

He erected up the courtyard all around the Mishkan and the Mizbayach... And Moshe completed the work. The cloud covered the Ohel Moed, and the glory of Hashem filled the Mishkan. (40:33, 34)

Ramban addresses the reason *Sefer Shemos* concludes with the subject of the *Mishkan*, when, in fact, it is addressed earlier in *Parshios Terumah* and *Tetzaveh*. He explains that *Sefer Shemos* is referred to as the *Sefer HaGeulah*, Book of Redemption. It is the book that relates how Hashem came to His close nation and redeemed them from the pain and misery of the Egyptian bondage. Although they were no longer under the thumbscrews of their Egyptian masters, they were still in exile, in the sense that, until they would return to their place and come back to the level of their ancestors, their redemption would not be complete. When they left Egypt, they were still exiles, because they had not entered into their Promised Land. Wandering in the wilderness, not knowing what tomorrow would bring, hardly engendered a sense of freedom. When the nation arrived at *Har Sinai* and made the *Mishkan*, thereby setting the stage for the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, to reside among them, they had returned to the level of their forefathers. Then, they were considered *geulim*, redeemed. Thus, *Sefer Shemos* concludes, "The glory of Hashem filled the *Mishkan*."

Let us attempt to grapple with the above statement. Following their release from Egypt, *Klal Yisrael* were wandering in the harsh wilderness – without a stable home, source of livelihood and sustenance, lacking everything that is part of a settled life. They lived from day to day, sustained by the Heavenly *manna*. Yet, it was specifically this set of circumstances which defined their freedom. How are we to understand this?

Horav Arye Leib Bakst, zl, explains that the underlying purpose of the *briah*, the creation of this world, is that *Klal Yisrael* achieves perfection. Hashem chose us as His emissaries to the world, as His nation. We must be worthy of this distinction. This can only come about through commitment, obedience, devotion, and self-sacrifice. Then, after reaching this pinnacle, we have arrived. We are free! This is the ultimate *geulah*, liberation. We derive from the *Ramban* that this plateau can be achieved when *Klal Yisrael* lives with the *Shechinah*, as it was when Hashem's glory filled the *Mishkan*. This is the perfection which connotes true freedom. The only way *Klal Yisrael* can replicate this perfection, which is the result of Hashem's glory being among us, is through the medium of *limud haTorah*, Torah study. Everything else mundane is merely vacuous and foolish. We either have it – or we do not. When Hashem reposes among us, we are not in exile – regardless of the physical conditions in which we find ourselves. One can be in a ghetto or a concentration camp and be free; alternatively, one can be outfitted from head to toe in luxury, his days and nights filled with honor and power, but still remain a slave in exile. It all depends on his degree of perfection, his relationship with Hashem.