

MAKING THIS WORLD A REFLECTION OF THE WORLD TO COME PART II

by Rabbi Aron Tendler

Continued from last week Parshas Terumah...

Why is the Torah's account of the Mishkan so detailed, and repeated whereas other equally if not more important laws receive far less attention? Why did G-d want us to extract the 39 prohibitive laws of Shabbos (the Avos Melacha) from an analysis of what it took to create the Mishkan? Basically, we are told that on Shabbos we are forbidden to do the kinds of work that were necessary to build the Mishkan. What is the relationship between the not building of the Mishkan and Shabbos?

Parshas Titzaveh...

The culture and mood of the Mishkan was intended to approximate the mood and culture that existed in Gan Eden before Adam and Chava sinned. It was also intended to recapture the mood and culture that existed within the Jewish nation as they were camped at the foot of Mt. Sinai following Matan Torah and before the sin of the Golden Calf.

The Mishkan was a microcosm of the world as it should have been and the Kohain Gadol was a model of the human G-d intended all Jews to be and all other nations to emulate.

On Shabbos the Jews were forbidden to build the Mishkan. The 39 Avos Melachos (39 categories of forbidden-creative-work) were delineated through an analysis of what it took to build the Mishkan. Whatever those types of work were are the Melachos prohibited on Shabbos.

It stands to reason that if the Mishkan was a microcosm of G-d's originally intended world, and whatever it took to build the Mishkan is what is forbidden to do on Shabbos, then whatever it took to build the Mishkan is what it takes to build a perfect world. Therefore, the building of a perfect world should require all 39 categories of work. It also stands to reason that studying the details of the building of the Mishkan and analyzing the prohibited laws of Shabbos should reveal much of G-d's intent and purpose in creating the world.

Furthermore, Shabbos was the day G-d chose to celebrate the completion of His world. G-d completed His world in the first six days of creation. Upon its completion He saw that it was "very good" and introduced Adam and Chava into its perfection. Nothing more had to be done; everything was as it was supposed to be. There was nothing that G-d needed added and there was nothing He needed removed. Any change imposed on the world would have only marred its perfection.

Only one thing remained to be done. The human creature had to use the world G-d had created to recognize His existence and to serve Him. The human had nothing else to do.

Essentially, the world was supposed to be one long continuous Shabbos. Not in the sense of Kiddush, Challah, and the prohibition against doing the 39 Melachos, but in the sense of time devoted exclusively to recognizing His existence and serving Him. As you can see, the seventh day, G-d's designated Shabbos, our designated Shabbos, has always been what it is today - a day devoted to recognizing His existence and serving Him.

In last week's Parsha, the Torah detailed the construction of the Mishkan and its vessels. In this week's Parsha the Torah details the clothing of the Kohain Gadol and the Kohanim. The last two Parshios of Shemos, Vayakhel and Pekudei, review the details of the Mishkan and the Bigdei (clothing) Kehunah. The emphasis on the Mishkan and its details now makes perfect sense. In fact, if there was any part of the Torah that demanded review and study, the Mishkan and the Bigdei Kehunah would be that part.

The details of the Mishkan are the clearest expression of what G-d wanted from us in the form of character and performance. It presents a functioning model of perfection for the individual, the family, the community, and the world. As mentioned earlier, our purpose in this world is to recognize G-d and serve Him. To do so we must create an environment that proclaims G-dliness and devotion, purpose and value. We must adorn ourselves in humility, dignity, and royalty. We must live in sanctity, eat in sanctity, dwell in sanctity, and raise our children in sanctity. For the short time that Adam and Chava existed in Gan Eden they lived in such a rarefied environment. The Garden proclaimed G-d's presence and purpose. Their unclothed bodies were the essence of humility, dignity, and royalty. Their reality reflected sanctity in the singular goal of their living. All of it was predicated on the single understanding that they were the creations of the Divine formed in His own image and completely dependent on His benevolence. They had been given everything and they lacked for nothing. Their being and reality were the gift of a continuous Shabbos.

Yet they were created to work. They were created to work hard. They were created to work for their entire lives. The work was to raise a family and train a society. They would have to integrate the lessons of reality into their interaction with each other. They would have to convey the truth of their unique and simple existence to their children and their future generations. They would have to create a family life and a social environment that reflected G-d's presence and the devotion His presence demanded. They would have to develop a delivery system, an educational dynamic that would succeed with every child, without fail. What was that system? How could they not fail?

The secret to succeeding with every child and every student is the verse, "The words of the wise are heard in Nachas." Nachas is a uniquely Jewish word. It describes a sense of joy, contentment, pride, pleasure, serenity, excitement, feeling of success and completion. It is the look parents have on their face when their child or grandchild performs flawlessly. (The way Rabbi Oscar Z. Fasman Zt'l looked

and sounded when he excitedly told of his great grandchild's first published Dvar Torah, or his attending the Bris of his first great, great, grandson.) As I said, it is a uniquely Jewish word that has no other synonym.

The verse specifically describes the educational delivery system from parent to child and teacher to student as "Nachas - The words of the wise are heard in Nachas." Most people understand the word Nachas as describing the tone and mood of the teacher as he or she delivers the information. It mandates or suggests that the methodology employed by the parent or teacher when giving his lecture should be patience and calm. The volume and tone of the lesson should be set to an acceptable, civil, and sensitive level.

On the one hand, that interpretation is certainly defensible and sensible; on the other hand, the interpretation is fundamentally flawed. The word "Nachas" means a whole lot more than patience, calm, and the right decibel level. If the verse used the word Nachas it meant all aspects of the word, not just an approximation of its true meaning. The mandate is to the teacher and parent to stand in front of his class, to sit with the child, to learn with a chavrusah (study partner), and view the student, child, and partner with joy, contentment, pride, pleasure, serenity, excitement, feeling of success and completion. It means that the Rebbi (teacher) and parent must consider their own part in the delivery of the information with joy, contentment, pride, pleasure, serenity, excitement, feeling of success and completion. A teacher who is truly proud and excited of the Torah he or she teaches, the lesson he or she has prepared, and the opportunity to impart that pride and excitement to his or her child, student, or chavrusah, is a teacher and parent who will never fail. Patience, calm, and volume are one thing, joy, contentment, pride, pleasure, serenity, excitement, feeling of success and completion is a completely different game!

Gan Eden before the sin and the Jewish encampment before the Golden Calf were places that inspired joy, contentment, pride, pleasure, serenity, excitement, feeling of success and completion. All the opportunities for success were there. No distractions, no worries, no fears, no limitations, and a single focus. Each person knew that he or she could attain their potential; all they had to do was want it enough.

Unfortunately, humanity and the Jewish people did sin. They marred the perfection of G-d's world. They denied His benevolence and their potential. They traded joy, contentment, pride, pleasure, serenity, excitement, feeling of success and completion for falsehood and temporality.

The first time humanity failed, G-d divorced them from "Paradise" so they could experience the consequences of their actions. However, the ideal remained the same, humanities obligation remained the same. They still had to recognize G-d and devote themselves to fulfilling His will. After almost 2000 years, Avraham and Sarah graced the world with their unadulterated love and began teaching the world, by word and example how to recognize G-d and ascertain His will. Clearly, it was time for phase two of G-d's plan to be put into action.

Consider a world that had tasted the emptiness of false gods. Frustration, suffering, jealousy, destruction, hatred, fear, and discontent reigned freely. Leaders were users and morality was dictated by strength and avarice. The masses did not know better and life was the curse of malevolent gods. Into that world entered a couple who lived lives of joy, contentment, pride, pleasure, serenity, excitement, feeling of success and completion. Into that world entered a couple willing to share their understanding with any one who may wish to listen. Had the ten generations that preceded Avraham not experienced the void of falsehood, they would not have had the clear contrast that Avraham and Sarah represented. The two of them changed their world by offering their students a taste of Gan Eden, a taste of Nachas.

Their reward was to birth the nation that would continue to present a cognitive and emotional dissonance in contrast to all other beliefs and lifestyles. Their children were destined to do for their worlds what Avraham and Sarah had done for theirs. However, to do so they needed to embrace joy, contentment, pride, pleasure, serenity, excitement, feeling of success and completion. They needed to feel Nachas in themselves, and even more so, Nachas in the other nations of the world.

Had they not sinned with the Golden Calf, their existence would have approximated the abundant benevolence of Gan Eden, and they would have personally attained the level of Nachas necessary to continue the work of Avraham and Sarah. Unfortunately, their fears gave way to discontent and the Nachas that had been gifted to them in the first seven weeks of the desert and had been realized at the time of Matan Torah, "Like one being with one intent," dissipated into temporality and false gods.

Once again G-d needed to create a contrast between what should have been and what was. Once again G-d had to remove Himself from the overt workings of the universe and hide behind the embroidered curtains of the Mishkan. Inside the Mishkan the world would be as it should have been. Inside the Mishkan the visitor would be exposed to a potential otherwise thought to be beyond and impossible. Inside the Mishkan and the Bais Hamikdash G-d's presence would be felt in a way that demanded compliance, devotion, and listening. The Kohanim, and especially the Kohain Gadol, were to be living models of joy, contentment, pride, pleasure, serenity, excitement, feeling of success and completion. When they interacted with their fellow Jew, when they administered their devotional needs, the Kohanim would do so with such apparent Nachas that the sinner, petitioner, or supplicant would be uplifted by the expectation and pride. Infused with a newfound energy and enthusiasm, he would know in his heart that his failures were all his own. He would know with certainty that all limitations on his personal development and relationship with G-d were self-imposed. He would know that he too could attain Nachas. However, it was by contrast with the rest of the world that the unique culture and mood of the Mishkan was apparent and felt.

The mood and culture of the Bais Hamikdash and Mishkan was Nachas. The mood and culture of Shabbos is supposed to be Nachas. The 39 Melachos detail how to create a world in which joy, contentment, pride, pleasure, serenity, excitement, feeling of success and completion can reign

supreme. However, that world demands six days of hard work to create and maintain. It was not intended to be easy; it was not intended to be simple; however, it was intended to be possible.

The work of creating the world must be completed before we can attain Nachas. The work of building the Mishkan had to be completed before the Mishkan reflected Nachas. The work of six days must be contrasted with the non-work of Shabbos to perceive and appreciate the joy, contentment, pride, pleasure, serenity, excitement, feeling of success and completion that is the mood and culture of Shabbos.

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