

This week's *Parashah* begins to discuss the construction of the *Mishkan* / Tabernacle. Surprisingly, though, a *Midrash* relates that *Hashem* told Moshe to command *Bnei Yisrael* about the *Mishkan* when they were yet slaves in Egypt. Specifically, we read (*Shmot* 6:12-13), "Moshe spoke before *Hashem*, saying, 'Behold, the nation *Bnei Yisrael* have not listened to me . . .' *Hashem* spoke to Moshe and Aharon and commanded them regarding *Bnei Yisrael* . . ." Says the *Midrash*: "He commanded them to prepare slats to make the walls of the *Mishkan*." What is this *Midrash* teaching us? Why was that an appropriate time to speak about the *Mishkan*?

R' Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht z"l (1924-1994; founder and *Rosh Hayeshiva* of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh) explains: The *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Rosh Hashanah* 3:5) offers another surprising interpretation of the words: "*Hashem* . . . commanded them regarding *Bnei Yisrael*," i.e., *Hashem* instructed Moshe to command *Bnei Yisrael* to free their Jewish slaves after six years. Why teach this law now? And, how, asks R' Goldvicht, was this an appropriate response to Moshe's concern, "*Bnei Yisrael* have not listened to me"?

Another question: We read in last week's *Parashah* (21:6) that a Jewish slave who refuses to go free after six years should have his ear pierced. "The ear that heard at Sinai (*Vayikra* 25:55), 'For *Bnei Yisrael* are My slaves,' yet it went and obtained a human master for itself, should be pierced," says the *Gemara* (*Kiddushin* 22b). Why the focus on the ear, not on the person himself? – **Continued in box inside** –

Shabbat

"*V'karata La'Shabbat Oneg*" / "You shall call the Shabbat a 'delight'" is a *Mitzvah* fulfilled specifically through physical pleasures, such as eating and drinking. What does it mean to "call" Shabbat a delight, and what does that teach us about how to perform this *Mitzvah*?

Rabbeinu Bachya ben Asher z"l (Spain; 1255-1340) writes: The word "*V'karata*" has the same implication as in (*Tzephaniah* 1:7), "*Hikdish keru'av*" / "He invited his guests." (*Kad Ha'kemach: Shabbat*)

R' Yeshayah Halevi Horowitz z"l (the *Shelah Hakadosh*; rabbi of Prague and Yerushalayim; died 1630) elaborates: The *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 118a) speaks of "One who gives the *Shabbat 'Oneg'*," not one who gives himself *Oneg*, because a person's intention [when he prepares and consumes *Shabbat* delicacies] should not be to give himself pleasure. Rather, it should be to enjoy himself in honor of *Shabbat*. This may be likened to hosting an honored guest and making a big meal in his honor. In such a situation, one exerts himself more than he would do for himself.

(*Shnei Luchot Ha'brit: Masechet Shabbat, Ner Mitzvah* 37)

How does one know if he is enjoying himself in honor of *Shabbat* or just paying lip service to *Shabbat* and satisfying his own desires? R' Eliezer Papo z"l (1785-1827; rabbi in Sarajevo) answers: If one does not pursue delicacies and worldly pleasures during the week, and on *Shabbat* he eats a little more than he is accustomed to, then he is honoring *Shabbat* and giving it pleasure.

(*Pele Yo'etz: Oneg*)

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“You shall erect the Tabernacle according to its laws, as you were shown on the mountain.” (26:30)

R' Srayah Deblitzki z"l (1926-2018; Bnei Brak, Israel) writes: *Hashem* did not command Moshe himself to make all of the parts of the *Mishkan* or its *Keilim* / implements. As the Torah relates, that work was done by Betzalel, Ohaliav, and many other unnamed men and women. Why, then, was Moshe commanded to erect the *Mishkan* himself?

R' Deblitzki explains: Imagine that a very sophisticated machine--for example, an aircraft or spaceship--has been assembled. Each of the thousands of parts conforms perfectly to its specifications and is in its proper place, yet, for some reason, the machine does not work. The project's engineers are stymied, until the world's leading expert inspects the machine and notices that one screw is loose. That one loose screw is preventing the machine from working; indeed, were that screw to come loose during the spaceship's flight, a major tragedy would result.

The *Mishkan*, continues R' Deblitzki, was a very finely-tuned “machine.” Through it, *Hashem's Shechinah* could reside in this world, but only if it was constructed according to the precise physical and spiritual specifications that Moshe Rabbeinu was shown at *Har Sinai*; otherwise, it would not work. That is why Moshe himself had to assemble it.

R' Deblitzki adds: Man's body is also a *Mishkan* / tabernacle capable of having the *Shechinah* reside in it. In order to accomplish this, one must ensure that each limb is performing its job properly [-- for example, that the tongue is being used to speak words of Torah, prayer, and kindness, not *Lashon Ha'ra* or hurtful words; that the eyes are being used in *Mitzvah* performance, not to view sinful things, etc.] If even one small part is “out of place,” the *Shechinah* will be unable to make a home in that body. (Et L'drosh p.91-92)

“You shall place the Shulchan / Table outside the Partition, and the Menorah opposite the Shulchan on the south side of the Tabernacle, and the Shulchan you shall place on the north side.” (26:35)

The verse begins to speak of the *Shulchan*, then it tells us where the *Menorah* should be placed, and, only then, it tells us where the *Shulchan* should be placed. Why?

R' Yissachar Dov Rokeach z"l (1851-1926; Belzer Rebbe) explains: The merit of the *Shulchan*, on which the twelve loaves of *Lechem Ha'panim* / bread were placed, brings down *Hashem's* material bounty. The *Menorah*, in contrast, alludes to the light of the Torah. Thus, the *Gemara* (*Bava Batra* 25b) teaches: “If one wants to become wise, he should face slightly southward when he prays,” because the *Menorah* was in the south.

The purpose of material bounty, continues the *Belzer Rebbe*, is solely to enable us to study and keep the Torah. Otherwise, there is no reason for it. The *Shulchan* needs to be opposite the *Menorah*. Therefore, the Torah needs to tell us first where the *Menorah* is to be placed. (Quoted in *Lekket Imrei Kodesh*)

“And turquoise, purple, and scarlet wool, linen, and goats. Red-dyed ram skins, and Tachash skins, and acacia wood.” (25:4-5)

Rashi z"l writes: *Tachash* was a kind of wild beast that existed only at that time.

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1785-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) asks: What was bothering *Rashi* that he felt the need to tell us this?

He answers: *Rashi* was bothered by the fact that the Torah says, “*Tachash skins*,” rather than saying, “*Tachash*,” as it says “Goats.” Therefore, *Rashi* understood that the *Tachash* itself was of no importance, because that animal was created only so *Bnei Yisrael* could use its skins, and then it became extinct.

R' Kluger adds: Do not ask, “But the Torah also says, ‘Ram skins,’ and the ram is not extinct?!” The Torah had to say “Ram skins” because it is the skins that are “Red-dyed,” not the rams themselves. (*Imrei Shefer*)

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R' Goldvicht answers: When it comes to knowing what the Torah expects of us, “listening” (“hearing”) is the most important sense we have. Thus, *Bnei Yisrael* said, “*Na'aseh Ve'nishmah*” / “We will do and we will listen,” when they accepted the Torah. Likewise, our twice daily proclamation of our faith begins, “*Shema*” / “Hear!” After we listen and hear what is expected of us, we can make the decision to serve *Hashem*.

A slave is inherently incapable of making such a decision, R' Goldvicht continues. Even if he goes to *Minyan* every day, for example, it is by the grace of his master, not an act he can claim as his own. On the other hand, a slave who is freed can become a true servant of *Hashem*. Therefore, someone who wants to be a slave, who refuses to “hear” what is expected of a Jew, deserves to have his ear pierced.

No one could appreciate the above distinction between a slave and a free person more than the Jewish People could on the eve of the Exodus. Therefore, R' Goldvicht writes, that was the perfect time to teach them to free their own Jewish slaves in the future.

The purpose of the Exodus, R' Goldvicht concludes, was to create a nation of servants of *Hashem*. Thus, the culmination of the Exodus was not when *Bnei Yisrael* left Egypt, not when the Sea split, and not when the Torah was given; it was when the *Mishkan* was built, as R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (*Ramban*; 1194-1270; Spain and *Eretz Yisrael*) writes. In light of this, we can understand why *Bnei Yisrael* would be commanded to prepare materials for the *Mishkan* while they were still in Egypt.

(*Asufot Ma'arachot: Ma'amar “Arirut Ha'avdut”*)