

Parashat Terumah תרומה

Torah: Exodus 25:1–27:19

Haftarah: 1 Kings 4:29–6:13 (in English versions)

The Most Holy Place

General Overview

In keeping with the theme of a Sacred Marriage that was established in Parashat Yitro, it is possible to say that it is now the time when the Divine Bridegroom speaks about the dwelling place where He and His bride, Israel, would meet with each other as this Sacred Family. We are speaking of this new “house,” the Tabernacle. That is the focus of this parasha.

Exposition

One thing we can say is that God is certainly a master artist! To an artist, every detail has significance. It is clear that the Eternal One gave Moshe a very detailed revelation. Moreover, Hebrews chapter 8 tells us that the Mishkan God revealed to Moshe was just a “copy and a shadow of what is in heaven” (8:5). Hebrews goes on to say that because of this, Moshe was concerned about every detail! He wanted to make sure that the copy was just like the original.

Just as every brush-stroke in a painting has meaning and importance, so does every detail of God’s revelation. It must be that way because, in reality, we have one universe attempting to communicate vital truth to another universe. Therefore, precise communication is absolutely necessary in order for our world to understand God’s world. From the detailed information about the Mishkan, it is clear that we have a God who wants to be approached in a very specific manner. He wants us to relate to Him in a very specific way. This, to us, is one of the basic meanings of the Mishkan.

Hence, here is our study outline:

- I. The Purposes of the Mishkan
- II. The Parts of the Mishkan
- III. The Price of the Mishkan
- IV. The Position of the Mishkan

In this excerpt from Parashat Terumah, we will focus on “The Most Holy Place.”

The Most Holy Place

The Holy of Holies was the place of God’s dwelling on planet earth. It is important to note that not all of God dwelt there in a physical way, only a certain aspect of the physical manifestation of His glory was present. Nonetheless, God said in 25:22 that, “There, above the cover... I will meet with you.”

This becomes symbolic of two important truths written about in the Renewed Covenant Scriptures. One truth we have already touched on. The Mishkan, especially the Holy of Holies, serves as a symbol for the way in which the Son of

God came to dwell here on planet earth. In the Most Holy Place, there was a special physical manifestation of the Glory of God, whom the rabbis call the *Shekinah*. This Presence was sent by God to come and dwell in the Holy of Holies. When they saw the Shekinah, the Israelites did not see all of God, yet what they did see was a certain aspect of the fullness of God.

In like manner, we are told in John 1:14 that the Word of God, Yeshua the Messiah, was sent by God to earth to dwell with us. Similarly, when they saw Yeshua, they did not see all of God! God is much bigger than just a human body! Moreover, God was not born, nor did God ever die! However, on the other hand, when they saw Yeshua, they saw the fullness of God in bodily form, just like the Shekinah!

This takes us again to John 1:14. It is important to remember that John, the one who wrote the fourth Gospel, was a native-born Hebrew speaker. Although he may have written in Greek, nonetheless, he was writing from a Hebraic mind-set. Therefore, when he wrote that the Word “dwelt” among us, his mind would have been focusing on the Hebrew word for “dwell,” the same Hebrew root (*sh-kh-n*, ש-כ-נ) from which we get both the words “Mishkan” and “dwell.” Indeed, a “Mishkan” was simply a place of dwelling. Moreover the word “Shekinah,” though a rabbinic word, and not found in the Bible, is also a derivative of the root, ש-כ-נ. It literally means, “that which dwells.”

Perhaps we may summarize the meanings derived from this useful Hebrew root in this way. You do not have to know Hebrew in order to see how the same three Hebrew letters, (ש-כ-נ), form these important and related words or phrases:

He dwelt	שכן
The place of dwelling	משכן
That which dwells	שכינה

This summary enables us to notice the play on words that John intended his Hebrew minded readers to see from 1:14. He was telling us that

1. **Yeshua dwelt.** שכן
2. **He dwelt in God’s Mishkan.** משכן

He resided in the literal Mishkan that we are studying in Exodus, but now he also resides in the present “Mishkan,” the place of His residence — in those who believe.

3. **His glory was visible.** שכינה

It was visible in the literal Mishkan, it was visible when He was transfigured (Matthew 17), and it is visible when people “see” Him in our lives.

If we look a little closer, an amazing truth begins to emerge from what was in the Holy of Holies. As we have already indicated, the Shekinah dwelt in a physical way. In some way, shape, or form, there was a kind of an on going physical presence of God in the Holy of Holies. However, for God to accomplish that, He had to put certain limitations on Himself, for certainly, He is greater than just the space in that man made room!

Keeping this in mind will help us to see how Yeshua could also take upon Himself human flesh and dwell among us. Just as the Shekinah was the manifested presence of God dwelling in the Mishkan, so also was Yeshua the manifested presence of God dwelling on earth and in our hearts.

For instance, when people saw Yeshua, they did not see all of God. The Scripture says that when He came to earth, He “emptied Himself” (Philippians 2:7). Scripture also says that, “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him” (Colossians 1:19).

If this is getting difficult to understand, do not worry. This theological concept has baffled the best of scholars for centuries. Even the rabbis struggle with it. It is interesting to read, for example, certain statements by some rabbis about the nature of the unity and plurality of what is sometimes, though certainly rarely, referred to as the “Godhead.” For instance, in the *Zohar*, a definitive book of Jewish mysticism we read:

How can three be One? Are they verily One, because we call them One?
How can three be One can only be known through the revelation of the Holy Spirit.¹

One person explained this concept like this: If we take a cup of water from the Mediterranean Sea and analyse it, we will notice that the cup does not contain all of the Mediterranean Sea. However, the water that is in the cup is *completely* Mediterranean Sea water. So it was with Yeshua. He was not all of God that there is; yet what was in Him was surely Divine. He was surely God in the flesh, like the sea water in the glass.

Therefore, John tells us that the Holy of Holies is symbolic of the way Yeshua would tabernacle among us. Thus, it is easy to see that we can learn much about the way “The Word became flesh” by studying the Shekinah in the Mishkan.

Living Holy Places

There is, however, another symbolic use of the Holy of Holies. The Scripture uses the Holy of Holies as a symbol for the way in which the Spirit of God tabernacles or dwells in the believer in Yeshua. 1 Corinthians 6:19 says, “Do you not know that your body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?” It seems from this teaching that, in a way, our physical bodies form a kind of Mishkan for the presence of God in our lives. This, as Rabbi Shaul says, is a motivation to keep all that is offensive to Him away from us.

¹ *The Zohar*, the Amsterdam Edition, vol. 2, 43, and 22.