

## Instilling Life in Wood and Stones

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In this week's *parsha* we have a listing of all of the items in the *mishkan*. When all the pieces were finally crafted, it was ready for assembly, which would seem to be the easiest part of constructing the *mishkan*. However, the *passuk* says, "They brought the *mishkan* to Moshe..." (*Shemos* 39:33), which Rashi quotes a *medrash* to explain to mean:

For they themselves could not erect it. And because Moshe did not do any other work in the *mishkan*, Hashem let him erect the *mishkan*. For no one was able to erect it, because of the weight of the planks, which no one had the strength to lift; but Moshe lifted it up. Even Moshe asked Hashem, "how is it possible that a human can lift up the parts?" Hashem replied, "you go about trying to do it, and it will appear as if you're the one that erected it, but actually it will rise by itself." And that's why it says, "the *mishkan* **was erected**", meaning by itself.

This *medrash* is very puzzling. Lifting up the planks, and putting them together, does not seem to be any great feat of craftsmanship, insight, or knowledge. It's just a matter of brute strength which simply requires many people. The pyramids are arguably much heavier than the *mishkan*, and yet with enough manpower they were built. As such, what is the problem with erecting the *mishkan*, and why was Moshe, of all people, tasked with doing so? He was not particularly known for his strength [certainly not in Torah *Sheb'ksav*]. Furthermore, if Moshe could not do it himself, why wouldn't many people doing it together suffice? Lastly, what solace is there in "appearing" to do it when in fact he's not doing it? Is it a photo op - people will think that he put it up, even though he didn't!? It's extremely puzzling.

Let us therefore take a second look at the concept of "standing up". We find in many places the concept of "standing up" as being something far more than a physical state. For instance, the *gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 38b) describes the creation of Adam *HaRishon* in incremental steps, hour by hour. The *gemara* says that at the fifth hour he "stood up on his feet". At first glance, this pales in significance to the other markers, e.g. "mixing earth and water" to create Adam's raw material, etc. A developing child standing up is similarly a marker of a certain stage in his development. When we speak of independence and self-rule, we refer to it as "*komemius*" which means "standing upright" (*Vayikra* 26:13). What is the meaning of all of these "standing up"s?

The concept of "standing up" refers to the fact that physical objects tend to lie in their most stable position, which is that most of their weight is on the ground; this is pure physicality. Thus, objects will fall on their longer side as a matter of course. Similarly, a person who is not living falls down and cannot stand upright. The reason is that is the natural position of one's weight distribution.

By contrast, when life is breathed into a person, the person is able to lift himself up. His weight is not what determines his position, but rather his spirit. The inspiration of life when it takes hold enables a person to stand upright. Similarly, the *gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 92b) says that when Yechezkel resurrected the dead people, "they stood on their feet, and recited *shirah*". Standing up erect on one's feet is a sign of the spirit ruling over the body and lifting it up, as opposed to the body collapsing under its own weight.

The same is true of the *mishkan*. The *mishkan* was made of inanimate objects; whether gold, silver, or wood, all of it was inanimate. The structure of the *mishkan* required "*atzei shitta omdim*", meaning "planks of cedar standing upright". Material alone does not make the *mishkan* unless it is infused with some sort of inner life force. It is a Divine spirit that permeates it, infused by a person who has the life-giving energy which is the hallmark of a great person. *Klal* Yisroel could make the pieces and craft them to precision, but they could not infuse it with Divine life. Moshe was the one person who possibly could infuse it with divine life, and even he could do so only with *HaKadosh Boruch Hu's* help. No person can give life; it is ultimately Hashem that gives life. But it does require the medium of a person who is worthy of infusing that life, and that was Moshe *Rabbeinu*.

This is perhaps a lesson for all of us who are engaged in one way or another in creating spiritual enterprises. Whether it is a shul, or a yeshiva, or any other type of *beis* Hashem. Yes, we must have all the material pieces, personnel, and so on, but all of that remains deadweight without a person who has something of a Divine spirit to infuse it with that spirit of life. The history of *Klal* Yisroel's successes - even in our days - was due to much effort and much material pieces falling into place. But no money, no system, no buildings, or anything else of that nature, succeeded in creating a *makom* of *kedusha* that inspires others, unless life was breathed into it by a person of spirit.