

The Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash

Parshat HaShavua
Yeshivat Har Etzion

This parasha series is dedicated
in memory of Michael Jotkowitz, z"l.

PARASHAT TERUMA

This shiur is dedicated in memory of Yaddidya ben Aaron Koster z"l.

Concerning the *Mishkan*

By Rav Yaakov Medan

A. "*Mikdash*" vs. "*Mishkan*"

We generally use the terms "*Mishkan*" and "*Mikdash*" as names for the various structures in which God's *Shekhina* rested. The *Mishkan* (Sanctuary) refers to the portable structure that Moshe established in the desert, as well as to the temporary edifice that *Benei Yisrael* established in Shilo under Yehoshua's leadership following fourteen years of conquest and division of the land. The *Mikdash* is the building that King Shelomo built in Jerusalem and which Nevukhadnetzar destroyed (the First Temple), as well as the building that Zerubavel and Yehoshua ben Yehotzadak built with the return of the Babylonian exile under Persian rule (the Second Temple); King Herod renovated this building and Titus destroyed it. It is this building that we pray will be built again speedily in our days, and it will stand forever - Amen, and so may it be God's will.

The Gemara tends to mix up these two terms:

"We find that the *Mikdash* is call "*Mishkan*" and the *Mishkan* is called "*Mikdash*" (*Eruvin* 2a)

In fact, these two terms have additional, more specific significance.

This *Gemara* mentions the verse that describes how "the Kehatim, bearers of the '*Mikdash*,' shall bear..." where it is in fact the Ark of the Covenant that is referred to as the "*Mikdash*." Perhaps we should interpret in the same light the verse mentioning the "*Mikdash*" in our *parasha* (although the *Gemara* interprets it as referring to the entire building):

"THEY SHALL MAKE ME A *MIKDASH* and I shall dwell in their midst. As all that I show you, the form of the *Mishkan* and the form of all its vessels - so shall you fashion [them]. AND THEY SHALL MAKE AN ARK of *shittim* wood, two cubits and a half long, and a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high." (25:8-10)

From verse 10 onwards the Torah specifies the form of the Ark, referred to in verse 8 as a "*Mikdash*." Verse 9, dividing between these two stages, is the conclusion of the first section - a sort of summary of the sections that follow in the *parasha* (compare 25:40 and 26:30).

In the next verse, the word "*Mikdash*" again refers to the Ark of the Covenant:

"See, now, that God has chosen you to build A HOUSE FOR THE *MIKDASH*; be strong and do it" (*Divrei Ha-Yamim* I 28:10); at the beginning of the same chapter, David tells the officers of Israel:

"Hear me, my brethren and my people: I had it in my heart to build A HOUSE OF REST FOR THE ARK OF GOD'S COVENANT..." (*ibid.* verse 2).

A comparison of the two verses shows that the "*Mikdash*" means the Ark, and the entire edifice is named after it.

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The "*Mishkan*" in its more specific sense refers to the bottom layer of curtains:

"YOU SHALL MAKE THE *MISHKAN* OF TEN CURTAINS, fine twisted linen and blue and purple and scarlet, [with] artistic *keruvim* shall you fashion them" (26:1).

In contrast, when it comes to the construction of the boards, we are told: "You shall fashion the boards FOR THE *MISHKAN*..." (26:18). The boards are FOR the *Mishkan*, while the curtains themselves are the *Mishkan*.

Indeed, when the *Mishkan* was established in Shilo, it was built of stone; the boards were put away, since they were not essential to the *Mishkan*. But the stone edifice in Shilo was built without a permanent roof; the curtains of the *Mishkan* that Betzalel and Oholi'av had made in the desert were placed over it. It is these very curtains that gave the building its name - *Mishkan*.

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Let us now address the relationship between the specific references of the terms "*Mishkan*" and "*Mikdash*." The *Mikdash*, as we have said, was the Ark - the ARK OF TESTIMONY (*Aron ha-Eidut*), named after the Tablets of Testimony which it housed. The *Mishkan*, too, is referred to as the "*Mishkan ha-Eidut*" (*Mishkan* of testimony), named for the Tablets of Testimony within it:

"These are the accounts of the *Mishkan*, the *MISHKAN* OF TESTIMONY, as they were counted by Moshe's word, the work of the *Leviim* being by the hand of Itamar ben Aharon the Kohen" (38:21).

The rest of the shiur will focus on this name for the *Mishkan*.

B. "*Mishkan*" and "*ohel*"

As we have noted, in *Sefer Shemot* and in *Sefer Bamidbar*, the name by which the building is usually known is "*Mishkan*." In *Sefer Vayikra*, on the other hand, it is referred to as the "*ohel mo'ed*" (tent of meeting). Sometimes both names appear together:

"He abandoned the *Mishkan* of Shilo, the tent (*ohel*) where He dwelled among people" (*Tehillim* 78:60).

In these verses and in *Sefer Vayikra*, "*ohel*" is the general name for the whole building. More specifically, "*ohel*" refers to the goat skins that were spread over the curtains of the *Mishkan*:

"You shall fashion curtains out of goatskins as a covering (*ohel*) over the *Mishkan*; you shall make eleven curtains" (26:7).

Let us examine more closely the difference between the curtains of the '*Mishkan*' and the curtains of the '*ohel*'. The curtains that comprise the *Mishkan* are splendid, royal items, fashioned from the finest of materials: blue, purple and scarlet thread, fine twisted linen, with artistic *keruvim* woven into them. Their loops are made of blue

thread, with gold clasps joining them. These curtains are relatively short; they drape over and hang in the air - nowhere do they reach the ground.

The curtains comprising the *ohel*, on the other hand, are not necessarily beautiful. They are black - the color of goat hair in this region in biblical times. (White goats were imported to the area only much later on.) When these curtains covered the *Mishkan* curtains, the *Mishkan* would probably have looked like one of the Bedouin shepherd tents familiar to us from the Negev; a black tent made of goat hair. The loops here are regular loops, and the clasps are made not of gold but of brass. These curtains are longer; they reach the ground, even trailing along the ground. Needless to say, they have no artistic images woven into them.

There is an obvious, technical explanation for the difference between the two sets of curtains: the *Mishkan* curtains are the bottom - i.e., inner - layer. They are visible to anyone who stands inside the *Mishkan*, and they are the essence of its content. These curtains are beautiful, but they are delicate and cannot withstand desert weather conditions without fading or tearing. Desert weather features drastic changes in temperature between day and night, sand storms, sudden showers, etc. The *ohel* curtains surround the *Mishkan* curtains on the outside. They are less beautiful, but sturdier and more resistant to weather damage.

But perhaps there is also a more fundamental, qualitative difference between the two sets of curtains. Let us consider this difference through the perspective of *Shir Ha-shirim*:

"I am black but beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem; like the tents of Kedar, like Shelomo's curtains" (*Shir Ha-shirim* 1:5)

Chazal, in their *midrashim*, note the contrast between "black" and "beautiful." As they understand the concepts, "black" means ugly. Actually, the parallel in this verse seems to be as follows:

"I am black - but comely, O daughters of Jerusalem,
like the tents of Kedar - like Shelomo's curtains" –

as though it was saying, "I am black like the tents of Kedar, but beautiful like Shelomo's curtains." The nation of Israel is compared in this verse to the *Mishkan*: on the inside, they are as beautiful as the *Mishkan* curtains - which are indeed beautiful, precious and royal - "Shelomo's curtains." But on the outside, because of the goatskin curtains covering it, the *M* looks like one of the tents of Kedar, tents of desert nomads.

The image of God, who dwells in the *Mishkan* and the *ohel*, is similar to that of *Kenesset Yisrael*. God is the Supreme King of kings, and the nation of Israel is His royal flock. As King, it is appropriate that a magnificent palace be built for Him from the finest of materials: Shelomo's curtains, the curtains of the *Mishkan*. But God is not only King; He is also a Shepherd, and *Am Yisrael* is His flock in the wilderness - the natural grazing site for sheep. And thus God is likened by the prophets:

"He will feed His flock like a Shepherd, gathering the lambs in His arm and carrying them in His bosom, and leading those that have young" (*Yishayahu* 40:11).

"Therefore, so says the Lord God of Israel concerning the shepherds who feed My people: You have scattered My flock and led them astray, you have not watched over them. Behold, I will punish you for the evil of your doings, promises God. And I shall gather the remnant of My flock from all the lands to which I have driven them, and I shall restore them to their folds, and they shall be fruitful and multiply" (*Yirmiyahu* 23:2-3).

"For so says the Lord God: Behold, I shall search for My flock and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day when he is among his sheep that have strayed, so I shall seek out My sheep and save them from all the places to which they have been scattered on the cloudy, misty day. I shall take them out from among the nations and gather them from the lands, and will bring them to their land, and feed them at the mountains of Israel by the streams and in all the inhabited places of the land. I shall feed them in a good pasture; the high mountains of Israel shall be their fold. There they shall lie in a good fold, and feed in a fat pasture, upon the mountains of Israel. I shall feed My flock and let them lie down, promises the Lord God. I shall seek out that which was lost and bring back that which has strayed, and bind up the crippled, and strengthen the sick; I shall destroy the fat and the strong; I will make them graze with justice" (*Yechezkel* 34:11-16).

Like a shepherd pasturing his flocks in the desert, so God feeds and sustains His nation with bread and water, and protects them from all enemies and troubles.

It appears that Moshe's staff - symbolizing God's outstretched arm - was also originally a simple shepherd's staff. It obviously served him to ward off bandits and animals of prey while he shepherded the flocks of Yitro, his father-in-law, in the wilderness. This same weapon came to be used against Pharoah and against Amalek,

symbolizing the arm of God leading His people in the wilderness for forty years. And God's resting place is in the *ohel* made of goat hair curtains and brass clasps.

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Let us return to *Shir Ha-shirim*. God's two images in this text are the Beloved ("My Beloved answered and said to me: "Arise, My love, My fair one, and come..."), and Shelomo ("Go out and see, O daughters of Jerusalem, King Shelomo, wearing the crown that his mother crowned him with on the day of his wedding, on the day of his heart's gladness"). Closer examination shows that as "the Beloved," God appears "from the desert," as a shepherd and as a gazelle; an appearance that seems spontaneous and sudden, while as "Shelomo," God's appearance is royal and grand.

God's appearances parallel the images of David - the shepherd and warrior defending his people, whose life amongst the nation is replete with ups and downs, love and alienation; and Shelomo - the magnificent king, ruling over all the lands, whose life amongst the nation is fixed and institutionalized; his status clear and unequivocal.

C. Testimony and Meeting

We have noted that the *Mishkan* is referred to as the "*Mishkan* of Testimony," while the *ohel* is called the "*Ohel Mo'ed*" (tent of meeting). Just as the *ohel* curtains are laid upon the *Mishkan* curtains, so the *kaporet* (covering) is laid over the Ark. The Ark contains the Tablets of Testimony, while the function of the *kaporet* is:

"When Moshe came to the *Ohel Mo'ed* to speak with Him, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the *kaporet* that was upon the Ark of Testimony, from between the two *keruvim*, and it spoke with him"
(*Bamidbar* 7:89)

The "testimony" (*edut*) is the Written Law, the written Tablets. The "meeting" (*hiva'adut*) is the giving of the Oral Law. God meets with Moshe in the *Ohel Mo'ed* (tent of meeting), and speaks with him.

The Tablets of Testimony represent the institutionalized relations between *Am Yisrael* and the King Who appears at Mount Sinai, with all His entourage, and gives fixed, unchanging instructions. This testimony is like God's appearance in *Shir Ha-shirim* as "Shelomo"; it is reminiscent of the fixed, institutionalized relationship of marriage. The "meeting" (*hiva'adut*), on the other hand, is the element of the Oral Law. This meeting is one of direct speech with *Am Yisrael*, through Moshe. This is revelation at whatever time God chooses - like the dramatic appearances of the

Beloved in *Shir Ha-shirim*. It is reminiscent of the period of engagement; it is dramatic and immediate, but not permanent.

In both appearances - both '*edut*' (testimony) and '*hiva'adut*' (meeting), both Ark (*aron*) and *kaporet* (covering), both *Mishkan* and *ohel*, both Written Law and Oral Law, Shepherd and King, David and Shelomo - the relationship between God and His people is realized in the *Mishkan*.

D. Middot

We have addressed the *Mishkan* as a "*Mishkan* of testimony," but the *Kodesh ha-Kodashim* also houses another item - a container of manna.

The Torah takes care to specify exact measurements for the construction of the *Mishkan*: two cubits and a half is the length of the Ark, a cubit and a half is its width, and it is a cubit and a half high. Likewise measurements are stipulated for the Table, the altars, the boards and the curtains. Even more elaborate and exact measurements than those given for the *Mishkan* and its vessels are provided for the *Mikdash* and its vessels (*Melakhim* I, chapters 6-7). Special elaboration on the measurements of the *Mikdash* appears in the prophecy of Yechezkel:

"In the visions of God He brought me into *Eretz Yisrael*, and placed me upon a very high mountain, upon which was a structure like that of a city to the south" (*Yechezkel* 40:2).

"In the man's hand was a measuring rod of six cubits, by a cubit and a handbreadth" (*Yechezkel* 40:5)

Yechezkel goes on to rebuke the people:

"...Let them be ashamed of their sins, and measure the form" (*Yechezkel* 43:10).

Yechezkel sees an angel measuring the spaces, porches, openings, and posts; the angel goes on to measure chambers and floors, courtyards and tables, the house and its sides, the galleries, and the walls; the altar and the courtyards; the measurements of the Temple Mount and of Jerusalem, the areas for the *Kohanim* and *Leviim*, and - finally - the portion of the prince.

It would seem that the minute detail of Yechezkel's specifications is meant to lead up to his concluding prophecy:

"So says the Lord God: You have done enough, O princes of Israel. Remove violence and spoil, and perform judgment and righteousness. Take away your exactions from My people, declares the Lord God. You shall have just balances and just quantities and just measurements. The '*efa*' and the '*bat*' shall be of one measure, so that the '*bat*' shall be a tenth of a '*chomer*,' and the '*efa*' shall be a tenth of a '*chomer*': it shall be measured according to the '*chomer*'. And the '*shekel*' shall be twenty '*gera*'; twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels, and fifteen shekels shall be your portions." (*Yechezkel* 45:9-12)

All the exactness and precision of the measurements of the *Mikdash* comes to teach us the proper precision of a judge in judgment and of a shopkeeper in his measurements. If a proper '*efa*' is missing from the market, the yardstick for measuring God's Sanctuary is likewise absent.

The container of manna placed in the *Mishkan* is "an *omer*-full." In our *shiur* on *Parashat Beshalach* we discussed at length the manna's function as a test for *Benei Yisrael*: could the entire nation gather "each person in accordance with his eating," or would one person eat what he needed and gather part of his neighbor's portion?

Measures and weights, in addition to serving as a test for *Benei Yisrael* in the wilderness, are also a precondition for God resting His *Shekhina* in His *Mishkan*.

Translated by Kaeren Fish