



Parshat Terumah 5778

When I grow up

By Rabbi Dani Locker

When I was a kid, people used to ask, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" For some reason they don't ask me that anymore. I think it's because they've lost hope of me ever actually growing up.

Usually my answer was "ninja."

I thought it was crazy to even think that far in the future. I haven't even thought about what I'm eating for lunch today, and it's 3pm! How am I supposed to think ten or twenty years down the road?

We read this week about the building of the Mishkan, which kind of the LEGO version of the Holy Temple. We used the mishkan during the forty years our ancestors wandered around in the desert. Most of it was made from wood. Acacia wood, specifically. Where on earth did they get Acacia wood? Actually, let me rephrase that. Where in the DESERT did they get Acacia wood? Trees don't grow in the desert. Hint: it wasn't from Home Depot.

Apparently, Jacob (remember him? Yeah, our ancestor who had twelve sons and no earplugs) planned stuff way ahead of time. Before he passed away, he planted trees in

Egypt, and instructed his children to bring the wood with them as they exodused (that's a word I just made up, but I like it).

Against my better judgement, let's do some math. Jacob passed away more than one hundred and ninety (that 190!) years before the Jews left Egypt. He planted trees at least 190 years (it was probably more, because it's likely he didn't plant the trees exactly when he died) early, in anticipation of the need that would come about later. Jacob understood that eventually his descendants would be asked to build some sort of temple to God, and he prepared. Not the "I'll pack snacks because I might be hungry later" type of planning. Not the "I think I'll study for tomorrow's test because I don't want to repeat sixth grade for the fourth time" type of planning. Planting trees 200 years in advance to prepare for something that would never happen to him or any of his children. Preparation for his grandchildren, great grandchildren, and, yes, he even planned for us.

Jacob understood, and we should too, that everything we do can affect thousands of descendants down the line. You might be thinking, "whoa, I'm just a kid!" It's never too early to start making the choices that will give your grandchildren their best chance. Think about that next time you skip your homework!

STUMP THE RABBI

Dear Rabbi,

I have a question that's been bothering me for a while, but I'm not sure it's allowed. OK. I'm just gonna come right out and ask it. Where is God? Is He in Israel? Is He at my Temple? Is He in a mezuzah? What's the deal?

Sincerely,

Manny P. Resent

Dear O' Manny PResent,

Do you follow the Winter Olympics? I love the downhill skiing. Curling, not so much. If you want to watch the olympics, you might turn on a TV to the right channel, or download an app. And watch. Skiing. Wait... what? How can a massive mountain, miles high, fit into your iPad? How come those ice hockey players with all those extra pounds of equipment don't make your phone too heavy to carry?

"Rabbi, you've done it. You've actually turned the corner and gone off the deep end."

Maybe true, but I still do have a point. Of course, the Olympics are not actually contained IN your device. They're happening in South Korea, but if your device is tuned to right frequency or web address, it can access a representation of what's actually going on.

God works pretty much the same way. No, God is not South Korean. I mean that God is not actually

located in a synagogue, or even in Jerusalem, any more than He is everywhere. God's essence is everywhere in the universe in a similar way to the radio waves or digital encryption carrying the Olympic events, even when your TV is turned off. But when you turn on... when you attach yourself to God's frequency, then God is represented here on Earth, and His presence is felt.

That's why a synagogue is considered to be God's home. It's a place where people are tuning in to God's frequency by praying and studying Torah. Jerusalem, and especially the Holy Temple (nowadays, the Western Wall of said temple) are very strong representations because of all the Godly actions and words taking place there. Yet there's one place that is even more Godly than any prayerhouse or city.

When God told Moses to build a sanctuary, His words were, "And you shall build for me a sanctuary, and I will dwell within them." Notice the word "them." God's presence is not felt most in buildings of stone, wood or gold. It's "within us." When a human being tunes in to God's frequency by acting Godly (kind, selfless, disciplined and refined), that's where your wifi picks up the very best coverage of the real gold.

BTW, every question that's asked sincerely is a good question!

Have a Nageela Shabbat,

The Rabbi

