



PARSHAS TERUMOH— MICHAEL LEBRETT (REPRINTED)

This weeks sedra is the first of several that deal with the construction of the Mishkon.

The raw materials that were required to make the vessels, curtains and coverings came from the donations made from the booty collected from the Egyptians. However, the boards of the Mishkon were made from 'shittim-wood' which were supplied from a different source.

The Medrash Tanchuma quoted by Rashi (chapter 25 posuk 5) says that when Yaacov came down to Egypt from Eretz Yisroel he brought with him cedar trees which he replanted in Egypt. With the benefit of Ruach Hakodesh he foresaw that a Mishkon was going to be built in the future which would require wood. He therefore left instructions that when the Jews left Egypt they should take these trees with them and use its wood for the Mishkon. In fact there is a further twist to the tale. The Bereishis Rabba (94:4) states that those very trees Yaacov brought with him to Egypt were the trees that Avrohom had planted many years earlier in Be'er Sheva.

Hence, the ancestry of this wood was impeccable. However, why was it so important to specifically use this wood? R' Yaacov Kamenetzky suggests the following idea. The purpose of Avrohom planting his trees was in order to use the wood to build an 'eshel' – a lodge where he would welcome visitors and wayfarers. During the course of their stay, Avrohom would not only perform the mitzvah of hachnosas orchim but also take the opportunity to discuss religion with them and persuade them to recognize the glory of Hashem and the beauty of His world. Since these trees were planted and nurtured for such lofty purposes – purely to sanctify Hashems' name – Yaacov felt that it would be most fitting that wood from these trees form the basic shell of the Mishkon.

Perhaps, suggests R' Kamenetzky there is an added reason for Yaacov bringing the trees down to Egypt from Eretz Yisroel. Yaacov was very concerned that his descendants never forget Eretz Yisroel during their exile. In fact his reluctance to go down to Egypt in the first place was based on his fear that over the generations his descendants would 'find a home' in Egypt and lose all connection to their homeland. Consequently, he brought down something tangible from there to serve as a constant reminder to them that their desire should be to return to Eretz Yisroel. This message he hoped would be passed on from father to son. Since the point of the message was to highlight the eventual building of the Mishkon following their redemption from Egypt and these trees served as a focal point of that message it was entirely appropriate to use the wood from those trees.

R'Moshe Sternbuch suggests a further point. Yaacov wanted to stress to his exiled descendants that however easy it may be to acquire goods and produce from outside Eretz Yisroel nothing can match the inherent and unique value in terms of holiness of produce from Eretz Yisroel. This applies not just to its' fruit but even its trees.

(Rav Yitzchok Feigenbaum (1828-1911) Av Beis Din of Warsaw felt that all seforim ought to be published only in Eretz Yisroel in fulfillment of the posuk 'ki miTzion tetzei Torah' – Torah shall go forth from Tzion. He would preferentially use seforim printed in Eretz Yisroel over editions printed anywhere else. Additionally, from the day imported wines from Eretz Yisroel became available in Warsaw he would not drink any other kind)

The importance of this message can be seen from a different and opposite angle.

In the sedra of Re'eh the Torah lists a number of animals that are impure. Included in this list is the Ro'oh (literally seeing). The Gemoro in Chulin 63b says that this animal can stand in Bovel and see a carcass in Eretz Yisroel. R'Meir Shapiro suggests that this attitude in itself is enough to render the animal impure. To view Eretz Yisroel from afar and only see its flaws and to pinpoint only its imperfections shows a complete lack of appreciation of the holiness of that holy land.

Undoubtedly, the message of the trees that Yaacov brought with him from Eretz Yisroel is as relevant today as it was then.