



ישיבת הר עציון

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Selected and Adapted by Rabbi Dov Karoll

Quote from the Rosh Yeshiva

It is not only in the construction of the Mishkan that we find tension between obligation and submission, on the one hand, and innovation and breakthrough, on the other. This dual trend also appears in the very building of the world, which was given to man to develop and perfect – “which God created, to do” (Bereishit 2:3). On the one hand, man is expected to act in the world and advance it technologically, scientifically, and morally; on the other hand, man must always remember his boundaries and the submission expected of him – that the castle has a leader.

This, in my opinion, is the essence of the mitzva of Shabbat, which demands of man that he desist from the creative endeavors in which he is engaged during the rest of the week, in order to deepen his consciousness of submission and living before God, the master of the world.... -Harav Baruch Gigi, taken from: <https://etzion.org.il/en/node/42162>

Parashat Pekudei Of Parts and Pieces: The Instructions and Assembly of the Mishkan

By Rav Chanoch Waxman



Based on: <https://etzion.org.il/en/tanakh/torah/sefer-shemot/parashat-pekudei/pekudei-parts-and-pieces>

I.

Sefer Shemot closes with the assembly of the Mishkan. After God commands Moshe to set up the Mishkan and instructs him regarding the order of its assembly (40:1-16), the Torah reports that Moshe accomplished the divine command (40:17):

And it was in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, the Mishkan was erected.

In apparent emphasis of Moshe's faithful accomplishment of God's instructions, the Torah details Moshe's carrying out of God's instructions. Following the verse above, it presents 8 mini-parashiyot, each detailing the assembly by Moshe of some part of the Mishkan mentioned in the original instructions section (40:1-16) and each bracketed by Masoretic text breaks known as “stumot” (40:17-33). Each of the first 7 sections ends with the refrain, “just as God had commanded Moshe,” and the eighth ends by asserting that, “Moshe finished the work” (40:33). The point cannot be missed. Moshe, ever the faithful servant, has fulfilled God's word to a T.

At this point, after the “instructions” and “accomplishment” sections of the narrative, we arrive at what might be thought of as the third stage in the process of assembling the Mishkan: the divine aspect, the descent of God's presence onto the Mishkan (40:34-38):

Then a cloud covered the Mishkan and the glory of the Lord filled the Mishkan. And Moshe was not able to enter the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud rested upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Mishkan. And when the cloud rose from upon the Mishkan, the Children of Israel went onward in their journeys: but if the cloud did not rise, they did not set out until the day it rose. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the Mishkan by day, and fire by night, in the view of all the house of Israel throughout their journeys.

As Rashbam points out (40:35), God descends to inaugurate and sanctify the newly built Mishkan with His very presence.

If so, we might think of the final chapter of Sefer Shemot, the story of the assembly of the Mishkan, as possessing a simple linear structure. This can be mapped as follows: Section 1 (40:1-16) – the instructions; Section 2 (40:17-33) – the accomplishment; Section 3 (40:34-38) – the public descent of the divine presence and divine sanctification of the newly completed Mishkan.

However, things are not as simple as they appear.

II.

The “command-execution” relationship outlined above – “instructions” (1-16) and “accomplishment” (17-33) – leads to a simple expectation. Everything that appears in the “instructions” should be fulfilled in the “accomplishment.” This expectation gains strength from some phrases and literary devices utilized in the “accomplishment” section, such as the reference to Moshe “finishing the work” (v. 33) and the 7-fold refrain of “just as God had commanded him.”

Moreover, the 8 mini-parashiyot, each describing the assembly of a particular vessel or structure in the Mishkan, parallel in number, content and order the 8 verses that command the assembly of the vessels and structures of the Mishkan (40:1-8). Finally, the overall “instructions” section closes with a forward-looking verse that serves as a transition to the upcoming “accomplishment” section (40:16): “And Moshe did in accord with ALL that the Lord had commanded him, so he did.”

This brings us to the nub of the matter. The “instructions” section contains 7 verses (9-15) with no parallel in the “accomplishment” section. Checking the text yields the following. After God commands Moshe about assembling the structure & vessels of the Mishkan (1-8), He commands him to anoint the various parts of the Mishkan & thereby sanctify them (9-11). God then commands Moshe to prepare the priests, including bringing them to the door of the tent of meeting, washing them, dressing them & anointing them for divine service (12-15). None of this is mentioned in the “accomplishment” section! The following chart should illustrate the problem:

Moshe's Task	Instructions	Accomplishment
Assembly of structure and vessels	40:1-8	40:17-33
Anointing and Sanctification	40:9-11	?
Preparation, anointing and sanctification of priests	40:12-15	?

While the physical arranging of the Mishkan is addressed at length, the procedures necessary for its operation are omitted. This leads to the following dilemma. If Moshe did not carry out the commands of sanctification and priest-preparation at this point, why does the Torah emphasize that Moshe did “according to all that God commanded him” (v. 16)? Alternatively, if he did carry out the sanctification and priest preparation at this point, why does the Torah omit them from the “accomplishment” narrative of chapter 40?

The mystery of the missing sanctification and priest-preparation accomplishment sections should help us uncover another problem with the structure and story line of chapter 40. Let us look at the first time that the Torah mentions priest preparation and arrangements for the daily functioning of the Mishkan.

Back in Parashat Tetzaveh the Torah detailed the process of “miluim,” the ordaining or consecration of Aharon & his sons. Aside from sacrifices over a 7-day period, the process of sanctification also involves Moshe preparing Aharon & his sons in a particular way (see 29:1). God commands Moshe to bring them to the door of the tent of meeting, wash them, dress them & anoint them (29:4-9). In other words, here are the instructions repeated in chapter 40 & omitted from the “accomplishment” section at the end of the book.

The instructions in chapter 29 – regarding the “miluim” process, of priest-preparation, sanctification & transition to daily operation of the Mishkan – end with the orders for daily sacrifices at the door of the Tent of Meeting & the following proclamation:

This shall be a regular burnt offering throughout the generations, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting before the Lord... And there I will meet with the Children of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by My glory. And I will sanctify the Tent of Meeting, and the altar, and Aharon and his sons I will sanctify to serve Me. And I will dwell among the Israelites and I will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of Egypt, that I may dwell among them... (29:42-46)

Apparently, the presence of God in His house, the “dwelling of the glory of God” in the Tent of Meeting, depends upon the daily functioning of the Mishkan. As a consequence of priestly activity and sacrifices, God’s “glory” appears at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, sanctifies the tent, “meets” with the Children of Israel and dwells amongst them. This is the message of chapter 29.

Indeed, chapters 8 and 9 of Sefer Vayikra, which recount the accomplishment of “Parashat ha-miluim,” confirm this point. Chapter 8 details the bringing of Aharon and his sons to the Tent of Meeting and the other details of priest-preparation and sanctuary sanctification (see 8:1-13). In completing the story, chapter 9 concludes with the appearance of the “glory of God” in front of all the people at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and God’s fiery consumption of a sacrifice (9:23-24).

All of this should lead us to question our assumptions about the end of Sefer Shemot. Previously, it seemed obvious that Section 3 of chapter 40, the glory of God filling the newly erected Mishkan (40:34-38), constituted the natural consequence & culmination of setting up the Mishkan. God’s purpose in commanding the building of the Mishkan was to dwell amongst the Israelites (see 25:8). Alternatively, the event comprised an act of divine sanctification of the newly constructed sanctuary (Rashbam). However, now all this

seems difficult. The meeting between God & Israel at the Tent of Meeting should take place at its entrance. The resting of His glory upon the Mishkan, His revelation to the Children of Israel & His sanctification of the Mishkan should take place in the context of priests & the transition to the Mishkan's daily functioning – the details omitted from the “accomplishment” section of chapter 40.

In other words, what is the purpose of the public divine revelation at the end of Sefer Shemot? If it does not fulfill the expectations of “Parashat miluim” and the transition from preparation to operation, what is it about? If the theophany does not sanctify and inaugurate the Tent of Meeting, what is the purpose of this unusual public revelation?

III.

The solution to our dual problem, of the missing priest-preparation and sanctification “accomplishment” sections, and of the nature of the divine revelation that closes Sefer Shemot, may lie in a close analysis of the literary structure of the 3rd section of chapter 40. Previously, we defined this section as the public descent of the divine presence, and divine sanctification of the newly completed Mishkan. The second half of this definition clearly needs some work. Let us return to the text (see 40:34-38, cited above, p. 1).

As argued above, no mention is made of divine sanctification of the Mishkan. Moreover, in place of this “expected” sentence, we are informed of the strange fact that Moshe could not enter the tent, an altogether unexpected situation (40:35).

To add to the perplexity, the Torah terminates its discussion of the Moshe, Mishkan and cloud situation on the day that the Mishkan was set up. In a radical shift of place, time and theme, the Torah digresses to another Mishkan-cloud context. It elaborates on the travel arrangements of the Children of Israel during their wanderings in the desert. God signaled them to journey onwards by raising the cloud, which appeared to the eyes of Israel by day as cloud and by night as fire (40:36-38).

Realizing that these last 3 closing verses of Sefer Shemot are more appropriate for the story of “travel arrangements,” the story of Bamidbar 9:15-23 that prefaces the Israelites' first journey from Sinai, should highlight this point. Bamidbar teaches the following:

And on the day the Mishkan was erected, the cloud covered the Mishkan, the Tent of the Testimony, and at evening there was upon the Mishkan the appearance of fire, until the morning. So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. And when the cloud rose from upon the Mishkan, then the Children of Israel journeyed, and in the place where the cloud dwelled (yishkon he-anan), there the children of Israel encamped. (9:15-17)

Just as at the end of Shemot a cloud covered the Mishkan on the day it was erected (40:17, 34), so too according to Bamidbar 9:15, a cloud covered the Mishkan on the day it was erected. However, in Bamidbar, a story concerned with traveling, the ensuing discussion of the cloud and fire seen by the Israelites and the rising cloud signal constitutes a natural continuation of the reference to the cloud of the first day. By contrast, in Shemot, the cloud, fire and signal passages seem a bizarre digression, an inexplicable foreshadowing of a passage and journey that will not take place until deep into Sefer Bamidbar.

Finally, the beginning of Vayikra complements the argument above. Sefer Vayikra opens with God calling Moshe (1:1): “And the Lord called to Moshe, & spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting.” As many commentaries observe (see Ibn Ezra & Seforno 1:1), God's unusual act of summoning Moshe picks up on Moshe having been prevented from entering the Tent of Meeting at the end of Shemot (40:35), and thus God summons Moshe & invites him in (Ibn Ezra). If so, the last 3 verses of Sefer Shemot, the story of the cloud signal & vision of cloud and fire, are not just a shift in time & space, foreshadowing later events, but a parenthetical comment, a deliberate disruption in the flow of the text. What are we to make of this? Is the Torah attempting a literary flourish, a high note on which to finish the book?

In fact, this deliberate digression creates an intricate parallel between the end of Sefer Shemot and an earlier part of the book. Let us consider another end in Sefer Shemot, the last verses in the story of Sinai (24:15-18):

And Moshe went up onto the mountain and the cloud covered the mountain. And the glory of the Lord dwelled upon Mount Sinai and the cloud covered it for 6 days: on the 7th day He called to Moshe from the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain before the eyes of the Children of Israel. And Moshe went up onto the mountain, and Moshe was on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights.

This last Sinai scene, Moshe's ascent to receive “the tablets of stone, the Torah and commandments” (24:12), may be thought of as consisting of the following 5 elements: 1) Moshe acts alone (see 24:12-15). 2) God's glory embodied in a cloud covers the mountain and dwells upon it. 3) Moshe is held back. He cannot enter and must await the divine summons. 4) God calls Moshe and Moshe enters to be with God. 5) The Children of Israel witness Sinai enveloped in cloud and fire.

The point should be relatively clear. These are the 5 elements present in our story, the seam between Sefer Shemot and Sefer Vayikra. Just as Moshe acted alone at Sinai, so too he assembles the Mishkan, seemingly unaided (see 40:17, 33). Just as the cloud of

God's glory covered and dwelled upon the mountain, so too the cloud of God's glory covered and dwelled in the Mishkan (40:34-35). Just as Moshe was held back at Sinai, and only entered when called by God, so too here he cannot enter the area of God's glory until summoned by God (40:38, Vayikra 1:1). Finally, by virtue of the "digression" foreshadowing their travels, the Children of Israel are depicted as seeing the Mishkan enveloped in cloud and fire, just as at Sinai.

All our questions about the structure and story line of the 3rd section of chapter 40 should be answered. Moshe's inability to enter the Mishkan should no longer surprise us and the shift of the last 3 verses should no longer shock us. The Torah arranges the events and verses to remind us of Sinai. The Sefer ends not with a mere literary flourish, but with a reminder of Sinai, a deliberate echoing of Moshe's ascent to receive the stone tablets, Torah and commandments.

IV.

To close the circle, let us return to the questions raised earlier: the problem of the missing priest-preparation and sanctification "accomplishment" sections, and the problem of the nature of the divine revelation that seals Sefer Shemot.

Hopefully, our analysis has uncovered that the "dwelling" of the divine presence in the Tent of Meeting is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon. On the one hand, it is a means of immanent connection to God. By the service of the priests, the sacrifices, the consumption of the sacrifices by signs of the divine presence, and the overall structure of the House of God, the Mishkan provides an almost material meeting between God & Israel. However, this is just 1 aspect. The "dwelling" of God's glory and presence in, or above, the Mishkan, also constitutes a recreation of the experience at Sinai. As God "descended" to teach Torah and contract a covenant with Israel at Sinai, so too He "descends" to continue the teaching of Torah and the covenantal relationship in an ongoing fashion. On both the psychological and metaphysical planes, Mishkan provides a "portable" Sinai, an ongoing experience and reminder of Sinai.

All of this should help us resolve our outstanding problems. The end of Shemot is concerned with Mishkan as Sinai rather than Mishkan as a place of meeting (entailing priests and sacrifices). As such, the end of Shemot is carefully structured to emphasize the Sinai-Mishkan parallel. The last chapter of Shemot thus fails to mention the inauguration of the priests, the sanctification of the sanctuary and the transition to standard functioning.

To close, I would like to argue that the emphasis on Mishkan as Sinai, i.e. communication and covenant, as opposed to Mishkan as sanctuary, i.e. a religious technology for meeting with God comprised of priests, cult & atonement, constitutes a fitting end for Sefer Shemot. As Ramban famously emphasizes, the overarching theme of the Book of Shemot is redemption. But redemption is more than just a physical state. Not until the Israelites stood at Sinai, heard God's word and entered into a covenant with Him, were they both physically and spiritually redeemed. Hence, the end of Shemot, the Book of Redemption, harks back to Sinai and reminds us that the spiritual redemption of Sinai was not an isolated moment in time for the Children of Israel. It was captured and continued in the Mishkan, the portable Sinai.

Sefer Daniel Lesson 20 Daniel's Prayer (Part 2)

By Harav Yaakov Medan

Based on: <https://etzion.org.il/en/tanakh/ketuvim/sefer-daniel/daniels-prayer-2>

2. Revisiting the Lions' Den

We shall assume, despite having no explicit basis for it in the text, a connection between our chapter [9] and the narrative in chapter 6, which we discussed previously.

Let us return to Daniel's high hopes for the 70th year, inspiring his great prayer for the redemption, a prayer which was anticipated and awaited by Yirmeyahu. In a development that can be called the work of Satan, in the 70th year, the ministers of Darius the Mede invent a decree prohibiting prayer to any god or power except for Darius himself. Daniel is aware that this decree may cause the time for redemption to be missed. He does not view it as an incidental development. He sees it in the context of Yirmeyahu's words on prayer, understanding that the decree is a test that God imposes on His people, on the eve of the redemption, to see whether they love God with all their heart and all their soul and whether they will fulfill Yirmeyahu's prophecy simply and wholeheartedly (29:12-13): "You shall call upon Me, & go, & pray to Me, & I will hear you. You shall seek Me, & find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."

Daniel views the situation as a test – but not in the sense that he is certain that God will save him. He intends to give up his life if he is caught by the authorities in prayer, but he is unwilling to miss the potentially favorable hour that is critical for the redemption.



We previously cited the Ritva on Pesachim 25, who provides support for giving up one's life when a foreign ruler issues decrees against Judaism, even to maintain observance (not only in avoidance of cardinal prohibitions), in a case in which it is being neglected – that is, to serve as an example to the generation & thereby spur them to repentance. Daniel extends the license to give up one's life in defiance of a decree against Judaism to another area affecting the generation as a whole – the time of the approaching redemption, a time requiring self-sacrifice & devotion to God that goes beyond everyday conduct & even beyond ordinary Halakha.

Let us return to our other question: the reason Daniel faces toward Jerusalem. We previously showed that on most views in the Babylonian Talmud, the concept of facing Jerusalem applies only while the Temple stands & the Divine Presence rests within it. The teaching, based on the word “talpiot” – “the tel to which mouths (piot) turn” – takes “tel” as meaning “foundation” (i.e., the Temple, foundation of the world). Indeed, it is natural that while the Divine Presence rests in the Temple, prayer should be directed there. But the Jerusalem Talmud maintains that prayer is directed to the same place even when the Temple is in ruins. There, the interpretation of “talpiot” is “the mound to which all mouths pray.” The direction expresses the subject of the prayer. In the Babylonian Talmud, “One who wishes to become wise should pray towards the south” – since wisdom is associated with the south. “One who wishes to become wealthy should face towards the north” – for there is the source of wealth, since the Table with the showbread was on the northern side of the Temple (see Bava Batra 25b). Similarly, one who wishes to pray for the rebuilding of Jerusalem should pray in its direction.

Daniel's prayer is entirely a supplication for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple. Therefore, he faces towards Jerusalem. This image was eternalized and accepted as halakha throughout the Diaspora since, following Daniel's example, we too pray mainly for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple and the restoration of the Divine Presence there, may it come speedily in our days.

We should thus read chapters 6 & 9 accordingly. In chapter 6, the ministers of Darius the Mede forbid prayer. Daniel, aware of the prohibition, nevertheless goes to his home, with its windows open towards Jerusalem, & pours forth the supplication recorded in chapter 9 concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem. He is caught in the midst of his prayer, thrown to the lions, & miraculously delivered.

3. Aspects of Daniel's Prayer

Daniel starts his prayer with “the great and awesome God,” omitting from his description the third traditional title, “mighty.” The gemara in Yoma (69b) explains this by means of a question: “His children have been handed over into servitude; where is His might?”

The first part of his prayer is a confession. This confession is not in the style of that of Yom Kippur, which essentially asks for forgiveness, but rather in the style of the public confession that we recite in the lamentations on Tish'a be-Av – essentially an acceptance of God's justice and the recognition of His righteousness. Many of the sentences in Daniel's prayer have entered the confession that is part of our regular prayers, especially the long Tachanun recited on Mondays and Thursdays, which discusses the return from exile, Jerusalem, and the Temple. The connection between the confession that we recite and the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy is our supplication for forgiveness. The connection between the confession and Daniel's prayer – the longer Tachanun – is the acknowledgement of God's judgment and the punishment that has befallen us, before we ask for Divine mercy.

After the confession & acceptance of Divine judgment comes Daniel's supplication. It does not proceed from the promise of redemption after 70 years, but rather recalls God's mercies & His great Name, which is desecrated & scorned by the nations so long as Am Yisrael is in exile. In the prayer just before Tachanun, “Avinu Malkenu,” we express these 2 concepts in 2 successive requests:

Our Father, our King – act for the sake of Your many mercies; Our Father, our King – act for the sake of Your great, mighty, and terrible Name, by which we are known.

In his prayer, Daniel also mentions that the evil that has befallen Jerusalem is unparalleled anywhere under the heavens. Nevukhadnetzar destroyed many cities, as did the kings of Assyria. But the degree of cruelty demonstrated in Jerusalem was unique.

4. Calculations of the Time for Redemption

In response to Daniel's prayer, the angel Gavriel appears and reveals to him that redemption will come (9:20-27):

And while I was speaking, praying & confessing my sin & the sin of my people Israel, & presenting my supplication before the Lord my God on behalf of the holy mountain of God, & while I was still speaking in prayer, the man Gavriel, whom I had seen in my vision at the beginning, flew swiftly & approached me at about the time of the evening sacrifice. And he made me understand, & he spoke with me, & said, “Daniel, now I have come forth to give you understanding. At the beginning of your supplications a word went forth, & I have come to declare it, for you are greatly beloved; therefore look into the word & understand the vision. 70 weeks (shavu'im shiv'im) are decreed for your people & for your holy city, to finish the transgression & to make an end to sins & to atone for iniquity, & to bring an everlasting righteousness, & to seal up vision & prophet, & to anoint the holy of holies. Know,

therefore, & understand that from the issuance of the word to restore & rebuild Jerusalem until the anointed prince shall be 7 weeks (shavu'im shiv'a). Then for 62 weeks it shall be rebuilt, with broad places & a moat, but in a time of distress. And after 62 weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off, & shall be no more; the city & the Sanctuary shall be destroyed by the people of a prince who will come, & his end shall be with a flood, & to the end of the war desolations are decreed. And he shall make a firm covenant with the many for 1 week, & during ½ of the week he shall cause sacrifice & offering to be halted, & upon the wing of abominations shall come one who causes desolation, until the decreed destruction is poured out upon he who causes desolation.

Despair of redemption may lead Am Yisrael to become assimilated in its place of exile. Only hope can keep a nation alive without its land and its kingdom. Yirmeyahu deviated from the boundaries maintained by the other prophets and set a time limit for the Babylonian exile – 70 years from the ascent of Nevukhadnetzar. When the 70th year arrives, the angel conveys to Daniel the hope for the end to this exile, hope that is meant to strengthen the nation so that they will not despair. But the time of the redemption is conveyed in the form of a riddle, and the angel instructs Daniel, “Know, therefore, and understand.” It is clear that both the angel and Daniel deliberately formulate the message in such a way that not everyone will be able to decode its meaning. Nevertheless, we may attempt to understand what the text means.

The accepted interpretation in the Talmud (Nazir 32b) and the commentators is that the “70 weeks” allude to the 490 years between the destruction of the First Temple and the destruction of the Second Temple. This period includes the 70 years of desolation from the destruction of the First Temple until the second year of the reign of Darius (the Persian), when the building of the Second Temple commenced, and the 420 years that the Second Temple stood.

According to this interpretation, Daniel foresaw the year of the destruction of the Second Temple. But this presents a problem – it suggests that the Second Temple was destroyed not (or not only) because of the sins of Am Yisrael, but because God already decreed its destruction in advance. It also seems to imply that after those 490 years, there is an end to the transgressions of Am Yisrael through their suffering (“to finish the transgression.... and to atone for iniquity”). But it was specifically then that the nation’s worst troubles began in their long exile! Moreover, on our understanding of the text thus far, Daniel did not address any period so distant in the future.

In any event, this is how the message was interpreted by R. Sa’adia Gaon, Rashi, and the other commentators who followed them. According to Rashi, the “shavu'im shiv'a” are the years of exile. From the destruction of the First Temple until the return to Tzion, there were 52 years, which are “7 sevens” plus another 3 years. The “62 sevens” (or “62 weeks”) are the years from the return to Tzion until the destruction of the Second Temple: 420 years that the Temple stood, and the preceding 18 years, from the time of the Return until the construction of the Second Temple began.

Elsewhere, I raised an opposing claim (see my article in Megadim 14). The accepted historical chronology of events proceeds from the outset from the need to arrive at the number 539. In order to arrive at this calculation, the duration of the Persian Kingdom was revised by Christian scholars during the Middle Ages, such that the exact coincidence of the dates should not be surprising.

Perhaps the “70 sevens” allude to the years of Am Yisrael from the time of its creation – the Exodus from Egypt – until “the anointing of the holy of holies” – the conclusion of the construction of the First Temple. The period from the Exodus until the beginning of the construction lasted 480 years, and the construction lasted another 7 years (see Melakhim I 6:1, 38), which is 487 years – almost exactly “70 sevens” (490 years). After “7 sevens” – 49 years from the completion of the construction of the Temple – Assa, king of Yehuda, was born. Based on the early prophets, it seems that he may have been meant to be the Mashiach, so he may be the “anointed prince” (mashiach nagid) mentioned here in Daniel’s vision. In his time, a great salvation took place, but owing to his sins, he did not merit the full redemption (see Divrei Ha-yamim II 15). In the “62nd week” – the 429th year after the start of Assa’s reign – the dedication of the Second Temple took place, in the 6th year of Darius. Following this came the subjugations hinted to at the final verses of the vision.

We might suggest another way of calculating the redemption in accordance with the “shavu'im shiv'im” in our chapter. If we count the “shavu'im” as days rather than years, the angel confirms for Daniel that the return to Tzion and the beginning of the rebuilding of the Temple will take place during the coming year (490 days are approximately 1 year and 4 months). The total count arrived at if we add “shavu'im shiv'im,” “shavu'im shiv'a,” and “shavu'im shishim u-shenayim” is almost 3 years, and this may allude to the 3-year reign of Cyrus, who is referred to by Yeshayahu (44:28-45:1) as “mashiach.” The death of Cyrus, the “mashiach,” heralded a difficult period for Am Yisrael, as alluded to by Daniel in the final verses of his vision.

Still, the vision remains opaque and its riddle awaits a solution.

Translated by Kaeren Fish

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