

## T'rumah

*Rebecca Goldman*

In my torah portion *T'rumah*, God tells Moses to gather the Israelites and build him a Mishkan or a traveling temple. Moses goes to set about the task but God stops him and tells him that the Mishkan needed to be built in a very specific way with “an ark of acacia wood overlaid with gold inside and out with four gold rings cast upon it to be attached to its feet.” And with many other rare and expensive parts. When I first read my portion I thought, why does God want such expensive ornamentation I had never thought of Him as materialistic. The answer I found was that although God had chosen us as his people the honor would not just be given to us, we would have work hard for it. We couldn't just spend a few hours building a plain Mishkan and expect God to appear there and listen to our prayers when we hadn't worked to earn them.

This reminds me of my bat mitzvah project **Helping Hands Bolivia**, an organization that sells jewelry and key chains to help pay for kids who don't qualify for orphanages' or government help to college and give them a place to live. The kids in this program have never had anything handed to them. They have had to work hard to keep up the grades to qualify for the program and to make the jewelry to sell and raise money for their education. I believe that the most important lesson in my portion is: when you perform a mitzvah you have to care about the deed you are doing. If you just say “I'm going to raise money for this charity because my mom says I have to” you are not truly doing a *mitzvah*. In order to do a real, true *mitzvah* you have to have the right reasons for doing it and you have to perform it to the best of your ability. In this portion we could have built a plain Mishkan in a few hours and called it a *Mitzvah*. But if we only apply that much effort in all that we do, are we really worthy of the responsibilities God has given us?

In my portion God doesn't just tell Moses to build him a *Mishkan* but tells Moses to gather the people and build him a Mishkan together. It is important to God to have the community involved in such an important and holy act.

When I think of a community I think of my family, because, in our own way my family is like a special little community. Dad is our rock. Our strong pillar that can stand through anything and everything and will always be there for us. Mom is the Excitement in our group: crazy, funny, lively, and all around wonderful. Emmy is the Spirit of our group, she is independent and brave but at the same time loving and fun. The small nest of our community could never hold her and she is often off exploring the rest of the world. She has always been a great role model.

Sarah is our voice of reason, who always lets her conscience be her guide. With her we can make it through anything and stay strong as a family. Sarah has a strong presence and gentle comfort. She is a great sister and an even better friend. Zack is our Strength. After all you have to be pretty strong being the only boy out of four kids. He is always ready for a challenge and never backs down. He has always been there for our little community and he always will be.

I would like to thank my family as well as Cantor Cohn, Rabbi Small, Mrs. Fox, Ms. Wolpoe, and all my other Hebrew school teachers for helping me to prepare for this day. Please turn to page 485 in the Etz Hayim Chumash (the big red book).