



MISHNAS CHAYIM

משנת היום

MISHNAH ON THE PARSHAH

A project of CHEVRAH LOMDEI MISHNAH • Parshas Pekudei 5768

The Torah devotes a tremendous amount of space to dealing with the *Mishkan* and its accessories. Practically the entire second half of *Sefer Shemos* depicts the process of fashioning the *Mishkan*. As we complete the *Sefer* this week, we conclude this unit as well.

Let us reflect for a moment on the essence of this subject. What exactly is the *Mishkan*? What are its inherent qualities which cause it to warrant such attention?

In order to fully appreciate the underlying principles at work here, we must first preface our discussion with a glimpse at the condensed history of the entire world.

Before the universe was created, Hashem existed alone. In His infinite goodness, Hashem desired to bestow kindness upon others. Therefore, He created the world and filled it with creatures upon whom to shower blessing. The pinnacle of creation, of course, was Man—created in Hashem's likeness, and the prime recipient of His benevolence. In response to this generosity, Man recognized the greatness and kindness of the Creator, and praised and served Him. The entire creation functioned as a harmonious interaction between the Benefactor and the grateful beneficiaries.

At that point, having fulfilled the purpose of creation, Hashem could rest His *Shechinah* amongst the *tachtonim* (denizens of the lower spheres). To paraphrase R' Yeruchem Levovitz (*Daas Chochmah U'Mussar*, vol. 5, ch. 74), prior to the first sin, the entire creation was one big *mishkan*. In this pristine state, the entire world was a perfect receptacle for Hashem's Presence.

This idyllic situation did not last long, however. That old trouble-maker (more commonly known as the *yetzer hara*) sniffed opportunity, and coaxed Man to violate the Will of the Almighty. This primordial sin had a devastating effect—not only on Man himself, but on the entire creation. The negative force introduced into the world through this act was of such magnitude that the *briyah* (creation) was permanently damaged. Spiritual pollution, referred to as *kilkul* (decay), now infested the world, causing the *Shechinah* to depart.

Creation was no longer a hospitable place in which the *Shechinah* could dwell.

No longer hospitable, that is, until *Klal Yisrael* entered the scene. Once a Torah nation existed, Hashem enjoined them to prepare a new resting place for the *Shechinah* on earth: the *mishkan*. No longer could the entire world serve as the vessel to contain Hashem's presence. Nonetheless, He would once again dwell amongst His creation, albeit in a specific location.

The task with which *B'nai Yisrael* were charged was actually a massive undertaking. Fashioning a *Mishkan* entailed a lot more than building a structure and producing vessels. Rather, the Jews' mandate was to facilitate the manifestation of the *Shechinah* on earth, an act that could only be accomplished by 'decontaminating' the site of the *Mishkan* from the spiritual impurities that exist in the rest of the world.

Once we appreciate the magnitude of the task, we can easily understand why the Torah devotes so much space and detail to this topic. The

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a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of his Neshamah.



MISHNAS
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mission to ‘fumigate’ an earthly location and restore it to pre-sin levels of purity must require super-human effort and massive spiritual wisdom.

Although the many secrets involved in the building of the *Mishkan* remain hidden from us, we can begin to appreciate just how monumental the entire project was. To paraphrase R’ Yeruchem (*ibid.*) once again, the *Mishkan* was a *kleine vinkele* (small corner) which was restored to the pristine spiritual state that existed in the world of *Adam HaRishon* in *Gan Eden*.

We find this theme reflected in the Mishnah in Avos (5:7):

עֲשָׂרָה נִסִּים נַעֲשׂוּ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ: לֹא הִפִּילָה אֱשֶׁה מֵרִיחַ בֶּשֶׂר הַקֹּדֶשׁ, וְלֹא הִסְרִיחַ בֶּשֶׂר הַקֹּדֶשׁ מֵעוֹלָם, וְלֹא נִרְאָה זָבוּב בְּבֵית הַמִּטְבָּחִים, ... וְלֹא הִזִּיק נָחַשׁ וְעִקְרָב בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם מֵעוֹלָם, וְלֹא אָמַר אָדָם לְחַבְרוֹ: צַר לִי שְׂאֵלִין בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם.

“Ten miracles were wrought for our forefathers in the *Bais HaMikdosh*: no woman ever miscarried as a result of the smell of sacrificial meat; the sacrificial meat never went bad; a fly never appeared in the slaughterhouse;...no one was ever harmed by a snake or scorpion in the entire Jerusalem; and, of all the myriad visitors to the city, everyone was able to afford lodgings.”

In his commentary on Avos, the Chossid Yaavetz explains that in actuality, the happenings detailed in the Mishnah were not miracles at all; rather, they were realities of the natural, pre-sin world.

As explained above, *kilkul* was only introduced into creation as a result of Man’s sin. This spiritual decay manifested itself in a physical manner as well: as a secondary result of sin, deterioration, spoilage, and animal predation were introduced into the physical world.

In the pristine situation that existed in the world before sin, meat did not go bad, poverty did not exist, and scorpions were nice, adorable creatures. Once Man sinned, this blessed state of affairs continued to exist in only one location: the *Mikdosh*. There, in that singular ‘*kleine vinkele*’ in the universe, creation continued to function according to the natural laws of the *Gan Eden* era. Hence, within the confines of the *Bais HaMikdosh*, meat did not spoil and scorpions did not menace.

The Chossid Yaavetz concludes his thought by stating that in the future Messianic era, all of creation will return to the blissful pre-sin state of affairs. We hope and pray to witness the era when “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb... (and) they shall not wreak destruction...” (*Yeshayah 11:6-9*), speedily in our times.

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