

Northern Nexus Parshat Teruma

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

When we study the measurements of the vessels in the *mishkan*, we note that some measurements are full measurements while others are fractional or a combination of full and fractional. We also note that the placement of these furnishings is meant to be instructional. As Rabbi Hofstedter writes, Hashem revealed the secrets of existence to Moshe at *Sinai*, and showed him how to build the *mishkan* to parallel the very universe itself.

Rabbi Hofstedter in citing the Kli Yakar, notes that that all the measurements of the *Aron Kodesh* which represents total spirituality are fractional. This is to teach us that we may never consider ourselves whole and complete in relation to the spiritual. Our spiritual quest must be continual, for we are always capable of reaching greater heights. Our search for knowledge of Hashem through Torah study should be unquenchable. He cites the Midrash on Yaakov's blessing of Menashe and Ephraim comparing them to fish. Fish are submerged in water all their lives, yet when it rains they surface and try to catch the raindrops. So too, while totally immersed in the life giving waters of Torah, we should nevertheless eagerly thirst for and internalize each new insight into Torah.

The width and length of the Table are expressed in whole measurements, while its height is fractional. The Table represents both the kingship and the economic well being that the king is responsible for. When it comes to material possessions, one should perceive

himself as whole and complete. However, when observing others who may be less fortunate, one should feel a sense of responsibility and help them with their needs.

The Ramban notes that material blessings flowed from the Table as their source, as God no longer creates substance *ex nihilo*. But material blessings also contain a spiritual element that we must never forget. The Table was in the north while the *Menorah*, representing the wisdom and light of Torah, was south. Yet the two were facing each other. As the Shlah Hakodosh says, one must never mistake one's success as the result of his own efforts, but must attribute it to Hashem's support. The showbread on the Table remained fresh on the Table from one *erev Shabbat* to the next to teach us the very concept that Hashem is the One Who sustains us while using the food as His medium. This does not mean that we can sit idly and wait for Hashem to provide for us. We must put in effort. However our self-definition should not be defined by our work but rather by how we create a spiritual life, viewing work as a means to sustain the spiritual essence.

The interdependence of the physical with the spiritual also explains why the instructions for constructing the Table precede the instructions for constructing the *Menorah*, yet when the Torah outlines the placement of these furnishings, it begins with the placement of the Table, interjects the placement of the *Menorah*, and then completes the instructions for placing the Table. As the Mishchat Shemen quotes Chazal, "*Im ein kemach, ein Torah* – if there is

no food, there is no Torah." Although we need to eat to live, our spiritual needs must always be at the forefront. As the Be'er Moshe says, while at times we must put our attention to the south, to the Table and sustenance, we must always be cognizant of the reflection of the *Menorah* from the north as the Table and the *Menorah* face each other.

There were two crowns over the Table. The first crown represents the challenge of wealth, rising above the resistance to share one's affluence with others and not constantly desiring more, says the Tiferet Shimshon. The second crown teaches us that by treating one's table as holy, one has the ability to elevate one's food to a divine status. The Sichot Ha'avodah provides some guidelines. We must treat our food with the respect it deserves. We must thank the Giver of the food with full sincerity both before and after the meal. And we must further remember God during the meal by citing words of Torah. The Ark, the Altar and the Table were made from the special acacia wood, *atzei shitim*. Rabbi Frand cites Rabbeinu Bachya that it is an acronym for the blessings the Temple service will bring to the Jewish people: *shalom, tova, (i)yeshuah, mechilah*, peace, goodness, salvation, and forgiveness. However, now that we no longer have the *beit hamikdash* all we have is our own earthly table which we must endeavor to elevate to a spiritual status by using it as a vehicle for welcoming travelers and feeding the poor. Then our own table can become a personal altar of atonement.



Tradition Of Rachel and The Fast Of Ester

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Soshie Nissenbaum

Rachel excelled in the art of silence. She gave that ability over to her children, Yosef and Binyamin, and they in turn passed it down to Shaul Hamelech who passed it down to Esther.

Let's explore some similar patterns that occur in *Tanach* with Yosef and Binyamin and Mordechai and Esther. Yosef and Binyamin are described as beautiful. So too Esther is called beautiful. The word used in *Tanach* is *chen* (grace). Wherever they go, they find *chen* in the eyes of their beholder. We see that the children of Rachel were given the power to conquer Amalek. Although Shaul was assigned the task he did not succeed. Esther and Mordechai completed the mission. It says about Yosef, "*Vayehi kidabra yom yom v'lo shama.*" The wife of Potifar spoke to Yosef every day and he did not listen. Similarly, Mordechai refused to bow down to Haman and they came to protest, *v'lo shama*- and Mordechai didn't listen. Two servants of the king, the *sar hamashkim* and the *sar haofim* were the catalyst to bring Yosef to power. So too in the story of Purim, two servants of the king, Bigtan and Teresh were the catalyst to introduce Mordechai to Achashveirosh. Pharaoh had a dream and Yosef was called to interpret it. This then led to his rise to power. So too the turning point in the Megillah was the night Achashveirosh's slumber was

disturbed.

Amalek tries to implant within us doubt but the descendants of Rachel teach us that Hashem is present everywhere and in all times. Rachel was a master at the art of concealment. We first meet her at the well. Yaakov describes her as "*yafat tohar yafat einayim,*" she had beautiful eyes and she was a beautiful person. Rachel and her children were beautiful. Their outer features mirrored their inner beauty. What was Rachel's special strength? Leah never knew that it was Rachel who enabled her to marry Yaakov. We see this in the way that Leah reacted when Rachel asked for the *dudaim* (mandrakes). Leah said, "Is it not enough that you took my husband from me, you also want to take my son's *dudaim.*" If Leah would have known the truth she would have treated Rachel differently. So too her children would've never looked at Yosef as trying to usurp their power and position because they were there first. They viewed it backwards. Leah was first and Rachel was the tag along wife who came into the picture later. Yet although Rachel knew the truth she said nothing.

When the Jews were banished from Eretz Yisrael and were led to exile, the *avot* and *imahot* pleaded on their behalf. Hashem did not listen to them until Rachel came before

Him. "*Me'ana l'hinachem al baneh.*" She refused to be comforted for her children. All of Hashem's children are her children. She would not rest until Hashem promised that every soul would have a *tikun*. This is the tradition she passed down to her children. It says about Mordechai, "*Ish Yehudi ish yemini*" The tribes argued which tribe he belonged to. Similarly, Esther didn't reveal her birthplace and every nation claimed she was theirs. Both Mordechai and Esther created a feeling of kinship and brotherhood. They cared about people. It didn't matter how you were related. If you were a child of Hashem, you were a brother.

We see this when Mordechai tells Esther, "Don't think you will be able to save yourself in the king's house. If you don't help the Jews now, you and your father's house will perish and the Jewish people will find their salvation from another source." But you will have violated the tradition of your father's house, the tradition of Rachel. Don't back down until you ask Achashveirosh to save every Jew. And that's what she did. The megillah says, "*Vatosef Esther vatischanen.*" She didn't just ask for mercy for herself, she continued to plead. "*Nafshi besheilasa v'ami bivakashasi.*" Her plea was not just for herself, but for her people. Her desire was to save the entire nation.

The Turning Point in Egypt Part V

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

The ninth plague was *choshech*-darkness. This corresponds to the saying of the first day, "*Vayomer Elokim yehi ohr*-And Hashem said let there be light." What was unique about this plague was that at the same time that the Egyptians were engulfed in darkness the Jews were surrounded by light. This is something we cannot comprehend. The darkness of the Egyptians was not just their inability to see but their inability to move. Rashi explains that the darkness was so thick it was tangible. Yet a Jew who was standing next to his Egyptian neighbor in the very same place did not experience it. On a very simple level, people saw the hand of Hashem

clearly. But there was something unique here that they discerned, namely, two opposites could coexist at the same time. The fact that they cannot coexist is a rule that Hashem created in nature. But He is not bound by these laws. His reality can be one of coexisting opposites.

It says about Hashem, "*B'rogez rachem tizkor*-In your anger, remember your compassion." It is not humanly possible to be overcome by anger and to be merciful at the same time. But Hashem can do this. This is what the plague of darkness meant to teach us. Opposites can come from the same

source. This is also an answer to one of the greatest challenges mankind faces. We know that Hashem is merciful yet we hear terrible stories of people suffering and dying. Logically, it doesn't mesh together and we cannot understand it. This is why many people came to the erroneous belief that there are two Higher Beings- one good and one bad and they fight each other. When good things happen it means the good Hashem prevailed and visa versa. This is really humanizing Hashem because within His reality opposites can coexist. We have to discern Hashem's mercy at the moment of difficulty.