

That the Torah sets out a parallelism between the Creation of the World and the Construction of the Mishkan is evident to any reader with a literary pulse (which I trust includes all of you, gentle readers). Halakhah embodies this parallelism in the laws of Shabbat, where the 39 prohibited categories of *melakhah* are derived from, or attached to, the forms of *melakhah* used to construct the Mishkan. Rav Yoel Bin Nun argues quite brilliantly that the number 39, which often seems arbitrary, is actually based on the number of commands issued as the framework for the construction of the Mishkan; you can read his Hebrew article [here](#).

But the Halakhah here is not the *purpose* of the parallelism, rather a *product*. In Rambam's framework, Torah can have the direct purposes of perfecting character, action, or opinion, and the direct purpose of this parallelism is perfection of opinion rather than of action. So what is it that the parallel is supposed to enable us to understand? What should Creation teach us about the Mishkan, and perhaps more daringly, what should the Construction of the Mishkan teach us about Creation?

I think it can be legitimate to answer this question in abstract, sweeping ways that are constrained only by the fact of the parallelism. In such an approach, the only question is whether the evidence is sufficient to establish the connection; once that threshold is reached, the evidence as such is irrelevant. But I prefer to see the connection as *constituted* by the evidence, so that it matters a great deal not only *that* the Torah connects them, but also *how* the Torah connects them.

The Midrash I've attached frames the connection by finding an aspect of the Mishkan that corresponds to some element of each of the Seven Days of Creation. Thus

- 1) the curtain-roofs (יריעות) parallel the Heavens/שמים (as attested in Psalms);
- 2) the curtain-door (פרוכת), which divides the Holy from the Holy of Holies, parallels the שמים/Firmament that divides the upper from the lower waters
- 3) The water-basin parallels the oceans
- 4) The menorah parallels the sun and moon
- 5) the bird-sacrifices parallel the birds
- 6) the High Priest parallels the Human
- 7) Moshe blessing the people parallels Hashem blessing the Shabbat; Moshe completing/ויכל the *melakhah* of the Mishkan parallels Hashem's completion/ויכל of the *melakah* of Creation; Moshe's sanctification/ויקדש parallel's Hashem's sanctification of the Shabbat.

Abravanel cites a version of this midrash which substitutes as follows:

- 5) the winged cherubim/כנפים פורשי on the ark-cover parallel the birds/יעופף
- 6) Moshe's bringing-near/והקרב of Aharon and sons to priesthood parallels Hashem bringing/ויביאה of Chavah to Adam.

Substitutions in other version (this is by no means comprehensive) include:

- 6) the animal/בהמה. sacrifices parallel the creation of animals/בהמה
- 7) the Mishkan became full of light once completed, just like Shabbat

My educated intuition is that the versions of this midrash we possess are mix-and-match, but that we can productively discuss some substantive issues regarding which parallels to draw, specifically:

- a) The version I've attached draws parallels exclusively to the first Creation story. The "bringing of Chavah", however, occurs in the second Creation story.

b) citation to sacrifices, animal or bird, draws a parallel from the *ritual* of the mishkan and Creation, not just from the *construction*. (This parallels the argument of I believe Rav Saadia Gaon that the rules of Shabbat can be derived from the ritual as well). Note that winged cherubim also occur in the second creation story, *after the sin*, guarding the path to Eden.

Each of these variants can radically change our understanding of the overall parallelism. We can frame the issues as whether the Mishkan is intended to parallel

- a) a hypothetical world in which justice exists but not mercy (the first Creation story)
- b) the world as it was before sin (the second Creation story)
- c) the world as it is after sin (the aftermath of the second Creation story).

and whether it is intended to model a static world (construction) or rather a dynamic world (ritual).

I tend to think that the key underlying issue, though, is the role of human beings. Note that

- a) in one version there is no Mishkan parallel to the creation of humanity - the parallel to Day 6 is animal sacrifice; but
- b) in another version those-who-bring-sacrifices/כִּי יִקְרִיבוּ אֲדָמָה parallel the created Adam; and
- c) in yet another the anointing/bringing near of Aharon as High Priest is parallel to the bringing of Chavah to Adam

The tension here is that human beings represent both Creators and Created.

This tension is deepened, and another becomes evident, when we turn to Shabbat. The parallel drawn there is between Mosheh and Hashem; Mosheh blesses the people for their work, finishes the *melakhah*, and sanctifies the Mishkan. That Mosheh has to complete the *melakhah* suggests that the parallel between the people and Creator is incomplete. On the other hand, Mosheh blesses the workers and sanctifies their work, whereas Hashem blesses and sanctifies Shabbat – the aftermath of the work rather than the work itself. Perhaps the proper parallel is not between the blessing of the Shabbat and the blessing of the people, but rather between the blessing of humanity on Day 6 and the Mosheh's blessing of the people *before* he completed their *melakhah*.

Each of these tensions can be complicated – perhaps in the direction of resolution – when we recall that the Mishkan itself can be understood as existing in two versions, one as imagined and commanded before the sin of the Golden Calf, and one as actually constructed after that sin. So perhaps one thing that the Mishkan and world teach us about each other is that the ideal exists within the real, but that there is nothing, whether within the narrowest confines of religion or the broadest reaches of life, that is incorruptible.

Shabbat shalom!

Aryeh Klapper

מדרש תנחומא (ורשא) פרשת פקודי סימן ב

(ב) אלה פקודי המשכן,

זש"ה ה' אהבתי מעון ביתך (תהלים כו) זה ההיכל שהוא מכוון במקום משכן כבודך,  
ארשב"י זאת אומרת שההיכל שלמטה מכוון כנגד היכל של מעלה  
שנאמר (שמות טו) מכוון לשבתך פעלת ה' מקדש ה' כוננו ידיך,  
א"ר יעקב בר' אסי: למה הוא אומר ה' אהבתי מעון ביתך ומקום משכן כבודך?  
בשביל ששקול כנגד בריאת עולם.

כיצד?

בראשון

כתיב "בראשית ברא אל-הים את השמים ואת הארץ", וכתוב (תהלים קד) "נוטה שמים כיריעה",  
ובמשכן מה כתיב?

"ועשית יריעות עזים" (שמות כו);

בשני "יהי רקיע", ואומר בהן הבדלה,

שנאמר "ויהי מבדיל בין מים למים",

ובמשכן כתיב

"והבדילה הפרוכת לכם" (שם /שמות כ"ו/);

בשלישי כתיב מים

שנאמר "יקוו המים",

ובמשכן כתיב

"ועשית כיור נחשת וכנו נחשת וגו' ונתת שמה מים" (שם /שמות ל/),

ברביעי ברא מאורות,

דכתיב "יהי מאורות ברקיע השמים",

ובמשכן כתיב "ועשית מנורת זהב" (שם /שמות כה/),

בחמישי ברא עופות,

שנא' "ישרצו המים שרץ נפש חיה ועוף יעופף",

ובמשכן כנגדן לעשות קרבנות כבשים ועופות,

(ובמשכן

"והיו הכרובים פורשי כנפים למעלה") (שם /שמות כ"ה/),

בששי נברא אדם

שנאמר (בראשית א) "ויברא אל-הים את האדם בצלמו" - בכבוד יוצרו,

ובמשכן כתיב "אדם", שהוא כהן גדול שנמשח לעבוד ולשמש לפני ה',

בשביעי "ויכולו השמים והארץ",

ובמשכן כתיב "ותכל כל עבודתך",

בבריאת העולם כתיב "ויברך אל-הים"

ובמשכן כתיב "ויברך אותם משה",

בבריאת העולם כתיב "ויכל אל-הים"

ובמשכן כתיב "ויהי ביום כלות",

בבריאת העולם כתיב "ויקדש אותו"

ובמשכן כתיב "וימשח אותו ויקדש אותו",

ולמה המשכן שקול כנגד שמים וארץ?

אלא מה שמים וארץ הם עדים על ישראל,

דכתיב העידותי בכם היום את השמים ואת הארץ (דברים ל)

אף משכן עדות לישראל, שנאמר "אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדות"

לכך נאמר ה' אהבתי מעון ביתך ומקום משכן כבודך וגו',