

## PARASHAT TERUMA

### A Return to the Garden of Eden Rav Amnon Bazak

*Parashat Teruma* opens the series of *parashot* devoted to the *Mishkan*, the resting place of God's Divine Presence. The Torah's lengthy description of God's command, and then the repetition of its fulfillment, certainly testifies to the importance and special significance of the *Mishkan*. It is therefore appropriate that we study the purpose of the *Mishkan* and why the Torah sees fit to elaborate at such length on its construction.

Many commentators have pointed out the unmistakable linguistic parallels between the description of the construction of the *Mishkan* and the description of the Creation of the world. Let us consider some of them:

1. At the end of the Creation, we read, "And God saw all that He had done, and behold, it was very good" (*Bereishit* 1:31). Correspondingly, with the conclusion of the construction of the *Mishkan*, we are told, "And Moshe saw all the work, and behold, they had done it – as God had commanded, so they had done" (*Shemot* 39:43).
2. In the story of Creation, we find, "The heavens and the earth and all of their host were completed, and God completed on the seventh day His workmanship which He had done" (*Bereishit* 2:1-2). When the *Mishkan* is finished, we read, "All the labor of the *Mishkan*, the Tent of Meeting, was completed... and Moshe completed the workmanship" (*Shemot* 39:32; 40:33).
3. Both endeavors end with a blessing: "God blessed the seventh day" (*Bereishit* 2:3); "And Moshe blessed them" (*Shemot* 39:43).
4. The verb "a-s-h" (to do, make) is used seven times in the Creation of the world: "God made (*va-ya'as*) the firmament" (*Bereishit* 1:7); "And God made (*va-ya'as*) the two lights" (1:16), etc. In the construction of the *Mishkan*, this verb recurs almost 200 times: "Let them make (*va-asu*) for Me a Sanctuary" (*Shemot* 25:8); "Let them make (*va-asu*) an Ark" (25:9); "You shall make (*va-asita*) a Table" (25:23), etc.
5. In *Sefer Mishlei* (3:19-20), the Creation is described with the words: "The Lord founded the earth with wisdom; with understanding He established the heavens. By His knowledge the depths were broken up..." These adverbial descriptions are precisely the qualities that appear later on in the chief builder of the *Mishkan* – Betzalel ben Uri: "He willed him with a spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, and with knowledge, and with all manner of workmanship" (*Shemot* 31:3).

In *midrashei Chazal*, we also find a repeated parallel between the workmanship of the *Mishkan* and the Creation of the world. Thus, for example, in *Midrash Tanchuma (Pekudei 2)*:

Why does the verse say, "God, I love the habitation of Your House and the place where Your glory dwells" (*Tehillim* 26:8)? Because [the *Mishkan*] is compared to the Creation of the world. How is this so? On the first day [of Creation], we are told, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (*Bereishit* 1:1), and it is written, "He spreads the heavens like a curtain (*ki-yeri'a*)" (*Tehillim* 104:2). Concerning the *Mishkan*, what does the text say? "You shall make curtains of goat skins (*yeri'ot izzim*)" (*Shemot* 26:7). On the second day, we find, "Let there be a firmament," and the concept of division appears, as it is written, "Let it divide water from water" (*Bereishit* 1:6); concerning the *Mishkan*, it is written, "And the *parokhet* will divide for you" (*Shemot* 26:33)...

The *midrash* goes on to point out parallels between each of the days of Creation and different stages in the construction of the *Mishkan*.

But the question remains: for what purpose does the construction of the *Mishkan* recall the Creation of the world? For what reason are *Bnei Yisrael* commanded to "repeat" the Creation as described in the first chapter of *Bereishit*?

The answer to this question lies in understanding man's purpose in light of the first chapter on Creation. In this chapter, the Torah emphasizes that man was created in the image of God and that his role is to rule over the world. In this way, man realizes his potential similarity to God:

And God said: "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea..." And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them. And God blessed them and He said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea..." (*Bereishit* 1:26-28)

From the very start, man is called upon to act in a manner that imitates God – the faithful God with Whom there is no injustice.

"You shall follow the Lord your God" – Is it then possible for a person to follow the Divine Presence? ... Rather, [it means] to follow God's qualities. Just as He clothes the naked... so you shall clothe the naked; God visited the sick... likewise you should visit the sick; the Holy One, blessed be He, comforted mourners... so you, too, should comfort mourners; God buried the dead... likewise you should bury the dead. (*Sota* 14a)

The same idea underlies the construction of the *Mishkan*. Just as God created the world and caused man to dwell in it, so man is called upon to build a place for God: "Let them make Me a Sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst" (*Shemot* 25:8). Through this act, man becomes God's partner in the Creation of the world. "R. Tarfon said: God did not rest His Presence upon Israel until they performed workmanship, as it is written, 'Let them make Me a Sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst'" (*Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, chapter 11).

However, in chapter 2 of *Bereishit*, in the description of man being placed in the Garden of Eden, the picture is different. Here, God goes about in the Garden, and man is entrusted only with the obligation to obey God's command and the role of – "to tend it and to guard it" (*Bereishit* 2:15).

Indeed, this description of the Creation, and man's role within it, also has a parallel in the *Mishkan*. Just as the process of building the *Mishkan* corresponds to man's role in the first chapter of *Bereishit*, so the description of the Divine service in the *Mishkan* parallels man's role in the second chapter of *Bereishit*. There are several points of similarity between the *Mishkan* and *Gan Eden*, and thus between those serving in the *Mishkan* and those living in *Gan Eden*:

1. In *Gan Eden*, Adam is entrusted with the obligation "to tend it and to keep it" (*le-ovda u-le-shomra*). These are also the roles of the *kohanim* and the *levi'im* in the *Mishkan*: "They shall keep (*ve-shamru*) all the vessels of the Tent of Meeting... to perform (*la-avod*) the service of the *Mishkan*" (*Bamidbar* 3:8; see also 8:26; 18:4).
2. God's appearance in the Garden is described with the words (*Bereishit* 3:8), "They heard the sound of the Lord God going about (*mithalekh*) in the Garden." Concerning the *Mishkan*, we read in *Vayikra* 26:11-12: "I shall make My dwelling place in their midst... and I shall go about (*ve-hithalakhti*) in their midst and I shall be their God."
3. *Keruvim* were placed at the entrance to *Gan Eden* in order "to guard the path of the Tree of Life." In the *Mikdash*, two *keruvim* were placed upon the Ark, which held the Tablets of Testimony, the essence of Torah, "a tree of life for those who grasp it."
4. God clothed Adam and Chava in *Gan Eden*: "And the Lord God made coats of skin (*kutnot or*) for Adam and for his wife, and He clothed them" (*Bereishit* 3:21). Correspondingly, Moshe performs a similar action during the Days of Inauguration: "And you shall make coats (*kutnot*) for the sons of Aharon... and you shall clothe Aharon your brother and his sons with them" (*Shemot* 28:40-41).

This, then, is the other aspect of building the *Mishkan*. The first aspect viewed the essence of the *Mishkan* as the actual doing, the action itself, paralleling God's action in creating the world, while the other aspect focuses on the result – the resting of the Divine Presence within the *Mishkan*, which is a return to the idyllic world of the Garden of Eden, the world from which Adam was banished.

Thus, we learn that the building of the *Mishkan* was a *tikkun* for Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden. The Exodus from Egypt created, as it were, *Am Yisrael*. The building of the *Mishkan* facilitated a return to a state in which God goes about amongst *Bnei Yisrael*. Adam was unable to bear this spiritual tension, and he sinned. Can *Bnei Yisrael* now meet God's demands? Will they be able to avoid a return to sin?

Eventually, *Bnei Yisrael* are destined to sink into the depths of sin, to be expelled once again – this time from the *Gan Eden* that is *Eretz Yisrael*. At the same time, the Divine Presence leaves the Sanctuary – the miniature *Gan Eden*: "He has stripped His dwelling like a garden, and has destroyed His meeting place" (*Eikha* 2:6). However, the Divine Presence is destined to return to Israel, and the waters of *Gan Eden* will once again proceed from the Sanctuary:

And by the river, on its bank on this side and on that, there shall grow every tree for food; its leaves will not wither, nor will its fruit fail. It shall bring forth new fruit every month, for it is from the Sanctuary that its waters emerge. (*Yechezkel* 47:12)

Translated by Kaeren Fish