

L'Chaim!

The Weekly Publication for Every Jew

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Living with the TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Terumah, speaks about the traveling tabernacle (Mishkan) and its vessels which the Children of Israel constructed while in the Sinai desert. The portion contains the verse "They shall make for Me a Mikdash (Sanctuary) and I will dwell in their midst." Our Sages noted, "In their midst, not in its midst, meaning within each and every Jew."

Thus, G-d assured us that not only would His Presence rest within the material walls of the Sanctuary (and Holy Temple in the future), but within the heart of every Jew.

When does the Divine Presence rest within the Jew? When he transforms even the physical aspects of his being into a Sanctuary for G-dliness. When a Jew observes mitzvot (commandments), studies Torah, and imbues even his most mundane affairs with holiness, G-d rests within him.

The Holy Temple in Jerusalem, G-d's "dwelling place," was built of physical components and was situated in an actual physical location. When the individual Jew erects a Sanctuary to G-d and causes the Divine Presence to rest within him, even the lowest levels of existence are transformed into a "dwelling place" for G-dliness. In this manner the world becomes permeated with holiness, and G-d's true will is fulfilled.

The physical Holy Temple was built of various materials: wood, stone, silver, gold, etc. Yet these physical components were not merely the "vessels" for containing G-d's presence; the materials themselves were transformed into holiness. The actual structure of the Holy Temple was sacred.

This must also be the case when we construct a spiritual Holy Temple in our hearts. It isn't enough to bring holiness into the physical aspects of our lives; all of our affairs and concerns, even the most mundane, must be transformed into holiness!

With the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people, the connection between the higher and lower worlds, between G-d and His creations, was established. This connection was continued and strengthened when many of the actual mitzvot were commanded, for the mitzvot are the means through which the Jew connects himself to G-d. This week's portion, Teruma, however, goes even further; it speaks of a connection between the Jew and G-d that transcends even the performance of mitzvot, a bond we can achieve in the realm of permissible action.

Everything a Jew does, even those actions which are not strictly mitzvot, are a means by which he can attach himself to G-d and erect a Sanctuary. In this way all his deeds are transformed into holiness, and the Divine Presence will rest within.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe OB" M

Broken Pipes

By Rabbi G. Grosbaum

Winter brings with it many inconveniences: colds, delayed travel, the need to bundle up, protecting plants and pets, keeping home and hearth heated, shorter days and greater stress.

A "winter problem" in the coldest climates is broken pipes. Of course, water lines can break any time of the year. But broken pipes occur most often in the winter. That's why the advice to "let the water run" - a tiny stream or steady drip, so that the water flows through the tubes and doesn't freeze - works in all kinds of climates.

There's a spiritual analogy to the "broken pipes" problem. Our Sages tell us that wisdom is compared to water. For one thing, water, like the intellect, flows from above to below. But, as just mentioned, water must flow through (and into) containers. Without the proper system, without pipes and sealed joints, water leaks out and literally floods everything. Instead of being available for cooking, cleaning, etc., as water is when properly channeled, it ruins everything.

The analogy is clear: if we do not channel our knowledge properly, if we do not use our minds for the proper things, we will "flood" ourselves out - wallow in indulgence and excuses. Because water, in a spiritual sense, is the source of growth, and therefore, if not properly channeled, the source of excess; an unrestrained "flow of water" leads to rot, mildew and decadence.

This is why we have to be careful when it comes to intellectual pursuits. When exploring "new territory" it's important to lay the groundwork,

so to speak, to prepare the channels, secure the points of transitions (the joints), so that the "water" flows properly.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the study of Torah, which the Sages compare specifically to water. As we pursue our knowledge of Judaism, it's often too easy to go "outside the channels," to follow the "path of least resistance," which usually leads to a break in our system of transmission.

Unfortunately, that "break" won't become evident until there's a "freeze" - an interruption in one's involvement, a slowing down or cooling off of enthusiasm for things Jewish. And that happens, because the "cold weather," the "winter times" of life - issues of a livelihood, etc., - make movement of any kind hard. It's harder to "warm up" to things Jewish.

At all times, but especially at such times, we need to keep the "water" - the Torah study - flowing. But it has to flow through the proper channels - the teachings of Torah that has been passed down from generation to generation.

There's a reason Jewish tradition has a "flow chart" - from the Torah through the Prophets and Talmud and Commentators such as Rashi and Codifiers and Philosophers such as Maimonides through the centuries of accepted tradition, to our own day with Chasidut. Studying Torah through the system established by our Sages keeps the "water" flowing and prevents "broken pipes."



IT HAPPENED ONCE...



Years ago in the city of Minsk there lived a man named Shmuel Nachum. Although his main occupation was studying Torah, his mind was so acute in business matters that he became an arbiter and legal advisor in all sorts of business disputes. In fact, this is how he made a comfortable living.

Shmuel Nachum and his wife had one surviving daughter, named Devorah, on whom they doted. Devorah was an unusually bright child and her father assumed total responsibility for her education. By the age of eight she was studying the Chumash (the Five Books of Moses) and the Prophets. Her progress continued and by age ten she knew the whole Bible and began learning Mishna and the Code of Jewish Law. In addition she learned mathematics, Polish, and was able to read and write. By the age of fifteen she was studying Talmud with the commentaries of Rashi.

At 18, Devorah married a fine young man and was a happy new bride. Her husband succeeded in business and she shortly gave birth to two girls and one boy. Suddenly, tragedy struck her in a series of terrible blows. Her two little girls died in an epidemic and within the same year her husband also died. Broken-hearted, the young widow returned to her parents' home with her little son. But three years later, her son also, was taken from her.

What did Devorah have left to live for? All day she tried to hide her grief from her parents, but from time to time she would closet herself in her room and weep for hours. After some time she realized that she must take charge of her shattered life, and she threw herself into her studies more than ever. She also began to involve herself in the social welfare of the local women.

Together with two of her childhood friends, Devorah established study-circles among the young women of Minsk who had not been as fortunate as she in learning Torah. Indeed, her learning groups became popular and spread throughout the city, making her a sought-after lecturer. Devorah found great solace in her work for, in helping others, she at the same time stilled the dull pain in her aching heart.

One day her father was approached by a certain man named Tzadok Moshe with a suggestion for a match between Devorah and his rebbe, a notable Torah scholar from Vitebsk named Nachum. Devorah expressed an interest in meeting the man, and it was arranged that he should travel to Minsk to meet this extraordinary woman. Within a short time they became engaged and thus began a new episode in the life of this unusual woman.

Having been used to the high level of Torah scholarship amongst the women of Minsk, Devorah was appalled at the ignorance of the women in Vitebsk, and she set about remedying it. Again she arranged study-circles as she had in Minsk. In addition, she established institutions for the sick and needy. She was very happy in her new life, filling her time with study, social service and managing her husband's business.

Nachum was not merely astonished to find that his wife was such a capable manager of his business affairs, but her extensive Torah knowledge astounded him! He began to realize more and more what a treasure he had in such a wife, and his respect and admiration for her increased enormously. He began to realize what a change her coming had made, not only in his own home which had become a veritable "Open House and Council of Wise Men," but in Vitebsk at large, where her influence was felt and appreciated in every sphere of social and educational activity! What he did not know was that Devorah found time every day to study Talmud and that she was studying it in its entirety for the second time!

Devorah was not satisfied to concentrate on the women alone; her ambition was to see Vitebsk as a whole become a center of Jewish learning. To that end she devised a plan in which a number of promising students from the small Vitebsk yeshiva would be supported to learn in one of the great yeshivas in another town where they would prepare themselves to serve their home town upon their return. In the interim, she convinced her husband to import and maintain at his own expense, a group of teachers and their families to come and educate the people of Vitebsk. This plan took time to implement, but within a year ten teachers were installed in Vitebsk and the sweet sound of Torah could be heard throughout the whole town.

Devorah had made her home in Vitebsk for ten years and her dream of making it a Torah center was slowly becoming a reality due to her efforts, foresight, and rare abilities.

THE PARSHAH in a Nutshell

This Week: Terumah ~ Exodus 25:1-27:19

The people of Israel are called upon to contribute fifteen materials -- gold, silver and copper; blue, purple and red-dyed wool; flax, goat hair, animal skins, wood, olive oil, spices and gems -- out of which, G-d says to Moses, "They shall make for Me a Sanctuary, and I shall dwell amidst them."

On the summit of Mount Sinai, Moses is given detailed instructions on how to construct this dwelling for G-d so that it could be readily dismantled, transported and reassembled as the people journeyed in the desert.

In the Sanctuary's inner chamber, behind an artistically woven curtain, was the Ark containing the Tablets of Testimony engraved with the Ten Commandments; on the Ark's cover stood two winged cherubim hammered out of pure gold. In the outer chamber stood the seven-

branched Menorah and the Table upon which the "showbread" was arranged.

The Sanctuary's three walls were fitted together from 48 upright wooden boards, each of which was overlaid with gold and held up by a pair of silver foundation sockets. The roof was formed of three layers of coverings: (a) tapestries of multi-colored wool and linen; (b) a covering made of goat-hair; (c) a covering of ram and tachash skins. Across the front of the Sanctuary was an embroidered screen held up by five posts.

Surrounding the Sanctuary and the copper-plated Altar which fronted it was an enclosure of linen hangings, supported by 60 wooden posts with silver hooks and trimmings and reinforced by copper stakes.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe O.B.M.
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Good Signs:

Whenever things got worse, Jews would say, "This is a sign! Moshiach is coming!"

But in those days, a messianic era would have meant a radical change in the natural order of things.

Today, though the human soul sleeps a deep slumber of materialism, the material world itself is prepared.

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Sunday 28th of February between 12:00pm – 5:00pm.

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*service Free of charge

This weeks L'Chaim is dedicated
in honor of:
Rabbi and Mrs. Mendel Stein
on the birth of their newborn baby girl.
MAZEL TOV!