

Parashat Tetzaveh, 5784, 2024:

And I Will Dwell in Their Midst

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ה' יעזור וירחם על אחינו, כל בני ישראל בארץ ישראל ובכל חלקי הארץ

The notion of Hashem dwelling amongst our people is presented in two *pasukim* in *Sefer Shemot*. The first appears in last week's *parasha*, "And they shall make Me a sanctuary (*mikdash*) and I will dwell (*v'shachanti*) in their midst;" and the second in our Torah portion, "I will dwell (*v'shachanti*) in the midst of the children of Israel, and I will be their G-d (*v'hayiti lahem l'Elokim*)." (25:8 and 29:45, translation, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*) The first *pasuk* states that as a result of constructing the *Mishkan* the Holy One blessed be He will dwell among us, and the second adds the idea that His dwelling in our midst indicates He will be our G-d. As such, the following formula emerges: Construction of the *Mishkan* eventuates in *v'shachanti* among us, which leads to *v'hayiti lahem l'Elokim*.

Although they seem to convey similar content, *v'shachanti*, and *v'hayiti lahem l'Elokim* are actually dissimilar concepts. This approach was followed by both the Sforno (Rabbi Ovadiah ben Ya'akov, 1475-1550) and the Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, 1816-1893) in their respective Torah commentaries on *Sefer Shemot* 29:45. According to the Sforno, *v'shachanti* refers to Hashem's ready desire to accept our *tefilot*, and our *avodah* (*korbanot*). In contrast, *v'hayiti lahem l'Elokim*, gives voice to the idea that Hashem will do so *bikvodo u'vatzmo*, that is, without any intermediary. This is similar to how He took us out from Egypt: "Not through the efforts of an angel (*malach*), not through the exertions of a ministering angel (*saraf*) and not as a result of a messenger (*shaliach*), rather, by the Holy One blessed be He, in His honor and glory." (*Haggadah*)

The Netziv differs from the Sforno's interpretation of "*v'shachanti* in our midst," and suggests it denotes an everlasting connection between Hashem and the Jewish people—even when we are not *zocheh* to have the *Mishkan*:

Even in the absence of the *Mishkan*, wherein Hashem's glory, may He be blessed, was explicitly manifest, [He] will continue to ever be in the midst of the Jewish people. This means that His *Schechinah* (Divine Presence) will never depart from the community of Israel...even though it will not appear manifestly evident to all. (Translation my own)

Moreover, unlike the Sforno, the Netziv suggests that "*v'hayiti lahem l'Elokim*" signifies the Almighty is continually attuned to and "watchful of our needs and will fulfill them."

Whether we follow the Sforno or the Netziv, both agree that *v'shachanti* and *v'hayiti lahem l'Elokim* refer to Hashem's commitment to an eternal personal relationship with the Jewish people. In my view, this is the counterpoint to our passionate song at the *Yam Suf*: "This is my G-d and I will ever praise him (*zeh kali v'avahu*), the G-d of my father, and I will exalt Him." (*Sefer Shemot* 15:2) We were G-d intoxicated at the *Yam Suf* and could not hold ourselves back from bursting out in a song of ever-lasting love to Him; now, so to speak, it is Hashem's turn to proclaim His never-ending love for the Jewish people.

On measure, this analysis lends new meaning to the oft-said phrase: "*Ashreinu mah tov chelkeinu u'mah nayim goraleinu u'mah yafah yerushateinu*—We are overjoyed in the goodness of our portion! And how pleasing is our fate! And how desirous is our inheritance!" The terms portion, fate and inheritance refer to the holy Torah and the dynamic relationship it fosters between Hashem and the Jewish people. Therefore, let us proclaim, "*zeh kali v'avahu*," and may we once again be blessed to hear, "*v'shachanti v'hayiti lahem l'Elokim!*" *V'chane yihi ratzon*.

Shabbat Shalom

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They may also be found on <http://www.yutorah.org/> using the search criteria of Etengoff and the parasha's name.

The email list, *b'chasdei Hashem*, has expanded to hundreds of people. I am always happy to add more members to the list. If you have family or friends you would like to have added, please do not hesitate to contact me via email <mailto:rdb718@gmail.com>.

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*** I have posted 164 of **Rabbi Soloveitchik's** English language audio *shiurim* (MP3 format) spanning the years 1958-1984. Please click on the highlighted link.