

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA

**PARASHAT TERUMA
SICHA OF HARAV BARUCH GIGI**

“And You Shall Make a *Menora* of Pure Gold”

“You Shall Make” vs. “Shall be Made”

In reviewing the command to construct the *menora*, we discover an inherent tension in the verses. The command opens with the words:

And **you shall make** a *menora* of pure gold; of beaten work [or, “all of a piece”] **shall the *menora* be made**: its shaft, and its branches, its bowls, its bulbs, and its flowers shall be of the same. (*Shemot*25:31)

There is a tension between the active command “you shall make” and the passive description “it shall be made.” Rashi notes this and proposes a solution by citing the *midrash*:

“Shall the *menora* be made”: by itself. For Moshe experienced difficulty with it, and the Holy One, blessed be He, told him: Cast the talent of gold into the furnace, and it shall come into being by itself. Therefore, the verse does not say [again], “you shall make.”

Another point of tension arises towards the end of the description of the *menora*:

Of a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels. And take care **and make** them in accordance with their form that was shown to you in the mountain. (*Shemot* 25:39-40)

Here again, the tension is reflected in the *midrash* that Rashi cites, contradicting the active command inherent in the word “make”:

“And take care and make...” – See here at the mountain the form that I am showing you. This tells us that Moshe had trouble with the fashioning of the *menora*, until the Holy One, blessed be He, showed him a *menora* of fire.

Indeed, were it not for the active commands *ve-aseh* and *ve-asita*, we might have understood that the command concerning the *menora* appears solely for the sake of the architectural description, while God had intended from the outset to make the *menora* Himself. However, since the verses contain an explicit active command, we must find some way to resolve the conflict.

God Complements Human Action

We will attempt here to understand God's demand of Moshe and the actual execution of the command. Thereafter, we will address the ramifications of the meaning of these verses for our worldview.

It seems that while God commands Moshe to construct the *menora*, when Moshe reaches the stage at which it is impossible to continue, God steps in to help him. This took place both in relation to understanding the technical structure of the *menora* and in relation to the fashioning of the *menora* itself.

The message arising from God's assistance to Moshe is of direct relevance to us. God tells Moshe: Know that effort is required of you in various different spheres, but you are not responsible for successful results when these lie beyond your capabilities. You must do the maximum that you are able to, and God will complement your efforts and good intentions and finish the work.

The same insight arises from *Chazal's* teaching in *Massekhet Megilla*:

R. Yitzchak said: If someone tells you, "I exerted myself but did not find [results]" – do not believe it; [if he tells you,] "I did not exert myself, but nevertheless found [results]" – do not believe it; [if he says,] "I exerted myself and found [results]" – believe it. (*Megilla* 6b)

R. Yitzchak's choice of the expression "I found" is strange. We think of "finding" as something that happens incidentally, not deliberately. Indeed, the *gemara* teaches:

Three things come while one is distracted, and these are they: *Mashiach*, finding, and a scorpion. (*Sanhedrin* 97a)

Although the *gemara* also describes "hiring laborers to gather lost objects ['finds']" (*Bava Metzia* 12b), it is clear that the word "find" indicates a successful outcome that is not in our power to ensure. Why, then, does R. Yitzchak choose the phrase, "I exerted myself and I found," rather than, "I exerted myself and succeeded" or some similar expression?

In view of what we have said above, it would seem that R. Yitzchak maintains that it is not the effort and exertion that lead directly to the result, but rather Divine assistance that brings about the result, like a "find," to the person

seeking it.

Sacrifices vs. Resting of the Divine Presence

Above we discussed the *menora* as a context for viewing the relationship between human effort and Divine intervention. We shall now move on to look at the Sanctuary more broadly and to revisit this relationship, via a dispute among the *Rishonim*.

The purpose of the Sanctuary is defined as follows by the Rambam at the beginning of his Laws of the Temple:

It is a positive commandment to construct a House for God, prepared for sacrifices to be offered within it. And we gather there three times a year to celebrate, as it is written, "And you shall make Me a Sanctuary..." (*Shemot* 25:8). (Rambam, Laws of the Temple 1:1)

The Ramban offers a different position in his commentary on our *parasha*:

Therefore, God first commanded the building of the *Mishkan*, so that He would have a dwelling place amongst them that was sanctified for Him... Thus, the most essential part of the *Mishkan* is the place where the Divine Presence rests – i.e., the ark, as it is written, "And I shall meet with you there, and I shall speak with you from above the covering..." It is for this reason that the ark and its covering are the first vessels to be addressed here, for it is the most important... (*Shemot* 25:1).

This dispute pertains to the essence of the function of the Temple. Is it a place for offering sacrifices (the view of the Rambam) or a place for the dwelling of the Divine Presence (the view of the Ramban)?

The Heart of the Sanctuary – Altar or Ark?

The above dispute has implications for the question of the vessel that represents the heart of the Temple. According to Ramban, the central vessel is the ark with its covering; it is here that the most direct contact is forged between man and God. According to the Rambam, on the other hand, the central vessel is the altar, by means of which *Am Yisrael* offers sacrifices. However, the difference of opinion here pertains not only to the identity of the principal vessel, but also to its place.

The ark of the covenant rests on the Foundation Stone (*even ha-shetiya*), concerning which we are taught:

It was called *shetiya*, for from it the world was founded (*hoshta*). (*Yoma* 54b)

For the Ramban, since the central vessel in the Temple is the ark, via which God speaks with man, it is clear that this vessel must be placed upon the spot from which God commenced creating the world. In fact, according to the Ramban, the focus of Divine service is the quest for God and trust in Him, and therefore the rationale behind the building of the Temple is the quest for the place that offers the greatest degree of contact with God – and placement of the ark, through which this contact takes place, upon this spot.

In contrast, the Rambam rules:

The altar has a very precise location, which may never be changed, as it is written, “This is the altar for the burnt offerings of Israel” (*Divrei Ha-Yamim* II 22:1). It was at the site of the Temple that Yitzchak was bound, as it is written, “Go to the land of Moriah” (*Bereishit* 22:2), and it is written in *Divrei Ha-Yamim* (II 3:1), “Then Shelomo began to build the House of the Lord in Jerusalem, on Mount Moriah, where God had appeared to David, his father, in the place which David had prepared, in the threshing floor of Ornan, the Yevusi.”

And it is a universally accepted Jewish tradition that the place where David and Shelomo built the altar – in the threshing floor of Aravna – is the place where Avraham built his altar and bound Yitzchak upon it. It was the same place where Noach built his altar when he emerged from the ark. And this was the altar upon which Kayin and Hevel offered their sacrifices. Here Adam offered a sacrifice, and it was from there that he was created, as our Sages taught: “Man was created from the place where he would find atonement.”

The dimensions of the altar must be very precise, and its design was passed down from one to another [over the generations]. The altar built by the exiles returning from Babylon resembled the altar that will be built in the future. We may not increase or reduce its dimensions. (Laws of the Temple 2:1-3)

Nowhere in his *Mishneh Torah* does the Rambam make any mention of the Foundation Stone. Instead, he elaborates (in quite uncharacteristic fashion) on different *midrashim* concerning the location of the altar, so as to emphasize its importance. The Rambam highlights man’s work and his efforts; in the context of the Temple service, the emphasis is accordingly on the external sacrificial altar. The *midrashim* that he cites likewise pertain to man’s service of God at the site of the Temple throughout the generations – from Adam, via Kayin and Hevel, continuing with Noach, including the binding of Yitzchak, and more.

The Rambam states that “man was created from the place of his atonement”, based on the midrashic teaching that the earth that God took to

create Adam was taken from the place of the altar. The site of the altar is used here as a sort of source for “spare parts” for man: the altar is the place from which man was created, and it is the same place via which man atones for his sins in order to continue to live.

If You Have Exerted and Found – Believe It

Apparently, the fundamental dispute between the Ramban and the Rambam is what underlies the tension in the *parasha* of the *menora*. The question is to what extent we should leave room for human action, as symbolized by the altar, and to what extent do we focus on the intervention and revelation of the Divine Presence, via the ark of the covenant.

Our conclusion is that we must do the most and the best that we can, maximizing human possibilities. Only when we have exhausted the dimension of “you have exerted yourself” can we merit Divine help and the intervention of “you have found.”

Translated by Kaeren Fish