretan apples; and the flowers like the blossoms around the capitals of columns. It will be found, therefore, that there were twenty-two cups, eleven bulbs, and nine flowers.

beaten work: *Of beaten work shall the Menorah be made (25:31)*

It should not be made out of sections, and its branches and lamps should not be made piecemeal and welded together. Rather, it should originate in its entirety as a single piece [of gold], which should be hammered and spliced into shape, and the branches bent in either direction.

(Rashi)

Six branches shall extend from its sides; three branches of the Menorah out of the one side, and three branches of the Menorah out of the other side (25:32)

Rashi, following the basic meaning of the text, states that the branches of the Menorah extended upward from its main stem in straight, diagonal lines--not curved, as commonly depicted. This reading of the text is supported by an illustration in Maimonides' own hand, which likewise shows straight, diagonal branches.



Sketch of Menorah by Maimonides' hand from manuscript of his *Mishneh Torah*

(Maimonides refers to the illustration as a rough sketch designed to show the general form and placement of the

Commentary

Menorah's components, rather than an exact depiction; the shape of the branches, however, is a major rather than a minor detail. As Maimonides' son, Abraham, writes: "The six branches... extended in straight lines from the Menorah stem to the top, as my father drew them--not curved, as others have drawn.")

Traditional Rabbinical sources do include an opinion--that of the "Maaseh Choshev"--that the Menorah's branches were curved. However, it is obvious from the words of the Maaseh Choshev that the author did not see Maimonides' illustration. (He mentions Rashi's opinion that the branches were straight, but noting that Maimonides says only that they "extended upward," he deduces that Maimonides differs from Rashi. This understanding of Maimonides' opinion clearly indicates that the Maaseh Choshev was unaware of the illustration which Maimonides sketched in his original manuscript of the very text he quotes).

The common practice of depicting the Menorah with curved branches derives from the infamous "Arch of Titus," erected by the Roman emperor to celebrate his defeat of the Jews and his destruction of the Temple, in which a Menorah (with curved branches) is shown being triumphantly carried off to Rome, and which bears the inscription "Judah Captive." The curved branches are only one of many inaccuracies in this Menorah, which differs in numerous ways from the Torah's specifications. It is most unfortunate that, for many Jews, the image of the Menorah is as depicted on an arch constructed to celebrate the Temple's destruction, rather than as described by the Torah and its traditional commentaries.

I therefore urge that every effort be made to correct this error by taking care to always draw the Menorah with diagonal branches, and to follow this model in all representations of the Menorah, such as menorahs used for the kindling of Chanukah lights, and so on.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Likkutei Sichot vol. 21)

Three decorated goblets in each branch (25:33)

Another interesting feature of Maimonides' illustration (see previous citation) is that the "goblets" or "cups" that were part of the Menorah's design are shown upside down. Apparently, Maimonides was the recipient of a tradition, or was privy to a nowadays unknown Midrash, that this was how the goblets were formed in the Menorah.

The significance of the Menorah's upside-down goblets can be understood in light of another "inverted" feature of the Sanctuary, when it attained its permanent form as the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. "When a person builds a house," says

shaft, its branches, its goblets, its bulbs, and its flowers, shall be [hammered] of the same [piece of gold].

"And six branches shall come out of its sides: three branches of the Menorah out of the one side, and three branches of the Menorah out of the other side." Together with the center shaft, this made seven branches, which are to be topped by seven lamps; "and they shall light its lamps, that they may give light over its face."

And look that you make [the Menorah and its parts] after their pattern, which is shown you on the mountain

The Roof Coverings

Commentary

the Midrash, "he makes the windows narrow on the outside and wider on the inside, so that the light from the outside should illuminate the interior. But when King Solomon built the Holy Temple he made the windows narrow within and wide without (as per I Kings 6:4), so that its light should emanate to the outside and illuminate the world." As the Holy Temple was not a recipient of light but a disseminator of light, its windows were turned inside out.

By the same token, a goblet can serve as a receptacle of drink or as a dispenser of drink. The Sanctuary being the source of blessing and nurture for the entire world, the goblets depicted within it were shown in a dispensing, rather than receiving, mode.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Likkutei Sichot vol. 21)

shown: *And look that you make [the Menorah and its parts] after their pattern, which is shown you on the mountain (25:40)*

Moses had difficulty comprehending the construction of the Menorah until G-d showed him a Menorah of fire.

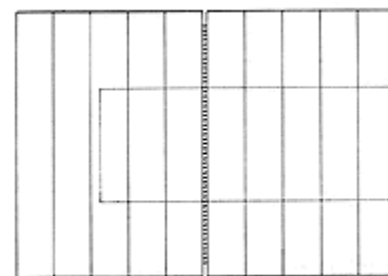
(Rashi)

After describing the three major "vessels" of the Tabernacle---the Ark, the Table, and the Menorah---G-d proceeds to detail the making of its roof coverings.

Three layers of coverings are to be draped over the walls of the Tabernacle, to form its roof and almost completely cover its sides. (The construction of the walls themselves are detailed in the next chapter).

The first covering (which the verse calls, like the edifice itself, "the Mishkan") should consist of ten tapestries, made of "fine-twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet wool," with "cherubim of artistic work" woven into the fabric.

The ten tapestries should each measure 28 x 4 cubits, and should be sewn together to make two large sheets of five tapestries each (making each "grouping" of five tapestries 28 x 20



The tapestries over the Tabernacle

cubits in size). The two "groupings" are then to be joined together by means of 50 gold clasps inserted into loops of blue-dyed wool sewn along

Commentary

artistic work: *Make the Mishkan [covering] ten tapestries... with cherubim of artistic work shall you make them (26:1)*

"Artistic work" means that the images were not embroidered, but of the weave itself, and done in such a way that one figure showed on one side and a different figure on the other.

"Embroidered work" were images made with needlework, and which were the same on both sides.

(Rashi)

clasps: *And you shall join the tapestries with the clasps, that the Mishkan may be one (26:6)*

the edges of the outermost tapestry in each "groupings." Thus joined, the ten tapestries will form a sheet 40 cubits by 28 cubits (approximately 60 x 42 feet).

[Since the walls of the Tabernacle formed a structure 31 cubits long, 12 cubits wide, and ten cubits high, the first covering almost completely enveloped this structure, hanging down 8 cubits on each side and 9 cubits in the back. (The front end of the tabernacle was covered by the separate "screen" described later.)]

The second covering (called *ohel*, or "tent") should be made of goat hair. It should be larger than the first, consisting of 11 strips, each 30 cubits by 4 cubits, joined into **two "groupings"** --- one of five strips sewn together, and a second of six. These, in turn, should be joined together with 50 copper clasps. (Altogether, the second covering will thus have an area of 44 cubits by 30 cubits.)

Commentary

As seen from the inside of the Sanctuary, the golden clasps imbedded in the tapestries were like stars glittering in the heavens.

(Beraitat Melechet HaMishkan)

two "groupings": *Make the Mishkan [covering] ten tapestries... And make sheets of goat hair as a tent-covering over the Mishkan; make them eleven sheets... and you shall enfold the sixth sheet (26:1-9)*

The ten multi-colored tapestries, in two groups of five each, represent the Ten Commandments (engraved on two tablets). The eleven sheets of goat hair, sewn together in groups of five and six, represent the Five Books of Moses and the Six orders of the Mishnah... The "folded sheet" represents the Talmud, which enfolds and defines the Torah... The fifty clasps represent the fifty days from the Exodus to the Giving of the Torah.

(Midrash HaGadol)

When draped over the first covering, the second covering will hang down 9 cubits on either side of the Tabernacle--one cubit more than the first covering--leaving only the silver foundation sockets of the Tabernacle exposed (see below). It should be made to overlap slightly in the front and completely cover the back wall, even "**trailing** behind the back of the Tabernacle."

These two covering are to be topped by a "roof" of red-dyed ram skins and **tachash** skins.

The Walls

Commentary

trailing: *And the remnant that remains of the sheets of the tent, the half curtain that remains, shall trail behind the back of the Tabernacle (26:12)*

The Mishkan thus resembled a lady strolling through the market with the hems of her dress trailing behind her.

(Talmud, Shabbat 98b)

tachash: *And you shall make a covering... of tachash skins above (26:14)*

The tachash was a multi-colored animal, which was created specifically for the Tabernacle and existed only at that time.

Rabbi Hoshaya taught that it was a one-horned animal.

(Jerusalem Talmud)

In truth, "Everything that G-d created, He created solely for His glory" (Ethics of the Fathers 6:11). It is only that, in our material world, a thing's exterior face often belies its intrinsic purpose.

But there was one creature, the tachash, which existed only in the time and place it was needed for the making of a "dwelling for G-d." Thus the tachash expressed the true nature of every creation: that it exists to the sole end of serving and revealing the divine essence implicit within it.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

*And you shall make boards for the Tabernacle of **shittim** wood standing upright*

A defining feature of the Tabernacle is its portability: the "vessels" are equipped with "carrying poles"; the roof coverings are of cloth and animal skins. The walls of the Mishkan were likewise made to be dismantled, transported and reassembled numerous times, as the people of Israel set up camp in various locations in the course of their journey through the desert.

The Mishkan--G-d instructs Moses--should have three walls, fitted together out of 48 "boards" (*kerashim*): 20 boards to form the right (south) wall, 20 boards to form the left (north) wall, and 8 boards to make the back wall to the west.

The boards should be made of shittim wood and covered with gold. Each board should be 10 cubits long, 1.5 cubits wide, and 1 cubit thick.

Commentary

shittim: *And you shall make boards for the Tabernacle of shittim wood (26:15)*

According to the Talmud, the *shittah* was a type of cedar; in Rabbi Saadiah Gaon's (Arabic) translation of the Torah it is rendered *shant*, or "acacia."

Chassidic teaching sees the word *shittim* as related to the word *shetut*, "folly"--an allusion to the fact that the function of the Mishkan was to transform the folly of materialism into "folly of holiness"--commitment to G-d that transcends the rationale and normalcy of "the way things are."

wood: *And you shall make boards for the Tabernacle of shittim wood (26:15)*

How did the Children of Israel obtain wood in the desert? Rabbi Tanchuma explained: Our father Jacob foresaw with his holy spirit that Israel was destined to build a Sanctuary in the desert; so he brought cedars to Egypt and planted them [there], and instructed his children to take them along when they left Egypt.

(Rashi)

The boards should be stood upright, their 10 cubit length forming the 10 cubit height of the Mishkan. The 48 boards should be inserted into 96 cubit-high silver "foundation sockets" (*adanim*)---two sockets to a board. The bottom cubit of each board should be whittled to form two "pegs" for insertion into the foundation sockets.

The boards should be joined to each other by means of gold "rings" or brackets inserted into slits made in their top. Each wall should also be reinforced with four "cross bars" (two on top, and two on bottom) inserted into rings affixed to the boards' exterior. An additional "center bar" should run "through the middle" of the boards, from one end to the other."

Two Chambers

Stood upright and joined side by side, the 48 boards of the Tabernacle will form a U-shaped enclosure whose inside area is 30 cubits by 10 cubits. This area should be divided into two chambers: a 20 x 10 outer chamber to the east;

Commentary

For all the years that the children of Israel were in Egypt, Jacob's cedars served as a link to their past and a promise of their future. "This is not your home," the growing trees said. "You, like us, hail from a loftier, holier place. And soon you will leave this depraved land, to be reclaimed by G-d as His people. You will then uproot us from this foreign land and carry us triumphantly to Sinai, where you will construct out of us a dwelling for the divine presence in your midst."

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

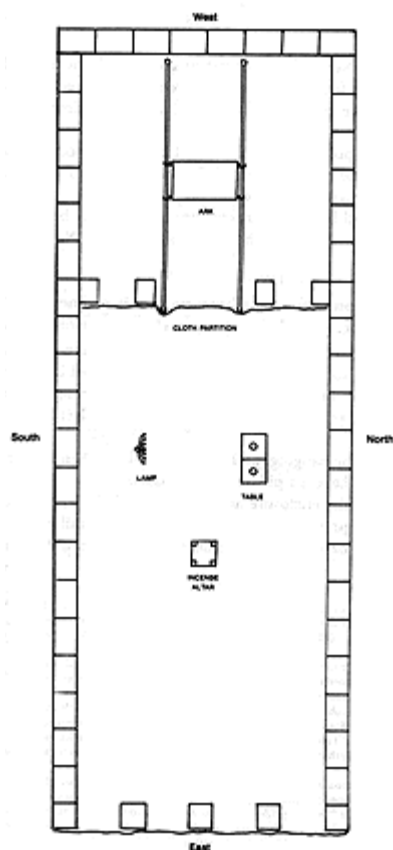
through the middle: *And the middle bar in the midst of the boards shall reach from end to end (26:28)*

It lay there by miracle. (It was a single, 72-cubit long bar which passed through the three walls; the necessary bending between the angles of the walls was miraculously done by itself).

(Talmud & Rashi, Shabbat 98b)

and an 10 x 10 inner chamber (the "Holy of Holies") to the west.

To separate the two chambers, a *Parochet* ("veil" or "partition") should be made of "blue, purple and scarlet wool, and fine-twined linen; with cherubim of artistic work" woven into the fabric. Four pillars of gold-covered shittim wood, inserted into for silver foundation sockets, should hold up the Parochet. (Thus the Mishkan had a total of 100 silver foundation sockets.) The Parochet should be hung exactly 20 cubits from the eastern end of the



The Mishkan and its "Vessels"

Mishkan, which will place it directly under the golden clasps which joined the two "groupings" of tapestries in the first roof-covering (as per above).

The Ark containing the Tablets of Testimony should be placed in the "Holy of Holies" behind the Parochet. In the outer chamber, the Menorah should be placed to the right (**south**) of the room, and the Table to the left (**north**).

Commentary

south: *And you shall place... the Menorah opposite the Table on the south side of the Tabernacle; and you shall place the Table on the north side (26:35)*

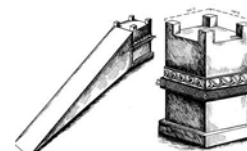
Said Rabbi Yitzchak: One who desires to become wise should turn to the south [when praying], and one who desires to become rich should turn to the north. Your sign

[The outer chamber also contained the "Golden Altar," whose construction and function are described in next week's Parshah.]

The front (east) end of the Mishkan has no boards, but should be covered with a "screen" (*masach*) held up by five pillars of gold-covered shittim wood inserted into five copper sockets. Like the Parochet, the "screen" should be a tapestry of multi-colored wool and fine-spun linen. It should be decorated with images of "embroidered work."

The Outer Courtyard

Moses is commanded to construct the Altar--a hollow, earth-filled structure made of **copper**-plated shittim wood--to be placed outside the Mishkan, in front of the "screen" on its eastern side; on this "Outer Altar," selected parts of the offerings brought to the Sanctuary are burnt.



The Altar

Commentary

for this is the Table was to the north, and the Menorah to the south.

Said Rabbi Joshua ben Levi: One should always turn to the south, because through obtaining wisdom, he will obtain wealth.

(Talmud, Bava Batra 25b)

copper: *And you shall make an Altar... and you shall overlay it with copper (27:1-2)*

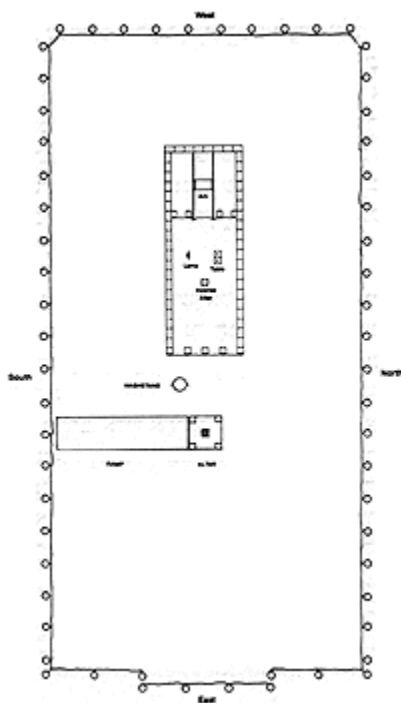
Why copper? Just like copper tarnishes and then can be scrubbed clean, so the people of Israel, although they sin, they repent and are forgiven.

(Midrash HaGadol)

And you shall make its pans to receive its ashes, and its shovels, and its basins, and its forks, and its firepans: all its vessels you shall make of copper.

Both the Mishkan and the Altar should stand within an enclosure or "courtyard" (*chatzer*).

The Enclosure should measure 100 cubits from east to west and 50 cubits north to south. Its walls should consist of linen hangings held up by pillars of shittim wood with silver hooks and silver trimmings inserted in copper sockets. A total of sixty pillars should be made, including four pillars to support a 20-cubit screen that should stand before the entranceway in the center of the eastern side of the enclosure.



The Mishkan and the Enclosure

*All the utensils of the tabernacle in all its service, and all its pegs, and all the **pegs** of the enclosure, shall be of copper.*

Commentary

pegs: *All [the Mishkan's] pegs, and all the pegs of the enclosure, shall be of copper (27:19)*

These "pegs" served to hold down the coverings of the Mishkan and the walls of the Enclosure so that they should not lift in the wind. I am not sure if they were stakes driven into the ground, or if they were just weights tied to and hung upon the fabrics to hold them down.

Commentary

(Rashi)

The deeper significance of Rashi's uncertainty is as follows: If the stakes were driven into the ground, then the earthen floor of the Mishkan formed an integral part of its structure. If, however, the stakes merely weighed down the edges of the coverings, then the relationship of the Mishkan to its floor was more superficial, and its holiness did not permeate its floor to the same extent as it did its other parts.

The Mishkan sanctified and elevated a broad cross-section of physical materials, including "higher" vegetable and animal-derived substances as well as inanimate minerals. But the minerals used in its construction were of the more precious sort--gold, silver and copper. Unless the earthen floor of the Mishkan formed an integral part of the edifice, the "lowliest" elements of the physical world had to await the construction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem (made primarily of mortar and stone) to become part of the divine dwelling on earth.

(The Chassidic Masters)

Why Are We Here?

Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Courtesy of MeaningfulLife.com

This, the mother of all questions, is addressed in turn by the various streams of Torah thought, each after its own style.

The Talmud states, simply and succinctly, "I was created to serve my Creator." The moralistic-oriented works of *Mussar* describe the purpose of life as the refinement of one's character traits. The Zohar says that G-d created us "in order that His creations should know Him." Master Kabbalist Rabbi Isaac Luria offered the following reason for creation: G-d is the essence of good, and the nature of good is to bestow goodness. But goodness cannot be bestowed when there is no one to receive it. To this end, G-d created our world -- so that there should be recipients of His goodness.

Chassidic teaching explains that these reasons, as well as the reasons given by other kabbalistic and philosophical works, are but the various faces of a singular divine desire for creation, as expressed in the various "worlds" or realms of G-d's creation. Chassidism also offers its own formulation of this divine desire: that we "Make a home for G-d in the material world."

A Home For G-d

What does it mean to make our world a home for G-d?

A basic tenet of our faith is that "the entire world is filled with His presence" and "there is no place void of Him." So it's not that we have to bring G-d into the material world -- He is already there. But G-d can be in the world without being at home in it.

Being "at home" means being in a place that is receptive to your presence, a place devoted to serving your needs and desires. It means being in a place where you are your true, private self, as opposed to the public self you assume in other environments.

The material world, in its natural state, is not an environment hospitable to G-d. If there is one common feature to all things material, it is their intrinsic egocentrism, their placement of the self as the foundation and purpose of existence. With every

iota of its mass, the stone proclaims: "I am." In the tree and in the animal, the preservation and propagation of the self is the focus of every instinct and the aim of every achievement. And who more than the human being has elevated ambition to an art and self-advancement to an all-consuming ideal?

The only thing wrong with all this selfishness is that it blurs the truth of what lies behind it: the truth that creation is not an end in itself, but a product of and vehicle for its Creator. And this selfishness is not an incidental or secondary characteristic of our world, but its most basic feature. So to make our world a "home" for G-d we must transform its very nature. We must recast the very foundations of its identity from a self-oriented entity into something that exists for a purpose that is greater than itself.

Every time we take a material object or resource and enlist it in the service of G-d, we are effecting such a transformation. When we take a piece of leather and make a pair of *tefillin* out of it, when we take a dollar bill and give it to charity, when we employ our minds to study a chapter of Torah -- we are effecting such a transformation. In its initial state, the piece of leather proclaimed, "I exist"; now it says, "I exist to serve my Creator." A dollar in pocket says, "Greed is good"; in the charity box it says, "The purpose of life is not to receive, but to give." The human brain says, "Enrich thyself"; the brain studying Torah says, "Know thy G-d."

The Frontier of Self

There are two basic steps to the endeavor of making our world a home for G-d. The first step involves priming the material resource as a "vessel for G-dliness": shaping the leather into *tefillin*, donating the money to charity, scheduling time for Torah study. The second step is the actual employment of these "vessels" to serve the divine will: binding the *tefillin* on the arm and head, using the donated money to feed the hungry, studying Torah, etc.

At first glance, it would seem that the second step is the more significant one, while the first step is merely an enabler of the second, a means to its end. But the Torah's account of the first home for G-d built in our world places the greater emphasis on the construction of the "home," rather than its actual employment as a divine dwelling.

A sizable portion of the book of Exodus is devoted to the construction of the Sanctuary built by the children of Israel in the desert. The Torah, which is usually so sparing with words that many of its laws are

contained within a single word or letter, is uncharacteristically elaborate. The fifteen materials used in the Sanctuary's construction are listed no less than three times; the components and furnishings of the Sanctuary are listed eight times; and every minute detail of the Sanctuary's construction, down to the dimensions of every wall-panel and pillar and the colors in every tapestry, is spelled out not once, but twice -- in the account of G-d's instructions to Moses, and again in the account of the Sanctuary's construction.

All in all, thirteen chapters are devoted to describing how certain physical materials were fashioned into an edifice dedicated to the service of G-d and the training of the *Kohanim* (priests) who were to officiate there. (In contrast, the Torah devotes one chapter to its account of the creation of the universe, three chapters to its description of the revelation at Mount Sinai, and eleven chapters to the story of the Exodus).

The Sanctuary is the model and prototype for all subsequent homes for G-d constructed on physical earth. So the overwhelming emphasis on its "construction" stage (as opposed to the "implementation" stage) implies that in our lives, too, there is something very special about forging our personal resources into things that have the potential to serve G-d. Making ourselves "vessels" for G-dliness is, in a certain sense, a greater feat than actually bringing G-dliness into our lives.

For this is where the true point of transformation lies - - the transformation from a self-oriented object to a thing committed to something greater than itself. If G-d had merely desired a hospitable environment, He need not have bothered with a material world; a spiritual world could just as easily have been enlisted to serve Him. What G-d desired was the transformation itself: the challenge and achievement of selfhood transcended and materiality redefined. This transformation and redefinition occurs in the first stage, when something material is forged into an instrument of the divine. The second stage is only a matter of actualizing an already established potential, of putting a thing to its now natural use.

Making Vessels

You meet a person who has yet to invite G-d into his or her life. A person whose endeavors and accomplishments -- no matter how successful and laudable -- have yet to transcend the self and self-oriented goals.

You wish to expand her horizons -- to show him a life beyond the strictures of self. You wish to put on *tefillin* with him, to share with her the divine wisdom of Torah.

But he's not ready yet. You know that the concept of serving G-d is still alien to a life trained and conditioned to view everything through the lens of self. You know that before you can introduce her to the world of Torah and mitzvot, you must first make her receptive to G-dliness, receptive to a life of intimacy with the divine.

So when you meet him on the street, you simply smile and say, "Good morning!" You invite her to your home for a cup of coffee or a Shabbat dinner. You make small talk. You don't, at this point, suggest any changes in his lifestyle. You just want her to become open to you and what you represent.

Ostensibly, you haven't "done" anything. But in essence, a most profound and radical transformation has taken place. The person has become a vessel for G-dliness.

Of course, the purpose of a vessel is that it be filled with content; the purpose of a home is that it be inhabited. The Sanctuary was built to house the presence of G-d. But it is the *making* of vessels for G-dliness that is life's greatest challenge and its most revolutionary achievement.