

B”H

THE AMAZING SELF-CONSTRUCTING MISHKAN/MIKDASH

BEGIN WITH A GRIN

How come trees don't go to school?

Because they never make it to the cut off date!

CONSTRUCTION CONUNDRUM

Parshas Pikudei brings to an end the story of the contributions to and building of the Mishkan, a long description spread out over five parshiyos. Toward the end of the parsha, the Torah describes the erection of the Mishkan by Moshe on the eighth day of *miluim* (investiture), Rosh Chodesh Nissan.

After preparations that took months, after much toil, sweat and tears, the Jewish people stood ready for the big day, the day they were all waiting for, the day Moshe was going to erect the Mishkan. The Torah describes this historic event (40:17), “And it was in the first month in the second year on the first of the month that the Mishkan was erected.”

What needs explaining is the pair of words, “hukam ha'Mishkan,” which makes it sound as though the Mishkan was erected by itself without human intervention, which sounds ridiculous. The Medrash Tanchuma, quoted by Rashi explains that as absurd as it sounds, that's what happened. Why? How did this happen?

The Medrash says that due to the heaviness of the boards, huge wooden kerashim that were ten amos long, an amah and a half wide and an amah thick (imagine wooden beams 14 and 3/4 feet tall, almost two and a half feet wide and a little more than one and a half feet thick. Sounds heavy, right?) nobody was able to lift them, not even Moshe who was an extremely tall and powerful man.

What do you do when it's impossible? You turn to Hashem. “Moshe said to Hashem, 'How can it be erected by man?' Hashem said, 'You get involved with your hands.' It appeared as though he was erecting it and it stood up on its own!”

It sounds very special, heavenly and lofty, really miraculous stuff. However, before we begin waxing nostalgic let's see how the Medrash fits with the text. Every beginner student knows (and this appears in the Medrash itself and was also copied by Rashi) that during the first seven days of the investiture process, starting on 23 Adar through erev Rosh Chodesh Nissan, Moshe would erect and take down the Mishkan every day. He built it in the morning and dismantled it in the evening, every single day, seven days in a row! The question is, how? How was he able to lift the boards that weighed (in total) over a ton? And if Moshe (who was quite the wise fellow...) found a way to lift 96 solid cedar beams seven days in a row, what happened on the eighth day and why was a miracle needed?

Perhaps some will say that after seven days of this, Moshe no longer had the strength to do it again, but we all know how absurd this sounds when speaking of someone on the level of Moshe.

CONSTRUCTIVE ACTIVITIES

In an amazing, electrifying sicha, the Rebbe explains it all in a way that is exquisite in its simplicity. According to Rashi, there was a major difference between erecting the Mishkan during the seven days of consecration and its erection on the eighth day. Regarding the eighth day it says (Shemos 26:30), “And you (in the singular) shall erect the Mishkan according to its proper manner, as you have been shown on the mountain.” Moshe understood from the wording that the eighth day was meant to be special, a day when the Shechina would descend to dwell among the Jewish people, a day that would bring about a cosmic transformation in the relationship between the Jewish people

and G-d, a day the likes of which never was before, a day that, technically, was greater and more holy than even the giving of the Torah on Har Sinai. And on this special, holy day, G-d wanted the Mishkan to be erected by Moshe himself, on his own! One single individual, with his own powers and without any help, to get the Mishkan up and standing!

During the seven days of investiture, the erection of the Mishkan was only a preparatory act, like military training for the real thing, and during a practice run you can improvise, you can ask for help, you don't need to do it all alone. Remember, the Jewish people came from Egypt, the home of the pyramids which are made of stone and bricks that weigh much more than wood. The ancient world knew plenty about impressive, heavy structures that were made without any modern-day equipment and tools; they had impressive know-how, talent and ability for large-scale improvisation. They used numerous people and all sorts of techniques to achieve the results. So to erect a structure the size of the Mishkan with all its boards wasn't such a big deal, but doing it all alone as a one-man job was, indeed, a miracle!

This fabulous explanation also answers another powerful question. How could it be said that “nobody could raise it,” when the Levi'im moved the Mishkan around for 40 years in the desert? They dragged the boards, curtains, sockets and vessels. They were the ones who erected the Mishkan after every stop and they dismantled the Mishkan for every trip. So what was so difficult in erecting the Mishkan now, on the eighth day?

As said before, on the eighth day there was a special commandment for Moshe, and only Moshe, to erect the Mishkan himself. The question is, why. Why should such an odd, impossible commandment be issued? Why does G-d command Moshe to do the impossible?

HEAVENLY CONSTRUCT

The simple answer is that to bring about a revelation of the Shechina, drastic measures need to be taken. To bring about a revelation of the Ohr Ein Sof in this material world, a supernal power is needed. True, the service of the lowly beings is important and without it, the Shechina would not have settled in. True, without the contributions toward the Mishkan given by the Jewish people, the making of the Mishkan by the wise-hearted, and the bringing of the Mishkan to Moshe, the Shechina would not have dwelt in it. Despite all that, after all is said and done, the indwelling of the Shechina was done by G-d above in miraculous fashion. That means that the construction and erection of the Mishkan during the seven days by ordinary means was essential to the process and without those seven erections of the Mishkan they would not have been able to inaugurate the Mishkan, sanctify the vessels and consecrate the Kohanim, and still, this was only a preamble to the real thing. The indwelling of the Shechina could only come from above.

All of the above dovetails nicely with Rashi's view regarding the third Beis HaMikdash which we mentioned in earlier weeks. Rashi's view (Succa 41a) is, “The future Mikdash that we anticipate, built and furnished, will be revealed and descend from heaven, as it says (Shemos 15), 'The Mikdash, Hashem, which Your hands established.' This means that the ultimate indwelling of the Shechina in the world is made possible only from on High. Just as it was with the Mishkan, so too with the final Mikdash. The “final blow,” the crucial finale is executed by G-d Himself. Only a supernal power can bring down the infinite light of holiness to the world.

Man's avoda is important, necessary and vital. It is what will lead to G-d Himself building the Mikdash, but G-d is the Builder; He is the main act and we are (just) the opening act!

As for us, there first needs to be our own involvement and avoda. At the same time, we need to know that this is only a preparatory stage. We need to bring the Mishkan, our creative endeavors to the “Moshe Rabbeinu of the generation.” Only Moshe, with the power of the Creator, can erect our Mishkan! We need to adhere to and mobilize for the task, to do and toil, to volunteer from the bottom of our hearts, to take action with the wisdom of our hearts, just as in the time of the Mishkan, and to do so with utter devotion to the Rebbe MH”M, Moshe of the generation, who is the only one able to erect the third Beis HaMikdash!

TO CONCLUDE WITH A STORY

We will end with a story that illustrates the fact that the Rebbe demands a little bit of work from us while he does all the work behind the scenes.

At a farbrengen, Rabbi Chaim Moshe Yehuda Blau a'h, known as an expert on manuscripts of the Rishonim, approached the Rebbe in order to give him a new sefer he published. To his utter surprise, the Rebbe told him, "You are going to Denver soon. Do what you can to promote 'Education Day.'"

How did the Rebbe know of his plans to travel to Colorado? And why should he promote Education Day when he had no connection with that whatsoever? But a Chassid doesn't ask questions.

R' Blau flew to Denver and asked everyone he knew how to promote Education Day, but to no avail. He would soon be returning to New York and nothing had transpired. He poured out his heart to a local rav.

The rav told him that he knew a journalist, the editor of the local paper in Yiddish. Maybe it paid to meet with him and perhaps he would be willing to write an article about it. R' Blau met with the editor who said he knew a radio broadcaster, a non-Jew, who had a very popular radio program in which listeners were able to say their opinions on any topic. Maybe he would be willing to bring up the topic on his broadcast.

R' Blau met with the gentile broadcaster and asked him to bring up Education Day on his program. The broadcaster, who didn't seem that interested in the subject (after all, why would his audience in Colorado care about Education Day in honor of some rabbi in Brooklyn) said that if he could interview R' Blau and the interview went well, he would do it.

R' Blau went to his home and the man began the interview with a question. To R' Blau's astonishment, he suddenly remembered that the Rebbe had asked that very question at that farbrengen when he had given R' Blau this assignment. R' Blau repeated the Rebbe's answer and the man was very impressed. He asked another question which the Rebbe had also asked in the farbrengen! This repeated itself four times! For every question, R' Blau had a ready response, taken from the Rebbe. Amazing! The broadcaster was floored by these persuasive, deep responses and he decided that Education Day would be discussed on his program.

The recorded interview was broadcast on the radio and generated a lot of buzz in all of the major news outlets, and obviously it had the desired effect in publicizing Education Day.

Good Shabbos!