

## Texts on Mishkan compiled by Rabbi Amy Bernstein for KI Torah Study

Rabbi Tarfon said, "How great is work, for even God (who is everywhere) will not bring the divine presence to rest on the Jewish people until they have done work. As the Torah says, '[They must] make for me a tabernacle and [then] I will dwell among them.'" -Avot D'rabbi Nason

"Change was very difficult for the Jewish people. Therefore, God gave them animal sacrifices because that is the type of service they were used to, not because it was the best type. God wanted to turn their sacrificial service of idols to the service of the One God." -Maimonides-- Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon of Fez (formerly of Cordoba), 11th century (Guide to the Perplexed 3:32)

(Courtesy of AJWS)

Our Torah verse is "Ve'asu li mikdash v'shakhanti b'tocham / Let them make Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell among them." The last word in this verse is b'tocham. Translated as "among them," it can also mean "within them." Many commentators pick up on this and focus on what it means for God to dwell "within" the people. Aviva Zornberg points out that the word does not translate as "among the nation [as a whole]," but rather, "within [each of] them", within each person. The Mikdash – the Mishkan – is meant to represent the fact that Holiness is able to dwell within and among each and every individual.

(B'nai Or Montreal Community Shul blog)

...the Hebrew term nadiv. This word suggests not so much the office or status of a noble, but rather the characteristic of nobility. It is linked to the term for generosity: nedavah (a free-will offering), or nediv-lev (one whose heart moves him to contribute). Here the idea of nobility is bound up with what noble people do: they're generous. It is not about station, but about behavior and character.

"Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give," kol ish asher yidvenu-libo. After Revelation, God creates the possibility for every Israelite to be generous through the joint project of building the Mishkan. Everyone can give. And in giving, everyone can be a person who gives—a nadiv, a noble.

There's an important message here about collective belonging, one that can inform all of our group experiences. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks writes in his book *The Home We Build Together*, "A nation is built by building." So are communities, companies, congregations, sports teams, and families. But there's also an important message about the Exodus: the culmination of the Exodus is not the crossing of the sea, and not even the revelation of the Torah. The culmination of the Exodus is in the building of the Mishkan, in the empowerment of the powerless to be

noble, to be generous, to contribute.  
( Rabbi Josh Feigelson)

Me'am Loez notes a subtle difference in the instructions given to Moshe for making the menorah, the tabernacle, and the sacrificial altar. Instructions for making the menorah and mishkan are given in the present tense, as if a reliable visual image given to Moshe at Sinai could serve as the design grid when the building actually began. Moshe, however, is given the instruction for designing the sacrificial altar in the past tense, "as you were shown on the mountain."

He continues that there are three types of spiritual work in this world, each progressively more difficult. One can be given an oral instruction and the work will be done. A more difficult kind of work requires a visual map; one must see it to believe it. The most difficult form of spiritual work, however, requires partnership and practice. One must not only hear of it and see it, but actually participate in its creation.

(Rabbi Jeffrey Schein)

THE GIFTS (TRUMAH) – Rabbi Rachel Barenblatt

These are the gifts  
leather and linen  
silver and gold

each who was moved  
returned these riches  
to the place

every yearning heart  
following the blueprint  
these are the gifts

parchment scraped fine  
and iron gall ink  
commentaries in the margins

words intertwined  
so that the tabernacle  
becomes one whole

these are the gifts  
that make the sanctuary  
the presence dwells in us