

The Search for Sacred Space: Conceptual Frameworks and Practical Models

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I. Space Informing Practice and Shaping Identities:

Alain de Botton, *The Architecture of Happiness* (New York, 2006).

“We seem **divided between an urge to override our senses and numb ourselves to our settings and a contradictory impulse to acknowledge the extent to which our identities are indelibly connected to, and will shift along with, our locations.** An ugly room can coagulate any loose suspicions as to the incompleteness of life, while a sun-lit one set with honey-coloured limestone tiles can lend support to whatever is most helpful within us. Belief in the significance of architecture is premised on the notion that we are, **for better or for worse, different people in different places** – and on the conviction that it is architecture’s task to render vivid to us who we might ideally be.”

II. The Mishkan as Creation:

שמות לט – מ

לג ויביאו את-המשכן אל-משה את-האהל ואת-כל-כליו קרסיו קרשיו בריחו ועמדיו ואדניו... מב ככל אשר-צוה ה', את-משה כן עשו בני ישראל את כל-העבדה. מג וירא משה את-כל-המלאכה והנה עשו אתה כאשר צוה ה' כן עשו ויברך אתם משה. א וידבר ה' אל-משה לאמר. ב ביום-החדש הראשון באחד לחדש תקים את-משכן אהל מועד. ג ושמרת שם את ארון העדות וספת על-הארן את-הפרכת. ט ולקחת את-שמן המשחה ומשחת את-המשכן ואת-כל-אשר-בו וקדשת אתו ואת-כל-כליו והיה קדש. לג ויקם את-החצר סביב למשכן ולמזבח ויתן את-מסד שער החצר ויכל משה את-המלאכה.

33 And they brought the tabernacle unto Moses, the Tent, and all its furniture, its clasps, its boards, its bars, and its pillars, and its sockets...42 According to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did all the work. 43 And Moses saw that they had performed all the tasks – as the Lord commanded, so they had done – Moshe blessed them. 1 And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying: 2 On the first day of the first month you shall set up the Tabernacle of the tent of meeting. 3 Place there the Ark of the Pact, and screen off the ark with the curtain...9 And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is in it to consecrate it and all its furnishings, so that it shall be holy. 33 And he set up the enclosure around the Tabernacle and the altar, and put up the screen for the gate of the enclosure. So Moshe finished the work.

בראשית א-ב

לא וירא אלקים את-כל-אשר עשה, והנה טוב מאד; והי-ערב והי-בקר, יום הששי.

א ויכלו השמים והארץ, וכל-צבאם. ב ויכל אלקים ביום השביעי, מלאכתו אשר עשה; וישבת ביום השביעי, מכל-מלאכתו אשר עשה. ג ויברך אלקים את-יום השביעי, ויקדש אתו: כי בו שבת מכל-מלאכתו, אשר-ברא אלקים לעשות.

31 And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. 1 And the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. 3 And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it He rested from all His work which God in creating had made.

Textual Parallels Linking Creation and Mishkan

| <i>Shemot 39-40</i> | <i>Bereishit 1:31 – 2:2</i> |
|---|---|
| וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶת-כָּל-הַמְּלָאכָה וְהִנֵּה עָשׂוּ אֶתְּהָא אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' כִּן עָשׂוּ (לט, מג) | וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה-טוֹב מְאֹד (בראשית א, לא) |
| וַתִּכַּל כָּל-עֲבֹדַת מִשְׁכַּן אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד (לט, לב) | וַיִּכְלוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל-צָבָאָם (א, ב) |
| וַיִּכַּל מֹשֶׁה אֶת-הַמְּלָאכָה (מ, לג) | וַיִּכַּל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה (ב, ב) |
| וַיִּבְרָךְ אֶתְּם מֹשֶׁה (לט, מג) | וַיִּבְרָךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי (ב, ב) |
| וַקִּדְשֵׁת אֶתְּךָ וְאֶת-כָּל-כְּלָיו וְהָיָה קֹדֶשׁ (מ, ט) | וַיִּקְדָּשׁ אֹתוֹ (ב, ב) |

Rabbi Dr. Joshua Berman, *The Temple: Its Symbolism and Meaning Then and Now* (Northvale, NJ, 1995), 14:

On one level, creation ended on the Sabbath. On a second level, however, it only truly concluded once the Tabernacle work was completed. The composite parts of the physical world were completed on the sixth day of creation, but the ultimate purpose of these elements – to be dedicated to the service of God – is only realized once the Sanctuary is built, to serve as a universal focal point for the service of God. To be certain, the mere act of constructing the Sanctuary will accomplish nothing if the spiritual climate of the times is inappropriate for such activity... When these conditions prevail, the presence of the Sanctuary represents the spiritual completion of the times and symbolizes the completion of the creation of the universe.

מדרש תנחומא: פקודי §2

א"ר יעקב בר' אסי למה הוא אומר "ה' אהבתי מעון ביתך ומקום משכן כבודך" (תהילים כו:ח)?
בשביל ששקול כנגד בריאת עולם. כיצד?

1. בראשון כתיב בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ וכתוב (תהלים קד) נוטה שמים כיריעה ובמשכן מה כתיב "ועשית יריעות עזים (שמות כו)
2. בשני יהי רקיע ואומר בהן הבדלה שנאמר ויהי מבדיל בין מים למים ובמשכן כתיב והבדילה הפרוכת לכם (שם / שמות כ"ו),
3. בשלישי כתיב מים שנאמר יקוו המים ובמשכן כתיב ועשית כיור נחשת וכנו נחשת וגו' ונתת שמה מים (שם / שמות / ל),
4. ברביעי ברא מאורות דכתיב יהי מאורות ברקיע השמים ובמשכן כתיב ועשית מנורת זהב (שם / שמות / כה),
5. בחמישי ברא עופות שנא' ישרצו המים שרץ נפש חיה ועוף יעופף ובמשכן כנגדן לעשות קרבנות כבשים ועופות (ובמשכן והיו הכרובים פורשי כנפים למעלה) (שם / שמות כ"ה),
6. בששי נברא אדם שנאמר (בראשית א) ויברא אלהים את האדם בצלמו בכבוד יוצרו, ובמשכן כתיב אדם שהוא כהן גדול שנמשח לעבוד ולשמש לפני ה',
7. בשביעי ויכלו השמים והארץ ובמשכן כתיב ותכל כל עבודתך, בבריאת העולם כתיב ויברך אלהים ובמשכן כתיב ויברך אותם משה, בבריאת העולם כתיב ויכל אלהים ובמשכן כתיב ויהי ביום כלות, בבריאת העולם כתיב ויקדש אותו ובמשכן כתיב וימשח אותו ויקדש אותו, ולמה המשכן שקול כנגד שמים וארץ אלא מה שמים וארץ הם עדים על ישראל דכתיב העידותי בכם היום את השמים ואת הארץ (דברים ל) אף משכן עדות לישראל

שנאמר אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדות לכך נאמר ה' אהבתי מעון ביתך ומקום משכן כבודך וגו'.

The *Midrash Tanbuma* on פרשת פקודי points to the verbal parallels between Creation and the construction of the *Mishkan*, drawing the conclusion that “the place of the *Mishkan* is equivalent to the creation of the world.”

III. Man as Partner in the Process of Creation:

ברכות נה.

אמר רב, יודע היה בצלאל לצרף אותיות שנבראו בהן שמים וארץ. כתיב הכא (שמות לה) וימלא אותו רוח אלהים בחכמה ובתבונה ובדעת, וכתיב התם (משלי ג) ה' בחכמה יסד ארץ כונן שמים בתבונה וכתיב (משלי ג) בדעתו תהומות נבקעו.

“R. Yehudah said in the name of Rav: Betzalel knew how to combine the letters through which the heavens and earth were created... It says here (Exodus 35), *and he filled him with the spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge*, and it says there (Proverbs 3), *the Lord by wisdom founded the earth, by understanding he established the heavens, by his knowledge the depths were broken up...*”

IV. The Number Seven as it Appears in the Temple Narratives

“The Temple: Its Symbolism and Meaning Then and Now,” R’ Dr. Joshua Berman

Just as language from the Sabbath narrative of Genesis, chapter 2, is present in the Tabernacle sections of Exodus, chapters 39 and 40, Sabbath imagery is likewise present in the narrative of the completion of the Temple in 1 Kings... The number seven figures prominently throughout the Temple narrative of 1 Kings. The Temple took seven years to complete (1 Kings 6:35) and was dedicated on the festival of Sukkot, a holiday of seven days that occurs during the seventh month of the year (1 Kings 8:2). Finally, Solomon’s dedication address is composed of seven petitions (1 Kings 8:12-53).

V. The first part of Chumash: From Creation to Creation

Aaron Koller, “Building the Tabernacle, building a world,” in *Mitokh Ha-Obel: Essays on the Weekly Parashah from the Rabbis and Professors of Yeshiva University* (ed. Stuart W. Halpern and Daniel Z. Feldman; New York and Jerusalem: Yeshiva University Press and Maggid, 2010), 219-225.

It is also not an accident, of course, that these parallels connect the beginning of *Bereishit* to the end of *Shemot*...

...Three important transitions can be seen within this two-book unit, which explain why this part can now come to an end. First, **God has, so to speak, handed off to mankind the job of creation, as Buber said.**

Second, and in what may be a related development, the focus has shifted from sacred time to sacred space. When God’s act of creation is described, what he completes and what he blesses is a fragment of time; when human creation is narrated, they create, complete, and give sanctity to a fragment of space.

Third, God has found his home... It has been observed that elsewhere in the ancient Near East, when a god is said to have created the world, the immediately following aftermath is that a temple is constructed for him or her. **In *Chumash*, these expectations are foiled.** God’s own Creation,

full of such order and promise in *Bereishit* Ch. 1, crashed in the face of the reality of Eden in *Bereishit* Ch. 3, again in Noah's generation in *Bereishit* Ch. 6, and again in the valley in Shin'ar in *Bereishit* Ch. 11. **The entire first part of *Chumash* may be read as God's search for man, or, more precisely, God's search for a sacred space among man...Finally, in the second half of *Shemot*, though still outside that Promised Land, man has – on the orders of God – created a space within their own space for God Himself.** This first act of the grand drama ends on a crescendo of accomplishment, and yet with the promise of an even more transcendent future: now that the *Mishkan* is built, “the cloud of God” will live among man forevermore.

VI. Placement/Location of Mishkan-Ohel Moed: Center or Periphery – Different Religious Ideologies

1. Center

שמות כט:מד-מו

מד וקדשתי את-אהל מועד ואת-המזבח ואת אהרן ואת בניו אקדש לכהן לי. מה ושכנתי בתוך בני ישראל והייתי להם לאלהים. מו וידעו כי אני ה' אלקיהם אשר הוצאתי אתם מארץ מצרים לשכני בתוכם אני ה' אלקיהם.

במדבר פרקים ג-ד

Travels through the desert are organized by tribe around the משכן at the center

2. Periphery

שמות לג:ז

ומשה יקח את-האהל ונטה-לו מחוץ למחנה הרחק מן-המחנה, וקרא לו, אהל מועד; והנה, כל-מבקש ה', יצא אל-אהל מועד, אשר מחוץ למחנה.

במדבר יא: טז-יז, במדבר יא: כד-ל, במדבר יב: ה-ו

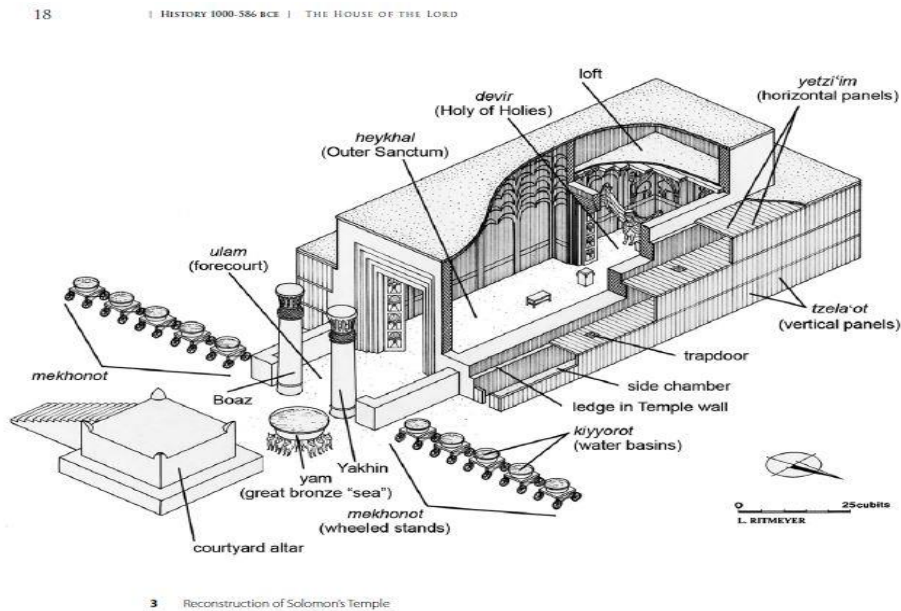
Benjamin D. Sommer, “Conflicting Constructions of Divine Presence in the Priestly Tabernacle,” *Biblical Interpretation* 9,41-63 (2001)

“...The ... tents exemplify **two different religious ideologies** described by the historian of religion, J.Z. Smith... A *locative* or centripetal view of the universe underscores and celebrates that which primeval and central. All times and places have value or even reality only insofar as they relate to, borrow from, duplicate, imitate, or acknowledge the moment of creation or the axis that connects heaven and earth... Such a mentality expresses an **ideology of immanence**, for it is based on the conviction that the divine irrupts into space and time – **more precisely into specific places and at specific times**. An alternative view of the universe emphasizes not the **center but the periphery**, not immanence but transcendence (for no place fully comprehends the divine); it recognizes the reality, the unavoidability, and even the value of reversal, liminality and chaos. **The tents described... conform to Smith's categories in a strikingly clear fashion...**

VII. Mishkan as compared to the Mikdash: Transience v Rootedness

- (a) Difference in Materials
- (b) Difference in the Nature of the Structure
- (c) Difference in Dimensions
- (d) Portable v. Stationary
- (e) Even if their dimensions were different, the two structures were similar in general form

VIII. Architecture of the בית המקדש: Hierarchical space



Mikdash as compared to The Great Temple at Meggido: Broad Room Design

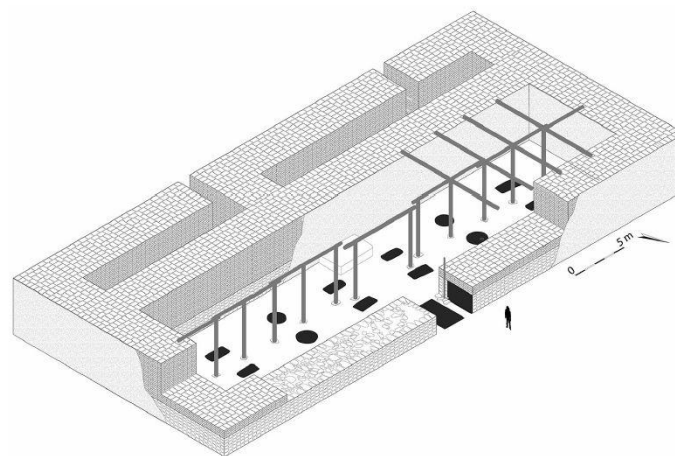


Fig. 5. Isometric drawing of the Great Temple. The staircase over the western corridor is not reconstructed here.

IX. משנה מסכת כלים א:ז-ט – Hierarchy of Space

עשר קדושות הן: ארץ ישראל, מקודשת מכל הארצות. ומה היא קדושתה--שמביאין ממנה העומר והביכורים ושתי הלחם, מה שאין מביאין כן מכל הארצות.

א,ז עיירות מוקפות חומה, מקודשות ממנה--שמשלחין מתוכן את המצורעים, ומסבבין לתוכן מת עד שירצו; יצא, אין מחזירין אותו.

א,ח לפני מן החומה, מקודש מהן--שאוכלין שם קודשים קלים, ומעשר שני. הר הבית, מקודש ממנו--שאיין זבים וזבות נידות ויולדות נכנסין לשם. החיל, מקודש ממנו--שאיין גויים וטמא מת נכנסין לשם. עזרת הנשים, מקודשת ממנו--שאיין טבול יום נכנס לשם, ואין חייבין עליה חטאת. עזרת ישראל, מקודשת ממנה--שאיין מחוסר כיפורים נכנס לשם, וחייבין עליה חטאת. עזרת הכוהנים, מקודשת ממנה--שאיין ישראל נכנסין לשם אלא בשעת צורכיהם, לסמיכה ולשחיטה ולתנופה.

א,ט בין האולם ולמזבח, מקודש ממנה--שאיין בעלי מומין ופרועי ראש נכנסין לשם. ההיכל, מקודש ממנו--שאיין נכנס לשם אלא רחוק ידיים ורגליים. בית קודש הקודשים, מקודש מהן--שאיין נכנס לשם אלא כוהן גדול ביום הכיפורים, בשעת העבודה. אמר רבי יוסי, בחמישה דברים בין האולם ולמזבח שווה להיכל--שאיין בעלי מומין, ופרועי ראש, ושתויי יין, ושלא רחוק ידיים ורגליים נכנסין לשם, ופורשין מבין האולם ולמזבח בשעת ההקטרה.

There are ten grades of holiness: the land of Israel is holier than all other lands. And what is the nature of its holiness? That from it are brought the omer, the firstfruits and the two loaves, which cannot be brought from any of the other lands....

Cities that are walled are holier, for metzoras must be sent out of them and a corpse, though it may be carried about within them as long as it is desired, may not be brought back once it has been taken out.

The area within the wall [of Jerusalem] is holier, for it is there that lesser holy things and second tithe may be eaten. The Temple Mount is holier, for zavim, zavot, menstruants and women after childbirth may not enter it. The chel is holier, for neither non-Jews nor one who contracted corpse impurity may enter it. The court of women is holier, for a tevul yom may not enter it, though he is not obligated a hatat for doing so. The court of the Israelites is holier, for a man who has not yet offered his obligatory sacrifices may not enter it, and if he enters he is liable for a hatat. The court of the priests is holier, for Israelites may not enter it except when they are required to do so: for laying on of the hands, slaying or waving.

The area between the porch (ulam) and the altar is holier, for [priests] who have blemishes or unkempt hair may not enter it. The Hekhal is holier, for no one whose hands or feet are unwashed may enter it. The Holy of Holies is holier, for only the high priest, on Yom Kippur, at the time of the service, may enter it. Rabbi Yose said: in five respects the area between the porch and the altar is equal to the Hekhal, for those afflicted with blemishes or with a wild growth of hair, or who have drunk wine or whose hands or feet are unwashed may not enter there, and the people must keep away from the area between the porch and the altar when the incense is being burned.

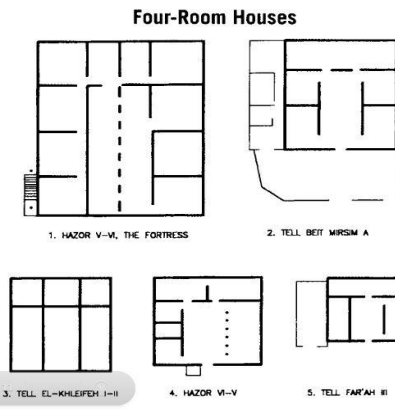
X. Mikdash as Compared to Iron Age Home

- a. Floor plan
- b. Egalitarian ethos of space?

The Four-Room House

The term “four-room house” is a convention used to designate the typical Iron Age dwelling in ancient Israel whose ideal plan is composed of four main rooms. In this configuration three parallel longitudinal spaces are backed by a broad-room with the entrance located at the central space. The “rooms” are really areas. As will be seen, while the number of these areas (usually four or three) is part and parcel of the basic architectural configuration of the house, the number of rooms (i.e., inner division of the areas) varies greatly. There are, however, subtypes of the “ideal” form, comprising three or two areas and, in exceptional cases, even five areas.

Rows of pillars characteristically separate the lateral front areas from the central area. It had been thought that the central space may have been an open courtyard (Shiloh 1973: 280). This space is usually wider than the building's other areas and contained more installations



Avraham Faust and Shlomo Bunimovitz, “The Four Room House,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66:1-2 (2003)

“The relation between a society and its architecture is reflexive: People structure their built environment, and the latter in turn structures people’s perception of space. In other words, as Winston Churchill once said, “we shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us.” ...An intriguing implication of access analysis of the four-room house is the correspondence between its non-hierarchical configuration – a quality that is lacking in most complex houses – and the “democratic” or egalitarian ethos of Israelite society observed by scholars from diverse schools of thought...Large households display a complex and hierarchically structured arrangement of living and sleeping spaces reflecting their complex social structure. **This is often manifested in hierarchical grading of accessibility and structural depth of spaces within the house related to generational and in some cases gender-based status distinctions.** These ... **The four room plan lacks “depth” or access hierarchy, thus expressing a more egalitarian spirit...** By living in the house, its occupants absorbed the values embodied in it, thus ensuring the continuity of the ethos itself.”

XI. Returning to the End: Setting it All Up

שמות מ:לה

וַיִּכַס הָעָנָן אֶת-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיִּכְבֹּד ה' מְלֵא אֶת-הַמִּשְׁכָּן. וְלֹא-יָכַל מֹשֶׁה לָּבוֹא אֶל-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד כִּי-שָׁכַן עָלָיו הָעָנָן וַיִּכְבֹּד ה' מְלֵא אֶת-הַמִּשְׁכָּן.

The cloud covered the *'obel mo'ed* and the *kavod* of Hashem filled the *mishkan*. Moshe could not enter the *'obel mo'ed* because the cloud dwelled on it, and the *kavod* of Hashem filled the *mishkan*.

House First or Furniture First? Moshe v. Betzalelברכות נה.

אמר רבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר רבי יונתן: בצלאל על שם חכמתו נקרא. בשעה שאמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה: לך אמור לו לבצלאל "עשה לי משכן ארון וכלים" הלך משה והפך ואמר לו: "עשה ארון וכלים ומשכן". אמר לו: משה רבינו, מנהגו של עולם אדם בונה בית ואחר כך מכניס לתוכו כלים, ואתה אומר "עשה לי ארון וכלים ומשכן", כלים שאני עושה, להיכן אכניסם? שמא כך אמר לך הקדוש ברוך הוא, "עשה משכן ארון וכלים"? אמר לו: שמא בצל אל היית וידעת?

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said that Rabbi Yonatan said: Bezalel was called by that name on account of his wisdom. When the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses: Go say to Bezalel, "Make a tabernacle, an ark, and vessels" (see Exodus 31:7–11), Moses went and reversed the order and told Bezalel: "Make an ark, and vessels, and a tabernacle" (see Exodus 25–26). He said to Moses: Moses, our teacher, the standard practice throughout the world is that a person builds a house and only afterward places the vessels in the house, and you say to me: Make an ark, and vessels, and a tabernacle. If I do so in the order you have commanded, the vessels that I make, where shall I put them? Perhaps God told you the following: "Make a tabernacle, ark, and vessels" (see Exodus 36). Moses said to Bezalel: Perhaps you were in God's shadow [*betzel El*], and you knew precisely what He said. You intuited God's commands just as He stated them, as if you were there.