

Our *Parashah* begins: "Moshe assembled the entire congregation of *Bnei Yisrael*." There, Moshe commanded *Bnei Yisrael* to observe *Shabbat*. R' Tzaddok Hakohen Rabinowitz z"l (1823-1900; *Chassidic Rebbe* in Lublin, Poland) writes: This assembly may be likened to another gathering, when Yaakov told his sons (*Bereishit* 49:1-2), "Assemble and I will tell you what will befall you at the End of Days. Gather yourselves and listen . . ." *Midrash Rabbah* relates that Yaakov cautioned his sons to avoid *Machloket* / dissension. He said, "If you are united, then I may tell you about the End of Days." Similarly, writes R' Tzaddok, Moshe wanted to tell *Bnei Yisrael* about *Shabbat* and the *Mishkan*, but first he told them that they must be united.

R' Tzaddok explains: The *Mishnah* (*Uktzin* 3:2) teaches that there is no "container" like *Shalom* / peace and harmony for holding a blessing. Where does *Shalom* come from? The *Gemara* (*Berachot* 64a) teaches: "Torah scholars increase *Shalom* in the world." At first glance, writes R' Tzaddok, the study of Torah appears to be inherently argumentative, and Torah scholars seem to always be engaged in *Machloket*. However, the prophet writes (*Zechariah* 8:19), "Love *Emet* / truth and *Shalom*!" When debates amongst Torah scholars are pursued with the goal of seeking *Emet*, the result is *Shalom*.

R' Tzaddok concludes: [Such debates are, particularly, a feature of the *Torah She'be'al Peh* / "Oral Law"--today, the *Talmud*.] The *Zohar* teaches that *Shabbat* is a propitious time for occupying oneself with the Oral Law--not just for scholars, but for everyone. And, the *Mishkan*--where *Hashem* spoke to Moshe--was the source of the Oral Law. Therefore, Moshe preceded both of them with a gathering focused on *Shalom*. (*Pri Tzaddik*)

Bitachon

This year--a *Shemittah* year--we will iy"H devote this space to discussing the related subject of *Bitachon* / placing one's trust in *Hashem*.

Rabbeinu Bachya ibn Pekudah z"l (*Saragossa, Spain; early 11th century*) lists ten benefits of *Bitachon*. The third of these benefits is as follows:

A person with *Bitachon* is able to clear his mind of distractions and focus on serving *Hashem*. [R' Raphael ben Zechariah Mendel z"l (1725-1795; *Yampola, Poland*) explains: The biggest distraction that keeps people from studying Torah and serving *Hashem* is the constant worry about where their sustenance will come from and how it will come. One who trusts in *Hashem* worries less about that and, therefore, is able to devote greater attention to his Divine service (*Marpheh La'nefesh*).] [R' Baruch Aryeh Halevi Fischer *shlita* (rabbi and educator in Brooklyn, N.Y.) explains further: A person with *Bitachon* also needs to work for a living, but he does not worry, because he understands that his work is not the true source of his sustenance (*Lev Ha'ari*)].

R' Bachya continues: A person with *Bitachon* is free of worries about this world, like the legendary alchemists who were said to turn silver into gold, and copper and tin into silver [--thus giving them an endless supply of wealth]. In fact, a person who trusts in *Hashem* is more secure than an alchemist for a number of reasons, among them:

- An alchemist requires ingredients and tools for his experiments and transformations. In contrast, one who trusts in *Hashem* understands that his sustenance is not dependent on specific sources, as we read (*Devarim* 8:3), "Not by bread alone does man live; rather, by everything that emanates from the mouth of *Hashem* does man live." *Hashem* is not lacking in ways to bring about what we need.
- An alchemist must toil to accomplish his goals, doing dangerous work that produces poisonous fumes that can kill him. One who trusts in *Hashem* is free of such worries. [R' Chaim Avraham Katz z"l (Mogilev, Belarus; died 1804) clarifies: This does not mean that someone with *Bitachon* never experiences difficulties. We observe that that is not so. But, a person with *Bitachon* understands, and finds comfort in the knowledge, that *Hashem* is directing the world with a plan that is for the person's long-term good. (*Pat Lechem*)]
- An alchemist must protect his secret formulas and his supply of precious metals. One who trusts in *Hashem* has no such worries.

(*Chovot Ha'levavot: Sha'ar Ha'bitachon*, Introduction)

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“Moshe assembled the entire assembly of *Bnei Yisrael* and said to them, “These are the things that *Hashem* commanded, to do them. On six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for *Hashem* . . .” (35:1-2)

R’ Shlomo Oheiv *z”l* (Ragusa, Italy; early 1600s) asks: Why does the verse say, “To do them”? Since the verse is speaking about the activities that are prohibited on *Shabbat*, should it not say, “Not to do them”?

He answers: R’ Shlomo L’bet Ha’levi *z”l* (1532-1600; Salonika, Greece) explains that the verse is teaching what we should do on *Shabbat*--namely, we should gather together Jews and teach them the laws of *Shabbat*, just as Moshe is doing in our verses.

In my own opinion, continues R’ Shlomo Oheiv, the verse is teaching that we should see ourselves as a united group in serving *Hashem*. A person should not say, “I will serve *Hashem* by myself and ‘Peace onto me!’” Rather, we should do what Moshe is doing in our verse: Assembling a group to serve *Hashem* together.

One might ask, continues R’ Shlomo, how will we have time to form such groups when we have to work for our livelihoods? To this, the Torah answers: “On six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you.” At least one day a week, we do have time for such gatherings.

(Shemen Ha’tov)

“Every wise-hearted person among you shall come and make everything that *Hashem* has commanded.” (35:10)

How did they know who was a “wise-hearted person”? R’ Yehonatan Eyebchutz *z”l* (Central Europe; 1690-1764) explains: Moshe did not tell the volunteers every detail that *Hashem* had commanded regarding the *Mishkan*. Instead, Moshe gave hints, and whoever was able to “make everything that *Hashem* has commanded” demonstrated thereby that he was a wise-hearted person.

Alternatively, he writes, the phrase “make everything that *Hashem* has commanded” was a commandment that every volunteer participate in every task so that there would be no jealousy or one-upmanship amongst the volunteers.

(Tiferet Yehonatan)

From the same work:

“The *Nesi'im* / leaders brought the *Shoham* stones . . .” (35:27)

The word “*Nesi'im*” can also mean “clouds.” The *Gemara* (*Bava Batra* 75a) teaches: “Moshe’s face was like the sun . . .” R’ Eyebchutz writes: The fact that there were intermediate levels of leadership, prevented everyone from developing a personal relationship with Moshe Rabbeinu. Thus, those intermediate leaders are like “clouds” that obscure the sun.

“Moshe assembled the entire assembly of *Bnei Yisrael* . . .” (35:1)

“The entire assembly of *Yisrael* left Moshe’s presence.” (35:20)

The *Gemara* (*Eruvin* 54b) describes how the Torah was transmitted to *Bnei Yisrael*: (1) Moshe taught Aharon alone. (2) Aharon’s sons entered, and Moshe repeated the lesson. (3) The Elders entered, and Moshe repeated the lesson again. (4) All of *Bnei Yisrael* entered, and Moshe taught the lesson yet again. (5) Moshe departed, and Aharon repeated the lesson. (6) Aharon departed, and his sons repeated the lesson. (7) Aharon’s sons left, and the Elders repeated the lesson. In this way, each person heard each lesson four times. [Until here from the *Gemara*. Note that, in all, the *Gemara* describes seven lessons, with the fourth lesson being the first one in which *Bnei Yisrael* as a whole participated.]

R’ Ze’ev Wolf Olesker *z”l* (1700-1777; Galicia and *Eretz Yisrael*) asks: In our verses, the above procedure was not followed, for we read, “The entire assembly of *Yisrael* left Moshe’s presence!” Why?

He explains: The *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 10a) teaches that a Torah scholar begins his daytime meal by midday. Our Sages also teach that an average person can walk a distance of ten *Parsa’ot* in one day. At that rate, it would take 1.8 hours for the person who lived farthest from the center of *Bnei Yisrael*’s camp to walk to Moshe’s tent at the center of the camp, and an equal time to walk home. This would leave 2.4 hours for learning Torah until midday, when it was time to eat ($6.0 - 1.8 - 1.8 = 2.4$).

R’ Ze’ev Wolf continues: We can calculate that each of the seven lessons described by the *Gemara* lasted six tenths of an hour (36 minutes). Moshe taught Aharon, his sons, and the Elders--three lessons, in all--for a total of 1.8 hours, the amount of time it took the last of *Bnei Yisrael* to arrive ($3 \times 0.6 = 1.8$). Then, each of *Bnei Yisrael* heard four lessons (one from Moshe, one from Aharon, etc.), and then it was time to go home ($4 \times 0.6 = 2.4$).

That was the schedule on a regular day. However, *Rashi z”l* writes that the gathering described in our verses took place on the morning after *Yom Kippur*--the day after Moshe had descended from *Har Sinai* with the second set of *Luchot*. Since that was the first day of Moshe’s teaching, R’ Ze’ev Wolf writes, *Bnei Yisrael* did not yet know the schedule. Rather, messengers had to be sent to gather *Bnei Yisrael*. This took an additional 1.8 hours, leaving only 0.6 hours in the morning for learning before it was time to go home to eat ($6.0 - 1.8 - 1.8 - 1.8 = 0.6$). This was insufficient time for *Bnei Yisrael* to hear all four lessons described by the *Gemara*; rather, they went home for their meal immediately after hearing Moshe’s lesson, which lasted 0.6 hours. Thus, our verse says: “The entire assembly of *Yisrael* left Moshe’s presence.”

Alternatively, R’ Ze’ev Wolf writes, since *Bnei Yisrael* had made the Golden Calf immediately after midday (see *Shmot* 32:1 and *Rashi*), Moshe wanted them to bring their donations for the *Mishkan* at that same time of day, thus cutting short the time available for Torah study. *(Drishat Ha’Ze’ev)*