

Parashat Terumah: Partnership by Design

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Shemot 25:40	
וְרָאָה וַעֲשֵׂה בְּתַבְנִיתָם אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה מֵרָאָה בְּהָרִי:	Note well, and follow the patterns for them that are being shown to you on the mountain.

1. The Blueprints for the Mishkan

Shemot Rabbah 35:3	
דָּבָר אַחֵר, וַעֲשִׂיתָ אֶת הַקֶּרְשִׁים, מִה כְּתִיב לַמַּעֲלָה מִן הָעֵינָן (שְ�מוֹת כה, מ): וְרָאָה וַעֲשֵׂה, וְכִי מִשָּׁה עָשָׂה אֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְהָלֹא כְּתִיב (שְ�מוֹת לו, א): וַעֲשֵׂה בְּצִלָּאֵל וְאַהֲלִיאֵב וְכָל אִישׁ חָכָם לֵב, אֲלֹא מִשָּׁה לְתַלְמוּד וּבְצִלָּאֵל לַמַּעֲשֵׂה, מִכָּאֵן אָמְרוּ רַבּוּתֵינוּ לְתֵן שָׂכָר לַמַּעֲשֵׂה כְּעוֹשֵׂה, שֶׁכֵּן מְצִינוּ בַּמִּשָּׁה שֶׁעָשָׂה בְּצִלָּאֵל לַמַּלְאכָה הַמִּשְׁכָּן, וְהָעֵלָה עָלָיו הַקִּדּוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא כְּאֵלֹהֵינוּ הוּא עֹשֶׂה, שְׁנֶאֱמַר (דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים א כא, כט): וַיִּמְשְׁכֵן ה' אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה מִשָּׁה בַּמִּדְבָּר.	Another matter, "You shall craft the boards," what is written before this matter? "See and craft" (Exodus 25:40). Was it Moses who crafted the Tabernacle? Is it not written: "Betzalel and Oholiav and every wise-hearted man crafted"? (Exodus 36:1). Rather, it was Moses in theory and Betzalel in practice. From here our Rabbis said to give reward to the one who causes the action to be performed like the one who performed it, as we find in Moses's regard that Betzalel performed the labor of the Tabernacle, but the Holy One blessed be He ascribed to him [Moses] as though he had performed it, as it is stated: "The Tabernacle of the Lord that Moses had crafted in the wilderness" (I Chronicles 21:29).

Shemot Rabbah 35:6	
דָּבָר אַחֵר, וַעֲשִׂיתָ אֶת הַקֶּרְשִׁים לַמִּשְׁכָּן, אָמַר רַבִּי אֲבִין מִשָּׁל לְמֶלֶךְ שֶׁהָיָה לוֹ אִיקוֹנִין נֶאֱמָה, אָמַר לָבֵן בֵּיתוֹ עָשָׂה לִי כְמוֹתָהּ. אָמַר לוֹ אֲדוֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵיךְ יִכּוֹל אֲנִי לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּמוֹתָהּ, אָמַר לוֹ אַתָּה בְּסִמְמַנְיָךְ וְאֲנִי בְּכַבּוּדִי. כֵּן אָמַר הַקִּדּוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לַמִּשָּׁה, (שְ�מוֹת כה, מ): וְרָאָה וַעֲשֵׂה, אָמַר לִפְנֵינוּ רַבּוֹן הָעוֹלָם אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲנִי שָׂאֲנִי יִכּוֹל לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּאֵלֹהֵינוּ, אָמַר לוֹ (שְ�מוֹת כה, מ): כְּתַבְנִיתָם, בְּתַכְלִית וּבְאַרְגָּמָן וְתוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי, וְכִשֶּׁם שֶׁאַתָּה רוֹאֶה לַמַּעֲלָה כֵּן עָשָׂה לַמַּטֵּה, שְׁנֶאֱמַר (שְ�מוֹת כו, טו): עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים עֹמְדִים, כְּנִתָּן בְּאִיסְטְרִטְיָא שֶׁל מַעֲלָה, וְאִם תַּעֲשֶׂה כְּאִתָּה שֶׁל מַעֲלָה לַמַּטֵּה, אֲנִי מְנִיחַ סִנְקִלִיטִין שֶׁל מַעֲלָה וּמִשְׁרָה שְׁכִינָתִי בִּינְיָכֶם לַמַּטֵּה, מִה לַמַּעֲלָה (יִשְׁעִיָּה ו, ב): שְׂרָפִים עֹמְדִים, אֶף לַמַּטֵּה עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים	Another matter, "You shall craft the boards for the Tabernacle." Rabbi Avin said: This is analogous to a king who had a fine visage. He said to a member of his household: 'Create me [a portrait] like it.' He said to him: 'My lord king, I cannot create one like it.' He said to him: 'You with your paints and I with my glory.' So too, the Holy One blessed be He said to Moses: "See and craft" (Exodus 25:40). He said before Him: 'Master of the universe, am I a god that I can craft [vessels] like these?' He said to him: "In their form" (Exodus 25:40); with sky blue and purple and scarlet wool. Just as you see above, so craft below, as it is stated: "Acacia wood standing upright"; just as it is in the heavenly host. If you craft it below as it is above, I will leave My supernal entourage and rest My Divine Presence in your midst below. Just as above, "seraphs are standing" (Isaiah 6:2), so, below, "acacia wood standing upright"; just as there are stars above, so, too, below. Rabbi Hiyya bar

¹ All translations are from Sefaria, unless otherwise noted.

עמדים, מה למעלה כוכבים, אף למטן כן. אמר רבי חייא בר אבא, מלמד שהיו קרסי זהב נראין במשכן ככוכבים הנראים ברקיע.	Abba said: It teaches that the golden hooks in the Tabernacle appeared like the stars visible in the sky.
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Bavli Menahot 29a	
תניא רבי יוסי ברבי יהודה אומר ארון של אש ושלחן של אש ומנורה של אש ירדו מן השמים וראה משה ועשה כמוהם שנאמר (שמות כה, מ) וראה ועשה כתבניתם אשר אתה מראה בהר.	Another matter, "You shall craft the boards," what is written before this matter? "See and craft" (Exodus 25:40). Was it Moses who crafted the Tabernacle? Is it not written: "Betzael and Oholiav and every wise-hearted man crafted"? (Exodus 36:1). Rather, it was Moses in theory and Betzael in practice. From here our Rabbis said to give reward to the one who causes the action to be performed like the one who performed it, as we find in Moses's regard that Betzael performed the labor of the Tabernacle, but the Holy One blessed be He ascribed to him [Moses] as though he had performed it, as it is stated: "The Tabernacle of the Lord that Moses had crafted in the wilderness" (I Chronicles 21:29).

Ibn Ezra on Shemot 25:40	
ובעבור זה רמזתי לך כי יש בדורינו אנשים חכמים בעיניהם אולי יהתלו על דברי. והיודע סוד נשמתו ומתכונת גופו יוכל לדעת דברי עולם העליון. כי האדם כדמות עולם קטן. והוא היה סוף בריאתו בארץ וסימן לדבר בגדול החל ובעקטן כלה. והגאון הזכיר כי שמונה עשר דברים הם במשכן שהוא עולם אמצעי וכמוהם בעולם העליון וככה העולם הקטן. הנה הכלל כל כרוב נעשה לקבל כח העליון. גם בעבור שילמד המשכיל ואין צורך להאריך:	I gave you these hints because there are many people in our generations who think they are wise. Perhaps they will mock my words. He who knows the secret of his soul and the makeup of his body is able to understand the workings of the upper world. This is so because man is a microcosm. Man was the last thing created by God when he created the earth. Let this serve as a sign: <i>He began with the largest and finished with the youngest</i> (Gen. 44:12). Saadiah Gaon notes that there are eighteen objects in the tabernacle which serves as the intermediary world. The same number of objects is found in the upper world and also in the microcosm. Here is a general rule. Each cherub was made to receive power from above. It was also made so that the intelligent will learn. There is no need to go on.

2. Partnership By Design

Professor Vivian Mann, "When Humanity Creates With God," Parashat Terumah 5769 (2009), JTS
For a people who had just received their religious constitution, the Tabernacle designed by God and executed by man was a joint effort based on two different artistic senses, that of God, the architect and designer, and that of man, who added the details. This "partnership" became a concrete symbol of the Jewish people's commitment to God, and God's willingness to dwell among them. At the same time, the partnership evident in the building of the Tabernacle may be seen as a paradigm of the ongoing relationship between God and Israel. God is the lawgiver; the people "embroider" on his words or interpret them.
Big Question: How might we describe the relationship God is establishing with the Israelites based on God's role and their role in the instruction of the mishkan?