

Parshat Vayakel: Removing The Mask

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

There is an intriguing juxtaposition in Parshat Ki Tisa and Parshat Vayakel. In Vayakel, Hashem first tells Moshe to command the Jews about the *mitzva* of Shabbat and he singles out the prohibition of kindling a flame. He then tells the people about the *mitzva* of building the Mishkan. In contrast, Parshat Ki Tisa, which is a culmination of Parshat Terumah and Tezaveh and the building of the Mishkan, begins with the *mitzva* of Shabbat. Why the switch and why does the Torah continually connect Shabbat with the Mishkan?

The Siftei Chaim notes that Adam lived a pure existence before the sin of *eitz hadaat*. Every action he performed, even if it was physical, was entirely sanctified. His only goal was to do the will of Hashem. After the sin, Adam was thrust into a world of confusion. Suddenly he acquired *busha* (shame), which is a contradiction between what one knows to be correct and his actions. Every action from then on contains a mixture of good and evil, to the extent that man could now never say that his motives were completely altruistic. Before the sin, Adam's food did not require preparation. After the sin, producing bread became a long arduous process. This reflects life in microcosm. Life is about working with a mixture of good and evil and extracting the grains of goodness.

On Shabbat we can reach the state of Adam before the sin. All week long we mimic

building the Mishkan by taking the physical and elevating it for Hashem. On Shabbat we enter a dimension of Gan Eden where we don't need to work and can still achieve this same level of spirituality. Shabbat is about rejoicing with the kingship of Hashem. On this day we crown Him as master. Our sages say that on Shabbat we receive an extra soul, an expansiveness of the heart. We can enjoy physical pleasures and our souls will not despise them because on Shabbat both the physical and spiritual work in tandem. Rav Wolbe notes that this level can be reached with the first *kezayit* of *challa* at the meal. If you consume it as if you are eating that first piece of *matza* at the seder, you can experience a foretaste of The World To Come.

At *matan Torah*, when the Jews completely nullified themselves before Hashem, they reached the state of Adam before the sin. After *chet ha'egel* they lost this level again. However, our Sages say that Moshe retained it. The *parsha* notes that he had a *keren* or, his face shone and he needed to wear a mask in order to speak to the Jewish people. His face, a reflection of his inner being, embodied a perfect melding of physical and spiritual. On Shabbat we return to this level.

The Netivot Shalom teaches that Shabbat is a propitious time for *teshuvah*. The mask we wear all week long is lifted. We can return to our inner essence. Shabbat is a time to meditate on our true selves. Every Jew can recognize

that life is about elevating the physical to the spiritual and about coming closer to Hashem. Our challenge is to take this message into our week and create a *Mishkan* for Hashem. The models of this were the women in *Mitzrayim*. They knew how to live *Shabbat* during the week. The Ibn Ezra writes that they were so committed to Hashem that they donated their mirrors, signifying their preoccupation with physicality, and came to the *Ohel Moed* to pray and learn.

Rav Kanatovsky notes that the reason for the reversal in the Parshiot is to teach us that we need to buttress the fundamental aspect of Shabbat-connection to Hashem, with action. Shabbat is the focus of Jewish belief. We need to recognize that we are not in control. Our job is to do our part, but ultimately the results are up to Hashem. This is why the Torah singles out fire. Fire symbolizes man's mastery over the universe. The suspension of this act represents relinquishment of control. Shabbat is about recognizing that there is a larger force behind our everyday actions. Similarly, the word *vayakhel* means community. We belong to something bigger than ourselves.

The Klei Yakar writes that *Ohel Moed* reflects the women's tents. The greatest accomplishment of a woman is dedicating herself to a greater aspect of self, namely her home and family. May our efforts to reach these lofty levels bring ourselves, those close to us, and all of Klal Yisrael to true *sheleimut*.

The Wisdom of the Torah

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The Maalot HaTorah writes that the Jewish people are remembered by Hashem in the merit of their Torah. What does this mean? When I tell someone, "Remember me," I mean to say, "Let him know my essence and let him keep it in his heart." The Torah is our essence. Yitzchak said, "The voice is the voice of Yaakov, the hands are the hands of Esav." The world of action and war belongs to Esav. The world of the voice, of expressing inner essence through Torah and prayer belongs to Yaakov.

Our merit of desiring to know Torah stands for us on the day of judgment. On Rosh Hashana

we repeatedly refer to Hashem's kingship. You know the king is there through his decrees, laws, and interactions with his subjects. When we say Hashem is king we mean to say that we study his laws and decrees and want to know His will. Torah is meant to give us access to the face of the King. But our ability to see His face is contingent on recognizing that we have the capacity, that this is our inner life. The Torah is about *malchiyut*, accepting Hashem's kingship. It's not about intellectual self-actualization. When we accept the Torah which is encapsulated in the Ten Commandments and commemorated by the ten verses of *malchiyut*, we validate that the world which was created

in ten statements has reason to exist.

The verse in Tehilim says, "*Koach ma'asav higid l'amo*." Through the Torah Hashem displayed the force of His creation to His people. Many people think that cleaving to Hashem is about meditating and praying to Him. They ask, "How can we come close to Hashem through the study of laws concerning relationships between man and man? Where is Hashem in the picture?" This is the voice of the *yetzer hara*. The central medium to come to *deveikut b'Hashem* is through learning Torah. The Sages say the Torah is one long divine name. This means that the Torah is how

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we can come to know Hashem experientially and emotionally, not just intellectually.

The Zohar says that the Torah, Hashem, and Yisrael are one. The more you know Torah the more you know Hashem. The more you know His will, the more you will come to love Him. When you learn Torah you learn Hashem's

middot. The Torah tells us how Hashem visited the sick, buried the dead, and did acts of kindness. It objectifies our sense of right and wrong.

There's an aspect of self that is higher than the mind. In mystical language this is called *keter* (crown). A crown sits on the head, not inside it.

The supra rational self is above the mind. Studying Torah teaches us Hashem's will, which is even beyond His wisdom. The highest level of knowing is when there's mutual interaction. This is what learning Torah is about.

Parshat Vaykhel: The Secret of One

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

Why is the *mitzvah* of Shabbat mentioned in this parsha with a specific emphasis on gathering together? In addition, why is there a special mention of the prohibition of not kindling a fire? Furthermore, in earlier *parshiot* the *mitzvah* of building the *mishkan* is discussed before the *mitzvah* of Shabbat, but in Parshat Vaykhel the order is reversed. Why?

The Shem Mishmuel explains. In Parshat Terumah the *pasuk* says, "Take for me a portion from every person whose heart willingly offers." The Midrash interprets this to mean that before the sin of the golden calf every person was holy enough in his own right to warrant the building of the *mishkan*. In Parshat Vaykhel it says, "Those who are generous should contribute." After the sin, there was a shift from the individual to the communal level. Now only as a nation could they build the *mishkan*.

Shabbat is the secret of one. During the week

nature creates a veil behind which Hashem hides, but on Shabbat, the world, Israel and Hashem become united. Shabbat gives us the power of connection. This is why it's mentioned first. In this parsha, Shabbat comes first to unite the individuals into a group worthy of the *Mishkan*.

How can we understand how a *tzaddik* of Aharon's stature helped fashion the golden calf? When Moshe ascended to heaven to receive the Torah, Aharon saw that the people had lost their unifying figure. It was as if Moshe had spiritually left them. They no longer felt bound together with a single minded purpose and goal. Moshe was the soul of the Jewish nation. Similarly, Shabbat is the soul of the world, uniting all in purpose.

Where there is holiness, impurity seeks to get in. Therefore, when a person's soul departs, his body becomes *tamei*, impure. When Moshe's soul left the Jews, the void he left was filled by evil energies, which created havoc

among the Jews. Aharon knew how much Moshe's presence meant to the people. They needed something that would unify them. He therefore told them to contribute gold. Gold symbolizes giving up one's personal aspirations for a higher national goal. Aharon threw the gold into the fire. Fire has the power to purge evil. Aharon thought the fire would refine their desires and lead them back to pure unity. He meant to fashion the golden calf as a harmless statue inspiring in some ways, but not at all idolatrous, but he failed. The Jewish people could not overcome the evil forces that had set in.

When Moshe came down from heaven, he threw the calf into the fire and purified the people. *Vaykhel*-He then gathered them together. He created a unified community. He reversed the order of commandments and gave the Jews Shabbat first. For Shabbat is *raza d'echad*-the secret of one. It is the key to our unity and our ultimate ability to build a dwelling place for Hashem in this world.