

TERUMAH (EXODUS 25:1-27:19)

Welcoming G-d

2001 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Seplovitz

This week's Torah reading discusses the collections for the construction of the *Mishkan*. This portable Tabernacle served as the Temple in the desert and in Israel until King Solomon built the "permanent" one in Jerusalem.

The first in a long and distinguished line of rabbinic fund-raisers, Moses put the word out that he would be accepting donations. He requested "**gold, silver, copper, sky-*blue wool, dark red wool, wool died with crimson worm, linen, goat's wool, reddened ram's skins, blue-processed skins, acacia wood, oil for the lamp, spices for the anointing oil, and sardonyxes and other precious stones...They will make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in them.*" Exodus, 25:3-8)

"*I will dwell IN **THEM**.*" It would seem more logical to write, "*They will make for me a sanctuary, and I will dwell IN **IT***". In fact, we are told that G-d "limited" His presence, and somehow made the *Mishkan*, and later, the Temple, and today, the Temple Mount as a special place where the *Shechina*, G-d's Divine Presence, rests.

However, perhaps of greater significance, is the fact that by making a building for G-d, we are inviting Him to dwell **IN US**.

Allow me to share with you the comments I made at a funeral several years ago.

I used to be the rabbi of a small synagogue in Kingston, New York. Although the Shul was orthodox in affiliation and practice, a very small percentage of our members were actually orthodox. One of our members once asked me to buy him some *Tzitzis* in New York. *Tzitzis* are the fringes that are worn on a four-cornered garment, such as a *Tallis* that is worn in Shul. (See Numbers, 15:37-41 and "Fringe Benefits".) In addition to the Mitzvah of wearing the large *Tallis* during Morning Services, there is also a Mitzvah to wear a smaller *Tallis* throughout the day. (Most people wear this garment beneath the shirt, although some Chassidim wear it over the shirt.)

At this gentleman's funeral, I mentioned his pride in this particular Mitzvah. Many people, I said, pray to G-d in the morning, and then put away their *Tallis* and say good-bye to Him for the rest of the day. By wearing this small *Tallis* throughout the day, we take G-d with us to work and to life.

This is the message of “*they will make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in THEM.*” Of what value is a Shul, beautifully decorated with expensive wood and precious stones, if that is the place where we tell G-d to hide? After we come to G-d’s house to pray, we must take Him with us when we leave. When we go about our daily lives, at work, at the dinner table, and in the gym, we must always remember that wherever we go we are in G-d’s house, as long as we are willing to invite Him in.

Have a great Shabbos.

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