YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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**PARASHAT HASHAVUA**

**Rav Yishai Jeselsohn**

**PARASHAT TERUMA**

**"Thus you shall make it"**

**I. The Temple – With Precision, and For All Generations**

In our *parasha*, the people of Israel are commanded to build a house for God: "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (*Shemot* 25:8). This is not only a temporary directive to those setting out into the wilderness, but a permanent command to the people of Israel wherever they may be. This is how the *Or Ha-Chaim* explains the difference in terminology between the command, in which the house of God is called a *mikdash*, "sanctuary," and the term used for the specific house of God in the wilderness: *mishkan*, "tabernacle."

It seems that the statement, "And let them make Me a **sanctuary** **(*mikdash*)**," is a positive commandment that applies at all times, both in the wilderness and when they entered the land, whenever Israel will be there, across the generations. Israel would have had to do so even during the exiles, except that we find that God prohibited [the building of a sanctuary] in all places from the time the Temple was built [in Jerusalem] … Therefore, it does not say: "And let them make Me a **tabernacle (*mishkan*)**," which would have implied that the *mitzva* was only stated for that time.And after commanding them about the matter in general, He said the specific law that was to be performed in the wilderness – which is not a place in which to erect a stone building – that a tabernacle was to be erected, in the stated order. (*Or Ha-Chaim*, *Shemot* 25:8)

Indeed, the Rambam, who established in the principles guiding his determination of the 613 *mitzvot* (principle no. 3) that "it is inappropriate to count *mitzvot* that do not apply in all generations," counts the building of the Temple as a mitzva(positive commandment 20).

The Torah describes the building of the sanctuary in detail twice: once in the command (*Parashat Teruma* and *Parashat Tetzaveh*) and a second time in the execution (*Parashat Vayakhel* and *Parashat Pekudei*), emphasizing that everything was done in accordance with God's command. Thus, our *parasha* continues its introduction to the command regarding the building of the *Mishkan*:

According to all that I show you, the design [*tavnit*] of the tabernacle, and the design of all its vessels; thus you shall make [it]. (*Shemot* 25:9)

And as we read in *Parashat Pekudei*, at the end of the construction work:

Thus was finished all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting; and the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moshe; thus they made [it]. (*Shemot* 39:32)

This emphasis highlights the problem in deviating, in even the smallest way, from God's command regarding the building of the *Mishkan*. God commands, clearly and precisely, in which house and over which vessels the *Shekhina* will rest in the world, such that any change is significant and could interfere with the presence of the *Shekhina.*

*Chazal* further derived, from the superfluity of the words "thus you shall make [it]," that the necessity of precision in the building of the *Mishkan* applies for all generations:

Rav Shimi bar Chiya said: The verse states: "According to all that I show you, the design of the tabernacle… thus you shall make [it]" – for the generations to come. (*Sanhedrin* 16b, *Shevuot* 14b-15a)

A similar description is found in *Pesikta Zutarta*,with a picturesque addition that emphasizes the importance of precision in the work of the *Mishkan*:

"According to all that I show you." This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed Moshe all the work of the design of the *Mishkan*; He showed it all to him as an image of fire.

"Thus you shall make [it]" – for the generations to come. (*Pesikta Zutarta Shemot* 25:9)[[1]](#footnote-1)

Rashi reduces these ideas about the importance of precision in the fashioning of the vessels, and about the *mitzva* concerning the *mikdash* applyingfor all generations, to a practical halakhic ruling:

"Thus you shall make [it]" – for [all] generations. If one of the vessels is lost, or when you make for Me the vessels for the permanent Temple, e.g., the tables, candlesticks, lavers, and stands which Shlomo had made – you shall make them after the design of these. (Rashi, *Shemot* 25:9)

That is to say, throughout the generations, when the people of Israel merit building the Temple, they must not deviate from the designs of the building or its vessels that were given in our *parasha.* The *Or Ha-Chaim* learns something similar, though in a slightly more qualified manner, from the Rambam's *Hilkhot Beit Ha-Bekhira*:

I examined everything that the Rambam wrote regarding the laws governing the Temple, and I saw that regarding three of the vessels, he wrote that they must be exactly like the vessels that Moshe fashioned in the wilderness; namely, the table, the *menora*, and the golden altar. And thus it is stated explicitly in chapter *Shtei Ha-lechem* [Chapter 11 of tractate *Menachot*]*.* But as for the rest of the vessels, and the form of the Temple [itself], we do not learn for future generations from what Moshe did in the wilderness. According to this, it would have seemed that the mitzvaof "Thus you shall make [it]" applies in future generations only to [these] vessels. (*Or Ha-Chaim* 25:9)

According to the Rambam, it would seem that only the form of the *vessels* is indispensable – not the form of the Temple itself.

However, the *Or Ha-Chaim* goes on to argue with this (“This is not the truth”) based on the aforementioned Gemara in *Sanhedrin*, whose context implies that the consecration of the Temple *courtyard* must also be done the way it was done in the days of Moshe. Thus, he argues, what we derive from Moshe's *Mishkan* applies for generations not just to the vessels, but also to the building itself.

(One might have explained the Rambam's position by saying that the act of consecration is indeed learned from the *Mishkan*, but the form of the building cannot be learned from it since the *Mishkan* of Moshe was a temporary tabernacle, while the future Temple will be a permanent building.)

In any case, it is apparent from the comments of Rashi, the Rambam, and the *Or Ha-Chaim* that precision regarding even the smallest details of the Temple is important for all generations.

**II. From the *Mishkan* to Shlomo's Temple**

There is considerable difficulty involved in this imperative. The first difficulty arises from the chapters in the book of *Yechezkel*, which describe the future Temple (*Yechezkel* 40 and on); it is not clear from that description how similar that Temple will be to Moshe's *Mishkan*. However, those verses refer to the future, and we have not yet merited to fulfill them; moreover, they express an explicit command of God, by way of His prophet.

A more significant difficulty arises from Shlomo's Temple, and is discussed earlier in the *Or Ha-Chaim*’s comments on our verse. With the *Mishkan*, Moshe, Betzalel, and the entire nation of Israel were indeed careful to fashion it and its utensils in accordance with their precise design – but the Temple that Israel merited to build in the days of King Shlomo involved various deviations from the designs found in our *parasha*, some of which were quite significant: among other things, Shlomo added lamps and tables, and he changed the dimensions of the utensils. Owing to these difficulties, the Ramban rejected the *halakha* that Rashi had innovated in his explanation of the phrase "Thus you shall make [it]":

But I do not know if this is true, that Shlomo was bound to fashion the vessels of the Temple after the design of these vessels. Shlomo made the copper altar twenty cubits long and twenty cubits wide (II *Divrei Ha-Yamim* 4:1). (Ramban, *Shemot* 25:9)

Whereas *Parashat Teruma* dictates thatthe copper altar is to be five cubits long and five cubits wide, Shlomo's altar was twenty cubits by twenty cubits. For this reason, the Ramban suggests that the words "thus you shall make [it]" are intended for emphasis and to encourage the workers, not to teach us a new law.

The Re'em, Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrachi, offers a creative defense of Rashi’s *halakha*, suggesting that in fact, the size does not have to be the same as in the *Mishkan*; rather, it is the *relationship* between the length and width of the altar that is indispensable, and this is what is called the "design":

[The Ramban’s argument] is not [compelling], because the meaning is not “like their design," like the design of these, like their dimension; [rather,] that the sides of their areas should be similar in that the ratio of the length to the length should be like the ratio of the width to the width – and since the ratio of the length of the copper altar of Moshe to the length of the copper altar of Shlomo is like the ratio of the width to the width, they are similar to each other, [following] one design. (Re'em, *Bereishit* 25:9)

The *Or Ha-Chaim* takes issue with the Re'em's analysis, however, based in part on a Gemara that states:

Our Rabbis taught: The horn, the ascent, the base, and squareness are indispensable; the measurements of its length, width, and height are not indispensable. From where are these words derived? Rav Huna said: The verse states: "The altar"; wherever it says "the altar," it is indispensable. (*Zevachim* 62a)

Thus, the dimensions of the altar do not present a major difficulty; even in the time of Moshe, the measurements of the altar could have been different, and thus there is no cause for concern about the fact that Shlomo’s altar was a different size. According to the *Or Ha-Chaim*, the mandate of "thus you shall make [it]" applies to those aspects of the construction that are “indispensable,” based on the passage in *Zevachim* as well as other sources. It does not apply to every detail.

However, these are not the only things Shlomo changed. We learn in the book of *Melakhim* about another, very significant change:

And in the sanctuary he made two cherubim of olive-wood, each ten cubits high… And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place, into the sanctuary of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubim. (I *Melakhim* 6:23; 8:6)

Besides the two cherubim on the ark itself, King Shlomo added two more cherubim that stood as part of the design of the Temple in the Holy of Holies.

This change is not just surprising, but considerably problematic. At the end of *Parashat Yitro*, God commanded:

And the Lord said to Moshe: Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: You yourselves have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. You shall not make with Me – gods of silver, or gods of gold, you shall not make to you. An altar of earth you shall make to Me, and shall sacrifice thereon your burnt-offerings, and your peace-offerings, your sheep, and your oxen. In every place where I cause My name to be mentioned, I will come to you and bless you. (*Shemot* 20:18-20)

The commandment not to make gods of silver and gold appears here in the framework of making a place for the service of God (an altar of earth) – which led *Chazal* to wonder about the presence of cherubim in the Holy of Holies, the heart of the service of and communion with the one eternal God:

"Gods of silver and gods of gold." Why is this stated? Because it is stated: "And you shall make two cherubim of gold" (*Shemot* 25:18) – perhaps you will make four. Therefore, the verse states: "Gods of gold," that if you added to the two [that were commanded], they are like gods of gold. "Gods of silver." Why is this stated? Because we find about all of the vessels of the Temple, that if they don't have gold, they can make them of silver, I might understand that the same applies to the cherubim. Therefore, the verse states: "Gods of silver"; if he changed and made them of silver, they are like gods of silver. (*Pesikta Zutarta*, 20:20)

According to this *midrash*, increasing the number of cherubim in the Temple is tantamount to making other gods! Such a dramatic change, that touches on the prohibition of idolatry in the holiest of places, requires an explanation.

**III. The Torah Basis for Shlomo's Design**

A plain reading of the account in the book of *Melakhim* implies that the changes introduced by Shlomo were made exclusively at his discretion. But the *Or Ha-Chaim* points out that upon closer inspection, this is not the case.

As we explore his comments on this issue, we will see another facet of the *Or Ha-Chaim's* interpretative approach. On the one hand, the *Or Ha-Chaim* is committed to the text and tries to reach the truth of its plain meaning, but on the other hand, he has great difficulty imagining that King Shlomo changed explicit commandments regarding the Temple of his own accord. He addresses our issue based on these assumptions, and with utmost skill, he succeeds in proving from the plain meaning of the verses that Shlomo did not in fact make his own changes to the structure of God’s house.

The *Or Ha-Chaim* takes us to *Divrei ha-Yamim*, where it is explicitly stated that Shlomo did all that he did *not* of his own accord:

**Then David gave to Shlomo his son the design** of the porch [of the Temple], and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper rooms thereof, and of the inner chambers thereof, and of the place of the ark-cover; and **the design of all that he had by the [divine] spirit**, for the courts of the house of the Lord… and for all the work of the service of the house of the Lord, and for all the vessels of service in the house of the Lord. (I *Divrei Ha-Yamim* 28:11-13)

King David drew precise plans for Shlomo to build the house of the Lord and the vessels – "of all that he had by the spirit." Rashi explains that these plans came from the prophet Shmuel:

"That he had by the spirit" – as he was shown by Shmuel the seer. (Rashi, I *Divrei Ha-Yamim* 28:12)

Alternatively, the Radak suggests that David may have received the plans through his own prophecy:

"All that he had by the spirit" – by a prophetic spirit, for by way of the holy spirit he knew the entire design of the house, whether by way of himself *or* by way of the prophet Shmuel. (Radak, I *Divrei Ha-Yamim* 28:12)

The Malbim proposes a surprising explanation – that David was familiar with the Temple from his own body:

Because the entire Temple and its rooms allude to great and wonderful matters, both in the great world and in the small world, which is the soul, both of which are arranged and ordered according to the order of the Temple for those who have the knowledge. (Malibim, I *Divrei Ha-Yamim* 28:12)

In any case, it is clear from these verses that King Shlomo did not act on his own, but on the basis of a divine command, received through King David.

However, one must still ask how this can be reconciled with our *parasha*, whose detailed instructions are applicable for all generations. The *Or Ha-Chaim* reconciles the design of Shlomo’s Temple with the instructions for the *Mishkan* by finding hints of Shlomo’s changes in the verses of our *parasha.*

Regarding the cherubim, the Torah states:

And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of beaten work shall you make them, at the two ends of the ark-cover. And make one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other end; of one piece with the ark-cover shall you make the cherubim of the two ends thereof. (*Shemot* 25:18-19)

Here, the cherubim are placed on top of the ark-cover, and there do not seem to be any other cherubim on the floor of the sanctuary, such as those fashioned by Shlomo. But the *Or Ha-Chaim* directs our attention to an interesting detail in these verses:

There is a difficulty: Why did the Torah have to say twice: "and you shall make," "and make"? And there is a further difficulty, in that the entire line is superfluous, for once it is stated: "at the two ends of the ark-cover," it is clear that "one cherub at the one end, etc." And it is also difficult, why did it also say: "of the two ends thereof." (*Or Ha-Chaim* 25:9)

Simply put, these two verses are marked by what seems to be unnecessary repetition and detail. The change from the word *ve-asita*, "and you shall make," which speaks in second person and in the present, to the word *va*-*aseh*, "and make," which can be understood as referring to the future, brings the *Or Ha-Chaim* to see in these lines a command about two sets of cherubim:

Regarding what was to be done at that time, it says *ve'asita*, in the second person, because it will be done in the *Mishkan*. And regarding the cherubim in the Temple, which are alluded to at the beginning, it says *va-aseh* – it does not speak in the second person, but rather commands about a different making, at a different time. For in addition to the two cherubim which are at the ends of the ark-cover, there will *also* be made [in the future] one cherub at each end – and these stand on their own, as Shlomo made them, with their feet touching the ground rather than the ends of the ark-cover. (*Or Ha-Chaim*, ibid.)

**IV. The Essence of the Cherubim**

Now that we have seen the difference between the cherubim of the *Mishkan* and the cherubim of Shlomo's Temple, we can expand a little on the essence of this difference. *Why* did God command an additional set of cherubim in the Temple? In order to understand this, we will delve a little more deeply into another detail regarding which the cherubim of the Temple were different from the cherubim of the *Mishkan*.

Regarding the cherubim of the *Mishkan*, we read in our *parasha*:

And the cherubim shall spread out their wings on high, screening the ark-cover with their wings, with their faces one to the other; towards the ark-cover will be the faces of the cherubim. (*Shemot* 25:20)

That is to say, the cherubim stand over the ark-cover, facing each other, with the ark-cover in the middle. In contrast, regarding the cherubim of Shlomo, it is stated:

And the wings of the cherubim were twenty cubits long: the wing of the one cherub was five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house; and the other wing was likewise five cubits, reaching to the wing of the other cherub… and they stood on their feet, and their faces toward the house. (II *Divrei Ha-Yamim* 3:11-13)

The cherubim are on the ground and not on the ark-cover; they face the house, i.e., outwards towards the sanctuary; and their wings covered the entire Holy of Holies. What is the nature of these differences?

It seems that the differences can all be explained with the Vilna Gaon's beautiful commentary on the difference between the *Mishkan* and the Temple:

Because a wife is for two things, a. for marital life, and b. to be a homemaker. This is the meaning of what is written in the Gemara: "I never called my wife, 'my wife,' but rather 'my house'" (*Shabbat* 118b), that is, because she is for two things, and I did not call her "my wife," because that is an indecent matter, but rather "my house," which relates to the second benefit, that she is responsible for the needs of her house. **This is the difference between the *Mishkan* and the two Temples, that in the *Mishkan*, there was a revelation of the marital relationship, in that they clung at all times to the Holy One, blessed be He,** and therefore it is called "our couch" (*Shir ha-Shirim* 1:16), which is the place of connection. **But the Temples involved only maintenance of the house, and there was no revelation of cleaving…** This is what is written: "You shall call Me no more *Ba’ali*" (*Hoshea* 2:18), in the sense of master of the house, but rather "*Ishi*" (ibid.), that the marital relationship shall be visible to all, when they will cling at all times to the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is written: "When I should find you without, I would kiss you; and none would despise me" (*Shir ha-Shirim* 8:1), because of the cleaving. (Vilna Gaon, *Shir ha-Shirim* 1:17)

The generation of the wilderness merited a daily revelation of the *Shekhina* in the raining down of the manna and in God's direct providence over them. In contrast, in the generation that will enter the Land of Israel, that providence will come to an end. The service of God will have to enter the regular and natural patterns of the material life of a people in their country. Thus, their guidance and relationship to the *Shekhina* will be different. Whereas in the wilderness, the *Mishkan* is mobile and moves among the people of Israel, in the Temple, it is the people of Israel who go up to the Temple. The main part of life lies in their daily activities, and one must go to the sanctuary only from time to time, in order to instill strength and fear of God to continue living in this world. In the wilderness, the eating of unconsecrated meat was forbidden, but in the Land of Israel it was permitted – for in the Land of Israel, the service of God must proceed within day-to-day and mundane life, like a homemaker.

The Gemara in *Bava Batra* sees another contradiction between the verse in *Divrei Ha-Yamim* and the verse in our *parasha* regarding the form of the cherubim:

How did they stand? Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Elazar [disagreed]: One says: They faced each other; and the other says: Their faces were inward. But according to the one who says they faced each other, [it may be asked]: Is it not written: "And their faces were inward" (II *Divrei Ha-Yamim* 3:13). [This is] no difficulty: The former [was] at a time when Israel obeyed the will of God; the latter [was] at a time when Israel did not obey the will of God. According to the one who says their faces were inward, [it may be asked]: Is it not written: "With their faces one to the other" (*Shemot* 25:20)? They were slightly turned sideways. (*Bava Batra* 99a)

Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin explains:

Now, the generation of the wilderness, who merited to dine from the heavenly table on bread from the heavens each day in turn, and their clothing didn't wear out upon them, and they didn't have to involve themselves with earning a living in the world at all – all agree that they were not referred to as performing God's will unless they were gazing upwards with absolute sincerity, and subjugating their hearts only to Torah and service of God, and awe of Him; day and night it would not depart from their mouths, the words exactly as written, without veering off to the side in any manner, even a single hour for the sake of earning a living. And as the Sages said (*Mekhilta* *Beshalach* 17 and elsewhere): "The Torah was given only to those who ate the manna.” For that reason, they set the cherubim in place according to how they performed God's will, directly face-to-face, to show that they perceived His face directly, face-to-face with His holy nation.

However, in Shlomo's time, when the general masses of the people of Israel were required by necessity to turn aside slightly to earn a living, even if it was just to sustain their lives – which is the essence of the truth of God's will according to Rabbi Yishmael, who concluded that for the masses, it is more fitting to act in that manner, as it is said in *Avot*: "The study of Torah is better with an occupation…" and "All Torah that is not accompanied by labor…" (*Avot* 2:2), and all the statements of *Avot* are statements of piety, [expressing] only that during the period that they are involved with earning a living, their hearts should behave with wisdom, reflecting on words of Torah – for that reason, at that time, they first set up the cherubim according to how they would do God's will, their faces turned aside a little, and even so, they were attached "as a man and woman joined by their arms" (I *Melakhim* 7:36), with expressions of affection, to exhibit His affection for us, for this is the crux of His blessed will, as we described above. (And he agrees with Rabbi Yishmael; and the one who said that Shlomo's cherubim were also set up initially according to how they would perform God's will, absolutely facing each other, agrees with Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.) (*Nefesh Ha-Chaim* 1, 9)

Thus, the Vilna Gaon's disciple followed in his teacher's path, and saw in the difference between the cherubim in the *Mishkan* and those in the Temple the difference in the relationship of the entire nation of Israel to the house of God and the place it occupies in our lives.

It seems that the other differences in the form of the cherubim stem from a similar point – while the cherubim of the *Mishkan* stand on top of the ark-cover and draw their base and standing from it, the cherubim in the Temple stand on the ground, on the Land of Israel. The cherubim of the *Mishkan* spread their wings only over the ark, and all that is between their wings is the Torah and holiness. In contrast, the cherubim of the Temple span a larger area, that includes the ground of the Land of Israel that is in the Holy of Holies.

God speaks to Israel from between the two cherubim. While in the wilderness, His speech relates exclusively to the Torah and holiness, the virtue of the Land of Israel is that the word of God is evident in it even in mundane matters.

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. It is interesting that the Rashbam, who is known as a commentator who follows the plain meaning of the verses, also brings this *midrash* in his commentary. This emphasizes that indeed, this *midrash* follows from the plain meaning of the verse: "According to all that I show you." [↑](#footnote-ref-1)