



Beautifully Built

“*Vayehi bachodesh harishon bashanah hasheinit be’echad lachodesh hukam hamishkan. Vayakem Moshe et hamishkan...*” in the first month of the second year [of the Exodus] on the first of the month, the Mishkan was erected. Moshe erected the Mishkan...” (*Shemot 40:17-18*) After intense labor, the Mishkan and all its components were finally complete and ready to be assembled. Yet the artisans responsible for the building were unable to erect the Mishkan. They approached Moshe Rabbeinu who put up the structure single handedly. The word “*hukam*” indicates that the Mishkan was established on its own, and just appeared as if Moshe Rabbeinu built it himself. We have some obvious questions here: Why couldn’t the people put up the Mishkan themselves? Why was it necessary for it to look as if Moshe Rabbeinu alone was putting it up?

The Saba of Slobodka in *Ohr Tzafun* explains that Torah is the true power through which the *Shechinah* comes down to earth. Although the physical structure is important, Torah is the core element that serves as the conduit to allow the *Shechinah* to dwell amongst us. Indeed, the Ramban notes the parallels between the various parts of Har Sinai and the sections of the Mishkan. Moshe Rabbeinu

was the individual who brought the Torah from heaven to earth, hence, he was the most appropriate person to inaugurate the building, the physical representation of connecting heaven and earth.

Rav Zaidel Epstein in *Sefer He’arot* adds that once the Temple was destroyed, the *Shechinah* is found in the four *amot* of learning Torah, *i.e.*, every person can establish a place for the *Shechinah* to dwell in their midst through dedicating their lives to learning and practicing Torah. As Moshe Rabbeinu personally created a place for Torah within himself by making himself a “*kli kibul*”, a receptacle for Torah, Hashem erected the Mishkan through him.

Rav Zaitchik in *Ohr Chadash* adds another important component. The midrash teaches that Moshe Rabbeinu was distressed at having no part in building the Mishkan. Hashem saw his desire and yearning to be part of this special project, and gifted him with the honor of setting it up. Rav Zaitchik learns two important lessons; first, people who desire to do mitzvot but are unable to carry them out for whatever reason are so beloved by Hashem. Their burning desire and passion is considered as if they built a house for Hashem. Second, Hashem, *kaviyachol*, saw Moshe Rabbeinu’s pain and responded with deep sensitivity, even if it meant that the Mishkan would not be erected sooner. We can take this lesson, emulating Hashem, to be concerned for the feelings of those around us as we strive to build a mini Sanctuary within ourselves. ■