
*Today's
Sanctuary...*

Rabbi Alon Meltzer

A New Page of Talmud

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Terumah 5782



A building designated for meetings at appointed times. **Chizkuni on Shemot 25:8**¹ The Gemara asks: Where in Babylonia does the Divine Presence reside? Abaye said: In the ancient synagogue of Huzal and in the synagogue that was destroyed and rebuilt in Neharde'a. And do not say that the Divine Presence resided here and there, i.e., in both places simultaneously. Rather, at times it resided here in Huzal and at times there in Neharde'a. Abaye said: I have a blessing coming to me, for whenever I am within a distance of a parasang from one of those synagogues, I go in and pray there, due to the special honour and sanctity attached to them. It was related that the father of Shmuel and Levi were once

And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכְכֶם
Shemot 25:8

sitting in the synagogue that was destroyed and rebuilt in Neharde'a. The Divine Presence came and they heard a loud sound, so they arose and left...The verse states: "Yet I have been to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they have come" (Ezekiel 11:16). Rabbi Yitzhak said: This is referring to the synagogues and study halls in Babylonia— **Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Megillah 29a**² It is popularly assumed that the synagogue emerged as a communal institution only subsequent to the destruction of the Temple. It is quite true that the synagogue is often referred to as a *mikdash me'at*, a miniature Temple, but such reference does not connote that the synagogue is merely a replica of, or a replacement for, the Temple which once

stood in Jerusalem. Prayer does, indeed, serve as a substitute for the sacrificial order—"Let our lips compensate for bullocks" (Hos. 14:3)—and the formal order of prayer followed today is patterned after the sacrificial ritual. However, prayer constitutes a *mizvah* in and of itself, regardless of whether or not sacrifices are concomitantly offered in the Temple. **Contemporary Halachic Problems**

³ One may not behave in a lightheaded manner in a synagogue or house of study; for example, laughter, humour, or pointless chatter. **Shulchan Arukh, Choshen Mishpat 151:1**⁴ What then were the grounds of the faith in him? The Revelation on Sinai which we saw with our own eyes, and heard with our own ears, not having to depend on the testimony of others, we ourselves witnessing the fire, the thunder, the lightning, Moses entering the thick darkness after which the Divine Voice spoke to him, while we heard the call, "Moses, Moses, go, tell them thus and thus". **Mishneh Torah, Foundations of the Torah, 8:1**⁵

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