



## Multiple Measurements

Every detail in the Torah serves to direct and guide each of us to live higher, more meaningful lives. Therefore, it behooves us to understand the particulars of each element featured in the *Mishkan's* construction. The dimensions specified for the consecrated vessels, the *Aron*, *Shulchan* and *Mizbeach*, are notably interesting. Some of the measurements are in half increments, such as the *Aron* that was  $2 \frac{1}{2} \times 1 \frac{1}{2} \times 1 \frac{1}{2}$  cubits, and some measurements are in whole units, such as the *Mizbeach*, which was  $5 \times 5 \times 3$  cubits. The measurements of *Shulchan* were in half and whole units;  $2 \times 1 \times 1 \frac{1}{2}$ . (*Shemot 25;10-30, 27; 1*) What is the significance of the various proportions and what can we learn from them?

Rav Dovid Hofstedter in *Dorash Dovid* offers some beautiful lessons based partially on the *Kli Yakar's* interpretation. The *Aron's* measurements are all in fractional units. As the repository for the *luchot*, the *Aron* represents Torah. A person should never feel satisfied that his learning is complete, he must always yearn to know more and broaden his understanding of Torah. Yaakov Avinu blessed his grandsons to “proliferate like fish” (*Bereisheet 48;16*). The Midrash teaches us that fish possess an

interesting quality. Although they live in the water, they will swim to the surface when it rains seeking the drops that fall. Such is the thirst that we must strive for to increase our knowledge in Torah. Based on this idea, Rav Apfel in *Mesameach Tzion* understands the gemara's discussion on the words of *Shir Hashirim (6;7)*, “*k'pelach rimon rakatech*.” Reish Lakish says, “even the empty ones amongst the Jewish people are filled with mitzvot like a pomegranate.” (*Sanhedrin 37a*) How can we be empty if we are filled with mitzvot? Rather, the Jewish mindset is that we always have empty space to be filled. We are always searching for more, continually yearning to be inspired and filled with greater connection to the Divine.

The *Shulchan* symbolized material prosperity. Its dimensions are in both whole and fractional units. Rav Hofstedter explains that one must always feel materially whole - satisfied with what he has and appreciative of every G-d given gift. However, he cautions, the half measurement of the *Shulchan's* height is to remind us that when we look at the needs of others we should never say, “this is what that person needs to be content with.” Rather, we must extend ourselves to fill the needs of others and feel a responsibility to make them whole. In the words of Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev, “Don't worry about the state of someone else's soul and the needs of your body. Worry about the needs of someone else's body and the state

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of your own soul.”

What do we learn from the measurements of the *Mizbeach* that are all whole units? In the realm of atonement and forgiveness one should realize that he can always achieve completeness and wholeness in Hashem's eyes.

All three of these vessels, the *Aron*, *Shulchan*, and *Mizbeach*, were made from *atzei shittim*, acacia wood. *Rabbeinu Bechaye* finds a magnificent homiletic message in the word *shittim*. He notes that it is an acronym for all the great blessings that emanated from the *Mishkan*; *shalom*, *tova*, *yeshua*, and *mehila*. Today, we can transform our homes into a mikdash me'at by striving towards greatness in Torah living, deepening our Torah study, expanding our sensitivity to others and becoming a source of powerful blessing in the world. ■

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