

# THE FUTURE IS NOW

by Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein

*Take for me terumah... You shall make for me a mikdash, and I will dwell amongst you.*<sup>[2]</sup>

Don't get distracted by the powerful beginning of the *parshah*, and all the messages that we traditionally have absorbed from it. It still seems all wrong.

It is just not the way the Torah does things. We would have expected it to command the Bnei Yisrael to build a *mishkan*, and only afterwards specify the details. Instead, we have six *pesukim* inventorying the materials needed for a job that has not yet been commanded! It should have prescribed the collection of the materials only after telling us their intended purpose. The Torah jumps into the collection process, and only then tells us that the proceeds are to be used for a *mishkan*.

Truth be told, it doesn't come around to specifying the purpose of the appeal, even in inverted order. The name of Bezalel's building project was "*mishkan*." Why, coming out of the gate, doesn't the Torah call it that, rather than call it *mikdash*? The latter word is an appropriate description of the function of the *mishkan*, but it is also a more general term. Why not call the *mishkan* – "*mishkan*?" That would ground the *parshah* in a particular portable apparatus that would accompany the Bnei Yisrael for centuries to come, and was known and recognized by everyone.

Even out of order, the instructions are confusing. After the Torah comes around to telling us that they are to build a *mishkan*, it immediately adds, "According to all that I will show you: the form of the *mishkan*, and the form of all its utensils. So you shall do!"<sup>[3]</sup> The Torah should have simply stated, "The *mishkan* and its utensils should be according to the form that you will be shown." Additionally, we would like to know why the matter needs so much repetition. The Torah finds it necessary in speaking of different utensils to repeat<sup>[4]</sup> the instruction to be attentive to the "form," the visual manual, that Moshe would receive.

Chazal have a puzzling reaction to the "So you shall do!" of our *pasuk*. They see in this an instruction that all future construction of similar structures follow the same essential plan: "And so it shall be for all generations!"<sup>[5]</sup> It seems strange to us that Chazal should have to find a target for its *derashah* in the distant future, rather than in some detail inherent in the immediate task that the *pasuk* describes.

Unless that is precisely the point. Our *parshah* really does not deal with the *mishkan*, but with the eventual construction of a *mikdash*, in the time of Shlomo! That (and the ones that would follow)

collectively serve as an everlasting abode for the *Shechinah*. The Bnei Yisrael are here instructed to prepare a working model for the real thing. The *mishkan* would not be an eternal dwelling place for Hashem's Presence. It would, however, offer the *tavnin*, the form that would "for all generations" guide others in the construction of the permanent *mikdash* in its time, and for the *kelim* inside.

Our *parshah* therefore instructs the Bnei Yisrael to gather materials and create a *mishkan*. It is not preceded by a commandment to build a *mishkan*; that is not the goal. Rather, all of the activity in our *parshah* serves as a preparatory stage - to provide a model for the future. The real goal was still, in the days of Moshe, far off in the future. Only in the days of Shlomo would we see a fulfillment of that goal, in the completion of a permanent *mikdash*.

Another point worth pondering is the great amount of diversity in the instructions given to Moshe. The subsection about the menorah and its accessories concludes with a reminder to follow what he is being shown, *mar'eh*, on the mountain.<sup>[6]</sup> The Torah uses the present tense. In the case of the *mishkan*'s structure, however, the Torah employs the past tense, as "you were shown," *asher hereisa*.<sup>[7]</sup> In regard to the altar, it is the past tense again - "as you were shown, *asher hereh* - but it is immediately followed with "and so shall they do."<sup>[8]</sup>

The differences between then reflect the difficulty in comprehension and execution of the various tasks. At Sinai, those who came closer to the top saw some sort of prophetic vision which included what was "under G-d's feet."<sup>[9]</sup> This is a reference to Hashem's footstool, which is none other than the *mikdash*, as we find in Eichah, "He did not remember His footstool on the day of His anger."<sup>[10]</sup> We can further suppose that they saw the *mishkan* with its contents. That image stayed with them. In connection with two elements, the Torah refers to this image in the past. The altar was the least complicated. Moshe could relate what it was based on what he saw, and verbally communicate it well enough that the Bnei Yisrael were able to construct it without any other help. The erection of the *mishkan* was a bit more difficult. Moshe had to consult with the image that he remembered in order to guide the people. The menorah held the greatest difficulty. Moshe could not proceed without being shown again - thus the present tense- exactly what the menorah was to look like.

1. Based on Meleches Machsheves by R. Moshe Cheifetz, 1663-1711.
2. Shemos 25:8.
3. Shemos 25:9.
4. Shemos 25:40; 27:8.
5. Shevuos 15A.
6. Shemos 25:40.
7. Shemos 26:30.

8. Shemos 27:8
9. Shemos 24:10
10. Eichah 2:1

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