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LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Herschman

Sanctuary, Sin, Sanctuary

The order of events in the second half of the book of Shemot has much to teach. The sin of the golden calf is flanked on each end by a commandment to build a dwelling place for G-d. First, the people are commanded to build a Tabernacle, a place where the Divine Presence will rest among them. Then, the nation committed what remains the gravest sin in our national history. Upon forgiveness, and re-giving of the Tablets, Moshe again instructs the people in the name of G-d, regarding the construction of that Dwelling Place.

The great betrayal had jeopardized the relation of the command to erect a Dwelling Place, but in the end, these events were of the most far-reaching significance for the command itself, and for the purpose of the Dwelling Place.

Now, the Mishkan would have to be constructed under the impact of this experience. The people had come to realize how weak and imperfect they still were, and how much they needed to improve themselves – how much they needed the uplifting and atonement that the Mishkan could provide. They had also come to experience G-d in the severity of His judgment and rejection, and then, in the fullness of his grace when they regained His favor.

The renewed command to build the Mishkan, then, carried a significant message: The Mishkan would be a place where, at any stage of error and weakness, the Jewish People could find renewed strength to work their way up again on high, find the strength of will to persevere on the lofty heights of their calling, and find G-d's help and blessing. The recording of the sin of the golden calf at a point in time, *between* the command to build the Mishkan and the instruction regarding execution of that command, stands as testimony that it is possible at any stage of error to return to and regain G-d's grace.

There is another critical lesson to be learned from the forgiveness granted before the building of the Sanctuary. The greatest national crime was committed, and the *highest* grace was attained from G-d – *without* the Sanctuary and *without* offerings. Thus, we learn that the Sanctuary and the offerings do not themselves secure G-d's favor, but are intended only as guides in the process.

▪ Sources: Commentary, Shemot 35:2

Q & A

VAYAKHEL

Questions

1. On which day did Moshe assemble the Jewish People?
2. Why is the prohibition against doing work on Shabbat written prior to the instruction for building the Mishkan?
3. Why does the Torah specify the particular prohibition of lighting a fire on Shabbat right after it had already noted the general prohibition of doing work on Shabbat?
4. What function did the "yitdot hamishkan" serve?
5. What function did the "bigdei hasrad" serve?
6. What was unusual about the way the women spun the goat's hair?
7. Why were the *Nesi'im* last to contribute to the building of the Mishkan? How does the Torah show dissatisfaction with their actions?
8. Who does the Torah identify as the primary builders of the Mishkan? From which tribes were they?
9. What time of day did the people bring their daily contributions for the construction of the Mishkan?
10. For what was the woven goat's hair used?
11. What image was woven into the *parochet*?
12. Why does the Torah attribute the building of the *aron* to Bezalel?
13. Where were the sculptured *cheruvim* located?
14. How many lamps did the *menorah* have?
15. Of what materials was the *mizbe'ach haketoret* composed?
16. Of what material was the *mizbe'ach ha'olah* composed?
17. The *kiyor* was made from copper mirrors. What function did these mirrors serve in Egypt?
18. How did the *kiyor* promote peace?
19. The *kiyor* was made from the mirrors of the women who were crowding at the entrance to the *Ohel Mo'ed*. Why were the women crowding there?
20. Of what material were the "yitdot hamishkan" constructed?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Answers

1. 35:1 - The day after *Yom Kippur*.
2. 35:2 - To emphasize that the building of the Mishkan doesn't supersede the laws of Shabbat.
3. 35:3 - There are two opinions: One opinion is to teach that igniting a fire on Shabbat is punishable by lashes as opposed to other "*melachot*" which are punishable by death. The other opinion is to teach that violation of numerous "*melachot*" at one time requires a separate atonement for each violation.
4. 35:18 - The edges of the curtains were fastened to them. These were inserted in the ground so the curtains would not move in the wind.
5. 35:19 - They covered the *aron*, the *shulchan*, the *menorah*, and the *mizbachot* when they were packed for transport.
6. 35:26 - It was spun directly from off the backs of the goats.
7. 35:27 - The *Nesi'im* reasoned that they would first let the people contribute materials needed for the Mishkan and then they would contribute what was lacking. The Torah shows its dissatisfaction by deleting a letter from their title.
8. 35:30, 35:34 - Bezalel ben Uri from the tribe of Yehuda; Oholiav ben Achisamach from the tribe of Dan.
9. 36:3 - Morning.
10. 36:14 - It was made into curtains to be draped over the Mishkan.
11. 36:35 - *Cherubim*. (See Rashi 26:31)
12. 37:1 - Because he dedicated himself to its building more than anyone else.
13. 37:7 - On the two extremities of the *kaporet* (cover of the *aron*).
14. 37:23 - Seven.
15. 37:25,26 - Wood overlaid with gold.
16. 38:1-2 - Wood overlaid with copper.
17. 38:8 - These mirrors aided in the proliferation of the Jewish People. The Jewish women in Egypt would look in the mirrors so as to awaken the affections of their husbands who were exhausted by their slave labor.
18. 38:8 - Its waters helped a woman accused of adultery to prove her innocence.
19. 38:8 - To donate to the Mishkan.
20. 38:20 - Copper.

Q & A

PEKUDEI

Questions

1. Why is the word Mishkan stated twice in verse 38:21?
2. Why is the Mishkan called the "Mishkan of Testimony"?
3. Who was appointed to carry the vessels of the Mishkan in the *midbar*?
4. Who was the officer in charge of the *levi'im*?
5. What is the meaning of the name Bezalel?
6. How many people contributed a half-shekel to the Mishkan? Who contributed?
7. Which material used in the *bigdei kehuna* was not used in the coverings of the sacred vessels?
8. How were the gold threads made?
9. What was inscribed on the stones on the shoulders of the *ephod*?
10. What was on the hem of the *me'il*?
11. What did the *Kohen Gadol* wear between the *mitznefet* and the *tzitzit*?
12. What role did Moshe play in the construction of the Mishkan?
13. Which date was the first time that the Mishkan was erected and not dismantled?
14. What was the "tent" which Moshe spread over the Mishkan (40:19)?
15. What "testimony" did Moshe place in the *aron*?
16. What function did the *parochet* serve?
17. Where was the *shulchan* placed in the Mishkan?
18. Where was the *menorah* placed in the Mishkan?
19. Who offered the communal sacrifices during the eight days of the dedication of the Mishkan?
20. On which day did both Moshe and Aharon serve as *kohanim*?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Answers

1. 38:21 - To allude to the *Beit Hamikdash* that would twice be taken as a "*mashkon*" (pledge) for the sins of the Jewish People until the nation repents.
2. 38:21 - It was testimony for the Jewish People that G-d forgave them for the golden calf and allowed His *Shechina* to dwell among them.
3. 38:21 - The *levi'im*.
4. 38:21 - Itamar ben Aharon.
5. 38:22 - "In the shadow of G-d."
6. 38:26 - 603,550. Every man age twenty and over (except the *levi'im*).
7. 39:1 - Linen (See Rashi 31:10).
8. 39:3 - The gold was beaten into thin plates from which threads were cut. (See Rashi 28:6).
9. 39:6, 39:7 - The names of the tribes.
10. 39:24,25 - Woven pomegranates and golden bells.
11. 39:31 - *Tefillin*.
12. 39:33 - He stood it up.
13. 40:17 - *Rosh Chodesh Nissan* of the second year in the desert. For seven days before this, during the consecration of Aharon and his sons, Moshe erected and dismantled the Mishkan. (Rashi 39:29)
14. 40:19 - The curtain of goatskin.
15. 40:20 - The *Luchot Habrit*.
16. 40:21 - It served as a partition for the *aron*.
17. 40:22 - On the northern side of the *Ohel Mo'ed*, outside the *parochet*.
18. 40:24 - On the southern side of the *Ohel Mo'ed* opposite the *shulchan*.
19. 40:29 - Moshe.
20. 40:31 - On the eighth day of the consecration of the Mishkan.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Vayakhel-Pekudai: Turning the Corner (Part 1/2)

Believe it or not, there's a whole bevy of words in the Hebrew language that all mean "corner." In this essay, I explore those various synonyms, drawing from the different grammarians and lexicographers who attempted to differentiate between these same-meaning terms. Because of the plethora of relevant words, I decided to split this article into two parts. In Part 1, we will discuss the words *peah*, *keren*, and *zavit*. Afterwards, in Part 2, we will discuss the words *pinah*, *miktzoa*, *katzeh*, *atik*, and *demeshek*. Let's get straight to it!

The word *peah* (plural: *pe'ot* or *peyot*) is the most common word in the Bible for "corner." Overall, it appears approximately 85 times. In the bulk of its appearances in the Bible, *peah* refers to a cardinal direction, like when saying which sides of the Tabernacle should have a curtain (Ex. 27:9) or stipulating the law that a city must have clearance on all four sides (Num. 35:5). In most of those cases, the word *peah* appears alongside a word that refers to a specific direction, like north, south, east, or west. In these cases, *peah* is generally translated by Targum Onkelos as *rucha/ruach*. But when the Bible says: "Do not round-cut the *peah* of your head, and do not destroy the *peah* of your beard" (Lev. 19:27) or "Do not finish the *peah* of your field in your harvesting" (Lev. 19:9, 23:22), the word *peah* means "corner" as opposed to "direction," and in all four such instances, the Hebrew *peah* is left untranslated by Targum Onkelos.

When detailing how the Table of the Tabernacle should be built, the Torah says that one should make four golden rings and place them on the four "corners" (*peah*) of the Table (Ex. 25:26, 37:13). In the two places where this passage appears, Targum Onkelos renders the Hebrew word *peah* as *zavit* – that word will be more important later on.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim (1740–1814) offers two theories as to the etymology of the word *peah*. In *Yeriot Shlomo*, he explains that *peah* comes from the biliteral root PEH-HEY, whose primary meaning is "mouth." This relates to a "corner" by way of analogy, for just as the "mouth" is the place for food to enter the body and for words to exit the body, so is a corner the place within a larger area through which one enters or exits that space. In his work *Cheshek Shlomo*, Rabbi Pappenheim traces the word *peah* to the biliteral PEH-ALEPH, whose primary meaning he sees as "wide corner."

Rabbi Pappenheim explains that Moabite noblemen are called *pa'at* (Num. 24:17, Jer. 48:45) because they are in the "corner" in the sense that their eminence separates them from the rest of the nation and places them at the proverbial corner of society. He also notes that they are called so because they serve as the figurative cornerstones upon which the rest of Moabite society stands.

Similarly, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785–1865) explains that *peah* does not necessarily denote something physically located in the "corner," but can refer to something that is isolated and cut off from the rest, as though it were metaphorically "in the corner." Based on this, he clarifies that even though the Torah calls for leaving the *peah* of one's field unharvested so that the poor may glean from there (Lev. 19:9, 23:22), said *peah* need not be physically located in the "corner" of one's field, but can even be in the middle (see Mishnah *Peah* 3:1).

To read the rest of this article, visit us at: http://ohr.edu/this_week/whats_in_a_word/

PEREK SHIRA: The Song of Existence

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

THE SONG OF THE OX

The ox says: Then Moshe and the Children of Israel chose to sing to Hashem this song, and they said, "I shall sing to Hashem, for He has shown Himself to be exalted over the exalted; horse and rider He casted into the sea!" (*Shemos* 15:1)

The Talmud notes that there are four exalted ones: the lion amongst the wild animals, the ox amongst the domestic animals, the eagle among the birds, and man amongst all creatures. The images of these four exalted ones are upon Hashem's Throne of Glory, which signifies that Hashem is supreme and exalted above all. This was demonstrated when Hashem drowned the Egyptian superpower in the sea in an exhibition of awesome power and justice that could be attributed to Him alone. Upon witnessing their salvation, the Jewish people sang the Song of the Sea, which begins by describing Hashem as "exalted over the exalted."

The ox is a powerful beast that can be dangerous even to humans, yet it subjugates itself to its master who feeds it. On a deeper level understanding, that which man is exalted over the exalted ox resembles how Hashem is exalted over the four exalted ones. Accordingly, with every furrow the ox plows, it sings the opening verse of the Song of the Sea.

On yet a deeper level of understanding, the Sages teach that the ox split when it saw Yosef's coffin carried by the Jewish people, which recalled his great merit of restraining himself from committing adultery. Since Yosef is compared to an ox, it is fitting that the ox sings the opening verse of the Song of the Sea.

Although this song is attributed to the ox, it would seem to apply to cows as well, though to a lesser extent, as they are less powerful. It happened once in history that cows literally sang its song. The Pelishtim captured the Aron and placed it next to their idol, Dagon. The following morning, they found Dagon broken on the floor, and they themselves were stricken with a severe illness. They admitted that Hashem was exalted over them and their idol, and they sent the Aron back to the Jewish people together with a respectable tribute upon a cart pulled by cows. In a miraculous manner, the cows headed straight to a Jewish town, and according to one opinion amongst the Sages, they sang the opening verse of the Song of the Sea. They sang how Hashem is exalted over the exalted, the supreme and unrivaled God.

This song teaches us a fundamental idea. Although we are the exalted amongst all creatures, this must not translate into haughtiness. We should humbly recognize that Hashem is incomparably greater than us, and that He is the source of all we have. The more that He grants us, the more we should feel an obligation to subjugate ourselves to Him. By doing so, we echo one of the greatest songs in history.

Sources: *Shemos Rabbah* 23:13 with *Hagahos R' Yerocham Fishel Perlow*; *Pi Eliyahu*; *Yeshayah* 1:3; *Kol Rinah*; *Shmuel (Aleph)* 6:2; *Avodah Zarah* 24b with *Rashi*.

*In loving memory of Harav Zeev Shlomo ben Zecharia Leib

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Vayakhel

Moshe Rabbeinu exhorts the *Bnei Yisrael* to keep Shabbat, and requests donations for the materials for making the Mishkan. He collects gold, silver, precious stones, skins and yarn, as well as incense and olive oil for the Menorah and for anointing. The princes of each tribe bring the precious stones for the *Kohen Gadol's* breastplate and *ephod*. G-d appoints Betzalel and Oholiav as the master craftsmen. *Bnei Yisrael* contribute so many resources, such that Moshe begins to refuse donations. Special curtains with two different covers were designed for the Mishkan's roof and door. Gold-covered boards in silver bases were connected, forming the Mishkan's walls. Betzalel made the Holy Ark (which contained the Tablets) from wood covered with gold. On the Ark's cover there were two figures facing each other. The Menorah and the table with the showbreads were also of gold. Two Altars were made: a small incense Altar of wood, overlaid with gold, and a larger Altar for sacrifices, made of wood covered with copper.

Pekudei

The Book of Shemot concludes with this Torah portion. After finishing all the different parts, vessels and garments used in the Mishkan, Moshe gives a complete accounting and enumeration of all the contributions and of the various clothing and vessels that had been fashioned. *Bnei Yisrael* bring everything to Moshe. He inspects the handiwork and notes that everything was made according to G-d's specifications. Moshe blesses the people. G-d speaks to Moshe and tells him that the Mishkan should be set up on the first day of the first month, i.e., Nissan. He also tells Moshe the order of assembly for the Mishkan and its vessels. Moshe does everything in the prescribed manner. When the Mishkan is finally complete with every vessel in its place, a cloud descends upon it, indicating that G-d's glory was resting there. Whenever the cloud moved away from the Mishkan, *Bnei Yisrael* would follow it. At night the cloud was replaced by a pillar of fire.

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TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Nazir 37-43

Love Conquers Fear

Reish Lakish (Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish) said, “Any time you find a conflict between a ‘positive commandment’ and a ‘negative commandment’, if you are able to fulfill both of them – good! But if you cannot fulfill them both, then the ‘positive commandment’ comes and pushes aside the ‘negative commandment’.”

According to this, the only time a positive command “overrides” a prohibition is if the command cannot be fulfilled in a manner that does not violate the prohibition. An example discussed in our *sugya* is the mitzvah to shave the entire head of a *metzora*. Since it can be done with tweezers and without a razor, the mitzvah does not grant permission to use a razor, which would violate the prohibition against shaving, since the mitzvah can be done without a prohibited razor. A modern-day example would seem to be to not allow linen *tzitzit* on a wool garment, since wool could be used without pushing aside the prohibition against wearing *shatnez*.

▪ *Nazir 41a*

▪

Clean But Not a Haircut

“A nazir may wash his hair with shampoo or untangle his hair with his fingers, but may not comb his hair.”

One of the prohibitions for a *nazir* is not to cut his hair. The *gemara* on our *daf* explains that when he shampoos or separates the hair he does not intend to remove hair, but when he uses a comb he intends to remove (cut) loose hairs (Rashi). A question raised by commentaries is why the reason for not using a comb is not given as “*psik reisha*” – certain to happen – and some hair will come out even if he does *not intend* to remove any hair (Rosh, Rashi on Shabbat 50b).

▪ *Nazir 42a*