

Geulas Yisrael #191-

Pekudei- The Deposit

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The iconic term *Mishkan* evokes the idea of Hashem's presence dwelling among His people. Long before the *Mishkan's* construction, this concept was hinted at in the encounter between Malki-Tzedek the king of Shalem and Avraham. When blessing Avraham, Malki-Tzedek referred to Hashem as the ruler of both heaven and earth, acknowledging that Avraham had transformed humanity's understanding of the Divine. No longer was Hashem a distant and abstract force; through Avraham's mission, He entered the human realm, shaping imagination and experience.

When Yitzchak considers leaving the Land of Israel, Hashem commands him to stay, using the word "שכון" —not merely instructing him to remain physically, but urging him to embed the Divine presence within the local culture. Yitzchak was called to cultivate a deeper awareness of Hashem within the land itself, transforming it into a place where holiness could take root and flourish.

Hundreds of years later, the mission of bringing Hashem into our world was no longer the charge of individuals alone—it became the calling of an entire people. We had stood at Har Sinai, experiencing direct and overwhelming revelation. But those fiery displays, that electrifying encounter, were not meant to define our daily existence. Instead, Hashem instructed us to build something quieter, something more serene—a place that would house His presence in a lasting and sustainable way.

Thus, the temporary sanctuary in the wilderness was called the *Mishkan*. It was not permanent. Unlike the *Beit HaMikdash*, it was not anchored in the heart of our capital. It did not command the attention of the entire world. It was not even referred to as a house, but simply as a *Mishkan*—a dwelling, a place where the Divine presence could reside amidst His people in the steady rhythms of daily life.

TAKEN AWAY

Chazal, however, discern a deeper, more enduring significance in the term *Mishkan*, one that speaks to the unbreakable covenant between

Hashem and His people. *Rashi* cites the *Midrash*, that at times, the *Mishkan/Mikdash* itself would serve as a *mashkon*—a form of collateral held by Hashem. When we betrayed Him, when we strayed from His ways, Hashem, as it were, took the *Mishkan/Mikdash* as a *mashkon*, withholding His presence from us as a consequence of our rebellion.

The Torah subtly alludes to this idea by repeating the word *Mishkan* in the same verse:

"אֵלֶּה פְּקוּדֵי הַמִּשְׁכָּן, מִשְׁכַּן הָעֵדוּת"

This doubling hints at the two times in history when Hashem seized His sanctuary—the destruction of the first and second *Batei Mikdash*. The same structure meant to house the Divine presence could, in moments of national failure, become a sign of absence—a painful reminder of what we had forfeited. Twice in history, Hashem transformed His earthly home into a *mashkon*, a collateral seized in sorrow, yet whispering the promise of redemption.

REASSURANCE

Though this is an ominous foreshadowing, it carries a deeply reassuring message and for this reason, the message of *mashkon* was delivered at the very dawn of the *Mishkan's* inauguration. The *mashkon announcement* reminds us that despite our moral and religious failures, despite Hashem's justified anger, our people will never be utterly forsaken.

The *Midrash* in *Eicha* describes a fateful decision taken in heaven at midday on Tisha B'Av. As our enemies stormed the *Mikdash*, threatening to annihilate the Jewish people, Hashem made a choice—to direct His wrath toward “wood and stone” rather than toward His children. At that moment, the *Mikdash* was set ablaze, not merely as an act of destruction but as a divine declaration that He would spare His nation, channeling His anger toward the edifice but sparing His children.

For this reason, our mourning on *Tisha B'Av* shifts at midday, when the *Mikdash* began to burn. The tragedy of loss of the *Mikdash* structure contains within it the assurance of our survival. The message of the "*Mishkan as a mashkon*" reminds us that even when we falter, even

when we betray our calling, we will outlast our failures—though at the agonizing cost of losing our sacred *Mikdash*.

HE WILL RETURN

There is a second, deeply comforting message in referring to the *Mikdash* as a *mashkon*. A *mashkon* is a prized possession temporarily surrendered by a borrower when payment is delayed. It serves as a guarantee, ensuring that the debt will eventually be repaid. By holding onto the collateral, the lender maintains a connection with the borrower, preventing him from disappearing and ensuring that a day of reckoning will come.

So too, when Hashem takes the *Mikdash* as a *mashkon*, it is not an act of final severance but a promise of return. The *Mikdash* sanctuary is held in trust, awaiting the day when we will be worthy to reclaim it. The notion of a *mashkon* implies that the borrower will one day stand before the lender once more, ready to redeem what was lost. Our exile is not an abandonment, nor has Jewish history been sealed with an irrevocable decree. Hashem holds onto our *Mikdash* waiting for the moment when He will return it to us, just as a lender patiently awaits the day he can reunite with the borrower and restore what was merely held in trust. Our exile is not abandonment; it is a pause before redemption.

IT IS OURS

Additionally, by designating the *Mikdash* as a *mashkon*, Hashem stresses that the *Mikdash* is rightfully ours—once our debt is repaid, He will return it to us. Hashem wants us to view the *Mikdash* as our own, as our rightful home, built with our hands, our toil, and our devotion. Unlike Har Sinai—a mountain peak divinely chosen for revelation—the *Mikdash* was not divinely constructed—it was forged through our labor, our yearning, and our sacrifice. By describing it as a *mashkon*, Hashem emphasizes that He has taken it temporarily, but a day will come when He will be "compelled" to return to us what is rightfully our own.

OUR DEBT TO HISTORY

Finally, the image of a *mashkon* teaches us that we carry a historical debt, just as a borrower who offers collateral remains obligated to repay the debt he owes and for which he deposited a collateral. Jewish history is dynamic, unfolding across generations. Though we inhabit a specific moment in time, we are part of an unbroken chain, inheriting both the merits and the burdens of those who came before us. Chazal teach that any generation that does not rebuild the *Mikdash* is considered as if it had destroyed it. Our failure to fully repay the spiritual debts of the past is not merely a historical shortcoming—it is an ongoing responsibility, a charge that rests upon our shoulders until we restore what was lost. Until we fully repay the debt of Jewish history the *mashkon* will not be returned.

WE ARE THE MASHKON !

A different Midrash (Bereshit Rabbah 44:18) presents an alternate image of collateral—one in which *we, the Jewish people*, serve as the *mashkon* rather than the *Mikdash* itself. At the dawn of Jewish history, during the covenant of *Brit Bein HaBetarim*, Hashem assures Avraham of the unfolding destiny of his descendants:

"ידוע תדע"

Sensing the repetition of the root *ידוע*- *to know*, the *Midrash* explains that Hashem provided a dual message. He informed Avraham not only of the hardships of Jewish exile but also of the certainty of our eventual return.

"ידוע שאני מפזרן, תדע שאני מכנסן, ידוע שאני ממשכנן, תדע שאני פורקן,
ידוע שאני משעבדן תדע שאני גואלן".

Hashem forecasts: *I will scatter them, but I will gather them. I will deliver them as a **mashkon**, but I will redeem them. I will subject them to oppression, but I will liberate them.*

This *Midrash* captures three distinct hardships of Jewish exile. First, we endure *persecution and discrimination*, but Hashem assures us that this suffering will end with our redemption. Second, we are *scattered* across the world, estranged from one another rather than united as a single family, yet Hashem promises to gather and restore us as one people.

Finally, we are delivered as a *mashkon*—a collateral—an image that goes beyond mere dispersion and oppression. What does this metaphor signify beyond exile and suffering? What deeper message is hidden within the notion that *we, ourselves*, become the *mashkon* in Hashem's design of gallut?

A *mashkon* exists in an unnatural state—though it belongs to the borrower it is temporarily held by the lender. Reclaiming the collateral is not just a financial transaction; it is a restoration, a return to its rightful place. So too, the Jewish people, even when not persecuted or scattered, remain displaced when living outside their homeland. Our natural existence is in Israel, under the direct gaze of Hashem. When Hashem promised Avraham that we would be taken as a *mashkon*, He also assured him that this unnatural state would not endure forever. One day, He would correct this imbalance and return us to our rightful home.

We are searching for our *mashkon*—the *Mikdash*, the house we built, the home that is rightfully ours. With courage, dedication, and sacrifice, we strive to repay the debt of Jewish history. As we attempt to reclaim *our mashkon*, and it is deeply reassuring to know that just as we seek our *mashkon*, Hashem seeks His *mashkon*—His people. One day, all that has been held in trust will be restored—the *Mikdash* to our people and our people to Hashem.

All the *mashkons* will be returned to their rightful owner and to their rightful home.