

Parshas Truma Levels of Kedusha

A. Timing of the Command of the *Mitzva* of Mishkan

The *mitzva* of building the Mishkan dominates the second half of Sefer Shmos. The Mishkan was the place where Hashem's Shechina rested. Rashi and Ramban disagree about how to understand the timing of the events leading up to the command to build the Mishkan. Before them, also the *midrash* and Zohar took different perspectives.

According to the simple reading of the Torah, the *mitzva* to build the Mishkan was given right away at Har Sinai, the day that Moshe Rabbeinu concluded the *bris* to keep the Torah. This was most probably the same day as the ten commandments and Parshas Mishpatim were taught to the Bnei Yisrael. That same day Moshe taught them the *mitzva* of the Mishkan. Then the story of the *eigel* occurred, while Moshe was on top of Har Sinai. The aftermath of the *eigel* followed with the people's punishment, Moshe's prayers on behalf of the Bnei Yisrael, the resolution of that story, and then the renewal of the *mitzvos* of the Mishkan. This is the way the Ramban and Zohar understand the order of events.

Rashi though, following the midrash, invokes the rule of *ain mukdam ume'uchar batorah*. Since we see the Torah spends so much time discussing the Mishkan again after the *eigel*, apparently the *mitzva* to build the Mishkan was given only after the *eigel* episode happened, and after Moshe broke the *luchos*, punished the sinners, went back to Har Sinai and prayed to Hashem for forgiveness for the Jewish people. After that reconciliation, Hashem gave the *mitzva* to build the Mishkan.

B. Mishkan Dimensions

Shem Mishmuel presents an interesting analysis of this *machlokes*. He raises a question. With a careful reading of the *parsha*, the dimensions of the Mishkan do not compute. One of the *keilim* of the Mishkan would not actually fit into the building. Our sages say that the holy ark was so big that it couldn't fit into the room of the *kodesh hakadashim*. Additionally, the gemara teaches that each time the Jews moved and carried the pieces of the Mishkan with them, the *aron* was not actually carried. Instead, it carried the *levi'im* who carried it. In addition, the beams of the Mishkan were too numerous to fit all of them on the limited number of wagons they used. They were more than 20 feet tall, and they must have weighed tons. How could a few oxen on a few wagons carry all these beams? Clearly, we are dealing with something that did not work according to the regular laws of nature. The Mishkan was a miraculous construct, even though it was based on physical dimensions.

How could Bnei Yisrael engender this kind of miraculous building to function with them in the desert? What merit did they have that enabled them to construct a physical building that broke through physical limitations? Shem Mishmuel says that this was result of the love of Bnei Yisrael for Hashem, as demonstrated by their boundless donations for the building of the Mishkan. They made all of their donations in a matter of days. They donated millions of *shekalim* worth of money, precious metals and stones, materials, textiles and animal products. They were motivated by their immense love for Hashem. So Hashem responded with His love, as if with a winking eye, making some of the features of the Mishkan miraculously fit even outside of their physical boundaries.

Just like Bnei Yisrael went beyond normal efforts to build the Mishkan, Hashem went beyond the normal laws of nature to enable the Mishkan to function.

C. The Source of Bnei Yisrael's Appreciation

Where did this immense love of Bnei Yisrael come from? According to Ramban and the Zohar, this love came from Sinai. The experience of hearing the ten commandments and of feeling Hashem so close to them brought out an intense desire to be close to Him. Bnei Yisrael demonstrated their desire for closeness to Hashem in their response to the call for donations. They donated immensely and thereby achieved special closeness to Hashem and the ability to create a miraculous building.

In contrast, Rashi and the *midrashim* say Bnei Yisrael achieved this tremendous love through the episode of the sin of the golden calf. Once Moshe came down from Har Sinai, destroyed the calf, punished the evil-doers, and told them of the dire consequences, the bulk of the Jewish people experienced great feelings of regret. They desired to make amends for the sin of betraying the Almighty and not following the laws of idolatry so soon after Sinai. They did *teshuva* at the deepest level of their souls. They voluntarily gave up their two crowns, “halos,” that the angels had gifted them when they accepted the Torah at Har Sinai.

Chazal say that the halos that Moshe told the people to remove after the sin of the *eigel* had been given to them after they accepted the Torah. According to Chazal, one halo made them invincible in battle. The other would protect them from the angel of death. After the sin, they gave up their halos, subjecting themselves to enemies and even to death. This level of repentance, accepting even death as punishment for the sin of the *eigel*, with the aim of reestablishing closeness to Hashem, created a tremendous yearning to do the will of God. Their *teshuva* aroused within them much more yearning for Hashem than they felt before the sin. The people gained greater desire, enthusiasm, and alacrity to reach out and grow closer to Hashem. Because of the *eigel* and their subsequent *tshuava*, they felt that only Hashem could redeem them. This motivated them to donate millions of *sheklim* in just a few days. This love is what produced the miraculous building of the Mishkan.

D. Two Mishkans

Shem Mishmuel says both ideas are correct. Hashem commanded Bnei Yisrael to build a Mishkan, as the simple reading indicates, right after the *aseres hadibros*. According to Shem Mishmuel, this *mitzva* of building a tabernacle was commanded before the *eigel*, when Bnei Yisrael had two halos, protecting them from both enemies and death. The Mishkan then was going to be an amazing spiritual edifice. All the gold and silver that would have been donated for the Mishkan would have been more spiritual than physical. It is hard to grasp this because we are living in a physical world, and we live with sins. But for people who were like Adam and Chava before the sin, as Bnei Yisrael were after they received the Torah, the physical side was imbued with great spirituality. Adam before the sin, and the Jewish people right after the ten commandments, were incredibly more spiritual as compared to their physical aspect.

We see, for example, that their leader Moshe was able to go forty days without food and water. He lived on his spirituality. There are stories of great *tzadikim* who lived not long ago who barely ate. There were some who only ate on Shabbos, like the Belzer Rebbe and the Baba Sali, who were alive only 40 years ago. They were very spiritual people and the physical side was only a minor aspect of their personality. Eating wasn't that important to them.

The Jewish people, according to the original *mitzva* to build the Mishkan right after Sinai, were going to build from the gold and silver something so spiritual that the gold and silver would be physically reduced to nothing and would become spiritual in nature. The building itself would have been fit for Adam and Chava before the sin, as one day perhaps we too will experience *Gan Eden* in the future redeemed world. This was the original *mitvza* of the Mishkan.

However, the Jewish people sinned. And when they sinned the whole character of the *mitzva* changed. They lost their halos, lost their immortality and invincibility. The struggle between good and evil became real again. The Mishkan that had to be built after the reconciliation needed more physicality than the original Mishkan that was supposed to have been built after the ten commandments. This second Mishkan was still very spiritual, but it was more physical than in the original plan. In certain ways, its spirituality superseded physical limitations and laws, but it was nevertheless primarily a physical entity.

E. Different Levels of *Kedusha* – Moshe's Challenge

Shem Mishmuel explains that holiness has many levels. The idea of becoming holy is the central motif and imperative of our Torah, as stated, “*Ki am kadosh ata*” and “*k'doshim tihyu.*” This agenda has many levels. Clearly a person like Moshe *Rabbeinu* was holy. His holiness surpassed the holiness that others can attain. He went to the top of Mt Sinai, spent forty days without food or water and communicated with Hashem. He went back a second time to pray for Bnei Yisrael, and a third time to receive the next set of *luchos*. For Moshe, what does the command of *k'doshim tihyu* mean?

Shem Mishmuel says *kedusha* means abstinence, to restrain oneself and thereby achieve closeness to Hashem. In particular, *kedusha* means to give up something for Hashem. What did Moshe *Rabbeinu* give up? Did he give up physical pleasures? This is a ridiculous concept to apply to such a great person. Moshe wasn't interested at all in physical pleasures.

Every one of us has a certain degree of *kedusha*. Some of us have achieved certain levels of *kedusha* at which certain things don't even tempt us. How many of us feel temptations to eat bacon? I have no interest in it and most of you probably also have no interest. When we pass by McDonald's we are not tempted. Do we fulfill *k'doshim tihyu* by not eating pig?

We may have other temptations that are difficult for us. If someone insults us do we answer back in kind? Do we talk badly about someone behind his back? These are the challenges of *kedusha* that we face at our level. We have to resist the temptation of *sinas chinam*. For us, sometimes it is difficult to be tolerant of others. But not eating *treif* is not a high level fulfillment of *kedoshim tihyu* at all.

Some people, though, who grew up in a non-religious family may encounter a challenge when choosing to eat only kosher food. When becoming observant it can be very hard to give up non-kosher food. This is their *kedusha*. We thus see that *kedusha* is related to each person uniquely.

What was Moshe's *kedusha*? It wasn't money. After they crossed the Yam Suf, when Bnei Yisrael were taking money from the dead Egyptians, Moshe didn't take anything. He was busy with the coffin of Yosef. He did not want money, just like we don't want non-kosher food.

Did Moshe want power? Moshe argued with Hashem for a week, saying I don't want to be the leader of

the Jews. So what was Moshe's interest that he had to give up in order to become holy, on his level to achieve *kedoshim tihyu*?

Moshe had a certain desire. He wanted to grow in his spirituality. He wanted to become closer to Hashem. No matter how close he was he knew he could still come closer to Hashem. He had a great desire to understand more of Hashem's nature and His ways of running the world. Moshe asked Hashem, *Hodi'eini na es d'rachecha*. "Let me know your ways." This then was the area for his *kedusha* – holy restraint – to be expressed.

Rashi in Parshas Yisro says that when Moshe came down from mountain, he went straight down to the people. He did not deal with his own spiritual concerns, but only with the people's. Rashi thus says Moshe turned away from his own spiritual dealings so that he could teach Bnei Yisrael the Torah, so that they would achieve *their* spiritual goals. Moshe decided to set his own personal spiritual advancement aside. He performed Hashem's will to help the Jewish people. He gave up his own desire for personal spiritual development in order to help others.

F. Holy Responsibilities to Others

We have responsibilities to other Jews, especially parents to children and to our friends. We also have a responsibility to ourselves and to Hashem to develop our own spiritual sides. As holy as Moshe would have become had he studied more Torah, he decided to put away his own desires. He had a responsibility to bring Torah to Am Yisrael, to other Jews. This was Moshe's main mission. Moshe thus said, "My responsibility is to bring Hashem's word to Am Yisrael. This takes precedence over my own personal development."

There are many instances in which we too should put aside our own personal interest to bring Torah to Am Yisrael. This especially applies to parents. Parents have many responsibilities, both to themselves and to their children. We should follow the model of Moshe. We should give precedence to the spiritual development of our own family over our own personal development. This certainly is more important than climbing the ladder of success, becoming rich, popular or famous. The private platform of our family, of our spouse, of our children, must be our primary agenda – just as Moshe put aside his own warranted, personal holy needs to help Am Yisrael learn Torah. Each of us in our own way has to put aside our own personal development to help others who depend on us. This is the *kedusha* of Moshe, who gave up his own spirituality for the sake of others.

My rebbe, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveichik zt"l, once said something startling, that Moshe Rabbeinu even gave up the spiritual development of his own children for the sake of Bnei Yisrael. This prioritization was unique for Moshe in his special role. The average person, though, must put his children first. *Aniyei ircha kodmim l'aniyei ir acheres*, but *aniyei beischa* come even before that. Moshe was a special messenger from Hashem. Only he had to give up even his own family for Bnei Yisrael. No one else should do such a thing. One's own family precedes the needs of others. We must take care of our family, first and foremost.

Each person has his or her *kedusha*, the sacrifice that only he or she can make to achieve their mission in life. For some of us it is giving up physical pleasures. For some of us it is passing up on the pursuit of wealth and fame. And for some of us it is a spiritual price, in order for greater good to be achieved.

Shem Mishmuel explains that *kedusha* is a function of each person at his or her own level, related to his or her own background and goals. Everybody is unique and has his or her own challenges. Each person must deal with the challenge at his or her level. My challenge is not your challenge, and my sacrifice is not your sacrifice. We each achieve *kedusha* in our own individual way. The result is that each of us has our own unique relationship with Hashem.

G. Uniquely Holy Times and Places

Just like *kedusha* has many different levels, we also find in the various times of the year different kinds of *kedusha*. The days of the week, Rosh Chodesh, Yom Tov, Shabbos and Yom Kippur – each of these *kedushos* are different. *Kedusha* is not an all or nothing concept. It is related to different people, times and places.

Shem Mishmuel explains in a special *drasha* that there are three levels of *kedusha*. We see these three *kedushos* in the Mishkan: *Chatzer*, the outer courtyard; *Kodesh*, the first sanctuary; and *Kodesh Kadashim*, the inner sanctum of the Mishkan. These are the three levels of *kedusha* in the realm of place.

All Jews are allowed into the *Chatzer* except for *tma'im*. In the *kodesh*, which in the Beis Hamikdash was the *ulam* and *heichal*, only *kohanim* can enter. The only person who enters the *Kodesh Kadashim* is the *kohein gadol*. Here we find three levels of *kedusha* in people: 1) ordinary Jews; 2) *kohanim*; 3) the *kohein gadol*.

We also find three *kedushos* in the realm of time. The three types of holiness in time are 1) Rosh Chodesh 2) Yom Tov and 3) Shabbos. Rosh Chodesh has greater *kedusha* than weekdays, because of the special *korbanos* that are brought on the day. It is like the *chatzer* and parallels the ordinary Jew. Even though Rosh Chodesh is holier than regular weekdays, work is still permitted. On Yom Tov, however, we can do only some *melachos*, the ones that have to do with food preparation. This parallels the *kodesh* and the *kohen*. On Shabbos and Yom Kippur, even activities that have to do with *ochel nefesh* are prohibited. These days parallel the *kodesh kadashim* and the *kohein gadol*.

We thus have three levels of holiness in time that are similar to three types of *kedusha* in place and people.

H. Uniquely Holy People

We also find varying levels of *kedusha* practices for regular Jewish people. There is one type of *kedusha* that everyone has to keep, we must all stay away from prohibited things such as sexual prohibitions, prohibited foods, and prohibited creative activities of Shabbos. This is a *kedusha* that is expected and demanded of every Jew. In the realms of time and place, this is parallel to Rosh Chodesh and the *chatzer*.

The second level of holiness is *kadesh atzmecha b'mutar lach*, voluntary restraints. A person can eat as much cake as he wants, but he can decide that he will only eat a certain number of pieces a week. Or he could limit the time he spends browsing the web. These are activities that may normally be permitted. But the person who makes these commitments wants to achieve *kedusha* in things that are permitted. This is like Yom Tov, the days on which we can do certain *melachos*, but others are forbidden.

The third level of *kedusha* is related to the concept of *b'chol derachecha da'eihu*, restraint and holiness in all things. This is the level of the *tzadik*, the righteous Jew, who in every fiber of his being feels that he is serving Hashem. This is the level of Shabbos and Yom Kippur, days on which we serve Hashem the entire time. This is the level of the *tzadik*.

The various forms of the Mishkan also had different levels of *kedusha*. The *mitzva* of Mishkan that came right after the ten commandments was a very high level holy Mishkan. It was intended to be a building of almost pure spirit, like being in *Gan Eden* before the sin of the *eitz hadaas*. This high level Mishkan came about due to the intense love and excitement to be the people of God. Then came the terrible sin of *eigel*. The Mishkan was then transformed into a more physical building. This was the Mishkan after the sin. It was driven by feelings of repentance and a desire to come back to closeness with the Creator. This second Mishkan had less *kedusha* than the first one.

I. Two Ways of Getting Close to Hashem

Shem Mishmuel explains that we have two motivations to get closer to Hashem. Sometimes we feel inspired. We experience feelings of love and enthusiasm and we marvel at Hashem's immense blessings in this great world, and are grateful for the kindness He showers upon us in our lives. For example, when we come to the Kotel we feel the intense pull of His love pouring out to us from the holy mountain, and we respond with intense love and desire. This is the level of the first Mishkan.

But sometimes we sin, and our sins separate us from Him. We feel heartbroken afterwards and we feel that we need Him. We feel lost in the depths of sin without Him. We seek Him from the farthest distances of the world and feel that we cannot exist without Him. We are lost and need Hashem to bring us back. These feelings also bring us back to Hashem. These are the feelings of the second Mishkan, the Mishkan that was commanded after the *chet* and the subsequent *tshuva*.

J. Two Kinds of Shabbos

This dichotomy is reminiscent of two ideas of Shabbos. In the first set of commandments the Torah uses the word *zachor*, remember and cherish the Shabbos. *Shamor*, from the second set of *luchos*, is negative, meaning don't desecrate the Shabbos. *Zachor* – love the Shabbos – was given to us in the first commandments before the sin. It is the Shabbos of beauty and enjoyment, reveling in the beauty of the day. It is the Shabbos of inspiration.

The second set of *luchos* came after the *eigel*, after sin and repentance. There the Torah uses the word *shamor*. We need the Shabbos to save us from sin, alienation and isolation. We experience this aspect of Shabbos at night. As we leave the six days of the week when we feel so distant from God, we need Shabbos to bring us back. Shabbos is a form of repentance. Shabbos is similar to the word *tshuva*. Both words have the letters *shin bet* and *tav*. Shabbos can also be understood as *rashei teivos* for *Shabbos bo tashuv*. This is the Shabbos of *shamor*, of the *baal tshuva*. This is the Shabbos of the Jew who flees the *chol* (profanity) of the week.

Then comes Shabbos day. It is a day of closeness to Hashem. We are ready then to come closer and closer to our beloved God. Shabbos day elevates us higher and higher until we reach the pinnacle of *kedusha* at *shalashudis* as we eat and sing the *zmiros* at the climax of Shabbos. This resembles the

Mishkan before the sin, the state that Adam had before he ate from the *eitz hadaas*. This resembles the pre-*eigel* commandment, *zachor es yom haShabbos l'kadsho*. This is like the inner sanctum of the Mishkan, the *kodesh kadashim*.

K. Holy Vacillations

We all go back and forth spiritually, from closeness to Hashem and then to sinning. We then have to repent for our failures and sins. Our sins make us feel alienated and distant from our Creator. When we then seek Hashem with all of our being, we find Him. This is the Mishkan after the sin, which we should all have.

Sometimes, though, we are *zoche* to find Hashem through *ahavas* Hashem, through pure love and inspiration. When you stand on top of a mountain and see the view, you see God's handiwork. When you look at the sky, see the stars, the work of His hands. When you stand on the beach and see the endless ocean, let yourself be inspired. Standing atop a mountain overlooking the city of Jerusalem, let the holy city bring inspiration into your heart.

The inspiration of Israel and Jerusalem, of Shabbat *kodesh* and Yom kippur,, leads us to *Gan Eden*, to the Mishkan before the sin. This leads us to the ultimate *kedusha*, the holiness of Moshe Rabbeinu, of Adam and of Chava before the sin, and of Bnei Yisrael right after they received the Torah.

May we be *zoche* to both kinds of Mishkan and Shabbos, to both kinds of closeness to Hashem, to both *zachor* and *shamor*.

Questions:

1. When was the mitzva of Mishkan given, according to Rashi, according to Ramban?
2. What is Shem Mishmuel's theory regarding these two opinions of Rashi and Ramban?
3. What are the three levels of *kedusha* in the Mishkan?
4. What are the three levels of *kedusha* in time?
5. What are the three levels of *kedusha* in people?
6. What are two different approaches of how to relate to Hashem?
7. How are these approaches manifest on Shabbos?

Exercises:

1. Keep a record of spiritual events in your day. List inspirational situations, or situations of alienation and repentance that prompted you to seek spirituality.

May Hashem bless You in successfully building your own holy Mishkan.