YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**Sichot of the Roshei Yeshiva**

**Parashat TERUMA**

**Sicha of HarAV Baruch Gigi[[1]](#footnote-1)\***

**Man Builds the World**

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### The *Mishkan* - the resting place of the *Shekhina*

The *parashiyot* dealing with the *Mishkan* open with God's declaration:

And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, the pattern of the *Mishkan*, and the pattern of all the furniture thereof, even so shall you make it. (*Shemot* 25:8-9)

These verses present the purpose and objective of the *Mishkan*: the resting of the *Shekhina* among the people of Israel.

At the end of the book of *Shemot*, we read about the realization of this goal:

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the *Mishkan*. And Moshe was not able to enter into the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the *Mishkan*. (*Shemot* 40:34-35)

The book of *Vayikra* opens on the same note:

And the Lord called to Moshe and spoke to him out of the tent of meeting, saying: Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: When any man of you brings an offering to the Lord, you shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd or of the flock. (*Vayikra* 1:1-2)

God calls to Moshe from the *Mishkan*, from the cloud on the tent of meeting. It is logical and natural that the site of the sacrificial service will be the site of the *Shekhina*. The resting of the *Shekhina* is expressed through those offerings, as in many other *mitzvot* described in the book of *Vayikra*. In fact, the entire book of *Vayikra*, with the exception of the last two *parashiyot*, deals with the *mitzvot* that were given to Moshe in the *Mishkan*.

We find another verse that reflects this point after the giving of the Torah:

An altar of earth you shall make to Me, and you shall sacrifice thereon your burnt-offerings, and your peace-offerings, your sheep, and your oxen; in every place where I cause My name to be mentioned I will come to you and bless you. And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stones; for if you lift up your tool upon it, you have profaned it. (*Shemot* 20:20-21)

God's blessing in every place where His name is mentioned is found next to the command to erect an altar of stone. The sacrifices are a way to “mention God's name” in the world. Indeed, the Ramban (ad loc.) comments:

And by the way of truth, the verses are in order: You yourselves have seen that I have talked with you from heaven with My great name. You shall not make with Me gods of silver or gods of gold. But I permit you to make an altar for Me alone and to offer burnt offerings and peace offerings in every place where I will cause My name to be mentioned. For I will come to you and bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that couches beneath.

### The *Mishkan –* the place where sacrifices are offered

In contrast, the Rambam in *Hilkhot Beit Ha-Bechira* describes the Temple as follows:

It is a positive commandment to construct a house for God, prepared for sacrifices to be offered within. We [must] celebrate there three times a year, as it is stated: "And you shall make Me a sanctuary" (*Shemot* 25:8). The sanctuary constructed by Moshe is already described in the Torah. It was only temporary, as it is stated: "For at present, you have not come to [the resting place and the inheritance]" (*Devarim* 12:9). (Rambam, *Hilkhot Beit Ha-Bechira* 1:1)

In contrast to the Ramban and the plain sense of the verses that we saw above, which indicates that the role of the sacrifices is to express the resting of the *Shekhina* among Israel, here the focus is on the sacrifices themselves – not sacrifices as expressing the *Shekhina*, but rather offerings as an independent objective, for the realization of which the *Mikdash* must be built.

Was the Rambam not familiar with the verses cited above?! Did he not pay attention to the fact that the explicit verse at the beginning of our *parasha* describes the purpose of the *Mishkan* as resting the *Shekhina* among Israel? Indeed, this is also explicitly stated at the end of *Parashat Tetzave*:

And there I will meet with the children of Israel; and [the tent] shall be sanctified by My glory. And I will sanctify the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his sons will I sanctify, to minister to Me in the priest's office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I am the Lord their God. (*Shemot* 29:43-46)

The wording of these verses is explicit! The purpose of the *Mishkan* is to serve as a place for God to meet with the people of Israel and to rest His name in the world. How, then, can it be argued that the purpose of the *Mishkan* is the sacrificial service?

### The Difference Between the *Mishkan* and the *Mikdash*

 In order to answer this question, let us pay attention to an important point in the words of the Rambam. When he cites the verse from our *parasha*, the Rambam cites only the first part of the verse "And you shall make Me a sanctuary," whereas the concluding words, "that I may dwell among them," are not mentioned.

It appears that the Rambam distinguishes between the *Mishkan* and the *Mikdash*. The *Mishkan* was indeed intended to be a place where God comes and in which He rests His name and glory. According to the Rambam, all of the verses cited above refer exclusively to the *Mishkan.* There, and only there, does God rest His name, and the sacrifices express this, alongside the additional goals of the sacrificial service that relate to the person bringing the offerings.

The Rambam apparently distinguishes between the *Mishkan* in the wilderness and the *Mikdash*. All that we said above was correct regarding the wilderness. In the wilderness, the people were supplied by God with their manna and water, and "your clothing did not wax old upon you." However, when they reached *Eretz* *Yisrael*, the people themselves became responsible for these matters.

In contrast, the *Mikdash* is a different phenomenon. The significant difference between the *Mikdash* and the *Mishkan* stems, of course, from Israel's entry into the Promised Land. The entry into the land finds clearest expression in the transition from miraculous governance to natural governance, from the situation in which God acts in place of man to the situation in which man acts on his own behalf, plowing and sowing his field and then harvesting his crop.

### *Even ha-shetiya* ("The Foundation Stone")and the burnt-offering altar

There is a fundamental disagreement between the Ramban and the Rambam about how to view the *Mikdash*, and this disagreement is further reflected in their understanding of what is the center of the *Mikdash*. The Ramban, in the introduction to his commentary on the Torah, elaborates about the *even ha-shetiya*, "the foundation stone":

"Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shone forth" (*Tehillim* 50:2). Out of Zion, the entire world was perfected. How so? Why is it called *even ha-shetiya*? Because from it the world was founded.

The *even ha-shetiya* is located under the ark of the covenant. The ark of the covenant – the site of the *Shekhina*, the place from where the word of God reaches Moshe. This is the stone from which God began to create His world.

In contrast to the Ramban, the Rambam makes no mention of the *even ha-shetiya* in his description of the *Mikdash* anywhere in the *Mishneh Torah*.[[2]](#footnote-2) According to him, the center of the Temple is the burnt-offering altar, the site of the sacrificial service, as well as the geographical center of the Temple in its entirety.

This disagreement relates also to the count of the 613 *mitzvot.* According to the Rambam, the mitzvato build the *Mikdash* and the mitzvato build the altar are two separate *mitzvot*. In contrast, the Ramban combines those two *mitzvot*, but distinguishes between the mitzvato build the *Mikdash* and the mitzvato build the ark. According to him, these are two separate *mitzvot*.[[3]](#footnote-3)

### Taking responsibility for the world

This disagreement is not a localized dispute regarding the *Mishkan* and *Mikdash.* Rather, it is a broad dispute regarding the place of man in God's world. The Rambam understands the *mitzvot* as the actions of man, who changes the world. In his opinion, when God gave Israel the commandments, He gave them the power to influence and change things in various different realms.

In similar fashion, the Rambam and the Ramban disagree about the sanctification of the month. According to the Rambam, it is the court that actually sanctifies the month; they determine and establish when the New Moon will be observed, and God, as it were, sits back and listens to them, lending His agreement to what they have decided. In contrast, the Ramban maintains that the court merely clarifies the time of the sanctification of the month, which was determined in Heaven.

Attention should be paid to the words of the Rambam: “**God gave the world to man so that he should develop it.**”Thus, He gave him also the tools and the guidance to do so. Therefore, even today, when there is no court, the Rambam maintains that it is the people of Israel living in the Land of Israel that sanctify the month.

 Let us consider another example of this conceptual disagreement, which concerns the mitzva of appearing in the *Mikdash* courtyard on the Festivals. The Ramban maintains that this mitzva and the mitzva to bring the offerings relating to the day are separate *mitzvot*. In contrast, the Rambam maintains that the mitzvais to appear in the *Mikdash* courtyard accompanied by offerings:

The Torah's charge to appear before God mandates that one should appear in the Temple courtyard on the first day of a festival and bring with him a burnt-offering… (Rambam, *Hilkhot Chagiga* 1:1)

The words of the Rambam teach us about the great influence that man has on the world – the world of man and the world of God.

Alongside the great influence, a heavy responsibility that lies on our shoulders. Causing God's name to rest in the world, no less than the establishment of the calendar, depend upon us. We must realize this power that God planted within us in the optimal manner.

1. \* This *sicha* was delivered on *Erev Shabbat* *Parashat Teruma* 5773. It was not reviewed by Ha-Rav Gigi. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. It appears in *Hilkhot Avodat Ha-Kohen Ha-Gadol Be-Yom Ha-Kippurim* in an entirely technical context. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See *Sefer Ha-Mitzvot*, positive commandment 20; *Hilkhot Beit Ha-Bechira*, chapters 1-2; and *Hasagot Ha-Ramban*, *mitzva* 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)