



ויקהל - פקודי
Vayakhel - Pekudei
פרשת פרה

Ashreinu אשרינו

Enhancing your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

The Takeaway

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Our parsha opens with the following:

וַיִּקְהַל מֹשֶׁה
אֶת-כָּל-עֵדֹת בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל

“And Moshe gathered together the entire congregation of Bnei Yisrael.” (Shmot 35:1).

However, when Moshe finishes talking to Bnei Yisrael, the Torah tells us:

וַיֵּצְאוּ כָל-עֵדֹת
בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, מִלִּפְנֵי
מֹשֶׁה

ishes speaking to Bnei Yisrael that they leave his presence? If the Torah starts with Moshe speaking to Bnei Yisrael and then they leave, it would not be preposterous to assume that they left from Moshe’s presence! After all, he was talking to them, and then he was finished. Of course they left and went home!

Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian, in his sefer Lev Eliyahu, shares what I think is a life-altering understanding of these seemingly extra words. He explains that when Bnei Yisrael leave Moshe’s presence, they are different. They gain from the experience of standing in front of Moshe, and are no longer the same as when they first came to Moshe. Being in the presence of Moshe has such a strong impact upon them, that everyone can tell from their actions and mannerisms that they have just been in Moshe’s presence.

There are many experiences that we encounter on a daily basis that impact us in many ways. They change how we talk, what we eat, how we dress, how we spend our money, and how we live our lives. For this reason, when a person leaves the Kotel or after closing the Aron Hakodesh, they walk backwards. They want to retain the experience that just took place. The Torah is teaching us that whenever we are involved in an event, it should be noticeable from our deeds

“And the entire congregation of Bnei Yisrael left from Moshe” (35:20).

Is it not obvious? Could we not deduce that after Moshe fin-



and traits where we have been.

When we learn Torah, it should be obvious from how we behave outside of that Torah environment that the Torah has made an impact upon us. Learning Torah should be incorporated into our very selves and should impact and refine our *middot*. The Torah teaches us how to interact with others in the world, how to control our animalistic desires, how to learn to be satisfied and not jealous of others, and so much more.

If this is true about Torah, then it is certainly true about other events that take place in our lives. Whether it be Color War, an AIPAC Policy Conference, Sarachek Tournament, a shabbaton, a summer program, a Tanach class, or even a family dinner, we can never make the mistake of thinking that what we have learned and experienced has no lasting effect on our lives. Our challenge is to be able to take from these experiences and apply them to our daily lives. Through our actions and behavior, these events should shape who we are and who we want to become.

Connect to Hashem

Akiva Rosenthal ('20)

This week's maftir is Parshat Parah, but it is seemingly out of place because it discusses the laws of the red cow, while the main parsha goes through the laws of the Mishkan. Aside from the connection to Pesach, is there another reason that the reading of Parshat Parah is connected to the parsha in which the Jews learn how to become a nation?

The mitzvah of *parah adumah* is even referred to as,

זאת חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה

“this the the ‘illogical’ law in the Torah” (Bamidbar 19:2).

The ashes from the *parah adumah* that are sprinkled make the impure person pure, but also makes the person who deals with it, a pure Kohen, impure. Making someone pure, and at the same time making someone else impure, shows that nothing is inherently good or evil; what matters is how we use something. For example, the golden calf was used for sinning, but we use the red cow to purify ourselves.

There is a dispute between Rashi and Rambam about whether or not we should even try to figure out the reason for *parah adumah*. Rashi says that *chukim*, laws with no given reason, in general are not worth learning about be-

cause we could be doing other, more practical mitzvot. He gives an analogy of a king giving orders because the king, or Hashem, doesn't care about what his subjects say but rather that they do what they are ordered. The Rambam thinks that Hashem wants us to do everything we can to be closer to Him and maybe, if we show Hashem that we want to be close to him, He may disclose the reasoning behind the *parah adumah*. Whether or not we should try to uncover the secrets to the *parah adumah*, both Rashi and the Rambam teach us something important from this mitzvah: we aren't always in control, but we must trust that Hashem has a plan.

This may also answer why Parshat Parah is read now, because when the Jews were traveling in the desert, they had to practice recognizing Hashem's presence, because once they entered Israel Hashem would no longer perform overt miracles for them, and they would have to trust He was still involved in their lives.

Mishkan Motivation

Adina Hirsch ('19)

In the past three parshiot as well as this week's two parshiot, the central focus of the Torah has been on the building of the Mishkan. The fact that the Mishkan is mentioned this often begs the question of what we can learn from the building of the Mishkan: is it the building of something on a deeper level?

Many commentaries draw parallels between the creation of the Mishkan and the creation of the world. When reading Parshat Bereishit and reading this week's parshiot, many of the key words are identical. In Bereishit the pasuk states:

וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה

“And God saw all that He had made and behold it was very good” (Bereishit 1:31).

The exact same language is used later on in Shmot:

וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶת-כָּל-הַמְּלָאכָה

“Moshe saw all the skilled work and behold they had done it” (Shmot 39:43).

Again, creation of the world is described,

וַיְכַל אֱלֹקִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי

“And God completed all the work that He had done”
(Bereishit 2:2),

and creation of the Mishkan is described as

וַיְכַל מֹשֶׁה, אֶת-הַמִּלְאָכָה

“And Moshe completed the work” (Shmot 40:33).

These are just two examples of the keywords are the same in both narratives. Furthermore, the gemara (Megillah 10a) states that the completion of the Mishkan generated the same happiness as the day the world was created. Finally, the seemingly most obvious connection is the mention of Shabbat in both creations. Again, we need to ask, what is the connection between the dedication of the Mishkan and the creation of heaven and earth?

The effect is to suggest that making the Mishkan was, for Bnei Yisrael, what creating the universe was for Hashem. The purpose of Mishkan was so Bnei Yisrael could serve Hashem and attain a close relationship with Him, but in order to do they must be kadosh -- holy. However, kadosh can also mean separate. Many commentators explain that the way to reach true holiness, one must be separate and special from the outside world. This was the exact purpose for the Mishkan; it was a place where Bnei Yisrael could escape the outside world and solely focus on avodat Hashem. Bnei Yisrael created a spiritual haven amongst the physical world.

So too, Hashem created the physical world on the first six days and then made a distinction or separation on the seventh day, Shabbat. Shabbat served as a break from the physical creation of the world to the spirituality and remembering who is our true Creator!

One would assume that laws of Shabbat would not apply to the building of the Mishkan because in essence the Mishkan and Shabbat serve the same purpose. However, the laws of Shabbat still apply to the building of Mishkan. In fact, the commandments of Shabbat are repeated right before the building of the Mishkan, and from the building of the Mishkan the rabbis derived the 39 melachot, prohibited acts of creative labor on Shabbat. Even though Bnei Yisrael emulate Hashem's creation of the world through the creation of the Mishkan, Bnei Yisrael must cease this creativity in the recognition of the ultimate creator, Hashem.

Rav Soloveitchik explains the concept of the two facets of man. The first perek of the Torah describes how Hashem gives Adam the ability of creativity and innovation and explains that through man's creativity, they will achieve

the closest relationship with Hashem. Just a perek later, the Torah says that man is created from the dust of the earth and is merely on earth to protect it, highlighting the lowly facet of man.

When building the Mishkan, Bnei Yisrael utilize their creative ability but even though it was a spiritual building, it was still easy to forget that Hashem was the one who gave them their ability to build. Bnei Yisrael need to take a break from their creation on Shabbat to recognize how trivial their creation is in the grand scheme of Hashem's world. Bnei Yisrael have a chance to take a step back and appreciate Hashem's power and feel a sense of humility compared to Hashem's greatness. Hashem created the world and gave man the opportunity to be builders and it is easy to be blinded and think that we are the true creators. Shabbat is a weekly reminder for ourselves that Hashem is the ultimate Creator and all of our creative ability comes from Him.

What's In a Name?

Batsheva Shekhter ('20)

Throughout the last couple of perakim in Sefer Shmot, detailed instructions were given on building and running the Mishkan. Once they are properly informed about the actions needed to be taken to achieve this goal, Moshe gathered all of Bnei Yisrael and asked them to donate what they were capable of to the endeavor. Hashem then chose a leader to head the project and ensure the instructions were properly followed.

The pasuk then states:

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל רְאוּ קָרָא ה', בְּשֵׁם בְּצֵלְאֵל
בֶּן-אוּרִי בֶן-חֹר לְמַטֵּה יְהוּדָה

“And Moshe said to Bnei Yisrael see that Hashem has singled out by name Betzalel the son of Uri the son of Chur from the tribe of Yehudah” (Shmot 35:30).

It is strange that the pasuk chose to mention the lineage of Betzalel going back all the way to his grandfather. Instead, the pasuk could have simply mentioned his father's name, as usually written regarding most characters in Tanach.

According to Rashi and the Siftei Chachamim, Chur was the son of Miriam. Betzalel merited to have this prominent position because of his righteous grandmother. The added information provides an understanding of the greatness Betzalel descended from.

Meanwhile, the Da'at Zekenim explains that the mention of Betzalel's grandfather, Chur, holds a different significance. According to a midrash, Chur was killed by a swarm of Jewish people as he attempted to prevent them from creating and worshipping the Golden Calf. It seems only fitting that the grandson of a man who tried to stop the egel hazahav would merit to have the position of overseeing the building of the Mishkan, which would atone for the sin of the Golden Calf.

The Midrash Tanchuma discusses in this week's parsha the significance of names. A person receives three names during his lifetime: one at birth by his parents, one from others, and one by himself. Regarding Betzalel's name, the Midrash Rabbah claims that the pasuk states the word **בשם** in the name of -- with regard to Betzalel because he was singled out by Hashem for his reputation created by his good deeds and actions.

The pasuk lists all of Betzalel's lineage to explain his three names he had achieved during his lifetime. He was given the name Betzalel, meaning "in the shade of Hashem," which correlated to Hashem's presence that filled the Mishkan that Betzalel helped build.

The name he acquired from others related to Betzalel's righteous grandfather and great-grandmother that he merited in being selected for the position. However, Hashem specifically chose Betzalel for the name he created for himself through his actions and personality that allowed for him to receive the role to build Hashem's dwelling place.

Every person has a name given at birth and a reputation created by others as a result of family members and friends. An equally important name one can acquire for him or herself can only be achieved through living a life of Torah and middot. To lead a successful and fulfilling life, every individual must work to create a name for him or herself that represents his or her actions, beliefs, and personality, that will in return allow him or her to achieve great accomplishments.



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