

They shall make for Me a Sanctuary/Mikdash, and I will dwell among them (Shemos 25:8)

The language is striking. The Torah should have written *V'Shachanti b'socho*, "within it." Rather, it writes, *V'Shachanti b'socham*, "within them," which implies that Hashem will reside within them—within the hearts of each and every individual. The *Alshich HaKadosh* explains that the physical *Mishkan* was a model and a standard for how, and in what form one should create a space/Sanctuary within his own heart for the *Shechinah* to reside. The idea that each Jew will create a *Mishkan* within himself is inspiring and profound. It is also frightening. The inspiration profoundly comes from the realization of what Hashem feels we are capable of achieving. The frightening part is, if we fail, we are aware that we could have brought Hashem deeper into our lives, but did not succeed.

Building an inner sanctuary requires work. We must cultivate those qualities which invite the Divine Presence: love, kindness, humility, and a deep commitment to the *Torah* and *Mitzvos*. We must see to it that our lives align with the demands of sanctity, our thoughts, speech, and actions reflecting the goals of *Torah* values. Holiness requires an environment conducive to its preservation and growth. Just as the physical *Mishkan* was constructed of precious materials, our heart-based *Mishkan* can be built and maintained only with such materials that enhance sanctity, such as *Torah*, *avodah*, and *gemillus chasadim*, all guided by the core value of *emes*. Many acts of devotion appear to be sincere; many people carry out these activities under the rubric of *l'shem Shomayim*, for Heaven's sake. Only *emes* can determine the veracity of their intentions. One cannot dwell part-time. Transforming ourselves into a *Mishkan*, a dwelling place for Hashem, is not like a time-share apartment. Each Jew performs his role in bringing the Divine Presence into the world. It is a constant responsibility that requires personal growth. One does not slack off when his "visitor" is Hashem. We are forever encouraged to view our daily efforts in spirituality as sacred acts, transforming our lives into a personal sanctuary of the Divine. This is why it is so frightening. The responsibility is awesome, and the reward is extraordinary.

Chazal (*Shabbos* 30b) teach that the *Shechinah* does not rest upon a person who is in *atzvus* (depression/sadness). When a house is filled with joy, the *Shechinah* will enter. When the *Shechinah* is part of the house, when Hashem's Presence permeates the family life within that domain, it is blessed. In other words, *simcha*, joy, begets the *Shechinah*, and the *Shechinah* brings blessing.

The following story is related by *Horav Eliezer Halevi Turk, shlita*, who heard it from the *Rav* of *Achuzas Brachfeld*, in his *hesped*, eulogy, for *Horav Shmuel Halevi Wosner, zl*. The *Rav* was on the Rabbinical board of *Mayanei Hayeshua* hospital in *Bnei Brak*. As a result, he was often called to serve in the capacity of chaplain to spend time and give comfort to patients who were extremely ill. One day, he was called to the bedside of a *Yid* who was *r"l* paralyzed throughout most of his body. With great pain, he was able to move parts of his body slowly. The man asked the *Rav* if, in

his present condition, he was allowed to recite the blessing *She'asah li kol tzarki*, Who has provided me with all my needs. As of right now, just lying there he really had no purpose in life. Could he at least recite the blessing? The *Rav* replied that *Horav Shmuel Wosner* was due to visit the hospital that day: "We will present him with this *sheilah*, *halachic* query."

When *Rav Wosner* was presented with the question, he became emotional and demanded to meet the *choleh*, the patient who had asked the question. *Rav Wosner* walked into the room and, after expressing his warm feelings to the *choleh* for a *refuah shleimah*, asked if he could share the following story with him.

"When I was a student in *Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin*, I had the honor and merit to accompany my revered *Rebbe*, *Horav Meir Shapiro, zl*, on a visit to the hospital. One of the distinguished students in the *yeshivah* became ill with a dreadful disease. The doctors despaired for his life. The *Rosh Yeshivah* hoped that his visit would somehow infuse him with a modicum of hope. When we entered the room, we were shocked. The young man was certainly suffering excruciating pain, yet he appeared to be filled with joy and in an elevated spiritual state. It was absolutely unreal. *Rav Meir Shapiro* was taken aback and asked, "What is the reason for your joyful mood?"

The student's answer impacted the *Rosh Yeshivah*, "I have often thought about my state of illness, which has resulted in my being here in pain and unable to do anything for myself. As I lay here, I wonder: What is it that Hashem wants of me? Why has He kept me alive, when I can do nothing to serve Him? I remind myself of the words of *Chazal* (*Shabbos* 30b). 'The *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, rests above the head of a *choleh*.' Consequently, I have an enormous purpose in living. I am bringing the *Shechinah* down to this world! Hashem's Divine Presence rests above me, and I, due to my illness, brought Him down here. Is this not a worthy purpose in life and a reason to be filled with joy?"

When *Rav Meir Shapiro* heard these words from the young man who knew how close he was to his mortal end, he said, "This statement must be preserved for generations."

Rav Wosner concluded the story by saying to the *choleh* who had questioned his purpose in life, "How can you say that you have no purpose in life? On your shoulders rests one of the most significant and powerful functions: You have the opportunity to bring the *Shechinah* down to this world." The man who had originally sent for *Rav Wosner* related that, after that conversation, not only did the patient's mood change—even his physical condition improved. A calm and positive mental state reduces stress and improves overall well-being, which are critical for recovery. *Shlomo HaMelech* writes (*Mishlei* 17:22), "A joyful heart is good medicine." This highlights that a positive disposition has healing power, while despair or anxiety can weaken the body as well as the spirit. Indeed, a caregiver should know that offering reassurance, understanding, kindness—and just being there—can be just as therapeutic as any medical treatment.