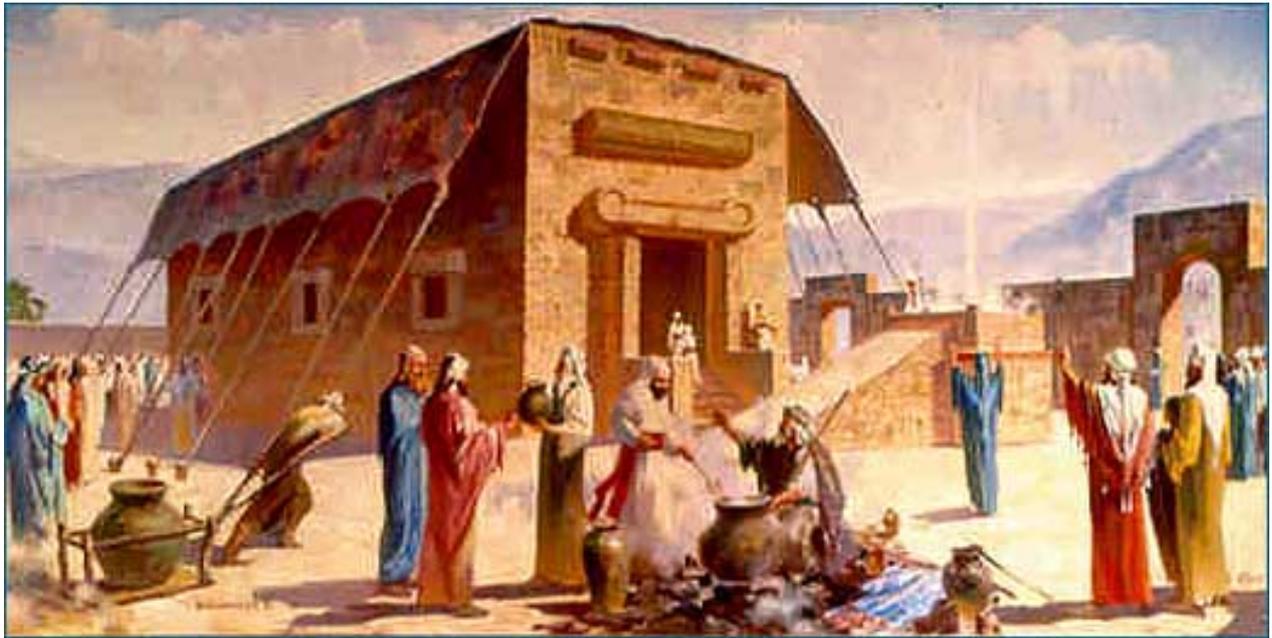


## Choveret Chinuchit: Parashat Terumah: To 'Build' a Nation



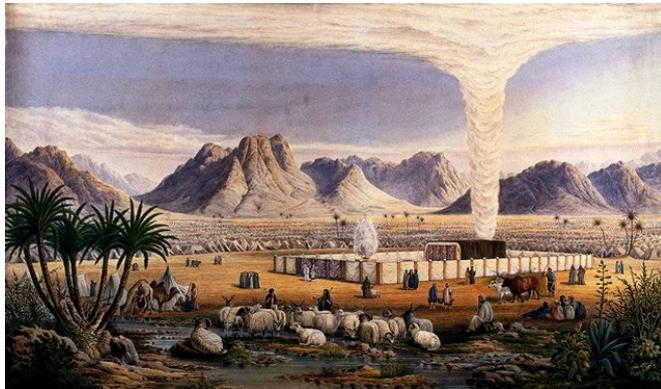
### Aims:

- 📖 **Learn** about the building of the Mishkan.
- 📖 **Discover** how the building of the Mishkan aided the building of the Jewish nation.
- 📖 **Think** about the challenges the State of Israel has faced and continues to face in building an Israeli nation.

## Building the Mishkan

Parashat Terumah is the first in a series of five parshiyot relating to the construction of the Mishkan, the portable Sanctuary which was to serve as a temporary substitute for the Beit Hamikdash. Hashem commanded Bnei Yisrael through Moshe, "They shall make a Sanctuary for Me - so that I may dwell among them", and this creation of an earthly dwelling place for Hashem teaches us many fundamental lessons.

The Mishkan, and subsequently the Beit Hamikdash, represent the supreme sanctification of the physical, the materialistic. The Mishkan was made from gold,



silver, copper, wool, linen, goat hair, animal skins, acacia wood, oil, spices, and stones. Yet out of these mundane, physical, earthly objects, a G-dly dwelling place is built.

Additionally, the Mishkan's construction was funded in two distinct ways: mandatory and voluntary contributions. This

represents the two spheres that everything in this world falls into, things are either a 'chova' - obligatory either in the sense of positive or negative

### Point to Ponder

📖 Can everything which is permissible be used for good purposes?

commandments - or 'reshut' - permissible. It is within the realm of reshut that we are challenged to sanctify Hashem, a challenge that we, as Modern Orthodox Jews, must particularly live up to.

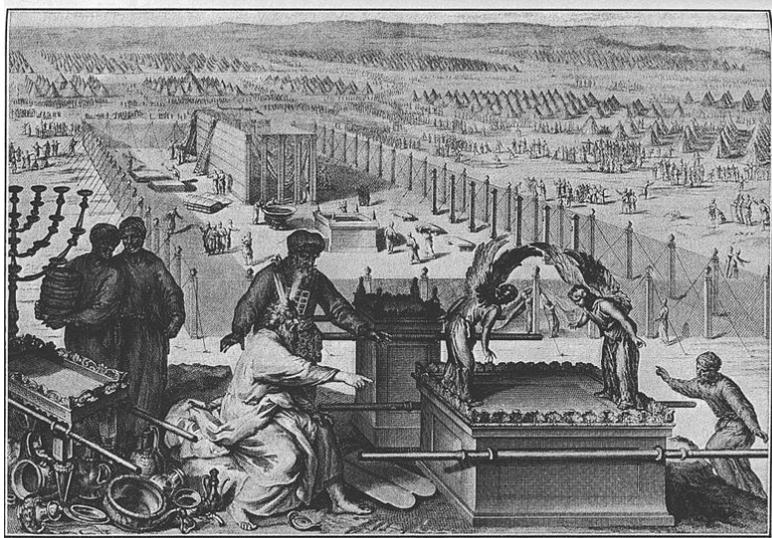
## Building a Nation

It was said after the unification of Italy's various provincial and city states in the 1800s, "We have made Italy. Now we must make Italians." For Bnei Yisrael, following their exodus from Egypt this challenge of making a united, G-dly nation was no less real. Even after Matan Torah, the Divine revelation at Har Sinai, Bnei Yisrael still nonetheless sinned with the golden calf. Indeed, Rashi comments that despite the apparent chronology of the Torah suggesting that the instruction to

build the Mishkan preceded the sin of the golden calf, in reality the command to construct the Mishkan only occurred afterwards.

Rabbi Sacks zt'l takes this point even further, highlighting the long series of complaints by Bnei Yisrael, from just before the Splitting of the Sea to their numerous complaints over food and water. Asks Rabbi Sacks, "If an unprecedented sequence of miracles cannot bring about a mature response on the part of the people, what will?"

"It is then that G-d said: Let them build something together. This simple command transformed the Israelites. During the whole construction of the tabernacle there were no complaints. The people contributed, some gold, some silver, some bronze, some brought skins and drapes, others gave their time and skill ... The building of the Tabernacle was the first great project the Israelites undertook together. ... It brought to closure their birth as a nation and it symbolised the challenge of the future."



Moreover, Ramban, the 13th century commentator, explains that the redemption from Egypt was not complete with the physical Exodus, nor even the giving of the 10 Commandments. It was only when the spiritual high of Matan Torah was retained through the Mishkan that the geula, redemption, was complete.

### The Manifestation of Unity

Only when Bnei Yisrael united in actualising their pledge of "Na'ase v'nishma - We will do and we will listen," only when all the people came together in a positive endeavour could they become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

The power of this manifestation of unity cannot be underestimated. The Midrash in Bereishit Rabba teaches, "Said Rabbi Shmuel bar Ami - from the beginning of

creation haKadosh Baruch Hu desired to have partnership with the beings in the lower realm. ... When did haKadosh Baruch Hu achieve this? With the establishment of the Mishkan. Said haKadosh Baruch Hu: it is as if on that day I created My world."

### Building an Israeli nation?

Since the first Zionist Congress held in Basel in 1897 there has been a plethora of views and opinions regarding what a Jewish state in Eretz Yisrael should look like: religious or secular, socialist or capitalist.

Over the course of the last 73 years the differences in opinion have become even more polarised. Famously, there is no explicit mention of G-d in the Israeli Declaration of Independence. In a brilliant compromise, the term "Tzur Yisrael, Rock of Israel" was used since the religious Jews understood the Rock of Israel to be Hashem, and the secular Jews understood it as the physical ground of the Land of Israel. Presently, the disagreements, particularly between the Chareidim and the secular Chiloni Jews over the army, are much more severe.

Perhaps this is even more difficult due to the vast cultural differences between various groups in Israeli society. President Rivlin, in a 2015 speech, described Israeli society as consisting of "four tribes:"



1. **Ultra-Orthodox Jews or Charedim**, who observe a strict interpretation of halakha, as well as highly conservative social norms and varying degrees of reclusion from general Israeli society;
2. **Religious or "Modern Orthodox" Jews**, dati'im, who practice traditional observance such as keeping kosher and observing the Sabbath, but who are also far more integrated into Israeli society than Haredim. Unlike Haredim, dati'im, sometimes also called "Religious Zionists" or "national-religious," also identify strongly with the state and the Zionist ideal of Jewish national self-determination. Dati men are conscripted into the military, unlike most Haredi men, and even a sizeable minority of dati women serve in the military.
3. **Secular Jews, or Chilonim**, a word commonly used in Israel to describe all Israeli Jews who observe little or no religious traditions, whether they are

believers or not. This group was the old elite from where Israel's leadership and most dominant actors have usually emerged.

4. **Arab citizens of Israel.** (Non-Jewish citizens of Israel are primarily Arab—mostly Muslims but Christians as well.) Many identify as Palestinian citizens of Israel, simultaneously balancing Palestinian, Arab, Muslim/Christian, familial or geographic, and Israeli identities.

#### Point to Ponder

- ❏ Despite the seemingly impossible odds, is it possible to create an Israeli nation?
- ❏ Is unity combined with action the key now as it was 3000 years ago?

#### Discussion Ideas:



- ❏ Would there be a difference if everything provided for the construction of the Mikdash was obligatory?
- ❏ What about if it was all voluntary?
- ❏ Is building a nation as simple as uniting towards a common goal?
- ❏ Although the redemption from Egypt was only completed with the Mishkan, would this end result have been possible without the statement of "Na'ase v'nishma" and the acceptance of the Torah?