

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Teruma 5786

Mordechai Schlachter

Hashem commands that Bnei Yisroel build a Mishkan for Hashem.

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכְכֶם:

“And then make me a sanctuary, and I shall reside within them.” (Shmos 25:8).

There has long been posed a question whether the Mishkan was always part of the divine plan or whether it was introduced in response to the sin of the Molten Calf. To answer, one must take into account not only the sequence in Sefer Shmos, but also what was told in advance – to Moshe and even earlier to the Avos, then find corroboration in Nach.

There are textual suggestions that the Mishkan may respond to changed circumstances. Immediately after the Ten Utterances, the Torah commands only, “Make me an earthen altar.” (Ibid 20:21). There is no mention of a permanent or centralized sanctuary. After the Chet HaEigel (ibid 32), the relationship between Hashem and Bnei Yisroel becomes more mediated. There is the creation of the Kehuna--instead of “You are all a kingdom of kohanim,” (ibid 19:6). Since there is no specific chronological order to the Torah, the fact that the Torah records the command to build the Mishkan prior to the chet is almost irrelevant. Further, our pasuk says, “And I will dwell among them.” This means the ultimate ideal is divine indwelling within the people themselves and not inside a Mishkan. When commanded about Korban Pesach (ibid 12), there was no command to use an altar. Further, the Torah says when they get to the Land they will observe Pesach, but does not indicate “the place that I will choose.” (Ibid 13:5). Compare this to later when the Pesach was to be brought to the place that Hashem will choose. (Devarim 16:11). Further, “For I did not...command your forefathers, on the day I took them out of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings.” (Yirmiyahu 7:22).

However, the instructions to build the Mishkan did not give a connection as a forgiveness for sin or any change of circumstances. Contrarily, the Torah stated the people were punished for the chet. (Ibid 32:35). And Yirmiyahu is being warned while offerings are important, it is the earnest intent of the people that is paramount. “I desire kindness not offerings.” (Hoshea 6:6). “The place that I will choose” is first and only mentioned in Devarim. (Ibid 12:5). It is a term specifically used by Moshe.

While there is no “before and after” to the Torah, that is only true when the Torah indicates or hints that events happened out of order. (Eg., the episode of the quail written in Shmos 16:13 really occurred later on, Bamidbar 11:31). This is especially true when the Torah writes explicitly when it occurred. The instruction for the Mishkan was part of the explicit instructions given to Moshe on his first forty-day visit within the Cloud of Glory on Har Sinai. The instructions are from when Moshe wet up (Shmos 24:18), until “When He had finished speaking,” (ibid 31:18). Hashem had already told Moshe, even before he went up on Har Sinai, that three times a year the people were to “appear before Me.” (Ibid 23:17).

The idea and concept of offerings and a place to bring those offerings was already written with the narratives of the Avos. It is conceded that Hashem never promised the Avos that their children will have a Beis HaMikdash. It was also never explicitly promised that they would be given the Torah. The Torah was in the plans, though, as it says, "Because I have known Avraham so that he commands his sons and his household after him that they should keep the path of Hashem." (Bereishis 18:19). Clearly, the intent to give Avraham the Land (and also have a say in Sodom's fate) was because the Land will be governed by the Torah. There are hints pointing to the intent to have a Mikdash.

The Mishkan was called the Ohel Moed – Tent of Meeting Times. Hashem also told Dovid, "I have dwelled in tents since the people left Mitzrayim." (II Shmuel 7:6). The symbolism of a tent near a mizbeach is found when Avraham pitched his tent and then built a mizbeach to Hashem, upon coming to the Land and being promised that land. (Ibid 12:8). Yitzchok came to that same place and was marked as an offering. (Ibid 22:9). Hashem promised the Land to Yitzchok (ibid 26:24) and Yitzchok built an altar there and he pitched his tent there (ibid 26:25). Yaakov is called "a dweller in tents." (Ibid 25:27). The pasuk did not say he dwelled, past tense. It says it in the infinite tense; he dwelled and continued to dwell. It is an allegorical hint that Yaakov will be a people that will dwell in tents—their central tent will be the Ohel Moed and then the Beis Hamikdash. Hashem promised the Land to Yaakov and Yaakov says, this is the "House of the Lord." (Ibid 28:17). He named the place Beis El because of it. (Ibid 2:19). Later, Yaakov goes back to Beis El and builds an altar there. (Ibid 35:3).

The altars were built inside of the Land, at Luz (Avraham and Yaakov) and Beersheva (Yitzchok). The Bris Bein Habisarim (Covenant of the Parts) took place on the way to Haran, and therefore, Avraham did not build an altar there. (Ibid 15:7). Instead, the parts were laid on the floor and Hashem's fire passed through them. (Ibid 15:17). When Hashem added the name Yisroel to Yaakov's name, it was on the Transjordan and Yaakov built a pillar but not a mizbeach. (Ibid 35:14). And as Yaakov said at Beis El, "this stone that I have erected as a monument shall be the House of the Lord." (Ibid 28:22).

Further illustration is "Because in succos I made Bnei Yisroel sit when I took them out of the Land of Egypt." (Vayikra 23:43). The Beis HaMikdash is called the succah of Dovid. (Amos 9:11). Part of the purpose of leaving Mitzrayim was to serve Hashem with a centralized Mishkan and, later, a Beis HaMikdash. Importantly, Hashem told Moshe, "They will know that I am Hashem, their Lord, who brought them out of the Land of Egypt so that I may dwell among them." (Ibid 29:46). The clear intention of the House of Hashem, the Mishkan, and the Beis HaMikdash was made at the outset, long before any change of circumstance. Hashem desires the closeness and wants to symbolically live among Bnei Yisroel. The sanctuary is the human way of understanding that Hashem does live among and within Bnei Yisroel. A singular mizbeach may have a purpose but it was only a placeholder until Mikdash could be built.

Even when the sanctuary is built, Hashem desires to live within Bnei Yisroel. The sanctuary may serve as a tool to understand, but the real goal is for the Mikdash to serve as a beacon for Klal Yisroel to come closer to Hashem. Understand that Hashem is like the Torah, not up in heaven or overseas, but in our hearts and minds.