

The Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash

Themes and Ideas in the Haftara
Yeshivat Har Etzion

**This haftara series is dedicated in memory
of our beloved Chaya Leah bat Efrayim Yitzchak
(Mrs. Claire Reinitz), zichronah livracha,
by her family.**

PARASHAT TERUMA

The *Mishkan* of God and the *Mikdash* of Shelomo

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This week's *haftara* is taken, to no surprise, from the account of Shelomo's construction of the *Mikdash* in the book of *Melakhim* ([I Melakhim 5:26-6:13](#)). The *haftara* does not,

however, only tell the story of the construction, but rather it also deals with the process of collecting the materials required for the *Mikdash*.

THE GOAL AND THE MEANS OF CONSTRUCTING THE MISHKAN

As we noted last week, the Torah attaches importance not only to the final result of the *mitzva* to construct a sanctuary for God – that is, to the finished product of the *Mishkan* – but also to the process of the construction. This point stands out at the beginning of the *parasha*. The Torah does not focus exclusively on the idea contained in the verse, "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" - the verse that expresses the final result of the building of the *Mikdash* and the resting of the *Shekhina* therein - but rather it opens with the command to accept contributions and collect the necessary materials from the people:

"Speak to the children of Israel that they bring Me an offering, of every man whose heart prompts him to give shall you take My offering. And this is the offering which you shall take of them... (*Shemot 25:2*)

The emphasis placed here on the people's offering and on their generosity is striking.

This is immediately followed by a long list of materials required for the *Mishkan*, and this too should be understood against this background. Surely the raw materials needed for the fashioning of the various vessels are mentioned later in the framework of the specific command regarding each vessel. Why then is it necessary to include them altogether in a single list at the

beginning of the *parasha*? Is it not self-evident that if the Ark requires gold and the priestly garments require blue and purple linen, then these materials must be collected from the people?

It stands to reason that the list at the beginning of the *parasha* comes to emphasize that the collection of materials constitutes a goal that stands on its own, because of the importance that is attached to the very act of free-will giving. The people's readiness to contribute is an independent spiritual goal and *mitzva*, and therefore the Torah stresses it as the beginning of the *parasha*. To summarize, the Torah deems important not only the construction itself of the *Mishkan*, but also the building process – the people of Israel's readiness to contribute and be involved in the construction of the *Mishkan*.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A TAX AND A DONATION

Shelomo's construction of the *Mikdash* should also be examined in light of these criteria. Already from the first verse, which describes the people's mobilization on behalf of the construction of the *Mikdash*, it is possible to discern the profound difference between the two projects. If in *Parashat Teruma* the emphasis is on the prompting of the heart and the free-will donation, in the book of *Melakhim* we read about a tax! Shelomo does not turn to the people and try to excite them about the project, but rather he imposes a tax upon them. Recruiting thirty-thousand men and sending them off to Lebanon, ten thousand every month on a tri-monthly rotation, creates a far more efficient system than turning to the people and asking them to contribute on a voluntary basis. Scripture describes a grand and efficient project that activates manpower that had been recruited into service on a massive scale: "And Shelomo had seventy thousand porters, and eighty thousand stone cutters in the mountains" (5:29).

However, the efficiency achieved through a royal levy exacts a toll on the people's identification with the project. They perceive the mission, not as an exalted religious challenge, but as a task that must be performed. In the aftermath of Shelomo's decision to impose a levy, the right to participate in the construction of the *Mikdash* is not perceived as a rare and wonderful opportunity to be counted among the Temple's builders - a possibility that fell exclusively to the members of that generation - but rather it is seen as one of the king's demands. The policy of imposing a forced levy from above brings the people to resentment, for it is human nature to resent coercive taxes and obligations.

Of course, to execute this plan it was necessary to create a network of officials that would enforce the tax. This led to the creation of a powerful bureaucracy, which erected yet another barrier between those who gave money for the work and the work itself. If we pay careful attention to the wording of the verse which describes the recruitment of workers, we can easily sense the gap between the common person sent off to Lebanon and his superior: "A month they were in the Lebanon, and two months at home; and Adoniram was over the levy" (5:28). It is likely that the thought occurred to them that they were working not toward some ideal, but on behalf of their supervisor. Indeed, the verse describes these workers as Shelomo's servants, and not as people who volunteered to build the Temple: "And Shelomo had seventy thousand porters, and eighty thousand stone cutters in the mountains...And Shelomo's builders, and Chiram's builders, and the Givlim did hew them" (5:29-32). For this reason, a verse and a half later, we read about Shelomo's system of supervision, which is described as: "Shelomo's chief officers who were over the work, three thousand three hundred, **who ruled over the people** that were employed in the work" (26:30). The contrast to the impressive voluntarism displayed in connection with the construction of the *Mishkan* cannot be greater.

THE INTIMATE *MISHKAN* AND THE EXALTED *MIKDASH*

Here, we must pay attention to another difference between the *Mishkan* and the *Mikdash* – the size. The *Mishkan* was a relatively small and intimate place. Its physical dimensions were modest, and it radiated a sense of nearness between man and God. It was not an impressive structure, but a place of intimacy, which emphasized its accessibility to man. The *Mikdash*, on the other hand, was a colossal structure, which beamed splendor and majesty. Whereas the *Mishkan* may be likened to a warm and comfortable neighborhood *shtiebel*, the *Mikdash* resembled a grand synagogue.[1][1]

As a result, there are significant differences between the construction of the *Mishkan* and that of the *Mikdash*. The *Mishkan* could be built in a far more modest manner than the *Mikdash*, the construction of which was a multi-dimensional engineering and organizational project. It is certainly possible that the need to carry out such a grand and complicated project is what stands behind Shelomo's decision to set aside the model of voluntarism. The establishment of the *Mishkan* could make do with the raw materials available to the people of Israel in their wanderings in the wilderness, and the level of expertise found in Israel, and therefore it was appropriate to base it on volunteers and contributions. The construction of the *Mikdash*, on the other hand, necessitated the recruitment of resources from afar, namely, the importing of expert artisans and huge amounts of raw materials. For this endeavor, it was impossible to rely on the free-will giving of the people, for it was not in the power of the man on the street to provide what was necessary. Only a royal project, which makes use of its authority to impose taxes and levies, and of its foreign relations with neighboring countries – only this can bring the construction of the *Mikdash* to a successful conclusion.

RAMIFICATIONS OF THE COMPULSION

It is, therefore, very possible that despite the fact that Shelomo recognized the advantages of a voluntary system, he nevertheless feared that it would not allow for completion of the *Mikdash*, and therefore chose not to use it. This decision, however, had significant

ramifications. The people did not view themselves as partners in Shelomo's noble project, but rather as forced labor, and this exacted a very high spiritual price. Even if the alternative course would have delayed the building of the *Mikdash* for several years, the question still remains whether it would not have been preferable to follow a method that would have bestowed upon the workers a sense of involvement, even at the cost of efficiency.

What is more, it seems that a heavy national price was paid for this policy, namely, this failure to consider the needs and desires of the people. I refer, of course, to the division of the kingdom following the death of Shelomo. It is difficult not to see that the people's complaints about the heavy taxes do not take into account the need to finance the construction of the *Mikdash*, which required great monetary and human resources. Had Shelomo allowed them to participate in the project, surely they would not have viewed this as an obligation, but as a privilege, and whatever would have been given for the building, would not have been viewed as part of their heavy tax burden. Since it was done in the form of a forced levy, accompanied by officers who ruled over the people, the building of the *Mikdash* was undoubtedly also viewed as a tax, and this burden would be remembered on the day of reckoning between the people and the house of Shelomo. Even if we assume that they didn't make a reckoning with Shelomo about the very collection of the money or the forced labor, surely governance that embitters the people and fails to take their emotional needs into account started already here. It may be assumed that it only grew in strength and later drew encouragement in face of the success of the building of the *Mikdash*, and that this is what stood at the foundation of the severance between Shelomo and the people.

"I HAVE SURELY BUILT YOU A HOUSE TO LIVE IN"

We must pay attention to another factor. The first Temple is sometimes designated "Shelomo's *Mikdash*," but never have we heard the *Mishkan* being called after Moshe. This fact reflects a basic difference between Shelomo's self-image and that of Moshe. Time after time,

Scripture emphasizes that the *Mikdash* was of Shelomo's building. For example, in our *haftara*: "And the house which King Shelomo built for the Lord" (6:2) – not just a house, but "the house **which King Shelomo built.**" Throughout the chapter, the various aspects of the construction are attributed to Shelomo, all the verbs being in the singular and referring to him: "And he built," "And he made," "And he plated," "And the king commanded, and they brought," and the like. It is not by chance that God turns to him and says, "Concerning this house, which you are building" (6:12), because the entire process of building is presented as Shelomo's personal project.

This reaches its climax in Shelomo's prayer. The prayer opens with an address to God, attests to the fact that "the Lord said He would dwell in the thick darkness" (8:12), and immediately thereafter introduces the personal achievement: "I have surely built You a house to live in" (8:13). The *Mikdash* is not defined as a national project supervised by the king, but rather as the building of the king himself. Directly following this, Shelomo turns to the people and describes his father David's desire to build the *Mikdash* and God's reaction:

Yet you shall not build the house; but your son that shall come forth out of your loins, he shall build the house to My name. And the Lord has performed His word that He spoke, and I am risen up in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel as the Lord promised, and have built a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. (8:19-20)

Here too it is difficult to ignore the fact that Shelomo presents the *Mikdash* as having been built by his family, and he fails to include the people as partners in the building.

Once again, the contrast to the *Mishkan* is striking. While the Torah says that it was Moshe who built the *Mishkan*, his personal role remains in the background, and does not take center stage. Throughout *Parashat Vayakhel*, the contribution of Betzalel and the wise at heart

to the building of the *Mishkan* is emphasized. So too in *Parashat Pikudei* – which describes Moshe as he who in fact erected the *Mishkan* – it is carefully stated at each stage that the work had been done "as the Lord had commanded Moshe." It is the command that is emphasized, and not the personal fulfillment.

The difference between the *Mishkan* and the *Mikdash* and Moshe and Shelomo is most striking in the dedication ceremonies. Whereas Shelomo and his person seize center stage at the dedication of the *Mikdash*, Moshe's presence at the dedication of the *Mishkan* remains far more hidden. Indeed, *Chazal* noted the fact that Shelomo's personal ambition played a problematic role in the construction of the *Mikdash*. Thus, it is stated in *Midrash Shochar Tov* on *Tehilim*(*Tehilim* 24):

"Lift up your heads, O you gates" (*Tehilim* 24:7). You find that when Shelomo built the Temple, he wanted to bring the Ark into the Holy of Holies. And the entranceway was small – five cubits high, and two and a half cubits wide. And the Ark was a cubit and a half long, and a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. Does not a cubit and a half fit through [an entranceway that is] two and a half [cubits wide]? At the time, however, the gates cleaved to each other. Shelomo recited twenty-four prayers, but was not answered. He said: "Lift up your heads, O you gates," but was not answered. Once again, he said: "Lift up your heads, O you gates...and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory," but he was not answered. When he said: "O Lord God, do not turn away the face of Your anointed; remember the faithful love of David your servant" (II *Divrei ha-Yamim* 6:42) – immediately the gates lifted their heads, the Ark entered, and fire came down from heaven. **And why was Shelomo caused to suffer so much? Became he became arrogant and said: "I have surely built a house for You."**

Only when Shelomo is ready to defer on his personal identity and his achievements as his calling card, and he is forced to present himself as dependent on the merits of his forefathers – only then can he enter the *Mikdash*.

In this context, it should be noted that the verses in [Yechezkel 28](#) describe the sin of the king of Tzor as arrogance, and *Midrash Yalkut Shimoni* (ad loc.) connects this to Chiram's participation in the building of the *Mikdash*:

To what may Chiram be likened? To a servant who made a garment for his master; as long as his master was wearing the garment, the servant would see it and boast: I made this garment for my master. The master said: I will tear this garment, so that the servant will not be overbearing towards me. Similarly, Chiram would boast that he had sent the cedars for the Temple. Said the Holy One, blessed be He: I will destroy My house, so that Chiram not be overbearing towards Me. As it is stated: "Open the doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars" ([Zekharya 11:1](#)).

If we join these two midrashim, we see that the formation of the covenant between Shelomo and Chiram, mentioned at the beginning of the *haftara*, comes not only to mark the peaceful relations and economic partnership that would allow for the building of the *Mikdash*, but also the deeper relationship between these two figures.

SHELOMO'S WISDOM

Before concluding, we must return to the opening verse of the *haftara*: "And the Lord gave Shelomo wisdom" ([I Melakhim 5:26](#)). In addition to the plain sense, according to which Scripture notes Shelomo's wisdom as an introduction to the description of the grand construction project to be described in the coming verses, and perhaps also Shelomo's wisdom in that he obtained Chiram's cooperation, it seems that the verse refers to a more profound wisdom that

characterizes Shelomo's greatness. Even if this hangs on the verse only as a *derash*, it is very important for the understanding of Shelomo's personality.

As we have seen, Shelomo built the *Mikdash*, but his feeling of personal achievement is intermingled in his grand project. It is possible, as we saw in the aforementioned midrash, to come and condemn his arrogance, and there is strong support for this in the verses themselves. It seems, however, that it is precisely in this point that we see Shelomo's greatness. Another person, ambitious as he was, would not have channeled his ambitions into holy work, but rather he would have directed his strengths to achievements in the realm of personal glory. Shelomo channels his own impulses to build a house for God. Even if in his prayer he emphasizes the fact that it was he who built the Temple, and even if the people's share was small – let us not forget that his strengths directed to heaven, and it is his sincere desire that the gates should lift their heads and allow God, the King of glory, to enter.

Channeling one's personal strengths toward the right objectives is a great secret in the service of God, and it is this idea that *Chazal* expressed in the famous Gemara (*Shabbat 129*) that says that one who was born with aggressive tendencies should turn to the professions of ritual slaughter and circumcision. An individual's personal strengths are a given, and the great question is to where will he channel them. When *Chazal* praise Shelomo for having built the *Mikdash* in only seven years, while the building of his own house took almost twice as long, they are praising him not only for the alacrity with which he built the *Mikdash*, but also for his seeing the construction of the Temple, and not the building of his personal palace, as his most important project.

Shelomo's greatness did not lie in the nullification of his personal ambitions, but in his ability to exploit them for the right goals. But nevertheless, they exacted a not inconsiderable price, as we saw at the beginning of this *shiur*, and for that reason Shelomo's achievements contain within them the seeds of the problems that were to rise further down the road.

(Translated by David Strauss)

[1][1] *Chazal* ([Yoma 54a](#)) attributed an intimate element to the *Mikdash* as well, and it is possible that different parts of the Temple filled different functions. In any event, the element of exaltedness, which was absent in the *Mishkan*, was certainly found in the *Mikdash*, this being the important point for our purposes.