

Meshech Chochmah Parshas Pekudei

From the Haftarah: Revealed and Concealed Kedushah

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל דָּוִד אָבִי יַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר הָיָה עִם לְבָבְךָ לְבָנוֹת בַּיִת לְשִׁמִּי הַטִּיבֶתָ כִּי הָיָה עִם לְבָבְךָ. רַק אַתָּה לֹא תִבְנֶה הַבַּיִת כִּי אִם בְּנֹךְ.

Hashem said to my father, David, “since it has been in your heart to build a Temple for My Name, you have done well by having this in your heart. You, however, will not built the Temple, rather, your son.” (Melachim I, 8:18-19)

Paralleling the theme of this week’s parsha which deals with the construction of the Mishkan, the Haftarah discusses Shlomo Hamelech’s dedication of the Beis Hamikdash. In the course of his words, Shlomo mentions the desire of his father, David, to build the Beis Hamikdash, and Hashem’s response that notwithstanding David’s praiseworthy intentions, it would be Shlomo who would build it.

In the Realm of Machshavah – Hidden Contributions

The Meshech Chochmah explains that David’s intention to build the Beis Hamikdash was not only praiseworthy, but also had an effect on the Beis Hamikdash itself. Commenting on the pasuk in Eichah¹ “טָבְעוּ בְּאֶרֶץ שְׁעָרֶיהָ” – its gates sunk into the ground,” the Gemara² explains that the reason the gates of the Beis Hamikdash sunk into the ground and were not destroyed is because they were made by David, and, as such, were not susceptible to the destruction perpetrated by our enemies. If David’s gates were impervious to the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, so were his intentions regarding that place. How was this expressed?

- The gates made by David are a *physical* entity, and thus endured in the physical realm.
- The intentions in his heart are *internal*, and thus their internal effect on the Beis Hamikdash likewise endured.

This means that even as the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed and external manifestations of its kedushah departed, the location on which it stood retained

¹ 2:9.

² Sotah 9a.

its kedushah on a hidden level. This idea is expressed in the Gemara³ commenting on the words in Tehillim⁴ “מוֹשִׁיבֵי עֵקֶרֶת הַבַּיִת – He establishes the mainstay of the house”:

אמרה כנסת ישראל לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא, רבוננו של עולם, שמוני בניך כחולדה זו הדרה בעיקרי בתים

Said the Assembly of Israel before the Holy One, Bless is He, “Master of the world, Your children have made me⁵ like a weasel who dwells in the foundations of houses.”

This reflects the fact that in times of exile, the highest qualities of Israel, called כנסת ישראל, do not disappear but retreat underground, so to speak, existing in a concealed capacity. Likewise, even in the absence of the Beis Hamikdash, the Shechinah continues to reside in a hidden manner. This is due to the internal desire of David to build the Beis Hamikdash, a desire which was not physically expressed, but whose effect continue to endure.

This is the meaning of Hashem’s words to David concerning his intentions “הִטִּיבַת כִּי הָיָה עִם לְבָבְךָ.” These words do not simply mean that David’s intentions *were* good, but rather, that they *effected* good, for they found expression in the continual presence of the Shechinah, albeit in a hidden manner.

In the Realm of Halachah – Rabbeinu Chaim Kohen

The Meshech Chochmah proceeds to explain that this idea, though “hidden” in nature, actually expresses itself in the realm of practical halachah, in relation to *bamos* – private altars. The Gemara⁶ states that the permissibility of offering korbanos on *bamos* is dependent on whether there is a centralized location for korbanos, i.e. the Mishkan or Beis Hamikdash. Therefore, for example:

- Prior to setting up the Mishkan in Shiloh, *bamos* were permitted.
- As long as the Mishkan was operating in Shiloh, *bamos* were forbidden
- Once operation of the Mishkan in Shiloh was discontinued, *bamos* were again permitted.

³ Pesachim 118b

⁴ 113:9.

⁵ Through their sinful actions – Rashi.

⁶ Megillah 10a.

- With the establishing of the Beis Hamikdash in Yerushalayim, *bamos* were once again forbidden.

What about after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash? The answer to this question would seemingly hinge on the well-known debate in the Talmud as to whether the sanctity invested in the location of the Beis Hamikdash was permanent or not.

- If the sanctity is permanent, *bamos* remain forbidden
- If the sanctity only pertained as long as the Beis Hamikdash was standing, then *bamos* should be permitted after its destruction.

In light of this seemingly straightforward equation, one of the Baalei HaTosafos, Rabbeinu Chaim Kohen,⁷ makes a rather unusual statement, namely, that even if the kedushah of the Mikdash and its location was only temporary, *bamos* nonetheless remain forbidden even after its destruction.

What are we to make of this statement, which seems to run counter to the parameters of *bamos* as set forth in the Gemara?

The answer, says the Meshech Chochmah, is that the debate in the Gemara regarding whether the kedushah of the Mikdash is temporary or permanent relates solely to the *external manifestation* of that kedushah, which would allow for the full functioning of the avodah in the Beis Hamikdash. However, even the opinion that the kedushah was temporary recognizes that it fundamentally continues to exist in a concealed manner, to the extent which precludes offering korbanos on *bamos* in any other location!

In the Realm of Parshanut – Neviim and Kesuvim

Based on this idea, the Meshech Chochmah proceeds to explain a discrepancy between two pesukim which seemingly describe the exact same thing. Perek 9 of Melachim 1 presents Hashem's words to Shlomo following the dedication of the Beis Hamikdash, during which He warns that neglect of following in Hashem's ways on the part of the people could lead to its destruction. Pasuk 8 of that perek reads:

⁷ Cited in Tosafos ibid. s.v. *mai taama*.

וְהַבֵּית הַזֶּה יִהְיֶה עֲלִיּוֹן כָּל עֹבֵר עָלָיו יִשָּׁם

*And this house **will be** exalted, all who pass by it will be stunned.*⁸

The very same communication is presented later on in Tanach, in Divrei Hayamim II,⁹ except there the pasuk reads:

וְהַבֵּית הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר הָיָה עֲלִיּוֹן לְכָל עֹבֵר עָלָיו יִשָּׁם

*And this House **which was** exalted, all who pass by it will be stunned.*

We note that while the pasuk in Melachim states that the House “will be exalted,” in the future tense, the pasuk in Divrei Hayamim uses the past tense, “which was exalted.” What is behind this discrepancy? Especially as the second pasuk appears to be more accurate, seeing as it is describing the Beis Hamikdash after its destruction!

The Meshech Chochmah explains that the difference between these two pesukim lies in the difference between the sections of Tanach known Neviim, and Kesuvim. Neviim was written with *Nevuah* (Prophecy), and is thus on a relatively higher level than Kesuvim, which was written with *Ruach Hakodesh* (Divine Inspiration).¹⁰ Hence, the first pasuk, which is in Neviim, is written in the future, which reflects the higher “inner” reality that the Beis Hamikdash remains holy even after its destruction. On contrast, the second pasuk, from Kesuvim, is written in the past tense, reflecting the lower more external perspective that after the destruction the holiness of the Beis Hamikdash has departed. Between these two pesukim, the composite reality is expressed

We look forward to the time when the kedushah of the Beis Hamikdash will emerge from its present concealed state and be revealed for all to see!

חזק חזק ונתחזק

⁸ Upon witnessing its destruction.

⁹ 7:21.

¹⁰ Rav Copperman, in his commentary, refers to Moreh Nevuchim 2: 45 for a detailed discussion of the difference between these two levels.