

## **Moshe erected the Mishkan... and he put the cover of the Tent-spread on it from above as Hashem commanded Moshe. (40:18,19)**

Moshe *Rabbeinu* was the one who raised the *Mishkan*, assembling it in accordance with Hashem's command. Betzalel was the architect of the *Mishkan*, preparing its parts and vessels, so that Moshe could erect it. Why Moshe? Why not Betzalel? Why not Aharon? It is not as if they did not have a vested interest in seeing the finished product. To Betzalel, it would mean that he had carried out Hashem's Will to build the *Mishkan* in order to atone for the sin of the Golden Calf, during which his grandfather had been murdered. Aharon *HaKohen* played a role in the creation of the Golden Calf. He certainly wanted a sign that he was forgiven. Allowing him to erect the *Mishkan* would have been a meaningful sign that he had been absolved. Instead, Hashem gave Moshe this honor.

The *Midrash (Tanchuma Pekudei, 11)* teaches that all of the following made the attempt to raise up the *Mishkan*: the *chachmei lev*, wise men, whose extraordinary skill allowed them to make the *Mishkan's* component parts; Betzalel and his partner Ohaliav. None succeeded in constructing the *Mishkan* in a way that it would remain standing. Why? The *Midrash* explains that Moshe was anguished over the fact that he had not played a role in the creation of the *Mishkan*. He had not contributed funds for the *Mishkan*. He had not worked on its creation. Hashem said, "Moshe, since you were anguished over not having played a role of any kind in the construction of the *Mishkan*, therefore, you will be the one to raise it." Moshe said to Hashem, "But I do not know how to raise it (given that no one else could). Hashem responded to Moshe, "You stand there and involve yourself (act as if you are raising it up) in setting it up. It will appear as if you are the one doing it. (Actually, it was Hashem Who did it, because its component parts were impossible to lift).

The *Tanchuma* reveals a novel lesson to us. Moshe did not contribute to the *Mishkan*. Everyone gave – but Moshe. Certainly, he had the means. Why was he excluded? The *Nesiim*, Princes, waited too long to give. Their money was no longer required. Surely, this cannot be said concerning Moshe.

*Horav Aryeh Leib Heyman, zl*, explains that from the very onset, Moshe was not included in the command to contribute towards the *Mishkan*. He was instructed to take contributions from them – the people. He, however, was not told to give! Why should Moshe, our leader, not have been encouraged to play a role – from the very beginning – in the creation of the *Mishkan*?

*Rav Heyman* observes that the source of the gold, silver etc. that the people contributed toward the *Mishkan* was Egypt – specifically, the Egyptians, who, during the three days of darkness, were only too happy to "lend" their precious metals and jewelry to the Jewish people. This was all part of the Divine Plan to compel the Egyptians to pay for enslaving the Jewish people for 210 years. Hashem had promised that, "afterwards, they will leave with great wealth" (*Bereishis* 15:14). We cannot

ignore the fact that the component parts of the *Mishkan* were intrinsically connected to the enslavement of the Jewish People. The *Mishkan*/edifice essentially stood as a testament before Hashem to the affliction which the Jews suffered in Egypt.

A number of “reminders” before Hashem are incorporated in Jewish practice that are worthy of note. (The *Mishkan* is one of them.) The *Kohen* does not enter the *Kodesh HaKedoshim*, Holy of Holies, wearing gold vestments, because gold brings the sin of the Golden Calf to mind. A human being forgets. Hashem never forgets. Even a one-time infraction becomes forever etched in the spiritual cosmos. If gold served as a reminder of sin, certainly the precious metals used for the *Mishkan* betoken the bitter affliction to which the Jews were subjected.

Likewise, we ask Hashem to consider the “ashes” of Yitzchak *Avinu* (as if they had been there, since it had been the Patriarch’s intention to go through with the *Akeidah*). Remembering the *Akeidah* serves as an incredible *z’chus*, merit, for *Klal Yisrael*. Furthermore, the *livnas ha’sapir*, sapphire brick, is beneath the *Kisei HaKavod*, Throne of Glory, which Hashem keeps stored before Him as a remembrance of the Egyptian bondage.

Thus, suggests *Rav Heyman*, it is appropriate to say that Moshe had been excluded from contributing to the *Mishkan* for this specific reason. The *Mishkan* recalls the slavery, in which Moshe did not take part. One might ask why the *shevet*, tribe, of *Levi* had been included in the *Mishkan*. They, too, had not been enslaved, because someone had to maintain the bond with the Torah. Since *shevet Levi* learned throughout the *shibud*, bondage, they had not been enslaved. Nonetheless, their children, just like the children of the other tribes, had been thrown into the Nile. They may not have labored, but they certainly suffered.

Moshe was the *Rabban Shel kol Yisrael*, the quintessential *Rebbe* of the Jewish People. Leadership positions are never easy, and certainly not worth the “fringe benefits” that result from holding them. Nonetheless, after all is said and done, the leader stands on a different plane – one that distinguishes him from the people. When the people suffer, the leader suffers with them – but only in spirit. He is not in the trenches experiencing the danger, suffering the pangs of anxiety, as do his people. He carries his responsibility with great concern, but, nonetheless, he does not suffer the way they do. He emerges as the hero of the campaign, despite the fact that he has not experienced the campaign in the same manner as did his people. His victory is different from theirs. Therefore, the celebrations and rewards are also different.