

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת ויקהל

ששת ימים תעשה מלאכה וביום השביעי יהיה לכם קדש שבת שבתון לה' כל העשה בו מלאכה יומת

“On six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for Hashem; whoever does work on it shall be put to death” (35:2)

Why does the posuk say that "work may be done" during the week, in the passive form, rather than use the active form of "you shall do work?" The Chofetz Chaim answers that herein lies the message of Shabbos. One who is bothered by the fact that he cannot work on Shabbos because he is losing out on potential profit does not fully appreciate Shabbos. Even during the week, it is not our great ability and our tremendous effort that leads to financial success. It is Hashem who guides our endeavors and determines how much we will benefit from them. Even during the work week, we are not actually "doing work," work is "being done." When one sees the hand of Hashem in his everyday activities, he truly understands the meaning of Shabbos and the cessation of work will not only cease to bother him, but he will also truly enjoy Shabbos.

Hashem is constantly providing for us and doing things on our behalf. In the tefilla of Modim, we thank Hashem "for Your miracles that are with us every day; and for Your wonders and favors at all times - evening, morning, and afternoon." Since these workings are often very subtle, we do not always realize it. This is also how our parnassa works. Similarly, the miracle of Purim was a hidden miracle because Hashem's maneuvers were concealed behind the veil of everyday life. If we look for Hashem's guiding hand in our daily activities, we will see Him everywhere and will appreciate His kindnesses much more.

ויבאו האנשים על הנשים כל נדיב לב הביאו חח ונזם וטבעת וכומז כל כלי זהב וכל איש אשר הניף תנופת זהב לה'

“The men came with the women; everyone generous of heart brought bracelet and nose-ring, and ring and body ornament - all sorts of gold ornaments - every man who raised up an offering of gold to Hashem” (35:22)

The Gemara in Shavuos 26b cites this posuk as proof that when one decides in his heart that he will give a donation to hekdash (a donation for sacrifices or other needs of the Mishkan/ Bais HaMikdash), the decision is binding, even though it was not verbalized. An extension of this law is that if a person accepts a fast upon himself, it is also binding without verbalization under certain circumstances, as fasting serves as a substitute for bringing sacrifices in a time when we do not have a Bais HaMikdash (Orach Chaim 562:6, see Mishna Berura there for details regarding this halacha).

In Hilchos Tzedaka (Yoreh Deah 258:13), the Rema questions whether a commitment in one's mind to give charity is also binding without a verbal commitment. The Torah Temima explains that this would depend upon whether a vow to give tzedaka is compared to a sacrificial vow, which needs no words, or a standard promise to do something, which needs to be stated verbally. The Rema concludes that tzedaka does follow the rules of sacrificial vows and an internal commitment to give a charitable donation is indeed binding.

We see that a commitment to do a mitzvah is much more serious than a commitment for any other action. When it comes to mitzvos, any statement or thought that could possibly be construed as a vow can be binding. Therefore, one should be careful to say "bli neder" when committing to perform a mitzva, more so than with other statements. If thinking it may be binding, saying it certainly is. One should realize that acceptance of a mitzva is equivalent to a

neder. In the text of Hataras Nedarim, we mention the vows pertaining to mitzvos separately from regular vows. When discussing vows pertaining to mitzvos, we specify both those vows that were stated verbally as well as those that were accepted in the heart.

ויעש בצלאל את הארן עצי שטים אמתים וחצי ארכו ואמה וחצי רחבו ואמה וחצי קמתו
“Betzalel made the Ark of acacia wood, two and a half cubits its length; a cubit and a half its width; and a cubit and a half its height” (37:1)

Why is the construction of the Mishkan attributed to Betzalel alone if he had many others assisting him? Rashi explains that this is because he gave of himself more than anyone else for the construction and this was why he is named in the posuk. This teaches us that it is not always about who does more but about who puts in the most effort. The Mishna in Pirkei Avos (5:26) states in the name of Ben Hei Hei: "The reward is in proportion to the exertion." This is only true of the Jewish people. In the prayer that we recite upon the completion of Torah study, which is also recited at a siyum, we say: "I thank you Hashem for placing my portion among those who sit in the Bais Medrash and not among those who sit idly in corners... For we toil and they toil. We toil and receive reward while they toil and do not receive reward." Does this mean that a gentile does not receive reward for his work? The answer is that a Jew is rewarded for the effort that is behind his actions. Even if he does not succeed in accomplishing his goal, he is rewarded. However, a gentile's reward is dependent on the bottom line. If he does not succeed, he is not rewarded for the effort he invested. It was the extra effort that separated Betzalel from all the wise men that participated in the construction of the Mishkan.

The concept of reward based on effort is the basis for the famous statement of Chazal: "A person should learn Torah for ulterior motives ("shelo lishma") so that it will lead to study for its own sake ("lishma")." If a person is unable to learn Torah or do a mitzvah just because it is the right thing to do, he should provide incentives for himself. Eventually, after doing it for long enough, he will come to realize the inherent value in what he is doing and will not need the incentives anymore. Even though he may not be doing the mitzvah for the ideal reasons, he still receives reward because he is investing effort in performing a mitzvah. R' Chaim Volozhin, the famous disciple of the Vilna Gaon, writes in his classic mussar sefer Nefesh HaChaim that the person who acts "shelo lishma" should not be looked down upon, as it will soon lead to "lishma." Similarly, there are many projects today that give people incentive to study Torah and there are those who criticize these projects for the rewards that they offer. This is a terrible thing to say because belittling these programs and denigrating the rabbis behind them will stop people from learning Torah and subconsciously prevents them from wanting to attach themselves to Torah scholars. If the "shelo lishma" is removed, some people will never reach the "lishma" because they never had the intermediary stage. Many outreach projects today offer incentives to those who join. This is the bottom rung on the ladder of spiritual growth for these people and it will allow them to climb higher. Even when a person is doing it "shelo lishma", a "lishma" comes from it. A person should not even become discouraged because of his own desire for "shelo lishma." Incentives should be created for children for behaving a certain way and for any positive action that they do. The "shelo lishma" is not at all to be considered a necessary evil. It is an integral part of spiritual growth and should be used rather than avoided.

ויעש את הכיור נחשת ואת כנו נחשת במראת הצבאת אשר צבאו פתח אהל מועד
“He made the Laver of copper and its base of copper, from the mirrors of the congregating women who congregated at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting” (38:8)

The Kiyor was made from copper mirrors that the women donated to the Mishkan. Rashi comments that Moshe felt it was not befitting that the mirrors be used for the holy construction

because they were objects used for physical pursuits. Hashem told him to use them because they were used for lofty purposes in Mitzrayim. The men would come home from the hard work and the women would adorned themselves and showed their husbands how beautiful they looked in their mirrors. They would comment about how beautiful they looked compared to the men in order to entice them so that they would be with them despite their weariness. Because of this, many children were born in Mitzrayim. Since the women used these mirrors for a lofty purpose, it was only fitting that they be used in the Mishkan.

We learn from these women to be optimistic and to always have hope for the future, even in the worst of circumstances. Hashem wanted the Kohanim to be reminded of this optimism every time they began their service, when they washed their hands and feet, so that this optimism would be expressed through the service that they would perform. We should also reflect this optimism in our prayer, which is a substitute for the service in the Mishkan, and express our confidence that Hashem will answer our prayers in His great kindness (Orach Chaim 98:5).

The Magen Avraham (147:5) learns a halacha from the use of mirrors in the Kiyor. He writes that even though we do not make covers for a Sefer Torah from items previously used for mundane purposes, if their shape and function is changed, this is permissible, just as the mirrors were permitted for creating the Kiyor.

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)

In both Parshas Vayakhel and Parshas Terumah, 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 in Parshas Pekudei, 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 Yiras Shamayim 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 that was where the Divine Presence resided. 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.

Kesharim Baruch College/NYU Parsha Shiur
Shiur given by Rabbi Mayer Friedman
Written by Michael Gutmann