Points to Ponder

Vayakhel 5779

**וַיַּקְהֵ֣ל משֶׁ֗ה And Moshe gathered (35:1) - Rashi** notes that Moshe gathered the people on the day after Yom Kippur when he descended from the mountain. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 20b) notes that there are three Mitzvos that the Jews were commanded when on the cusp of entering Eretz Yisrael -- to establish a king, destroy Amalek and build a Beis HaMikdash. If the Mikdash was to be last, why did the order change and the Mishkan commanded immediately after they were forgiven -- Motzai Yom Kippur? **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzsky ztl.** explains that after Bnei Yisrael lost their status after the Eigel and demonstrated how quickly we sink when we have no connection to Hashem, they needed the Mishkan right away. Thus, if they needed a direct line to Hashem, they would be ready to connect to Him immediately -- with an address for the rendezvous.

**וְאֵ֖ת לֶ֥חֶם הַפָּנִֽים: Lechem HaPanim (35:13)** - The Gemara in Menachos notes the 2 opinions as to the proper shape of the Lechem HaPanim -- as to whether it was to be a canoe shape (like **Rashi** suggests) or perhaps a solid rectangle shape. **Rav Schachter Shlita** would often note that this is perhaps the basis for the difference of opinion as to the shape of the Challos of Shabbos which are to represent the Lechem Hapanim -- either they are to be rectangular (like the loaf shapes we find out of some bakeries) or more of an oval/canoe shape. He would also remind us of the minhag by some to have 12 Challos or a large Challah that breaks down into 12 parts. The Gra didn’t have this minhag. He would cut both loaves at each of the three meals totaling 12 parts over Shabbos.

**וַיָּבֹ֥אוּ הָֽאֲנָשִׁ֖ים עַל־הַנָּשִׁ֑ים The men came on top of the women (35:22) - Onkelos** explains that this means that the women came and took off their jewelry that they were wearing and donated it. Why did they need to wear the jewels and donate it themselves? Why not send it with their husbands? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl** explains that the women wanted to make it clear that they were not donating items that they had no need for. They wanted to make it clear that they were donating the jewels that they wore to the last moment in order to demonstrate that the will of Hashem was more important to them than the jewel itself.

**וְהַנְּשִׂאִ֣ם הֵבִ֔יאוּ And the Nesiim brought (35:27) - Rashi** notes that the letter “Yud” is missing from their names because the Nesiim were delayed in bringing the initial donations for the Mishkan and chose to wait for everyone else to bring. When they realized that they had nothing more to bring, they worried. In the end, their bringing of the stones was probably worth much more than anything anyone else brought. Why punish them for wanting to give everyone a turn and then to fill in the gap? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** learned a number of critical lessons here: First, he suggested that they sinned in showing a lack of faith in the people to make the necessary contributions for the Mishkan. Moreover, their belief that they were big enough to “fill in the gap” implied a certain Gaava on their part. The Mishkan was going to get built with or without the Nesiim. They should have done their piece first. Also, people are to react with Zerizus -- with expedience when filling the word of Hashem. If we cannot expect this from the Nesiim then how are the common people going to be held to the standard?

**ה֕וּא וְאָֽהֳלִיאָ֥ב He and Ohaliav (35:34)** - Betzalel is recognized as a very important person  from a very important Shevet -- Yehuda. On the other hand, Ohaliav is not identified too well and comes from Dan which is the tribe not gifted the most important of status. **Rav Schwab** ztl. notes that Ohaliav seems to have been the regular guy -- a hard worker, a Yorai Shomayim but without the fanfare. Why the twinning of these personalities? Rav Schwab notes that the Torah wants us to take the idea that in the house of Hashem, there is room for all of Kahal Hashem with Hashem. Everyone can play a part and everyone has a place to do so.

**וַיַּ֧עַשׂ בְּצַלְאֵ֛ל  Betalel made (37:1) - Rashi** notes that Betzalel is singled out because he dedicated his soul to the project. What type of “soul did he give” to the project? Was anyone trying to stop him? **Rav Shaul Yisraeli ztl** suggests that the main point of having a mikdash is that you are Moser Nefesh for it. To have an Aron, you need to have a lowering of personal hubris in order to be humble. It is through this humility that one can change gold and wood into a Davar She’B’Kedusha -- by making it a utensil we use in serving Hashem. Betzalel got that message -- therefore he gave his soul in order to make sure that we give ours too.

**בְּמַרְאֹת֙ הַצֹּ֣בְאֹ֔ת אֲשֶׁ֣ר צָֽבְא֔וּ Out of the mirrors of women (38:8)** - It is interesting that in the three references to the Kiyor, this one does not mention that it was to be utilized for washing. Why? The **Mesech Chochma** explains that this is the time that the Torah identifies the source for the Kiyor -- from the mirrors of the women, and thus, he adds, that incorporating the mirrors into the *kiyor* expanded its purpose. It was no longer a simple container storing water and making it available to prepare a *kohen* for service. Rather it reminded people of hope borne through pain and despair and would forever encourage those who viewed it to follow the example of one's ancestors. **Rav Yaakov Neuberger Shlita** added that it is not a surprise that the Sotah waters come from the Kiyor. The family comes to the Mikdash convinced that the relationship will never be repaired. After all they harbor accusations of faithlessness and actions which make them credible. Nevertheless Torah insists otherwise. The couple, should they continue their family, is encouraged to share in the optimism that the mirrors represent, to look beyond their present painful anguish and attempt to envision what kind of future may be available to them. The Kiyor stands to remind us that we need to harness hope even when the Hester Panim of Hashem challenges our Emunah and casts ambiguity on our future.

Haftara (Parshas Shekalim): **וְעַתָּ֗ה אַל־תִּקְחוּ־כֶ֙סֶף֙ מֵאֵ֣ת מַכָּֽרֵיכֶ֔ם Now therefore receive no more money of your acquaintance" (12:8)** - After trying to bring order to the decimated coffers of the Beis HaMikdash, King Yoash tries to standardize the fundraising efforts. Whereas previously each Kohein was to go out and solicit donations from their acquaintances, now there would be standard fees charged and paid in the Beis HaMikdash. **Rav Alex Israel Shlita** notes that the change to the system brought control over the process away from a limited group of fundraisers, protection from corruption by those collecting bigger donations and accountability in the spending of the money. He suggests that this is why in Divrei Hayamim it is noted that at this time the people gave to the project joyously -- for once there is a sense of rebuilt, unwavering trust in the project, the people dedicated to the project’s goals can give to it freely.