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תרומה

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עשו לי מקדש... ושכנתי בתוכם

By Binyamin Orkaby

In פסוק ה', פרשת תרומה, commands בני ישראל to build Him a משכן and He will dwell within them, as the פסוק says, "עשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם". This פסוק can be broken into two parts. The first part being עשו לי מקדש and the second part being ושכנתי בתוכם. On each half the פסוק there can be a question asked as to the grammar, or word choice used. For the phrase "עשו לי מקדש" the word מקדש is the word in question, as ה' is asking בני ישראל to build Him a משכן, so why is He using the word מקדש instead of משכן? On the second half of the פסוק, the word בתוכם seems to have been conjugated improperly, as the פסוק should have used the word בתוכו, as it should be referring back to מקדש or the משכן. Why then is the singular conjugation of בתוכו used rather than the plural one of בתוכם?

With regards to the first question, רש"י answers that the word מקדש is used to show that the place which בני ישראל is to build will be a holy place for ה', קדושה ה', as the words מקדש and קדוש both have the root of ק.ד.ש. The מעם לועז brings down that the reason for why מקדש is used in the place of משכן to show that it wasn't only for that moment, that time in the desert, but rather a מצוה for the future generations as well.

This then leads back to the second question as to why the second half of the פסוק is in a plural form. One possible answer is that ה' was referring to the future בתי מקדש that will be built and how He will also dwell in them. And perhaps to take it one step further the מעם לועז brings down that a בית הכנסת is called בית המקדש which shows that ה' dwells in each and every כנסת, not just the המקדש.

There is, however, one further level to dig into the plural nature of בתוכם. The מעם לועז brings down that the word בתוכם is written so as to show us that we shouldn't think that the importance of the משכן is the structure and the vessels inside rather than each and every one of us is what is important. This is to say that each and every person should make for themselves a מקדש inside themselves. Furthermore its most important that the ה' or שכינה's presence should be within ourselves and not in the משכן which is made of wood, silver and gold. For all these things are like nothing when compared to the heart. The משכן is not brought to hold the שכינה rather to awaken us to its presence, to arouse within ourselves a connection with הוה ברוך הוא. For it is the people which make these places holy, not the beams of which they are made or the vessels that they contain. This is not to say that the משכן or the מקדש is not holy, on the contrary, they are of the holiest things we have and in this way they can help us to be awakened to the holiness of ה' and his מצוות. In the end, what's important is that each person needs to be משכן unto themselves. This is why after פסוק ה' says עשו לי מקדש in the very next פסוק it says וכן תעשו "and you should do". This is to show us that we, בני ישראל, need to do the work for the משכן ourselves and not have ה' build it Himself.

Each and everyone of us has the ability to create our own מקדש inside of us. This מקדש that we create inside of us allows us to come closer to ה' and to be more connected to our יהדות. May we be זוכה to build מקדשים within ourselves and come closer to ה' in doing so.

A Down to Earth God

By Ephraim Fischer

In this week's פרשה ה', gives משה the command to build the משכן. ה' says "ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי" (בני ישראל) will build for me a sanctuary, and I will dwell among them. At this point, ה' is saying that even after the building of the משכן, a place which is devoted for the worship of ה', He will still not just dwell in this building, rather He will dwell among בני ישראל, the people who built the משכן to worship ה'. This is a powerful message, as we see from here that ה' isn't just this God that is very distant from us and will only dwell in a single place which we must get to. On the contrary, ה' is a God who dwells among the people, and understands if we can't go to the משכן for whatever reason. In fact, throughout the פרשה, in the building of the משכן, we see many other examples of ה' understanding our human needs and adapting His commands to accommodate these rather than being a lofty, esoteric God that doesn't take our needs into account.

When instructions are being given for how the ארון קודש is going to be built, ה' tells משה that it should be made of wood, and then covered with gold, both on the inside and on the outside. One obvious question on this is that the ארון קודש could have just been made of pure gold, like the מנורה! It was the vessel which carried the לוחות, shouldn't it be given utmost respect? The דעת זקנים answers this by saying that the ארון קודש was fit to be made of pure gold, but had it been made of pure gold, it would have been far too heavy for the לויים to carry through the desert. Therefore, ה' commanded that it just be gold plated rather than being made of pure gold. This same logic is used to explain why the שולחן, מזבח הנחשת, and מזבח הזהב were also wood plated with metal. Here, ה' is commanding that some of the holiest things in the משכן be plated rather than made of pure metal in order that we be able to carry them. This shows how ה' gives commandments not just for His worship, but also for our physical needs, and He doesn't compromise our physical limits for His commandments.

This concept is seen again by the שולחן. In the instructions for building the שולחן, ה' commands that poles be affixed to either side of the שולחן so that it will be carried by them. It is understandable by the ארון קודש that poles be affixed to it, as it is an incredibly holy vessel, and עוזא was even killed for touching it in דוד's procession to ירושלים. However, aside from being a vessel in the משכן, the שולחן didn't have any extreme level of holiness attached to it, and it was just made to hold the לחם הפנים, so why was the commandment given for poles to be attached to it? The fact that poles were affixed to the שולחן along with the ארון קודש proves that the poles were meant to make its carrying more convenient for us. ה' explicitly went out of the way to say in the instructions for the שולחן to include poles because He understands our capabilities as humans and interweaves them into His commandments.

Throughout the תורה, there are many more examples of ה' making our religious obligations easier for our physical needs. All of these examples, especially in the building of a place dedicated to the worship of ה', teach us an important lesson: If ה' explicitly makes our obligations easier in order to accommodate our physical capabilities, then we must put all of our effort into worshiping ה'. If compromises have been made in order that we be able to worship ה', then we must take advantage of these opportunities given to us and not blatantly ignore these valuable chances given to us for our worship. Even if we aren't able to do מצוות with outstanding beauty, if we put all of our effort into them, they will be just as beautiful to ה', as ה' doesn't only dwell in the most holy places. He dwells among us.

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