



GEULAS YISRAEL

RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN
RAM YESHIVAT HAR ETZION
MAGGID SHIUR ALL PARSHA AND ALL DAF, OU.ORG

Torah at the Center of Mikdash

Though the details of the Mishkan appear in the Torah before the chet ha'egel, many maintain that the actual construction of the Mishkan took place only after the trauma of the egel.

Har Sinai had briefly restored the Jewish people to an elevated human condition. Chazal describe that moment as *batlah zuhama*, the removal of the spiritual residue that had clung to humanity since the sin of Adam and Chava. Through direct encounter with Hashem at Sinai, something corrosive was lifted. In that state of clarity and closeness, the need for atonement would have been greatly diminished.

The egel shattered that condition. What followed was moral fragility and renewed

vulnerability to failure. In response to that altered spiritual state, Hashem introduced the Mishkan, a framework that made room for korbanot, and especially for atonement. The Mishkan acknowledged who we had become after the fall and offered a path forward.

PARSHAT TERUMAH BEFORE KI TISA

This historical reading, however, does not reflect the textual order. Although the instructions for the Mishkan were delivered after the debacle of the egel, the Torah records them earlier. The command to construct the Mishkan appears in Parashat Terumah, immediately following Har Sinai and well before the account of the egel in Parashat Ki Tisa.

This order raises an obvious question: if the command to build the Mishkan followed the collapse of the egel, why are its instructions recorded in Terumah rather than after Ki Tisa, where they would seem to belong?

Based on the Torah's sequencing, the Ramban concludes that the command to build the Mishkan preceded the sin of the egel. After the egel disaster, the project was suspended, and only following Moshe Rabbeinu's prolonged tefillah were the plans revived.

Rashi, however, maintains that the Mishkan instructions were delivered only after the egel. Why then does the Torah place them in Terumah, before the sin, rather than in Vayakhel, where the construction is carried out?

HAR SINAI AND THE MISHKAN

The textual placement itself provides the answer. The Mishkan is positioned in Terumah alongside Har Sinai because it continues the experience of revelation. It is more than a

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site of ritual activity or daily service. It is described as a dwelling place for the Shechinah and as a setting for encounter with Hashem. To highlight this dimension, the Torah omits any detailed listing of korbanot in Parashat Terumah. The Mishkan is introduced first as a place of presence and meeting, a continuation of Sinai woven into ordinary life, not merely as a structure for korbanot.

In this respect, the Mishkan extends the revelation of Har Sinai. Sinai was a singular moment, an overwhelming giluy Shechinah that could not endure in its original form. The Mishkan translated that moment into permanence. It allowed Hashem's presence to settle into daily life, not as a fleeting event but as an ongoing reality.

For this reason, the Mishkan stands alongside Sinai in the Torah's presentation. What occurred in thunder and fire is meant to continue in quieter form, embedded within daily routine and human structure.

The name "Mishkan" reflects this purpose. It denotes a dwelling place for the Shechinah, not a technical structure for korbanot. The same theme appears in the term Ohel Moed, which the Torah repeatedly uses. It is a tent of meeting, a space of encounter. These terms draw our attention away from ritual mechanics and toward the presence of Hashem.

If the Mishkan extends the giluy Shechinah of Sinai, it must operate under the same terms that defined that encounter. Revelation at Sinai was not only a moment of divine appearance; it was mediated through the delivery of Torah.

In Sefer Bereishit, Hashem appeared to our Avot without delivering Torah. Individuals could encounter Hashem without instruction. A nation could not.

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Collective knowledge of Hashem requires a shared text and an enduring framework. That framework was Torah. At Sinai, Hashem revealed Himself through Torah so that an entire people could know Him and carry that knowledge forward over time.

If the Mishkan was meant to preserve that encounter beyond Sinai, it could not rest on presence alone. It had to be grounded in Torah. To faithfully reflect Har Sinai, the Mishkan had to function as a center of Torah study, not merely as a place of ritual and sacrifice.

LUCHOT AND TORAH

To ensure that Torah stood at its heart, the Luchot were placed in the Aron at the center of the Mishkan. Additionally, a Sefer Torah was placed in the Aron—or, according to some opinions, on a shelf adjacent to it. By anchoring Torah at its core, the Mishkan served as a locus of Torah and sustained the



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conditions first established at Sinai.

But Torah was not only housed there; it was taught there.

Torah was transmitted through the Mishkan itself. The Torah was delivered in the Ohel Moed, which means the Mishkan functioned as the first Beit Midrash in our history. In Shir HaShirim, Shlomo HaMelech refers to it as *cheder horati*, the chamber of my teaching. The Mishkan preserved the giluy Shechinah of Sinai because it sustained Torah study, and Torah remained the axis of that revelation.

SANHEDRIN

This function did not end once we entered Eretz Yisrael. After settlement, Torah study spread into homes and local batei midrash throughout cities and villages. The Mikdash was no longer the only place of learning, as it may have been in the midbar. Yet it remained the central locus of Torah. The Sanhedrin HaGedolah sat in the Lishkat HaGazit, adjacent to the Mikdash. It served not only as a judicial body but as the primary conduit of Torah sheba'al peh before it was committed to writing. In that sense, it was as much a study hall as a court.

Its authority was not symbolic but functional.

As the Rambam writes (Hilchot Mamrim 1:2), the members of the Sanhedrin are the pillars of Torah teaching, and through them Torah reaches the entire Jewish people. A zaken mamre who defies the Sanhedrin does more than dispute a ruling. He challenges the integrity of the mesorah itself.

By situating the Aron HaKodesh, which housed the Luchot and a Sefer Torah, together with the Sanhedrin HaGedolah within the Beit HaMikdash, the Mikdash became the seat of both Torah shebichtav and Torah sheba'al peh. It was not only a site of korbanot,

but a place of Torah. Without Torah study, the nation could not sustain a Sinai-like encounter with the Shechinah.

To underscore the linkage between korbanot and Torah, at least one Kohen would sit on the Sanhedrin. This connection bound avodah at the mizbeach to deliberation in Torah. The Mikdash was sustained not by ritual alone, but by Torah that gave ritual its meaning. Only through this integration could the Mikdash preserve the structure of Sinai within national life.

TORAH AS A SAFEGUARD

Beyond structure and symbolism, there was a deeper concern. There was yet another reason the Mishkan, and later the Mikdash, were anchored in Torah study. First, to perpetuate the Torah-based giluy Shechinah of Sinai. Second, to prevent ritual from becoming empty form. Without Torah at its center, the Mikdash risked devolving into ceremony detached from encounter. Sustaining Torah study ensured that the spirit of the rituals remained present, not only their structure.

Each day, after Shemoneh Esrei, we pray for the rebuilding of the Mikdash, speedily in our time. We ask that Hashem grant us our share in Torah and allow us once again to offer korbanot: v'tein chelkeinu b'Toratecha v'sham na'avodcha b'yirah. Without the Mikdash, our access to Torah is diminished. When the Mikdash is restored, our access to the divine will of Hashem will be restored as well. ■



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