

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT VAYAKEL

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

G-D'S GIFT!

As the curtain rises on Parshat Vayakhel, Moshe assembles the nation in order to convey G-d's commandments concerning the construction of the Mishkan (the Sanctuary). Suddenly, however, he opens his remarks with the following directives concerning Shabbat: "Six days work may be done and the seventh day shall be holy for you, a Shabbat, a day of complete rest for G-d; whoever does work (melacha) on that day shall be put to death. You shall kindle no fire in any of your dwellings on the Shabbat day."

Moshe's clear purpose in assembling the nation at the beginning of the Parsha is to launch the construction of the Mishkan. Why, then, does Moshe abruptly insert the subject of Shabbat?

Rashi verbalizes the most immediate halachic lesson learned from the encounter between Shabbat and the Sanctuary: "[Moshe] prefaced the commandments concerning the work of the Mishkan with a warning concerning Shabbat – to convey [that work within the Mishkan] does not supersede Shabbat."

But there seems to be another distinct reason for the interruption of this important Mitzvah. Shabbat and the Sanctuary represent two different realms of potential sanctification within Jewish tradition: the sanctification of time (e.g., Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh and the festivals) and the sanctification of space (e.g., the Mishkan, the Temple, the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem). Through the observance of G-d's laws, man is challenged with the investiture of holiness into each of these central domains.

Both of these realms are significant, but what happens when a choice between them must be made?

The Torah teaches us that the sanctification of time reigns supreme.

That is why the observance of Shabbat supersedes the construction of the Sanctuary.

Man is convinced that to extend his power over the world he must occupy more and more space through his constructions and creations. Hashem, however, is more concerned with time than space. The first time the Torah uses the word Kadosh is not to describe something physical, as would be expected, but to describe the non-physical, namely time. Hashem uses the word Kadosh to describe the seventh day, His day of rest. In fact, no physical being is described as Kadosh until Bnei Yisrael are told that they will be to Hashem an Am Kadosh at Har Sinai. Only after the downfall with the sin of the Golden Calf is an object – the Mishkan – referred to as Kadosh. But that object was used for the sole purpose of housing the Shechina. Thus, even the Mishkan was not holy in and of itself. It was holy because it provided a place for the Shechina to occupy. The single most precious and tenuous commodity we possess in life is time. Our moments are limited; each moment exists...and before we know it, that moment is gone.

There could be no greater expression of our belief in and our loyalty to G-d than the dedication of some of our limited moments specifically to His service. The sanctification of time – the dedication of time solely to our relationship with G-d – is one of the highest religious acts possible, transcending other acts of sanctification.

Therefore, when Moshe underscores the laws of Shabbat immediately before the launching of the construction of the Mishkan, he reminds the people to remember their priorities. As monumentally historic as the launching of the Mishkan may be, as overwhelmingly important as the Mishkan and all of its symbolism will be across the face of history, even more precious to G-d is

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the dedication of our own moments of time to His service.

The Gemara (Shabbat 10a) teaches: "One who gives a gift to another must tell him." Thus, Hashem said to Moshe, "I have a good present in My storehouse, and its name is 'Shabbat.' I want to give it to the Jewish people; go and inform them (Lech Lehodiam)!"

This last part is very interesting as we don't seem to find by any other mitzvah this idea that G-d tells Moshe that he must go and inform them.

What is the deeper meaning?

Once, a poor man came begging to the house of Rabbi Shmelke of Nikolsburg (1726-1778). The Rebbe was used to giving charity, but this time he could not seem to find any cash at home.

After searching for a while and realising

the plight of this poor man, the Rebbe looked through his wife's drawer and found a beautiful ring. He promptly gave it to the beggar and wished him well. When his wife came home, she asked how his day was and soon after realised that her ring was missing. He explained that he had donated it to feed this poor man. She screamed, "How dare you give that ring, it was worth so much money!"

Upon hearing this, the Rebbe ran out after the poor the man. As he approached, the poor man looked back and, seeing the Rebbe coming close, decided to run for it. The Rebbe ran faster and eventually, although out of breath, managed to catch up with the poor man.

"Please don't take away the ring," begged the poor man.

Reb Shmelke lifted his hands and, still

panting, replied: "I have just learned that the ring I gave you is worth a lot of money. Make sure you don't sell it for cheap!"

The same is true about Shabbat. It's a very special time, but if we are not aware of its beauty and

power, we will miss the opportunity. We will end up selling it for cheap.

Shabbat is the sanctification of time. It is a time when we are able to stop and be and enjoy the moment. A time out from our busy schedule. A gift from G-d.

If one takes the letters in the word "Rosh"-head- and replaces each letter with the letter that follows immediately after it in the Hebrew alphabet, the result is the word "Shabbat." The head (Rosh) of our faith and week is Shabbat. Keep it and it will keep you!

Shabbat Shalom



RABBI DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

THE POWER OF THOUGHT

In this week's parasha, the Torah states, "ויעש בצלאל את הארון" – "Bezalel made the Aron" (Shemos 37:1). This is particularly striking because Bezalel was responsible for overseeing much of the construction of the Mishkan and its Keilim (utensils). Why, then, does the Torah single out his role in crafting the Aron?

The Ramban explains that while many members of Klal Yisrael possessed the skills necessary to create the Mishkan and its vessels, Bezalel stood out as the

greatest craftsman of all. His uniqueness was not merely in his technical expertise but in his ability to deeply contemplate the task before him and execute it with the correct intention. The Aron was not necessarily the most complex vessel to construct, but Bezalel is specifically credited with its creation because he invested profound thought into it.

Rav Wolbe zt"l derives from this a powerful lesson on the importance of contemplation. True greatness is not solely determined by intellect or cleverness but by the depth of thought and investment one puts into an action. The more a person considers and prepares for what they do, the greater the outcome.

This concept is just as relevant in Judaism, Imagine if we took a moment to reflect before davening Mincha or reciting a bracha. Who are we speaking to? What are we about to do? When we approach mitzvos with mindfulness and intention, the experience is profoundly transformed. Our connection to Hashem deepens, and our actions carry greater meaning.

Bezalel's craftsmanship teaches us that true excellence stems not just from skill but from thoughtful preparation and devotion. As we approach Shabbos, let us strive to incorporate more intention and contemplation into our daily lives. By doing so, we can elevate even the simplest actions into something truly extraordinary.



RABBI BENJI STONE, TAL Chavruta Program

שיגין לדוד אשר שר לד' - Chapter 7 Tehillim for Our Times

LIFE SAVING ADVICE - FOCUS ON YOURSELF

Part 2 – The Key Our Survival as a Nation
We have seen that when King David was attacked by his enemies he reacted in remarkable fashion. Whilst recognising

that Hashem Himself had decided that he deserved to be threatened in this way he nevertheless appealed to Hashem pointing out the lowly nature of his pursuers relative to his own piety. From this we learned that if we ever find ourselves in a dispute with another party with no apparent resolution, we should simply focus on our own spiritual level and hope that Hashem decides that we deserve to be redeemed.

We can also internalize this lesson at a national level, as it applies to the Jewish people as a whole.

At the time of writing Israel has just seen a glimmer of hope as a handful of hostages were released in exchange for tens of bloodthirsty terrorists. This joy was painfully dampened by the sight of freshly outfitted new recruits cheering and parading in a sea of green, ready to join

Hamas in the struggle against that evil incarnation, the Zionist Jew.

This is not the first time that we have seen our neighbours suddenly bare their sharp teeth at us. Throughout history we have emerged as the "whipping boy" for the country or empire in which we have resided. Frequent discrimination, violence or expulsion dominate the landscape of our experience in this world.

How can it be that we, Hashem's precious children, His most prized treasure, appear destined to struggle so much at the hands of our enemies? We are the most spiritually charged people on earth. What are we doing wrong?

This is a difficult question but we can suggest as follows:

We tend to think that as the chosen people, our right to material and military success is guaranteed and that other nations are of little importance to Hashem. Now it is true that we have been selected as Hashem's representatives amongst the nations. It is also true that the whole world and its infrastructure were put in place with the ultimate goal of helping us fulfil our lofty mission. But does that mean that other nations have no significance or that they do not hold some kind of sway with Hashem? Do the Jewish people have a monopoly on that most vital resource – divine assistance?

Certainly not.

The prophet Daniel had a dream in which he saw four beasts emerging from the sea – a lion, a bear, a leopard and another mystical ten - horned creature. These beasts represented the four empires which have sought to destroy the Jews - the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman empires (Rashi). The Maharal (Ner Mitzvah), asks a very insightful question on this verse. How it is that the empire of Yishmael (the Arab nation) is not included in this list of stand-out enemies of the Jews?

The Maharal answers that there is a fundamental difference between the four nations listed by Daniel and the nation of Yishmael in this context.

When our matriarch Rivka was carrying Yaakov and Esav she was told that she would give birth to two great nations and that

"one nation would draw its strength from the other" (Bereishit 25; 23).

This curious prophesy is understood to mean that the two nations would not be successful at the same time. If one nation would experience success then the other must be in a state of desolation - as the gemarah states :

"If someone tells you that both Rome (Esav) and Jerusalem are destroyed do not

believe him. If someone tells you that they are both flourishing – do not believe him. If he tells you that Rome is destroyed and Jerusalem flourishes you can believe him; If he tells you that Jerusalem has been destroyed and Rome is flourishing then you can believe him" (Megillah 6a).

This "pendulum" phenomenon applies not just to Esav's relationship with the Jewish people but also to the other three empires which Daniel saw in his dream (R' Saadiah Gaon) as the verse states;

"These exalted nations will receive the throne and they will inherit the throne for ever and ever" Daniel (7-18)".

We also see in this verse that all of the oppressors mentioned by Daniel actually draw their power ("receive the throne") from the Jews themselves. When we sin and lose our spiritual supremacy our crown is taken and given to one of these nations which then has the chance themselves to dominate, forming an empire and ruling over other countries. Only once we claw back our spiritual standing can we regain the crown once again.

In contrast to these nations, Yishmael does not draw his energy from the failure of the Jews. His power is self-generated. When Yishmael was ejected from his house as a young boy and cast into the heat of the desert, his mother Hager sat far away so that she should

"not see the death of the boy" (Bereishit 21;17

as he withered away from thirst and dehydration.

The Torah then tells us that at that point "Hashem listened to the voice of the lad" (21;17) and shortly afterwards an angel appears to Hager and tells her not to fear because "Hashem has heard the voice of the boy".

We see from here that the birth of the Yishmaelite nation is defined by the ability to cry out and pray to Hashem with great effect. This is indeed the meaning of the name Yishma – Kel; "Hashem will hear".

The Maharal tells us that this is why Daniel did not list Yishmael along with the other four main empires. Those empires depend on the Jews for their strength whereas Yishmael's power is innate.

Viewed from this perspective, it might be argued that Yishmael are more of a threat to us than the other nations. Yishmael do not necessarily need to wait for us to falter. They just need to be better.

This idea of Yishmael "competing" with the Jew is found in the midrash (Bereishit 55;4) which records a debate between Yitzchak and Yishmael in which Yishmael argues that he is more precious to Hashem because he was circumcised at

thirteen years of age. Yitzchak responds that actually he is greater because he was circumcised at eight day's old, as mandated by the Torah. Yishmael stands his ground and argues further;

"I could have objected but I chose not to. You had no choice in the matter"

which prompts Yitzchak to assert that his capacity for mesirat nefesh (self-sacrifice) was just as great, declaring;

"I wish Hashem would appear to me and request that I would cut off one of my limbs and I would do so".

(The episode of the akeida in which Yitzchak was almost slaughtered by his own father shortly followed, as an uncanny fulfilment of this "pledge").

This competition between Yishmael and the Yitzchak actually relates directly to the question of who rightfully deserves to dwell in Eretz Yisrael. We find in the Zohar (32a) that a descendent of Yishmael petitioned Hashem to reward his ancestor's mesirat nefesh in undergoing circumcision at the age of thirteen. As a result Hashem awarded the Yismaelite nation the right to inhabit the land of Israel as long as it was desolate and devoid of its proper owners, the Jews. History has proven this promise to have been true ; at the start of the 19th century Israel was almost exclusively inhabited by Arabs with only a few thousand Jews.

Its appears therefore that we face a dual threat. Some nations lie in wait for the moment that we begin to slip in the hope that they will get the opportunity to take our "crown" and use it for their own purposes. Yishmael is a more challenging proposition. They have the gift of tefillah (prayer) and they pro actively look to compete with us, looking to prove that they are more committed to their divine service than we are. As we have seen, their efforts can directly impact on the struggle for Eretz Yisrael too.

It seems that we cannot afford to sit back and rely on our privileged relationship with Hashem for security. As a nation, we must constantly self-check, innovate and strengthen ourselves in Torah and Mitzvot, even as Yishmael breathes down our neck. We have taken some ground-breaking advice from this chapter of Tehillim. On a personal level, if you find yourself in a dispute you cannot seem to resolve then you need to turn your attention to yourself. Work hard to elevate your avodat Hashem and you may well merit redemption. On a national level too we need to stay on our toes and not let up in our commitment to Torah and mitzvot. This attitude will provide the greatest protection for our brothers and sisters in the Middle East and all around the world.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Veyakhel

Moshe Rabbeinu exhorts the Bnei Yisrael to keep Shabbat, and requests donations for the materials for making the Mishkan. He collects gold, silver, precious stones, skins and yarn, as well as incense and olive oil for the Menorah and for anointing. The princes of each tribe bring the precious stones for the Kohen Gadol's breastplate and ephod. G-d appoints

Betzalel and Oholiav as the master craftsmen. Bnei Yisrael contribute so many resources, such that Moshe begins to refuse donations. Special curtains with two different covers were designed for the Mishkan's roof and door. Gold-covered boards in silver bases were connected, forming the Mishkan's walls. Betzalel made the Holy Ark (which contained the Tablets) from wood covered with

gold. On the Ark's cover there were two figures facing each other. The Menorah and the table with the showbreads were also of gold. Two Altars were made: a small incense Altar of wood, overlaid with gold, and a larger Altar for sacrifices, made of wood covered with copper.

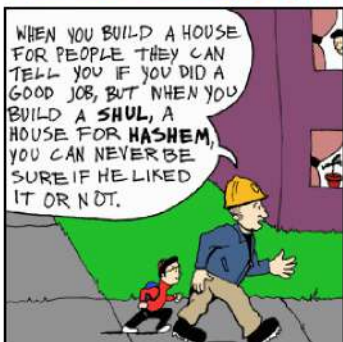
Rabbi Sinclair,
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1. On which day did Moshe assemble the Jewish People?
2. Why is the prohibition against doing work on Shabbat written prior to the instruction for building the Mishkan?
3. Why does the Torah specify the particular prohibition of lighting a fire on Shabbat right after it had already noted the general prohibition of doing work on Shabbat?
4. What function did the "yitdot hamishkan" serve?
5. What function did the "bigdei hasrad" serve?



1. 35:1 - The day after Yom Kippur.
2. 35:2 - To emphasize that the building of the Mishkan doesn't supersede the laws of Shabbat.
3. 35:3 - There are two opinions: One opinion is to teach that igniting a fire on Shabbat is punishable by lashes as opposed to other "melachot" which are punishable by death. The other opinion is to teach that violation of numerous "melachot" at one time requires a separate atonement for each violation.
4. 35:18 - The edges of the curtains were fastened to them. These were inserted in the ground so the curtains would not move in the wind.
5. 35:19 - They covered the aron, the shulchan, the menorah, and the mizbachot when they were packed for transport.








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