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DVAR TORAH TELL THE DOCTOR HOW SICK YOU REALLY ARE

Moshe uses a surprising expression when he pleads with Hashem not to destroy the Jewish People after the sin of the Golden Calf: He says, “אנא חטא העם הזה חטאה גדלה ויעשו להם אלהי זהב – Please – this people has committed a great sin and made for themselves a god of gold” (Shemot 32:31). The expression “חטאה גדלה – great sin” is puzzling. Moshe is trying to plead on their behalf. One would have thought that he would try to minimize the sin, not amplify it. Why did he add the words “great sin”? Not only is it obvious that the sin is grave; it also makes the case against Israel more severe and defeats Moshe’s own goal, Israel’s forgiveness.

The Dubno Maggid, (Rabbi Yaakov Krantz, זצ"ל, 1740-1804) raises this difficulty, and resolves it with a parable:

Two poor friends, hoboos, are wandering through Eastern Europe from town to town, going door-to-door collecting alms.

One of them, Reuven, is extremely sickly. The other, Shimon, advises him not to talk too much about how sick he is, because people won't be comfortable about having someone so sick enter their house. “Keep quiet about your sickness; play it down.”

One day they're walking on a road and a nice wagon stops for them and offers them a ride. Shimon knows that the person who picked them up is one of the area's most accomplished and talented physicians. Reuven, tell him how terribly sick you are,” says Shimon.

Reuven is surprised; “I thought you told me not to tell people how sick I really am.”

Shimon explains: “That was because I was worried that people wouldn't let you into their houses if they know how sick you are. But because this man is a doctor you must tell him exactly how sick you are so he can give you the appropriate cure. You can't hide anything from the doctor so he can prescribe the right medicine and you'll really get well.”

This explains why Moshe used the expression, “great sin,” says the Dubno Maggid. Moshe wasn't just defending the People of Israel before G-d; he was also praying that Hashem would give them the opportunity to do a deep and real teshuvah. But in order to accomplish that, he could not downplay the sin – he had to be 100% accurate. The doctor has to know exactly how sick his patient is; and the patient can't hide any of his symptoms if he really wants to get healed.

Moshe teaches us to pray about sin from two very different perspectives. When praying for Israel's forgiveness we must attempt to judge favorably, to minimize the sin, and to emphasize our pure core that lies within. But when praying for Israel's teshuvah, repentance, we must clearly perceive the depths of the sin. That realism will enable us to be truly healed, to truly transform ourselves and the People of Israel.

SOURCE GUIDE: BUILDING THE MIKDASH ON SHABBAT

Why does the Torah juxtapose the command to keep Shabbat with the command to build the Mishkan? Rashi answers that Hashem here teaches us that even building the Mishkan is prohibited on Shabbat. But why is that so? **Why isn't an activity as spiritual as building a dwelling place for the Divine Presence permitted on Shabbat?** This source guide is built on the answer that appears in Sichot L'Sefer Shemot (Talks on the Book of Shemot), based on the teachings of Harav Avigdor Nebenzahl, שליט"א, the Rov of Yerushalayim's Old City.

A. Shabbat and the Mishkan

Hashem told Moshe that he has chosen Betzalel to design and build the Mishkan, its vessels, the clothes of the Kohanim, and the anointing oil and incense; and that Ohaliav will join him, as well as a staff of talented people. Then, immediately, comes one of the Torah's commands to keep Shabbat:

<p>1. Shemot 31:12-13 (12) Hashem said to Moshe, saying: (13) And you, tell the Children of Israel, saying, "Only, you should keep My Shabbatot; for they are a sign between Me and you for your generations, to know that I am Hashem that sanctifies you."</p>	<p>שמות לא יב-יג (יב) ויאמר ה' אל משה לאמר. (יג) ואתה דבר אל בני ישראל לאמר: "אך את שבתתי תשמרו כי אות הוא ביני וביניכם לדתיתכם, לדעת כי אני ה' מקדשכם."</p>
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Rashi comments:

<p>2. Rashi's Commentary on Shemot 31:13 "And you, tell the Children of Israel, saying" – And you, even though I have appointed you to command them about the work of the Mishkan; do not treat [Shabbat] lightly, to push off Shabbat because of that work. "Only, you should keep My Shabbatot" – Even though you will be driven and energetic about the work, Shabbat should not be pushed off because of it.</p>	<p>רש"י על שמות לא יג "ואתה דבר אל בני ישראל" – ואתה, אך על פי שהפקדתך לצוותם על מלאכת המשכן, אל יקל בעיניך לדחות את השבת מפני אותה מלאכה. "אך את שבתתי תשמרו" – אך על פי שתהיו רדופין וזריזין בזריזות המלאכה, שבת אל תדחה מפניה</p>
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Even though Hashem already twice commanded Israel to keep Shabbat (in the Ten Commandments in Parshat Yitro and in Parshat Mishpatim), He repeats it here to emphasize that the great Mishkan project must break for Shabbat. Though this is a Halachah with a source, Rav Nebenzahl seeks out "טעמא דקרא", the rationale behind the Torah's command. Why shouldn't Israel continue building the Mishkan even on Shabbat?

B. Two Goals of the Beit Hamikdash

The question is sharpened when we think about two of the great goals accomplished by the Mishkan and its final form, the Beit Hamikdash. The Mikdash increases כבוד שמים – the honor of Heaven:

<p>3. Rambam's Yad Hachazakah, Hilchot Beit Habechirah 1:11 It is an ideal form of the mitzvah to strengthen the building and make it as high as the community is able to; as it says, "to elevate the House of our G-d" (Ezra 9:9). They should make it as splendid and beautiful as they can. If they are able to plate it with gold and make it as great as possible, that is a mitzvah.</p>	<p>רמב"ם יד החזקה, הלכות בית הבחירה א יא ומצוה מן המובחר לחזק את הבנין ולהגביהו כפי כח הציבור, שנאמר "ולרומם את בית אלקינו" (עזרא ט:ט). ומפארין אותו ומייפין כפי כחן. אם יכולין לטוח אותו בזזה ולהגדיל במעשיו הרי זה מצוה.</p>
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A beautiful Mishkan and Beit Hamikdash increase Hashem's honor and the dignity of service of G-d. The Mikdash also brings about fear and awe of Hashem, יראת שמים:

<p>4. Devarim 14:23 Eat before Hashem your G-d in the place that He chose to rest His Name there the tithe of grain, wine, and oil, and the first born of your cattle and sheep, in order that you should learn to fear Hashem your G-d all the days.</p>	<p>דברים יד כג ואכלת לפני ה' אלקיך במקום אשר יבחר לשכן שמו מעשר דגנך תירשך ויצהרך ובכרת בקרך וצאנך למען תלמד ליראה את ה' אלקיך כל הימים.</p>
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The experience of making the pilgrimage to Yerushalayim, seeing the Divine Presence resting in the awesome Beit Hamikdash, encountering the holy Kohanim and wise men of the Sanhedrin on the Temple Mount, and seeing the daily miracles in the Temple (Avot 5:5) – all cultivated fear and awe of G-d.

C. Why Shabbat Takes Precedence

Even though the Mikdash increases Kevod Shamayim and Yirat Shamayim, Shabbat takes precedence. Why?

<p>5. Talks on the Book of Shemot, p. 358 But despite all of this, the Mikdash is not able to fill these goals completely. And why? It is because the Mikdash was built, at the end of the day, by human hands. It is the handiwork of craftsmanship and talented craftsmen. And when a person looks at the Mikdash, in addition to the honor of Heaven and the fear of Heaven that he absorbs from the sights that surround him, he is necessarily also impressed by the works of finite humans. Something is missing in the aspect of "There is nothing else besides Him" (Devarim 4:35).</p>	<p>שיחות לספר שמות, עמוד שנה אך למרות כל זאת, אין המקדש מסוגל למלא ייעודיו אלה בתכלית השלמות. ומדוע? – משום שהמקדש נבנה בסופו של דבר בידי אדם. יש בו מעשה ידיים של אומנות ואומנים מוכשרים, וכאשר אדם מתבונן במקדש, הרי שבנוסף לכבוד שמים וליראת שמים שהוא קולט מן המראות שסביבו, הריהו מתפעל בעל כורחו גם ממעשי בני תמותה. משהו חסר כאן ב"אין עוד לברדו" (דברים ד:לה).</p>
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This is not the case for Shabbat:

<p>6. Talks on the Book of Shemot, p. 358 Shabbat testifies that "There is nothing else besides Him." In the prayers for Shabbat we close the blessing with, "Blessed are You Hashem, Who sanctifies the Shabbat," without any mention of "Israel," like in the prayers of the holidays ("... He sanctifies Israel and the times"), for no human involvement is ever necessary for Shabbat. Therefore man is asked to refrain from all work on Shabbat, from all creative activity, to show that he removes his partnership in leading the world.</p>	<p>שיחות לספר שמות, עמוד שנה השבת עדה על כך, ש"אין עוד מלבדו". בתפילות שבת אנו חותמים: "ברוך אתה ה' מקדש השבת," ללא איזכור של "ישראל" המופיע בתפילות המועדים ("... מקדש ישראל והזמנים"), משום שאין שותפות אדם נצרכת לעולם בשבת. ולכן נקרא האדם לשבות מכל מלאכה בשבת; מכל פעילות יוצרת. להראות שהוא מסיר את השתתפותו בהנהגת העולם.</p>
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During the six work days man's activities hide the Divine Glory. It is clear to all that G-d causes the rain to fall, but man's plowing, sowing, and reaping hide the Divine total involvement. On Shabbat, "Rest from plowing and reaping" (Shemot 34:21), and the honor of Heaven can shine in its totality. This is what is taught by the following Midrash:

<p>7. Midrash Rabbah Shemot 29:9 Rabbi Avahu quoted Rabbi Yochanan: When the Holy One, blessed be He, gave the Torah, no bird called out, no bird flew, no ox lowed, the ofanim angels did not fly, the seraphim did not say, "Holy, holy," the sea did not tremble, and people did not speak. The world was quiet, silent, and the voice came out, "I am Hashem your G-d" (Shemot 20:2).</p>	<p>שמות רבה כט:ט א"ר אבהו בשם ר' יוחנן: כשנתן הקב"ה את התורה צפור לא צווח, עוף לא פרח, שור לא געה, אופנים לא עפו, שרפים לא אמרו "קדוש קדוש", הים לא נזדעזע, הבריות לא דברו. אלא, העולם שותק ומחריש ויצא הקול "אנכי ה' אלקיך".</p>
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The same is true, to a lesser degree, for Yom Kippur, the Yamim Tovim, and Chol Hamoed. But each of them involves some human involvement, and Shabbat has none. They are all dependent on the declaration of the month that must be done by a human court; whereas Hashem has brought on Shabbat by Himself every seven days since the beginning of Creation. The holidays are זכר ליציאת מצרים – a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt; but Shabbat is, in addition, זכר למעשה בראשית – a remembrance of Creation.

In short, why is building the Mishkan and the Beit Hamikdash prohibited on Shabbat?

Their goal is to increase כבוד שמים and יראת שמים – the honor of Heaven and fear of Heaven. But because they were made by human hands, the Divine Glory is still partially hidden. Only Shabbat, whose sanctity is totally untouched by human hands, can call out with total clarity, "There is none other than Hashem." Even the building of the Mishkan and the Beit Hamikdash gives way for Shabbat.

ASHES AND RENEWAL BY RABBI FYVEL SHUSTER

Parah precedes Hachodesh in the progression of the Four Parshios. This carries with it an important message.

The Sfas Emes (Harav Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter, זצ"ל, the third Gerrer Rebbe, 1847-1905, in his comments on Parshas Parah 5641) quotes his grandfather (the Chidushei Harim, Harav Yitzchak Meir, זצ"ל, the first Gerrer Rebbe, 1799 – 1866) who says: "על ידי הביטול כאפר יכולים למצוא התחדשות" – Through **ביטול** like ashes one can find renewal." Through the **ביטול** of Parah we are ready for the renewal, the **התחדשות** of Hachodesh.

It is difficult to find one English word that accurately captures the word **ביטול**. The words "nullification" or "negation" lack the sense of becoming part of something greater that the word **ביטול** implies. **ביטול** here means subsuming one's self to Hashem, much as if some milk would fall into soup and become **בְּטוּל**. It is not merely negated, but becomes part of the soup.

The Parah Adumah (the Red Heifer) was totally burnt; and we used its ashes to become tahor (pure) in order to offer the Korban Pesach (the Pesach sacrifice). Ashes represent something whose energy is totally spent; they represent a person who is willing to give up everything to Hashem. We are told that Hashem looks at the ashes of Yitzchak which are gathered on the altar (Zevachim 62a). This is because Yitzchak gave himself over totally. He was ready to do whatever Hashem wanted, so he is associated with ashes.

In order to become renewed, explains the Sfas Emes, we must become like ashes. We must break out of the world of **טבע**, the world of nature, about which Koheles said, "There is nothing new under the sun" (Koheles 1:9). The world of nature doesn't have anything truly new. Nature involves the actions and interactions of existing material. The world of nature does not include **יש מאין** – creation of something out of nothing. In nature, things "get older." But Koheles's words imply that "above the sun" there is a possibility for **התחדשות**, true renewal.

There is a world beyond the limitations of **טבע**, beyond the bounds of the natural world. The Jewish People has the ability to access that world; and that opens them up to the possibility for renewal. That is the source and hope for the survival of the Jewish People. We only continue to exist because we and our forefathers are connected to that which is beyond nature. By not limiting ourselves to be defined by anything within this world we are able to access that which is beyond it.

Through **מסירות נפש**, says the Sfas Emes, we can awaken **התחדשות**, renewal, every day. **מסירות נפש** doesn't just mean being willing to die to sanctify the Divine Name. It means giving over our lives to Hashem, making ourselves into ashes. If we do not merely live in a this-worldly way, we then can bring something which is truly new into the world. We can open up a new spiritual reality each day; and Hashem recreates the world to serve the purposes of that spiritual reality. The message of the ashes of the Parah Adumah is not finality, but the beginning of true renewal.

שבת שלום ומבורך

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We pray for a refuah shleimah, a complete healing, for all those wounded in the attacks against our People.