

CHIZUK & IDUD

*Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra
with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael
Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim*

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In one of the verses from this week's parsha we are commanded to build a Mikdash: V'ASU LI MIKDASH V'SHACHANTI B'TOCHAM, Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them (Shmot 25:8). There are those who say that the Mishkan was a 'portable Har Sinai'. Har Sinai was a deeply memorable but a passing event. To anchor that event it was necessary to keep it alive. This was accomplished with the Mishkan.

The Midrash writes that the Almighty directed Moshe that while transmitting the Mitzva of building the Mikdash he should add the following explanation. Tell the People of Israel: "It is not because I have nowhere to dwell that I tell you to build a Mishkan. Before the world was created My sanctuary was on high. 'A glorious throne on high from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary' (Yirmiyahu 17:12). However, because of my love for you, I will descend from My sanctuary on high and go down to dwell amongst you as it says, V'ASU LI MIKDASH V'SHACHANTI B'TOCHAM (Tanchuma

Yashan, as quoted in the Torah Sheleima, T'ruma p. 19).

The rationalist camp of Jewish thought suggests that we focus on the effect the mitzva has upon Man. Seen from this vantage point, the Mishkan is not for Hashem but rather for us. The Mikdash is not an abode for the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, but rather a place of worship where one's thoughts are directed to the Divine. The Mikdash serves as a reminder of our ability of transforming the physical into a vehicle for spiritual transformation. If not for the commandment of V'ASU LI MIKDASH one could have concluded that the realm of the spiritual and metaphysical could not be integrated into this world. This is the educational message one is supposed to come away with after visiting the Mishkan. These are the thoughts that are to occupy our minds and hearts when we come to Yerushalayim three times a year to 'see' G-d. The Mikdash is a physical representation of the belief underlying our life-mission dedicated to the combining of the spiritual together with the physical.

Without negating any of the above, we move to a competing Midrash, which demands that we look at the question from a radically different perspective. This competing Midrash attributes the sense of disbelief to

Moshe himself: 'When Moshe was told V'ASU LI MIKDASH, he was shocked and perplexed. The Almighty is the Master of the Universe - could he conceivably dwell on earth? It says: "Behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this home that I have built?" (Melachim Alef 8:27). How is this paradoxical combination of transcendence and immanence made possible?

The answer provided in this Midrash, brings the mystical viewpoint to the forefront: The Almighty answered Moshe saying: "It is not as you think Moshe, I will M'TZAMTZEIM, constrict Myself and descend into the world" (Pesikta D'Rav Kahana 4).

HaKdosh Baruch Hu is at once both transcendent and other-worldly, while at the same time he is immanent and near. M'LO KOL HA'ARETZ K'VODO, He suffuses the world with His glory. The quality and character of this Divine Immanence is not that of an impersonal radiation of goodness (like the light rays radiating from the Sun). KAROV HASHEM L'CHOL KOR'AV - Hashem is close, and intimately near, to all who call out to him. ASHER YIKRA'UHU BE'EMET - They who call out in truth .

The use of the word TZIMTZUM to explain how this can be possible, demands that we turn our focus away from the rationalists. This Midrash

brings to mind the well-known Kabbalistic concept, explaining how the Almighty - who by definition is: Kadosh Kadosh Kadosh, holy, holy, holy - wholly transcendent and beyond the world, yet can reside within a corporeal world. The Kabbalistic answer is that the Almighty willfully contracts Himself (TZIMTZUM) thereby making room for the world. [In a certain vein this can be compared to a professor of theoretical mathematics or physics talking and playing with a small child. The professor makes "room" for the child by contracting himself. So, too, the Almighty makes room for the world by limiting Himself].

This description of the manner in which the Almighty engages with His creation, is one which we are called upon to emulate - MA HU AF ATA! When a couple becomes engaged to one another, they are thereby promising to make room in their heart - inviting their partner to enter therein. Whether it is explained rationally or mystically, the deep spiritual significance of visiting the M'KOMOT HAK'DOSHIM (holy places) cannot be denied.

This truism can be attested to by Olim who have made their home in Eretz Yisrael. There are those who question whether this geographical relocation has any real significance. The answer is that when we enter

Eretz Yisrael, and come near Yerushalayim and M'kom HaMikdash, the Almighty leaves His heavenly abode and accompanies us as we go about our hallowed task to be M'TAKEIN the world. This is the difference between continuing life in one's place of birth, in the old country, and replanting oneself in our spiritual place of rebirth in the Holy Land! 🏠🕯️

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