



Parshat Teruma  
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Parshat Teruma begins with God's command to *Benei Yisrael* to construct a *Mishkan*, a temporary Temple that would serve as the site of sacrificial worship until the construction of the permanent *Beit Ha-mikdash* in Jerusalem several centuries later. Maimonides, both in *Sefer Ha-mitzvot* (*asei* 20) and in the *Hilkhot Beit Ha-bechira* section of *Mishneh Torah* (1:1), cites God's command concerning the *Mishkan* ("They shall make for Me a sanctuary" – 25:8) as the source for the eternal *mitzva* to construct a Temple.

A number of writers have noted that later in *Mishneh Torah*, in the beginning of *Hilkhot Melakhim*, Maimonides cites a different Biblical source for this obligation, namely, a verse from the Book of Devarim: "*le-Shikhno tidreshu u-vata shama*" – "You shall seek His presence and go there" (Devarim 12:5). The Torah here enjoins *Benei Yisrael* to "seek out" the chosen site of the permanent *Mikdash* and to then see to it that a proper Temple is constructed on that site. The obvious question arises, why did Maimonides in one context choose the verse from Parashat Teruma as the source for this obligation, while in a different context he cites a passage from the Book of Devarim?

Some commentators explained, quite simply, that in *Hilkhot Melakhim* Maimonides cites the verse from Devarim as the source not for the basic obligation to build a Temple, but rather for one detail of this *mitzva*. Namely, this verse establishes that the obligation to construct a permanent *Mikdash* takes effect only after *Benei Yisrael* have entered and settled the Land of Israel. Indeed, the context of Maimonides' comments there in *Hilkhot Melakhim* relates to the three obligations which *Benei Yisrael* bore collectively upon their successful conquest of the land (appointing a king, eliminating Amalek, and building a Temple). Naturally, in this context he cites a source indicating that the obligation of building a *Mikdash* took effect only at this point, and not earlier, and he therefore points to the aforementioned verse in Devarim, after which the Torah declares:

You will cross the Jordan and dwell in the land that the Lord your God bequeaths to you, and He will grant you respite from your enemies around you and you will dwell securely; then the site that the Lord your God shall choose for His Name to reside therein – there shall you bring all that I command you...

(Devarim 12:10-11)

Thus, whereas the verse in Teruma introduces the obligation to build a Temple generally, the passage in Devarim establishes that a permanent *Mikdash* should be constructed in place of the temporary *Mishkan* only after the successful conquest and settlement of *Eretz Yisrael*.

It is perhaps instructive that the Torah confined even as lofty an endeavor as the building of the *Beit Ha-mikdash* to a specific time-frame, rather than simply requiring that it be done "ASAP." This might very well demonstrate the paramount importance of proper timing in religious life. A measure that would constitute a great act of devotion and holiness in one context is unwarranted, or even wholly inappropriate, on other occasions. The construction of a *Mikdash*, for which we pray numerous times each day, is certainly among our nation's highest religious priorities, and yet the Torah insisted upon a specific time-frame for its realization. Before embarking on even important projects and endeavors, one must ascertain both the inherent value of the endeavor, and whether the timing is appropriate, whether it suits the current setting and context. Not every context is suitable for bringing the direct presence of the *Shekhina* into our midst through the construction of a *Mishkan*; similarly, goals that are appropriate in some settings may be unwarranted in others, and even inherently admirable pursuits must be carefully assessed to determine their suitability to the current circumstances.