

# The CHASSIDUS PERSPECTIVE with Reb Yoel Kahn

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In this week's Parshah, Hashem commands the Jewish people to build a Mishkan and Beis Hamikdash for Him, a place where His *shechinah* can dwell.

Why must there be a specific spot that will house the *shechinah*? Doesn't Hashem's *shechinah* fill the entire world?

The primary service in the Beis Hamikdash was the *avodah* of *korbanos*. Nowadays, this has been replaced with prayer, in which a person takes his inner "animal" and "sacrifices" it to Hashem. Although this is a spiritual service, it too is grounded in physicality: We must face the physical spot where the Beis Hamikdash once stood, and it is specifically via there that our prayers ascend on High.

This, too, is difficult to understand. Even the fact that physical sacrifices may only be brought in the Beis Hamikdash and nowhere else begs for explanation. But why should our *spiritual* prayers and *avodas Hashem* be "weighed down" by the physical limitations of a finite spot?!

## THE LIMITS OF BEING UNLIMITED

We tend to think that while the limits of physicality are certainly infinitely distant from Hashem, something without limits or boundaries is closer to Him. A spiritual entity or activity is surely more Divine than a limited, physical act or place.

However, this is not true. Physicality and spirituality are equally removed from Hashem. Just as He is beyond limitations, He is beyond being higher than limitations. He can be found in a physical spot just as He can be found in the spiritual realms.

This is what it means when we say that Hashem is *nimna hanimna'os*. It is impossible for something to be impossible for Him. Just as He is not confined to limitations and boundaries, He is not limited to remaining higher than them.

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## THE PLACE FOR INFINITY

Where can Hashem's true unlimited quality be expressed? Not where there are limitations, and not even where there are no limitations. It can only be expressed where limitations and beyond limitations join together.

## BOUNDLESS BOUNDARIES

This is what was unique about the Mishkan and Beis Hamikdash. On the one hand, it was a limited, measured spot with defined borders, and it and its vessels were required to be formed from specific materials and comprise precise measurements. At the same time, it was a miraculous place where the *shechinah* was revealed. It was a place where the ten miracles listed in Pirkei Avos joined hand in hand with the laws of nature, where the unlimited *shechinah* shone forth from a measured spot.

Take the *aron*, for example. It was 2.5 *amos* long, 1.5 *amos* wide, and 1.5 *amos* high. This was a halachic requirement; failure to meet these measurements would have rendered it unfit. Yet, when placed in the twenty-*amah*-long *kodesh hakodashim*, one was able to measure ten *amos* from the north wall to one side of the *aron*, and another ten *amos* from the south wall to the other side!

How was this possible? It wasn't. It was a fusion of space with beyond space, a portrayal of how Hashem is not only

beyond measurement, but beyond beyond-measurement as well. (If the *aron* would not need to consist of a specific measurement, the fact that it did not take up space would not have been a wonder. The miracle was that it *did* have a halachically mandated measurement, and at the same time it remained beyond measurement.)

This concept was expressed with the *korbanos* as well, in both their physical and spiritual manifestations. The sacrificed animal was confined by physical limitations and had to meet specific criteria to be fit for a *korban*. Then, this animal would be consumed by a fire that descended from on High, symbolizing



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the fusion of its finite existence with the infinite.

Similarly, our spiritual *korbanos*—our prayers—must be directed toward the exact spot where the Beis Hamikdash once stood, and it is specifically via there that they ascend Above. This, too, demonstrates how the unlimitedness of the spiritual joins with the boundaries of the physical.

## A MIKDASH IN BUSINESS

In addition to building a physical Mikdash, we are instructed to build a spiritual Mikdash for Hashem, by infusing our daily activities with *kedushah*. Here as well, it is not enough to reveal the *shechinah* in the spiritual aspects of our lives, rather it must be revealed in the physical as well.

A person's *yetzer hara* can protest:

"I understand that I must bring Elokus into the parts of the day that are clearly spiritual. When learning Torah, I will learn *lishmah*; when doing mitzvos, I will fulfill them scrupulously, with every *hiddur*, with *kabolas ol*, with *chayus*—you name it!

"But why must even my personal activities be done *lesheim shamayim*? Give me a break; allow me a few minutes for myself. Must every part of my day be connected with Hashem?!"

In fact, what is demanded is not only that כל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים, to have an intent *lesheim shamayim* in whatever you do, but furthermore—בכל דרכיך דעהו, "In all your ways you shall know Him." כל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים means that you are engaging in business (for example) just like anyone else, and the difference is only in the *intent*: Why are you trying to make money? Not for the sake of making money, but to give *tzedakah* and be able to learn Torah without distractions. בכל דרכיך דעהו takes it a step further: You perceive Elokus *within* the business itself; you see

Hashem's hand in your dealings and how every event is orchestrated from Above.

Why, indeed, is it important to connect our physical actions with Elokus? Because that's the whole point of making a Mishkan—to fuse the limited with the unlimited.

## THREE PARSHIYOS, THREE LEVELS

Viewed in this light, the three *parshiyos* of Yisro, Mishpatim, and Terumah are steps in a ladder, each *parshah* building upon the previous one.

Before the giving of the Torah, *elyonim* and *tachtonim*, the spiritual and the physical, were two separate entities. Mattan Torah, described in Parshas Yisro, broke this barrier and accomplished that the two can unite as one.

However, the events of Mattan Torah were miraculous and heavenly, and did not fully demonstrate the extent of this union. Parshas Mishpatim adds to Parshas Yisro by demonstrating how a person's finite, limited intellect can fuse with Hashem's Wisdom, by understanding

*mishpatim* in a way that is permeated with *kabolas ol* (as explained in last week's *The Chassidus Perspective*).

Parshas Terumah takes this to a new level. Not only can human intellect—a spiritual, albeit limited, entity—connect with Hashem, but even a concrete spot, the ultimate of physicality, can be a place where His *shechinah* is revealed.

For further study, see *Lekutei Sichos*, Vol. 3, Parshas Terumah

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