

## You shall make the beams of the Mishkan of shittim wood, standing erect. (26:15)

*Rashi* teaches that the word *ha'kerashim*, with the *hay ha'yediah*, (the beams) with the definite article *hay*, is written by design. The Torah is alluding to specific *shittim* wood that was “standing” – designated for the unique purpose of serving as the walls of the *Mishkan*. Yaakov *Avinu* took along with him saplings from the *shittim* trees planted by Avraham *Avinu* in his *eishel*, travelers’ welcome house, where he performed his famous acts of *chesed*, kindness. Yaakov then replanted these saplings in Egypt and commanded his children that, upon leaving the country, they were to take these trees along. He saw that in the future Hashem would instruct the Jews to erect a *Mishkan*, and these trees would play a vital role in its construction.

Apparently, the holy Sanctuary, which was the place in which the Divine Presence reposed, the holiest place on earth, still required an infusion of *kedushah* via the medium of Yaakov and Avraham’s *shittim* wood which were imbued with the *middah*, character trait, of *chesed*. Why was it necessary to supplement the already elevated level of *kedushah* inherent in the *Mishkan*?

In his *He’aros*, **Horav Zaidel Epstein, zl**, derives an important principle concerning our *avodas ha’kodesh*, holy service, to Hashem. The most sublime level of *kedushah*, sanctity, rests upon a material/physical entity which a person himself sanctified. It is no *kuntz*, novelty, to have something holy brought down for our utility. It is much more sublime for man to put forth effort, and by his spiritual efforts effect a transformation in a simple, mundane, physical object. The beams which were used for the *Mishkan* – which comprised the walls of this most holy edifice – were made from trees that were originally planted for the purpose of performing *chesed* and thereby glorifying Hashem’s Name. By taking the saplings from these trees, replanting them for the express purpose of designating them for the *Mishkan*, *Klal Yisrael* elevated them beyond their base materialism, endowing them with holiness. Likewise, the *Briach HaTichon*, Middle Bar, of the *Karshei HaMishkan*, beams/walls of the *Mishkan*, was derived from Yaakov’s *makel*, walking stick. This is all the Patriarch possessed, a simple walking stick. Despite being relegated to live in abject poverty, he served Hashem with complete love and fidelity. The stick represented his physical possessions – or lack thereof. This symbol of poverty was elevated to serve in the Sanctuary.

Thus, when Hashem chose a place where He would repose His Divine Presence, He selected an edifice whose walls represented Avraham’s *chesed* and Yaakov’s paucity. Hashem wanted the real thing – a *kedushah* which was catalyzed by the devotion of man. He wanted the *Mishkan* to be constructed of material which had been elevated and sanctified through human devotion and labor on behalf of the Divine. This product maintained greater significance before Hashem than the work of the Ministering Angels.