

A-250, Rabbi Norman Lamm
"Va'yakheil" February 1957

REFLECTIONS ON A MIRROR

In this morning's portion, we read the instructions concerning the construction of the laver, the "kiyyor," as follows:

The use of these copper looking glasses or mirrors, was an occasion of disagreement and controversy in the days of old. We read that Moses objected to the women donating their mirrors for use in the Tabernacle.

The mirror is an instrument of vanity and a tool of temptation, and vanity, Moses insisted, has no place in a Tabernacle. And yet, our rabbis continue and tell us that Moses was ultimately forced to accept the "maross tzov'oss", as the Torah clearly indicates. Why was this?

Two answers present themselves to us. And the answers indicate two of the most important functions of a Synagogue, two seemingly opposite yet really complementary principles of a "mishkan".

The first is indicated by the Midrash (see Rashi): When the Jewish men folk were herded into the forced labor camps as slaves of Pharoah, and subjected to inhuman working conditions, we are told that their women brought them their food and their necessities. But we