

אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה
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פרשת תרומה

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לעילוי נשמת
דינה רחל בת
ר' בנימין יצחק רבינוביץ ע"ה
לכבוד היארצייט א' אדר

פרשת תרומה

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשֹׁכְנֵתִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם: כָּל אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵרָאֶה אוֹתְךָ אֵת
תְּבִנֵית הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְאֵת תְּבִנֵית כָּל פְּלִי וְכֵן תַּעֲשׂוּ: (שמות כ"ה ח'-ט')

ר"ט: וכן תעשו לדורות

The Mitzvah of Mikdosh in our Lives

The Varying Terminologies of משכן and מקדש

In this *parshah*, Hashem commanded the Bnei Yisroel the *mitzvah* of building the *Mishkan*, the 'abode' for the *Shechinah*, with all its various aspects and details. The Ohr Hachaim focuses on a variation in the different *pessukim* of the *parshah* concerning the terminology which the Torah uses to convey this *mitzvah*. In the first *passuk*, the dwelling is referred to as 'Mikdosh' – *וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ* / *They should make for me a Mikdosh*. In all the subsequent *pessukim* however, the dwelling place is referred to as *Mishkan* – *כָּל אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵרָאֶה אוֹתְךָ אֵת תְּבִנֵית הַמִּשְׁכָּן* / *Like all that I am showing you, the form of the Mishkan*. Why did the Torah use two different expressions when referring to this *mitzvah*?

The Ohr Hachaim explains that the *mitzvah* that Hashem commanded at that time contained two different elements. Firstly, there was a מצוה לדורות / *a mitzvah that is applicable to all future generations*. This is a general *mitzvah*, binding in all the different settings in which Klal Yisroel find themselves, which consists of establishing a central structure for the purpose of having the *Shechinah* dwell among them. This *mitzvah* is called *Mikdosh*, referring to the place of *Kedushah* in general. After setting out the general obligation, the *pessukim* then continue with the מצוה לשהע / *the mitzvah that was applicable to that particular point in time*. This *mitzvah* was called *Mishkan*, referring to the portable structure that the Bnei Yisroel were to erect in the *Midbar*, with the exact specifications and measurements that Hashem laid out at that time.

The Ohr Hachaim explains further that in truth, the general *mitzvah* of *Mikdosh* would be applicable even in our times. The reason that nowadays we cannot fulfill the *mitzvah* of building a *Mikdosh* is due only to the *halacha* that once the *Shechinah* came to Yerushalayim with the building of the *Bais Hamikdosh*, there is a prohibition to build a *Mikdosh* in any other location. Therefore, until the time that we will be

able to rebuild the actual *Bais Hamikdosh* in Yerushalayim with the coming of Moshiach ב"כ, we are prevented from fulfilling the *mitzvah* in its ideal form.

The מצוה לשעה and the מצוה לדורות

It must be noted, however, that although the *mitzvah* in its basic, absolute form refers to the building of the actual *Bais Hamikdosh*, there are additional methods of fulfilling this *mitzvah*, in a partial sense. As we shall see, these applications of the *mitzvah* are quite relevant for us even in our times. Therefore, although the Ohr Hachaim states that nowadays we cannot fulfill the *mitzvah*, this refers to the actual *Bais Hamikdosh*; regarding the other applications of the *mitzvah*, however, we can assert that the *mitzvah l'doros* is in full effect even nowadays.

Shuls and Botei Medrash

Firstly, Chazal teach us that our shuls and *Botei Medrash* have the status of a מקדש מעט / *a miniature Mikdosh*. Building and maintaining these places is thus a fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *Mikdosh*.

It is incumbent upon us to recognize that our houses of *ruchniyus* are dwellings for the *Shechinah*. When these locations are viewed in light of their true *Mikdosh* status, their sanctity and importance become greatly elevated. We must act with the sense of awe and respect that these places demand from us as the House of Hashem.

At the very least, this should mean to refrain from using phones during the times that we are actually davening or learning in the Bais Medrash. How terribly disrespectful it is to be using a phone while the tzibbur is engaged in praising Hashem and speaking to Him!

Let us see to strengthen ourselves in this area and let us daven that this should be a *zechus* to bring the *Shechinah* among us.

A Yiddishe Home

שלום בית

Aside from the shuls and *Botei Medrash* which are specifically built as a בית ד', each person's home must be a *Mikdosh* as well. Chazal tell us in various places that when the proper conditions exist, the *Shechinah* dwells in a *Yiddishe* home. It is our duty, then, to allow the *Shechinah* into our homes, rather than *chas v'shalom* sending it away. Most famously included in this responsibility is the need to make our homes a place of

שלום. As Chazal tell us, when there is *shalom* between a husband and wife, the *Shechinah* dwells among them. Rav Chaim Shmulevitz zt"l would constantly stress to us that this spirit of *shalom* is not achieved when each side makes sure that the other side is fulfilling his or her obligation. When each person makes it his or her business to fulfill his/her own obligation, while simultaneously being able to overlook shortcomings in the performance of the other party, that is what can bring true *shalom*.

Bringing Kedushah into our Homes

The atmosphere of *shalom* that we cultivate in our homes is an important condition in bringing the *Shechinah*, but it is not the only one. In order to turn our homes into a *Mikdash*, we must also see to actively bring *kedushah* as well.¹ This means establishing a home in which true value and importance is attached to Torah and *mitzvos*.

It is crucial to realize that it is not sufficient to simply pay lip-service to such ideals. Children can see right through what it is that really matters to their parents. Instead, we need to internalize these ideals within ourselves through much *limud hamussar*. We must work ourselves to the point that our homes will indeed be permeated with the appreciation and desire for *ruchniyus* and closeness to Hashem, rather than a love for material and physical pleasures. We must express joy at all achievements in *ruchniyus*, whether of ourselves or of our children, and we must learn to be able to forgo material pleasures and desires that do not enhance our *ruchniyus*. When our children sense this attitude and feeling, and they see that what is important and matters to us is our *Avodas Hashem*, this will carry over to them as well. We will be transforming our home into a true *Mikdash*, a fitting place for the *Shechinah* to dwell.

Blocking Detrimental Influences

Besides for the positive spirit of *kedushah* that we must generate in our home, it is equally important to bar any negative influences as well. Newspapers and magazines containing material which is below our standards of *kedushah*, are a surefire way of driving away the *Shechinah* r"l. The same applies to any inappropriate activities or sites that we view

¹ In truth, real *shalom* as well can only be attained when the husband and wife share a common goal of *ruchniyus* and *Avodas Hashem*. As long as they devote themselves to following their own desires and needs, there is bound to be points of friction between them when their individual needs come into conflict.

on phone or computer screens. We must remind ourselves that the inappropriate material is simply not made for us. The *goyim* may perhaps enjoy it because they do not have access to the life of *ruchniyus* that is available for us. For us, however, such material is poisonous, and has no connection to us.

A school serves lunch every day to its student body. There is one child who has a special diet due to various allergies and other medical conditions. A special lunch is prepared for him, which lacks both the broad base of nutrition as well as the delicious taste that is served to the rest of the school. After his lunch, this student is also required to take various medications. Some other students see this student receiving his lunch each day, and they begin to feel jealous of his special treatment.

How completely mistaken these other children are! They are fortunate not to have to eat the lunch of that student. That student's diet is not meant for them, and they should be thankful for that, rather than resentful.

Similarly, the lowly content of the *goyishe* world is not meant for yidden, whose *neshamos* are so elevated. Instead, we must fill our *neshamos* with a diet of *kedushah* and closeness to Hashem. Only the *goyim* who do not merit to access the *ruchniyus* that we have may instead try to satisfy themselves through gratifying their lowly physical desires and temptations.

Our Homes are a *Bais Hamikdosh*

We must try to visualize how we would behave if we were presented the opportunity to stand inside the actual *Bais Hamikdosh*. Our awe for the *Shechinah* would be immense and overpowering. We would not dare to bring any questionable material with us – not out of fear of being caught by another individual standing in the vicinity, but because of the inner shame that we would feel to disregard the tremendous *kedushah* that pervades the *Bais Hamikdosh*.

We must always remember that it is our responsibility to turn our own homes into a place for the *Shechinah*, just as the *Bais Hamikdosh* was. A person must view his home as having the sanctity of the *Bais Hamikdosh*, and himself, as the Kohen Gadol performing the *Avodah* within it. He must make Torah and *mitzvos* be the mainstay of his home, bringing to it the *kedushah* of the *Bais Hamikdosh* and of the *Avodah* that was performed within it.

This tragic story will demonstrate this point about the responsibility that Yiddishe parents have of making their homes be a Mikdosh.

The story occurred while I was serving as the 10th grade rebbe in a certain Mesivta. It happened one Sunday morning that a certain bachur – Shmuley – was misbehaving. Until that morning, this boy had always been a great student in all senses of the word. He was interested in the shiur, he asked great questions, and he thought of great answers. He was respectful to the rebbeim, and he was pleasant and friendly to his fellow bachurim. This Sunday, however, the boy was completely not acting himself. He was not paying attention, and he was disturbing the class. Something was clearly agitating him.

I pulled him out to the hallway, and the first thing I said to him was "Shmuley, what did you watch last night?"

As soon as the words left my mouth, Shmuley began crying uncontrollably. After a few minutes, I gathered that my guess was indeed correct. Shmuley's parents had left home for the night, and Shmuley had seen an inappropriate video which he had watched at his home. He had been terribly affected by it, and now, the next morning, he was simply unable to focus on his learning. Moreover, he had felt this powerful urge to disrupt the class and prevent everyone else from learning as well.

Taken aback by this extreme story, I made my way to the menahel's office. I told him about the problem, and he picked up the phone to call the boy's parents. Both the menahel and I were stunned by the reaction of the boy's mother.

"What?!" the mother had exclaimed in surprise. "But he knows he's not allowed into our bedroom!"

Sadly, this incident left a terrible scratch on the boy's neshama and became a turning point in the boy's life for the worse. He became involved in other questionable activities, and he has still not come back to the place where he used to be.

The lesson for us is from the tragically mistaken mindset of the mother. In her eyes, the boy was the one responsible for his own behavior. True, she had a VCR in her room, where she and her husband watched videos, but the child was clearly warned not to come in. He was expected to control himself from his temptation.

It may be difficult to refrain from viewing negative material on account of one's children. Parents want their children to have a pure chinuch, while at the same time they feel that they themselves can 'handle' the inappropriate content. However, there is a realization that needs to be reached. If children see that the parents watch or do what they please, the children will also want a turn! If you cannot control yourselves, how can you expect your child to do so? You are 45 years old; he is 15. Why is he any worse than you are?!

Parents have a responsibility to turn their home into a *Bais Hamikdash* – by taking control over their own actions. They must see to only bring into their homes – whether for their children's use or for their own – what is truly fitting to be brought into an actual מקדש ד'. By doing so, they can indeed look toward having beautiful, *ehrlische* children, who remain on the true path of Torah and *kedushah*.

A Mikdosh in our Hearts

Bringing the Shechinah in to our Hearts

The concept of *Mikdosh* is not limited to physical location. Many *Meforshim* take note of the language of the *passuk* which mentions the fact that Hashem will rest His *Shechinah* in the *Mishkan*. The *passuk* says **בתוכם** / *They should make for Me a Mishkan, and I will dwell within them*. Seemingly, the *passuk* should have said **ושכנתי** / *and I will dwell in it*, referring to the actual structure of the *Mishkan*. Why does the *passuk* employ a plural terminology?

The Alshich famously explains that the *passuk* is not referring to the actual structure of the *Mishkan*, but to a *Mishkan* within the hearts of Bnei Yisroel². HaKadosh Boruch Hu commands each one of us to make our hearts and minds into a suitable setting for the *Shechinah* to reside. This is accomplished by incorporating *kedushah* into our minds and personalities. When we concentrate and focus our full attention on our learning and davening, we are bringing *kedushah* into ourselves. We need to engage our minds as much or as often as possible in thoughts of awe

² א"ה, עי' באלשיך שכתב דברים נוראים, שהשראת השכינה מתחלת בתוך בני ישראל, ומשם נתפשט שפע השכינה לבית המקדש. ועיי"ש שביאר לפי"ז הפסוק בירמיהו (פרק ד' פסוק ד') ה'יכל ה' ה'מה, והיינו דמשכנו האמתי הוא נפשות בני ישראל, ומזהם יתפשט אל מקום המקדש. ולכן בשעה שנתבטל מבני ישראל השראת השכינה בתוך ליבם, ממילא נתבטל שפע השכינה להיכל ה'. וכ"כ הנפש החיים (שער א' פרק ד' בהגה"ה), עיי"ש.

and praise of HaKadosh Boruch Hu. We must think thoughts of thanks and appreciation for the tremendous gifts which we receive from Hashem in all aspects of our lives both in *ruchniyus* and *gashmiyus*.

This *Mikdosh* in our hearts contains the inverse side as well. This means that just as in regard to the *Mikdosh* of our homes, there is a necessity to combine the positive actions of *kedushah* together with a battle against the negative forces that the *yetzer hara* brings to us, the same applies to the *Mikdosh* of our minds. We need to purify our minds from inappropriate thoughts, be they thoughts of *tumah* or other negative feelings. For instance, one who feels *גאוה* /*arrogance* is certainly banishing the *Shechinah* from himself, as the Gemara (סוטה ה') tells us כל אדם שיש בו *One who has haughtiness, HaKadosh Boruch Hu says of him, 'I cannot coexist in the world with him!'* The same can be applied to one who has *שנאת חנם* /*baseless hatred* against other Jews. One must make himself pleasing to HaKadosh Boruch Hu in order to allow for the *Shechinah* to dwell within himself.

Affecting One's Torah

The Function of the *Mishkan* as a Means for HaKadosh Boruch to Be Near the Torah

The level of *kedushah* one brings within himself has a direct association with the essence and quality of the Torah he learns. This is because Chazal teach us that one of the goals of building the *Mishkan* was to allow the *Shechinah* a place to reside alongside where the Torah is contained.

This is conveyed in the following *mashal* given in the Medrash in the beginning of this week's *parshah*:

A king made a shidduch between his daughter to a prince of a foreign land. As the day of the wedding approached, the king called his in his prospective son-in-law.

"I must tell you," the king began, "my daughter, the princess, is very dear to me. I feel that I cannot part from her."

The prince was taken aback. "Do you mean to tell me that you are calling off the shidduch?!"

The king reassured him. "Have no fear; I have no intention of withholding my daughter from you. After all, she cannot remain home her whole life, and moreover, I have already committed to

you. She will become your wife, and you will have the full right to move with her back to your homeland, or to wherever you wish. I ask just one favor from you: Wherever you choose to build your palace, could you please build a small dwelling nearby, so that I can live near my daughter without keeping her away from you."

Similarly, the Torah is Hashem's treasured possession which He gave as a gift to Klal Yisroel. Hashem thus says to us, "To part from my Torah – I cannot do; [and yet] to tell you not to take the Torah, I also cannot do. After all, the Torah is meant for you, and I have already given her to you. I ask you, therefore, to build a place for My Shechinah to reside among you, so that I can be nearby my Torah, while still allowing you to have possession over her.'

This Medrash teaches us that at least one function of the *Mishkan* was to enable Hashem to *כביכול* remain near His Torah. We, Klal Yisroel, have possession of the Torah, and therefore Hashem 'requested' of us to build the *Mishkan* for the *Shechinah*, so that He could be in close proximity to the Torah that He gave us.

Our Own Connection to Torah is Dependent on our Level of Kedushah

This idea carries with it a great responsibility for us, as we will explain.

Rav Chaim Brim zt"l used to say over to us the following continuation of the above *mashal*, as he heard it from Rav Chatzkel Levenstein zt"l:

A boy was walking with his father through the countryside. As they passed by a large palace, the boy turned to his father.

"Tell me," the boy asked, "is that the palace of the prince who just recently married the foreign princess?"

"You tell me," the father replied. "Do you see any small apartment nearby that was added for the benefit of the prince's father in-law, the king?"

The boy responded that he did not see any apartment.

"If so, then it cannot be the palace of the prince!"

Similarly, Rav Brim told us, Hashem stipulated that there must be an abode for the *Shechinah* in any place where the Torah resides. This abode, while certainly referring to the actual *Mikdash*, additionally refers to the

Mikdosh within us as well. Hashem instructs us to make ourselves into a suitable home for the Shechinah, so that Hashem can be near His Torah that is within us.

This brings us, then, to this chilling conclusion: If we will make ourselves into suitable receptacles for the *Shechinah*, we can hope to be able to acquire the Torah. We can be assured, however, that an individual who never turned himself into a *Mikdosh*, will *chas v'shalom* not acquire the Torah, for he is lacking the necessary precondition. Any knowledge of Torah that he does learn will remain outside of himself, not becoming part of his being. This is a frightening thought, considering how much effort and energy we place into our Torah learning. Let us see to become people who are indeed appropriate vessels for the *Shechinah*, and who can truly acquire the Torah and internalize it into our *neshamos*.

Yiras Shamayim is a Necessary Condition for Hatzlacha in Learning

Rav Nochum Partzovitz zt"l recounted a very similar thought which he heard from Rav Boruch Ber Lebowitz zt"l while learning in the Kaminetz yeshiva in Europe. Rav Boruch Ber possessed a powerful and fierce love of Torah, alongside a tremendous feeling of love toward for his *talmidim*. These remarks reflect those feelings.

Rav Boruch Ber was speaking to the yeshiva, delivering words of mussar and inspiration before Tekias Shofar on Rosh Hashana.

Rav Boruch Ber began by citing the Tanna D'vei Eliyahu which states that when a yid learns Torah, HaKadosh Boruch sits nearby and learns alongside him.³ Rav Boruch Ber first 'klerred a shailah [explored a question]' regarding this benefit of Hashem learning alongside the individual: Is this reality a necessity for one's learning, or is it an added luxury? He then brought proofs to demonstrate why it is a necessary and essential condition for one's hatzlacha in learning.

Rav Boruch Ber then said a 'sevara'. One who does not have Yiras Shamayim causes displeasure to Hashem. Certainly, then, Hashem will not desire to sit nearby him. If so, this individual will be lacking this vital condition for his hatzlacha in learning!

³ זה לשון התדב"א (י"ח א'), כל תלמיד חכם שיושב בינו לבין עצמו וקורא ושונה, הקב"ה יושב כנגדו וקורא ושונה עמו.

"If so, my dear talmidim," Rav Boruch Ber concluded, "we must have *Yiras Shamayim*, so that we can be *matzliach* in our learning!"

The benefit of *hatzlacha* in Torah was so tangible to Rav Boruch Ber, that it was a most obvious driving factor and source of motivation to acquire *Yiras Shamayim*. 'We must have *Yiras Shamayim*,' he told his beloved *talmidim*, 'because without it, we will not be *matzliach* in learning!'

In Review

Let us daven for *siyatta d'shmaya* and apply our utmost efforts into transforming ourselves and our surroundings into fitting homes for the *Shechinah*.

- Let us ensure that we treat our shuls and *Botei Medrash*, the מקדשי מעט that remain with us, with the appropriate respect and awe for the *Shechinah* which resides in them. We must see to act with the seriousness and reverence that is deserving of the Palace of the King. At the very least, this means that while the *tzibbur* is actively engaged in praising and davening to Hashem, we must not display an attitude of indifference and disinterest by using our devices during that time.
- Let us turn our homes as well into fitting places for the *Shechinah* to reside. This is done firstly, by establishing a *ruach* of *shalom bayis* in our homes. We must see to treat every other person in the home with the proper care and sensitivity, while at the same time being easygoing and tolerant of their shortcomings.
- We must also seek to actively bring *kedushah* into our homes by setting the Torah and *mitzvos* as the primary ideals and values. We must further see to banish from our home any influences which will drive away the *Shechinah*. All inappropriate books or magazines, as well as any digital devices containing access to such sites, have no place in our homes. Let us always recall that our homes must be on the level of a *Bais Hamikdosh*, and we, on the level of the Kohen Gadol performing the *Avodah*. Let us act within our homes the same way we would in the *Bais Hamikdosh* itself.

- Besides for turning our homes into a *Mikdosh*, let us bring a *Mikdosh* into our hearts and beings. Let us involve ourselves in Torah and closeness to Hashem, and let us place great effort into purifying our thoughts from thoughts and images which are harmful to *kedushah*.
- Lastly, let us remember that our *hatzlacha* in Torah is directly related to our level of *kedushah* and *Yiras Shamayim*. As we learn in the *mashal* of the king who requested his son in-law to build him a small home so that he can be in close proximity to his daughter, HaKadosh Boruch Hu wishes to remain near His precious possession, the Torah. We must therefore make ourselves into suitable recipients of the *Shechinah*, so that we will be able to acquire Hashem's Torah. Let us remember that in order to be *matzliach* in our Torah, it is a necessity to have HaKadosh Boruch learn alongside us. As Rav Boruch Ber urged his *talmidim*, let us see to have the proper *Yiras Shamayim* so that Hashem will find us to be a suitable '*chavrusa*' in our learning.

In the *zechus* of our elevating ourselves to the proper levels of *kedushah* and *Mikdosh*, we should be *zoche* to the actual *Bais Hamikdosh* and the full measure of *Shechinah* במהרה בימינו.

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