

Parshat Terumah 5776

In this week's parsha Bnei Yisrael are asked to contribute gifts to the building of the Mishkan as Hashem says *"They shall make for Me a Sanctuary and I shall dwell in their midst¹."* Whilst the Ramban sees this as a culmination of Bnei Yisrael's acceptance of the Aseret Hadibrot and the covenant with Hashem on Har Sinai, Rashi disagrees. He holds that the commandment to build the Mishkan was given after the sin of the Golden Calf and was a direct result of that sin. According to both opinions, however, there would at some point have been a permanent sanctuary to Hashem. This is clear from Sefer Bereishit when Avraham builds an altar in Bet – El² and Yaakov wakes from his dream and claims: *"This is none other than the abode of God...³"* Whether there would have been a Mishkan – a temporary, portable structure for their sojourn in the wilderness in any event is debatable but it was always understood that once we entered Eretz Yisrael we would build a permanent Mikdash – a sanctuary where Hashem would dwell in our midst.

The haftarah deals with the construction of this permanent Mikdash by King Solomon. It begins with an account of the treaty between Shlomo and Hiram the King of Tyre. Shlomo needed to trade with Tyre in order to build the Bet HaMikdash. The tallest trees in the Middle East were grown in Lebanon -the cedar tree -and Shlomo needed this lumber for beams. In addition to the Bet HaMikdash Shlomo built his own palace and other buildings in Yerushalayim. These building projects required the import of huge numbers of Cedar trees from Tyre as well as the craftsmen with the technical knowledge to build these magnificent edifices. His relationship with Hiram was of great importance in ensuring the physical and economic growth of his empire. It appears that Shlomo and Hiram became good friends through their mutual interest in architecture and engineering.

There was, however, another aspect to this relationship. It was actually David, Shlomo's father who makes the initial treaty with Hiram. Hiram sends cedar wood and craftsmen to build David's palace. *"Hiram, king of Tyre, sent a delegation to David with cedar wood and carpenters"*... and they built a palace for David. David realised that G-d had established him as king over Israel and that He had exalted his kingdom for the sake of His people. It appears that it is the treaty with Hiram that convinces David that Hashem wanted him to be king.

¹ Exodus 25:8

² Bereishit 12:8

³ Bereishit 28:17

Since Bnei Yisrael left Egypt they have had an isolated existence. The only nation to have any peaceful relationship with us was the Givonim who based their appeal for a treaty with Yehoshua on deceit. Throughout the period of the judges and up until the reign of David, the surrounding nations had waged war against Bnei Yisrael. This treaty with Hiram is the first instance of a foreign nation wishing to have a positive relationship with Israel. This is because for the first time Israel is in a position as a nation to be admired and respected. It is now a unified nation worshipping Hashem.

Shlomo Hamelech consolidated the work of his father. Under his reign the nation reached the peak of its influence. It controlled the trade routes between Egypt and Mesopotamia and the treaty with Hiram ensured access to the important trade routes of the Mediterranean. Shlomo established his kingdom as a super power amongst the nations of the region and a centre of civilisation to which foreign peoples are drawn like the Queen of Sheba.

We have just celebrated Rosh Chodesh Adar. Bnei Yisrael is compared to the moon for many reasons. One reason given is that the passage of the moon mirrors the history of the nation. For the first fifteen days of the month the moon waxes until it reaches its full size on the fifteenth of the month and then it wanes reaching its smallest size on the thirtieth day. There are fifteen generations from Avraham to Shlomo. During Shlomo's reign the nation reaches its peak strength and glory. The next fifteen generations end with the reign of Tzidkiyahu, in exile and the destruction of Shlomo's temple.

Shlomo builds the Mikdash specifically at the point in history when Israel is at its greatest. All the nations respect Israel and look to Israel for direction. In his prayer at the dedication of the Mikdash Shlomo explains that *"Also a non-Jew ... shall hear of Your great name, and of Your mighty hand... and will come and pray toward this Temple; may You hear ..and act according to all that the non-Jew calls out to You, so that all the peoples of the world may know Your name, to fear You, as does Your people Israel, and to know that Your name is proclaimed upon this Temple which I have built⁴."*

Shlomo's Mikdash had a dual purpose – to be an inspiration to both Jew and non-Jew incorporating the idea that we should be a light unto other nations. As a nation we were not ready to fulfil that role until Shlomo's reign. But as Hashem warns at the end of the Haftara this Mikdash and Hashem's presence amongst us, will only last as long as Israel keeps His commandments.

⁴ Kings I 8:41-43