



PROBING

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THE PROPHETS

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As our parasha begins detailing the construction and function of the Mishkan, so our haftarah does the same regarding the construction and function of the Beit Mikdash. But upon reading the details of the Mishkan, we note how the Torah focuses primarily on the vessels of the Mishkan and only after completing the description of the various keilim does the Torah begin to relate the mitzva of building the Mishkan itself.

The Ramban explains that Hashem's desire was to establish the Mishkan as the site of the Sh'china, which explains why the Aron, the "place" of G-d's presence is detailed first, followed by the Shulchan and the Menorah, set up in the inner Kodesh.

When, however, we read the description of the Bet Mikdash in our haftarah (and subsequent prakim in Sefer Melakhim), we find that the Menorah, the Shulchan and the Mizbe'ach – the "inner" keilim, play only minor roles in the description of the Mikdash, and even the role of the holy Aron seems less important than as it's depicted in our parasha. The command regarding the Menorah and the Shulchan in the Mishkan continues for eighteen verses in the Torah while only three verses are dedicated to these two vessels in Sefer Melakhim.

HaRav Moshe Lichtenstein suggests that

the very heart of the Mishkan is to be found in the keilim – the vessels - with the outer walls serving as a protective "shell" housing them. In the Mikdash, however, the structure is what's central to the Temple while the vessels were meant to fill the structure. He further points out, how the pillars ("amudim") in the Mishkan, served simply to support the structure and hold up the curtains - therefore containing no decorative elements. But the two pillars in the Bet Mikdash, are described as being adorned with capital and decorations. Besides being "ornamental", he argues, the pillars were also monumental. Their huge size attested to the fact that the building, with its pillars, was meant to impress all who visit and to fill a symbolic role beyond its functional role. These contrasting attitudes toward the pillars attest to a significant difference between the Mishkan and the Mikdash with respect to the purpose of the two buildings.

The Mikdash "grew" from the Mishkan and transformed it into a magnificent edifice of great dimensions, decorated with precious metals, carved walls, beautiful decorations, and large and numerous vessels. The principle underlying the building was splendor and majesty, finding expression in the larger dimensions, material wealth and structural decorations.

This all stands in stark contrast to the earlier Mishkan which was a temporary

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structure that could be taken apart; its roof was a tent, and its dimensions were much more modest. It was an expression of a different kind of spiritual experience, conveying a feeling of intimacy between man and God; its purpose was not to broadcast strength and power to the outside but to express the warmth of the Man-God relationship. We might submit that the construction of the Mishkan is better understood through its historical context as a framework of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness. It emphasized the dimension of intimacy and closeness to Hashem, a necessary spiritual step for that generation. In effect, the Mishkan highlighted the wilderness experience.

On the other hand, the Mikdash, G-d's "eternal house," presented spiritual balances that were not dependent on time

or place. Rather, the Temple was meant to represent a spiritual vision of strength and majesty, an element that was missing from the compact and portable Mishkan.

To summarize, the Mishkan conveyed intimacy and modesty while the Mikdash expressed strength and power; the former placed great emphasis on the quality of love, while the latter emphasized the quality of fear; the former turned inward and was directed exclusively to Israel, while the latter looked outward to impact all of humanity.

Ultimately, both lay out for us the requirements of a place of tefillah: a "mishkan" that creates the atmosphere of warmth and intimacy with Hashem and a "mikdash" that is capable of inspiring the proper reverence of His majesty.

We still struggle to reach those goals. ■