

PARSHAS TERUMAH

תשפ"ד

Parshas Terumah was given to Klal Yisroel the day after Moshe Rabbeinu came down from Har Sinai on Yom Kippur. Why was it necessary to begin construction of the Mishkon so immediately after Ma'amad Har Sinai? The Ramban explains that the experience of Ma'amad Har Sinai and the hashro'as haShechinoh needed to be with Klal Yisroel at all times. Moshe Rabbeinu asked, how can any physical structure contain the Shechinoh – Hashem fills all of creation! Hashem responded that He is capable of localizing the presence of the Shechinoh in a specific place. The entire purpose of the Mishkon is to be that place where Klal Yisroel can feel that intense presence of the Shechinoh.

This is why the Mikdosh is also a mokom of tefillah. The midrash says the Kosel HaMa'arovi remains as a mokom tefillah until we have the complete Beis HaMikdosh.

How does it happen? How does Shechinoh make its presence felt in Klal Yisroel?

There is an interesting ma'amar Chazal at the beginning of Parshas Behaalos'cho. The chanukas haMishkon was based on the chanukas hamizbeach. Only the Nesi'im – the heads of the 12 Shvotim – participated, and each brought their korbon. Aharon was left out and he felt excluded. Hashem reassured Aharon that his contribution through the lighting of the Menorah is greater than theirs. The Ramban explains that at this point of history, the mizbeach was the vehicle for the chanukas haMishkon. But at a later point in history, it will be the Menorah which inaugurates the Mikdosh and it will be the Kohanim who will carry this out. When the Chashmonaim threw the Greeks out of the Beis HaMikdosh, every vessel needed a new dedication. The Greeks defiled everything including the mizbeach, as the gemara in Avodo Zoro says. But somehow the Menorah became the focus of the chanukas haBayis. Hashem told Aharon that this will be done by kohanim, which in fact it was.

In the midbor, Klal Yisroel were surrounded by nissim. They lived in a supernatural existence with the ananei hakovod, with mon and a traveling well of water, and the connection to Hashem was immediate and constant.

People today have salt on the table to commemorate the mizbeach, because a table in a Jewish home is like the mizbeach. The Ibn Ezra notices that all the keilim of the Mishkon are described in Parshas Terumah with one exception – the mizbeach haketores. This mizbeach is left out here and is described all the way at the end of Parshas Tetzaveh after the bigdei kehunoh. Why was it stuck in later like an afterthought? The answer is that all the keilim in the Mishkon have two purposes. One is a technical function of a place to perform the avodoh. The other was to be a symbol of what a Jewish home should look like. The table of a Jew should be similar to the mizbeach of the Mishkon. His eating at home at his table should also be a form of avodoh in the presence of Hashem.

Unlike non-Jews, a Jew has the unique ability to integrate avodas Hashem into every aspect of his physical life. Both Jews and non-Jews can bring korbonos and become close to Hashem, but a non-Jew can only bring olos – offerings that are completely consumed on the mizbeach with nothing for a human being to enjoy. His conception of spirituality is limited to only the non-physical aspects of life. Only a Jew can bring a shlomim, which part of the korbon is burnt on the mizbeach and part is eaten as a segment of the avodas Hashem. A Jew has 613 mitzvos because every aspect of our lives has mitzvos

associated with it. This trains us to bring Hashem into our everyday life and this allows us to enjoy the pleasures of the world in a disciplined way and integrate them into our avodas Hashem.

So, every piece of furniture in the Mishkon that we find in a human home reflects the idea that Hashem should dwell in our home. There are four basic furniture items in a home: shulchan, kissei, menorah, and mittoh. We need a place to rest our body, to eat, to sleep, and we need light. But light does not have a functional use. It enables us to see the world. The midrash asks, why is the menorah in the Mishkon? Does Hashem need light to see the world? Hashem lights up the whole world! The answer is that the function of the Menorah is to reflect the light of the Torah. This means that just like my table has to have Hashem's presence when I am eating on it, I have to view the world in the light of Hashem's perspective – which is the Torah.

There are different periods in Jewish history. At certain points in Jewish history, the environment that Jews lived in was steeped in Yiddishkeit. They lived in a closed Jewish ghetto with no foreign influences. Seeing the world through the Torah's light wasn't a challenge for them. They needed to elevate their physical living and functioning to bring Hashem's presence – just as the Jews in the midbor didn't have any challenge integrating the Torah's outlook, because all they heard and knew about for 40 years was Moshe Rabbeinu's shiur. The ikkar avodoh was the mizbeach – elevating the physical acts of living.

But in the times of Golus Yovon, there was a huge pull to view the world through a secular lens. At that point, the avodoh was the Menorah – to view the world from the perspective of the Torah instead of Greek philosophy. So the main chanukas haBayis at that time was through the Menorah which needed the purest olive oil and needed to be lit by kohanim who were oseik baTorah. Only they could bring Torah into people's lives.

How do we look at the world today? From the light of secular culture? Or from the light of Torah?

This is the purpose of the Mishkon.

The Midrash in Eichoh says that after the churbon haBayis, Yirmiyohu haNovi is sitting by the burning rubble and is crying and crying. A Greek philosopher comes over and asks, why are you – who are so intelligent and taught me so much wisdom – why are you crying over a pile of sticks and stones? Yirmiyohu answered that all this wisdom that you are so impressed with came from these sticks and stones. Yes, I got all my chochmoh from the Torah. But when I felt Hashem's intense presence in the Mikdosh, my chochmas haTorah was elevated to a much higher degree. We say after each Shmoneh Esrei: שיבנה בית המקדש במהרה בימינו ותן חלקנו בתורתך. Torah is the way we can connect to Hashem in our current stage in history. We don't have a Beis HaMikdosh, we don't have nevuah, and any other vehicle they had to feel Hashem's presence that we used to have.

Chazal, in the Heicholos of Rabbi Yishmoel Kohen Godol, say an unbelievable thing. The first Beis HaMikdosh was destroyed because of the three major aveiros of avodo zoro, etc. We can't relate to the yetzer horo of avodo zoro today because before the building of the second Beis HaMikdosh, the Anshei Knesses HaGedolah davened to remove this yetzer. Why? They didn't want to have to deal with the same yetzer horo and fail again and lose the second Beis HaMikdosh to the same problem. But somehow this yearning for avodo zoro was associated with a certain sensitivity to ruchniyus. When this yearning

was removed, the sensitivity to ruchniyus was also removed and it became much harder to feel Hashem's presence as intensely as before. In the second Beis HaMikdosh there was no nevuoh, no Urim v'Tumim, no ruach hakodesh. So they davened that all the secrets of Torah Shebaal Peh be revealed to them – as a way to compensate for that lost connection to ruchniyus, and to be able to connect to Hashem intensely through limud haTorah.

Until then, the limud of Torah Shebaal Peh was limited to an elite few. To counter the loss of connection that the masses experienced, they needed to be given access to these secrets, and a new era of mass limud haTorah began. From Bayis Sheni and onward, this is what replaced the intensity of the Shechinoh that used to be brought by the avodas HaMikdosh. This is how we bring Hashem into our lives today. We live in an insane, crazy world and we need the Torah to teach us how to bring Hashem into our lives and how to look at everything in the world through the Torah's viewpoint.

This is why the first keli is the Aron – it is made of gold, with a golden crown. You are filled with Torah inside and out, and like a crown, you reflect Torah to the world.

The Kosel is a mokom tefilloh. It is not to be a place for social gathering and it is not a national symbol. I don't go to the Kosel during the normal times that are popular for tourists to visit. I sit there and contemplate what has taken place from the beginning of human history on the other side of that wall. Odom HoRishon was created from the earth that was on the other side of that wall, and he brought a korbon there. Avrohom and Yitzchok performed the Akeidoh on that same place. And I am here today because of what they did on that spot just a few dozen meters away. Dovid and Shlomo Hamelech built a Beis HaMikdosh here and on the other side of that wall is where the avodoh of the Kohen Godol on Yom Kippur took place. I can think about all these things at the Kosel because I spend the rest of my time immersed in Torah. This is what naturally comes up in my mind when I see the Kosel. Through that connection, I can daven a different davening. It is an opportunity to connect to Hashem on an entirely different plane.

As the posuk alludes to, the Mikdosh is a vehicle for Hashem to become more present in the everyday lives of each and every member of Klal Yisroel.