



Parshas Pikudei

AS THE LORD SAID TO MOSES

Throughout the sections detailing the construction and establishment of the Mishkan, the Torah repeatedly uses the phrase “כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה” or variants. It would seem obvious that the construction of the Mishkan would take place as instructed – it’s not as though competing architects and interior designers had to pitch different ideas and blueprints. Why emphasise that they did what they were supposed to?

There is a prevalent view that holds that the Mishkan was only required to fix the problems created at the Golden Calf. The Beis Halevi explains that what caused the sin was the people’s own ideas about how best to serve Hashem, and this led them to the conclusion that they drew about how to serve God. By accepting God’s total authority, and marginalizing their own beliefs in order to complete the Mishkan, the Torah sees fit to emphasise “כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה” – that was the actual point of getting them to build it.

The Ohr HaChayim elaborates that there were three components in forming the Golden Calf which required rectification – the idea of not believing in God or Moshe wholeheartedly; the speech to Ahron to find alternative forms of spirituality; and the donation and subsequent casting of material into the form it took. But when describing the Mishkan’s construction, the Torah merely states that they did as commanded – along with other such verbs referring to action. Where are the reparations for thought and speech reflected?

The chief architect and foreman of the Mishkan was Bezalel – to whom Chazal ascribe the ability to see the components of all things to the smallest possible detail. He truly understood the plans of the Mishkan, and they made sense to him. But he did not perform the tasks because he understood them. He did it because Hashem told Moshe. This counteracted their heretical intentions and thoughts.

The significance of Parshas Shekalim is that every individual had to make a personal contribution to the Mishkan fund. In so doing, they bought a stake in the project, undoing their donations and pressure to form the Golden Calf.

To initiate the actual construction, Moshe was not simply told to have the Mishkan built:

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר. בְּיוֹם הַחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ תִּקְיִים אֶת מִשְׁכַּן אֱהִל מוֹעֵד
the day of the first month, on the first of the month, you shall set up the Mishkan of the Tent of Meeting...” (40: 1-2)

Moshe had to explicitly say to them to build it. They had to be told precisely what to do! This counteracted their clamouring for alternative forms of spirituality.

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