YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**Student summaries of *Sichot* of the Roshei Yeshiva**

**Parashat Tetzaveh**

***Sicha* of HarAV Yaakov Medan**

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Dedicated by Mr. and Mrs. Leon Brum for the *Refua Sheleima* of

Dana Petrover (Batsheva bat Gittel Aidel Leba)

and Marvin Rosenberg (Meir Chaim ben Tzipporah Miriam)

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In memory of six friends and family,
strong pillars of the Montreal Jewish community,
who have left us in the past seven years.
All were אוהבי עם ישראל, אוהבי ארץ ישראל, אוהבי תורת ישראל.

Joseph (Yosie) Deitcher

Avrum (Avy) Drazin

Rabbi Joseph Drazin

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**The Meaning of Holiness and the Shekhina**

Adapted by Itai Weiss

Translated by David Strauss

Every year that is not a leap year, I am distressed by the fact that, owing to our preoccupation with *Parashat Zakhor*, we tend to overlook an exceedingly important passage:

It shall be a continual burnt-offering (*olat tamid*) throughout your generations at the door of the tent of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet with you, to speak there to you. 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; Aharon also and his sons will I sanctify, to minister to Me. And I will dwell (*veshakhanti*) among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell (*le-shokhni*) among them. I am the Lord their God. (*Shemot* 29:42-46)

In this paragraph, we learn of another goal of the Exodus from Egypt, a goal that for the most part receives less attention. The two goals with which we are all familiar are entering into a covenant with God at Sinai and entering Eretz Israel. The third goal, which appears in our passage, is the resting of the *Shekhina*, God’s Presence, among the Jewish people.

We will address four important points regarding this matter:

**I**

The first point is that bringing a sacrifice is a means and not a goal.

The purpose of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle, literally “dwelling”) is to make God present in man’s life, to allow Him to rest His *Shekhina* — *“veshakhanti.”* In the *Mishkan*, there is great preoccupation with the sacrificial offerings, but the purpose of the sacrifices is to serve as a means for the resting of God's *Shekhina*; they are not an end in themselves. This is also what follows from innumerable places in the words of the Prophets.

**II**

The second point is a solution to the seeming contradiction in the verses dealing with the holiness of the priests.

On the one hand, it is Moshe who sanctifies the priests:

And this is the thing that you shall do to them to sanctify them, to minister to Me. (*Shemot* 29:1)

On the other hand, it is God who sanctifies the priests:

And I will sanctify the tent of meeting, and the altar; Aharon also and his sons will I sanctify, to minister to Me. (*Shemot* 29:44)

For the solution to this contradiction, let us first stipulate that there are two types of holiness. One is, as explained by Rashi (*Vayikra* 19:2): "'You shall be holy' — you shall set yourselves apart from lusts and from sin." This is holiness that a person creates when one designates something for God. The second is holiness by emanation; in this case, God is the initiator.

It would appear that the verses mentioned above describe these two types of holiness: In the first stage, Moshe sanctifies the priests, setting them apart from the rest of the people and purifying them, thereby allowing them to "Turn from evil," in the words of *Tehillim* 34:15. In the second stage, “And do good” (ibid.), God sanctifies the priests, allowing positive holiness, sanctity that has content, to rest upon them.

**III**

The third point is the relationship between the *Mikdash* (Temple) and the *Mishkan*, on the assumption that there is a certain similarity between them, as stated in the Gemara:

We find that the *Mishkan* is called *mikdash*, and the *Mikdash* is called *mishkan*. (*Eiruvin* 2a).

The focus of the *Mishkan* lies in God's speaking to Moshe:

It shall be a continual burnt-offering throughout your generations at the door of the tent of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet with you, to speak there to you. (*Shemot* 29:42)

The *Mishkan* relays to the Israelites God's command, so that the Jewish people know what God wants from them. That is to say, the goal is to know the word of God, the Torah.

On the other hand, in Shelomo's prayer, the goal of the *Mikdash* appears to be different:

But will God in very truth dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house that I have built!

Yet have You respect to the prayer of Your servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken to the cry and to the prayer which Your servant prays before You this day; that Your eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place whereof You have said: My name shall be there; to hearken to the prayer which Your servant shall pray toward this place.

And hearken You to the supplication of Your servant, and of Your people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place; yea, hear You in heaven Your residence; and when You hear, forgive. (I *Melakhim* 8:27-30)

The purpose of the Temple is, as it appears here, that God should know what man wants, as it were; the focus is prayer.

These two elements, Torah and prayer, God's turning to man and man’s turning to Him, lie at the core of the *Mishkan* and the *Mikdash* — the very idea of God's presence among Israel.

**IV**

The fourth point relates to the *Shekhina* itself.

First of all, what is the *Shekhina* that rests on earth; and second, as strange as this question may sound, why is it important?

Of course, the answer to the second question is that the very manifestation of the *Shekhina* is important in itself.

To answer the first question, let's return to the verses:

And I will set My *mishkan* among you, and My soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk (*vehithalakhti*) among you, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. (*Vayikra* 26:11-12)

Admittedly, no one has the authority to propose a *gezeira shava* independently, but if it were up to me, I would suggest a *gezeira shava* from hereto the following verse, as in both cases, God is referred to as “walking” in the reflexive case:

And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking (*mithalekh*) in the garden toward the cool of the day. (*Bereishit* 3:8)

The meaning of the presence of the *Shekhina* is that the declaration "I have set the Lord continually before me" (*Tehillim* 16:8) is not merely the goal of sublime spiritual service, nor the portion of just the especially pious, but a tangible, everyday and realistic feeling: God walks among us, and there is "fullness" in the reality of our lives that stems from Him.

***Shekhina* and Purim**

*Chazal* (*Megilla* 14a) offer three answers as to why the psalms of *Hallel* are not recited on Purim: "The reading of the *Megilla* is equivalent to *Hallel*," that is to say, the *Megilla* itself is the *Hallel* that is recited on Purim; *Hallel* is not recited for miracles performed outside the Land of Israel; and lastly: "We are still servants of Achashverosh." I would have proposed a fourth answer: *Hallel* cannot be recited over a scroll in which the name of God is not mentioned.

People like to expound upon the fact that God's name does not appear in the *Megilla* and to conclude from this that God is present and conducts the process even when this does not seem to be the case; but I do not connect to this idea. I see the vision of "And I will walk among you" and understand how profoundly this is missing for us. This is the meaning of:

And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I am the Lord their God. (*Shemot* 29:46)

[This *sicha* was delivered on *Shabbat Parashat Tetzaveh* (*Zakhor*)5778 (2018).]