

For Parshat Trumah (Exodus 25:1- 27:19)

Planting and Trees

The prime topic of this week's *parsha* is the building of the Mishkan, the tabernacle/sanctuary that served our people during their sojourn in the desert and also for several hundred years after. The materials for the Mishkan were simple but beautiful. However, there is one perplexing component. Chapter 25, verse 5 prescribes "*Atzei Shittim*" usually translated as Acacia wood.

Rashi (R. Shlomo Yitzhaki, eleventh century France) offers a beautiful answer based on earlier Midrash:

Rashi writes:

And from where did they get for themselves (wood) in the desert? Our father Jacob foresaw with the Holy Spirit that in the future (the people of) Israel would build a *Mishkan* in the desert. So he brought trees (when he went) down to Egypt and planted them. He commanded his children to take them with them when they would leave Egypt.

Did Yaakov Avinu, the Patriarch Jacob, know with absolute certainty that these trees he was schlepping down to Egypt would serve a Holy function in the future? While he could not be sure, his Divine Vision assured him that the efforts were worth it. And so it was, as Jacob's descendants, the children of Israel hundreds of years later, harvested the wood to build the *Mishkan*.

The Torah teaches us that while we never know what the future may bring, we have to remain inspired and plant many seeds. Our hope is that the seeds we plant will be harvested and used by those who come after us. The lesson can be applied whether we work in non-profit communal life, Jewish education and the rabbinate, business, a profession, raising a family, building a new shul building, or just about any aspect of life. We should try to plant many seeds within the people whom we touch. We do not always know if they will blossom. Jacob's efforts remind us that our labors will ultimately bear fruit as we offer healing and strength to those whom God has guided into our lives.

Shabbat Shalom

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