

*Make Me a Sanctuary
Reconciliation, concession, or something else?*

Exodus 25:8

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכָם:

And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.

Rashi on Exodus 31:18; 33

וַיִּתֵּן אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְגו' AND HE GAVE UNTO MOSES etc. — There is no “earlier” or “later” (no chronological order) in the events related in the Torah: in fact the incident of the golden calf (related in ch. 32) *happened a considerable time before the command regarding the work of the Tabernacle was given (ch. 25 and the following chapters)*. For on the seventeenth of Tammuz were the Tablets broken (when the people were worshipping the calf) *and on the Day of Atonement God became reconciled with Israel* (after Moses had prayed 80 days for forgiveness; so that it is very unlikely that the command for the building of the Tabernacle should have been given before that day) and on the next day, the eleventh of Tishri they began to bring their contributions for the Tabernacle which was set up on the first of Nisan. (From the seventeenth of Tammuz until the eleventh of Tishri are almost three months — ימים רבים) (Midrash Tanchuma, Ki Tisa 31).

On the 10th of Tishri *God became reconciled to Israel in joy and with a perfect heart* and said to Moses: "I have forgiven them", handing him the second tablets, He, Moses, then descended and He began to give the order of the construction of the Tabernacle and they completed it by the first of Nissan.

Shemot Rabbah 33

“I am asleep” (lost in despair) due to the act of the Calf, “but my heart is awake,” and the Holy One blessed be He knocks, “they shall take Me a gift.” Open for me, my sister, my love” (Song of Songs 5:2) – until when will I be proceeding without a house, “for my head is filled with dew” (Song of Songs 5:2). Rather, “craft a sanctuary for Me” (Exodus 25:8), so I will not be outside.

Tanhuma Terumah 8

You will find that on the Day of Atonement their sin was expiated and on that same day the Holy One Blessed be He said unto him: “Let them make me a sanctuary the I may dwell among them”, so that all the nations should know that the deed of the Golden Calf had been expiated by them.

It is therefore called “the Tabernacle of the testimony, a testimony to all the inhabitants of the world that the Holy One Blessed be He dwells in your sanctuary.

Midrash

“Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring Me an offering... and thou shalt make an altar of acacia wood”. The whole matter of the candelabra, the table, the altar, the boards, the tent and the curtains and the vessels of the Tabernacle - what were they for? Said Israel before the Holy One Blessed be He: Lord of the Universe! The kings of the nations, they have their tent, table, candlesticks and incense burner. Such are the trappings of sovereignty. For every king has need of such things. Should not Thou, our King, Redeemer and Saviour, therefore be equipped with the trappings of sovereignty, to make known to all the denizens of the world that Thou are the King?

Said He to them: Children! You who are flesh and blood have need of all this, but as for Me, I need it not, since before Me there is neither eating nor drinking. I have no need of light, as My servants prove. For the sun and moon give light to the whole world and I enrich them with My light and I shall watch over you for good, in virtue of the merits of your forefathers.

Israel thus replied to the Holy One: We seek not the forefathers... Said the Holy One to them: *If so, make that which you desire, but make them as I command you...as it is said: “And make for Me a sanctuary... and make a candlestick... and make a table... and make an altar to burn incense upon”.* (from Studies in Exodus, Nehama Leibowitz pg. 465-466)

Exodus 25:20

וְהָיוּ הַכְּרֻבִים פְּרָשֵׁי כַנָּפִים לְמַעַל סִכְכִּים בְּכַנְפֵיהֶם עַל־הַכַּפֹּת וּפְנֵיהֶם אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו
אֶל־הַכַּפֹּת יִהְיוּ פְּנֵי הַכְּרֻבִים:

The cherubim shall have their wings spread out above, shielding the cover with their wings. They shall confront each other, the faces of the cherubim being turned toward the cover.

Seforno

The reason why the Torah continues in describing these cherubs as facing the lid of the Ark, i.e. looking downwards whereas their wings are spread upwards, is a reminder that although inspiration originates in heaven, understanding of G'd and how He works can only come by paying close attention and studying what He does in our material, “lower” part of His universe. The ideal means of unraveling the meaning of G'd's actions is through His revealed word, the Torah, of which the Ark has become the repository. The upshot of the message contained in the symbolism represented by the cherubs, their shape, their posture, etc., is that for us on earth the key to obtain all these insights must be obtained by study of the Torah. By giving us the Torah, allowing us to build the Tabernacle, etc.,

Ramban on Terumah

Thus the main purpose of the Tabernacle was to contain a place in which the Divine Glory rests, this being the ark, just as He said, *And there will I meet with thee, and I will speak with thee from above the ark-cover*. Therefore He first gave the commandment about the ark and the ark-cover, for they are first in importance. Next to the ark He gave the commandment about the table and the candelabrum, which are vessels just like the ark, and because they indicate the purpose for which the Tabernacle was made... The secret of the Tabernacle is that the Glory which abode upon Mount Sinai [openly] should abide upon it in a concealed manner.

Creation and building the Tabernacle Connections, Martin Buber

And God <i>made</i> the firmament (Gen.1:7)	And let them <i>make</i> me a sanctuary. (Ex. 25:8)
And God <i>made</i> the two great lights (Gen. 1:16)	And they shall <i>make</i> an ark. (Ex. 25:10)
And God <i>made</i> the beast of the earth. (Gen. 1:25)	And thou shalt <i>make</i> a table. (Ex. 25:23)
	And thou shalt <i>make</i> a candlestick of pure gold. (Ex. 25:31)

Buber gives seven connecting words from the Creation in Genesis and the building of the Tabernacle. What is he saying about what the parallels teach us?

Does the following idea of R' Menachem Mendel of Kotzk align with the sages studied?

And let them make Me...

R' Menachem Mendel of Kotzk: It says "among them: and not "among it," to teach you that each person must build the Sanctuary in his own heart: then God will dwell among them.