

Parashat Terumah / פרשת תרומה

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The Image of the Mishkhan

This Weeks Reading List:

Torah: Exodus 25:1-27:19

Haftarah: 1 Kings 5:26-6:13

B'rit HaChadashah: Matthew 5:33-37 2 Corinthians 9:1-15

In this week's parsha, Parashat Terumah, we find a detailed description of the construction of the aron (ark), and the Mishkhan (tabernacle or sanctuary). The Mishkhan is designed to provide a place for man to draw near to G-d and also is the location where the aron (ark) is located which contains the luchot (tablets), the symbol of the covenant at Har Sinai (mountain of Sinai). HaShem commands Moshe to meticulously build the Mishkhan according to the pattern that was shown to him. I believe this is very significant. The significance of the detailed construction plan for the Mishkhan is because the Mishkhan is a symbol of HaShem's Shekhina (the divine presence) dwelling with Bnei Yisrael.

The Mishkhan is a prelude to what HaShem has ultimately planned, that is establishing a permanent place for his presence, called the Mikdash (מקדש, Temple). Now remember, the Mishkhan (tabernacle) is a temporary sanctuary, a portable tent like structure which is good for travel. The Mikdash is a permanent place (a temple) such as that what was built by King Solomon in Jerusalem. We first encountered the theme of the Mikdash when Avraham built the mizbayach (מזבח, altar) in Beit-El (Bethel) and calls out in HaShem's name (reference *Genesis 12:8* and *13:4*).

בראשית 12:8

שם מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה הִנְרָאָה אֵלָיו: וַיַּעֲתֵק מִשָּׁם הַחֵרֶה מִקְדָּם
לְבֵית־אֵל וַיֵּט אֹהֶלָה בֵּית־אֵל מִיָּם וְהָעִי מִקְדָּם וַיִּבֶן־שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ
לַיהוָה וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה: וַיֵּסַע אַבְרָם הַלּוֹךְ וְנֹסֵעַ הַנִּגְבָּה:

בראשית 13:4

בְּתַחֲלָה בֵּין בֵּית־אֵל וּבֵין הָעִי: אֶל־מְקוֹם הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה
שָׁם בְּרֵאשִׁיטָה וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם אַבְרָם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה: וְגַם־לָלוּט הַהַלְדִּי

We also see this when Yaakov erects a monument and vows upon his return to Canaan he will establish the site of this matzeyva (monument) as a Beit Elokim, a House of G-d (reference *Genesis 28:17-22*). We see that HaShem is ultimately planning for a place for where His presence may dwell with mankind and is beginning with the construction of the Mishkan. The theme of a tabernacle where G-d is preparing a place for us to draw near to him is found throughout the Tanach, and in fact follows even into the B'rit HaChadashah. In the B'rit

HaChadashah we find HaShem finally making his tabernacle in our hearts. Note how the Mishkhan (tabernacle) contains the aron (ark) which contains the sign of the covenant, the Torah. I believe this is an image of Adonai seeking to place his Torah in our hearts. For this reason our hearts are very important to G-d. The B-rit HaChadashah reading for this week is found in Matthew chapter 5 where we find Yeshua speaking about making an oath, I believe He is referring to our hearts.

Matthew 5:33-37

5:33 Again, you have heard that our fathers were told, 'Do not break your oath,' and 'Keep your vows to ADONAI.' 5:34 But I tell you not to swear at all -- not 'by heaven,' because it is God's throne; 5:35 not 'by the earth,' because it is his footstool; and not 'by Yerushalayim,' because it is the city of the Great King. 5:36 And don't swear by your head, because you can't make a single hair white or black. 5:37 Just let your 'Yes' be a simple 'Yes,' and your 'No' a simple 'No'; anything more than this has its origin in evil. (CJB)

Here Yeshua is telling us to not break your oath and keep your vows to Adonai. The difference between a vow and an oath is hazy, not only to us but also within Judaism. And I don't know about you, but have you ever noticed that this issue doesn't appear to be very significant today? Have you ever said "I swear" or heard someone else make short statements like that in a rash or nonchalant manner? I don't believe Yeshua was telling us that we should not swear or take an oath, but that we should be careful of vain oaths. When Yeshua made these statements I don't believe he was teaching something new, because we can find some parallel's in Judaism. For example, in the apocrypha, *Sirach 23:9 "Do not accustom your mouth to swearing oaths, and do not habitually use the name of the Holy One."* Philo of Alexandria recommended avoiding oaths entirely in his Decalogue 84. The Talmud also has a parallel to verse 37 saying "Let your 'no' and 'yes' both be righteous (reference *Bava Metzia 49a*). I believe the point Yeshua was making was the reasons behind our making a vow or oath; i.e. our hearts condition. We find further evidence towards this fact that Yeshua was not forbidding us from making a vow in the book of Acts. In the book of Acts Shaul (the apostle Paul) took the vow of a Nazirite.

Acts 21:23-24

21:23 So do what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow. 21:24 Take them with you, be purified with them, and pay the expenses connected with having their heads shaved. Then everyone will know that there is nothing to these rumors which they have heard about you; but that, on the contrary, you yourself stay in line and keep the Torah. (CJB)

The vow of a Nazirite is a voluntary vow, described in the Mishnah Nazir, are generally one to three months in length. The basic elements consist of (i) not touching anything dead, (ii) refraining from any product of the grapevine and (iii) not cutting one's hair (reference Numbers 6:1-21). Then, at the end of the vow, the Nazirite had to cut his hair and burn it on the altar along with certain prescribed sacrifices. The exact details of the vow however are uncertain but the Torah lists the main requirements.

Numbers 6:13-15

6:13 "This is the law for the nazir when his period of consecration is over: he is to be brought to the entrance of the tent of meeting, 6:14 where he will present his offering to ADONAI - one male lamb in its first year without defect as a burnt offering, one female lamb in its first year without defect as a sin offering, one ram without defect as peace offerings, 6:15 a basket of matzah, loaves made of fine flour mixed with olive oil, unleavened wafers spread with olive oil, their grain offering and their drink offerings. (CJB)

In *Acts 21:23-24*, it appears the four men were poor; Shaul was asked that the sacrifice was paid for along with the temple gifts. In this portion of scripture, Shaul (the apostle Paul) needed to do more than simply pay for the expenses of these men, he also had to be accepted by the cohanim (priests) and be ritually purified. This process requires seven days to perform. (*Acts 21:27 The seven days were almost up when some unbelieving Jews from the province of Asia saw him in the Temple, stirred up all the crowd and grabbed him. (CJB)*) The purpose of this was because some people claimed that Shaul taught against the Torah, and himself did not keep Torah.

Acts 21:21

21:21 Now what they have been told about you is that you are teaching all the Jews living among the Goyim to apostatize from Moshe, telling them not to have a b'rit-milah for their sons and not to follow the traditions. (CJB)

Yaakov (James) knew that sending Shaul to Jerusalem would make it perfectly clear the zealous believers would see that there is nothing to the rumours (gossip, reports, stories, whispers) they have heard. On the contrary, the authority of Yaakov stands behind the assertion that Shaul was Torah observant even after having faith in Yeshua. In fact, this confirms the ruling (din or halakhic decision) found in *Acts 15:19-20* and *15:28-29* which reassures the gentiles that this situation with the messianic Jews does not affect the determination that gentiles can become believers without conversion to become Jews. Let's summarize the five lies that were told about Shaul

Five Lies told about Shaul

1. Teaching against the people
2. Teaching against the Torah
3. Teaching against the place
4. Brought some Goyim into the Temple
5. Defiling the Holy Place

The accusations were designed to stir up feelings against him. Bringing a gentile into the Temple's inner court would ceremonially defile it. These things come back to the issue of the heart. The heart is a symbol of the source of our thoughts and emotions. In the importance of our thought life and its relation with our walk with HaShem is the reason Yeshua was so adamant about saying let our yes be yes and our no, no.

Throughout the Bible, we find G-d calling to us, and drawing us to a right relationship with Him. The creation of the Mishkhan (Tabernacle), which contained the Torah, and then the construction of the Mikdash (Temple) are images of HaShem's ultimate plan to make our bodies the place where His presence will ultimately dwell.

Romans 8:9-11

8:9 But you, you do not identify with your old nature but with the Spirit - provided the Spirit of God is living inside you, for anyone who doesn't have the Spirit of the Messiah doesn't belong to him. 8:10 However, if the Messiah is in you, then, on the one hand, the body is dead because of sin; but, on the other hand, the Spirit is giving life because God considers you righteous. 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Yeshua from the dead is living in you, then the One who raised the Messiah Yeshua from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you. (CJB)

I believe there is a direct correlation of our thought life and the cycle of sin we fall into. The soul and body are very tightly knit together through the concept of our thought life. (*Prov23:7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee. (KJV)*). Similarly the Torah and the Mishkhan/Midkash are tightly knit together because there cannot be one without the other. And finally when HaShem said that he will write His Torah on our hearts, how else could he do that but by His Spirit?

Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
"Yeshua" King Messiah forever and ever