

FEBRUARY 15, 2010

Parashat Terumah

Textiles and Skins

V'shesh v'izim – “and linen and goats hair...” (Exodus 25:4)

Included in our *parashah's* listing of the fine and rare items which were necessary for the construction of the Tabernacle are several ordinary objects such as skins, wool and linen. Noticing this unusual grouping, Ohr Hachayim (on 25:3) explains that the construction of the Tabernacle required the procurement of all of the material listed, regardless of monetary value, and notes that these items were grouped together to emphasize the importance of the non-precious materials. Moreover, “it was not the intention that every person from Israel should bring them all. Rather, in sum the total donation of all Israel provided all the needed materials...this came to teach [the Israelites] that they should accept from those who bring any of the thirteen required materials, and not belittle one who brings cloth or skins.”

We can learn an important lesson from the inclusion of everyone, regardless of their financial ability, in the building of the Tabernacle. Today, each of us, regardless of our financial ability, must follow this example and do our part to support Israel.

Advocacy on behalf of Israel closely follows Ohr Hachayim's description of contributions to the Tabernacle. Support for Israel stems not simply from monetary contributions, but from our local efforts to advocate on behalf of the Jewish state. While those who have the ability should certainly donate to the political campaigns of their choice, we can all get involved in political activism by volunteering on campaigns, supporting candidates through email or blog initiatives or by simply raising awareness of pro-Israel issues in our communities. Even more importantly, we can all take the time to build relationships with those candidates running for office this November. In doing so, we can influence policy by educating our leaders about the importance of the U.S.-Israel relationship.

For America's relationship with Israel to remain strong, each of these elements must play a critical role. And, as Ohr Hachayim reminds us, each element carries critical importance.

Many mistakenly feel that if they cannot contribute gold or silver then they are not able to make a meaningful contribution. However, political advocacy reinforces the example of the Tabernacle—that even those of us who do not have money to donate can still have an impact in securing the future of the Jewish people. ■

Devine Design

Et tavnit hamishkan – “but the pattern of the tabernacle” (Exodus 25:9)

According to the Torah, God instructed Moses to build the Tabernacle “According to all that I show you.” The Midrash (Lekach Tov) explains, “This teaches us that God showed Moses the plans for the construction of the entire Tabernacle in a fiery form.” Why did God go to such great lengths to detail the specific design of the Tabernacle? Why not just let Moses and Bezalel design the Tabernacle themselves? Many commentators answer this question by finding ethical and moral meaning from the minute details of the construction. From these commentaries emerges an acute awareness of the power of design. Thus, God insisted on the careful design of the Tabernacle in order to convey

Judaism's values not only through the words of the Torah, but also through the forms, construction and function of the vessels with which the Israelites worshipped.

The careful plans for the Tabernacle remind us just how critical a role design plays in influencing how we live our lives. Next month, a new Israeli museum will open which conveys this very message.

Upon its opening in March, the Design Museum of Holon will be one of only a handful of museums around the world dedicated to design. Built entirely from public funds and designed by world-renown Israel architect Ron Arad, the museum utilizes 350 tons of steel to “frame the sky through a series of bands that emulate the movement of ribbons,” the website Israel21c reports. The building, awarded *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine's Innovation and Design Award for Culture, is one of eight new museums that has risen in Holon during the past six years. Galit Gaon, the museum's creative director, told the Canadian newspaper *The Globe and Mail*, “We want to get people to talk about design by creating a dialogue. We will ask ‘Why do you think this is nice or ugly?’ and we're not going to give answers. The idea is that these discussions will get people to ask questions while driving around the city.”

The plans for the Tabernacle are so carefully detailed in the Torah to demonstrate how design can define an area. In modern times, as the Design Museum of Holon demonstrates, design can also transform a community and bring acclaim to a country. ■

Hidden and Dangerous

V'hivdilah haparochet lachem – “and the veil shall divide for you” (Exodus 26:33)

After the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the Holy of Holies, God commanded Moses to install the *parochet*— the veil that served to divide between the sanctuary, where the priests served, and the Holy of Holies, where they were forbidden to enter. The Midrash (Bereishit Rabati 32) notes that the veil was not constructed to serve God, but rather to serve the Jewish people. The Midrash notes that because the Ark of the Covenant housed the presence of God on Earth, gazing at it would cause death—as it is written, “For man cannot see Me and live” (Exodus 33:9). Thus, in order to prevent people from the fatal accident of looking at the Holy of Holies, God insisted on a veil of secrecy and separation for the benefit and protection of the Jewish people.

Unlike the veil of the Tabernacle which protected the Jewish people and separated them from danger, Iran has created a veil of secrecy as it attempts to develop nuclear weapons. Now, that veil must be lifted—before the world faces the potentially fatal threat of a nuclear Iran.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad recently ordered his atomic scientists to begin enriching their stockpile of uranium in order to power a medical reactor, a move that accelerated Iran's brinkmanship over its nuclear program by moving the country closer to producing weapons-grade fuel, *The New York Times* reports. Dismissing warnings of new sanctions from world powers, Iran also announced that it has begun work to enrich uranium to 20 percent. Because the technology is the same, once Iranian scientists are able to enrich uranium to 20 percent they will soon thereafter be able to enrich their stockpile to the weapons-grade level of 93 percent. Russia, Iran's long-time nuclear partner, questioned Tehran's intentions. According to Nikolai Patrushev, Secretary of the Russian National Security Council, “Iran claims it is not trying to acquire nuclear weapons. But actions such as starting to enrich low-enriched uranium up to 20 percent raise doubts in other countries and these doubts are fairly well-grounded.” For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

Iran's continued insistence on a veil of secrecy over its nuclear program allows it to continue on its dangerous path towards developing nuclear weapons. The international community must immediately impose crippling economic sanctions to compel Iran to lift this veil of secrecy and halt its uranium enrichment. While the veil in the Tabernacle was put in place to protect the innocent, lifting Iran's veil will ultimately serve to increase the safety of citizens around the world. ■