

They shall make a Sanctuary for Me – so that I may dwell among them. Like everything that I show you. (25:8,9)

The *Mishkan*, Sanctuary, was an edifice dedicated to the service of Hashem. A structure of stone and mortar becomes consecrated through the devotion and commitment to G-d of those who build and maintain it. Anything not built solely for G-d has little to no meaning. Man's ability to transform and elevate mere mundane, physical ingredients into a structure of holiness indicates the incredible spiritual powers vested within him. *K'chol asher Ani mareh osecha*, "Like everything that I show you," is a reference to Hashem showing Moshe *Rabbeinu* the exact form of each of the *Mishkan's* vessels. Thus, Moshe had before him an image of what each of the finished products should look like.

The Sanctuary represents our nation's obligation to sanctify itself in its personal life. Each and every one of us can create his own personal Sanctuary – within himself, through the medium of his devotion to Hashem. How does the image of the *Mishkan* which Hashem portrayed to Moshe *Rabbeinu* fit into the equation? It may serve as a blueprint for the collective Sanctuary, but it hardly assists one in creating his personal *Mishkan*.

The **Admor m'Kretchnif, Shlita**, explains this with a homiletic twist of the *pasuk*. Hashem said to Moshe, "They (*Klal Yisrael*) shall make themselves into a Sanctuary, for Me, by having my *Shechinah* repose within them. How will this transpire? *K'chol asher ani mareh osecha*, "I will simulate you to others so that they will see your behavior and total devotion to Me. When they will perceive your commitment and holy demeanor, they will have a living paradigm to emulate." Thus, as Moshe sanctified himself to Hashem, he was by virtue of that very process presenting the archetype *eved Hashem*, servant of G-d.

V'hayu einecha ro'os es morecha, "And your eyes will behold your teacher" (*Yeshayahu* 30:20). Imagery is a powerful motivational tool. When one sees greatness – one aspires to emulate and reproduce himself in that image. I present the following narratives, one which extols positive imagery, and the other which intimates the everlasting loss to oneself of overlooking and ignoring the image before him. In his *Warmed by their Fire*, Rabbi Yisrael Besser shares an episode concerning **Horav Elazar Menachem Shach, zl**, which demonstrates the long-lasting effects of seeing an image in a positive light:

The saintly *Rosh Yeshivah* of Ponevez was an individual to whom Torah study was life itself. Though aged and physically weak, he received strength and succor from the time spent with his precious *seforim*. Every line of *Talmud*, *Rambam*, *Rishonim* added strength to his frail body.

One day, a prominent *mechanech*, Torah educator, visited and presented the *Rosh Yeshivah* with a difficult request. As an educator who via his educational programs came in contact with students from many *yeshivos* in Bnei Brak, he was able to organize a *siyum Mishnayos*, completion of the

entire *Mishnah*, which would be attended by thousands of youngsters from the area. The *siyum* was to be held in a hall adjacent to the *yeshivah*. Was there any way the *Rosh Yeshivah* could attend? No speeches, no fanfare – just to walk in and grant the children the treat of seeing the *gadol hador*, preeminent Torah leader of the generation. It would mean so much to them and would be remembered their entire lives. *Rav Shach* apologized profusely, saying that he was simply physically exhausted. The *Rosh Yeshivah* was a centenarian upon whom every step took its toll. The *mechanech* felt bad, but understood that it was simply too much for *Rav Shach*.

After the gentleman left, *Rav Shach* turned to *Rav Toib*, his close confident and sort of aide, and asked him if he “agreed” with his decision not to attend the function. Out of deep reverence, *Rav Toib* hesitated, but, then respectfully said, “I must tell the truth, but I wish to do so by relating a story.” The *Rosh Yeshivah* agreed to listen.

“My father-in-law, *Rav Michel Fried*, survived the horrors of the European Holocaust. He lost everything – family and physical possessions. His world as he once knew it was gone. Despite the tremendous losses and mind-numbing emotional pain, he retained his strong *emunah*, faith, in the Almighty. I once asked him how he was able to persevere in his faith after all that he had suffered. So many others had weakened; what kept him going?”

He replied that as a child, the venerable sage of Radin, the **Chafetz Chaim**, visited his village, and the entire community went out to greet the great *Kohen Gadol*. “My father lifted me so that I could gaze at his radiant face and look into his piercing eyes. From that moment on, that image was seared into my mind,” his father-in-law said. He would never forget that image of holiness and splendor. His countenance stood before him during the most bitter and lonesome moments, when all was dark and gloomy. That image pulled him from the depths and gave him the strength to look forward with hope to the next day.

Rav Shach listened intently to the story. He remained deep in thought for a moment, and then the elderly *Rosh Yeshivah* arose from his chair, donned his frock and hat, and went out to see the children.

The second story is also about perception – or – the lack thereof. I came across this story in Rabbi Pesach Krohn’s latest literary endeavor, *In the Splendor of the Maggid*. In the early 60’s, **Horav Shlomo Freifeld, zl**, was engaged as principal of the nascent Bais Yaakov High School of Toronto. *Rav Freifeld* later devoted his life to establish America’s *kiruv*, Jewish outreach movement, via the *yeshivah* he founded in Far Rockaway. A dynamic, charismatic and brilliant scholar, he could converse with any Jew, regardless of age, background or religious affiliation about almost any subject under the sun; so broad was his breadth of knowledge. As a role model and *rebbe*, he had very few peers.

While Toronto was a booming city on the Jewish religious scene, its suburbs ran a far and dismal second. The small Jewish community of Hamilton, Ontario was geographically a mere forty-two

miles south of Toronto, but from a Torah perspective, it lagged far behind. There was an afternoon *Talmud Torah* that catered to the Jewish children of its secular Jewish community. It was run and staffed by *bnei Torah*, Orthodox men and women from Toronto, who made the trip more as a labor of love than anything else.

The *Talmud Torah* decided to have a fund-raising dinner, and sought a guest speaker who would enthrall the gathering and convey the school's message, as well as their financial needs. They asked Rav Freifeld. We must bear in mind that, while Rav Freifeld spoke prolifically, his appearance bedecked in a long black frock, large black beaver hat, and sporting a full beard and *payos*, was not what the average secular Jew envisioned in a "progressive" representative of the Orthodox community. In fact, as Rav Freifeld was about to enter the banquet hall, he was stopped by the doorman, who, assuming he was a *meshulach*, charity collector, said, "Sorry, there is no outside fundraising here tonight." Rav Freifeld smiled and said, "I just happen to be the guest speaker at this event. I hope you will allow me to enter."

Rav Freifeld entered the room to the stares of those gathered for the night's event. A tall, imposing man, bedecked in his classic garb, exuding self-confidence and pride, he exhibited an aura of assured dignity. The people looked at him and wondered if this European-style dressed man could even speak English. They were in for a surprise. Their negative perception was about to receive a wake-up call.

Rav Freifeld ascended to the podium and regaled them with a powerful speech. They were taken by his eloquence, his command of the language, his sensitivity and brilliant scholarship. The audience sat there enraptured, as he captivated them with a powerful message concerning the legacy of Judaism, each individual Jew's heritage and the sense of pride they should all reflect.

Then he stunned the entire audience with, "Let me share with you a story from the theatre district in Manhattan." With a confident smile he looked at the flabbergasted crowd, who could not believe that this rabbi would have a clue that there existed a theatre district – let alone talk about it. Could such a religious, traditionally-dressed man be so cosmopolitan?

Rav Freifeld related the story of a wealthy businessman from a Midwestern community who spent a week in New York. He assured his friend that while in the big city he would make a point to take in a popular musical that was playing on Broadway. He was told that they had heard that the play was sold out for the remainder of the year. Tickets were an impossible commodity. He assured them that for his money, the tickets would be readily available.

He was wrong. There were no tickets to be had – anywhere. Even the usual scalpers were unable to obtain the tickets at any price. He now had a problem. It was one thing not to see the play; it was totally another for the people back home to discover that there was something his money could not buy. His enormous ego would take a hit. Now, if the people did not know the truth – what could it hurt? So, on the last night of his trip he stood in front of the theatre and asked people who were

leaving for a ticket stub and a playbill. He had no trouble with obtaining these useless items. A ticket has value only before the play.

When he returned home, he showed his “souvenirs” to his friends, who were duly impressed. *Rav Freifeld* waited for the laughter to subside and he concluded with a thunderous voice, “Many of you here in this room are like that gentleman. You have the “stub” of Judaism, but you have missed the real show!” He continued with remarks about Judaism’s real history, its beauty, the sanctity of the Jewish home and the deep-felt pride that every Jew should have in being G-d’s emissary in the world. He was exceptional, and the audience gave him a standing ovation.

They understood his message and so should we.