

MICROCOSM AND REFLECTION

by Rabbi Aron Tendler

Starting with the Torah's account of the building of the Mishkan in Parshas Terumah, and through the end of Sefer Shemos, Shabbos is mentioned three times. The first mention (31:13) and the last (35:1 - this week's Parsha) are agreed to by all the commentaries. The second mention (34:21) is argued as to whether it refers to Shabbos or to the Shmitah year. These references are in addition to the Ten Commandments which introduced Shabbos as the fourth Commandment.

Why does the Torah repeat the mitzvah of Shabbos so often, and why in juxtaposition to the account of the building of the Mishkan?

As we know, the Mishkan was a direct response to the sin of the Golden Calf. If not for the Golden Calf, there would have been no need for G-d to restrict Himself to the confines of a tent. G-d's manifestation would have been self-evident through the constancy of nature and each and of us would have learned, by osmosis and through example, to integrate G-d into our daily thinking and behavior. The other nations would have seen the health, happiness, and contentment of our "G-dly" life styles, and they would have desired to emulate our exhibited values and ideals. In the end, the entire world would have become a veritable Gan Eden. Our awareness of G-d's presence would have been constant, and our desire to do His will would have been uncompromised. The other nations would have "seen the name of G-d upon us", and they would have accepted us as their teachers and mentors.

Instead, because of the Golden Calf, we lost out on the opportunity to reverse the tide of history, and Gan Eden remains as illusive and ethereal as ever. We are in a constant struggle with ourselves to structure our desires within the framework of G-d's law. We deny the evidence of His manifest presence, and fail, all too often, as His appointed teachers and "Kohanim." The rest of the nations do not appreciate who and what we are and are much quicker to condemn our values and accuse us of hypocrisy than they are to emulate our mores. However, to guarantee that we remain focused on what our responsibilities should be, G-d provided us with a model of what the world should have been like, if we had not sinned with the Golden Calf. That model was the Mishkan.

The Mishkan was the tent wherein which G-d restricted His manifest presence. This tent was to symbolize the lost world of Gan Eden. It was to be the one place on earth where any person, Jew or non-Jew, could visit, see, feel, and learn, what a world filled with G-d was supposed to be like. It was

a world filled with warmth, music, prayer, kindness, justice, righteousness, and purpose. It was a world of High Priests and Supreme Courts, Nazareness and Kings. It was a world of forgiveness and purity, scholarship and laws. The Mishkan was a microcosm of a world that should have been, and would have been, if only we had not sinned.

Upon instructing us to build the Mishkan, G-d also forewarned us not to build this "world" on Shabbos. Just as He had rested from the completed work of Creation on the Seventh Day. This is understood in the Talmud from the juxtaposition of Shabbos to both the beginning and end of the Torah's account of the building of the Mishkan.

The concept of Shabbos is to publicly proclaim G-d as the Master of the Universe through the fact that we do not do "work" on Shabbos. Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explains the usage of the word "Melacha - work" to mean, "that upon which we impose our own will in order that it should do our bidding." It is similar to the word "Malach - angel" which is a creation that does not have free will and can only do G-d's bidding. On Shabbos, through not imposing our will on the world around us, we admit that the world is not our own, but G-d's. If the world truly belonged to us then we would not necessarily restrict ourselves from working on the Seventh Day. That is why we say in Kiddush, "A remembrance of the creation." By keeping Shabbos we remember Who it was that created the universe.

The world and the human were created to serve G-d. We do so by using the world to recognize G-d's manifest presence. If we do as we were intended, then the world fulfills its purpose in having been created. If we do not live our lives making a -sanctifying G-d's name - revealing His actuality in the world - then the world and the human forfeit their reason for having been created. The difference between fulfilling our purpose and not fulfilling our purpose was the Golden Calf, and Shabbos. The Golden Calf placed our needs and desires before G-d's direct instructions. Shabbos refines our needs and desires so that they are expressions of devotion, rather than mere physical gratification.

Shabbos is referred to in the Zemiros as, "A reflection of the World To Come." We are told that Olam Habbah is a spiritual world in which there is absolute awareness of G-d. The constant struggle between our souls and our bodies, the spiritual and the physical, will no longer exist, and we will be freed to grow for all eternity in our understanding of G-d. However, it is important to note that Shabbos is but a mere "reflection" of Olam Habbah. Because we are physical creations, it is impossible to realize what it means for our souls to be freed so that they can soar to their unfettered potential and spiritual evolution.

As a primary goal of humankind, G-d included Shabbos in the Ten Commandments along with: recognizing His presence, honoring of parents, the sanctity of family, cherishing individual property, the value life, as well as the grandeur and dignity of the human spirit. (do not covet...) This was to identify for us the goals of humanity, the reasons for our existence. After we sinned with the Golden

Calf, and in essence, transgressed all of the Ten Commandments, (a great discussion to have around the Shabbos table) G-d felt that Shabbos, more so than any other of the Commandments, should be made a constant in our lives.

The human's capacity to recognize G-d is more evident in contrast than in constancy. We are by nature inconsistent in structuring our lives to accomplish, "Know before Whom you are standing." We are much more capable of spending a little time "in G-d's presence" than we are in integrating our awareness of Him into our daily behavior. Therefore, just as G-d restricted Himself to the confines of the Mishkan, and allowed us the illusion of space and distance from His constancy, so too did G-d provide us with space and distance in regard to time and provided Shabbos as the one day when our behavior and thoughts should reflect the constancy of His presence. By contrast to the rest of the week we are more willing and able to recognize G- d's intended place in our lives.

Imagine if you will, what it must have been like to live in a world where a Mishkan, or Bais Hamikdash stood as a living, tangible example of what Gan Eden was like. Imagine, if you will, what our week would be like if every Shabbos we would transcend the limits of our physical and live within the reflection of The World To Come. Shabbos and the Mishkan are one and the same. That is why the Torah integrated Shabbos into the account of the building of the Mishkan.

Good Shabbos.

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