

*Upon reading of the materials that were required to complete the construction of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle, one is struck by the majestic beauty and grandeur of this portable abode for G-D's presence in the desert. Although it dwarfs in comparisons to the Temple that would be built years later in our religious capital, Jerusalem; for an eminently movable structure that needed to be disassembled and assembled with frequent regularity this structure must have been an incredible sight. Adding to the noteworthy splendor of the building was the various tapestries that adorned the walls and roofed the structure. Amongst the roofing materials listed in this week's Parsha, the Torah tells us that the skins of the Tachash animal were required, as the ceiling of the structure was to be lined with them.*

*There seems to be much debate about what the Tachash animal actually was. Some claim that the Tachash was actually the dolphin, although where the Jews would find the dolphin in the desert is beyond me. Other opinions include a weasel (ermine specifically), a goat, and a giraffe. There is even an opinion that it is a multi-colored unicorn that has since disappeared, although I would hate to think that we were partially responsible for the extinction of this magical creature.*

*While the specific specie is debatable, the consensus is that whatever the animal it was, its skin was breathtakingly beautiful. Rashi in fact quotes the commentary of Unkelos that translates the Tachash as sasgavan. What is the meaning of this commentary? Is there an animal known as the sasgavan? Rashi explains that the word sasgavan is actually a compound word comprised of the two Aramaic words Sas meaning proud of and Gavan, his colors. Thus, Unkelos while not identifying the creature in question, is informing us that it was a specie that was most proud of its unique, colorful beauty.*

*The Gerrer Rebbe is puzzled by this commentary of Unkelos. Why would we roof the holy sanctuary, the one Earthly building where G-D's presence is said to rest, with skins from a prideful animal? Would that not be giving license to arrogance and vanity? By its obvious position above everyone's head, is that not giving haughtiness a rightful station in Judaism?*

*Arrogance is commonly understood as thinking or stating that you are better than everyone else. The Rebbe suggests that this is not actually arrogance, just an awareness of an undeniable reality. By this erroneous definition of arrogance several of our greatest sages would have been deemed guilty of such unforgivable conceit. Rabbi Zeira once said that he merited living a long life because he never even walked four cubits without learning Torah. Similarly, Rabbi Yose once said that if not for the study of the Torah he would be like any other Yose in the world and not the great Rabbi Yose. Is it possible that these great sages were haughty egotists? No, they were simply aware of the undeniable reality that they were world renowned Torah scholars. Being humble does not require naiveté or an active imagination to perceive faults that are non-existent.*

*Arrogance is not thinking that you are greater than others; arrogance is taking credit for that greatness. The truly humble person recognizes the great gifts that he has, but understands them for what they are; gifts, either from parents or G-D. He recognizes that he played no extraordinary role in achieving his own lofty status. He did what was required and lived up to the expectations incumbent upon him. The Tachash, this beautiful colorful animal, while proud of his unique and flamboyant appearance can take no credit for his exquisite splendor. He was born with this beautiful skin and he did absolutely nothing to enhance his beauty. He is forced to admit that his colorful beauty is completely a gift that G-D has bestowed upon him.*

*To deny our greatness is foolishness, to think our greatness is our's alone is arrogance, to know our greatness, yet attribute it to G-D, that is the essence of humility. Hanging the Tachash skins on top of the Mishkan served not only to enhance the exterior beauty of G-D's home, but more importantly, to enhance the inner beauty of the humble man that strolled within it.*

**Shabbat Shalom**

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