

HaShem tells Moshe to build Him a Mishkan.

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשִׁכְנֹתַי בְּתוֹכָם:

“And they shall make for me a Sanctuary; and I shall reside amongst them.” (Shemos 25:8).

HaShem is omnipresent. There is no need to build a sanctuary for HaShem to dwell in, as He lives and takes up the entire universe. There is no need to build a House of the Lord in order for Him to be among the Bnei Yisroel. Why did HaShem ask them to build the Mishkan?

We first commence with the premise that this instruction took place within the opening days of Moshe going up on Har Sinai for forty days. HaShem presented the Ten Words, i.e. Ten Commandments, and then informed Moshe of many other civil laws. Afterwards, HaShem commanded Moshe to come back upon the Mountain as Yehoshua waited at its foot, for forty days, so HaShem can present Moshe with the Luchos. In the opening days of Moshe coming up Har Sinai Hashem instructed Moshe about building Him a Mishkan.

The Midrash Tanchuma Ki Sisa 31 and many Rishonim learn that the instruction for the Mishkan took place only after the sin of the eigel (golden calf). This piece is of the position that it took place prior. (See Bonus Shtikel below for explanation of how pshat supports this chronology).

Additionally, when asking for the Mishkan, HaShem says the Teruma gifts are “for Me.” (Shemos 25:2). If the gifts are for Hashem then the Mishkan is for HaShem. Why does HaShem need it? Further, as HaShem is omnipotent then what can His creations possibly give to Him that He needs?

Gemara Avos D'Reb Nasson 11:1 teaches *nothing good happens without work being done. For example, Rabbi Tarfon would say: Even the Holy One Blessed is He did not rest His presence upon Bnei Yisroel until they had done work, as it says (Shemos 25:8), “Make Me a Sanctuary, and I will dwell among them.”*

Gemara Eurivn 21b and Shevuos 16b say, *the aron was referred to as a Mikdash, as it says in Devorim 10:21. The Mishkan is also termed a Mikdash as it says “And let them make Me a Mikdash that I may dwell among them.” (Shemos 25:8). This reference is to the Mishkan, as*

immediately afterward it is written: “According to all that I show you, the pattern of the Mishkan.” (Ibid 25:9).

Gemara Temurah 31b says *the Beis HaMikdash can be made from money that is hekdesh (consecrated) because it says the Mishkan / Mikdash is for HaShem, so HaShem’s money—so to speak—can be used in its construction and maintenance.*

These Gemaras convey the thought that the Mishkan is for HaShem but the work has to be done by the Bnei Yisroel for their part. What makes it a Mikdash is that it is built by the Bnei Yisroel.

Rashi says the Mishkan *is for the glory of HaShem’s name.*

Ibin Ezra says *the Mishkan is called Mikdash because it is Mishkan of the Holy One, Blessed is He.*

Sforno says *I will reside among them means that from here I will listen to their prayers.* He goes on to explain how each part of the Mishkan was designated to correspond to His Holy Court in the Heavens. (See there). He continues, *this was a step down from the promise made earlier, “In every place that I permit My Name to be mentioned I will come to you and bless you” (Shemos 20:21). Originally there was no need for a bayis to have the blessings.*

Chizkuni calls the Mishkan *the place for all of My appointments and meetings.*

Rashbam says, *שקדש, is an alternate description of אהל מועד, a place where HaShem would be sanctified and from which He would address the Bnei Yisroel. Compare Shemos 29:43.*

Ohr HaChaim similarly says *it is called here a Mikdash but then immediately after and in near future verses as Mishkan and Ohel Moed “Meeting Tent.” This is because our passuk is the positive commandment to build a Mikdash, here in the midbar and also later in Eretz Yisroel. Also, it does not say HaShem will “reside within it.” It says, “among them.” His residence was not strictly in the four walls of the building.*

Rabbeinu Bechaya says *the reason the Torah refers to the Mishkan as Mikdash, Sanctuary, from the word שקדש holy, is that it was sanctified by the very Presence within it of the Shechinah. Bnei Yisroel are the sheep and HaShem is the shepherd; they shall make and I shall reside is the reciprocal nature of the relationship.* Then he says further, *the numerical value of the letters in the word ושכנתי alludes to the 410 years the first Beis HaMikdash stood. When we break up the word ושכנתי into ישכן ת י we get that result “He will reside for 410 (years).” By*

rearranging the letters to read וְשָׁנִי ת"כ "and the second (Beis HaMikdash) 420," you get an allusion to the length of time the second Beis HaMikdash remained standing.

(That the second Beis HaMikdash likely stood closer to 500 years, and the seventeen decades hidden by Chazal, is beyond the scope of our discussion here. Further, there is no allusion to the nearly 500 years the Mishkan stood). The purpose of this gematria calculation is to illustrate that the Mishkan is tied to the Batei HaMikdash.

We quoted Sforno, but a closer look at the entire passuk reveals its true meaning. Under the foot of Har Sinai, just after giving the Aseres HaDibros, HaShem promised Bnei Yisroel that if they keep His Torah He will be with them. "An altar of earth you shall make for Me and you shall slaughter beside it your olos / burnt offerings and your shelamim / peace offerings, from your sheep and your cattle. Wherever I allow My name to be mentioned, I will come to you and bless you." (Ibid 20:21). "Wherever I allow My name to be mentioned" is referring to His Mikdashos, the Mishkan and then later the Batei HaMikdash. The Mishkan was certainly not a step down from any plans prior or after the sin of the eigel.

Here, our passuk says *They shall make for me a Mikdash, and I will dwell among them.* When reading it closely the word לִי can mean "for me" or "to me." It also can mean "me." *They shall make Me a Mikdash.* HaShem by Himself is Holy and spiritual and divine. This is obvious. However what HaShem wants from Bnei Yisroel and those that keep His Torah are for them to make Him holy; or more precisely to make Him their holiness. HaShem is instructing the Bnei Yisroel to make Him their Mikdash, to make Him their Holy Place. Then He will not reside in a mere physical building. He will reside *among them.*

We also read the word בְּתוֹכָם, not as 'among them' but *inside them.* By making HaShem their sanctuary then HaShem reciprocates and resides inside each and every one of the Bnei Yisroel, who He made his covenant with. That is also why the aron / ark is called Aron HaEidus, Ark of Testimony. (Shemos 25:22, 31:7). The Torah that is the covenant between HaShem and Bnei Yisroel (Ibid 24:7) was placed into the aron. (Ibid 25:16). The entire Mishkan gives testimony to the fact that the Bnei Yisroel gave *to HaShem, for HaShem* the Teruma gifts. Then they built the Mishkan. By doing that, they made HaShem their Mishkan/Mikdash and HaShem resided inside each and every one of them.

Those that continue to follow the Torah and make HaShem their Mikdash will have HaShem reside inside of them. Part of them will be uplifted from mundane to holy.

BONUS SHTIKEL

This instruction, to build the Mishkan, took place within the opening days of Moshe going up on Har Sinai for forty days. The chorology took place as follows: HaShem presented the Aseres HaDibros, i.e. Ten Commandments (Shemos 20:1) and then informed Moshe of many other civil laws. (Ibid 21:1). Afterwards, Moshe presented the Aseres HaDibros along with the new civil laws to the people. (Ibid 24:3). Moshe also gave over the promises that if they keep the Torah then HaShem will make them healthy, successful, and secure. (Ibid 23:25-33). Moshe next presented them all of this as a covenant between HaShem and the People. (Ibid 24:7).

After that, HaShem commanded Moshe to come back up the mountain as Yehoshua waited at its foot, for forty days, so HaShem can present Moshe with the Luchos. (Ibid 24:12). In the opening days of Moshe coming up Har Sinai, Hashem instructed Moshe about building Him a Mishkan.

The Midrash Tanchuma (Ki Sisa 31) and many Rishonim learn that the instruction for the Mishkan took place only after the chet haeigel. They also rely on the passuk that talks about how HaShem will fulfil His promise to Bnei Yisroel to bring them to their own Land. “You shall bring them and plant them on the mount of Your heritage, directed toward Your habitation, which You made, O Lord; the Mikdash, O Lord, of which Your hands founded.” (Ibid 15:17). This passuk implies no building is necessary, that HaShem will reside on a mountain and be their Protector. This original idea was amended after the eigel to requiring a building in order for HaShem to reside among them. This is more *mussar* than actuality, according to pshat. In fact, this last passuk is allegorical from the poem of Az Yashir.

To make their point stronger it can be argued that Avraham called the Har HaHabayis “the Mountain.” (Bereishis 22:14). It was ultimately called Bayis after what Yaakov called it. (Ibid 35:15). The derivation here is that it would have been called ‘Mountain’ without the sin. After the sin it is called ‘House.’

The svava is not sound as HaShem needs no building—ever—to reside among Bnei Yisroel. A Holy Temple is not a downgrade from a Holy Mountain; they are both equal *mikdash*, *a holy presence*. Yitzchok called it a field (Ibid 24:63) and that is not in consideration here. Yaakov called it a house long before the sin, so the sin is not relevant to its naming.

Gemara Kesubos 62b says, *the Mishkan was termed a Mikdash, as it says, "And let them make Me a Mikdash, that I may dwell among them"* (Shemos 25:8). The Gemara means it as a compliment, that even while they were still in the desert they called it Mikdash. This indicates that due to their closeness to HaShem they enjoyed greater affection and He, therefore, did not wait until they entered the Land to give them a Mikdash but advanced it. The Mishkan was always in the plans. The Mishkan is the place they could pray to and worship HaShem. Without the sin there would be no Mikdash, and that would be no improvement. The purpose of the sanctuary was not for repentance. It was to dwell among them so they can be close to Holiness and be made holy.

The passuk says, "And you shall place into the Aron the testimony which I *will* give you." (Shemos 26:16). This made the aron the aron haedus. Moshe was going to get the "testimony." The testimony was what he wrote down and gave over to the Bnei Yisroel as a bris earlier. "So Moshe came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances, and all the people answered in unison and said, '*All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do.*'" (Ibid 24:3). "And Moshe wrote all of the words of HaShem." (Ibid 24:4). Moshe received these on the two luchos. HaShem told Moshe, "Come up to Me to the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets, the Law and the commandments, which I have written to instruct them." (Ibid 24:12). These were received after the forty days (Ibid 31:18) and were to be put into the aron. Otherwise it would have said *put the testimony that I gave you into the aron.*

Further, it says, "Now see and make according to their pattern, which you are shown on the mountain." (Ibid 25:40). It also says, "And you shall erect the Mishkan according to its proper manner, as you will have been shown on the mountain." (Ibid 26:30). Both are clear references to the instruction about the Mishkan being given while Moshe was on Ha Sinai those forty days.

And conclusively, it says, "When He finished speaking with him on Har Sinai He gave Moshe the two Luchos of Testimony, stone tablets inscribed with the finger of the Lord." (Ibid 31:18). This passuk clearly says that when HaShem finished speaking to Moshe He gave him the luchos. Thus, all the previous tutelage from Shemos 25:1 through 31:17 was given to Moshe and *then* did HaShem give Moshe *the* Luchos of Testimony. Now should you mistakenly say these were the second set, it says "written with the finger of the Lord." These are the first and they were given, clearly, after the Mishkan instructions were conveyed to Moshe. The Mishkan was

always the plan because HaShem wanted the Bnei Yisroel to make HaShem their Mikdash so that HaShem can reside within them.