

Pekudei

Special Oxygen

These are the accountings of the Mishkan, Mishkan of testimony...

Shemos 38:21

“Mishkan, Mishkan” – twice, to hint to the Temple, which was collected as collateral via the two destructions, due to Israel’s sins.

Rashi

Mishkan of testimony – testifying before Israel that God has relented regarding the Golden Calf, for He has rested his Shechina amongst them [in the Mishkan].

Rashi

The word “Mishkan” (Tabernacle) shares its root with the word *mashkon*, collateral. Thus, our Sages¹ teach us that the repetition of the word Mishkan in our verse hints to the two Temples that were destroyed “as collateral” from the Jewish people.²

The Midrash then teaches that the designation “Mishkan of testimony” refers to the Mishkan as testament that God relents to the Jewish people,³ forgiving them even though they have sinned.

When Hashem told the Jewish people to build the Tabernacle, the temporary Temple, He said that when they build Him a home, He would dwell – “*visbochanti*” – among them.⁴ (*Visbochanti* also shares the same root as *mishkan* and *mashkon*.) Medieval scholars⁵ have noted that the word *visbochanti* teaches about the Temples themselves: (1) It can be broken into *visbochan* (“and He will dwell”) and the letters *tav* and *yod*, which add up to 410. The first Temple stood 410 years. (2) It also can be broken into the words *visbeni* (“the second”) and the letters *tav* and *chof*, equaling 420. The second Temple stood 420 years.

Thus, the very words telling us to build Hashem a temporary dwelling teach us about the

1 Shemos Rabbah 51:3. See Rashi to Shemos 38:21, s.v. *Mishkan, Mishkan*.

2 See also Bamidbar Rabbah 12:14, that the Mishkan in Shilo was destroyed as well, and is also a collateral for the Jewish people. Rashi, on Tehillim 74:8, writes that it was destroyed by the Philistines, but see Chasam Sofer (*Yoreh Deah*, 264), who says that there is no indication that it was the Philistines. (See also *Rinas Yitzchak* of R. Sorotzkin to Pikudei 38:21, p. 429.)

3 See *Shem Mishmuel* (Pikudei 5673, s.v. *Eleh Pikudei*), which explains why this is taught specifically when the accounting was done by Moshe.

4 Shemos 25:8

5 *Tosafos Hashalem* to Shir Hashirim 1:4, s.v. *mashbeni*

transitory nature of even the more permanent Temples. Even the Temple is only conditional. It is collateral that can be taken and given back.

Why does the Temple need to be a form of collateral? Collateral against what? Somehow, we need to understand why the collateral nature of the Mishkan is so fundamental that its very name describes it.

Moshe did not merit to enter the Land of Israel and build the Temple. If he had, our Sages teach,⁶ it would have stood forever. At first glance, an indestructible Temple sounds like a very good thing. However, the Temple's destruction is described in Tehillim⁷ as a joyous event because Hashem poured out His wrath on sticks and stones⁸ rather than on the people. Thus, even in its destruction, the Temple is taking the brunt of the punishment from the Jewish people. Rather than representing abandonment, the destruction of the Mikdash represents God's mercy, even when He is meting out justice.

The Temple was meant to help us achieve forgiveness for our sins. Each item in the Temple served to atone for a specific human mistake.⁹ The Passover Haggadah¹⁰ goes so far as to suggest that forgiveness is the entire reason for the Temple's existence!

However, there is a danger. As long as there is a Temple standing that can atone for our sins, what impetus can there be to change for the better? If the Temple will bring forgiveness, why repent from sin? Thus, the Temple serves as a form of collateral. If the people start to take it for granted, sinning and not repenting, it could – and would – be taken away.

As collateral, though, the Temple and its holy contents still belong to the Jewish people, even when they are claimed by God, the "Creditor." The Temple was taken from us, but it is still there, atoning for us – we just can't see it right now, which helps us to focus on the need for improving our deeds, rather than taking forgiveness for granted.

But if the Mikdash is still there, despite the destruction of its "sticks and stones," where is it?

*"Since the day the Mikdash was destroyed, all that Hashem has in this world are the four cubits of Halacha."*¹¹

When a person is involved in Torah, thinking about Torah and studying it, he is connected to the Temple. Rav Tzadok of Lublin writes that the holiness of the Land of Israel is found in the boundaries of Halacha. Furthermore, wherever in the world a person is, he can breathe

6 Bamidbar Rabbah 16:20, and Taanis 29. See also Sotah 9a, and *Ohr Hachaim* to Dvarim 1:37.

7 79:1

8 Eicha Rabassi 4:14. See also Rashi to Kiddushin 31b, s.v. *istayab milsab*, and Tosafos there.

9 Arachin 16

10 In "*Dayenu*"

11 Brachos 8a

the “air of the Land of Israel” that “makes a person wise,”¹² so long as he is in the four cubits of Halacha.¹³ Rav Pinchas Halevi Hurwitz¹⁴ writes, similarly, that the Divine Presence (Shechina) is found in the four cubits of Halacha.

The world sees that we don’t have a Temple, and they think that we are doomed. In fact, if we had kept our Temple, we would have been worse off! Although painful, the fact that our means of forgiveness has been taken away forces us to take responsibility for our actions. We no longer rely on the Temple to “clean up our messes.”

Nevertheless, the Temple is collateral. It exists, we just do not see it. During exile, it is in the Halacha, in the Torah, that we actually connect directly to the Temple and its source of power.

When Yaakov slept on the site where the Temple would one day stand, he exclaimed, “How awesome is this place! This is nothing other than the House of God, and the gate of Heaven.”¹⁵ His statement, “This is nothing other than...” is a roundabout way to talk. It would seem better to say directly, “This is the House of God.” The Sages¹⁶ inform us that Yaakov saw that this Temple would be built, and destroyed, and rebuilt.

When Yaakov said, “*ain zeh*” (this is not), he was hinting to the fact that at some point, the Temple would not exist. The very fact that it could be destroyed is as important as that it would be built! The Temple could be taken away for our sins, to teach us that life is something that we must take responsibility for, and our mistakes are ours to mend.

The Temple is gone, but it is also still there. We are still able to achieve forgiveness; we just reach it slightly differently.

“The Divine Presence has never left the Western Wall.”¹⁷ In a way, the Temple is not really gone, it is just being held as collateral.

12 Bava Basra 158b

13 *Tzidkas Hatzaddik* 209, 232

14 *Haflaah* to Kesuvos, end of “Pischa Zeira”

15 Bereishis 28:17

16 Bereishis Rabbah 69:7

17 Shemos Rabbah 2:2