

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XXIII: Pekudei (Ex. 38:21–40:38)

Essay 4. Delaying the setting up of the Tabernacle

מדרש ילקוט על פסוק "ובשנה האחת עשרה ברח בול", וכן אמה מוצא במלאכת המשכן אמר ר' חנינא בכ"ה בכסלו נגמרה מלאכת המשכן וכו' והקב"ה חשב לעצב שמחת הקמת המשכן בהדש שנולד בו יצחק וכו'. יש לדקדק למה דוקא נגמרה מלאכת המשכן בכ"ה בכסלו, ולמה נתעכבה הקמתו דוקא בהדש שנולד בו יצחק.

There is a **Midrash Yalkut Shimoni** on the verse, “**and in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul**—that is, the eighth month—the House was completed according to all its details and all its specifications.”¹

You find the same in the work of the Tabernacle. Rabbi Chanina said: “On the 25th of Kislev, the work of the Tabernacle was completed,” and it was folded until the 1st of Nissan, as it is written: “On the first day of the first month, you shall set up the Tabernacle.”² And Israel was murmuring against Moses, saying, “Why wasn't it set up immediately? Maybe there was a fault in it?” **And the Holy One, Blessed be He, thought to delay the celebration of the setting up of the Tabernacle to the month in which Isaac was born,** as it is written: “Knead and make cakes,”³ and they told him, “At the appointed time, I will return to you, at this time next year.”⁴ Thus, because of this, Kislev, when the work was completed, was lost. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said, “I must pay for it,” and He paid with the dedication of the Hasmoneans. Similarly, in the future, the Holy One, Blessed be He will repay in the month of Marcheshvan.

- Yalkut Shimoni on Nach 184:2

We need to check why the work of the Tabernacle was specifically completed on the 25th of Kislev, and why its setting up was delayed specifically to the month in which Isaac was born.

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¹ I Kings 6:38.

² Ex. 40:2.

³ Gen. 18:6.

⁴ Gen. 18:14.

וַיִּשׂ לֵאמֹר שְׂכַתְבֵי הַבְּתוּי בְּפָרְשָׁה זוֹ בְּשֵׁם הַמְּדַרְשׁ, שְׂמַעְשֵׂה הַמְּשָׁכָן הִיָּה שְׂקוּל וּמְכֻוּן נֶגֶד בְּרִיאַת הָעוֹלָם, בְּבְרִיאַת כְּתִיב "הַנּוֹטָה כְּדֹק שָׁמַיִם וַיִּמְתְּחֵם כְּאַהֲל" וּבְמַעֲשֵׂה הַמְּשָׁכָן כְּתִיב "וַעֲשִׂיתָ יְרִיעֹת עֲזִים לְאַהֲל". שֵׁם כְּתִיב "יָקוּוּ הַמַּיִם" וְכֵן כְּתִיב "וַעֲשִׂיתָ כִּיּוֹר נְחֹשֶׁת". שֵׁם כְּתִיב "יְהִי מְאֹרֹת" וְכֵן כְּתִיב "וַעֲשִׂיתָ מְנֹרֹת זָהָב". שֵׁם כְּתִיב "וַעֲוֹף יְעוֹפֵף" וְכֵן "וַהֲיוּ הַכְּרָבִים פְּרָשֵׁי כְּנָפַיִם", שֵׁם וְכֵן "וַעֲשִׂיתָ שְׂהָאָרִיז הַרְבֵּה".

It is said that the Rabbeinu Bachya⁵ writes on this parasha, on verse Ex. 38:21, in the name of the Midrash, that the work of the Tabernacle was equal to and corresponded with the Creation of the world. For the Creation, it is written, “Who spread out the skies like gauze, stretched them out like a tent to dwell in,”⁶ while for the Tabernacle, it is written, “you shall then make cloths of goats’ hair for a tent over the Tabernacle.”⁷

There, for the Creation, it is written, “G-d said, ‘Let the water below the sky be gathered into one area,’ ”⁸ and here, for the Tabernacle, it is written, “make a washbasin of copper . . . and put water in it.”⁹

There, for the Creation, it is written, “G-d said, ‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night,’ ”¹⁰ and here, for the Tabernacle, it is written, “make a lamp of pure gold.”¹¹

There, for the Creation, it is written, “G-d said, ‘Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and birds that fly above the earth,’ ”¹² and here, for the Tabernacle, it is written, “the cherubim shall have their wings spread out.”¹³

There, for the Creation, it is written, etc., and see there, where he elaborates greatly.

וְהָרַב הַנִּזְכָּר לְעִיל כְּתִיב בְּפָרְשַׁת תְּצַוֶּה שְׂבָאֲבָנֵי הַחֹשֶׁן הָיוּ ע"ב אוֹתוֹת כְּנֶגֶד ע"ב אוֹתוֹת שֶׁל שֵׁם הַגְּדוֹל, לְהוֹרוֹת בְּנֵה קִיּוּם הָעוֹלָם שְׂנִבְרָא בַּע"ב שְׁעוֹת, שְׁהָרֵי הָעוֹלָם נִבְרָא בַּיּוֹם וְלֹא בַּלַּיְלָה, דְּכְתִיב "בַּיּוֹם עָשִׂיתָ ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם" עכ"ל.

The rabbi mentioned above, Rabbeinu Bachya, wrote in parashat Tetzaveh (Exodus 29:15): “In the stones of the Choshen,” the high priest’s breastplate, “were 72 letters corresponding to the 72 letters of the Great Name,¹⁴ to indicate the Creation of the world which was created in 72 hours, since the world was created during the day and not at night, as it is written, ‘in the day that the L-rd G-d made earth and heaven.’ ”¹⁵ I.e., 6 days of Creation times 12 daylight hours per day equals 72 hours.

⁵ Isaiah 40:22.

⁶ Bachya ben Asher ibn Halawa (1255–1340), Biblical commentator.

⁷ Ex. 26:7.

⁸ Gen. 1:9.

⁹ Ex. 30:18.

¹⁰ Gen. 1:14.

¹¹ Ex. 25:31.

¹² Gen. 1:20.

¹³ Ex. 25:20.

¹⁴ The 72-letter name of G-d.

¹⁵ Gen. 2:4.

ולפי זה יש לומר שישראל עשו את המשכן בע"ב יום הואיל שהנה מכוון לבריאת העולם, ולכשתדקדק בהם נמצא שהם כלים בכ"ה בכסלו, שהרי ביום הכפורים משה נרד מן ההר וצוה להם מעשה המשכן, ומיום הכפורים עד סוף תשרי יש כ' יום, וכ"ט של מרחשון וכ"ה של כסלו הם בין הכל ע"ד יום, הוצא מהם שני ימים שהביאו הנדבה קודם שיתחילו להתעסק במלאכה, כדכתיב "והם הביאו אליו עוד נדבה בפקר בפקר" כדאימת במדרש ולשני בקרים הביאו כל נדבתם, ונשארו ע"ב, ואפילו בשבת שלא הותר להם לעשות מלאכה, שמה היו לומדים בשבת דיני המלאכות כדי להיות וריזים בימות החול, ואף השבתות עולים למנוח.

According to this, it can be said that Israel made the Tabernacle in 72 days, since it was corresponding to the Creation of the world, and when you check it, [the 72 days] ended on the 25th of Kislev. That is, on Yom Kippur, Moses descended from the mountain, and commanded them with the making of the Tabernacle. For from Yom Kippur until the end of Tishrei, there are 20 days, and 29 days of the month of Marcheshvan and 25 days of Kislev amount to 72 days, after subtracting two days for the contributions brought before they began the work. This is as it is written, "and they continued to bring freewill offerings to him morning after morning,"¹⁶ and as is brought in the Midrash, "and in two days they brought all their contributions,"¹⁷ and 72 days remained. Even on the Sabbath, when they were not permitted to perform work, they might have studied the laws of labor to be prompt on weekdays, and thus the Sabbaths are counted in the total.

אבל אף על פי שנושלמה המלאכה, "מה גדלו מעשיה ה' מאד עמקו מחשבתיה", שרצה להמתין בחודש שנולד בו יצחק, לפי שהמשכן נקרא משכן שעתיד להתמשכן וכו', ולפי דעת אברהם ויעקב היו חייבים מיתה, דסבירא להו ימחו על קדושת שמה, אבל לפי דעת יצחק ראויים לרחמים, ומשום הכי רחם עליהם ששפך חמתו על עצים ואבנים, כמו שפרש רש"י בפרק קמא דקידושין על ההיא ד"מזמור לאסף" קינה לאסף מיבועי ליה וכו' ועיי"ש.

But even though the work was completed, "How great are Your works, O Lord, very deep are Your thoughts,"¹⁸ that He wished to delay it to the month in which Isaac was born, since the Tabernacle is called Tabernacle, as it is destined to be taken by G-d as collateral for our sins, i.e., with the destruction of the First Temple and the destruction of the Second Temple.¹⁹ According to the opinion of Abraham and Jacob, "let them be eradicated for the sake of Your name," but according to the opinion of Isaac, they were worthy of mercy.²⁰ Because of this, He had mercy on them, in that He poured his wrath out upon wood and stones, as Rashi explained in the first chapter of tractate Kiddushin (31b), that Ps. 79:1, "A song of Asaph: O God, heathens have entered Your domain, defiled Your holy temple, and turned Jerusalem into ruins," should have been entitled "A lament of Asaph." Rashi explained that it was a song because G-d spared the people, instead destroying the Temple.

¹⁶ Ex. 36:3.

¹⁷ Ex. Rabbah 41:2; 51:2; Num. Rabbah 1:10; 12:16.

¹⁸ Ex. 36:3.

¹⁹ Midrash Tanchuma, Pekudei 2:4; Rabbeinu Bachya on Ex. 38:21.

²⁰ Shabbat 89b.

ומשום הכי נקרא משכן שעתידי להתמשכן, וכדי להראות לישראל ששם זה של משכן הוא לטובתם, שבתרבות המקדש מתקפריין עונתיהם, משום הכי המתין בחדש שנולד בו יצחק. נעניין עוד לקמן בסמוך טעם אחר נאה ומתקבל.

Therefore, it is called the Tabernacle, as it is destined to be taken by G-d as collateral, and in order to show Israel that this name of “Tabernacle” is for their benefit, that through the destruction of the Temple their sins are atoned. Because of this, He delayed the setting up of the Tabernacle to the month in which Isaac was born, because of Isaac’s advocacy for the salvation of our people. See further, later in the adjoining essay, for another reason that is pleasant and accepted.

ואם תאמר איך אפשר שפשישראל חוטאים נוטל מהם המקדש לכפר עליהם, והלא כשאין קרבן אדרבא אין כפרה. והכי נמי יש להקשות כשהנה בית המקדש קיים איך היו מתקפריין על הודונות, והא המשכן לא נעשה אלא להקריב עליו קרבנות, והקרבן אינו בא אלא על השוגג, ואיך יתקפרו בקרבנות והלא נשאר עליהם העבירות יותר חמורות שהקרבן אינו מכפר עליהם.

Maybe you will say, how is it possible that when Israel sins, the Temple is taken from them to atone for them? For isn’t it so that when there is no sacrifice, to the contrary there is no atonement? Alternatively, one can question that when the Temple was standing, how was atonement made for intentional sins, as the Tabernacle was built only to offer sacrifices, and a sacrifice is only for inadvertent sins? How can they be atoned by sacrifices when their sins remain even more severe, as the sacrifice does not atone for them?

ויש לומר דאין הכי נמי שהקרבן אינו מכפר אלא על השוגג, שהרי מלת "קרבן" משמעו לשון קריבות. וזה לא יתכן אלא על מי שחטא בשוגג, שבלשבויל חטאו נתרחק מהקרב"ה וצריך לקרבו. אבל מי שחטא בעבירות חמורות, הוא פגם בעונו ואינו יכול להתקרב עד שימתקן מה שפגם בנפשו, והקרבן אינו מועיל לו. אמנם הואיל שחטות בדינינו שהנצרך הרע לא יחטיא האדם מתחלה בעבירה חמורה, רק בעבירה קלה ואחר כך בעבירה גוררת עבירה ובה לחמורה, לכן נמן להם המקדש כדי שתקפריין תכף ומיד מן העבירה קלה קודם שיבאו לידי חמורה, ונהו התועלת שהנה להם בבית המקדש ובקרבנות, כמו שאמרו ז"ל לא לן אדם בירושלים ובגדו עון.

It can be said that it is indeed so that the sacrifice only atones for inadvertent sins, for the word “sacrifice” [קרבן] [karban] has the meaning of “bringing near” [קריבות] [kereivot]. This can only be done for someone who sinned by mistake, for due to his sin he was distanced from the Holy One, Blessed be He, and needs to be brought near to Him [לקרבו] [le'karvo]. However, someone who sinned with severe transgressions, he is injured by his sin, and he cannot draw near until he corrects the harm he did to his soul, and the sacrifice does not help him. However, since it is a tradition that the evil inclination does not initially lead a person to commit a grave sin, but rather to a light sin, and then one sin leads to another sin²¹ until it leads to a grave one, He gave them the Temple so that they would atone immediately from

²¹ Pirkei Avot 4:2.

the lighter sin before they reached the more severe one. This was the benefit they had through the Temple and the sacrifices, as [Rabbi Yehuda bar Rabbi Simon] of blessed memory said: “There was never a person in Jerusalem with iniquity attributed to him. How so? The continual offering of the morning atones for transgressions that were at night, and [that] of the afternoon atones for transgressions that were performed during the day.”²²

ועל זה אמר הכתוב "שגיאיות מייבין", כלומר לפי שהאדם אינו יכול להזהר מפל השגגות, משום הכי כשנודעו לו ומבקש מחילה ראוי הוא לכפרה, אמנם מנסתרות שלא נודעו לו כלל צריף שהקב"ה ינקהו מעצמו, וזהו "מנסתרות נקני", וכשלא יהיו השגגות לא יבאו הדונות, ולפיכך "גם מנדים חשף עבדך", "חשף" דוקא. אמנם כשלא רצו להתחרט מהשגגות עד שבאו לידי דונות, ומחמת זה בטלו הקרבנות וגלו מארצם, אז מודד להם במדה אחרת, שכל זמן שהם בגלות אף אם יחטאו בעבירות חמורות יהיו נדונים כשוגגים ונאנוסים, מחמת צער וטירוף ובלבול שיש להם בגלות.

On this, the verse says: “Who can be aware of unintentional errors? Clear me of unperceived guilt,”²³ meaning that a person cannot be so cautious as to avoid all inadvertent sins, and therefore when they become known and a person seeks forgiveness, he is worthy of atonement. However, for unperceived sins that were not known to him at all, it is necessary that the Holy One, Blessed be He, cleanse him Himself, and this is the meaning of, “restrain Your servant from willful sins”²⁴—literally “restrain” us from sinning intentionally. However, when they did not wish to repent from their unintentional errors until they came to the level of intentional sins, and because of this, the sacrifices were nullified, and they were exiled from their land, then He measures for them with a different measure. As long as they are in exile, even if they commit severe transgressions, they will be judged as if they were unintentional sinners and coerced, due to the suffering, madness, and confusion that they experience in exile.

דימאי למה שמצינו במדרש בשלח שמיכאל הליץ בעד ישראל שאף על פי שעבדו עבודה זרה במצרים נקראו אנוסים מחמת השעבוד, והעבירות חמורות שהיו להם בשעת החרבן נתכפרו מקצתם בצער החרבן ובכמה אלפים שנהרגו בעת ההיא וה' ינקום נקם דמם, ומקצתם באורך צער הגלות.

This is similar to what we find in the Midrash in Beshalach, where Michael interceded on behalf of Israel, saying that even though they worshiped idols in Egypt, they were considered coerced due to the servitude.²⁵ The severe sins they committed during the destruction were partially atoned for through the suffering of the destruction and by the

²² Num. Rabbah 21:21.

²³ Ps. 19:13.

²⁴ Ps. 19:14.

²⁵ Perhaps this is a reference to Yalkut Shimoni, Beshalach 234:6. It does not mention Michael, but rather has the Angel of Death, Samael, accusing the Jews of worshipping idols, to which G-d responds that they did not do so willingly. However, Michael is considered a counterpart to the Angel of Death, as per Ex. Rabbah 18:5, “Rabbi Yosei said: To what are Mikhael and Samael comparable? To an advocate and a prosecutor standing at trial.”

thousands who were killed at that time, and G-d will avenge their blood. Some of their atonement comes from the prolonged suffering of exile.

ולפי זה יבואר הפתוב "אבותינו חטאו (אינם) [ואינם]" וכו', הם חטאו ומקנו מקצת החטאים כגנזפר לעיל ואינם עוד בעולם למשן הכל, לפיכך "אנחנו" [ואנחנו] עונתיהם סבלנו", שאנו סובלים צער הגלות, ולא מחמת עונתינו שהרי אנו נידונים כאנוסים, אלא מחמת עונתיהם. ועיין עוד בהידוש הבא.

Accordingly, we can explain the verse, "Our fathers sinned and are no more; and we must bear their guilt."²⁶ They sinned and partially corrected some of the sins, as mentioned above, but they are no longer in the world to correct everything. Therefore, "And we must bear their guilt," means we are suffering the pain of exile, not because of our sins, for we are judged as coerced, but because of their sins. Further explanation follows in the next novel essay.

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²⁶ Lam. 5:7.