

Vayakhel: Two Mishkans?

- Rabbi Heshi Reichman transcribes a shiur of Rav Soloveitchik dealing with the repetition of the instructions for construction of the Mishkan, and following the Ramban compares the instructions before the Egel to those given after the Egel.

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(Transcribed from a tape by Rabbi Heshi Reichman, reportedly based on a shiur of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt'l.)

In Vayakhel we find a description of instructions for construction of the Mishkan. Is this not repetition of the Teruma-Tetzave instructions?

The Ramban on Vayakhel answers this question. Rashi in Ki Tisa 31/18, and in 33/11, says that the commandment of the Mishkan was given to Moshe only during the last 40 days on the mountain. Only after we were forgiven did God ordain a tabernacle, for Ein mukdam umeuchar... so Teruma-Tetzave should have followed Ki Tisa.

Ramban disagrees. He says there were in fact two commandments of the tabernacle, one before the sin of the golden calf, and one after the sin. In Vayakhel: Vaomar mithila inyan haMishkan asher nitzave bo mitchila, kodem shevor haluchos. Kivan shenitratze bahem Hakadosh Baruch Hu, venatan lo luchot sheniyot vekarat imahem brit hadasha sheyelech Hashem bekirbam, hine hazar lekadmutam leahavat kelulotam, ubeyadua sheyihiye shecinat betocham, keinyan shetzivahu bitchila, sheneemar 'Veasu li mikdash....' Velachen tziva lo Moshe ata kechal ma shenitzave mitchila.

"The idea of the Mishkan is that they were commanded to make it before the breaking of the tablets. Once Hashem was reconciled with them, He instructed them again, for they now had returned to the original status of love and betrothal, and He therefore wanted it known that they were forgiven. That is why He commanded them once again to construct the Mishkan."

Thus, the original commandment was given before the sin of the golden calf, just as the order of the parshot imply.

Yet while they were in the status of the sin of the Golden calf, they were told Veshalachti lefanecha malach, ki lo eele bekirbecha, ki am keshe oref ata.... This is a severe detraction of the original commandment to build a Mishkan. It means that the Almighty at that point decreed that even though the Jewish people would survive, and God would not destroy them, Hashem's spirit would not be in our midst, but He would send an angel.

What does this mean, and why was Moses so upset? This means that not only would they no longer have a Mishkan, in itself a great treasure, but they would now become subject to all of natural law, represented by the malachim. Rambam in More Nevuchim explains that natural law is nothing but malachey Hashem, angels, messengers of God carrying out His inexorable will. So Hashem had in this way decreed that He Himself and His special providence would no longer be with the Jewish people, but they would be subject to all the natural forces of the world and

human history. Like all other nations, they would grow, develop, wither and die. They would not be the eternal nation. True, they would have the Torah and do the Mitzvot; but eventually they would disappear from the face of the earth like all other nations. They would be subject to natural forces, grow, wither, and eventually die.

Moshe understood what a terrible disaster this would be. He prayed, Im eyn panecha holchim, al tallenu miz; ubame yevada eyfo, ki nimitzinu chen beenecha, halo belechtecha imanu, viniflinu ani veamcha mikal haam asher al pney haadama.

Moshe understood that if the Jewish people were to be the eternal people, it would only be if the Shechina would reside in Israel, guaranteeing Israel's eternity, elevating the Jewish nation above the events of natural history.

Moshe succeeded in his prayer. With the kaparat Yom Hakipurim, and the luchot sheniyot, Hakadosh Baruch Hu agrees to reside in Israel and to grant them his presence. And therefore the complete instructions to build the Mishkan are repeated again by Moshe and reported again in Vayakhel. For they constitute a new command, the b'rith hadasha of the luchot sheniyot as the Ramban explains.