**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA**

PARASHAT PEKUDEI

SICHA OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN ZT”L

Moshe Builds the *Mishkan*

Adapted by Matan Glidai

Translated by Kaeren Fish

After all the parts of the *Mishkan* are built, they are brought to Moshe (*Shemot* 39:33) and he connects them and sets up the *Mishkan* (*Shemot* 40:18). Rashi explains (39:33):

“For they were unable to set it up. Since Moshe performed no work [in construction of] the *Mishkan*, the Holy One, blessed be He, allowed him to set it up. No individual was able to raise it up, owing to the weight of the walls, which is beyond human strength to lift – but Moshe put it up. Moshe said to God, ‘How can it be raised by a person?’ He answered him, ‘Hold it with your hands.’ He looked as though he was lifting it, but in fact it rose and straightened up on its own. That is the meaning of the expression in the verse, ‘the *Mishkan* was raised’ (in the passive form) – meaning, it was raised by itself.”

The midrash paints a somewhat different picture than does Rashi:

“‘For you have surpassed them all’ – in that they constructed [the individual elements of] the *Mishkan* but did not know how to join them. What did they do? Each one took what he had made and brought it to Moshe, saying. ‘Here are the boards, here are the poles.’ When Moshe saw them, the holy spirit came upon him and he raised it.” (*Shemot Rabba* 52:4)

The midrash is perplexing. Those involved in creating the *Mishkan*, after all, included skilled builders and craftsmen:

“He has filled them with wisdom of heart, to do all manner of work: of the engraver, and of the craftsman, and of the embroiderer in blue and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, and of those that do any work, and of those that devise artistic work.” (*Shemot* 35:35)

Everyone was expert in his field, but no one knew how to join all the pieces and elements together to create a single *Mishkan*! Their great professionalism and expertise was in fact a disadvantage in this respect: each was proficient in his respective area of specialization, but knew little else, and they were therefore unable to envisage the larger picture of the *Mishkan*. Only Moshe had the breadth of vision to know how the various elements fit together to form the overall structure.

All of this reflects the view of the midrash. According to Rashi, however, the problem was a more prosaic one: the boards were simply too heavy; even Moshe could not lift them. He did what he was able to, and the rest happened on its own. But why could someone else not play the same role: to pretend that he was lifting the structure, while in fact the *Mishkan* raised itself? Rashi seems to suggest that the reason for this was that Moshe had played no role in the construction.

We might also suggest a different reason. Moshe was the only one who could try to raise the walls, exerting himself to his utmost ability and then leaving the rest of the work to God. This suggests that Moshe’s uniqueness lay not in his broad perspective and overall view, but rather in his ability to invest himself completely in his task. He did not give up; he tried his very best, and God helped him.

The same two messages arising from this physical construction can be applied to the “*mishkan*” of the spirit. Two of Moshe’s qualities are needed in order to build one’s “inner *mishkan*.” First, a person must build himself an all-round Torah personality: not limiting himself to just one sphere of study, but rather being open to and investing in diverse areas; not focusing on study alone, but broadening his aspiration to include the full sense of Torah, fear of Heaven, and proper conduct. Thus he will come to develop a whole personality that combines study, philosophy, feeling, and action. While secular academic study tends to encourage the acquisition of skill and expertise in a specific area, at the expense of others, a Torah personality should be well-rounded with attention to all spheres.

At the same time, one has to know that building this edifice requires considerable investment and effort. We must not imagine that it will happen by itself; on the other hand, we must not give up. A person has to do whatever he is able to, and from that point onwards God will aid him.

“‘And from Midbar to Matana’ (or, ‘from the wilderness [*midbar*] – a gift [*matana*]’) – If a person humbles himself like a wilderness, where others tread, then Torah is given to him as a gift.” (*Eruvin* 54a)

(This sicha was delivered at seuda shelishit, Shabbat parashat Pekudei 5755 [1995].)