

פקודי

WHERE THE SHECHINAH RESTS

ויכס הענן את אהל מועד, וכבוד ה' מלא את המשכן

Then a cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the Glory of Hashem filled the *Mishkan* (*Shemos* 40:34).

Klal Yisrael successfully completed the building of the *Mishkan* so that Hashem would then have a resting place (so to speak) among His nation, the ultimate goal of creation. This represented a unique unity of Hashem and *Klal Yisrael* in *Olam Hazeh*. This was not a spurious decision on the part of Hashem, but rather, part of the overall plan of creation (*Megillah* 10:; *Bereishis Rabbah* 3:9).

The Torah introduces the creation of the world with the initial relationship of Hashem to his creation:

...ורוח אלקי מרחפת על פני המים

... and the spirit of Hashem hovered over the face of the waters (*Bereishis* 1:2).

Hashem hovered over the earth as a mother dove hovers over her young without touching them (*Chagigah* 15•). Why was the Throne of Glory standing suspended in the air over the waters which covered the face of the earth? Could He not have landed on the water? If the fish, which He created, survive in water, could He not at least have sat on the surface of the waters or arranged for a bit of dry land as a landing site?

The above-mentioned *pasuk* teaches us that Hashem hovers until He finds a *suitable* resting place. Clearly, Hashem could rest anywhere He very well chooses, but the emphasis here is on the word “suitable.” So, until a suitable site was located, Hashem chose to maintain a “hovering” posture. That suitable site had to develop from within created entities.

The *Midrash* (*Bereishis Rabbah* 60:16) relates that the place where the *Shechinah* finally elected to rest was over the home of Avraham and Sarah. Although this was merely an everyday tent, it nevertheless was a desirable sanctuary to Hashem. Avraham and Sarah led a normal human existence as husband and wife. Avraham was involved in “every day life,” he earned a livelihood, and they both had dealings with their neighbors. Yet, they lived their materialistic lives so nobly, with such supreme devotion to Hashem, that He elected to forsake the heavens and to occupy their tent (see Rashi, *Shabbos* 55:).

Hashem does not expect man to ignore his body and to dim his passions, but only to sanctify and purify them, so that man can lead a life of *kedushah* —holiness. The Kotzker Rebbe explained the verse “*Ve’anshei kodesh tiheyun Li*,” which is literally translated as “You shall be holy people to me” (*Shemos* 22:30), in an innovative fashion: “You shall be holy in a *menshlich* fashion.” This is a *kedushah* which takes into account the nature of man, and not a *kedushah* of asceticism which requires withdrawal from all earthly pleasures.

Avraham and Sarah are not to be considered great merely because they fortuitously became the progenitors of *Klal Yisrael*; they became the progenitors of *Klal Yisrael* because they were so great. They identified Hashem and spent every moment of their lives walking in His ways. When the excellence of their character and the developed nobility of their souls caused Hashem to choose their tent as His resting site, Hashem's spirit discontinued Its hovering, and declared their simple home His sanctuary.

The *Mishkan* in the *midbar* was actually a replica of the tents of the *Avo* and *Imahos*. The *Shechinah* considered each of their tents Its personal sanctuary, and the *keilim* — vessels — of the *Mishkan* were patterned after their household utensils. Sarah had a *menorah*, for example, which miraculously burned from *Erev Shabbos* to *Erev Shabbos*; this was reproduced in the *Mishkan*. Sarah also had a special Divine blessing bestowed upon her dough, and this, too, was duplicated in the *Mishkan*. The *Shechinah* rested on her tent, so too with the *Mishkan*. Rabbi Yochanan (*Berachos* 55•) and Reish Lakish (*Chagigah* 27•) compare the Jewish table to the Altar of the Sanctuary.

The Ramban (*Bereishis* 46:1) reveals that when the *Avos* and *Imahos* passed away, the *Shechinah* was once again “forced” to resume a hovering posture, for It no longer had a suitable resting place. It was not until *Klal Yisrael* erected the *Mishkan* in the *midbar* that the *Shechinah* was content to call a man-made structure Its abode. Hence, it is part of the Divine plan that Hashem seeks a dwelling place in the midst of His creation. The Torah (*Shemos* 25:8) states: “They shall make Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell among *them*.” The Torah does not state, “I will dwell in it,” because the *Mishkan* brought man so close to Hashem that all could almost palpably sense the *Shechinah* within their midst. The Ramban (*Vayikra* 25:12) quotes the *Midrash* (*Bereishis Rabbah* 19:13), which states that the world was created with the intention that: “The Divine Presence was to be mainly in the lower world.” With each progressive sin on the part of mankind, this Presence withdrew to the remote heavens, until the Patriarchs appeared and gradually brought His Presence back into the lower world. When the *Mishkan* was completed and His Glory came to dwell therein, the process of return was completed.

Shlomo *Hamelech* expressed his consternation with the concept of assigning a physical abode to the Creator.

כי האמנם ישב אלקי על הארץ, הנה השמים ושמי השמים לא יכלכלוך, אף כי-הבית הזה
אשר בניתי

“But will Hashem indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house that I have built?” (*Melachim* I 8:27).

To which Yeshayah responded by quoting Hashem:

...השמים כסאי והארץ הדם רגלי, אי-זה בית אשר תבנו-לי ואי-זה מקום מנוחתי

“The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool; where is the house that you build for Me? and where is the place of My rest?” (*Yeshayah* 66:1).

For what Hashem wants most of all is to have a “*Beis Hashem*” — “a House of Hashem” (*ibid.* 20) — for it is the central theme of the Divine plan. Hashem does not want to hover over His creation, but He wants (so to speak) to live “among them.”

Rashi (*Shabbos* 55:) clearly states that before the building of the *Mishkan*, the *Shechinah* was to be found upon the tents of the righteous. Yaakov *Avinu* chose from among the four tents of his wives by examining which one tent was endowed with the presence of the *Shechinah* on that particular day. The fact that it was standard practice for the *Shechinah* to rest over the tents of the righteous, is intimated from a verse in *Iyov*:

כאשר הייתי בימי חרפי, בסוד אלוקי על אהלי

“As I was in the days of my youth, when the counsel of G-d was upon my tent”
(29:4).

Iyov reveals that the “counsel of G-d” was in his tent and foretold all future events.

The Ramban (introduction to *Shemos*) hints that the complete redemption of *Klal Yisrael* from *galus Mitzraim* was not fully achieved until the *Shechinah* came to rest upon the *Mishkan*, signifying that *Klal Yisrael* had achieved an exalted spiritual status akin to that of the *Avos*. It is for this reason that *Shemos* begins with a discussion and description of *galus Mitzraim* and the redemption therefrom and then concludes with the narrative account of the building of the *Mishkan*. For this account of *Klal Yisrael* parallels *Bereishis* — the account of the *Avos*. Rashi (*Bereishis* 17:22) states even further that the righteous are the “chariot of the H-ly One, Blessed be He” (see Ramban 47:8), meaning that the *Shechinah* rests over all *tzadikim*. *Bereishis* chronicles the greatness of the *Avos*, itemizing their trials and tribulations, their achievements, and the distinction of having had the *Shechinah* rest over their tents. Similarly, *Shemos* chronicles the trials and tribulations of *Klal Yisrael* in the “*kur habarzeil*” — “iron furnace” — of Egypt (*Devarim* 4:20), and the book then concludes with their great spiritual ascension, the distinction of having the *Shechinah* rest over the *Oheil Mo'eid*.

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