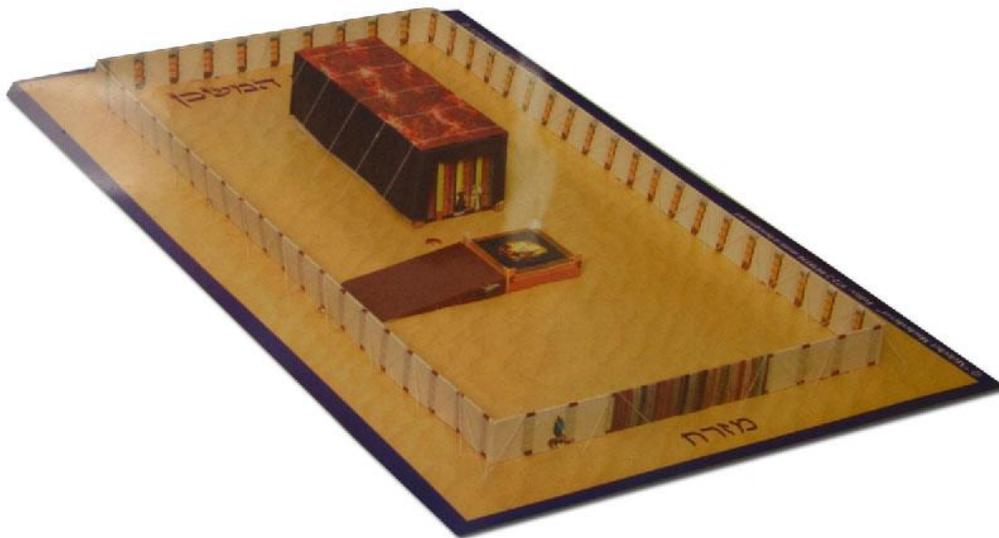




## Building the Mishkan



### Aims:

- To find out about the Mishkan.
- To learn about why Bnei Yisrael needed a Mishkan.
- To think about the importance of holy places in Judaism.

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## Mishcon de Reya Solicitors

The Torah takes a mere 34 verses to describe the creation of the world yet it takes a massive five parshiot, namely Terumah, Tetzaveh, part of Ki Tissa, Vayakhel and Pekudei, to describe the building of the Mishkan! What was the idea of the Mishkan and why is it so central to Sefer Shemot?

### **Mishkan: Was it always the plan?**

The command to build the Mishkan comes at the beginning of this week's parasha, Terumah.

*And they shall make for me a sanctuary and I will dwell in them. (Shemot 25:8)*

Two of the most famous commentators on the Torah, Rashi and Ramban, disagree as to the nature of this command. The main disagreement is when exactly this command took place – did it take place before or after the sin of the golden calf?

## Ramban's Approach

Ramban believes that unless the Torah specifies otherwise, it is written in chronological order. Therefore, as the diagram below shows, the command to build the Mishkan occurred before the sin of the Golden Calf (Chet Ha'egel) because that's where it is found in the Torah.

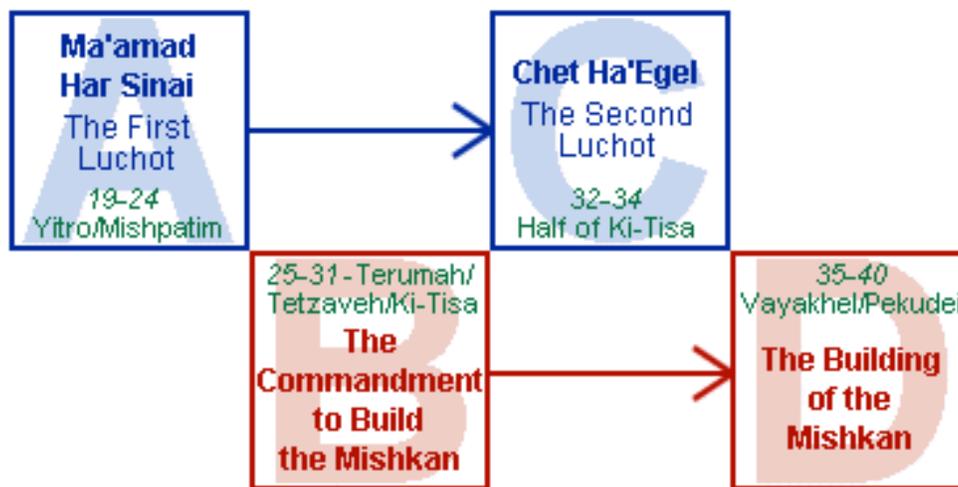


Image fro Rav Leibtag's [www.tanach.org](http://www.tanach.org) – a great website for learning Tanach!

## **Ramban says:**

*“After Hashem spoke the Aseret Hadibrot face to face with Yisrael, and commanded them some fundamental mitzvot via Moshe...and Yisrael accepted upon themselves to do anything that was commanded by Moshe and they made a covenant about this...and therefore (Hashem) commanded the matter of the Mishkan...and there He will speak with Moshe and command the Bnei Yisrael.”*

Ramban's views make logical sense – the Mishkan was **always the plan** and it represents a way of perpetuating the Sinai experience into a set structure, whereby the Jewish people would have a focus of worship through their desert wanderings.

## **Rashi's Approach**

But Rashi disagrees, as he holds the principle of 'there is no chronological order to the Torah'. This doesn't mean that the Torah is in random order; rather that the Torah prefers a conceptual sequence rather than a chronological one. And when Rashi noticed that the command to build the Mishkan reminded him of the sins the Jewish people did at the Golden Calf...

- ♣ ***They used gold to sin...and were commanded to donate gold to the Mishkan.***
- ♣ ***Bezalel is commanded to build the Mishkan and his grandfather, Chur, was (according to the Midrash) killed as he tried to prevent the sin of the Golden Calf.***
- ♣ ***The quote we started with (25:8) says that Hashem will return to dwell amongst Bnei Yisrael...was this because Moshe was told to move his tent away from Bnei Yisrael after the sin?***

...He believed that the Mishkan was a way of rectifying the sin of the Golden calf (or ACBD in the above diagram) and took place after the sin.

## A central focus: why we needed the Mishkan

We have seen two very different approaches to the command to build the Mishkan. Ramban felt that the Mishkan was a way of continuing what was started at Mount Sinai whereas Rashi believed that it was only necessary to re-focus Bnei Yisrael on worshipping Hashem, after they mistakenly decided to worship an idol.

Either way, we see that Hashem intended for Bnei Yisrael to have a central focus, a place where they could see Hashem's presence. It wasn't enough to just rely on past religious experiences – Judaism is for the here and now, and the Mishkan served as a place where Bnei Yisrael could reconnect to Hashem.

The Mishkan was another step in ensuring that Bnei Yisrael became a holy nation. First, the people were 'made holy' by being set apart from the nations through the covenant at Sinai. This is sanctifying **people**. Then, we have the commandments to sanctify **time**, both on Shabbat (which we learnt in the Ten Commandments) and Chagim. Finally, we sanctify **place** with the Mishkan. A people set aside for Hashem, on days set aside for Hashem, in the place set aside for Hashem.

Have a look at the Jewish people's various holy places throughout history...



## Mishkan (Tabernacle)

A temporary home for Hashem as Bnei Yisrael wandered through the desert.



## Beit Hamikdash (Temple)

The ideal home for Hashem, set in Jerusalem. There were two Temples, the latter destroyed in 70 CE.



## Beit Knesset (Synagogue)

A small sanctuary that can be built anywhere in the world, to maintain Jewry in exile.



## Beit Hamikdash (Temple)

To be rebuilt very soon!

## The first synagogue

*Adapted from Covenant and Conversation, Parashat Terumah 5765  
by the Chief Rabbi*

The prophet Ezekiel was one of those who shaped a vision of return and restoration, and it is to him we owe the first oblique reference to a radically new institution that eventually became known as the Beit Knesset, the synagogue: 'This is what the sovereign Lord says: although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet I have become to them a small sanctuary [mikdash me'at] in the countries where they have gone' (Ezekiel 11:16). The central sanctuary had been destroyed, but a small echo, a miniature, remained.

The synagogue...came into being not through words spoken by G-d to Israel but by words spoken by Israel to G-d.

We tend to forget how profound the concept of a synagogue was. Professor M. Stern has written that 'in establishing the synagogue, Judaism created one of the greatest revolutions in the history of religion and society, for the synagogue was an entirely new environment for divine service, of a type unknown anywhere before'.

The synagogue became Jerusalem in exile, the home of the Jewish heart. It is the ultimate expression of monotheism - that wherever we gather to turn our hearts towards heaven, there the Divine presence can be found, for G-d is everywhere.

# Points TO PONDER

- ✚ How do you think the place of worship affects the Jewish people? That is to say, what do you think the differences are when the only 'shul' was the Beit Hamikdash and today, when there are thousands?
- ✚ If everywhere is holy and Hashem's presence fills the world, why do we need a holy site to focus our worship?

***Final Thought: Many people often write messages to/pray to the Western Wall – but in reality, this is crazy! We don't pray to the Wall, we pray to Hashem AT the wall! Whether it's the Western Wall or your local shul, it's always important to remember who we're actually worshipping!***





- Court Case between the two opinions as to why we were commanded to build the Mishkan – was it because of the Golden Calf or always the plan? Bring evidence and witnesses etc.
- Play pairs using materials, builders and measurements of the Mishkan found in this week's parasha.
- Design your own Mishkan – groups make adverts or even show designs using chairs and tables for how their ideal place of Jewish worship would look.
- Give chanichim information on the components of the Mishkan, then go into Shul and play a real-life version of 'spot the difference' (or the similarities) between the Mishkan and a Shul.

## ***Hadracha Tip of the Week***

*Never forget the names of your chanichim – or your co-madrachim! One tactic if you have forgotten a name is to call them characters from Harry Potter such as Hermione or Voldemort and get their attention that way.*



## And Finally...



Let's bring back a classic BA game I remember from my South Woodford BA days... *(thanks to Miri Jeffay for actually remembering how to play)!*

**The Shoe Game:** There are many versions of 'The Shoe Game' but this is surely the best one! Everyone takes off one shoe and in turn says a fact about themselves in the following way: "I am Michael, this is my shoe and I went to Ilford County High School". After everyone has said their fact, they all put their shoes in a central pile in the middle of the room (N.B. that's the parasha link – all 'donating' to the general cause, like the Bnei Yisrael did when they built the Mishkan!).

Then, in order for each person to redeem their shoe, they have to pick up someone else's shoe from the pile and say over their name and fact. If correct, they redeem their shoe from the person who has it. Hopefully by the end, everyone will have got their shoes back.

If your sviva has any different versions of the Shoe Game, please write in at 2 Hallswelle Road, London, P.O. Box 1948.



## Sviva of the Week: Salford

**Roshim:** Danni Saffer & Gideon Sacofsky.

**Sganim:** Naomi Cohen & Joshua Rabinowitz.

**Madrachim:** Yishai Cohen, Hadassah Marks, Sam Seitler, Georgia Levine, Elliot Singer, Miri Collins, Eli Hayton, Sasha Buchsbaum, Adam Prais, Abigail Kemp, Alex Dover, Daniel Rabinowitz, Deborah Howard, Sam Golding, Daniel Shasha, Sigalle Kahn, Rafi Dover, Jordanna White, Ilana Rose, Gideon Kershner, Lisa Sagar, Esther Radnor, Ellis Horwich & Adina Collins.

### Facts about Salford:

- Salford BA is the only sviva that meets in a Bnei Akiva Bayit.
- The sviva is the central base for North Manchester's Jewish community.
- It is arguably one of the biggest svivot in the UK, with well over 100 people each week.



*The Manchester Bayit*