

Teruma

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Purim Mishkan and Ya'akov

Purim, Tabernacle, Ya'akov Avinu, and Parshas Teruma- do they all have something in common in this week's Parsha?

The answer must be yes.

In this week's parsha we are commanded and instructed to develop and build, with very exact measurements and instructions, the parts of the Mishkan that were used by the Jews in the desert and transferred eventually for use in the Beis Hamikdash.

The second posuk states: דִּבֶּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ־ לִי תְרוּמָה מֵאֵת כָּל־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִדְבְּגוּ לְבֹו תְקַחוּ אֶת־תְּרוּמָתִי:

Tell the Israelite people to bring Me gifts; you shall accept gifts for Me from every person whose heart so moves him.

What is interesting about this posuk is Hashem commands us to give a portion, it would seem, only if our heart is in it. In Halachik manifestation this likely could be translated as intentionality, and concentration, that one ought to give of themselves for a mitzvah when their heart is committed. In addition, this is another piece of evidence to the concept that it is better to fulfill a commandment than to voluntarily perform a good deed. While this may seem or feel counterintuitive (in that you feel better when you voluntarily do a good thing for someone else, whereas in service to Hashem, bittul comes from fulfilling the commandments because you are told to do it, not because you feel like you want to do it. Feeling like you want to do it, is part of the kavana- concentration and or intent, but even Halacha states that, “metoch Shelo

Lishma, Bah Lishma”, that without proper intent (in the name of Hashem) one will come to perform with intent, and that is enough of a reason to still perform a mitzvah. One ought not tell themselves that if they are not in the right mindset, they shirk themselves of the responsibility to do a mitzvah, by performing the mitzvah, and pushing through, even without the right concentration, they will come to perform the mitzvah for the right reason, and that is because Hashem commanded us to do it.)

Hashem “set us up” so to speak to be commanded to volunteer ourselves, so that, we maximize the reward, and our experience of bittul to Hashem that is required of us as Oivdey Hashem (servants of Hashem). As I've brought down from the previous parshios that a purpose of the Egyptian exile, and the change in status from slave to the status of ‘not slave’, and the fact that last week's parsha the first commandment relates to an Eved Ivri, is a lesson in our ability to harness true bittul to Hashem, as it is meant to be, and as the Alter Rebbe and other Chassidic Masters teach us.

Now that we established that the entire giving of the vessels, and building of the structure of the Mishkan is related to our bittul, and giving of ourselves for the service of Hashem, in our times, where we don't have the Mishkan or the Beis Hamikdash, the words of the Torah ought to apply as part of our Avodah to Hashem today. Because we know the Torah has exactly the right number of words and letters in it, one may wonder why Hashem spent so long giving us precise instruction and architectural dimensions of vessels, which once built, don't necessarily require rebuilding (until perhaps when we will rebuild them for Mashiach). Furthermore, even with the exact dimensions, without divine intervention (for example Betzalel getting divine inspiration to build the Aron HaKodesh) the divine precision ought not have been realized (the Menorah also was caste and hewn from a single block, but Hashem showed Moshe and the other builders the way¹). One reason for all the

¹ The posuk clearly tells us that Hashem had to show us the “way” כָּכָל אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְרַאֶה אוֹתְךָ אֶת תְּבִנֹת הַמִּשְׁכָּן “Exactly as I show you— (ס) וְכֵן תַּעֲשֶׂה:”

the pattern of the Tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings—so shall you make it.

details I heard from Rabbi Yossi Holtzberg was that it is a lesson in transparency and accountability. All the donations were accounted for and the precise measurements of the appliances and structure built conveying the message that every dollar had to be accounted for.

Chassidus tells of other reasons. The primary wood used for the structures that were plated in gold were “shittim” wood (some say this is from the Acacia or Cedar trees). Whatever the species of tree, the important point is that they were not indigenous to the region of the desert where the Jews travelled. Rashi explains this by asking the question, where did the Jews get the wood for development (it had not been mentioned that it was part of their “spoils” of Egypt.)

Rashi answering from Rabbi Tanchuma and Medrish explains that Ya’akov Avinu in his prophetic vision of the future of the Jews, he saw that when the Jews would leave Egypt, they would require the wood for the building of the Mishkan. Ya’akov therefore planted the shittim trees for their future use. One may conjecture as to why the species of wood was chosen. For example, Ya’akov could have planted a forest using indigenous trees from the region, why specifically shittim?²

One may offer reasons, due to the strength, quickness in which the wood grows, aromatic nature, weight, etc. etc. as being beneficial virtues of the shittim species versus others. But Chassidus explains to us the reason, which is applicable to us now, as it was then. The Rebbe in a sicha, quoting the Friediker Rebbe explains that shittum is loшон “shtus”, which is translated as senselessness, or wastefulness. Shtus is attributed to the characterological feature of something which is a “waste of time”. In being so it exists in a very physical manifestation. The purpose of our service is to convert the shtus into its full potential drawing out the divine light and lifeforce that exists

within it, so we are one step closer to creating a “dira bitachtonim”.

This is alluded to in the posuk וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכָם:

And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.

Which is stated quite early in the parsha. That the connection to us and Hashem, and the precision of the measuring, is ultimately to make a dwelling place. But as is famously known the wording used, isn’t to dwell in a specific place, rather, it is translated is you will build for me a sanctuary and I will dwell (among) within them. That is, we (our bodies) are a temple, and Hashem will dwell in us. Alternatively, it is that we make the entire earth an abode that is the “dira bitachtonim” for Hashem, and this is done with the performance of mitzvahs, that are performed as commanded.

Ya’akov had to plant the trees specifically, as the Alter Rebbe explains, because Ya’akov was a manifestation of the attribute of “tiferes” which was a combination of Avraham’s chesed, and Yitzchak’s gevurah. Both Avraham and Yitzchak existed in an opposite side of the spectrum, that requires the balance of Ya’akov. Furthermore, in Bereishis (28:14) Ya’akov is told

וְהָיָה זֶרְעֶךָ כְּעֶפֶר הָאָרֶץ וּפָרַצְתָּ יָמָה וַיִּקְדְּמָה וַיִּצְלָנָה וַיִּגְבְּהָ וַיִּבְרְכּוּ בְּךָ כָּל־מְשִׁפְחוֹת הָאֲדָמָה וּבְיִזְרְעֶךָ:

Your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you and your descendants.

Ya’akov is specifically given the ability and power to spread out. Specifically, as Chassidus tells us, spread out the light of Hashem, “la’asos

² A beautiful note was brought out by a shiur attendee named Benjamin Miller. He pointed out, that the fact that the trees were a foreign species, is a metaphor for the Jews. We are always “am kadosh” meaning

separate from those around us. So Ya’akov’s lesson to us, is knowing that we stand out from those among us, we still must remain steadfast, and be the pillars of ourselves for eternity.

lo dira bitachonim”. Ya’akov was imbued with the trait, and therefore us as the Bnei Yisrael, to be poreitz the light of Hashem. But Upharatzta, also has the root poretz, which is to “break” that means two things. First, we have the power to break the shtus (shittim), but also that simcha poreitz geder, that happiness breaks all boundaries (which is a characteristic of the month of Adar, and specifically the holiday of Purim, but it is a specific quality of how to serve Hashem- as the Alter Rebbe in the first Perek of Tanya states, one must serve Hashem b’simcha Uvetuv Leivov.)

The Rebbe Rashab in his exegesis “tof reish mem gimmel” states the concept that everything that Hashem created below, has a spiritual parallel in the heavens (for example, there are tefillin here, and Hashem also has tefillin- think about the bar mitzvah mamer). The Rebbe Rashab explains that Atzei Shittim (Omdim- standing), are paralleled by the malachim which stood steadfast in their service to Hashem. The pillars of shittim wood were used as supports for the mishkan, why would the posuk have to tell us that they were standing, if they were erected as part of the support for the structure of the mishkan, it would be obvious that they are in the appropriate position to accomplish this goal. The word Omdim (standing) is to tell us the intention of the malachim as they are steadfast. But the Alter Rebbe explains that the Malachim are also connected above and below, in that they are the middle (briach hatichon) between upper and lower worlds. The ability to balance, achieve beinoni status, convert shtus to spirituality and harness the potential of everything is specifically through the power of Ya’akov.

This connection between the malachim and the shittim wood and the steadfastness with which one must serve Hashem is part of the avoda of Purim, and the reading/listening to the parsha Zachor, recognizing to forget Amalek.

Amalek is the nation who right after the Jews left Egypt waged war against them. The Posuk in Beshalach (Exodus 17:16) tells us וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי־יָדָהּ עַל־כָּס יְהוָה מֶלֶכָּהּ לִיהְוָה בַּעֲמָלֵק מִדֶּרֶךְ דֶּרֶךְ (פ)

He said, “It means, ‘Hand upon the throne of the LORD!’ The LORD will be at war with Amalek throughout the ages.”

That the war with Amalek is a war with Hashem for the ages. Amalek manifests itself in every generation, in actuality, and esoterically as a “way of life”. Amalek’s evilness wasn’t necessarily only the physical harm that they cause the Jews, it is precisely the spiritual harm the Amalekite idea that is more damaging to Jews. Amalek is comprised of 2 words, Am Kal, a lax nation, but more importantly, the posuk (which we actually read as part of our annual biblical obligation) comes from Devarim (25:17-19)

אֲשֶׁר קָרָא בְּדֶרֶךְ וַיִּזְגַּב בָּהּ כָּל־הַנְּחָשִׁים אֲסָלִידָה וְאֵתָה עֲגִיף וַיִּגַּע וְלֹא יָרָא אֱלֹהִים:

“how, undeterred by fear of God, he surprised you on the march, when you were famished and weary, and cut down all the stragglers in your rear.”

The important phrase is אֲשֶׁר קָרָא בְּדֶרֶךְ, Karcha, also means, “cooled off”. That is the Amalekite mentality was to reduce the service of steadfastness to serve Hashem properly. The existential threat of Amalek to the Jews, wasn’t necessarily physical, it was spiritual, which arguably is far worse, and which is why it is a war against Hashem for the ages.

This also connects to Purim, whose entire theme was the reversal of the spiritual Amalek (Haman) at that time who tried to obliterate the Jews physically, (the decree he enacted with permission of Achashveirosh) but as the Megillas Ester states, the parties in the beginning of the megillah are to tell us of the assimilation of the Jews at that time, which was far worse to the existence of the nation, than the physical threat.

We read parshas Zachor before Purim, to remind us of the lesson and requirement, or more precisely the commandment to remember to forget Amalek. Choose what it is? The mepharshim explain, along with Chassidus, that

remembering to forget plays on 2 levels of “forgetting”. The wiping out of the name of Amalek (timcheh es Zecher), is a level of forgetting that prevents us from falling prey to Amalekite way of life. Much like remembering to not do something dangerous. Psychologically, full forgetting of a memory, but remembering you had a memory is still a memory, even if your memory is foggy. Furthermore, if you did something wrong, you remember to forget the thing you did wrong in order to not do the wrong thing again. Versus not even recalling that you had the memory to begin with (the difference between “shikcha” and “zechira”). For example, forgetting where I left my keys is different than remember to keep my keys in a safe place in order to not forget where they are. With Amalek, what we are trying to forget is to remember to not be what Amalek is, which stands in direct contrast to what Atzei Shittim Omdim is, how we ought to be as a Jews, which Ya’akov³ paved the way for us.

Finally, the precision of the vessels of the tabernacle and Beis Hamikdash is intentional. For example, there has been great debates among scholars about the shape of the Menorah. Many opinions believe that the arms of the menorah were rounded, for the image that is seen in the Arch of Titus. Whereas the Rambam’s opinion (in addition to being a message passed down father to son) is based on the spirituality of the menorah. Which is to shine light outward. The shape of the menorah with straight arms concentrated at a central foundation and protruding outwards is a model of the light of Hashem which begins at a concentrated point and shines outwards, which also the purpose of the menorah. Similarly, the design of the windows of the Beis Hamikdash was narrow on the inside, and broader on the outside, as the spiritual light of the Beis Hamikdash is to shine outward (similar design

features are found on the other vessels, and the Mishkan).

Since we no longer have the Beis Hamikdash, we are the mikdash that have the power to shine light outwards. וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכְנָתִי בְתוֹכָם. Which as power given to us from Ya’akov וַיִּכְרְצֵת יִצְחָק וְגַלְדִּיהָ וְגַלְדִּיהָ, who planted the Shittim wood which were standing, like the angels who are steadfast in their ways and who have the power to turn Shtus (b’lashon shittim) into holiness. Furthermore, it is an exact antithesis to the Amalekite mindset which we are told to quash within us, prior to Purim and on Purim itself, “V’nahaphoch Hu Asher Yishletu Hayehudim Heima B’soneihem” that on Purim it was the realization of this opposite, so much so that our commandment today to celebrate Purim is “Chayiv Inish L’besumai Ad Di Lo Yoda” not that we don’t actually know the difference between Haman and Mordechai, rather we are powered to convert the evil curses of Haman into the virtues of Mordechai, as expected of us as Atzei Shittim Omdim, steadfastly shining the light of Hashem outward. All this with Simcha, and we can overcome and conquer anything.

May we be zocheh to celebrate Purim V’es Darf Tzu Zayn with Moshiach now! Good Shabbos.

This week’s dvar torah is dedicated to honor the neshama of Raphael David Zev ben Eliyahu and Tzuttel who’s holy neshama should watch his family and klal Yisroel.

³ Ya’akov is also connected to this week’s parsha in the that the Tachash skin that was colorful and used as one of the coverings for the mishkan, was as the gemara explains a single era animal created for this purpose, and the animal had a single horn (unicorn)

as Rashi explains that existed at the one time. Ya’akov gave Yosef the Kesones Pasim which Targum translates as a many-colored coat, which medrish and the gemara explain was made of Tachash Skin.