**Part I. The essence of the משכן**

*(Highlights)*

**Paragraph 1**

- עשרת הדברות are apparently foundations of all the other מצוות

- בני ישראל at מעמד הר סיני — comparison to גירות, a repeated motif in חז"ל

- Only with the acceptance of the תורה did the בני ישראל become the unique, chosen nation they were destined to be

 - This is what would make them worthy of having ה'’s presence dwell amongst them

- Two major components of this idea of ה' living amongst them: 1) the glory of having the King of the Universe dwell in their midst; 2) having a set location through which to communicate with Him

 - [Do we sufficiently appreciate what this means?! It is astonishing; the Creator of the Universe would literally dwell amongst us as our king!]

- Since having ה' rest amongst the בני ישראל was the main goal of the משכן, the ארון, upon which He “rested,” is mentioned first here; followed by the other כלים, which also relate to this idea [i.e. that ה' would have a “home” in the lower worlds”]

**Paragraph 2 - 3**

- The essence of the משכן was to have the very same שכינה which rested upon הר סיני rest amongst the בני ישראל

 - Many parallels between מעמד הר סיני and the משכן; by understanding those פסוקים well, one can understand the משכן too

**Part II. The joint effort in the building of the ארון**

- רמב"ן begins with a question:

 - Q: Why did the תורה initially write the command to build the ארון in the plural form, and then switch to the singular?

 - [Additionally, by most of the other כלים, the command is formulated in the singular form]

- רמב"ן offers two explanations (which really build upon one another):

- A1: The language is going back on the בני ישראל mentioned earlier (“ועשו לי מקדש”, etc.); then, it transitions to address משה רבינו, who was opposite all of the בני ישראל

 - [This has two levels of meaning:

 - a) that he was as beloved and recognized in ה'’s eyes as the entire nation

 - b) that he was representing the nation in their building of a home for ה']

- A2: Additionally, this formulation might allude to something deeper — that all of the בני ישראל were supposed to partake in the building of the ארון

 - Why?

 - a) Because it was the seat of ה'’s glory

 - [**See Part I. above** — this was the major reason for the משכן’s creation in general]

 - b) In order so that they could all merit תורה [which the ארון represents]

 - רמב"ן quotes a מדרש which backs this point.

 - According to this explanation, how did they all practically partake in the building of the ארון? What did they all individually do?

 - [The basis of this unspoken question seems to be the impracticality of millions of people jointly building one relatively small vessel]

 - 1) Either they donated some of the golden vessels to make the ארון,

 - 2) Or they assisted בצלאל a bit with the actual construction,

 - 3) Or they were “מכווין לדבר”

 - [What does this last one mean?

 - a) Perhaps that they assisted בצלאל not in the physical building, but rather in understanding how best to design the ארון

- b) כלי חמדה – that they “had in mind” to assist, to participate

 - And apparently, even this counted as being involved in its construction!]

- [Homiletically, these three options seem to correspond to three different types of ways through which people have latched on to תורה throughout the centuries: 1) supporting תורה, 2) actually learning/teaching תורה, and 3) yearning for תורה, and trying to ensure they or their descendants would have a share in it]

**Part III. ברכה requires a foundation to build upon**

- רש"י – the crown around the edge of the שולחן represented the crown of מלכות, for the שולחן in general represented wealth and greatness

- רמב"ן agrees, and then explains what this means:

 - The ברכה of ה', since the time of the creation of the world, is not created יש מאין

 - Rather, the world functions along its natural patterns, as the פסוק says “And ה' saw all that He created, and behold, it was very good.”

 - [Apparently, the רמב"ן recognizes some degree of “nature”]

- [And apparently, ה' likes this “nature” (that’s why He created it, after all), and that’s why He generally maintains it]

 - [This may explain why even so many miracles ה' performs are couched in seemingly “natural” forms, to “minimize” the miraculous]

 - Instead, once there is a foundation of something, then the ברכה can act upon it and increase it

 - [Apparently, this isn't considered “outside” of “nature;” accordingly, this might require a redefinition and reclarification of this term]

 - רמב"ן cites the stories of אלישע and אליהו as examples of this principle

 - [Contrast to the explanation of the מלבי"ם by the story of אליהו in specific]

 - This was the manner of the לחם הפנים on the שולחן as well — the ברכה would take effect on it, and through that satiety would branch out to בני ישראל

 - רמב"ן ends by citing how חז"ל say that the לחם הפנים would satiate a כהן even with only a small amount of bread

- [Homiletically (**see Part II. above**), this explain why it was so essential that everyone partake, at least in some small way, in the creation of the ארון:

 - For תורה to blossom within us, we must first take the initiative to create a foundation for it to grow.

 - Once we work hard at that, then the rest will be given as a מתנה, as a ברכה]

 - Elevator משל

- One cannot expect to understand exactly how much of a foundation is required; what we *do* know is that תורה is a gift from ה', and is far too profound and massive to merit grasping on our own. We must put in our effort though first, to provide that foundation]