

## Did everything as Hashem commanded Moshe. (38:22)

A king commissioned a master craftsman to build a summer mansion. The king gave him the approved architectural drawings and instructed him to build the mansion in accordance with the drawings. The craftsman was a brilliant builder who had ideas of his own which he incorporated into the edifice. When it was completed, he felt that the mansion was far more beautiful than what he would have constructed based upon the architect's drawings. He was beyond proud of himself. It, therefore, came as a surprise when the king frowned upon seeing and entering the mansion. "What did you do?" asked the king. "I enhanced the structure by adding a little striking beauty in a place that the architect glossed over." The king, clearly upset, said, "I hired you to follow my plans – not yours. I wanted the mansion to be built as I envisioned it – not as you imagined it. No amount of creative artistry could satisfy the king, because perfection, in his eyes, was fulfilled when his will was carried out.

This concept is at the heart of our *parshah*, when the phrase *kaasher tzivah Hashem*, "as Hashem commanded," is repeated no fewer than eighteen times. With this repetition, the Torah is teaching us a crucial lesson; true perfection is not determined by human creativity, intelligence or talent. True perfection is achieved only by conforming to Hashem's *ratzon*, will. Indeed, the people could have built a grander *Mishkan*, more gold and silver, more artistic in design. Had they done so, however, had they deviated one iota from Hashem's will, the *Mishkan* would have been imperfect. No embellishment can substitute for precise obedience. This applies equally to each of us. In the famous words of *Horav Elazar Ezkari, zl* (author of *Sefer Chareidim*), *Bilevavi Mishkan evneh l'hadar Kevodo*, "In my heart, I will build a resting place to glorify His Honor." We all are building a Sanctuary for Hashem within ourselves. *V'asu li Mikdash v'Shochanti b'socham*, "They shall make for Me a Sanctuary, and I will dwell among them" (*Shemos* 25:8). *Chazal* observe that it does not say *b'socho*, within it, but *b'socham*, within them. We understand from this that the ultimate purpose of the *Mishkan* was not simply to have a physical location where the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, would repose, but for each Jew to create a space, a personal *Mishkan* within his or her heart.

Just as the *Mishkan* in the wilderness required precise craftsmanship, building a *Mishkan* within one's heart likewise demands deliberate spiritual construction, in which every aspect of this undertaking adheres fastidiously to the will of Hashem. Every action, every thought and intention in our lives contributes toward the construction of our personal *Mishkan*. Thus, they must conform with the Heavenly demands placed upon us.

*Shlomo Hamelech* says, *Mikol mishmor netzor leebecha*, "More than anything, guard, protect your heart" (*Mishlei* 4:23). The heart is not just a place for emotions, it is the spiritual engine of a person. If the heart is guarded and purified, it becomes an appropriate home for the *Shechinah*. This is what is entailed in building a *Mishkan b'levaveinu*. The *Mishkan* was comprised of free-willed donations of gold, silver and copper - each person giving in accordance with his means. Some gave more – others gave less. Everyone gave, and Hashem valued these donations equally.

Likewise, the building of our inner *Mishkan* requires contribution from every aspect of our being – large and small. No *mitzvah*, no moment of spiritual growth, is deemed insignificant. Each act of *chesed*, every *kavanah*, intention of prayer, contains some of the materials which comprise the building blocks of our personal *Mishkan*.

To live with the ideal of *Bilvavi Mishkan evneh* is to live in constant awareness that Hashem's Presence is not somewhere "out there," but rather, within each and every one of us. We must remember that with every sincere act of *avodas Hashem*, we turn our heart into a veritable Sanctuary worthy of the *Shechinah*.

Two *mishkanos*: the external *Mishkan* built by the people in the wilderness; the personal *Mishkan* which each one of us is enjoined to build within themselves. The physical *Mishkan* symbolizes grandeur and visibility and is designed to inspire awe in the public. The inner Sanctuary symbolizes humility and concealment, a place where only Hashem sees the heart's true nature. While the physical *Mishkan* is "complete," finished in its design and beauty, the inner *Mishkan* is never complete. A person is constantly working on himself, refining his *middos*, character traits, constantly striving to bring Hashem's Presence deeper into his being. Thus, one understands that he never "arrives" spiritually; he is always on the road of growth.

The greatest impediment to success in building the inner *Mishkan* is arrogance. When one is filled with himself he leaves no room for Hashem to enter. All one needs is a whiff of arrogance, and his personal *Mishkan* is no longer in the running. A young man who was extremely accomplished in the secular world decided that he wanted to enter the world of *Torah chinuch/kiruv* and reach out to the unaffiliated Jews who were intellectually refined, but spiritually unsophisticated. He felt that he could talk to them on a higher plane and show them the beauty of religious life. He had one drawback: he felt that his secular achievements narrowed the playing field for him, to the point that he actually began to think that he was better suited for reaching out than the seasoned professionals who had spent years in *yeshivah* and *kollel* preparing for entrance into the field of *kiruv*.

The young man met with *Horav Moshe Shapiro, zl*, who, after a few moments saw that the fellow's ego needed to be whittled down a notch or he would fare poorly. *Rav Moshe* asked him, "How does a person become an accomplished *ben Torah*?" The young man replied, "By amassing a considerable amount of Torah knowledge." "Good. And how does a person become an *adam gadol*, achieve true greatness?" *Rav Moshe* saw that, for once, the young man was at a loss for words. (He thought success was predicated on knowledge alone.) He took the initiative and answered his own question, "When he realizes that whatever Torah knowledge he has amassed barely scratches the surface." The young man's imperiousness was diminishing with each question. "And when does one become the *gadol hador*, undisputed Torah giant of his generation?" *Rav Moshe* paused for a second to allow the question to sink in and said, "That occurs when he knows with total clarity that he knows absolutely nothing." When a person recognizes his own inadequacy, he is ready to make his heart a *Mishkan* for Hashem.