



5784 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Reuven Schreier Parashat Terumah/פרשת תרומה

And They Shall Make Me a Sanctuary: Revealing the True Capacity of a Jew

In this week's *parsha*, the *Bnei Yisrael* are given a commandment to build a *Mikdash* for *Hashem*. ועשו לי מקדש, and they shall make a sanctuary for Me. Conventionally, we would translate the words of *Mishkan* and *Mikdash* as sacred locations dedicated to the resting of the Divine Presence in this world. This Divine Sanctuary is essential for the universe to fulfill its purpose. Famously, the *Midrash Tanhuma (Nassa 24)* explains that the creation process started with *HaKadosh Barukh Hu's* "desire" to rest and reside in the lower worlds, שיהא לו דירה בתחתונים. The *Mikdash* is the perfect place to serve as God's "dirah", His residence in this world. It is not a surprise that the *Mikdash* (and our lacking it) claims so much of our attention. As we know, a huge portion of the *mitzvot* of the Torah can only be fulfilled with a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. No less than six times a day do we beg *Hashem* in our *Shemona Esrei* to return His Divine Presence to *Tzion* and *Yerushalayim* so that the world can reclaim its destiny through His residence in the *Mikdash*.

However, looking carefully at *Hashem's* description of this *mitzvah* to build the *Mikdash*, a different picture emerges. The focus of this commandment is not to facilitate *HaKadosh Barukh Hu's* resting in the physical structure of the temple. Rather, ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם, and they will make a sanctuary for Me, and I will dwell in them. As Rav Moshe Alshich famously notes, the wording of the verse presumably should have been ושכנתי בתוכו, and I will dwell in it. Yet, *HaKadosh Barukh Hu* deliberately emphasizes the primary purpose of His temple and sanctified space: to facilitate His dwelling within each and every Jew.

Rav Chayim Volozhiner, in his masterpiece entitled *Nefesh HaChaim* (1:4), takes the *Alshich's* comment a radical step further. We were not given a commandment to build a Sanctuary for God to merely have His presence resting in the physical structure of the temple. Rather, the *Mikdash* and its holy vessels described in our *Parsha*, with their complex and detailed instructions, are intended to serve as a metaphor for how to bring *Hashem's* Divine Presence into ourselves. The intense Divine Presence that manifested itself in the temple was only there to show what a Jew is capable of accomplishing within his or her own self. The *Mikdash* served as a window through which to behold the spiritual power of every Jew. It was a mirror that reflected a Jew's awesome potential.



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In the times of the *Mikdash*, a Jew would ascend to Jerusalem and feel the palpable sense of שכינתו בציון, the Divine Presence resting in Zion. The exposure to this *hashra'as hashehina* would then unlock an innate spiritual capacity to reformulate the Jew's body and soul into a mini-temple. For the true purpose of creation is not for God to reside in Jerusalem, but rather for the Jewish people to realize through the holy city that they are His most precious *dirah*.

