

א-ת-ב-ג-ד-ה-ו-ז-ח-ט-י-כ-ל-מ-נ-ס-ע-פ-ק-ר-ש-ת

פרשיות ויקהל-פקודי
Parshiot Vayakhel-Pekudei
פרשת החודש

אשרינו Ashreinu

ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



JUST THE BEGINNING

RABBI BENJY HOROWITZ

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MISHAEL SOMMERS (23')

LIZI BUGAY (22')

REBECCA ADLER ('23)

BENNY FRANK (21')

The climax of a book usually appears towards the end of the story. This certainly makes a lot of sense. What would be the point of continuing to

read if you reached the pinnacle moment early on? If Harry killed Voldemort in Book Two, what questions would remain? If Luke defeated Darth Vader in the first Star Wars movie there would be no need for sequels -- only prequels! If Rocky would have won in the first movie, would we have ever had the rest?

But, if I asked the average person what the highlight of the Torah was, which event was the climax

of all of the stories, I imagine that most students would say it was the revelation at Har Sinai -- the moment where Hashem revealed Himself to the entirety of the Jewish people. How could that singular moment be topped!? And yet, this story happens in the middle of Book Two (Shmot), with three more books to go. How could this be?

Perhaps the point of the Torah is not to describe individual moments in time, as impressive and impactful as they surely were, but rather to describe the relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people throughout their lives. The revelation at Har Sinai is a step in the process, but the relationship is just beginning.

Nothing exemplifies this more than the last five parshiyot of Sefer Shmot. These parshiyot include the story of the command to build the Mishkan in Parshiyot Terumah and Tetzaveh, followed by the

sin of the golden calf and the teshuva of Bnei Yisrael in Parshat Ki Tisa, and then the building of the Mishkan in Vayakhel and Pekudei. The Torah describes Hashem's desire to dwell among the people, only to have the awful sin of the people's rejection of Him, followed by His forgiveness and return to dwell with them. The focus of the Torah is our ongoing relationship with Hashem: the highest of the highs as well as the lowest of lows. The message is for us to know that Hashem is always there waiting for us to continue our story with Him.

MIRROR MAGIC

MISHAEL SOMMERS (23')

In this week's parsha the story of Bnei Yisrael returns from the sadness of the Cheit Haegel back to the commandments of Hashem as to how to build the Mishkan. In last week's parsha we already started talking about the same thing, but the Torah adds something very important and insightful to the directions on how to build the *kiyor*:

וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת הַכִּיּוֹר נְחֹשֶׁת וְאֵת כְּנוֹ נְחֹשֶׁת בְּמִרְאֵת הַצְּבָאוֹת
אֲשֶׁר צָבְאוּ פָתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד

“He made the basin of brass, and its base of brass, out of the mirrors of the ministering women who ministered at the door of the Tent of Meeting” (Shmot 38:8). The obvious questions are: Why is there an addition to the directions of making the *kiyor* and why is it so important that it bears repeating?

Rashi provides a *geshmak* explanation to this weird event and to give us a little lesson and take away to incorporate into our lives.

Rashi answers that the women of Israel possessed mirrors that they would look into when they adorned themselves, and even though they could have used the mirrors, the women did not hesitate to contribute these mirrors to-

wards the Mishkan. Moshe initially was about to reject their offering of the mirrors because they were objects used for vanity, but Hashem told him to accept the mirrors as they are dear to Him because these mirrors allowed the Jewish women in Egypt to have many children. When their husbands would return from their slave work they gave their husbands food and water and would use the mirrors to make themselves beautiful to entice their husbands to have children.

Rashi explains that the mirrors were transformed from an object of the Yetzer Hara to becoming the *kiyor*, which gave couples the opportunity of creating *shalom bayit*, as the water from the *kiyor* was used to prove fidelity.

The lesson that we all can understand from this insight is that when you want to contribute to something or do something positive, the smallest things in our lives, like the mirrors that are naturally associated with Yetzer Hara, can transform and become something great and useful. In everything bad there is always something good that can come out of it -- and it's our perception that makes all the difference.

DO SHABBAT

LIZI BUGAY (22')

This week's parsha is a double parsha, Vayakhel and Pekudei. The parsha opens up by saying:

וַיִּקְהַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל עֵדֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אֵלֶּה
הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת אִתְּכֶם

“And Moshe assembled all of the congregation of the children of Israel and he said to them: these are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do” (Shmot 35:1).

The first commandment mentioned in this perek is to keep Shabbat.

שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי יְהִי לָכֶם קֹדֶשׁ

“Six days work shall be done but the seventh day should be holy for you...” (Shmot 35:2).

If the seventh day is designed for rest, why does previous pasuk say these are the things that the Hashem has commanded you to do, using the verb, לַעֲשֶׂה. It would seem more logical to be commanded not to do work or to rest with a more passive verb?

Rav Soloveitchik explains that the terminology or verbiage “to do” refers to the entire community because one who desecrates Shabbat in public is called a heretic. An element of being a member of a Jewish community is to embrace Shabbat. Shabbat is a public testimony that God created the world. By keeping Shabbat we are paying testimony that we are a witness and know that He is the creator.

The Imrei Chaim says that the term “to do” in connection with Shabbat involves creating a community! How do we create community? By going to shul, having guests, sharing divrei Torah, and taking part in other activities in the community; not by sitting idly without purpose.

Now we understand the reason the Torah uses the term לַעֲשֶׂה. Shabbat is not just about being passive. Shabbat is about being active. Just like a witness testifies in court as to the merits of a case, we testify through our actions that God created the world.

Moshe gathers the people together as a community and tells the people to “do” Shabbat. This is a challenging message as we endure a year-long pandemic of Covid and have been instructed to isolate. However our goals should be to return to being able to “do” Shabbat. We should not be satisfied with a passive Shabbat. We should yearn to “do” by going to shul, learning in groups, communicating ideas with our

peers, and more.

AMONG THEM

REBECCA ADLER ('23)

This week’s parsha describes the many intricate details of the Mishkan, Hashem’s dwelling place and home. Back in Shmot 25:8, the Torah says:

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם

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

First of all, why would Hashem need a place to dwell? Isn’t Hashem everywhere? One answer is that the purpose of having a physical mikdash is to give us a way to connect to Hashem. It can be difficult to have a relationship with Hashem, considering He isn’t a physical being and cannot be seen. Therefore, having the Mishkan eases that difficulty. It also encourages Bnei Yisrael to come to the Mishkan at certain times to offer sacrifices and complete other rituals in order to maintain a strong connection with Hashem. In the Mishkan, Hashem can receive our prayers and sacrifices, as stated by the Sforino. Although this idea answers the question, it is interesting to note that the pasuk says בְּתוֹכָם, among them, where we would expect the pasuk to say among it, referring to the Mishkan. This slight word change shows us that the purpose of the Mishkan was not to restrict Hashem’s presence to the physical Mishkan, but rather to act in a way to make Hashem’s presence stronger within us.

Although we do not have the Mishkan currently, the wording of this pasuk teaches us that Hashem is always with us. The Mishkan had many purposes, however one in particular is something that we can take beyond the physical building and apply to our own lives: Hashem is בְּתוֹכָם. He is among them, among Bnei Yisrael, now and forever.

KEEP GOING

BENNY FRANK (21')

In Parshat Pekudei, the Torah recounts the Mishkan being built by Bnei Yisrael. They worked diligently and, after all their effort, they finally completed the Mishkan and, in turn, had a big inauguration ceremony. The pasuk says:

וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל הַמְּלָאכָה וְהִנֵּה עָשׂוּ אֹתָהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' כִּן עָשׂוּ וַיְבָרַךְ אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה

“Moshe saw the entire work and behold they had done it as Hashem had commanded, so had they done. And Moshe blessed them” (Shmot 39:43).

Rashi elaborates on this pasuk and explains what kind of bracha it is that Moshe gave the Jews. He explains that this bracha was a request to Hashem that the *Shechinah* should always rest in the Mishkan with Bnei Yisrael. Now that the Mishkan had been blessed by Moshe to house the *Shechinah*, how would this blessing be realized? What actions would Bnei Yisrael need to take in order to achieve this goal?

Rabbi Yossi Jankovitz answers that this is referring to daily *avodah* in the Mishkan, and through that daily service, the *Shechinah* would continue to remain with them. The consistency that came with the Mishkan is the reason why Hashem rested his presence there on a daily basis.

It is easy for us to be inspired by big events like the inauguration of the Mishkan where we are pumped up and ready to serve Hashem. Those events are great, but it is what we do after that which really counts. To take that inspiration and let it fizzle out is a real shame. We must always be willing to see past the main event and be consistent even afterwards, because what really matters are the little things we do that show our strength and commitment to bigger things.

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