

Building the Mishkan

The order in constructing the sanctuary

Exodus 25:8

"ועשו לי מקדש יתנכשו מכותב"

"And they shall make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell amongst them"

Maimonides: Positive Commandment #20

The 20th *mitzvah* is that we are commanded to build a Sanctuary to serve [G-d]. In it we offer sacrifices, burn the eternal flame, offer our prayers, and congregate for the festivals each year, as will be explained.

The source of this *mitzvah* is G-d's statement (exalted be He), "Make a Sanctuary for Me."

We have already explained that this general term ["Sanctuary"] includes many parts. The *Menorah*, the Table, the Altar, etc. are all parts of the Sanctuary, everything together is called by the name, "Sanctuary," even though the Torah gives a distinct command for each individual element.

It is possible for one to entertain the thought that G-d's statement regarding the Altar, "Make for Me an earthen Altar," constitutes a *mitzvah* separate from that regarding the Sanctuary. However, the explanation is as follows: The plain meaning of the verse refers to the era when it was permissible to bring sacrifices on a *bamah*, i.e. when we were allowed to construct an earthen altar and bring sacrifices upon it in any location. However, our Sages, may they rest in peace, explained that it is a commandment to build the altar attached to the ground, and that it cannot be moved around as it was in the desert. They explained this verse in the *Mechilta* of R. Yishmael: "When you enter Israel, make for Me an altar attached to the ground." If so, this does apply to all generations.