

HOME

Nations go to war over it; families sign away a sizeable chunk of their income for the next 30 years to acquire one. The sages of the Talmud go so far as to say that "A man without a homestead is not a man."

A home is more than a roof to keep out the rain, walls to keep out unwanted visitors, a kitchen in which to prepare food and a bed in which to sleep. Forts, office buildings, hotels and restaurants can perform those functions as well, or better, than any residence. But only at home is a person at home. Home is where you can make faces at the mirror, wear an old green sweater with a hole under the armpit and eat pickles with peanut butter -- because you feel like it.

G-d, too, desires a home -- a place where He can be fully and uninhibitedly Himself. The Chassidic masters ask: Why did G-d create the physical world? What can our coarse, finite, strife-ridden existence give Him that the spiritual dimensions of creation cannot? And they answer: G-d created the physical world because He wanted a home -- a place where He can do things because He feels like it.

G-d's first home was a two-room, 45 by 15-foot building. According to Exodus 25, it was made of the following materials: gold, silver, copper, blue, purple and red-dyed wool, flax, goat hair, animal hides and wood. It was made to order, from detailed specifications given to Moses at Mount Sinai. It sat in the very centre of the Israelite camp in the desert, and was designed so that it could be dismantled and reassembled as they wandered from place to place for the forty years between their Exodus from Egypt and their entry into the Holy Land. Later, a larger and more permanent version was constructed on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Said G-d to man: I created wisdom, knowledge and understanding, and in these creations My mind dwells. I created love, justice and compassion, and in these my character resides. I created beauty, splendour and majesty, and in these I invest My personality. But none of these are My home, any more than the office at which you work or the theatre at which you are entertained is yours. So I created physical matter -- the most undivine thing I could conceive of -- so that I should have a place in which there are no roles for Me to play and no characteristics for Me to project. Only My will to fulfil.

When you take your gold (your material excesses), your silver (your stolid middle-class wealth) and your copper (your pauper's subsistence pennies) and use them to fashion a reality that conforms to My will, you have made Me at home in My world.

By: Yanki Tauber

31st January

Sedra: Terumah

Shabbat Begins: 4.33pm

Shabbat Ends: 5.39pm