

THE CITY OF THE STRONG

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Vayakhel

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The Katz family (Boro Park)
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and on the yahrzeits of
their aunt Chana bat Yaakov Chaim Hakohen a"h
and uncle Zvi ben R' Pinchas a"h

Today's Learning:
Keilim 9:3-4
O.C. 298:12-14
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Kamma 83
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Kiddushin 47

King Shlomo writes in Mishlei (21:22), "The wise one went up to the city of the strong, va'yored / and he brought down the strength of its trust." Rabbeinu Yonah (Spain; died 1263) writes: In this verse, King Shlomo is instructing a person how to be a leader, whether a leader in his own home or a leader of multitudes of people. The word, "va'yored," commonly translated "and he brought down," can also be translated, "and he conquered" (see, for example, Devarim 20:20). If one demonstrates

his wisdom to a group of people, he can "conquer" them and rule over them.

R' Yonah continues: A leader needs two qualities. One is alluded to in our verse, i.e., that one must "conquer" others by impressing them with his wisdom. The second is alluded to in the preceding verse, "One who pursues righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness, and honor." This verse emphasizes the benefits of acting with humanity ("menschlichkeit") to all people. This also includes guarding one's lips, both to ensure that unhealthy foods do not enter them and to ensure that improper words do not escape from them.

Alternatively, the verse, "The wise one went up to the city of the strong," refers to Moshe Rabbeinu who ascended to the realm of the angels to bring down the Torah. Moshe's career as a leader began with his pursuit of righteousness, i.e., when he stood up for the Jew who was being beaten by the Egyptian and when he rebuked two Jews who were fighting. Moshe brought down the Torah with him. The next day, "Va'yakhel" / he gathered Bnei Yisrael and began to teach them the Torah. Our parashah begins on that "next day." (Derashot Rabbeinu Yonah Al Ha'Torah).

"Moshe assembled the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael and said to them: 'These are the things that Hashem commanded, to do them'." (35:1)

Why does it say "to do them"? In fact, what follows is a negative commandment - what one should not do on Shabbat!

R' Chaim Meir Hager z'l (1888-1972; the Vizhnitzer Rebbe) explains: What Moshe was commanding them "to do" is what he did - "assemble the assembly." Only among a large group gathered for the purpose of singing zemirot and sharing Torah thoughts can Shabbat be observed to its fullest. (Quoted in Otzrotaihem Shel Tzaddikim)

"On six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for Hashem." (35:2)

Our Sages teach that a person should repent every day. Seemingly, this includes Shabbat. Indeed, some mussar works state that Shabbat is a particularly auspicious time for teshuvah.

Yet, this presents a difficulty, for teshuvah is referred to in verses (for example, Hoshea 14:5) and other sources (for example, Yoma 86a) as a refuah / healing process. The halachah states that refuah is prohibited on Shabbat except for critical illnesses.

R' Menachem Simcha Katz shlita (Brooklyn, N.Y.) explains that teshuvah is permitted on Shabbat because failure to repent is a critical, indeed life-threatening, condition. Specifically, the midrash teaches that, were it not for the gift of teshuvah, every sin would deserve the death penalty.

Yet the question remains: An inherent part of heartfelt teshuvah is crying. Is this, too, permitted on Shabbat? R' Katz explains that crying on Shabbat is permitted when it eventually leads to joy. Since teshuvah leads to joy, tears of regret and repentance are permitted even on Shabbat. (Simcha L'ish p.24)

"But the melachah / work had been enough for all the work, to do it -- and there was extra." (36:7)

R' Chaim bin Attar z"l (the Ohr Ha'chaim Hakadosh; died 1746) explains: Although Bnei Yisrael donated more materials than were needed for the Mishkan, Hashem caused a miracle to occur such that everything that was donated was used. Why? Due to his love for Bnei Yisrael, Hashem did not want any person to feel that his donation had been rejected.

One could also interpret the verse in the opposite way, writes R' Yisrael Dan Taub z"l (1928-2006; the Modzhitzer Rebbe) in the name of his ancestor R' Yechezkel of Kozmir z"l. The verse could mean that although Bnei Yisrael brought exactly enough materials for the Mishkan, Hashem caused a miracle and there were leftover materials.

What would have been the purpose of such a miracle? R' Taub explains that, in order to promote humility, Hashem wanted each person to feel as if his donation had been the extra one. Why? Because the purpose of the Mishkan was to atone for the Golden Calf. Our Sages teach that haughtiness is a form of idol worship. Accordingly, the atonement for idol worship is humility. (Yad Le'banim Al Pirkei Avot p.141)

Pesach

R' Shimshon David Pinkus z"l (died 2001) writes: There are two ways to pass Shabbat and Yom Tov - one can live the day, or one can be a bystander. By way of a parable: Two people go to the airport - one goes to watch the airplanes take off for distant and exotic lands, while the other buys a ticket and actually flies to one of those wonderful places. Obviously, airplanes were not built to give pleasure to those who watch them; they were built to carry those who board them and want to be lofted skyward.

So it is with the holy days. One can stand by and admire the beauty of the day - the sparkle of the house newly-cleaned for Pesach, the beautifully set table, the many songs that are sung as the night progresses. However, the holidays were not given to us so that we can watch them pass by as a tourist watches a parade go by. Rather, the holidays, like the airplane, were given to us to elevate us.

How do we accomplish this? How do we enable the spirit of the holiday to penetrate deep within us and affect our being? It is only by attempting to understand the essence of the holiday. This, in turn, requires us to study books about the holiday - both its laws and its philosophical aspects.

R' Pinkus continues: The title "Yom Tov" alludes to the first thing that was ever referred to as "Tov" / "Good," i.e., the first light that G-d created (Bereishit 1:4). [Rashi writes that that verse does not refer to the light that we are familiar with, but to a Divine light that was put away for the righteous to enjoy in the future.] The holidays, however, can shine this Divine light on us, and the mechanism to achieve that is through the Torah, which is called (Mishlei 4:2), "Lekach Tov" / "A good teaching." This is why each Yom Tov (except for Shavuot) has its own tractate of the Talmud; the essence of each holiday's light is contained within its tractate. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Tiferet Shimshon)

This Week in History, Halachah, and Minhag

25 Adar 3365 (396 B.C.E.): Death of Nevuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king who destroyed the first Bet Hamikdash. Two days later, his son, King Evil Merodach, released from prison Yechaniah, former king of Yehuda. (Seder Olam Rabbah, ch.28)

On this date, the treasurer of the Bet Hamikdash would begin to seize collateral from anyone who had not yet donated a machatzit ha'shekel to fund the communal sacrifices for the coming year. (Mishnah, Shekalim 1:3)

On this day in 5651 (March 5, 1891), the "Blackstone Memorial" was presented to U.S. President Benjamin Harrison. This petition, signed by J.P. Morgan, William McKinley, John D. Rockefeller and more than 400 other prominent Americans, called for the establishment of a homeland in Palestine for the oppressed Jews of Russia. (Various sources)

28 Adar: Purim Mitzrayim, celebrating the death in 1523 of Ahmed Pasha, cruel Ottoman rule of Egypt. (Luach Davar B'ito p.664)

29 Adar 4956 (1096): Massacre of Jews in Speyer, Germany following a blood libel. (Luach Davar B'ito p.668)

Rosh Chodesh Nissan: Some have a custom not to eat peas on any day when Tachanun is not recited due to the holiness of the day (as opposed to Tachanun begin omitted because of a brit milah or chattan). The reason is that peas are a food eaten by mourners (because of their roundness) and this is not appropriate for a joyous day. (Yosef Ometz section 697)

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adira'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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