

PARSHAS TETZAVEH 5778

This parsha continues the series of parshiyos describing the construction of the Mishkon.

Hashem gave very specific details about all the materials needed and ends with the phrase “You will make for Me a sanctuary so I will dwell in their midst. There are a number of explanations of this phrase. Rashi understands this to be a promise. Hashem says if you build the Mishkon, I will dwell in it—but only if you build it according to the exact instructions that I give you.

What was the purpose of the Mishkon? Why was it necessary and for whom was it necessary? For Hashem? The midrash says Moshe asked why Hashem needs a Mishkon when the whole world can't contain the kovod of Hashem? Hashem answered that I can contract My Shechinoh into this little structure.

What does this mean? Hashem is beyond time and space!

The Nefesh Hachayim says the Mishkon was not an ordinary structure. Everything in the Mishkon was endowed with a spiritual energy by forming the physical symbols of all the wisdom behind ma'aseh bereishis. Betzalel was able to focus all of these symbolic kavonos while constructing each and every detail of the physical Mishkon. The Mishkon became a microcosm of the physical universe.

The gemara says if you want to be wealthy, direct your tefillos in the direction of the Shulchan to the north—reflecting the source of parnassoh in the metaphysical world. If you want to be gain wisdom, direct your tefillos in the direction of the Menoroh in the south—because it reflects the metaphysical source of wisdom.

A certain amount of background is required in order to understand how Chazal viewed the spiritual and physical world and the connection between them. Without this background one will not appreciate the goals of the Mishkon, the structure and details of the Mishkon, and the symbols of the Mishkon.

It is a very important background that is lacking for many people.

When Chazal talk about creation, they talk in terms of a duality—the creation of the physical world—the one we experience, and the creation of a spiritual world—which is an intrinsic part of the universe although not directly accessible to us. We don't see the interaction between the two either. Man is the only created being containing the elements of both physical and spiritual worlds. He has a physical body and the spiritual neshomo. Just as we experience the physical part of ourselves, we are also aware of a spiritual dimension to our identity.

The Torah talks about the existence of angels. It records their interaction with human beings. The Rambam says that while our neshomo is enveloped within a physical body and subject to physical constraints, we cannot perceive any spiritual entities. We cannot experience angels or the spiritual realm. Only when a novi goes into a kind of trance—where the effects of his physicality are severely weakened and blocked from interfering

with the neshomo's capabilities, can he perceive the existence of spiritual entities like angels and interact with them.

According to the Rambam, when the Torah in Parshas Vayeyiroh describes angels talking with Avrohom and Lot, this exchange is all happening within a mareh nevuoh experienced by Avrohom. Only Moshe Rabbeinu was able to have a mareh nevuoh while his body was still active and functioning. He refined his body to such an extent that it no longer inhibited the full functioning of his neshomo and didn't block him from perceiving the spiritual realm even while awake.

On the other hand, all other human beings—even the highest novi—as long as they were awake and could feel the presence of their bodies, were not capable of having nevuoh to perceive anything in the spiritual realm.

The Ramban in Parshas Vayeyiroh disagrees. He says it is possible for an angel to communicate with awake human beings by assuming a temporary physical form. So the divide between spiritual entities and physical entities is not as absolute as the Rambam's view. But they are two different realms.

These two realms are parallel to each other. Everything you find in the physical world has a counterpart in the spiritual world. If there is a Beis Hamikdosh below, there is a Beis Hamikdosh above.

Every nation has a sar—an angel who runs its affairs in the spiritual realm. The physical world is a mirror of the spiritual world. We talked about Betzalel understanding the wisdom of tziruf osios. Hashem first created a spiritual world through tziruf osios, and then this gave rise to their physical counterpart within the physical world. For instance, we have a Midrash called Perek Shirah, where Chazal identified the shirah that all the aspects of the physical world sing to Hashem. What is the meaning of all this? The meforshim explain that there is a sar which is charge of every aspect of the physical world—and it is this angel that is saying shirah to Hashem. There is a lot of interaction between these worlds that we aren't aware of.

The scientific revolution started to promulgate the notion that the physical universe runs on its own power and has no need for any spiritual dimension for its existence. Laplace, a famous French mathematician once boasted to Napoleon that he has worked out all the equations to be able explain everything in nature, and declared that we no longer need G-d to explain the physical universe. But the truth of the matter is that every time the scientific community thinks it has the world all figured out, something comes up to overturn everything and forces them to realize that they haven't even begun to scratch the surface of the wisdom that lies behind the cosmos.

The physical world is coordinated by a spiritual world that stands behind it. The midrash in Beshalach says that in every war that is fought between two nations on Earth, there are angels in

Heaven representing these nations and are fighting the war on the spiritual plane. The outcome of that war in Heaven determines the outcome of the war being fought here on Earth. When Pharaoh and his army came charging after Klal Yisroel when they were trapped at Yam Suf, the Midrash says that Klal Yisroel were terrified by the vision of the Sar of Egypt in Heaven charging along with the Egyptians on Earth to support them in battle. Rav Elazar ben Dordia asked for the sun the moon and the mountains to plead on his behalf. Tosfos there explains he was asking the angels behind these entities to plead on his behalf.

There are numerous examples of this throughout Chazal and Rishonim who interpret countless pesukim in this light. It formed their entire worldview of how to look at the cosmos. The Rambam himself writes that every single physical entity on Earth is being given its existence and its physical characteristics through the command from Hashem Himself through the malochim and from there to the stars and down to earth. There are those who think the Rambam was a materialist and he denied the existence of a spiritual realm. Nothing could be further from the truth. They are simply ignorant about the Rambam's whole idea of tzuroh. The tzuroh according to the Rambam is a spiritual counterpart of the entities found in the physical world and the physical object cannot be understood fully without the understanding of its tzuroh—its spiritual counterpart.

The Torah says Hashem directly endowed Betzalel with the all wisdom necessary to execute all the different tasks of the Mishkon. How was this done? The gemara explains that Betzalel knew tziruf osios. This is the special method by which Hashem created the Universe. It is a subtle and sophisticated concept in kabbolah.

Hashem first created an entire metaphysical world through tziruf osios, and the physical world was just a material reflection of this metaphysical reality created by this tziruf osios. The Rambam in his introduction to his peirush to the Torah explains that if you understand this metaphysical world and how it was created through tziruf osios, you will automatically understand all the wisdom behind the physical universe. Betzalel knew this wisdom. This was true of Moshe Rabbeinu and Shlomo Hamelech. Chazal are telling us that this wisdom of the spiritual world reflected in the physical world allowed Betzalel to attain all the necessary knowledge of the craftsmanship for building the Mishkon and its vessels.

Betzalel was only able to build the Mishkon through the wisdom that he received about the tziruf osios—the spiritual mechanism which Hashem used to create the spiritual world, through which its counterpart, the physical world, emerged.

This is how Chazal viewed the world. The Torah contains all wisdom that is knowable in the world, and the highest level is tziruf osios. Through understanding the spiritual root of everything, you can understand everything about the physical world.

The spiritual energy for the functioning of the world came from its spiritual counterpart in the Mishkon and later, the Beis Hamikdosh.

The question is often asked: Why does the Chumash spend so much time dictating every single detail involved in building the Mishkon? Why are the details important in the first place that Hashem needed to provide them? Why couldn't He leave the details up to Klal Yisroel to use their own judgment?

The answer is three-fold.

Avodas Hashem isn't a free-for-all. Avodas Hashem is based on our subjecting ourselves to the will of Hashem in the most detailed way possible. This is reflected in all the halachos that surround symbols. The Torah says to eat matzoh in order to remember yetzias mitzrayim. However, the Torah also tells us how to carry out this remembrance in a very specific detailed manner. Eating matzoh in a way that is more meaningful to you personally but without conforming to the requirements of halacha is not allowed. The same is true about shaatnez and many other mitzvos.

Submitting yourself to the details of halachic precision is an essential element of avodas Hashem. There can be deep philosophies and concepts behind these mitzvos, but we have to express these concepts in the precise way that halacha dictates, otherwise it isn't genuine avodas Hashem. The details of halacha create a system of discipline.

The second reason is to teach us a lesson in accountability. When Moshe Rabbeinu collected all the gold and silver for constructing the Mishkon, he kept track of all the donations. The Torah gives a very exhaustive, detailed account and says there were 1775 weights of silver for the hooks of the amudim. It is interesting that the ta'amim accent the word 'thousand'. Chazal ask, what's so exciting about the word 'thousand'?

Chazal explain that after Moshe Rabbeinu had collected the silver and was going through the accounting for it all, he was missing a certain amount of silver and he was worried about being suspected. Then he looked up, saw the silver hooks, realized where that amount of silver had been used in the Mishkon, and was deeply relieved. Moshe Rabbeinu shows us the value of being held accountable—even when you are in a position of power. He wasn't given an open-ended license to do what he wanted with the donations. This is an extremely important lesson.

Lastly, the Mishkon, as we said, was the physical representation of all the different parts of the universe. Just as Hashem created the physical universe which detailed precision with exact constants etc., the miniature universe—the Mishkon—also had to be made with precision. The hashro'as haShechinoh into the Mishkon was the conduit for bringing hashro'as haShechinoh into the physical world at large, so the correspondence had to be extremely exact.

At one point the midrash asks: are korbonos are offered in the Beis Hamikdosh shel ma'aloh? The midrash answers yes.

In the brocha for avodoh we request that Hashem should accept our tefillos, bring back the avodoh—and ishei Yisroel. There is a disagreement where to put the comma. Do we combine avodoh with ishei Yisroel and ask Hashem to bring back both? If so, the problem arises where are korbonos different from ishei Yisroel. Tosfos suggests we are asking Hashem to accept our ishei Yisroel along with our tefillos today. What, you may ask, are the ishei Yisroel that we are offering to Hashem today? Tosfos answers that this refers to the neshomos of the tzaddikim that are offered each day on the mizbeach in the Beis Hamikdosh shel ma'aloh! This is what Tosfos says is being mentioned in each Shemoneh Esrei three times a day, seven days a week!

The idea that there is a corresponding spiritual entity to every physical entity in the universe is pervasive throughout our literature.

The Mishkon is a microcosm of the entire universe and this is why Betzalel had to know the wisdom of tziruf osios and used that wisdom to have the proper kavonos when making

every single detail in the building of the Mishkon. Because the Mishkon in all its details will have an impact on the quality of spiritual hashpo'oh that will come down from Hashem.

The Ramban says that Shlomo knew all the wisdom of the physical world from the Torah. This is why he was able to build the Beis Hamikdosh which was supposed to be a microcosm of the entire universe. It was thereby capable of channeling the hashpo'oh of hashro'as haShechinoh into the entire world.

There are various keilim in the Mishkon—mizbeach and shulchan, aron and menorah. The aron and menorah are the vessels that bring spiritual hashpo'oh into this world through limud haTorah. There are two aspects of limud haTorah. The aron corresponded to Torah Shebichsav and the menorah corresponded to the limud of Torah Sheba'al Peh which contains all the wisdoms of the world.

The mizbeach and shulchan are the vessels that bring material hashpo'o of parnossoh into the world through tefillah. There are different aspects of this world reflected by different types of keilim, and they correspond to the different roles that people take upon themselves in Klal Yisroel.

The Netziv gives an example about a king worrying about his kingdom. Part of a king's concern surrounds the economic health of the country and the situation of the working class. Another part of his concern surrounds the king's personal agents and defense of the country—his ministers and soldiers.

Hashem is the King and Klal Yisroel is His kingdom. Hashem worries about Klal Yisroel's parnossoh. But we live in a world where parnossoh in general, and rain in particular, depends on our spiritual level. Even though there are laws of nature that Hashem set up to determine what happens in the physical realm in a very predictable way, certain things about the physical world are built into the system, which are inherently unpredictable.

The gemara in Taanis says three keys are kept in Hashem's hands—one of them is rain. We are dependent on rain, and Hashem wants us to feel that dependency by not being able to control rainfall. Eretz Yisroel is unique in that regard. The rainfall is not in our hands and can never be predicted in advance. It is in Hashem's hands alone to get us to daven to Him for our livelihood. Although the world was created on the third day with an inherent system of natural irrigation, once Odom was created, Hashem changed the system and Odom had to first daven for rain in order to get parnossoh.

Rain is the symbol of parnossoh in the Torah generally. Hashem set up nature in a way that we are always dependent on Hashem alone. This is one type of dependence.

When Hashem worries about His kingdom, Hashem made the power of avodoh and tefillah in the Beis Hamikdosh trigger the rain. The Beis Hamikdosh is the central place of avodoh and tefillah which brings parnossoh. As Shlomo Hamelech said in his inaugural tefillah over the first Beis Hamikdosh, people will turn to the Beis Hamikdosh to daven for rain. This is one aspect of the Beis Hamikdosh.

But not everyone in the kingdom is busy with parnossoh. There are the king's ministers and servants, his army who serve the king personally and whose needs are taken care of by the king directly. So too, Hashem Himself takes care of those who are exclusively devoted to learning Torah. The Rambam says at the end of Hilchos Shemittoh and Yovel that the people who devote their lives to learning Torah are Hashem's army. So Hashem takes personal responsibility for their parnossoh in

order to free them to serve Hashem without worries about their physical needs. In the midbor, for 40 years, Klal Yisroel didn't have to worry about any material needs. All they did was learn Torah with Moshe Rabbeinu. So at that period, the korbonos were not necessary for parnossoh.

The Netziv explained the different phases in Jewish history where Torah was more central than others. In the midbor, when Klal Yisroel were exclusively engaged in limud haTorah and had no involvement with material activity altogether, the keruvim on top of the aron faced each other. It reflected an intense relationship between Hashem and Klal Yisroel from the merit of their Torah. By the times of Shlomo Hamelech, Klal Yisroel were in Eretz Yisroel for over 400 years and the bulk of the population were involved in parnossoh with only a couple of shevotim engaged exclusively in limud haTorah. At this time, Klal Yisroel did not have such an intense relationship with Hashem, so the keruvim were facing away from each other.

If the Mishkon reflected the way Hashem created the entire universe, the aron was the center of the Mishkon/universe. It contained the Luchos, a Sefer Torah, and the keruvim which reflected the dynamic relationship between Klal Yisroel and Hashem. Now we understand that it wasn't plain gold. It was imbued with the kavonos that Betzael put into it, so that it contained the power of something that reflected a deep metaphysical reality.

Throughout the generations there are people whose focus is on Torah and avodas Hashem day and night and relying on Hashem directly for their physical needs, and there are other people who are focused on parnossoh, depending on Hashem and davening for rain.

When there is an intense relationship with Hashem that is based on Torah like in the midbor, then the keruvim face each other. When the focus is on parnossoh and they ask Hashem to help them, the relationship is less intense and more independent. Then the keruvim faced in different directions.

The keruvim reflected the level of the relationship. Some people choose to have a closer, more intense relationship and some choose to be more independent.

The Netziv explains the idea of dynamic keruvim at length to reconcile all the various gemaras. He says there was a double miracle about the keruvim. One, the keruvim of gold were able to move altogether, and two, the keruvim were changing their position to reflect a changing spiritual level.

Another time when the keruvim face each other is at times of churbon—after a prolonged period of taking Hashem for granted and losing our appreciation of the Shechinoh in our midst, Hashem decides to take it away from us and we suddenly start to yearn again for that lost closeness. The way we start to rebuild that intense relationship again after churbon is through a renewed dedication to limud haTorah. This is also represented by the keruvim.

When we take a survey of times of decline in Jewish history, we always find that the response to a loss of Shechinoh is to strengthen limud haTorah.

When Moshe Rabbeinu died, the Beis Hamikdosh was destroyed, nevuah came to an end, the intensity of our relationship with Hashem dropped precipitously, there is always the same response.

Moshe Rabbeinu had the greatest relationship with Hashem, and through him Klal Yisroel in general were lifted up. The response in Sefer Yehoshuah is contemplating Torah day

and night. The conclusion of the last nevuah in Nach, Sefer Malachi ends by telling us "Zichru Toras Moshe Avdi". In Eichoh, describing the churbon, the response is to get up at night to sing with Torah and pour out your heart to Hashem. When the second Beis Hamikdosh is about to be destroyed, Rabbi Yochanon Ben Zakai realized the only way Yiddishkeit can go on after the churbon is by saving Yavneh and the Sanhedrin. This is what he asks for. This is how we rebuild and hold on to the Shechinoh.

In times of churbon, when Klal Yisroel understood everything they were losing and that made them yearn for that intimate relationship with Hashem, they instinctively grabbed on to limud haTorah. This makes the keruvim face each other again after the churbon.

These are fundamental ideas in Yiddishkeit. The commentary that explains in the most detailed way how the spiritual world is reflected in the physical world is the Rambam in Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah and Moreh Hanevuchim. But all rishonim express these ideas in their own unique style.

Every aspect of the Mishkon was supposed to correspond to every aspect of the physical universe which was designed with very precise wisdom. This is why Betzalel needed to master the wisdom of tziruf osios in order to know how to build the Mishkon and infuse it with its spiritual power. He also needed to be given a supernatural ability to translate this wisdom into

practice—knowing how to produce fine craftsmanship with very delicate and expensive materials—things they had no experience with while being slave laborers in Egypt.

People think building a Beis Hamikdosh is a simple thing that just takes political will and military force to take over Har Habayis. But they have no clue about the highest kavonos and spiritual levels that are necessary to be put into the building of a Beis Hamikdosh which is supposed to bring all kinds of spiritual and physical hashpo'os into our world.

The 3rd Beis Hamikdosh is going to be so difficult to build that some rishonim say we won't be able to build it ourselves at all. The Beis Hamikdosh shel ma'aloh will just have to come down from Heaven and materialize itself into our physical world. The Rambam seems to be more optimistic and holds that Moshiach will be able to lift the level of Klal Yisroel to such an unbelievable degree that we ourselves will be able to build it with all the necessary kavonos.

It is interesting that we have no less than four parshiyos in the Torah which describe all the infinite details of building the Mishkon. It reflects the need for Hashem to guide our avodas Hashem with details and we need to submit to His will with absolute discipline. Second of all, the details of the Mishkon reflect how Hashem designed both the physical and spiritual universe in parallel with tremendous precision and wisdom.