



CANDLE LIGHTING 5:28 PM | 1 ADAR | MARCH 1, 2025 | HAVDALA 6:33 PM

שבת פרשת תרומה
ב' דראש חדש
פרשת שקלים

**SHABBAT PARSHAT TERUMAH
SECOND DAY ROSH CHODESH
SHABBAT PARSHAT SHEKALIM**

Three Sifrei Torah. Seventh Aliyah is read from the 2nd Sefer Torah at Bamidbar 28:9-15, the two paragraphs וביום השבת and ובראשי חדשיכם. Maftir reads from Parshat Ki Tisah (Exodus 30:11-16). Haftorah is Kings II 12:1-17. Do not say אב הרחמים or צדקתך צדק.

FRIDAY EVENING

MINCHA 5:30 PM

SHKIA 5:47 PM

TZAIT HAKOCHAVIM 6:27 PM

SHABBAT

HASHKAMA 7:45 AM

SHACHARIT - MAIN 9:00 AM

POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR 9:20 AM

LAST KRIAT SHEMA 9:20 AM

FUNDAMENTALS SHIUR 11:30 AM

PRE-MINCHA SHIUR 4:40 PM

MINCHA 5:20 PM

SHKIA 5:48 PM

MAARIV 6:33 PM

SEUDAH SHLISHIT

Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by the Garfunkels to commemorate the Yahrzeit of יהושע פאליק ב"ר משה הכהן, David's father, Shea Garfunkel^{ה"ע}.

MATZAH SALE!

Order handmade Pupa Tzelhem shmura matzah through Ahavat Achim! Prices are: \$41 per lb. regular matzah, \$43 per lb. whole wheat matzah, \$36 per box of spelt matzah (6 matzahs), and \$36 per box of oat matzah - (three matzahs). Order here: [Matzah](#).

MISHLOACH MANOT

Purim is rapidly approaching, which means it is time to participate in the shul's Mishloach Manot! The deadline to order is March 3! You can order online here: [Mishloach Manot](#).

ROUND ROBIN MEGILLAT ESTHER PEREK-BY-PERK SHIUR

The Megillat Esther "round robin" will be at Seudah Shlishit on March 8. To present on a perek please contact Andrew Wigod or click here to indicate the Perek you want to speak on: [Esther](#).

MATANOT LEVYONIM AND MAOT CHITIM

Fulfill the mitzvah of Matanot Levyonim by contributing no less than \$30 (to help two poor individuals purchase food for Purim) here. Funds will be distributed in proportions to be decided by the Rabbi to Project Ezra (local and annual) and Leket Israel (as chosen by the Israel Action Committee charity subcommittee). For logistical reasons, deadline is March 13 at noon. Also, you can donate "wheat monies", Maot Chitim, for the poor before Pesach. IY"Y, links will be available in next week's bulletin.



SUNDAY
3/2

MONDAY
3/3

TUESDAY
3/4

WEDNESDAY
3/5

THURSDAY
3/6

FRIDAY
3/7

WEEKDAY MINYANIM AT AHAVAT ACHIM

SHACHARIT 8:00 AM 6:15 AM 6:25 AM 6:25 AM 6:15 AM 6:25 AM

2ND SHACHARIT MINYON - YISHTABACH AT 7:40 AM 7:25 AM 7:25 AM 7:25 AM 7:25 AM 7:25 AM

MINCHA/MAARIV 5:37 PM 5:38 PM 5:39 PM 5:40 PM 5:42 PM 5:40 PM

ZMANIM

Earliest Talit 5:34 AM 5:33 AM 5:31 AM 5:30 AM 5:28 AM 5:27 AM

Gedolah 12:37 PM 12:37 PM 12:37 PM 12:37 PM 12:37 PM 12:37 PM

Shkia 5:49 PM 5:50 PM 5:51 PM 5:52 PM 5:54 PM

Tzait 6:29 PM 6:30 PM 6:31 PM 6:32 PM 6:34 PM

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 8 - Esther Round Robin. Click here to sign up to discuss a chapter: [Esther](#).

March 13 - Purim Break Fast is sponsored by Lori & David Garfunkel to commemorate the Purim Yahrzeit of Herman Klein^{ה"י}, David's grandfather, חיים בן אברהם הלוי.

Mar. 29 - Scholar-In-Residence Rabbi Jesse Horn.

March 30 - Musical Hallel.

May 3 - Mizrahi Israel 360 Scholar-In-Residence Rabbanit Surale Rosen.

IN OUR FUTURE

Mar. 8 - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by the Greens commemorating the Yahrzeit of Elliot's mother, Sylvia Greene^{ה"י}, Serah bat Ya'acov Tzvi

Mar. 15 - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by the Garfunkels commemorating the Yahrzeit of אהרן בן אהרן משה מרדכי בן אהרן, Lori's father, Marvin Markovitz^{ה"י}.

BOARD MEETINGS

March 25 - 8:30 PM via Zoom.

April 29 - 9:00 PM via Zoom.

May 27 - 9:00 PM via Zoom.

June 24 - 9:00 PM via Zoom.

ISRAEL ACTION INITIATIVE

Tzedakah Fund of the Month- Leket Israel, Israel's national food bank. Give now by clicking here: [Leket Israel](#).



COMMUNITY NEWS

Mar. 16 - Blood Drive, 8:00 AM - 2:00 PM, at the shul. Must be 16 years or older (16 requires parental permission; over 75 needs a doctor's note). Weight minimum is 110 lbs. Click here to sign up: [Blood Drive](#).



SHIURIM



- RAV SOLOVEITCHIK ON THE PARSHA, Tuesdays at 1:00 PM (<https://zoom.us/j/7291311899>, PW: 112233).

- TORAH FOR YOUR COMMUTE, via a Whatsapp group, with 3-minute daily Halacha insights. To join email Rabbi Shestack at rabbishestack@gmail.com.



- SHABBAT SHIUR, 40 minutes pre-mincha.
- FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH THOUGHT, after Kiddush, discussing our community's kashrut standards.

- MESORAH-IN-REVERSE lecture series at Seudah Shlishit.



- Tzurba M'Rabanan with Zack Doberman, Wednesdays at 8:30 PM. In-person at the shul and via Zoom.

- Mishna Chaburah, led by Jeff Safier, after 7:25 AM Shacharit minyon (≈10 minutes).

KIDDUSH & SEUDAH SHLISHIT



- Enjoy Scotch at Kiddush, please donate a bottle to the shul from time to time.
- To sponsor a Kiddush (prices start at \$318, plus a bottle of scotch) email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com.
- Want to know the menu for Kiddush? If so, please email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com so he can put you in the WhatsApp group.
- To sponsor Seudah Shlishit for \$136 (or in the case of multiple sponsors, \$100 per sponsor), email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com.

GITA COOPERWASSER^{ה"י} YOUTH EVENTS

March 9 - Hamentaschen baking and mishloach manot packaging, 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM. RSVP to youth@ahavatachim.org by 3/5: \$5/child, \$12/family max.

GITA COOPERWASSER^{ה"י} SHABBAT YOUTH INFO



- SHABBAT YOUTH LEADERS, 2ND - 5TH GRADE: LETIZIA & SEBASTIAN; 4 YRS - 1ST GR.: NICOLE, AVIGAYIL, & ARIELLA
- Youth group for in 2nd - 5th Graders starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on left on entering the social hall.
- Youth group for children 4 years old through 1st Grade starts at 9:15 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on the right upon entering the social hall.
- Parent & Me, 9:00 AM in the Beit Midrash.
- Rabbi Meet & Greet, Friday night, kids can come over to the Rabbi after davening to receive a cup of grape juice and a ticket!
- Children earn tickets for coming to minyan (Friday night and/or Shabbat day), asking the rabbi questions or attending parent-child learning programs! Tickets can be redeemed for prizes.
- Children's corner at Seudah Shlishit, 1st to 5th graders will get 10 Torah questions in 10 minutes from Rabbi Shestack, with special snacks, tickets and more.

SHALOM BRAUSER, ADULT EDUCATOR/TEEN MENTOR

March 8 - Teen Mentor

March 22 - Teen Mentor

April 5 - Teen Mentor

18-25 Saddle River Road
Fair Lawn, NJ 07410
201.797.0502
<http://www.ahavatachim.org>

"THE IAC OF CONGREGATION AHAVAT ACHIM IS DEDICATED TO FOSTERING A STRONG CONNECTION BETWEEN OUR COMMUNITY AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL. WE STRIVE TO SUPPORT ISRAEL'S SECURITY, PROSPERITY, AND PEACE WHILE PROVIDING OUR MEMBERSHIP WITH CHARITABLE, COMMUNAL, AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES, AS WELL AS INFORMATION TO STRENGTHEN OUR BOND WITH THE JEWISH HOMELAND."

Adar's Tzedakah Highlight



YOU CAN'T MASK HUNGER

Fulfill your mitzvah of Matanot Le'evyonim by [clicking here](#)

Leket Israel deals with harvesting surplus agricultural produce and collecting cooked meals then sorting and distributing them to the needy throughout the country. The heart of Leket Israel is the complex logistical operation of sourcing, collecting, and transporting surplus food to where it is needed. Stringent food safety standards and Ministry of Health guidelines are maintained throughout the process. With Leket's fleet of 63 refrigerated trucks and vans, our staff and volunteers transport thousands of tons of rescued food throughout the country.

All rescued produce is brought to the logistics center or other cold storage facilities, where it is sorted, stored, and prepared for delivery to one of our nonprofit partners.

The food rescued by Leket Israel is distributed to 289 nonprofit organizations, including homeless shelters, soup kitchens, elderly centers, battered women's centers, community help organizations, and schools for at-risk youth. These nonprofit partners serve the food to approximately 415,000 Israelis in need every week, regardless of age, gender, religion, or ethnic background.

DAVID SCHWITZERד"ר SOCIAL HALL

Contact Lori at garfmom@gmail.com to book the David Schwitzerד"ר Social Hall for an event or occasion. \$250 (members), \$325 (Associates), or \$400 paid in advance for non-members, plus the cost of clean up (and a \$150 refundable security/cleaning deposit). Private caterers must be approved by the Rabbi.

CHESED TEAM

If you or someone you know needs assistance, email us at chesed@ahavatachim.org.

YAHARZEIT PLAQUES

Memorialize a loved one with a plaque, \$300 for members/\$450 for nonmembers. We will strive to send you written notice of upcoming yahrzeit and announce name during public Yizkor. Email Amy at aagress@gmail.com to arrange.

DONATE A SEFER, ETC.

Donate Siddurim & Machzorim (\$40), and Chumashim (\$60). Contact Jeff Safier at jeff.Safier@gmail.com for details.

MISHEBAYRACH

For a Mishebayrach pledge to give Tzedakah on behalf of those for whom you asked Hashem's blessing, contributions to the shul can be made using PayPal's Giving Fund (with 100% of the proceeds going to the Shul), by clicking here: [Ahavat Achim Donations](#). If by check, please indicate on its face "Aliyah Donation."

HONORARIA

The available Honoraria list will be provided upon request by contacting Steven Plotnick at seplotnick@gmail.com.

SINGLES SHIDDUCH GROUP

Reach out to Rabbi Shestack or Sara Levine (saralevine06@gmail.com if interested).

SPONSORSHIPS

Sponsorships opportunities for Yahrzeits, Refuahs, and Hodahs (thanks), are available for regular shiurim, youth events and similar activities (but not for established honorariums or sponsorship funded events). Cost of sponsorship (shiur or youth event) is \$100 per sponsor. Multiple sponsors for an event will be accepted. Sponsorships will be listed in the bulletin and announced at the event (and, if possible, a placard with the sponsorship will be prepared and displayed at the event).

Sponsorships do not include any extra amenities (such as food). Please contact Steve Plotnick for questions or clarifications.

MEN'S CLUB

Email MensClub@AhavatAchim.Org to join the Men's Club.

שבת שקלים - SHABBAT SHEKALIM

From The OU.ORG Four Shabbatot as adapted with permission from The Book of Our Heritage by Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov and other sources.

Resh Lakish said "On the first of Adar, an announcement is made concerning the Shekalim." (Masechet Megillah)

The first of the Four Special Shabbatot is Shabbat Parshat Shekalim. It occurs either on the last Shabbat of the month of Shevat, or on the Shabbat which in that year coincides with Rosh Chodesh Adar, or on a Shabbat early in Adar. A special reading, taken from Parshat KiTisa (Shemot 30:11-16) is appended to the regular Torah reading.

The reading describes a census of the Jewish People which was taken while the Jews were in the Wilderness, after their Exodus from Egypt. The Torah, here and in other places, teaches that it is forbidden to count Jews in the ordinary manner; rather, the People should be called upon to contribute items, which would then be counted.

In the case of this census, the item which was contributed, by rich and poor alike, was a half shekel, the "shekel" being the coin in use at the time, roughly equivalent to our dollar. The collected shekels, or "shekalim", in Hebrew, were then used for the construction and upkeep of the Mishkan, the portable Temple, which was used until the Temple found its permanent residence (despite its destruction twice, the place retains its holiness) in Jerusalem.

Equal participation of all the People symbolizes that all Jews must share in achieving national goals, by giving up his selfish, personal interests for the sake of the nation. One who does so gains infinite benefit, because the mission of Israel is dependent upon the unity of the whole. (Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, cited in the ArtScroll Stone Edition of the Chumash)

The verses also speak in terms of atonement that is achieved by participation in this half-shekel assessment... A solitary human being can seldom survive Divine scrutiny; what person is free of sin and shortcomings? But when a nation becomes one, it ascends, because all its individuals merge their virtues with one another. This is also the reason that it is better to pray with a "minyan," a quorum, to establish a community, whose virtues can merge, instead of praying individually.

Parshat Shekalim recalls the time of Purim, which was also a time of Divine scrutiny and judgment for the Jewish People. The name of the Day of Atonement, Yom HaKippurim, the "Day which is like Purim," is also suggestive of this relationship, although Purim also contains the word "Pur," lottery, to suggest how G-d uses what seems to be "chance" in His administration of the world.

At the time of Purim, an edict was issued by an earthly "court;" i.e., the "court" of Haman and Achashverosh, calling for harsh punishment, if not the destruction, of the Jewish People. The Fast of Taanit Esther, combined with the Repentance of the Jewish People, unified the nation and was once again able to receive upon itself the "yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven," and renew their acceptance of the Torah, "the Jews accepted again what they had begun to do," (Megillat Esther 9:23), and thus merit redemption.

AHAVAT ACHIM MEMBERSHIP/ HOSPITALITY

Email Sara at membership@ahavatachim.org for membership details or Shabbat hospitality.

PERSONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Various life cycle events related to members are announced in the bulletin (e.g., births and weddings of children/grandchildren, bar/bat mitzvahs of children, deaths requiring shiva observance, as well as travel to/ from Israel to study). Other personal announcements are not appropriate except as part of the bulletin's dedication (\$36 cost - \$54 with photo).

NUMBERS & INFO

ERUV: To subscribe for updates, email fairlawneruv@groups.io. Check status at <https://groups.io/g/fairlawneruv> or call 201-254-9190.

MIKVAH: 201-796-0350. At Shomrei Torah. Go to <http://www.fairlawnmikvah.org/> for online booking.

TWITTER: AhavatAchimFL

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100091322384429

INSTAGRAM: www.instagram.com/ahavatachim/

FLICKR: flickr.com/photos/ahavatachim/albums

BULLETIN DEDICATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND SHUL CALENDAR

Email seplotnick@gmail.com for an announcement of a simcha, refuah or life cycle event in the bulletin or to dedicate a bulletin for \$36 (\$54 w/Photo).

COMMUNITY SECURITY



To volunteer and become part of our community security service, email Margo at security@ahavatachim.org.

HOW TO DONATE TO THE SHUL USING PAYPAL

Please do not simply pay the shul using PayPal, as that incurs a 3% service charge that will get charged to the shul. Instead, please use our fee-free dedicated PayPal link <http://paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/1444321>. PayPal will email you a receipt for your charitable donation and the shul will receive 100% of your donation. [Make sure you click the "SHARE MY NAME" box so the shul will know who paid so that we can credit your account.]



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THE FAMILY SHUL

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PURIM 5785 MISHLOACH MANOT

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| _ Rachel & Tomer Alter | _ Dina & Elliot Greene | _ Jewel & Robert Safren |
| _ Talia & Etai Barach | _ Margo Greenstein | _ Marleny & Alex Salazar |
| _ Zehava & Norman Baron | _ Esther & Tzvi Hagler | _ Sara & Natan Santacruz |
| _ Renee & Lior Ben-Biniamin | _ Ruchama & Jerry Halpern | _ Arielle & Jonathan Schachter |
| _ Tami & Mark Berman | _ Joyce Heller | _ Rena & Matt Schaikewitz |
| _ Sara & Larry Bernstein | _ Rebecca Berger & Jay Herman | _ Madeline Schmuckler |
| _ Audrey & Jack Bickel | _ Gail & Elliott Hershkowitz | _ Esther Schwed |
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| _ Natasha & Daniel Borsuk | _ Vicki & Ian Joseph | _ Margo Heda & Brian Shanblatt |
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| _ Lisa & Jacob Eis | _ Aliza & Richie Mayer | _ Alex & Chana Weidenfeld |
| _ Elfie & Jamie Eisman | _ Lana & Boris Mihailevsky | _ Mimi & Barry Weinraub |
| _ Barbara & Ziv Farajun | _ Brett Norton | _ Sami & Zach Weixelbaum |
| _ Bonnie & William Farbstein | _ Miriam & Adam Nudelman | _ Kira & Andrew Wigod |
| _ Stacey & Yitz Finkelstein | _ Joanne & Stu Oppenheim | _ Seymour Wigod |
| _ Rachel & Jonathan Frank | _ Laurie Phipps | _ Shelly & Steven Winchester |
| _ Renee Freund | _ Gail & Steven Plotnick | _ Ray & Steven Wolfson |
| _ Lori & David Garfunkel | _ Amanda & Chaim Pollak | _ Sara Yehaskel |
| _ Arkady Geltzer | _ Shelly Racenstein | _ Stacey & Avi Zanjirian |
| _ Chava & Chayim Goldberg | _ Marty Reichardt | _ Susan Zarabi |
| _ Joan & Barry Goldberg | _ Howard Rein | _ Orit & Eli Zefon |
| _ Ronnie & Mitchell Goldstein | _ Andrea & Greg Riskin | _ Esther & Matt Zimmelman |
| _ Tamar & Yoni Gorelick | _ Tani & Josh Rossman | |
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| _ Naomi & David Graber | _ Alana & Slava Rubin | |

Your name as shown on Mishloach Manot Scroll: _____

INSPIRATION FROM ISRAEL'S FRONT LINES



AHAVAT ACHIM

PRESENTS A SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE SHABBAT WITH
RABBANIT SURALE ROSEN

SAVE THE DATE
SHABBAT PARASHAT TAZRIA-METZORAH
MAY 2-3, 2025



Rabbanit Surale Rosen heads London School of Jewish Studies' Iyun Halakha programme. She headed Metivta – Matan Jlm Advanced Talmud Programme and founded Shayla – Matan's Halachic Online Responsa where she wrote and edited *Shutim*. Rabbanit Surale is also a certified Rabbinic Arbitrator and has a certificate in mediation for family conflict resolution from The Israeli Centre for Negotiation and Mediation. She holds degrees in Talmud and English Lit, teaches Gemarah in Migdal Oz and Halakha as well as Midrash in various communities and shuls. Rabbanit Surale is on the board of the Rabbinic organization "Beit Hillel" and is actively involved in various programmes for female Orthodox religious leadership, including one with the Ministry of Religious Affairs on creating female Rabbinic examinations authorized by the government. She lives in Jerusalem, Married to Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Dov Rosen, Rabbi of the Yakar community and is a grateful mother of girls and boys.

Mizrachi360 reflects Israel's international reach and Mizrachi's mission of spreading Torat Eretz Yisrael across the world. To celebrate Israel during the month of Iyar, Mizrachi brings inspiring Israeli speakers and thinkers to 360 communities all around the globe. www.mizrachi.org/mizrachi360

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בס"ד

א' אדר 5785

"THE IAC OF CONGREGATION AHAVAT ACHIM IS DEDICATED TO FOSTERING A STRONG CONNECTION BETWEEN OUR COMMUNITY AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL. WE STRIVE TO SUPPORT ISRAEL'S SECURITY, PROSPERITY, AND PEACE WHILE PROVIDING OUR MEMBERSHIP WITH CHARITABLE, COMMUNAL, AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES, AS WELL AS INFORMATION TO STRENGTHEN OUR BOND WITH THE JEWISH HOMELAND."

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AHAVAT ACHIM
קהלת אהבת אחים
THE FAMILY SHUL



Plus, letter
writing to IDF
soldiers for
kids in first
grade & up!

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AHAVAT ACHIM
קהלת אהבת אחים
THE FAMILY SHUL



Covenant & Conversation

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FROM THE TEACHINGS AND WRITINGS OF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ז"ל

With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship of Covenant & Conversation, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. "I have loved the Torah of R' Chaim Schimmel ever since I first encountered it. It strives to be not just about truth on the surface but also its connection to a deeper truth beneath. Together with Anna, his remarkable wife of 60 years, they built a life dedicated to love of family, community, and Torah. An extraordinary couple who have moved me beyond measure by the example of their lives." — Rabbi Sacks

This year's series of essays were originally written and recorded by Rabbi Sacks ז"ל in 5772 (2011–2012). These timeless messages are accompanied by a new [Family Edition](#) created to inspire intergenerational learning on the Parsha and Haftara.

The Architecture of Holiness

From here to the end of the book of Exodus the Torah describes, in painstaking detail and great length, the construction of the Mishkan, the first collective house of worship of the Jewish people. Precise instructions are given for each item – the Tabernacle itself, the frames and drapes, and the various objects it contained – including their dimensions. So for example we read:

“Make the Tabernacle with ten curtains of finely twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, with cherubim woven into them by a skilled worker. All the curtains are to be the same size - twenty-eight cubits long and four cubits wide... Make curtains of goat hair for the tent over the Tabernacle - eleven altogether. All eleven curtains are to be the same size - thirty cubits long and four cubits wide... Make upright frames of acacia wood for the Tabernacle. Each frame is to be ten cubits long and a cubit and a half wide...”

Ex. 26:1-16

And so on. But why do we need to know how big the Tabernacle was? It did not function in perpetuity. Its primary use was during the wilderness years. Eventually it was replaced by the Temple, an altogether larger and more magnificent structure. What then is the eternal significance of the dimensions of this modest, portable construction?

To put the question more sharply still: is not the very idea of a specific size for the home of the Shechinah, the Divine Presence, liable to mislead? A transcendent God cannot be contained in space. Solomon said so:

“But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain You. How much less this Temple I have built.”

1 Kings 8:27

Isaiah said the same in the name of God Himself:

“Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where is the house you will build

for Me? Where will My resting place be?”

Isaiah 66:1

So no physical space, however large, is big enough. On the other hand, no space is too small. So says a striking Midrash:

When God said to Moses, ‘Make Me a Tabernacle,’ Moses said in amazement, ‘The glory of the Holy One blessed be He fills heaven and earth, and yet He commands, Make me a Tabernacle?’... God replied, ‘Not as you think do I think. Twenty boards on the north, twenty on the south and eight in the west are sufficient. Indeed, I will descend and confine My presence even within one square cubit.’

Shemot Rabbah 34:1

So what difference could it make whether the Tabernacle was large or small? Either way, it was a symbol, a focus, of the Divine Presence that is everywhere, wherever human beings open their heart to God. Its dimensions should not matter.

I came across an answer in an unexpected and indirect way some years ago. I had gone to Cambridge University to take part in a conversation on religion and science. When the session was over, a member of the audience came over to me, a quiet, unassuming man, and said, “I have written a book I think you might find interesting. I’ll send it to you.” I did not know at the time who he was.

A week later the book arrived. It was called ‘*Just Six Numbers*’, subtitled ‘The deep forces that shape the universe’. With a shock I discovered that the author was the then Sir Martin, now Baron Rees, Astronomer Royal, later President of the Royal Society, the oldest and most famous scientific body in the world, and Master of Trinity College Cambridge. In 2011 he won the Templeton Prize. I had been talking to Britain’s most distinguished scientist.

His book was enthralling. It explained that the universe is shaped by six mathematical constants which, had they varied by a millionth or trillionth degree, would have resulted in no universe or at least no life. Had the force of gravity been slightly different, for example, the universe would either have expanded or imploded in such a way as to preclude the formation of stars or planets. Had nuclear efficiency been slightly lower the cosmos would consist only of hydrogen; no life would have emerged. Had it been slightly higher there would have been rapid stellar evolution and decay leaving no time for life to evolve. The combination of improbabilities was immense.

Torah commentators, especially the late Nechama Leibowitz, have drawn attention to the way the terminology of the construction of the Tabernacle is the same as that used to describe God’s creation of the universe. The Tabernacle was, in other words, a micro-cosmos, a symbolic reminder of the world God made. The fact that the Divine Presence rested within it was not meant to suggest that God is here not there, in this place not that. It was meant to signal, powerfully and palpably, that God exists throughout the cosmos. It was a man-made structure to mirror and focus attention on the Divinely-created universe. It was in space what Shabbat is in time: a reminder of creation.

The dimensions of the universe are precise, mathematically exact. Had they differed in even the slightest degree the universe, or life, would not exist. Only now are scientists beginning to realise how precise, and even this knowledge will seem rudimentary to future generations. We are on the threshold of a quantum leap in our understanding of the full depth of the words: “How many are Your works, Lord; in wisdom You made them all” (Ps. 104:24). The word “wisdom” here – as in the many times it occurs in the account of the

making of the Tabernacle – means, “precise, exact craftsmanship”.¹

In one other place in the Torah there is the same emphasis on precise dimensions, namely, Noah’s Ark:

“So make yourself an Ark of cypress wood. Make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The Ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around.”

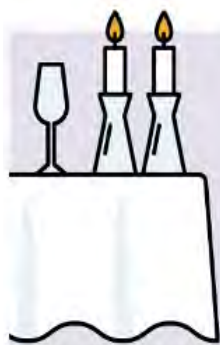
Gen. 6:14-16

The reason is similar to that in the case of the Tabernacle. Noah’s Ark symbolised the world in its Divinely-constructed order, the order humans had ruined by their violence and corruption. God was about to destroy that world, leaving only Noah, the Ark, and what it contained as symbols of the vestige of order that remained, on the basis of which God would fashion a new order.

Precision matters. Order matters. The misplacement of even a few of the 3.1 billion letters in the human genome can lead to devastating genetic conditions.

The famous Butterfly Effect – the beating of a butterfly’s wing somewhere may cause a tsunami elsewhere, thousands of miles away – tells us that small actions can have large consequences. That is the message the Tabernacle was intended to convey.

God creates order in the natural universe. We are charged with creating order in the human universe. That means painstaking care in what we say, what we do, and what we must restrain ourselves from doing. There is a precise choreography to the moral and spiritual life as there is a precise architecture to the Tabernacle. Being good, specifically being holy, is not a matter of acting as the spirit moves us. It is a matter of aligning ourselves to the Will that made the world. Law, structure, precision: of these things the cosmos is made and without them it would cease to be. It was to signal that the same applies to human behaviour that the Torah records the precise dimensions of the Tabernacle and Noah’s Ark.



Around the Shabbat Table

1. If you were to lead the creation of a sacred space, what elements would you include to reflect how you see the universe?
2. How do you create order in your life, and why does it matter?
3. Where else in Tanach do we see exact measurements carrying both physical and spiritual significance?

● These questions come from this week’s **Family Edition** to Rabbi Sacks’ Covenant & Conversation. For an interactive, multi-generational study, check out the full edition at <https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation-family-edition/terumah/the-architecture-of-holiness/>

¹ See Maimonides, The Guide for the Perplexed, III:54