

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת ויקהל-פקודי

ויבאו כל איש אשר נשאו לבו וכל אשר נדבה רוחו אתו הביאו את תרומת ה'
למלאכת אהל מועד ולכל עבדתו ולבגדי הקדש

“And they came, every one whose heart elevated him, and every one whose spirit made him willing, and brought Hashem’s offering, for the work of the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the holy garments.” (35:21)

The Ramban notes that “every one whose heart elevated him” refers to the craftsmen who volunteered to create the various vessels and tapestries for the Mishkan. Those “whose spirit made them willing” refers to the donors who brought their valuables to be used for the Mishkan. The Ramban asks: Where did these craftsmen, who had been slaves in Egypt a short while earlier, learn such artistic skills? Furthermore, why are they described as those “whose heart elevated” them?

Ramban explains that nobody taught a trade to the Jews in Egypt and they did not know how to work metal, how to sew elaborate tapestries or how to design the various facets of the Mishkan. However, there were those among the people who knew that they had a certain amount of natural talent and presented themselves to Moshe with the commitment to do whatever Moshe asked of them. Hashem rewarded these righteous people for their dedication to Him by helping them use their talent to learn the necessary skills.

There are two important lessons to take from this Ramban. The first is the importance of dedication and commitment. These people were assisted by Hashem because their hearts uplifted them to take the initial step of commitment and Hashem helped them the rest of the way. Without a commitment, a person can always find excuses. With a commitment, there is no way that a person will not succeed.

The second lesson is that it is important to know one’s own positive character traits, just as these volunteers trusted that they could use their talents to do whatever was need to be done for the Mishkan. Rabbeinu

Yonah begins his Shaar HaAvodah, a guide to serving Hashem, with the following statement: “The first opening in cleaving to the Hashem is that a person must recognize his self-worth and talents, as well as the greatness and importance of his forefathers and their preciousness to Hashem.” A person who is unaware of his talents is worse off than a person who is unaware of his faults because he does not know how to fix his shortcomings. It is important that each one of us know what we are good at and where we excel so that we can focus on using those character traits to serve Hashem. [MG]

ויעש את החצר לפאת נגב תימנה קלעי החצר שש משזר מאה באמה

“He made the Courtyard: on the south side, the lace-hangings of the Courtyard, of twisted linen, a hundred cubits” (38:9)

The construction of the courtyard is described last, after the Mishkan itself and all the vessels contained in it. In fact, when Moshe actually erected the Mishkan, we find that he first set up the Mishkan and its vessels and only then surrounded them with the curtains of the courtyard. Why is the courtyard always last?

The Chasam Sofer writes that the courtyard is always mentioned last in order to remind us of a saying recorded in Shabbos 31b: "R' Yannai called out: Woe to him who has no courtyard, but has made a gate to it!" This is a metaphor for one who studies Torah but does not have fear of Heaven. As the Orchos Tzadikim (Shaar Yiras Shamayim) explains: "R' Yannai is asking of what use is a gate if one has no courtyard. The Torah is only a gate through which to enter into the fear of Heaven." Torah study is very important but it must have a solid foundation of good middos and fear of Heaven beneath it. A person who knows Torah inside and out but is lacking in his fear of Hashem is missing the point. The gemara compares him to a person who has the keys to the inner door of a house but not to the outer door. Of what use are the keys to the inner door if he cannot even get there?

Similarly, writes the Chasam Sofer, the Mishkan was the main part of the whole construction. It contained the Aron and most of the other vessels and was home to the Divine Presence. Only after the important foundation for the Mishkan complex is in place is the courtyard, the less important aspect, taken care of. The Torah reminds us to have our priorities straight

and make sure that we are not ignoring our self-improvement while working on our Torah study.

וישם אתם על כתפת האפד אבני זכרון לבני ישראל כאשר צוה ה' את משה

“He placed them on the shoulder straps of the Ephod as remembrance stones for the sons of Israel, as Hashem had commanded Moshe” (39:7)

The Meshech Chochma points out that the stones of remembrance served as a reminder for the Jewish people, not for Hashem. The names of the tribes were inscribed on stones worn by the Kohen Gadol so that when the people would remember that their names were involved in the service before Hashem, they would be ashamed to sin. The stones on the Ephod already served as a deterrent against sinning many years earlier. The Gemara in Sotah 36b says that when Yosef was about to give in to the temptation to be with the wife of Potiphar, he saw a vision of his father Yaakov, who told him that if he sinned, his name would not be among those of his brothers on the Ephod.

Wherever we are, we are always in the presence of Hashem. If we remember this, it will prevent us from sinning because we will be ashamed to be seen by Hashem. As the Rema writes: "I place Hashem before me always - this is an important rule in the Torah and among the levels of the righteous who walk before Hashem. The way one sits, moves and acts when he is alone is not the way he sits, moves and acts when he is before a great king... Certainly when a person remembers that Hashem, the great King Whose glory fills the entire world, is standing over him and sees his actions... Immediately fear and humility will seize him in his trepidation before Hashem and his shame before Him." (Orach Chaim 1:1)

ויביאו את המשכן אל משה את האהל ואת כל כליו קרסיו קרשיו בריחו ועמדיו
ואדניו

“They brought the Tabernacle to Moshe, the Tent and all its utensils; its hooks, its planks, its bars, its pillars, and its sockets” (39:33)

The Midrash Tanchuma writes that Moshe felt bad that he had not participated at all in the construction of the Mishkan. Therefore, Hashem made the Mishkan too heavy for the people to assemble on their own and

they came to Moshe for guidance. Thus, Hashem reserved the erection of the Mishkan for Moshe Rabbeinu. We see from this midrash that if a person feels bad that he was unable to do something, Hashem opens up new opportunities for him. If he feels bad that he has missed out on the chance to do a good deed, Hashem will take note, just as he did for Moshe.

R' Nissan Alpert asks: Why should Moshe have been upset that he was left out? He should have been excited that everyone else participated so energetically! We never find that Moshe was selfish about serving Hashem. After all, Moshe himself honestly wished that every Jew could be a prophet like him (see Bamidbar 11:29). He answers that Moshe was concerned that the emphasis of the Mishkan was being placed on the beauty of the physical edifice rather than the purpose of Mishkan as the resting place for the Divine Presence. He felt that without his personal involvement, the people would infer that the spiritual aspect of the edifice was secondary because Moshe had not participated. Moshe wanted to make sure that people saw him partake in the construction. This was required in order to infuse the physical building with its spiritual function and ensure that all the people recognized this as the Mishkan's primary purpose.

Similarly, it is easy for a person to get so caught up in taking care of his physical health that he neglects his spiritual welfare. One should realize that his health is only a means with which he is able to serve Hashem. Nevertheless, people often turn the physical aspect of life into the most important aspect and get their priorities confused. The Orchos Tzadikim says in Shaar HaZechira (No. 11): "One must remember how zealous and quick he is in the acquisition of wealth, how he thinks of this day and night and considers a friend to be only one who can assist him in acquiring silver and gold, though his efforts may be entirely in vain, for he may lose everything, or his wealth may be for his evil, or he may die very soon. In spite of all this, he labors so much. And if he labors so for his body, what should he do on behalf of his soul, which exists eternally! How much more so must you care for it and be zealous to remember always to purify and refine it with a refinement that endures throughout all eternity."

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Written by Michael Gutmann