

Parashat Vayakel 5782, 2022:

Of Shabbat and the Mishkan

Rabbi David Etengoff

Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon Hakohen, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yechiel, Chana bat Shmuel, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, Shoshana Elka bat Avraham, Tikvah bat Rivka Perel, Peretz ben Chaim, Chaya Sarah bat Reb Yechezkel Shraga, Shmuel Yosef ben Reuven, Shayndel bat Mordechai Yehudah, the *Kedoshim* of Har Nof, Pittsburgh, and Jersey City, and the *refuah shlaimah* of Mordechai HaLevi ben Miriam Tovah, Yocheved Dafneh bat Dinah Zehavah, and the health and safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

Our *parasha* begins with the explicit linkage of Shabbat and the *Mishkan*:

Moshe called the entire community of *b'nai Yisrael* to assemble, and he said to them: “These are the things that the L-rd commanded to make [those objects that will be in the *Mishkan*]. Six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have sanctity, a day of complete rest to Hashem...And Moshe spoke to the whole community of *b'nai Yisrael*, saying: “This is the word that Hashem has commanded to say: ‘Take from yourselves an offering (*terumah*) for Hashem; every generous hearted person shall bring it, [namely] Hashem’s offering: gold, silver, and copper.’” (*Sefer Shemot* 35:1-2, 4-5, this and all Tanach translations, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*, emendations my own)

My rebbe and mentor, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik *zatzal* (1903-1993), known as the “Rav” by his followers and disciples, notes that there are three other passages in the Torah where we find a direct connection between Shabbat and the *Mishkan*: Parashat Ki Tisa 31: 1-17, Parashat Kedoshim 19:30 and Parashat Behar 26:2. This leads him to ask, “What is the nature of these intertwined concepts?” He begins his response by suggesting:

The answer is fundamental: Both Shabbat and the Tabernacle constitute sanctuaries. One is a sanctuary in time while the other is a sanctuary in space. God wants Jews to establish a residence for Him both in space and in time. The Jew who has prepared properly for the Sabbath and is about to light his candles finds himself in the same position as the Jew of two thousand years ago preparing to enter the Sanctuary. (This and the following Rav Soloveitchik quotes, *Darosh Darash Yosef*: Discourses of Rav Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik on the Weekly Parashah, Rabbi Avishai C. David, editor, pages 197-199, underlining my own.)

For the Rav, Shabbat is our sanctuary in time, and the *Mishkan/Beit HaMikdash* our sanctuary in space. This similarity constitutes the underlying reason, “...why the Torah, in four different places,

linked the sanctity of the Sabbath and that of the Tabernacle.” Nevertheless, in the Rav’s estimation, while the *Mishkan* and Shabbat are both sanctuaries, the nature of their specific sanctity is substantively quite different. For the Rav, the holiness of the *Mishkan* is supernatural:

There is a difference between the sanctity of Shabbat and that of the Tabernacle and the Temple. The sanctity of the *Mikdash* can never disappear, for although the physical Temple was destroyed, the *Shechinah* is always there...The *Shechinah* was both a physical light and a spiritual experience. It was outside of nature and defied the laws of causality, for the *Mishkan* was nothing less than an ongoing miracle that transcended the natural order.

In contrast, *kedushat Shabbat* operates within the natural world:

Shabbat demonstrates God’s presence on a natural level...God reveals Himself in the order of nature. One can experience God through the blue sky and the flowering bush. All this is enhanced by the awareness of Shabbat, which epitomizes the natural order at rest. God has no desire to interfere with the natural order. Each individual must pause...to take God’s presence within the natural order into account.

Given this distinction, we may very well wonder if the supernatural nature (*l’ma’alah min hateva*) of the *Mishkan/Beit HaMikdash* has primacy over Shabbat which operates within the bounds of nature. The Rav addresses this issue in an unequivocal manner:

We have survived two thousand years without the *Beit ha-Mikdash*, but we could never have survived without Shabbat... Jewish survival is not bound up with the *Mishkan*. While the *Mishkan* is a lofty and important place, we must remember...Shabbat, which is essential to Jewish survival, is stronger.

May the time come soon, and in our days, when we will experience *kedushat Shabbat* as we bear witness to the transcendent holiness of the newly rebuilt *Beit HaMikdash*. *V’chane yihi ratzon.*

Shabbat Shalom

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Please contact me at rdbe718@gmail.com to be added to my weekly email list.

*** My audio *shiurim* on the topics of *Tefilah* and *Tanach* may be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/8hsdpvd>

*** 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: [The Rav](#)