

Sunday 3rd of Menachem Av

ענייני בית המקדש

Review of the first four chapters in the Rambam

Lesson one – Learning about the Beis HaMikdash

There are four general reasons why we should learn now the laws of the Beis HaMikdash:

- 1) Gemoro: From the Pasuk we learn that it is incumbent upon us to make a remembrance for the Mikdash. (The Beis HaMikdash is such an important part of our lives, that even after the destruction – we must always remember it).
- 2) Rashi and others: To know how to build the Beis HaMikdash when the time comes. Being that the second Beis HaMikdash was built, as much as possible, similar to the third; in order for us to know how to build the third Beis HaMikdash, we are obligated to learn the measurements and dimensions of the second.
- 3) Midrash: Hashem said to Yechezk'el that by studying the dimensions of the Beis HaMikdash, Hashem will consider it as if we are actually involved in building it.
- 4) The Rambam: Since the Mitzva of building the Beis HaMikdash is a constant one that applies at all times; therefore, at a time that we can't actually build the Beis HaMikdash, we are obligated to do all that we can, which means studying and learning every aspect of the Beis HaMikdash.

The Rebbe adds that in most recent years there is a fifth reason: We not only study about the Beis HaMikdash of the past in anticipation of the future. We learn about a Beis HaMikdash that is greater than anything that was in the past – one for which we would anticipate even had the previous Beis HaMikdash not been destroyed, and we study its laws with the realization that they are about to become practically applicable at this very moment.

Lesson Two – Purpose of the Beis HaMikdash

According to the Ramban, the primary purpose of the Beis HaMikdash is to be a place where Hashem can rest His presence. However, according to the Rambam, the main purpose is to have a place where we can serve Hashem by bringing Korbanos etc. Both agree that both concepts are fulfilled by the Beis HaMikdash; the question is merely which one is the main one. According to the Ramban, the Shechina rests in the Beis HaMikdash in a manner of Hislabshus – like the brain rests within the intellect of a person; hence we can relate to the Shechina that rests there, and it is therefore the main purpose, as this is what

inspires and enables us to serve Hashem in this place. According to the Rambam, however, the Shechina that rests in the Beis HaMikdash is merely in a manner of Ma'avir – like the brain controls the movements of the hand, but does not actually express itself in them. Hence, the G-dliness that rests in the Beis HaMikdash is something that is there but beyond our capacity of relating to it, and the primary aspect for us is the Mitzvos – Divine service that we do there.

The Rambam explains how the Mitzva to build a Mikdash for Hashem – in which we can serve Him, is one single Mitzva that applies at all times, based on the circumstances of that particular time. In general, the Mitzva of building a Mikdash is dependent on having a king and getting rid of the enemies of Hashem, since both of these are a prerequisite to a person being able to accept Hashem's Kingship, and serve Him properly. When the king was Moshe Rabeinu – who didn't have all the laws of a king, and the war against Amalek was only a partial one, the Jewish people were able to build a temporary Mishkan. Once they were settled in Eretz Yisrael with Yehoshua, who had been *appointed* as a king, they were able to build a more permanent Mishkan. However, their establishment was not yet complete and therefore neither was the Mishkan. Once, however, all the enemies were conquered and there was an established king from the Davidic dynasty, they were then able to build a permanent house for Hashem, in the place that Hashem chose as His eternal resting place – Yerushalayim. Once the Mikdash was built in Yerushalayim – establishing that choice in a structure; now, it became forbidden to build a house for Hashem in any other place.

Even the permanent Beis HaMikdash has various stages: The first Beis HaMikdash was dictated from Above – hence, more spiritually attuned; the second was built by people ascending from Galus, based upon Hashem's blueprint of the first, and the prophecies regarding the third. It was less attuned to the spiritual, but in the physical world was greater – in both time and space. The third Beis HaMikdash is described in the prophecy of Yechezk'el and will be the ultimate merge of the spiritual and physical.

A Beis HaMikdash must be comprised of all the necessary components that make up a Beis HaMikdash, based on the original Mishkan in the Midbar, and the first Beis HaMikdash, as dictated by Hashem to David HaMelech. It must therefore contain:

- a) A Holy of Holies where Hashem can rest His presence.
- b) A Holy – Heichal, enclosed covered area – for “inside” services; kindling the Menora, offering the Lechem HaPanim (showbread), and bringing the Ketores.

- c) An “outside” area – Azara – courtyard that is enclosed but not covered, in which outside services, such as bringing Korbanos can be done.
- d) In the Mikdash there must also be an Ulam – entrance hall – leading up to the main sanctuary, the building of the Heichal.

Seven Keilm – holy vessels:

- 1) A (outer) Mizbayach for all animal offerings
- 2) A ramp with which to ascend the Mizbayach
- 3) A Kiyor (wash basin)
- 4) The stand of the Kiyor
- 5) An inner Mizbayach for Ketores
- 6) A Menora
- 7) A Shulchan

Lesson Three – Building the Beis HaMikdash

- 1) Large stones are used for the building. These stones can only be split (with metal tools) while outside of the parameters of the Temple Mount. Once inside the Temple Mount – it is forbidden to raise iron tools upon the stones.
- 2) It is forbidden to build wood anywhere in the Beis HaMikdash (according to the Ra'avad this prohibition only applies in the Azara).
- 3) The entire Azara must be tiled with marble tiles.
- 4) It is a Mitzva to beautify the Beis HaMikdash in every possible manner.
- 5) The Beis HaMikdash can only be built by day (from dawn to dusk).
- 6) Everyone, men and women, is obligated to participate (although it is a communal obligation – the obligation is that it should include everyone’s involvement) both bodily and financially.
- 7) Children must not interrupt their studies for the building of the Beis HaMikdash (however they do participate financially, and by studying its laws).
- 8) The building of the Beis HaMikdash does not override Yom Tov (and certainly not Shabbos).
- 9) The Mizbayach must be built of stone.
- 10) The Mizbayach must be connected directly to solid ground and must not have tunnels or hollow space under it.
- 11) The stones of the Mizbayach and its ramp must have never been touched by metal – we therefore dig deep into the ground to a place that was never ploughed.
- 12) The stones of the Mizbayach and the ramp must be complete, and not have even the slightest blemish that can be detected by a fingernail.

- 13) The stones of remainder of the structure of the Mizbayach must be complete (to the exclusion of any indent, even one that cannot be detected by a fingernail).
- 14) When plastering the Mizbayach, it is not done with an iron lathe, for fear that it will touch a stone – causing it to be disqualified.
- 15) It is forbidden to make steps for the Mizbayach, or to ascend it with steps. We therefore make a ramp with which to ascend the Mizbayach.
- 16) It is forbidden to break any stone of the Mizbayach or the rest of the Beis Hamikdash.
- 17) The Menora, Shulchan and inner Mizbayach must all be made of metal.
- 18) When possible, all the utensils of the Beis HaMikdash should be made of gold, and even the gates should be plated by gold.
- 19) All of the utensils and building materials, must all be prepared from the beginning – with the intention of being used in the Beis HaMikdash. Being that building the Beis HaMikdash is a Mitzva, the Rambam maintains that even the future Beis HaMikdash will be built by humans. Others say that the future Beis HaMikdash will come down from Heaven. The Rebbe reconciles the two opinions, that some parts will come from Above, while others will be built by Moshiach. When we study the laws of the Beis HaMikdash, we have both the human involvement, and the Heavenly involvement – the fact that Hashem considers it as if we are actually building it.

Lesson Four and five – The Mizbayach

The Mizbayach is the most important part of the Beis HaMikdash, and is the first object to be built before the rest of the Beis HaMikdash. A Mizbayach is a Mizbayach even without a Beis HaMikdash, but a Beis HaMikdash is not a Beis HaMikdash without a Mizbayach.

The Mizbayach must be built on a very precise place – the place that was chosen by Hashem from the very beginning of creation. It requires prophecy to ascertain the precise location of the Mizbayach, as well as its precise measurements and particular laws.

The following are some laws of the Mizbayach:

- 1) The Mizbayach of the Mishkan was made of copper-plated wood, while in the Beis HaMikdash (according to most opinions – both the first and the second, and probably also the third), the Mizbayach is built of stone.
- 2) In the Mishkan – the Mizbayach was square – five by five Amos and 10 Amos high (the area of the fire upon which the Korbanos were actually offered) was three Amos high).

- 3) In the first Beis HaMikdash the Mizbayach was 28 by 28 Amos and ten Amos high. In the second Beis HaMikdash, four Amos were added on each side – so that it would be 32 by 32 Amos. This was done based on Yechezk'el's prophecy regarding the 3rd Beis HaMikdash. One of the purposes of the extra space was that now the corners were hollow, so that when wine (or water) was poured – it went in, rather than just splashing over the side as was in the first Beis HaMikdash.
- 4) The widest part of the Mizbayach was the Yesod – foundation, which was one Ama high. In the third Beis HaMikdash this Yesod will be 2 Amos high.
- 5) The south eastern corner of the Mizbayach didn't have a Yesod (either this refers to only the corner – meaning one Ama of Yesod was missing on the south, and one Ama on the East, or on the entire southern side there was only one Ama of Yesod, and on the entire eastern side as well. According to the Tosefos Yom Tov, in the Mizbayach of the third Beis HaMikdash the Yesod will go all around.
- 6) On the south western corner of the Yesod there were two holes for the blood to descend to the Kidon valley.
- 7) Five Amos above the Yesod there was another Ama indentation called the Sovev. Thus from the Sovev upwards (not including the Ama height of the “horns”) was three Amos. This is what is known as the area of the fire.
- 8) Halfway up the Mizbayach – in the Mizbayach of the Mishkan there was a copper “netting”, while in the Beis HaMikdash, there was a red line all around. This served to differentiate between the top and bottom parts of the Mizbayach, being that some bloods were supposed be sprinkled on top and others on the bottom.
- 9) The “horns” at the four corners of the Mizbayach were one Ama high and one Ama squared all around.
- 10) The Kohanim would walk one Ama all around – leaving 16 Amos for the area of the fire.
- 11) The ramp was 16 Amos wide and ten Amos high; it didn't reach right up to the Mizbayach, but there was a separation of a hair breadth, in order that the limbs could be thrown on the Mizbayach.
- 12) There were two small ramps extending from the big ramp, in order to go up onto the Yesod and the Sovev.
- 13) The parts of the Mizbayach that are indispensable are the foundation, the “horns”, the fact that its square, and its ramp. However, it is still good even if the dimensions are not accurate as long as it is a minimum of an Ama by an Ama, and 3 Amos high.

- 14) There was a window in the ramp where they would place bird offerings that had become unfit.
- 15) Next to the Mizbayach there were a silver and a marble table upon which to place the limbs of the animals.
- 16) To build the Mizbayach they would use a wooden mold, and fill it with stones and plaster, placing a piece of wood in the area that didn't have a Yesod (to block the stones and plaster from going there).
- 17) Near the Mizbayach was the Beis HaMitbachayim (in the third Beis HaMikdash this will be a separate closed room), in which to slaughter the animals. There would be rings on the floor used to place the animal's neck in, and short pillars with hooks in order to skin the animal.

Lesson Six

The Menora:

1. The Menora can be made of any type of metal. However, it is best to be made out of gold, and has seven branches.
2. Whether it is made of gold or other metals, it cannot be made out of cheap metals.
3. When it is made of gold, and only then – the following laws apply:
 - a) The Menora and all of its utensils must all be made of one Kikar of gold.
 - b) The Menora must be chiseled out of one single chunk of gold.
 - c) The Menora has a base with three feet; then there are four cups, two knobs and two flowers plus an additional flower near the base.
 - d) The six branches that come out on of the middle branch – three on either side, are straight branches that go diagonally upwards, ending at the same position, so that they are all parallel to each other.
 - e) At each juncture that the branches come out, there is a button between them.
 - f) Each branch has three cups, a button and a flower.
 - g) All of the above are designed in almond-like shape.
 - h) In front of the Menora there was a stone with three steps.
 - i) The cups are narrow at the bottom and wide at the top – but they are upside down. The Rebbe explains that this expresses the fact that the Menora disseminates its light & energy to the rest of the world.
 - j) The Shulchan and golden Mizbayach were placed along the length of the house; whereas the Aron and Menora were placed with their length to the width of the house.

Shulchan

- 1) The Shulchan was a gold-plated wooden table with a rim on the bottom, and a crown on top.

- 2) It had eight golden rods atop it upon which there were golden half straws that held the trays with the Lechem HaPanim (show-bread).
- 3) There were 14 breads on each side – all together 28.

Golden Mizbayach

The golden Mizbayach was an Ama by an Ama square and was placed in the middle – parallel to the Aron.

Kiyor

The Kiyor had 12 spouts so that the Kohanim could all wash their hands and feet at the same time. In the first Beis HaMikdash there were 12 Kiyors; whereas in the second and the Mishkan there was only one – and the same will be in the third Beis HaMikdash.

Lesson Seven – The Holy of Holies

There was a stone in the western side of the Holy of Holies upon which the Aron was placed, and before it the jug of Mana and Aharon's staff. When King Shlomo built the Beis HaMikdash, he was instructed by Hashem to build a special chamber hidden in deep windy pathways, in which the Aron could be hidden, and it was placed there before the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, and was not returned during the time of the second Beis HaMikdash.

The Rebbe explains that the Rambam begins the description of the actual structure with the Aron, being that it is the most central factor of the Beis HaMikdash – the place where the Shechina rested. As such, the question is: how could that have been lacking in the second Beis HaMidash? The answer is that in truth – just as there was a place above ground for the Aron, there was also a place that was sanctified at the same time – below ground – only in hiding. In addition, it is in deep windy paths, as through the windy (crooked) path of sin and destruction, one reaches the very depth of the soul, which bring about the Geula and the third Beis HaMikdash, which will once again have an Aron.

In between the Holy and the Holy of Holies:

- 1) In the Mishkan there was a single curtain – partition.
- 2) In the first Beis HaMikdash there was a wall that was an Ama thick (with a door) covered by a single curtain.
- 3) In the second Beis HaMikdash – they weren't sure whether the wall was supposed to be as part of the 40 Amos of the Kodosh or part of the 20 of the Holy of Holies. Thus, they made the Kodosh a complete 40 Amos, and the Kodosh HaKodoshim a complete 20 Amos, and placed two curtains, with one Ama in between them.

According to Tosefos – it wasn't a complete Ama; however, the Rambam holds that everything is exact, and even the Ama space was complete.

4) In the third Beis HaMikdash there will be a wall that is two Amos thick, that will have a door 6 Amos high and seven Amos wide (no curtain is mentioned).

The Aron was 2.5 Amos long, one and a half Amos wide, and one and half Amos high. It had a cover which had two Kruvim – angels (one was the face of a boy the other the face of a girl). According to Rashi the Keruvim had faces of children, and according to the Ramban – the faces of angels.

The Aron – while it had an exact dimension – didn't take up space, as it was within space, but above space at the same time.

Lesson Eight – dimensions of the Heichal

The height of the Heichal of the second Beis HaMikdash was 100 Ama, as the Heichal was comprised of 2 stories; each floor from ceiling to roof is forty Amos high. In the first floor there was a six Ama base above ground, and the ceiling was altogether four Amos. The second floor (attic) was also forty Amos and four Amos of ceiling, plus one Ama of plaster on the ceiling of the first floor, which served as a floor for the attic, and a three Ama fence around the roof, as well as one Ama iron spikes to chase away the birds.

From east to west (back to front) was also one hundred Ama: The Heichal was forty Amos long, and the Kodesh Hakodoshim twenty, with one Ama in between them. The outer walls of the Heichal were six Ama each. Eleven Amos on the west for the one Ta (chamber or cavity) and its wall. The Ulam – 11 Amos, with a five Ama wall, are altogether one hundred.

From north to south: twenty Amos inside, two walls 6 Ama each, the Ta and wall – 11 Amos on either side, the Mesiba was three Amos and its wall five (only on the north side, as later it went up on top of the Ta'im); and on the other side was the place where the water would go down – also 5+3, then the Beis HaChalifos (which according to the Rambam extended along the entire north and south walls – 15 Amos on each side, equals 100.

The Heichal was broad at the front and narrow at the back like a lion: according to Rashi and the Tosefos Yom Tov – this refers to the Beis HaChalifos that protruded an extra 15 Ama on either side of the Ulam only. According to the Rambam – it means that it became a little bit narrower at the back, as the Beis HaChalifos extended all along.

In the third Beis HaMikdash, the dimensions will be similar, although the Ta'im will be a bit different, and there will be a Munach. The height of the Heichal of the third Beis HaMikdash – the Navi doesn't tell us – only that it will be very high. According to Rashi – its height will be 100 Ama just like the second Beis HaMikdash, and according to the Tosefos Yom Tov, it will be a lot higher.

Lesson Nine – the gates of the Heichal

The gates of the Heichal are ten Amos high and ten Amos wide. In the third Beis HaMikdash they will possibly be 50 Amos high. There are two small gates next to the big ones; the southern one is always closed, as Hashem enters through it, and the northern one is used for entering. In the third Beis HaMikdash – the Nassi, which refers either to the Kohen Gadol or Melech HaMoshiach will enter through this gate on special occasions.

The Ulam is an open entrance hall, which is completely open – thus the opening is forty Amos high and twenty Amos wide. It does not have a door – only a curtain, and one ascends the steps to enter. Above the door of the Ulam, there is a design in the building with five beams. On either side of the doorway there are pillars (in the first Beis HaMikdash, they were copper, in the second Beis HaMikdash, apparently, they were stone pillars. In the third Beis HaMikdash, they will be stone palm trees with golden crowns.

Lesson Ten – The Ta'im of the Heichal

Surrounding the walls of the Heichal are Ta'im: According to Rashi, these are chambers – three stories of chambers, the interior of each one is 6 Amos long and six Amos high, and each wall is 5 Amos thick. There are five chambers along the northern and southern walls, and along the western wall, two floors of three each, and two on top – altogether 38 chambers. In order not to have to break into the walls, the interior of each chamber becomes wider from floor to floor. From on top of these chambers, one can ascend to the attic.

According to the Rambam – the Ta'im are cavities in the walls. Hence, the five Ta'im on the north are: The outer wall of the Heichal was hollow – thus a five Ama “Ta” inside the outer wall, then the 3 Ama hollow – the “Ta” of the Mesiba, then a five Ama cavity in the next wall, and a six Ama space between the walls, and another six Ama cavity inside the inner wall – altogether 5 Ta'im, and the same excersize repeats itself on the south, only exchanging the Mesiba for the “water shed”. In the back (west side) there are only three Ta'im – two hollow walls and one space. Hence, in essence there is really one “Ta” around the walls of the Heichal, in which one can walk around the walls, but all the other walls are hollow (perhaps for light, or to enable going in to fix things etc.). The Mesiba – which is also called a Ta – is a ramp that goes along three floors until reaching the second floor.

According to the Rambam – there were also “balconies” protruding from the walls of the Heichal on the outside, each one wider than the one below it, as a protection against being able to hold on to the walls of the Heichal.

Lesson Eleven – the inside of the Heichal and Ulam

In the Ulam there was a golden vine hanging over the gate leading to the Heichal. Anyone could donate a golden grape, cluster or branch. In addition, in

the windows that were above the Heichal gates there were crowns, that the Kohanim would climb up on golden chains, to be able to see.

The inside of the Heichal in the first and second Beis HaMikdash was gold plated. In the third Beis HaMikdash as well, the inside walls will be gold-plated, and the Navi describes intricate designs of two faces of angels, with a palm tree in between them, all along the walls.

Although in the second Beis HaMikdash, the Beis HaChalifos either extended until the beginning of the Heichal, or all along the sides, and the Ta'im extended straight until the Ulam, thus the sides of the actual Heichal are either 70 or 100 Amos wide; in the third Beis HaMikdash the Ta'im do not extend around the walls of the Ulam – meaning that the area of the five Ama wall of the Ulam is only 32 Amos – 20 Amos of the inside and 6 Ama walls on either side. The Tosefos Yom Tov learns from this, that even according to the Rambam – in the third Beis HaMikdash the Beis HaChalifos will not extend all the way along the sides, because it is already interrupted by the Munach – rather the sides of the Heichal will definitely be only 70 Amos. BEH later when we describe the Ta'im more specifically – we will see that there is another possibility – that according to the Rambam even in the third Beis HaMikdash the Heichal will be 100 Amos wide.