



Terumah: The Eternal Message

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“V’asu Li Mikdash V’Shachanti B’Sochum, You shall make for me a Temple and I will dwell within you.” (Exodus 25:8)

With these simple words, God creates a new paradigm for religious worship. There would be a central address, with physical dimensions to create avenues of spiritual connection. And it was not just for the generation of the desert. In fact, God explains to Moshe: “According to all that I show you, the pattern of the Mishkan (Tabernacle) and the pattern of all its vessels; and so, shall you do.” (Exodus 25:9) Rashi comments: “And so shall you do - for future generations as well.”

It seems as if Rashi is teaching us that the details and dimensions of the *Mishkan* and its utensils would be the same for all generations. The same plans and measurements for the *Mishkan* would ultimately be used for the *Beis HaMikdash* (Temple). However, we know this was not the case. When King Solomon built the Temple, the dimensions were dramatically different. If so, what message is Rashi seeking to convey? What is the message of the *Mishkan* for future generations?

The great Chassidic master, Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (1740-1809) explains that the *Mishkan* was more than a gathering place for communal worship; it served as the physical embodiment of the most important theological and religious messages. Inside the confines of the *Mishkan*, the Jew was taught the true meaning of life and the path to establishing a meaningful relationship with the Divine.

Each utensil embodied a different life message. The *Menorah* represented the need to infuse one’s life with the light of Torah. The lessons of the Torah help us navigate the complexities of existence and illuminate the darkness which often enshrouds us. Torah is not simply a list of obligations and prohibitions. Through the *mitzvos*, God provides us with the moral and ethical clarity to navigate the tumultuous waters of life. The *Shulchan* (Table) represented the physical world and signified the need to sanctify and uplift the material. We need not eschew the material pleasures of life – but we must be vigilant to never lose ourselves in them. We must look at material wealth and possessions as vehicles to come closer to God and better serve our fellow man. The material world can be enjoyed as long as it lifts me closer to my Father above. The *Lechem HaPanim* (Show Bread) stayed fresh for an entire week after being placed on the *Shulchan*. This miracle taught us to appreciate God’s presence in our daily material lives. We must take nothing for granted; every breath and every dollar is a direct blessing from God. Our God-awareness must remain “fresh” as we journey through life. Just as God’s blessing was evident in each of the loaves, we must constantly look for His providence in our daily lives. The *Mizbeyach* (outer altar used for animal sacrifice) teaches us that we must be willing to share our material blessings with God and others. We do not toil for ourselves; we work and share the fruits of our success with others and in doing so allow God to share in our material success as well. We use our wealth to help and sustain others and to bring us closer to God. The *Mizbeyach HaKitores* (inner incense Altar) represents selfless giving. The incense was totally consumed on the altar (unlike animal sacrifices which often had portions for the owners and priests as mentioned above). Too often, we only do things for which there is reward, payoff, or some expected reciprocity. In life we must learn that if there is a beautiful opportunity to connect with God or to help another, we should seize it, simply because we can. We must strive to become selfless people. It is only after passing and absorbing the messages of these utensils that one could reach the *Aron* (Ark of the Covenant). The Ark represented the potential for a loving, passionate and intense relationship with God. On the lid of the Ark were two *Keruvim* (Cherubs) which according to some were in the image of a man and woman. They were locked in a loving embrace with their wings spread upward and toward one another. This embrace represents the love between God and his people. This love is what we strive for, what we pine for. We yearn each and every day to feel His passionate love and protective embrace. But to reach the *Aron*, one must first pass the *Mizbeyach*, *Shulchan*, *Mizbeyach HaZahav* and the *Menorah*. We can only feel the love, if we are willing to do the work. Additionally, in this most sacred spot, God reminds us to love one another. A passionate relationship with our Creator requires us to respect, honor and love each other. We have many differences but we must find a way to embrace.

This is the meaning of Rashi, “And so shall you do - for future generations as well.” Rashi is not referring to the physical dimensions of the *Mishkan* and its utensils. Rather, Rashi tells us that the message and meaning of the *Mishkan* and its utensils are perpetually relevant.

“V’Asu Li Mikdash V’Shachanti B’Sochum, Make for Me a Temple and I will dwell within you.” Although we currently lack the physical structures of a *Mishkan* and *Beis HaMikdash*, let us carry their eternal messages in the Temple of our hearts, in the *Mishkan* of our souls.