

A PARASHA THOUGHT

Over & Over Again



RABBI
MOSHE ZVI
CRYSTAL

If I were to ask you, how many times does the Torah tell us what to make for the building of the *Mishkan*, what would you think? Ramban counts five times (five times!) the Torah tells us what is included in the *Mishkan*. Sometimes the Torah tells us in a few succinct words, “You should make an *Aron*, and a *Shulchan*, and a *Menorah*,” etc. And sometimes the Torah goes into more detail. A few weeks ago, my family had the pleasant company of a guest at our Shabbos table who posed the following question: “Regarding so many *mitzvos* of the Torah we find that the details of how to properly fulfill them are left to the Oral transmission of Torah to clarify. All the laws regarding Tefillin for example. While regarding the *Mishkan*, the Torah not only tells us in great detail what should be done, but then repeats everything again! (And again!) What is going on?” Ramban himself actually goes into much technical discussion as to what each command about the *Mishkan* was for and accomplished

in the story of the building of the *Mishkan*, before concluding with a final thought. We find places in the Torah where it would seem to be an overly verbose retelling of an episode. The classic example of this being in regards to the story of Eliezer, the servant of Avraham, on his mission to find a wife for Yitzchak. “The conversations of the slaves of our forefathers are more pleasing to Hashem than the laws of their descendants, as the episode of Eliezer takes up several columns of the Torah whereas many laws are learned just a small allusion in the text,” say our Sages. Here too, says Ramban, because of Hashem’s

love for this topic He repeated it many times in the Torah. Rav Hirsh as well deals with this repetition, where he speaks to the great meaning and symbolism of every detail in the *Mishkan*. As our sages say, the creating of the *Mishkan* was like creating a new

and unblemished mini universe. As such, not only did each detail in the plans mean a lot, but only with the carrying out of each detail with the correct and holiest intentions could this *Mishkan* fulfill its mission. For this the Torah emphasizes first how important every detail in the plan was, and subsequently how everything was done properly with all its minutia on both the physical and spiritual planes. My response that Friday night was something along the lines of, “Gee, that’s a good question. Someone has got to discuss that.” Baruch Hashem, I was right! 🌟



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A SHINING EXAMPLE

RABBI EPHRAIM SKOLNIK

Mr. Goldberg settled into his seat on the plane for his return trip from Israel to England. As he got comfortable, he turned to the man next to him who, although was bare headed, he assumed was Jewish and introduced himself. "What is your name?" he asked. "Mark Schechter," the man replied. They continued chatting for the next while. As they got more comfortable Mr. Goldberg asked him, "Mark why don't you come to my house for a Shabbos meal and see what Judaism is about?" Rolling up his sleeve, Mark showed him the numbers on his arm. "I went through the Holocaust and survived. I had one son who was taken from me. I have not seen him in thirty years and he must have been killed by the Nazis. I have given up on G-d and Judaism." "I am very sorry to hear that," said Mr. Goldberg. "Either way we should keep in touch when we return to England." After they disembarked, Mr. Goldberg realized he never exchanged phone numbers, but at that point he already lost sight of Mark Schechter.

A week later was Yom Kippur and when the time for *yizkor* came, Mr. Goldberg, having both parents, stepped outside the

synagogue to get some fresh air. As he was standing there a man passed by eating a sandwich. Recognizing him he said "Mark! It's so nice to see you again. Today is Yom Kippur and even very unaffiliated Jews refrain from eating." "I told you," said Mark angrily, "I am done with Judaism." "Well now is *yizkor*. Why don't you come inside and say *yizkor* for your son." "I don't believe in G-d," answered Mark. "Don't do it for yourself; do it for your son." "Okay," he replied. As they entered the shul, Mark clearly looked out of place. With a deep breath he approached the *chazzan*. "What is the name of the deceased?" asked the *chazzan*. "Yaakov," Mark said softly. "And your Hebrew name?" continued the *chazzan*. "Moshe," he replied. "What's your last name?" asked the *chazzan*. Not sure of the question, Mark replied, "Schechter." The *chazzan* looked up with tears in his eyes. "Abba is that you? I have been looking for you for thirty years since the war. I thought the Nazis certainly killed you." By now the entire congregation had reentered the *shul* and there was not a dry eye in the room as father and son tearfully embraced for the first time in thirty years. 🕯

TEFILLA TIDBITS

RABBI YAAKOV MARCHUK

In the first of the two *Birchas Hatorah* we add a very unusual *tefilla* "to sweeten the words of Your Torah in our mouth." In the Introduction to his *sefer Eglei Tal*, Rabbi Avraham Borenstein writes that even though we have a general rule that *mitzvos* are "*lav lehanos nitnu*", not given for enjoyment, but are the service for Hashem (for example if someone vows to not derive benefit from his friend he may listen to him blow *shofar*, because a *mitzvah* is not considered deriving benefit), however, with regards to learning Torah, enjoying the learning is a part of the *mitzvah*. This is why the Gemara says "a person should study topics that he enjoys" – that enjoyment and sweetness is an integral part of the *mitzvah* of learning Torah. The *Ohr haChaim* (*Devarim* 26-11) writes: "If a person would truly feel the sweetness of the Torah he would run after the study of Torah, and all the money in the world would be of no interest to him, because the Torah encompasses all the good in this world." 🕯

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE ZOHAR

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

The Testimony of Rabbi Yitzchak of Akko (Part V)

Recap: According to the wife and daughter of Rabbi Moshe de Leon, their father/husband was the creator of the *Zohar* and attributed it to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai to boost publicity and sales.

Rabbi Yitzchak of Akko's testimony continues:

I was greatly surprised when I heard this story told to me by Rabbi David de Pancorbo, and I began to believe that Rabbi Moshe de Leon did in fact compose the *Zohar* himself. Then I travelled to Talavera where I met the great scholar Rabbi Joseph Ha-levi Abulafia, son of the renowned *kabbalist* and member of the Toledo rabbinate – Rabbi Todros. I questioned him as well about the *Book of the Zohar* and he replied to me with the following words: "Know for a fact that the book which Rabbi Moshe de Leon possessed was written by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, for I tested him to see if he copied from an ancient text or wrote the book himself. I [Rabbi Joseph Ha-levi Abulafia] had requested several lengthy segments of the *Zohar* from Rabbi Moshe de Leon, which he of course provided for me. Sometime later, I hid one of the segments and told him that I had lost it. Rabbi Moshe de Leon asked me to show him the end of the text that preceded the missing part and the beginning of the text that followed it. A few days later he sent me the manuscript and I [Rabbi Joseph Ha-levi Abulafia] compared the two documents. Not a single discrepancy was found. This was the great test to which I subjected Rabbi Moshe de Leon and it proves that he was copying from an ancient text."

To be continued... 🕯