

Terumah: Dimensions of the Aron and Shulchan, What We Learn by Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

In Shemos Chapter 25 we are told the descriptions as well as the dimensions of the vessels that were in the Mishkan. The dimensions of the Aron which held the tablets that Moshe brought down to us at Har Sinai were 2 and half cubits long, one and a half cubits wide and one and a half cubits high. The dimensions of the Table which held the twelve breads were two cubits long, one cubit wide and a cubit and a half high. As is the case with all details that the Torah gives us, the measurements teach us a number of valuable lessons.

As is well known, the Aron symbolized the Torah. The Table symbolizes royalty and wealth. Both are needed for our world. Rabbi Goldstein, a'h, in his commentary on Chumash, points out that being the Aron symbolizes the Torah all of its dimensions are given in fractions because when it come to Torah learning, we must always feel incomplete. We can never know it all.

The Chasam Sofer develops this idea further in regard to the Aron and the Table. The Chasam Sofer states that the idea of fractions shows true humility and brokenness as is befitting for a talmid chacham. The table, on the other hand, for the length and width has complete dimensions. The Torah does not allow a king to relinquish his honors. It must be clear to all that he is the king. If so, why is the height of the table one and a half cubits, an incomplete measurement? Because in height or his sense of others he must be humble. True, he is the king and has absolute authority. But he is not to feel he is better than others as the Torah states in Devarim 17:20 that he is not to be arrogant over his brothers. He takes a Torah copy of the Torah with him everywhere to remind him that he is merely Hashem's agent to guide Am Yisroel in doing Hashem's will. This trait has characterized all of our leaders from Moshe Rabbeinu to the present day. He is the leader but he is humble at the same time. Furthermore, Rav Moshe Cordovero, the Great Kabbalist, states in his well know work the Tomer Devorah that when one is truly great he has great respect for those who are below him. Greatness does not breed arrogance but and rudeness but rather, on the contrary, warmth, kindness and a gentle disposition.