



5786 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Reuven Schreier Parashat Terumah / פרשת תרומה

A Sanctuary in Transit

The construction of the *Mishkan* was a glorious undertaking. *Klal Yisrael* successfully built a structure that served as the “resting” place of the *Shechinah*, a place where *Hashem’s* Presence was revealed within physical world. Its construction required incredible expertise and penetrating spiritual wisdom.

And yet, upon close inspection, the *Mishkan* pales in comparison to its future successor, the *Beit HaMikdash* in *Yerushalayim*. The *Alshich* (*Shemot* 25) explains that there is a fundamental distinction between the *Mishkan* and the *Beit HaMikdash*. The *Mishkan* was temporary and portable; it moved from place to place, serving as the central spiritual location for *Klal Yisrael* as they journeyed through the *midbar* and *galut*. Because it stood outside *Yerushalayim*, it could never serve as the permanent spiritual center where *Hashem’s* Presence rests.

The *Beit HaMikdash*, on the other hand, is referred to as a *moshav*, a permanent residence of *Hashem’s* Presence. It stands at the center of *Klal Yisrael’s* *yishuv*. Structurally, it is an edifice of stone and permanence. It is built to stand, not to travel. It is not a coincidence that the *Mikdash* rests in the same city as the king’s palace, the political capital of the nation. The *Mikdash* is firmly rooted in the civilization of *Eretz Yisrael*, influencing and engaging with every aspect of life in a settled land.

The *Maharal* in *Gevuros Hashem* notes that this is why the *Mishkan* was deliberately built in the *midbar*. The desert is the antithesis of *yishuv*; its desolate isolation stands in stark contrast to the hustle and bustle of civilization. The *midbar* represents existence without rootedness, spirituality that is detached from sovereignty and permanence.

Eventually, the *Mishkan* entered into *Eretz Yisrael* and was placed in *Shiloh*. But even it was given more permanent stone walls, its temporary canopy remained for centuries. After all, it was never intended to be the structure for *Hashem’s* permanent residence.

The *Alshich* (*Shemot* 25) cites a shocking *Midrash* (*Bamidbar Rabba* 12:12), where *Chazal* describe what occurred in the heavenly realms when the *Mishkan* was assembled. *Hashem* hinted to the ministering angels that they too should build their own *Mishkan* to parallel the *Mishkan* down below. Cryptically, the *Midrash* explains that this supernal *Mishkan* is the resting place of the angel known as *Metatron*; within this *Mishkan*, the souls of the righteous are offered as atonement for *Klal Yisrael* throughout the vicissitudes of exile.

The questions abound. Why do angels have a *Mishkan*? What role does *Metatron* play?

The *Alshich* explains that although the *Mishkan* was certainly an intense expression of *Hashem’s* Presence in this world, it was not as powerful as the *Beit HaMikdash* built under the *Sha’ar HaShamayim*. *Chazal* describe the physical *Yerushalayim* as being intertwined with the heavenly *Yerushalayim* above. In *Yerushalayim*, there can be a powerful *chibbur* between *Hashem* and the corporeal world below. However, the *Mishkan*



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metaphorically requires spiritual intermediaries that facilitate this connection. This is why the sublime angel *Metatron* is associated with the *Mishkan*, while the *Mikdash* is associated exclusively with *Hashem* Himself.

The *Mishkan* is also explicitly associated with exile. In times when *Klal Yisrael* lacks permanence in *Yerushalayim*, the deaths of *tzaddikim* are necessary to provide atonement for the nation as a whole. Only when the *Yerushalayim* above and below are united can there be harmony without sacrifice, peace without pain.

May we merit the day when the *Shechinah* no longer dwells in transit, but rests permanently in its *moshav* in the heart of *Yerushalayim*, speedily in our days.