

Terumah - Rabbi Lerner - February 19, 2012

The Mitzvah to Build the Mishkan

The remainder of the Sefer Shmos, with the exception of the story of the sin of the Egel, is dedicated to the mitzvah of constructing the Mishkan, the lengthiest single topic in the Torah, emphasizing its importance.

25:2 *Speak to the Children of Israel and let them take for me (Veyikchu Li) a Terumah, from every man whose heart motivates him you shall take My portion. **Baal Haturim**: they cannot give an object of value that is not specifically needed - it has to be one of 13 specific items listed in these pasukim - three metals (gold, silver, and copper), and various threads and hides, wood, oil, stones, and spices.*

25:8: *Ve'Asu Li Mikdash Veshachanti Besocham: They shall make for Me a Sanctuary so that I may dwell amongst them. **Rambam**: this pasuk is the source of the Mitzvah of building a mikdash.*

Rav Hirsch: Two different words are used to describe Hashem's dwelling: a Mishkan and a Mikdash. There are two different ideals here, two different dimensions. A Mikdash is for God, tasks needed for God; we are elevating ourselves for God; it is the tangible symbol of God who is here to elevate us to be His Holy People - God wants us to be a holy, sanctified nation. We are making ourselves holy - we do all of this for God. The Mishkan is what God is doing for us - his divine presence will be with us, protecting us, making us invulnerable to protect us forever from destruction. It is our security blanket. This represents God coming down to us, to live amongst us to protect us. We elevate ourselves and God comes down to protect us.

There is a famous machlokes of whether this parsha is in the right order in the Torah. **Rashi** says the sin of the Egel preceded the command given to Moshe to build the Mishkan. *Ein Mukdam Uma'uchar Batorah* - there is no logical order in the Torah, and the purpose of the Mishkan was to bring atonement for the sin of the Egel. Had there been no sin, there would have been no need to build the Mishkan. We were originally intended to sense God's presence all over, but this construction indicated to us that we were very limited; we needed something concrete to hold onto the idea of God. So God had to make a concession to us so that we have a physical sense of a house for God. It was not the ideal situation. It was because of our weakness; we needed a physical symbol of God. **Sforno**: at the end of Yisro it describes the building of the Mizbeach; it says in 20:21 regarding korbanos that "...wherever I permit My name to be mentioned, I will come to you and I will bless you." Hashem was saying that to us that you don't need to build fancy temples and edifices for me in order for Me to come down to you; a simple Mizbeach made out of earth is sufficient; I need your interest and love for me to come to you; it can be in any place; I will come everywhere and anywhere; you just have to open up the door and I will be there. You don't need a temple; just open up your heart. This was the ideal; a centralized institution was unnecessary. But now that we showed our weakness with the sin of the Egel, we needed a physical representation to hold onto; it was Bide'eved, not Lechatchilah.

Ramban: vehemently opposes Rashi's opinion. The Torah is nearly always written in chronological order. The command to build the Mishkan was always in the plans; it was not because we messed up and built the Egel. It was a great ideal in the first place. The Jews at Sinai were holy, and because they showed their faith in God by saying Na'aseh Venishmah, God loved us and we were worthy of God dwelling in our midst. That is why God ordered us to build this Mishkan. Because of our enthusiasm with Na'aseh Venishmah, God wanted to dwell amongst us.

He would dwell above the Aron, between the Keruvim. The real deep secret of the Mishkan is that God wanted to perpetuate the experience of revelation from Sinai - He wants it to be eternalized. As He openly revealed Himself and was amongst us at Sinai, He will continue to be amongst us in a more private way in the Mishkan; it is the ideal for God to always be amongst us and we should feel close to Him.

Abarbanel: near the end of Mishpatim, there is another perek, Perek 24, which is the subject of machlokes of when it occurred. It begins with "*V'el Moshe Amar*" instead of the usual *Vayedaber Hashem El Moshe*. This pasuk is ambiguous as to whether it had occurred earlier. The pasukim describe Moshe, Aharon, his sons, and the nation's leaders ascending the mountain to approach God, while the nation stayed behind. Moshe then *gives over all of the words of God and these mishpatim to the people and they say they will do all that God commanded*. **Rashi**: the Divrei Hashem were the mitzvos of separating from their wives and keeping a distance from the mountain; the Mishpatim were the 7 mitzvos of Bnei Noach, and the mitzvos given at Marah (Shabbos, parah aduma, civil laws). **Rashi**: this parsha was said before the Aseres Hadibros, as indicated by the introductory words to the perek, that to Moshe it was said previously; it was on the fourth of Sivan that all of them were told to ascend the mountain; it was two days before the Aseres Hadibros, and certainly before the parsha of Mishpatim - all of those mitzvos were not given yet, so there were only a limited number of mitzvos given by Moshe to the people.

Ramban: this entire section was the day after Shvuos, on the seventh of Sivan; the Jews had not only been given the Ten Commandments, but also the entire parsha and laws of Mishpatim. By the seventh of Sivan Moshe had been given this huge chunk of Mitzvos. So when it says in 24:3 that Moshe told the people the words of God and the mishpatim, it was the entire parsha of Mishpatim, with all of the mitzvos of interpersonal laws; 53 mitzvos that he had just learned from God. And the people's response was that they will do them. Moshe now writes down these words of God. **Rashi** says when it says Moshe wrote these words down in 24:4, it means from the beginning of Bereishis up until the giving of the Torah; the Torah had not been given yet since this section preceded the Aseres Hadibros. **Ramban** on the other hand, says he wrote from the beginning through Mishpatim, with a large number of Mitvos. Moshe then told them to build a Mizbeach, and in 24:7, he took the Sefer Habris and read it to the people. **Rashi** says that this sefer is up to the mitzvos of Marah and the seven Noahide mitzvos; **Ramban** says it is all of the laws through Mishpatim; and the people respond Na'aseh Venishmah - they accepted the laws with great zeal. **Abarbanel** agrees with the Ramban regarding the timing of this event, after the Aseres Hadibros, in order to deal with another difficulty: in 23:20 Hashem tells Moshe that He will send an angel to lead the people to Eretz Yisrael; the should not make him angry - he will precede the people into Eretz Yisrael, and when there, the Jews should not worship their gods. Moshe does not react to this pronouncement of the angel leading them, as opposed to the same pronouncement in Ki Sisah after the sin of the Egel, when Moshe is very upset about the angel replacing God in accompanying the nation to Israel; Moshe went on strike and refused to proceed. After Moshe came down from the mountain and gave over all of the Mishpatim here, as the Ramban said, he told the people all of the laws, and the response of the people was very enthusiastic. Moshe inducted them into a new covenant and the leaders ascended the mountain. As a result of this excitement, Hashem decided to do a great chesed to His people - He is so moved and touched by their response of eagerness and enthusiasm, that He changes His mind. In addition to being their God after they enter the land of Israel, He decides to personally accompany them during their journey through the midbar - He will remain close to them in the midbar, as He was at Har Sinai. Hashem reverses Himself; that is why Moshe did not get upset -

because we showed Hashem such love, He reciprocated by commanding us to build a Mishkan so that He could dwell amongst us even during this temporary, transitory phase of Jewish history; He will be with us during these 40 years. The idea of the angel was before Moshe taught the people about the laws; after they accepted them with great love and faith, God changed the game plan and said that He wants to be with us immediately and He will lead us personally, without any intermediaries. On the sixth of Sivan, with the mountain over our heads, we showed the fear of God; on the seventh day we showed love of God, and God therefore then wanted to reciprocate.

Rav Eliyahu Schlessinger: there is a midrash about the Mishkan: when we accepted the yoke of heaven with joy by saying Na'aseh Venishmah, God commanded Moshe to build a Mishkan; our response to God's laws triggered God's response of having us build the Mishkan. Really, when God gave us the mitzvos at Sinai, it wasn't just a question of God commanding us to be His servants; God held the mountain over our heads as a Chupah - He married Himself to us at Sinai; it was a wedding, the model for all future Jewish marriages. He was proposing to us. This then engendered building a home for the new couple. There had to be a house for Yichud. Therefore, He had us build a Mishkan as a symbol of the Yichud; we expressed our great love, and God responded by making us into a couple and had us build a home for Yichud. It was a very romantic development.

Why does it say *Vayikchu Li Teruma* instead of *Vayitnu*? If it says to give, it would indicate a mandatory assessment - that it would cost everyone a certain amount to be a member of the nation. God therefore says *Vayikchu Li* - Hashem is commanding the people to give with their hearts, whatever they want of these needed items; they weren't commanded to give certain amounts. It was a matter of love, not coercion.

Rav Baruch Simon: Mumbaz the king, in the Gomorra Berachos, inherited the wealth of many previous kings; there was a famine in the land and he emptied out the treasury to feed the people; his royal relatives said he was foolish for giving away the wealth his ancestors had accumulated. He responded that his forefathers stored it for this world, for others; he was storing things for himself for the next world. Rav Simon says that we learned from Megilas Rus that the person who gains the most when tzedakah is given is the donor; we see this when Rus says she helped Boaz by coming to his field to glean wheat. The **Bais Halevi** says that is why it says taking - you think you are giving but you are really taking good for yourself by giving to others.