

Good Shabbos Everyone. The verse in this week's Parsha Terumah states: "Make for Me a holy house and I will dwell in them." (Shemos 25:8) The simple meaning of this verse according to Rashi, is that the Jews must build the Bais HaMikdash - the Holy Temple, which will be a place for Hashem to rest his Holy Presence - the Shechina.

Grammatically, it would seem to make sense that the verse should say: "Make for Me a holy house and I will dwell in *it*." Commentators note from the fact that the verse states: "and I will dwell among *them*," that the verse is hinting to an even deeper meaning. Namely, each and every Jew is capable of making himself into a place where Hashem can rest his Holy Presence - the Shechina. That is why the verse uses the plural "them." The "them" refers to the Jews. If a Jew makes himself into a "mikdash" - a holy vessel, then Hashem will rest his Holy Presence in that Jew. How does a Jew go about making himself a holy vessel? Through the performance of mitzvahs and learning Torah. The following inspirational true story illustrates the efforts and rewards of one Jew who made himself into a "mikdash" - a holy vessel fitting for the Hashem's Holy Presence.

The place was Red Square, Moscow. The event was a huge, joint concert performed by budding musicians from all over the world. Guy Hardane, an Israeli who has played the tuba since he was only ten years old, was there as a member of an orchestra from the U.S. As a student at the Oberlin School of Music in Cleveland, Ohio, Guy's musical talent was formidable, but he could not find a permanent seat with a top band or orchestra. Smaller orchestras usually have no need for a tuba; even full orchestras require one only on occasion, for special pieces, or when touring abroad. This was how he had arrived at Red Square.

There in Moscow, junior orchestras from four continents - thousands of musicians -- assembled to speak the common language of music. Guy circulated amongst the crowd of performers. Like many young Israelis, he vacillated between two instincts. One minute he wanted to lose himself in the masses of nations, to unite with the great throng in Red Square, in the true spirit of collectivism. A minute later, a contrary impulse made him want to shout out at the top of his lungs, "I'm a Jew!" His inner conflict made him reflect: "Here you are in the capital of a country that massacred Jews as a matter of policy." He vacillated: "But perhaps, today there is a different spirit in the air here. we are all united under the banner of music." Even so, he still wanted to shout, "I'm a Jew!"

As he stood there, his instrument weighed down on him. He shifted his weight, and the thought struck him: "This tuba is like the Jew who wants a permanent 'seat' among the nations. It is a unique musical instrument, and because of my skill with it, I am considered an excellent musician. But it is just because of that same uniqueness that I cannot find a permanent position. I am always on the outside, looking in. "It is the same with a Jew. He excels in many ways. He can be friendly with everyone, all day long, but he will never break into the ranks and be fully accepted as an equal member of the world community. Like a tuba, he will always be unique. Suddenly, a voice from behind asked him, "Where are you from?" When he answered, the young lady then asked him his name. "Guy," he replied. The young lady, who Guy later learned was from Germany and named Korina, surprised him by asking in Hebrew, "Mah zeh Guy?" (What is "Guy?") "Guy means 'valley.' Are you Jewish?" Guy asked. "No," she said, "but I am looking into Judaism," she continued. Korina had learned Hebrew so that she would be able to read the Tanach in the original text, to better to understand it. She asked Guy for his e-mail address so that she could send him questions about Tanach and Judaism in general.

Guy, who was totally secular, did not really know what to say. "Just because I am from Israel, she thinks I can teach her about Judaism?!?" He moaned to himself. (Once, while speaking with his roommate at Oberlin, Guy remarked that he would not marry anyone who was not Jewish. When the roommate asked him why, Guy did not have an answer - thus demonstrating his lack of knowledge about Judaism.) Now, suddenly, in Red Square, a girl from Germany had promoted him to rabbi!

Against his better judgment, he gave Korina his address. The tour through Russia came to an end and eventually, so did his studies in Cleveland. Guy and his tuba flew back to Israel. Shortly after his return, Guy won a permanent position with a Jerusalem-based orchestra.

A Refuah Shleimah to Shusha Malka bas Golda "Anyone who brings merit to the masses, no wrongdoing will come into his hands."

One day an e-mail arrived from Korina with a long list of questions about the fundamentals of Judaism -- and also about persons in Tanach. Guy had no answers for Korina. However, out of politeness, he described in his email back to her, about his work and the security situation in Israel. A few days later, he received another long list of questions. Apparently, Korina did not understand! He was a tuba player, not an expert on Judaism. Then another message came: Korina was on her way to Israel, intending to convert. He then began to worry a little. Korina was bound to confront him with her questions, face to face. What would he say? He had to do something, or face terrible embarrassment.

Upon her arrival in Israel, Korina registered in an ulpan - a place to learn Hebrew. Guy feared his days as a "rabbi" were numbered, but he decided to work on the list of questions while Korina learned Hebrew. There were a few religious men in the computer course he was taking. He asked one of them, a friendly young man, one of Korina's questions: "What is the Talmud? Is it a law book or a book about holidays - civil law or religious ritual?"

"Come to my house tonight and join me while I learn Talmud with a chavrusa (study partner)." Said Guy's colleague from the computer class. Soon after, Guy found himself watching two Jews learn Gemara (Talmud).

Guy saw depth that only the Gemara could uncover, and it warmed his soul. "I enjoyed the learning very much," he said at the end, "but I thought that the Talmud discussed Jewish thought. You know, ethics and philosophy?!?"

His friend smiled. "The Torah has everything," he said as he rose from his seat and went to the bookcase. "This is the Talmud," he said, pointing to one row of books. Moving to another shelf he said, "These are commentaries on Tanach. Here," he said, pointing elsewhere, "are halachic works. Over here you have works about ethics," and so on. Guy felt overwhelmed to this vast library of Jewish learning. He had come here only to prepare for Korina's questions. "Where does a person begin?" he asked.

Soon after, Guy met with the head of a yeshiva for baalei teshuva (secular Jews who have become religious.) The rav listened, and then asked questions about Guy's nature and personality, and suggested classes in chumash and mishnah. A new world opened up to him: wisdom and purpose! It was a breath of fresh air!

Although Guy started studying only to avoid embarrassing himself, his studies soon captivated him. He sought more and more. Rehearsals had taught him the importance of reviewing material over and over again until he knew it by heart. Little by little, the pieces of the puzzle began to form a complete picture. For the first time. Guy began to appreciate the uniqueness of the Jewish nation, and the absolute truth of the Torah. He began to understand, intellectually, what he had felt, intuitively in Red Square. "Why will a Jew always feel different from the other peoples of the world? Why does he sense that he is not one of them?" Now he had a clear answer: Jews are different by virtue of receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai.

Soon after, Guy attended an "Arachim" seminar. At the seminar, he was inspired to make a complete commitment to Torah and Mitzvahs.

Korina, it turned out, was Jewish in the first place. Where is she today? Guy does not know. One thing he does know, however: It was Hashem who put it into her head to approach him that day in Red Square.

Red Square has played a large role in our nation's history; most, if not all, of the memories associated with it evoke memories of terrible anguish and suffering. Now however, we have a happy account of how, in Red Square, Hashem looked after one of His loved ones, and led him home to his priceless heritage. Even when Jews are lost and bewildered, Hashem gathers His roses from amongst the thorns and replants them in the Holy Land, where they return to His Torah and flourish. (From "Arachim Update" Winter - 5764)

Let us all be inspired by this story to endeavor more and more to make ourselves vessels to enable the Shechina - Hashem's Holy presence, to dwell among us. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**

A Refuah Shleimah to Shusha Malka bas Golda "Anyone who brings merit to the masses, no wrongdoing will come into his hands."