

These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of the Testimony. (38:21)

Rashi explains the redundancy of the word *Mishkan* as alluding to the *Bais HaMikdash*, which was taken as collateral in its two destructions for the sins of *Yisrael*. *Mishkan HaEidus*, the *Mishkan* of the Testimony, attests to the fact that Hashem forgave *Klal Yisrael* for sinning with the Golden Calf. Despite the people's incursion, the Divine Presence still rests among *Klal Yisrael*. Two explanations for the *Mishkan*: it serves as collateral; it is a symbol of forgiveness. Obviously, this requires a bit more elucidation. *Horav Yaakov Kaminetsky, zl*, offers an analogy which sheds light on the *Mishkan's* dual function.

A wealthy man, who is slowly seeing his material assets depreciate as his business investments go sour, must act quickly in order to save whatever he can. Otherwise, he will lose everything to bankruptcy. First, he sells a portion of his assets, items which are not of much use to him or which have little to no significance. If necessary, he will sell more. He certainly will not sell those items which are of great sentimental value or those which he needs for living. In other words, one gives up that to which he is not that attached.

When *Klal Yisrael* was asked to contribute towards the building of the *Mishkan*, they gave wholeheartedly. This was despite the fact that they had a long journey before them and a war against the kings who inhabited *Eretz Yisrael*. They could have said that gold and silver were metals of great value, items which they might store away in case of hardship. Hashem's resting place could be constructed of copper or other materials of lesser value. Why not save the gold and silver? The fact that they contributed their precious metals toward the *Mishkan* indicates how vital the *Mishkan* was to them. The fact that Hashem only temporarily destroyed the *Batei Mikdash* indicates how much they mean to Him. One does not part with that which is critical to one's survival. Likewise, Hashem values what is vital to His People.

The Jews gladly parted with their money when they contributed toward the *Mishkan*, because they understood its significance. Hashem agreed; therefore, He never permanently destroyed our Sanctuary. This is also why Hashem forgave the sin of the Golden Calf. The reason that they sinned was that they were misled into believing that Moshe *Rabbeinu* had died. The fear of being left alone, adrift in the wilderness without a leader to guide them, was overwhelming to them, causing them to lose it and sin. Now, however, when they demonstrated their complete faith in Hashem by emptying their pockets, by giving up their material assets just so that there would be a place for Hashem to rest His Divine Presence among the people, they showed their deep abiding faith. This was sufficient reason for Hashem to forgive them.

Did Hashem really forgive them for the sin of the Golden Calf? Did we not read (*ibid.* 37:34), *U'b'yom pakdi u'pokaditi*, "And on the day that I make My account, I shall bring their sin to account against them." Hashem declared that, whenever *Klal Yisrael* would sin in the future, they would

suffer some of the punishment they should have received in retribution for the sin of the Golden Calf. Apparently, all was not forgiven. What, then, is represented by the *Mishkan*?

The commentators explain that actually, Hashem imposed two punishments upon *Bnei Yisrael* with regard to the Golden Calf. First and foremost, Hashem was prepared to do away with the Jewish People. A nation that does not maintain fidelity is not a nation. Second, Hashem put a halt to His *Hashroas HaShechinah*; the Divine Presence would no longer repose among the Jewish People. Hashem relinquished the punishment of *Hashroas HaShechinah*, and he continued his repose in the *Mishkan*. The punishment of destruction was put on hold, to be remembered every time we do something negative that warrants recalling the sin of the Golden Calf.

Nonetheless, *Chazal* do state that the *Mishkan* symbolizes Hashem's forgiveness. Yet, after all is said and done, we are still paying for the *cheit ha'eigel*. We derive a powerful lesson from here. True, Hashem still bears *charon af*, anger, for the sin of the Golden Calf. This is not going away, as it will be with us for generations – each one paying part of the punishment. I guess that is the price of not being annihilated right then and there! The fact that Hashem continues to be with us, that we are able to maintain *kirvas Elokim*, a closeness with G-d, is worth it all. It makes us feel as if we have been forgiven. With Hashem, we are able to surmount any challenge. Heaven forbid, without Hashem, we have nothing; we are nothing.

A *Yiddish* expression refers to a special Jew, a spiritually elevated Jew: a *derhoibener*. I think this refers to a Jew who feels a complete closeness with Hashem to the point that, in his mind, he senses a form of tangibility to this relationship. These are unique individuals, quite possibly not among the movers and shakers of a community, but rather, the ones who are in the background, *davening*, learning, reciting *Tehillim*. They do not require anyone's attention. They have Hashem's attention. These people are in constant communion with the Almighty. European Jews were like that. Most lacked material wealth. They were satisfied simply with serving Hashem with all of their hearts and souls.

Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl, was known to become very emotional when he would relate the following story that he had heard from a Holocaust survivor. A group of Jews was taken to Auschwitz in what was to be their final earthly journey. The infamous sadistic practice of the Nazi beasts was to remove anything of value from their victims prior to sending them to their deaths. Gold teeth were mercilessly removed, followed by their clothes, and then the accursed "showers," which were actually the gas chambers. While one group went "in," another group waited in the anteroom until their turn came. To prevent the Jews from running away, they were surrounded by guards and vicious dogs (actually, they were one and the same).

The Jews that were corralled in the ante room were acutely aware that in mere moments they were going to sacrifice their lives for the glory of Hashem. Each one of them must have had a potpourri of thoughts and remembrances going through his mind. Suddenly, one of them remembered that day was *Simchas Torah*, and he screamed out to his friends, "*Yidden*, today is *Simchas Torah*! We

may not have a Torah with which to dance – neither do we have a *Chumash* or *siddur* – but we have the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. Let us dance with Hashem. This will be our last earthly dance.” They all joined in spirited singing and dancing – with Hashem.

Rav Shach commented, “Believe me, how envious I am of them. The ecstasy that they achieved during these moments of spiritual affinity were the most pleasurable moments that one could ever achieve.”