

SIDRA OF THE WEEK : תרומה

1. When Mosheh our Teacher was on Mount Sinnai, he learned from HaShem all the Mitzvos of the Torah, to teach them to us. This week's Sidra is given over to one subject: the making of the Mikdash (the Sanctuary) and the instructions of this Mitzvah are given in this week's Sidra.

The Mikdash, which was the transportable fore-runner of the Beis HaMikdash in Yerushala'im, was the medium through which HaShem chose to show that His Presence dwells in the midst of His People, as it says: "They shall make for Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst." (Besides its ordinary meaning, this Possuk is also an exhortation to us that HaShem wishes to dwell in our very midst: every Jewish home is to be a Sanctuary, a holy place, to HaShem.)

2. The Mikdash consisted of a Courtyard, and in this Courtyard was situated the Mishkan which was made up of the Holy and the Holy of Holies, in which were the items of sacred furniture. In front of the entrance to the Mishkan were the great Copper Altar and the Copper Washstand. Every detail of the Mikdash and its utensils was commanded by HaShem.

All the materials used were given by the Jewish People. They included: gold, silver, copper; blue, purple and scarlet wool; linen; goats' hair; rams' skins dyed red; skins of the multi-coloured Tachash; a kind of cedar wood; olive oil for the Menorah; spices (used in the preparation of the anointing oil and for the incense) and precious and semi-precious stones (for the Ephod and for the Choshen).

3. The first item the Torah describes is the holy Ark. This was a box-like structure which sat on its base. It was made of wood and was covered with a layer of gold inside and outside. It was two-and-a-half cubits long, one-and-a-half cubits wide and one-and-a-half cubits high. There was an adornment all the way round the top, symbolizing the Crown of the Torah, for the Ark held the Tablets on which were inscribed the Ten Commandments, which embody the whole Torah. Rings of gold were cast and fixed to the corners of the Ark, and two poles were permanently inserted through the rings — and thus the Ark was symbolically "portable." A lid for the Ark was made of pure gold, and rising up from the same flat piece of gold were two Cheruvvim with their outstretched wings covering the lid itself and the Ark. It was from between these two Cheruvvim which faced each other over the lid (representing the Jewish People in harmony and brotherly peace) symbolically protecting the Ark of the Covenant in which was the Torah and which was placed in the

Holy of Holies, that the Voice of HaShem emanated and made itself heard to Mosheh our Teacher.

4. The Table was likewise constructed of wood, was covered with gold, and had an adornment all the way round it (symbolizing the Crown of Royalty at the Table of Royalty). It was two cubits long, one cubit wide, and one-and-a-half cubits high, and there were four gold rings and two poles by means of which the Table was carried. Through an arrangement of four gold supports at its sides, with a series of gold half-pipes going across the Table between these supports as shelves, twelve Show Breads (corresponding to the Twelve Tribes) were on permanent display in the House of HaShem. There were also two gold ladles of frankincense on the Table-top itself. The Show Breads were renewed each Shabbos. The Table was placed along the north side of the Mishkan, and symbolized the material wealth of the Jewish People utilized in the service of HaShem.
5. The Menorah was made of one piece of pure gold. From the central shaft, three branches came out from either side and curved upwards, and the whole Menorah was fashioned with various knobs, cups and blooms on its base, central shaft and branches. On the top of the shaft and branches were the seven lamps, also of gold. The Menorah, the symbol of the Light of the Torah, was placed in the Mishkan along the south side, opposite to the Table.
6. The structure of the Mishkan itself was made of great wooden boards which were inserted into silver sockets and then covers were spread across to form the roof. The first covering was made up of ten smaller pieces, composed of woollen yarn of various colours and linen, woven in beautiful patterns. The next covering, somewhat larger and made of goats' hair, consisted of eleven pieces, and on top of that were the coverings made of rams' skins dyed red and Tachash skins. The coverings were kept in place by means of pegs and cords so that they did not move in the wind. The boards were one-and-a-half cubits wide, one cubit thick, and ten cubits high. They were cut away at the base to form two tenons in each board, to fit into two silver sockets for each board. Each of the three walls of boards was secured with long bolts as well as with rings set into the top of the boards to keep them together, and there was also the middle bolt which went through all three walls of the Mishkan. The fourth side of the Mishkan had no wall of boards, for on that side was the entrance.
7. At the entrance, which was on the east, there were five pillars set into five copper sockets, and a heavy, beautifully woven curtain. Another similar curtain, the Po'roches, was hung across the Mishkan in front of four pillars (set into four silver sockets) at twenty cubits into the Mishkan, and this served as a screen in front of the Holy of Holies. The width of the Mishkan was ten cubits, and the Holy of Holies was ten cubits square.
8. The great Copper Altar was made of wooden tablets, covered with copper sheet, and formed a tall square five cubits by five cubits. The Altar of the Mikdash, like everything

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else, was portable: there were four rings at the four corners, and two poles were used to carry the Altar. This Altar was positioned outside the Mishkan, on the north side in front of the entrance to the Mishkan, and there was a long ramp starting at the southern side of the Courtyard leading to the top of the Altar.

9. The Courtyard itself was enclosed with white linen curtains hanging from high pillars inserted in sockets of copper, secured by means of ground pegs and cords. The Courtyard was one hundred cubits long (from east to west) and fifty cubits wide. The entrance, which was on the east, was formed by a screen hung from four pillars set into four sockets. The Mishkan itself was in the middle of the western half of the Courtyard and the Copper Washstand was between the Altar and the entrance of the Mishkan, on the southern side.
10. When HaShem commanded us to make the Sanctuary, He Himself stipulated the materials to be used, He laid down what the Mikdash should comprise, and He Himself directed the way in which the Mikdash and its components were to be made. The Mikdash, the symbol of HaShem's "dwelling in our midst," comprises numerous other symbols and it is our sacred duty to enquire and understand, to the best of our ability, what each and every part symbolizes, the better to know our duties towards Man and G-d. For it is only when each Jewish home is modelled on the ideals represented by the Mishkan of HaShem, taking as its guidelines those high and noble ideals which are embodied in the Mikdash ("Mikdash" means "holy place") that each Jewish home can become a "Mikdash in miniature," a fitting Abode for the Divine Presence "which dwells in our midst."

For the explanation of the Haftorah of Sidra תְּרוּמָה please go to HAFTORAS.