

¹The LORD said to Moses, ²"Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give. ³These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; ⁴blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ⁵ram skins dyed red and another type of durable leather; acacia wood; ⁶olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; ⁷and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. ⁸"Then **have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them.** ⁹Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings **exactly like the pattern I will show you.**

1. (v. 8) וַיֹּאמֶר לִי מִקֹּדֶשׁ—*They shall make a Sanctuary for Me.* Rashi is careful to avoid any hint of anthropomorphism in this command, explaining that it was to be **a Sanctuary in honor of Hashem's Name, rather than a dwelling place for Him.** But some commentators, including *Ramban*, hold that God commanded the Children of Israel to build a Sanctuary over which the *Shechinah*, **the reflection of His Majesty, would hover in the pillar of cloud.** This Divine Presence amid the people of Israel signifies their supreme consecration as a holy nation. God, Who revealed Himself to them spectacularly on Mount Sinai, still remains close to them, but henceforth His Majesty is enveloped in a veil which conceals It from the sight of common mortals.¹

The *Book of Exodus*, adds *Ramban*, is devoted to Israel's first exile [Egypt] and subsequent redemption. But this redemption could only reach completion through the return to the heritage of their ancestors, the Patriarchs. However, the Children of Israel did attain the high spiritual level of the Patriarchs at the Revelation at Sinai and at the time the Tabernacle was built. Thus, the exile actually ended, in the spiritual sense, well before they entered the Promised Land. That is why the *Book of Exodus* concludes with the building of the Tabernacle.

This rationale for the Tabernacle, however, does not explain the significance of the precepts pertaining to its internal arrangement and to the sacred objects which it contains. *Rambam* contends that the Sanctuary was meant to keep the Israelites from idolatry and to orient them towards God. His Sanctuary and His rituals are part of a general plan intended to limit the cult of sacrifices, a vestige of pagan religion. This was to be done **by allowing such practices only in the Tabernacle, and later, in the Temple in Jerusalem.** The sacred objects con-

tained within the Tabernacle, as well as its internal structure, are explained from the same point of view. The ultimate objective is the spiritual training of the Chosen People for the great ideals proclaimed at the Revelation (*Guide to the Perplexed* 3:45).

Other commentators argue that the Sanctuary has an important symbolic value in and of itself, with a goal to raise man to the ultimate level of holiness and spirituality. All the parts of the Tabernacle and the numerous details of the sacrifices represent specific ideas and principles which are to be reflected in the souls of the Israelites. This is the method adopted by R' Hirsch ...

According to the Kabbalists, the Tabernacle represents a microcosm of the universe, reflecting the deepest truths about life and the universe. On an infinitesimally small scale, the Tabernacle reflects the universal source from which life and blessings emanate to all the spheres of creation ...

Though the Torah records the commands to erect the Tabernacle prior to the episode of the Golden Calf, we have the Talmudic ruling (*Pesachim* 6b) that **the Torah does not follow a strict chronological order.** The Midrash (*Tanchuma Pekudei* [Accounts]) states that **the mitzvah to build the Tabernacle was first given on the tenth of Tishrei, Yom Kippur, after Israel was forgiven for worshipping the Golden Calf.** According to some, the building of the Sanctuary serves as public evidence of Israel's rehabilitation. Others suggest that only after the idolatrous tendencies of the people were exposed, was it necessary to channel them to the holy service of God (*Sforno*, introduction to *Leviticus*; *Abarbanel* to *Jeremiah* 7:21). The prophet refers to this concept when he says: *For I spoke not to your fathers, nor commanded them on the day I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices; but this thing I did command them, saying: "Listen to My voice, and I will be Your God, and you shall be My people; and you shall walk in the ways that I command you, that it may be well with you"* *Jeremiah* 7:22-23).

In another perspective, the *Zohar* maintains that the commands to build the Tabernacle came prior to the incident of the Golden Calf, as the Torah records it. R' Shimon bar Yochai explains that the plan for Creation anticipated that **the Divine Presence would dwell among men.** Indeed, upon making the covenant with Israel, God commanded that His residence be built. Later, Moses thought that the sin of the Golden Calf had voided this plan. But God granted His forgiveness, and the commands were confirmed anew. For out of love of Israel, God wanted "the remedy to precede the illness"; i.e., the Divine service

¹ Rabbi Elie Munk, *The Call of the Torah, Shemos*, (Mesorah Publications, Ltd.), pp. 362-368.

of the Tabernacle came before the sin of idolatry (*Ohr Chochmah* [The Light of Wisdom]). This view agrees with the opinion of the Kabbalists mentioned before and is also adopted by *Ramban* (to 35:1), in contrast to the view expressed by *Rashi* (to 31:18).

- a. *God commanded the Children of Israel to build a Sanctuary over which the Shechinah, the reflection of His Majesty, would hover in the pillar of cloud.*



1) Exodus 13:21-22

²¹By day **the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud** to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. ²²Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

2) Exodus 33:8-10

⁸And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. ⁹As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the

LORD spoke with Moses. ¹⁰**Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped**, each at the entrance to their tent.

- 3) Numbers 12:5-8—the occasion when Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses.

⁵Then **the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance to the tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam**. When the two of them stepped forward, ⁶he said, "Listen to my words: "When there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams. ⁷But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. ⁸With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; **he sees the form of the LORD**. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

JPS—And **the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud** ... and **called** Aaron and Miriam ...

OKE—And **the Lord was revealed in the pillar of the Cloud** ... and **He called** Aharon and Miriam ...

PJE—And **the Glory of the Lord was revealed in the Cloud of Glory** ... and **called** Aharon and Miriam ...

TNK—**The LORD came down in a pillar of cloud** ... and **called out**, "Aaron and Miriam!" ...

JPS—and **the similitude of the LORD** doth he behold
—similitude: *likeness, sameness, resemblance, uniformity*

OKE—and he shall behold **the likeness of the glory of the Lord**.

PJE—and he beheld **the likeness of My Shekinah**.

TNK—and he beholds **the likeness of the LORD**.

a) Ezekiel 1:26-28

²⁶Above the vault over their heads was what looked like a throne of lapis lazuli, and **high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man**. ²⁷I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him.

²⁸Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, **so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD**. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

b) Colossians 1:15

¹⁵**The Son is the image of the invisible God**, the firstborn over all creation.

c) Hebrews 1:3

³**The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being**, sustaining all things by his powerful word ...

d) **Notice, not one of three "coequal, coeternal, consubstantial divine persons."**

b. *For out of love of Israel, God wanted "the remedy to precede the illness" ...*

1) Pesachim 54a; Nedarim. 39b

"Seven things were created before the world was made, and these are they: Torah, **repentance**, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna, the throne of glory, and house of the sanctuary, and **the name of the Messiah.**"

2. (v. 8) **וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם**—*So that I may dwell among them.* Nearly 2,500

years after the creation of the world, the great ideal at last begins to be realized. The Divine majesty will now be enthroned on earth amidst men. Until now man's sins had postponed the fulfillment of this supreme objective.

By commanding Israel to build a Tabernacle, says *Abarbanel*, God showed that He had not forsaken this world. Quite the contrary, He wanted man to realize that the living God is in their midst and that His Providence is always near. The prophet Isaiah alludes to this idea: Thus says Hashem: *The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool; where is the house that you may build for Me? No house can be My resting place, for all these things My hand has made* (Isaiah 66:1-2). Nevertheless, God commanded its construction so that His Providence will be rooted in man's spirits, as the text concludes: *But upon him [such a man] will I gaze, on him that is humble and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word.*

Since God is infinite, how can we say that the Tabernacle is the dwelling place for the *Shechinah*? The Kabbalists utilize the concept of Hashem's **צְמִצּוּם**, *contraction*, to resolve this enigma. The All-Powerful God chose to withdraw the intensity of His presence unto Himself. The Tabernacle then becomes the focal point of this concentration. Thus, the Midrash observes that God, Who fills the higher worlds and the lower worlds, reduced His earthly residence to the twenty planks on the north side, twenty on the south side and five to the west [i.e., the Tabernacle] (26:18-22). He did this out of love for His Chosen People

so that He could establish His dwelling among them in order to lavish upon them His protection and His blessing. In so doing He allowed the Chosen People to share His holiness and live a life radiant with goodness, serenity, and spiritual bliss. So sublime an objective, exercising its power on all the nations of the world, will ultimately transform humanity, and open the path to peace and contentment.

The process of **צְמִצּוּם**, *contraction*, occurred with Creation, too. Before Creation, the cosmos was full of Hashem's glory. To create the universe, "space" was needed. Then, too, it was an act of love.

Commentators have pointed out the significance of God's choice to have His Presence revealed in a small, relatively modest Tabernacle. In fact, **it is really in man himself that the Divine glory should ultimately dwell**. Man should offer himself to God as His abode. The Torah does not say **וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכּוֹ** *that I may dwell in it* [the Sanctuary], but

וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם *that I may dwell among them*, literally *in them*, **in men's hearts** and minds. God asked each person to build a Sanctuary **in his heart, to prepare himself to be a Tabernacle for God and to be a dwelling place for His splendor** ... to build an Altar, there to uplift his soul, and be ready to sacrifice his desires at every instant for God (*Shelah*, *Malbim*, and others).

a. *God asked each person to build a Sanctuary in his heart, to prepare himself to be a Tabernacle for God and to be a dwelling place for His splendor ...*

1) 1Corinthians 3:16-17

¹⁶Don't you know that **you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?** ¹⁷If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and **you together are that temple.**

2) 2Corinthians 6:14-18

¹⁴Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? ¹⁵What harmony is there between Messiah and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For **we are the temple of the living God.** As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people" (Exo 29:45; Lev 26:12; Jer 32:38; Ezek 37:27). ¹⁷Therefore, "Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you" (Isa 52:11). ¹⁸And, "I will be a Father to

you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty" (Isa 43:6).

3) Ephesians 2:19-22

¹⁹Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Messiah Yeshua himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole building is joined together **and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.** ²²And in him **you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.**

3. (v. 9) כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְרַאֶה אוֹתְךָ—*Like everything that I show you.* Constructing the Tabernacle and its many components was a very complex task and numerous complications arose regarding their design, execution, and craftsmanship. Hence, Moses was shown a model of the Sanctuary and its objects, described by the Midrash as an apparition of fire. Some objects, like the golden Menorah, had to be shown to him four times before he could retain their design (*Sifre, Numbers* 81).

During that vision on the mountain, the deep spiritual significance and purpose of the Tabernacle were also revealed to Moses. The Zohar states that **the earthly Sanctuary is located directly below the celestial one, and is built in its image.** It represents the seat of holiness on earth and is the material expression of the ideal of holiness. Its relationship to the celestial source of holiness is like the body to the soul. The reflected ray from the earthly Sanctuary meets the original ray projected by its Heavenly counterpart ...

a. Hebrews 9:11-14

¹¹But when Messiah came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, **he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation.** ¹²He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place **once for all by his own blood,** thus obtaining eternal redemption. ¹³The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. ¹⁴How much more, then, will the blood of Messiah, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

b. Revelation 8:3-5

³Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on **the golden altar** in front of the throne. ⁴**The**

smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand. ⁵Then the angel took **the censer, filled it with fire from the altar,** and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

¹⁰"Have them make an ark of acacia wood—two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. ¹¹Overlay it with pure gold, both inside and out, and make a gold molding around it.

1. (v. 10) וַתַּשׁוּ אֹרֹן—*They shall make an Ark.* The first command concerning the construction of the Tabernacle was to make the *Aron*. **It contained the light of the world, for the Tablets of the Law and the Torah rested inside.** Similar to Creation, where light preceded everything else, so too the allegorical light of Torah comes first. (The word אֹרֹן, *Ark*, it has been pointed out, is related to אֹר, *light*.) The *Aron* is comparable, in a smaller format, **to what light is to the universe as a whole. It is the source of Truth, called upon to dispel the darkness** that obscures the spirituality of man.

The Tabernacle, excluding the Outer Court, can be viewed as containing two focal points: The *Aron* and the Altar of Incense. The latter is the last object mentioned in the construction of the Sanctuary. The first focal point, the *Aron*, reveals the rays bringing the Divine word to earth, while the last focus carries the message of Divine love, which is expressed in **the forgiveness granted to man through sacrifice and repentance.** God wanted His House to be essentially the source of mercy and pardon, and **the Altar represents atonement and absolution for man.** Hence, it is only mentioned at the conclusion of the Tabernacle's construction, just as the Sabbath marks the end of Creation ... *the end of the work was at the beginning of the thought (plan).*

a. **(The Aron) contained the light of the world, for the ... Torah (i.e., God's Word) rested inside ... It is the source of Truth, called upon to dispel the darkness.**

1) John 1:1-5

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning.

³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴In him was life, and **that life was the light of all mankind.** ⁵**The light shines in the darkness,** and the darkness has not overcome it.

2) John 1:14

¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We

have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, **full of grace and truth.**

3) John 8:12

¹²When Yeshua spoke again to the people, he said, "**I am the light of the world.** Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

4) John 12:44-50

⁴⁴Then Yeshua cried out, "Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. ⁴⁵**The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me.** ⁴⁶**I have come into the world as a light,** so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. ⁴⁷"If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. ⁴⁸There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day. ⁴⁹For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. ⁵⁰I know that **his command leads to eternal life.** So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

a) Luke 10:25-37

²⁵On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Yeshua. "Teacher," he asked, "**what must I do to inherit eternal life?**" ²⁶"**What is written in the Law?**" he replied. "How do you read it?" ²⁷He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" ²⁸"You have answered correctly," Yeshua replied. "**Do this and you will live.**"

²⁹But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Yeshua, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰In reply Yeshua said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³²So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I

return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' ³⁶"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" ³⁷The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Yeshua told him, "**Go and do likewise.**"