

CLASS 1 - PARSHAS TERUMAH

by Rabbi Heshy Grossman

Imagine for a moment that the Temple Mount is free and clear, with freedom to build as we wish. After consulting with the Gedolei HaDor, architectural plans are drawn for the Third Bais HaMikdash, and engineers begin designing the final structure.

Would the Shechinah be present?

Of course not.

It would be a grand synagogue, an impressive sight, but it wouldn't be fit for the Divine sacrificial service.

It would be a beautiful facade, but the inner life that marked the Temple era cannot be recaptured merely by duplicating ancient structures.

In this shiur we will explain the nature of the Mishkan, its relationship to modern life, and the method by which the Divine presence is brought to earth.

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This past week, Jerusalem was scene of perhaps the largest rally in the history of the State of Israel. A crowd of anywhere between three and four hundred thousand religious Jews, primarily Chareidi, gathered in mass prayer, protesting the incursions of the Israeli Supreme Court into religious affairs. Though forbidden to do so by the Attorney General, both chief rabbis were visible participants.

The call to protest sparked an extraordinary furor, culminating with a failed attempt by secular opponents to halt the 'assault upon democracy'. Unquestionably, the protest gathering struck a raw nerve, as press reports fanned public fear of the surging Chareidi menace.

Why has this issue, more than any other in recent memory, threatened people so?

The strength and stability of any society depends upon the integrity of its legal system. The rule of law insures that order will be maintained; that the government has the power to wield its authority.

What gives the law its strength?

Only the acquiescence of its citizens. In modern society, the law has no independent justification. In dictatorial regimes, the law is maintained by citizens' surrender to the barrel of a gun, while democratic countries have gained the confidence of their inhabitants, pursuing a joint commitment

to the government's legislative authority.

In other words, the law has force only to the extent that people are willing to listen.

What threw Israeli secularists into a tizzy is this: if one million religious inhabitants have lost respect for the Supreme Court, their own hopes for a cultural revolution are doomed.

Take the following scenario. The court rules that Yeshiva students must report for army induction. The Yeshivos refuse. What could be done? You cannot very well throw one hundred thousand students in jail. Internment camps would't go over too well, either. The attorney-general doesn't have the moral authority to discipline two chief rabbis, much less an entire sector of society.

As the Chazon Ish said to Ben-Gurion during their historic encounter in Cheshvan, 1952: "Every country solidifies its law by strength of force. In this manner, they successfully induce even unwilling citizens to behave properly. However, a law that undermines the tenets of faith is destined to fail, for in its face will stand suicidal divisions, men of strong spirit, whom no force will overcome. The law, therefore, will have no impact upon them, and the State will come out on the short end ...Your rifles are of benefit only so long as the Gedolei Torah have not yet ruled 'YaHarog V'Al Ya'avor' (be killed, rather than sin), for the moment they so decide, there will be no value to your threats!"

Here is the point: True strength is internal. To the extent that man is faithful to his belief, he can withstand armies of opponents whose power extends only as far as their bullets fly.

2

Let us return to our subject.

The Temple in Jerusalem was only a mirror of its Heavenly counterpart, precise parallel of G-d's Heavenly abode, the Bais HaMikdash Shel Ma'alah

Nebuchadnezzar and Titus may have destroyed the physical Bais HaMikdash, but the true Temple is not a building of stone, rather, it occupies the inner dimension of the spirit, where G-d enters the heart of man.

The entirety of creation was revealed to the prophets in human form. This is because man contains within himself cosmic forces that transcend his physical body. His varied parts and limbs, elements of a higher image, the Tzelem Elokim, are human manifestations symbolic of a larger dimension, the primordial man who encompasses all creation.

This conception of human life binds man to his Creator, and he shoulders the responsibility to reflect the thirteen characteristics of his Maker.

"It is appropriate that man be comparable to his Master, and then he will the secret of the Heavenly form, image and likeness. For if he will be comparable physically, but not behaviorally, he gives lie to his form.....and of what benefit is it to be like the Heavenly form in the likeness of the frame of his

limbs, yet with his actions not relating to his Maker! (Tomer Devorah, Ch. 1)

The deeds of man affect more than his immediate environment. If he wishes, man can reach the heavens, the perfect man reflecting the G-dly image that is the essence of his being.

Man is more than a mere body. His physical form is the casing of a spiritual dimension in which he connects the material world to its Heavenly core.

The Mishkan, and subsequently, the Bais HaMikdash, is a third element that parallels man and creation. It too, is a microcosm of the universe, every room and chamber alluding to a specific limb or dimension.

It is for this reason that the Holy of Holies is located at the center of existence, the Even HaShesiyah that is the bedrock of creation. The Temple is the fulcrum upon which all the world revolves, and the Kodosh HaKodashim at its heart pumps life to all existence.

In a parallel sense then, it is man that is the heart of creation. He is the focus of G-d's attention, and the spark that activates Divine intervention. The world is responsive to his thought and deed, transformed into a vehicle that actualizes G-d's will.

Man is the Temple, and his heart is the Holy of Holies.

He dedicates his thoughts and desires to the fulfillment of G-d's word, sacrificing himself at the altar of Divine command. He purifies his mind with the study of Torah, recognizing that to stray after temptation is to sully His abode.

"In truth, the wise man who understands this precisely, his heart should tremble within him in fright, when contemplating his evil deeds, G-d forbid, the extent to which they reach, the ruin and destruction of one sin....much more than what was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and Titus." (Nefesh HaChaim,1, 4)

Much as the true strength of a country is the loyalty of its citizens, and power is the potency of one's beliefs, so too, the survivability of the Temple extends only as far as the holiness of man.

"V'Asu Li Mikdash, V'Shachanti B'Socham" - "And they shall build for Me a Temple, and I will dwell in their midst" (Shmos 25, 8). In 'their' midst, not in the Mishkan itself, for the people of Israel are the true Temple.

Titus and Nebuchadnezzar destroyed mere facades, empty shells whose protective holiness had been decimated by the onset of sin.

It is for this reason that the Third Bais HaMikdash must wait for G-d's word. Modern man can hardly define holiness, much less hope to physically host the Divine Presence. G-d has promised that He will someday remove the stone from our hearts, and until then we struggle with ourselves, trying to clear a corner of our lives for the revelation that is sure to be.

"K'Chol Asher Ani Mar'eh Oscha, Es Tavnis HaMishkan, V'Es Tavnis Kol Keilav, V'Chen Ta'asu" - "As all that I show you, the form of the Mishkan, and the form of all its vessels, so shall you do" (Shmos 28, 9)

"V'Chen Ta'asu" - "L'Doros" (for all the generations (Rashi, ad. loc.)

This is our task. Though the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed long ago, the Divine sanctuary in our hearts still remains. Pure and untouched, it waits for us; ready to shine in all its splendor, lighting up the world with the holiness of His Name.

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