

THE INCREDIBLE VERSATILITY OF THE MISHKAN AND SHABBOS

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The Incredible Versatility of the Mishkan and Shabbos¹

Juxtaposing Shabbos to the Mishkan makes eminent sense to us. We've seen Rashi's comment, that placing Shabbos first in our parshah, before mentioning the Mishkan, serves notice to us that Shabbos takes precedence in any conflict with the readying of the Mishkan. Construction of the Mishkan goes on hiatus when Shabbos arrives; its *kedushah* brings the work of building the Mishkan to a grinding halt.

Upon further reflection, however, we ought not to be so pleased with this explanation, even though it rings true. The reason that it rings true is that we've heard the message before, in parshas Ki Sisa, where the Torah appends a warning to the final instructions regarding the Mishkan's construction.

"However, you must observe My Shabbosos."² Rashi there as well offers that the Torah links Shabbos to Mishkan so that we will understand that building the Mishkan does not trump the strictures of Shabbos. So why do we need to hear this twice?

A clue lies in the timing of our parshah. Moshe gave it to us on the day after Yom Kippur, the day that he made his way down the mountain with the news that HKBH had forgiven them for the sin of the Golden Calf. Along with that welcome news came a restatement of two mitzvos which had been mentioned before: Shabbos and Mishkan. Precisely because of the role that these two would play in the process of maintaining the process of *teshuvah*, they had to be repeated on the morrow after our first national experience with Hashem's forgiveness.

Shabbos and Mishkan share an element of universal relevance. They both target all Jews, even those at the extremes of continuum of spiritual accomplishment. They both address people on the absolutely highest levels of spiritual accomplishment, as well as those who have fallen into the deepest ruts. Shabbos illuminates the world of the Jew who lives on the cutting edge of spirituality. On the other hand, even the Jew who has strayed so far as to worship *avodah zarah* like the generation of Enosh can find atonement through the proper observance of Shabbos.³

The Mishkan parallels this, exactly. Even those (or more accurately, precisely those) on the highest levels are moved by the influence channeled through the *aron* and the *luchos* to a more sophisticated appreciation of Torah and Divine service. The menorah directed a Light of *Elokus* to those same people. The flame atop the outer altar that burnt through the night offered protection

from the darkness of all kinds of mishaps. In a similar manner, each of the vessels of the Mishkan offered some similar dividend of influence from Above, which could be appreciated and utilized best by the spiritual cognoscenti.

At the same time, the Mishkan certainly functioned as a lifeline to those who were spiritually adrift. The sinner brought his offering here to find atonement. The most regular fixtures of the Mishkan served a similar purpose. Chazal tell us that the morning Tamid atoned for nocturnal sins, while the afternoon Tamid addressed daytime sins.⁴

This, then, is the significance of the coupling of Shabbos and Mishkan, and its twice-articulated statement. Both of them have great relevance to the Jew in Ki Sisa, untainted by the sin of the *Egel*. But both speak a different language and offer a very different service to the Jew in Vayakhel, weighed down by the burden of a very serious *aveirah*. To them they offer guidance and encouragement on the path to a spiritual makeover. The Torah presents Shabbos and Mishkan twice - together - to underscore their parallel roles, and their application both before and after *chet*.

Considered more deeply, we find that not only has the Torah charged Shabbos with two different roles, but those roles can be thought of as opposite sides of the same coin. As a source of ethereal illumination, Shabbos is an example of *isr'usa del'ayla* - of awakening sent from above. Through Shabbos, the Jew who is pure and cleansed of sin can draw towards himself the its light and holiness. Shabbos stands in the opposite position for the post-*chet* Jew. To him, Shabbos comes in the form of *isr'usa del'sasa* - arousal begun from below. Shabbos is effective for him only to the extent that he has readied himself prior to its arrival by jettisoning his deficiencies and loosening his attachment to the mundane. (The *zachor/shamor* duality directly flows from this. *Zachor*, the positive, affirmative facet of Shabbos, relates to the light and *kedushah* it brings. *Shamor*, the avoidance of forbidden activity, points to the avodah, the difficult inner preparation that Shabbos demands of some of us.)

We understand the reference to the use of the plural *Shabsosai* in Ki Sisa; we can experience indeed two different kinds of Shabbos, depending on our level. When the Gemara⁵ speaks of Shabbos as the "good gift" that Hashem wishes to release from His treasure trove, it means the pre-*chet* Shabbos, which in fact is a freely offered gift - at least to those on the level to deserve it. On the other hand, when in Kiddush we mention that "Bnei Yisrael guarded, **observed** Shabbos *la'asos*, to **make** the Shabbos," we point to the post-*chet* Shabbos that places the burden of effort upon ourselves and our doing. Without our own activity and input, we are unable to enter into the Shabbos experience. (The Zohar⁶ tells us that there is a continuum of successful preparation. An anagram of the letters of Shabbos is *boshes*, shame. The embarrassment we feel about our own inadequacy as the holiness of Shabbos approaches is itself a form of effective preparation for it.)

We get some idea of the extent of Shabbos' reach in the Zohar's⁷ insistence that even evildoers

consigned to *gehinom* participate in Shabbos. R. Yosi sees an allusion to this in the double portion that Bnei Yisrael were instructed to collect on *erev* Shabbos so that they would not have to collect the manna on Shabbos itself. The evildoers as well, says R. Yosi receive a double dose of their punishment on *erev* Shabbos, so that they too - even those who publicly violated Shabbos in their lifetimes - experience Shabbos as a day of peace and rest.

The essential point is that Shabbos - like the Mishkan - has universal application without exception, extending to all people, saint and sinner alike.

¹ Based on Nesivos Shalom pgs 259-261

² Shemos 31:13

³ Shabbos 118B

⁴ Bamidbar Rabbah 21:21

⁵ Shabbos 10B

⁶ Tikunei Zohar 5B

⁷ Zohar Chadash, Bereishis