

THE TZADDIK BRINGS AN ABUNDANCE OF GOOD TO EVERY JEW

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

In Parsha Vayakhel we again read about all the offerings made by the Children of Israel for the Sanctuary and its implements. This should surprise us, for already in Parshiot Terumah and Tetzaveh we went through the entire subject of the construction of the Sanctuary and the Children of Israel's offerings. Therefore why does the Torah again begin, as it did earlier on, by describing the offerings of the Children of Israel and the making of the Sanctuary and its implements?

Furthermore, at the beginning of the parsha we find a short passage that doesn't seem to fit the subject of the Sanctuary. It deals instead with the observance of Shabbat: "On six days work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy to you, a Sabbath of complete rest to the L-RD" (Exodus 35:2). What is a passage on the observance of Shabbat doing here?

Rashi cites the Sages in stating that although the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded us to build the Sanctuary and its implements, this passage teaches us that the work of the Sanctuary does not supercede the observance of Shabbat. Still, we need to understand how that makes this the right place to put such a message, not to mention the fact that what the Torah is describing here is the making of the Sanctuary and its implements, not the actual order to make them. Incidentally, this also needs to be explained, for the Torah could have shortened its account here by stating that Moses and the craftsmen did what they had been ordered to do. Why does the Torah need to lengthen its account of the subject?

By delving into these issues, we will see that an important moral lesson is found here. As we know, the Sanctuary and its implements allude to the body of man, as our holy books state. The Sanctuary itself represents man's body, and its implements represent his limbs. If we think about this further, we will realize that man's brain is represented by the Ark, which is the Sanctuary's main implement. What is the Ark? The preceding section, Parsha Ki Tisa, describes the sin of the golden calf, after which Moses broke the Tablets of the Covenant. Although Hashem later told him to prepare new tablets, the second ones, what was done with the fragments of the first ones? Here the Sages say, "Both the whole tablets and the fragments of the tablets were placed in the Ark" (Berachot 8b). This means that the fragments of the first tablets are also contained in the Ark. However we need to understand what these fragments symbolize.

The Midrash states, "When the Children of Israel sinned, Moses took the Tablets of the Covenant. The Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to snatch them from him, but Moses succeeded in preventing this" (Yalkut Shimoni, Shemot 291). When Moses saw the golden calf at the base of the mountain, however, he immediately broke these tablets in the sight of all the people, as the Torah states (Exodus 32:19).

This requires an explanation. Why did Moses fight so much for Hashem not to take the tablets away from him, since he knew that the Children of Israel had made the calf and therefore no longer needed the Torah? Furthermore, if Moses already knew in Heaven that the Children of Israel had made the calf, since Hashem had told him, "Go,

descend, for your people... have become corrupt" (Exodus 32:7), then why did he break the tablets only when he saw the calf? Why didn't he break them when he was in Heaven?

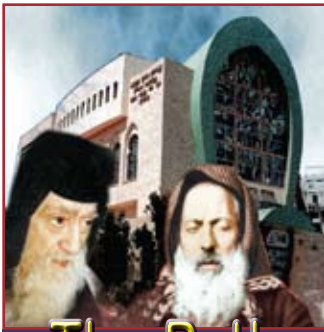
In order for the Children of Israel to accept the yoke of the Torah and prevail over the evil inclination, which constantly enticed them to sin, the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to fill the heart of every Jew with faith in His Torah. He therefore inscribed the tablets with the Ten Commandments – including the entire Torah – all written by His hand. In this way every Jew would have the Torah in his heart, and he could therefore study it and overcome the evil inclination.

Yet when the Children of Israel sinned with the golden calf, they transgressed the commandment, "You shall have no other gods before Me," which made it seem that they did not want the Torah. Hence Hashem decided to snatch the tablets from Moses and prevent him from giving it to them. What did Moses think at that point? If Hashem takes the Torah back, then even what He engraved upon the heart of every Jew – the desire to study Torah, to believe in it, and to work for it – will be taken from them. What will become of them then?

Moses therefore stubbornly clung to the tablets so Hashem would not take them back, as we read at the end of Parsha Vezot Haberacha: "In all that mighty hand" (Deuteronomy 34:12). This is because Moses succeeded in retaining the tablets. In the end, Hashem also agreed with him, and therefore Moses' conduct in refusing to yield the Tablets of the Covenant was a way of arguing that the Children of Israel had already repented and wanted to keep the Torah. Moses was actually the Children of Israel's agent, and the Sages have said, "A man's agent is as himself" (Kiddushin 41b). Thus by Moses wanting the Torah, it was as if the Children of Israel wanted it as well.

This is what Hashem tells us: "Remember the Torah of My servant Moses" (Malachi 3:22) – remember the fact that he was stubborn for your sake, in order for you to return to Me and "piece the fragments together" to study Torah, for "both the whole tablets and the fragments of the tablets were placed in the Ark." This is why the Torah carries the name of Moses, for what was engraved upon the heart of the Children of Israel has remained there for all the generations because of him.

That being the case, we fully understand why the observance of Shabbat is found at the beginning of Parsha Vayakhel. Concerning Shabbat the Sages have said: "Let him make his entire Shabbat a day of Torah." We can also understand why the complete description of the Sanctuary and its implements is repeated here, namely for everyone to infuse the Torah deep within himself, especially on Shabbat. Even if he has sinned, the fragments of the Torah are also in the Ark, teaching us that despite a person's sins, he can strengthen himself and return to Hashem, all by the power of the Torah that is within him. If he also studies Torah, the fragments will unite to form a single whole, enabling him to return to Hashem to the greatest degree possible.



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GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

But She has a Lifetime Contract!

If you say something derogatory about another person, you are guilty of speaking Lashon Harah even if that person does not suffer any consequent loss or damage. An example of this is a case where the listener refused to believe a derogatory statement that you told him.

Even if you realize beforehand that no damage will result from your Lashon Harah, it is still prohibited. The Torah forbids the mentioning of derogatory information, whether or not it causes harm.

Moshe cannot excuse his Lashon Harah by saying, "Since Yitzchak lives in Eretz Israel, my speaking about him in New York won't hurt him. He'll never know about it."

Chana spoke against a teacher and claimed, "My teacher has a lifetime contract. Regardless of what I say, she won't lose her job." This is not a valid justification.

– Guard Your Tongue, pp.48-49

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

Who Will Open the Door?

It is written, “Betzael 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” (Exodus 37:1).

A certain Jew went to work every morning, happy to be earning an honorable living for his family and using his spare time to learn Torah. Such was his routine for several years, until the company he worked for began having problems. Rumors began to spread at work about cost-cutting measures, and eventually he was the victim of a lay-off. Although he looked for another job, he could only find a position as a monitor in a school bus. It was a difficult job, for the children did not always listen to his instructions, and he wasn't young anymore. Eventually he had an argument with the bus driver, who thought that it was his task to open the door for the children, whereas he thought that it was the driver's responsibility.

When the situation became unbearable, he sought the advice of a great Torah figure in Jerusalem, Rabbi Ben Zion Abba Shaul Zatzal. The Rav was surprised by what he heard, and he said: “Are you arguing over who will take the Sifre Torah from the Ark?”

When our friend heard these pearls of wisdom from the sanctified lips of the Rav, he happily returned to his job. Without arguing with the bus driver, he opened the door (the Ark) and helped to bring down the children (the Sifrei Torah) with joy. The Rav had revealed the greatness and sanctity of this task to him, and he was only too happy to comply.

Let us examine just how happy we, the Jewish people, should be. We should feel happy that each day we can take the Sifrei Torah, our children, and bring them into school buses, the holy Ark, on their way to the Talmud Torah, where they will learn to write the letters of the Torah. Even their games are connected to Torah learning, for it is like preparing parchment to be written with the letters of the holy Torah.

On the other hand, we must recognize the immense responsibility we have, for we must fashion flawless Sifrei Torah. We must see to the education of our children as best we can, meaning that we must first educate ourselves in order to provide them with a shining personal example. We must not wait for the Talmud Torah to begin their education; we must take this responsibility into our own hands and safeguard it. This is why the verse states, “Betzael made the Ark,” for although Oholiab the son of Ahisamach and the other wise men of Israel also participated in this work, it is associated with Betzael because he devoted himself to it more than anyone else (Rashi on Exodus 37:1). We must devote ourselves to the education of our children and not rely on others, even if we accept their help. In this way we will merit to build the holy Ark, into which we will place the Tablets of the Covenant.

May we always think that we have not yet fulfilled our task, and may our efforts never waver. This is the meaning behind the fact that the dimensions of the Ark are not whole numbers.

A Pearl From the Rav

It is written, “Moses gathered the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and said to them, ‘... On six days work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you’ ” (Exodus 35:1-2).

In his book Pahad David, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita asks why, after having assembled the people, Moses starts by giving them the mitzvah of Shabbat, not another one, especially since they had already received this mitzvah!

During the sin of the golden calf, the Children of Israel damaged the unity and sovereignty of Hashem, Who created the world in six days. Not only that, but the Children of Israel also denied the entire Torah, for as our Sages have said: “Grave is idolatry, for he who denies it is as if he accepts the whole Torah” (Chullin 5a). Now since the essential aspect of faith in Hashem is demonstrated by the observance of Shabbat – witnessing to the fact that Hashem created the

world in six days and rested on the seventh – it also enables us to recognize the holiness of Shabbat, the source of all blessings for the week. Moses assembled the entire community of the Children of Israel in order to bring them under the wings of the Shechinah, with complete faith in Hashem and His sovereignty, as they were before the sin. He then immediately gave them the order to observe Shabbat so that faith in the Creator would be infused in their hearts, and so that the sin of the golden calf would be rectified.

For Hashem

It is written, “On six days work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy to you, a Sabbath of complete rest to the L-RD” (Exodus 35:2).

The Holy One, blessed be He, gave man a lofty soul, but during the week it grows distant from its source by dealing with everyday concerns.

Hashem allotted a double portion to the sixth day, however, so that on Shabbat we can rejoice in the words of the living G-d through the study of Torah and nourish our lofty souls.

This is why “On six days work may be done” – for that is the time when we can attend to the needs of the body – “but the seventh day shall be holy to you, a Sabbath of complete rest to the L-RD” – for Shabbat is devoted to Hashem, which is why He gives us all we need to study Torah on Shabbat. We can therefore go to the Beit Midrash, attend Torah lectures, and not sleep on this holy day, which is for Hashem!

– The Maggid of Dubno

An Even Greater Dowry

It is written, “The seventh day shall be holy to you” (Exodus 35:2).

The author of Lachmei Todah lived in a town where a young Jew had become engaged to a wealthy, but non-observant young woman. After their wedding, the young man began to stop observing mitzvot.

The Lachmei Todah met him and said, “You're following in your wife's footsteps because of a large dowry. However Shabbat is also a bride [as the Lecha Dodi calls it], and it has an even greater dowry than your wife's, for the Sages have said, ‘Whoever rejoices on Shabbat is given a heritage without limit.’ Why not consider this dowry as well?”

– Torah HaParasha

This is the Thing

It is written, “Moses said to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel: ‘Zeh hadavar [This is the thing] that the L-RD has commanded’ ” (Exodus 35:4).

The Sages have said that all the prophets prophesized using the formula ko amar Hashem (“this is about what Hashem said”), while Moses prophesized using the formula zeh hadavar (“this is the thing,” with certainty). In other words, this very thing is what emerged, so to speak, from Hashem's mouth, for the Shechinah spoke through Moses. When the Children of Israel committed the sin of the golden calf, Moses also descended from his lofty spiritual level and prophesized using ko amar. He then asked Hashem that “I and Your people... be made distinct” (Exodus 33:16), meaning for his prophecy to also differ from that of the other prophets, just as before. Hashem replied, “Also hadavar haze [this thing] that you have spoken” (v.17). That is: Until recently you prophesized using zeh hadavar, and I will restore this to you. Therefore once the sin of the golden calf was forgiven, the text again quotes Moses as saying “Zeh hadavar [This is the thing]” (Exodus 35:4).

– Pardes Yosef

The Greatest Wisdom of All

It is written, “Every wise-hearted person among you shall come and make all that the L-RD has commanded” (Exodus 35:10).

The greatest wisdom of all is not to be too wise, but only to do what Hashem commands. This is why we read, “Moses and Aaron did so, as the L-RD commanded” (Exodus 7:20) or “As the L-RD commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did” (ibid. 12:50). This teaches us the greatness of Moses and Aaron, who

despite their greatness pursued none of their own plans. Instead they did only what Hashem commanded them to do.

– Pardes Yosef

Betzalel's Ark

It is written, "Betzalel made the Ark" (Exodus 37:1).

Why is Betzalel's name mentioned specifically with regards to the Ark? It is because the Sanctuary's other implements were made later on, sometimes by other people. They were used in the First and Second Temples, and they will again be made for the Third Temple. Such is not the case with the Ark that Betzalel built, for it was used in the Sanctuary and the First Temple, until it was finally hidden. Although it was not used in the Second Temple, it will be returned by Hashem and used once again in the Third Temple.

Made By Itself

It is written, "He made the Menorah of pure gold; hammered out did he make the Menorah" (Exodus 37:17).

The Midrash states that the Menorah was made by itself. When Moses was puzzled by it, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: "Take a talent of gold, cast it into the furnace, and take it out again. The Menorah will take shape on its own" (Bamidbar Rabba 15:4).

Since the Menorah was made by itself, why did Hashem show it to Moses? After all, he had nothing to do with making it! The Sefat Emet explains that from here we learn a great principle, namely that when someone does all that he can to fulfill a mitzvah, then even the part that he cannot accomplish will be done on its own. He is promised that it will be accomplished with the help of Heaven, just as Moses was told to cast the gold into the fire and it would take shape on its own.

This applies to every mitzvah. A person certainly does not have the strength to fulfill each mitzvah to perfection. Instead, he is only required to act in accordance with his abilities, in which case he will receive help from Heaven to fulfill them to perfection. As the Sages say, "If one comes to purify himself, he is helped" (Shabbat 104a).

– Talalei Orot

Overview of the Parsha

In Parsha Vayakhel, after the Children of Israel are forgiven for the sin of the golden calf, they receive the order to solidify their relationship with Hashem by means of the Sanctuary in which He will reside. Moses brings Israel the order to build the Sanctuary, beginning with a warning not to desecrate Shabbat. Speaking of the construction itself, the parsha describes the offerings to be taken in order for the craftsmen to begin their work.

EISHET CHAYIL

She Extends Her Hand to the Needy

Two needy people went to the home of the Chacham Tzvi to ask for charity. Everyone knew just how generous his household was, even though they had almost nothing for themselves, since they had given away almost everything they had. The Chacham Tzvi's daughter, who welcomed these needy people inside, was embarrassed because she had nothing to give them.

Not knowing what to do, she suddenly remembered that they still had one small silver spoon that she could give away. But how was she going to give one spoon to two people? Thinking about it, she decided to break the spoon in half and give the handle to one of them and the spoon part to the other. Her two needy guests accepted her offer and left.

When the Chacham Tzvi saw what his daughter had done, he said to her with a smile: "You are a strong woman, for you have fulfilled what is written in Eishet Chayil: Kapa ['her palm,' but also 'spoon'] parsa le'ani ['she spreads out to the poor'], veyadeha ['and her hand,' but also 'handle'] shilcha la'evion ['she extends to the needy']."

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

The Other Side of the Puzzle

It is written, "Every wise-hearted person among you shall come and make all that the L-RD has commanded: The Sanctuary, its tent..." (Exodus 35:10-11).

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said, "Had the nations known how beneficial the Tent of Meeting was to them, they would have encompassed it with camps and forts" (Shir Hashirim Rabba 2:14).

The Holy One, blessed be He, commanded us to build the Sanctuary. It was not just a material edifice; it also constituted an elevation of materiality to the level of spirituality by the fulfillment of Hashem's commands.

A certain Jew said, "In the past, during my son's summer vacations, I would buy a game to amuse him and keep him busy. Whenever he grew tired of one game, I would buy him another. One day I bought him a complicated game, a giant puzzle containing the map of the world. The puzzle contained hundreds of pieces, with each continent and country composed of numerous small pieces. It symbolized a world that was dispersed and divided, a world where nation was fighting nation, and where a man's enemies were the members of his own household. My son had to put all the pieces of this puzzle together, thereby creating a world without chaos, with everything in its place, just as G-d created it.

I told my son that the puzzle would take him at least one or two entire days to finish, and that in the meantime I would be busy with my work. Yet to my great surprise, after about an hour my son came into my room and shouted with an air of triumph, "Daddy, I finished it!" When I told him that he couldn't have finished it so quickly, he insisted and said: "If you don't believe me, come and look." I went into his room, and sure enough, to my utter surprise, he had completely finished the puzzle. "How did you finish it so quickly?" I asked. The boy revealed his secret: "On the back of the puzzle there's a drawing of the Sanctuary, just as it appears at the end of my Chumash. I just put the pieces of the Sanctuary together, and the puzzle was done!"

The nations of the world fail to understand the greatness of the Sanctuary. They are only looking at one side of the puzzle, the one in which the world seems impossible to put together. If they were to look at the other side of things, they would realize that all the abundance in this world comes through the Sanctuary, meaning by the Jewish people's performance of Hashem's mitzvot. We too should reflect upon this concept and realize that it is the only way for the Shechinah to dwell upon us, in which case our world will automatically experience an abundance of blessing, peace, and goodness. We must piece together the puzzle of the world by the description of the Sanctuary in our Chumashim, namely the mitzvot of Hashem. Only then will we witness a world in which order and beauty reign, a world where peace and harmony abound.

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Yitzchak Eizik of Safrin – The Ziditchover Rebbe

The Rebbe of Ziditchov, the holy Rabbi Yitzchak Eizik Zatzal, was a hidden tzaddik. He carried the name Safrin after the small town from which he came. He was known as a child prodigy from his early youth, a boy who surpassed many others. Known for his sharp responses, he could quickly answer even the most difficult questions. When asked about his quick replies, he would say: “The Torah has 70 faces, and I know the Torah’s faces.” As the years passed, people realized that he also knew the mystical Torah, Kabbalah, the source from which he drew most of his understanding. After his wedding, Rabbi Yitzchak Eizik settled in Ziditchov, the town from where his fame spread to the entire Diaspora. People from all around came to see him, and he literally made himself sick by incessantly asking Heaven to have mercy on the entire Jewish people, as well as on each individual Jew. He would remain enclosed in his room studying Torah and Kabbalah for most of the day. He left the Jewish people five G-d-fearing sons, both Kabbalists and Rebbes: Rabbi Alexander Sander of Kumarna, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of Ziditchov, Rabbi Lippa of Sambor, Rabbi Moshe of Sambor, and Rabbi Berish of Ziditchov. His sons studied Torah with him, primarily Kabbalah, and began a dynasty of holiness among the Jewish people. Of his sons he said, “I raised five books of Torah in Israel, and from them the Torah went out to Israel.” Rabbi Yitzchak Eizik’s soul ascended to Heaven on Adar 1, 5560, a grievous loss for the entire Jewish people. May his merit protect us all.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

Yachin and Boaz

It is written, “He erected the right pillar and called its name Yachin, and he erected the left pillar and called its name Boaz” (I Kings 7:21).

We may explain this passage by what our Sages said in the Talmud: “He who desires to become wise should turn to the south [when praying], and he who desires to become rich should turn to the north” (Bava Batra 25b). Wisdom is to the right and wealth is to the left, for south is on the right and north is on the left. A person who is wise but not rich, yet is supported by someone else, should be called Yachin (“he establishes”). This means that he establishes for others, for the wealthy who support him share in his Torah study, as was the case in the partnership between Issachar and Zebulun. Hence he establishes for others. Yet a person who is both wise and rich, and who does not need help from others, should be called Boaz (“strength is in him”), for the Torah is called oz (“strength”), as it is written: “The L-RD will give oz [strength] to His people” (Psalms 29:11). The Torah is in him and nothing is taken from him for others.

Hence: “He erected the right pillar” – if a person merits to erect the right pillar, the wisdom of the Torah, meaning that he is wise but not rich – then he is called Yachin, since he establishes for others. And if “he erected the left pillar” – meaning a Torah scholar who is also wealthy – then he is called Boaz, for “strength is in him.”

A TRUE STORY

A Gift Given in Secret

It is written, “They continued to bring him free offerings every morning” (Exodus 36:3).

Our holy books say that they hastened to bring their offerings while people were still sleeping, so as not to be noticed.

Rabbi Nachum of Horodna lived in a town where there was an extremely stingy and wealthy man. Nevertheless Rabbi Nachum decided to pay him a visit in order to ask for a contribution. He went to this Jew’s home, lingered there for a time, and then left empty-handed, as the story goes. From that day on, Rabbi Nachum no longer went to see him when collecting money for tzeddakah.

Eventually the wealthy man died, and Rabbi Nachum asked that he be buried in the middle of the cemetery. He explained that death served as his atonement.

The son of this wealthy man was also known to be as stingy as his father. It didn’t take long for the son to also pass away, and once again Rabbi Nachum asked that he be buried in the middle of the cemetery, next to his father. When Rabbi Nachum passed away, his will stipulated that he was to be buried next to these two wealthy men, explaining that when he had asked for a contribution from the father, he had given him a sizeable amount and asked that nobody be told about it. Following in this man’s footsteps was his son, whom Rabbi Nachum would meet in private, far from prying eyes. Hence Rabbi Nachum wanted to be buried next to these two tzaddikim.

THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

A Gift From Heaven

There was once a pious man who owned a field, and when his produce ripened his workers went out to harvest it. Once the produce had been harvested, they let it dry and then brought it into the open to thresh.

When the man went into his field to see if the workers had finished, he noticed that they had left a sheaf behind. This made him very happy, and he immediately summoned his son. He showed him the lone sheaf and said: “Look! I now have the opportunity to fulfill this mitzvah, thank G-d, and I’m overjoyed! The Torah says, ‘When you reap your harvest in your field and you forget a bundle in the field, you shall not turn back to take it. It shall be for the stranger, the orphan, and the widow, so that the L-RD your G-d will bless you in all your handiwork’ [Deuteronomy 24:19]. That is why, my son, you must go to the Temple and bring an offering for me: A bull for a burnt-offering and a bull for a thank-offering! I must thank the Holy One, blessed be He, for having given me the opportunity to fulfill this mitzvah!”

His son replied, “Father, I understand that you’re happy that this sheaf can be used for the poor, as the Torah says. But why are you happier over this mitzvah than over any other that you’ve done?”

The father explained: “All the mitzvot depend on a person’s desire and intention. However this mitzvah cannot be done intentionally, since it depends on forgetting something, which is impossible to do intentionally. Heaven therefore sent me this mitzvah as a gift, ensuring that the workers would forget this sheaf in my field. Even though I didn’t intend for it to happen, the Holy One, blessed be He, has promised a blessing to anyone who performs this mitzvah! That’s why I’m so happy!”

– From Tosefta, Peah 2