

A HOME FOR HASHEM

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Hamaayan / The Torah Spring
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Vayakhel

Volume XIV, No. 22
27 Adar I 5760
March 4, 2000

Today's Learning:

Eruvin 5:7-8

Orach Chaim 258:1-259:2

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Yevamot 95

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Nedarim 10

After reading in the last three parashot about the command to build the mishkan/Tabernacle and its vessels, we read in this week's parashah of the actual construction. In all, observes R' Gedalyah Schorr z"l, there are seven parashot that discuss some aspect of the mishkan's construction. Likewise, we are taught that there are seven "Heavens."

The purpose of the mishkan was to be a "home" for Hashem. With each of these seven parashot, the Shechinah descended from one of the seven Heavens until it reached the mishkan.

We read in this parashah that Bnei Yisrael brought so many donations for the mishkan that Moshe had to say, "dai"/"Enough!" The gemara says similarly that when Hashem created the universe, it would have expanded indefinitely if He had not said, "dai"/"Enough!" (This is why one of His names is

"Shakkai.") What does this mean?

R' Schorr explains that the act of creation involved Hashem's restricting His Light in order to make room for, i.e., to allow for the possibility of, a physical world. However, He struck a fine balance so that it is still possible to find Him within the physical world. Had He not commanded the physical world to stop expanding, that balance would have been lost and there would be no possibility of man's recognizing G-d's Light.

In contrast to the creation of the physical world, which caused Hashem's presence to be hidden, Bnei Yisrael's construction of the mishkan caused Hashem's presence to be revealed in this world. Here too, however, there is a limit, and it was necessary to say "Enough!" Otherwise, Hashem's Light would overwhelm us. (Ohr Gedalyahu)

"Take from yourselves a portion _for_ Hashem; everyone whose heart motivates him shall bring it, as the portion _of_ Hashem: gold, silver and copper . . ."

(35:5)

Why does the phrase, "portion of/for Hashem," appear twice, and why does the verse say "for" one time and "of" the second time?

R' Baruch Yosef Sack z"l explains: On the verse (Mishlei 3:9), "Honor Hashem with your wealth," the Sages comment (via a play on the Hebrew word "honcha"/"your wealth"), "Honor Hashem with what He has given you." When we give charity, the money that we give is not ours, it is His. All that we give of our own is our good will.

This is the meaning of our verse: "Take from yourselves a portion for Hashem; everyone whose heart motivates him shall bring it." The only thing that you give which is "from yourselves" is the fact that your hearts motivate you. Anything else you give is "the portion of Hashem: gold, silver and copper . . ." (Birkat Yosef)

"The nesi'im/leaders brought the shoham stones and the stones for the settings for the ephod and the breastplate." (35:27)

Rashi quotes the midrash: Why did the nesi'im bring the first sacrifices when the altar was dedicated (in Bemidbar, chapter 7), whereas they were not the first to contribute when the mishkan was built? The nesi'im said, "Let the people bring whatever they will bring for the construction of the mishkan and we will make up whatever is lacking." In the end, however, nothing was lacking (except these stones). Therefore, when the mishkan was dedicated, the nesi'im said, "This time, we will contribute first."

Rashi concludes: Because they acted lazily the first time, one letter was subtracted from their name,

and the word "nesi'im" in this verse is missing a "yud."

Why, of all letters, a "yud"? R' Moshe Yechiel Epstein (the "Ozorofer Rebbe" in New York beginning in 1926) observes that the number ten - the gematria of "yud" is ten - signifies a congregation. By not participating initially in the construction of the mishkan, the leaders separated themselves from the congregation and lost the letter "yud."

When the mishkan was dedicated, each of the nesi'im brought a set of sacrifices - one leader per day, for twelve days. The midrash says that on the day that each nasi brought his sacrifices, he made a party for all of his friends and relatives. Why? asks R' Epstein. This was each leader's way of re-entering the congregation from which he had separated himself at the time that the mishkan was built. (Be'er Moshe p. 1000)

Parashat Shekalim

This week, as every year on the Shabbat before Rosh Chodesh Adar (unless Rosh Chodesh falls on Shabbat), we read Parashat Shekalim. In the so-called "Yotzer" prayer which some congregations recite on this Shabbat, we read: "You raised my head above all heads, and You caused my body to be raised above all bodies." (The word in parentheses is not in some versions.)

What does this mean? Also, asks R' Shalom Elchanan Jaffe z"l (St. Louis; 1890's), why is there a change from "You raised" in the first part of the stanza to "You caused . . . to be raised" in the second part? He explains:

Our Sages comment on the verse (Tehilim 139:5), "Back and front You created me," that man was both first and last in the process of creation. If man is worthy, he is considered to be the "beginning" of creation, but if man is not worthy, he is considered to be the "end" of creation. How so? R' Jaffe explains that man's soul is the most important -- the "first" in importance -- of all creations, and a man who lives a life worthy of his holy soul is "first" in rank among G-d's creations. On the other hand, man's body is one of the grossest of the creations, and a man who places his body first, places himself "last" in creation.

However, man can elevate and purify his body. Indeed, Kabbalists teach that G-d created the whole world merely so that man would have an opportunity to improve himself. When man elevates himself he becomes the loftiest of all creations, and by creating a world where one can elevate himself, G-d has "raised [man's] head above all heads." The first "head" refers to each person, of which the head is the loftiest part, while the second "head" refers to everything else in the world that is lofty. When one elevates himself, his "head" is raised -- it becomes loftier -- than all "heads."

Because man's body contains a soul which is extremely holy, man effectively has a "head-start" toward elevating himself. This is alluded to in the phrase, "You raised my head above all heads." You, G-d, did it. Thereafter, man must work on his own, and the spiritual boost that he receives from G-d

is more indirect. This is alluded to in the more indirect language, "You caused my body to be raised above all bodies."

How is this message relevant to the Shabbat of Parashat Shekalim? R' Jaffe explains:

The special Torah reading for this Shabbat commemorates the obligation to donate a half-shekel to the Bet Hamikdash. Why a half-shekel? The half-shekel symbolizes the fact that half of man (the soul) is already in heaven. All that man must do is elevate the other half (the body). (Sichah Sheleimah)

Rabbis of the New World

R' Abraham Joseph Rice z"l was the first ordained rabbi to hold an official position in the United States. He was born in Germany in 1802, and studied under R' Avraham Bing. (R' Bing was a student of R' Nosson Adler and was the teacher of R' Yaakov Ettlinger, the "Aruch La'ner."). Later, R' Rice studied under R' Wolf Hamburger, the leading German posek/halachic authority of his time.

For a short time, R' Rice headed a small yeshiva in Germany. However, in 1840, he was prevailed upon to settle in the United States to lead the many immigrants moving there. There were no rabbis in America at that time. R' Rice himself wrote: "In this country, men who have studied neither Bible nor Talmud have assumed the title of 'Rabbi,' donning the rabbinical cap on their heads in the same way that Napoleon placed the crown on his head."

R' Rice first settled in Newport, Rhode Island, but soon moved to Baltimore. There he became the rabbi of Congregation Nidchei Yisrael. R' Rice also received halachic queries from all over the country. Among the issues that he dealt with was the status of West Indian etrogim and the kashrus of supposedly pure olive oil. As the first ordained rabbi in the United States, R' Rice was the one who decided the Hebrew spellings of many place names, something that is essential for writing a get/bill of divorce.

In 1849, R' Rice left his increasingly reform-minded congregation and went into business. At the same time, he began a small, strictly Orthodox congregation and served it as rabbi without charge. He wrote to his teacher, R' Hamburger: "I dwell in complete darkness, without a teacher or companion."

R' Rice died in 1862. (Source: The Torah Personality, p. 247)

Sponsored by the Katz family in memory of aunt Chana bat Yaakov Shulim a"h

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah"), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at [Project Genesis](#) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page. Text archives from 1990 through the present may be retrieved from <http://www.acoast.com/~sehc/hamaayan/>. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.
