

## PARSHAT TETZAVEH

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In the previous parshah, Hashem describes in great detail how to build the mishkan and how to create a space for His presence, the *שכינה*. He introduces this idea with the verse that states that if you build it, I will come: *ועשו לי מקדש, ושכנתי בתוכם.*

In this parashah, the Torah describes in further detail all of the vestments for the priests, including the special ones for the Kohen Gadol. Doing all of these things allows Hashem to sanctify the Mishkan and the priests who serve in it. *וקדשתי את-אֵהָל מוֹעֵד וְאֶת-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְאֶת-אֹהֲרֹן וְאֶת-בְּנָיו אֲקַדֵּשׁ לְכַהֵן לִי.*

This concept of holiness reinforces the notion that holiness resides in a special place, with special people, with particular clothing. Holiness requires separation from the ordinary and appears, in a way, inaccessible to the average person.

How strange, then, that immediately following this declaration of holiness, the Torah quotes Hashem as saying, *וְשִׁכְנֹתִי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים* (and I will reside among the people of Israel and I will be their God.) The Netsiv explains that G-d's presence resides most evidently in the Mishkan, but even among the people in regular situations, Hashem's presence resides, though not as obviously. Indeed, it appears as if the creation of a place of Holiness is a precondition for, but also a catalyst for, Hashem's presence to exist elsewhere wherever the people of Israel cohort together.

We need models of sanctity, places of sanctuary, to help us understand what it means to connect to the Divine. These places - the mishkan, our synagogues, our schools - are indispensable for our religious personalities to develop. At the same time, we must know that our feeling of Hashem's presence cannot remain solely in those places. That's not the life of a Jew. That's not the religious life. That's not the life devoted to G-d.

Build me a holy place, says G-d, so that my presence doesn't have to reside only there. In fact, the verse says specifically, *ועשו לי מקדש, ושכנתי בתוכם* – *make for me a mishkan so that I will dwell among them (not in it). Build it so that you can take the inspiration from inside and bring it outside, to every place that we live and interact with people.*

We try our best to create a holy place in school, a place where the “voices of small children” help to sustain the world (as I am fond of quoting), but the only way that we know that we have truly created a holy place is when our children - and our graduates - *take this holiness with them out into the world.*