

COMPLETING THE JOB

by Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein

Like everything that Hashem commanded Moshe, so did the Bnei Yisrael perform all the work.

Be'er Mayim Chaim: This pasuk does not appear to tell us anything we did not already know. As the Torah earlier recounted the fabrication of all items in the mishkan, it carefully added a refrain to each stage: "as Hashem commanded Moshe." What could our pasuk add to that?

The Torah introduced the ban on melachah on Shabbos in the Aseres HaDibros with an unusual commandment. "Six days you shall do your work." Does that make labor and productivity mandatory? Can it really be a Divine commandment, to the extent that one who finds himself without an occupation for a while violates Torah law?

The Torah alludes to something quite different. The 39 categories of forbidden labor on Shabbos subsume all important kinds of labor. (If some activity is not an example of one of those 39 categories, it will be a toldah/ derivative or sub-category of one of them.)

The number 39 corresponds to the number of curses sustained by Adam and Chavah in the aftermath of their sin. The significance of this is that the midah of din requires the very necessity of labor. Were it not for the demands of din after the sin of Adam and Chavah, nothing would prevent Hashem, as it were, from creating a world naturally full of all kinds of useful commodities - all without the intervention of Man. (The gematria of Elokim - adding one for the kollel - equals that of melachah.)

We are not saying that work itself is a curse. To the contrary. In the post-chet world, Man's labor serves as a tikkun to the curses he brought upon himself through his disobedience. Each of the 39 types of labor serves as a tikkun to one of the 39 curses - the applications of din to Man's new condition. Each kind of melachah blunts the effect of one of the curses, thereby allowing berachah to descend to the world.

It is in this sense that the six days of the week before Shabbos are called yemai ha-ma'aseh/ the days of "doing." Our labor during the week illuminates the world by clarifying its resident kedushah, liberating it from the kelipos that cling to it.

The mishkan addressed all the curses of Man, because it subsumed all 39 types of melachah. With the destruction of the beis ha-mikdash that continued its function, we lost a potent way to blunt the effects of the din that had become part of Hashem's operating system for the world. We were left

with the din - but not its prescribed antidote. Thus, the gemara tells us that with the churban, every day has become a curse, i.e. the original curses of Adam are no longer remedied by one of the melachos that went into the mishkan's construction.

On the other hand, our everyday labor has a similar, if much slower effect. What the mishkan and its successor batei mikdash did with great impact, our everyday labor accomplishes in part. Little by little - till the arrival of Mashiach - our labor partially remedies the curses of Adam.

We have arrived at the meaning of our pasuk. Through the building of the mishkan, incorporating the 39 types of melachah, the Bnei Yisrael addressed all that Hashem commanded, meaning the totality of the root concept of avodah. Man's labor became a fixed requirement of our world through an exercise of Divine din. That din was answered (and blunted) through the holy work done by the Bnei Yisrael in building the mishkan.

Sources:

1. Based on Be'er Mayim Chaim, Shemos 39:42
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