

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 *etz 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 *teshuva*. 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 womens' 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*.

Bitachon: The Meaning of Trust The Value of Spiritual Joy #4

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller-Gottlieb

Having *bitachon* means trusting Hashem to give us the abilities to attain our spiritual goals. The fact that Hashem gives us new life every day is His way of telling us that we still have new doors to open. As Jews, we have the potential to experience a different sort of joy, which comes from closeness to Hashem. We should not expect a peaceful life in the merit of our good deeds. Rather, we should perform *mitzvot* with *simcha* in gratitude to Hashem for all He has given us.

The most unhappy people are those who

destroy their own lives through jealousy, desire, and honor. No matter what they have, they are not satisfied. We have an enormous amount to be grateful for and we must let it take us higher. There is no moment in all of a person's life that Hashem's goodness isn't upon him. *Hitbonenut* (contemplation) is very important for us to our place and purpose. The Mesilat Yesharim says one has to set aside time to think, what am I accomplishing in life and how am I doing it? Is it getting me where I want to go? If we fail to do this, we can easily get lost in the maze of life. *Hitbonenut* should

lead us to love Hashem. The more we see how much He's given us, the more we see His love and caring. The more we see the intricacy and the enormous compassion Hashem has for nature, the more recognition we have of Hashem's goodness, and the more we trust Him. We should see ourselves as a part of the unending continuum of Hashem's giving and realize that Hashem has more to compassion for us than for nature. He can guard us from tragedy just as well as He can confront us with it, if it's for our benefit.

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Mashiach can come at any moment but it depends on our readiness and willingness. The Rambam tells us that we don't have to be perfect. Readiness can be even on the most rudimentary level. We have to be open to the possibility of *teshuva*. We should not think that *Mashiach's* coming will give us sudden access to material prosperity. Rather, Hashem will take away all the obstacles that keep us from being who we are meant to be. In Parshat Chayei Sarah the Torah says, "*V'Hashem beirach et avraham bakol.*" Ramban explains that Hashem blessed Avraham with a certain level of consciousness where he recognized that Hashem is involved at all levels of creation. On the second day of creation, Hashem separated the higher waters from the lower waters, the spiritual source of nature from its physical consequence. The result was a vast empty space

that could be filled with trust or doubt. If we live the kind of life where we do battle with our desires and ego, where our emotional agendas don't get in our way, we can learn to see Hashem's involvement in everything.

On a symbolic level the Gemara explains that *bakol* means a daughter. The man's role in a marriage is to provide, and the woman's role is to build using what he provides. Hashem blessed Avraham *bakol*, as a daughter so to speak. He empowered him to take the *middah* of seeing Hashem's involvement in all things and to act upon it. There are obstacles on the outside and even bigger ones on the inside that keep us from seeing Hashem. We don't see the whole picture. *Mashiach* will throw open the curtains so that we can see the light that was there all along. All of the prosperity discussed in the books of prophecy is related

to discerning Hashem in the physical world without being challenged by evil. Hashem will take away the *yetzer hara* from the hearts of His people. Our inner obstacles will disintegrate and every one of us will come to know Him.

The beauty and splendor of this world is coarse and vulgar compared to the unending pleasure of the next world. The same way a king would never want to switch roles with a beggar, we should never want to have the pleasures of this world instead of the next. Yet, given our spiritual immaturity, we'll sometimes trade *olam habah* for the transient joy of *olam hazeh*. A small revelation of Hashem's presence in this world gives us a sense of what will be in the next world. As the verse in Tehillim says, "How great is the goodness you've hidden for those who fear you."

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.