

Parshas Vayakheil

This week's Parsha-Vayakheil is the ingathering of the Jews after Yom Kippur as a congregation who were forgiven for the sin of the eigel. The first Mitzvah that is repeated is that of Shabbos. Rashi on the Gemara in Shabbos 49b states that the juxtaposition of Shabbos to the overview of the building of the Mishkan to teach us that the work that was done on Shabbos are the basis for the prohibitions on Shabbos.

Three "precious metals" (Gold Silver and Copper) are stated in the posuk, as the Rebbe points out that all three are required for the building, not just gold, or silver or copper. The Rebbe explains that gold represents the good deeds of a tzaddik, the silver represents the yearning of a person who is asking for forgiveness, and copper, the lowliest, represent the good deeds of even the sinners. That one without the others isn't good enough, only when all three types are found together, is when there is completion.

The Rebbe is consistent in his worldview about Jews, that is a positivist view. As this is in line with the Rebbe's discourse on Kol Yisrael, where "vamech kulam Tzadikim" means even those who don't know that they are Jewish still merit good deeds to be bestowed on them. The Alshich explains on 36:7, that the people were told to stop bringing their "nedavos". Even refraining from doing a mitzvah is a mitzvah in and of itself. Which means, like the Rebbe explains, when you're not doing a Lo Ta'aseh you are getting reward for that. Which means, that even if you don't recognize Hashem or that you have the

obligation to do mitzvos you may receive reward for it.

Shabbos being the mitzvah here relates to the fact that Shabbos is how we, on a week-to-week basis, focus our lives on Hashem, and commit to Him being our King. We keep Shabbos for no other reason that because Hashem told us to, and in doing so we recognize his creating of the world and us in it, and our need to do Mitzvos. Which is why the posuk says 35:2 that "six days work shall be done" not that "six days you have to work", to show that the focus of the week is for Shabbos, and Shabbos is the central tenet of our faith. (As we know keeping one Shabbos as a nation will free us from golus, as well, we say in Lecha Dodi "Likras Shabbos Lechu V'nhelicha, Ki Mekor Habrach, Merosh Mikedem Nesucha, Sof Ma'aseh Bimachshava Techila". In a way "Shabbos" precedes creation and is a source for creation to exist, as the focal point for all creation to arrive at Shabbos. The whole week is geared to bringing in Shabbos, and we exit Shabbos i.e., have the right so to speak to leave Hashem, specifically with Havdala, which allows us to go back to the mundane.)

Copper metal continuously shows up as a key metal in the construction of the Mishkan. It seems that the bases/support knobs and tubes were made of copper. As well, later in the parsha we see (38:8) that the Kior was made of copper mirrors comprised from mirrors of the women. Rashi explains (based on the Zohar 2:4a) that these were mirrors that they would beautify themselves-that is they were an important possession, yet they still donated them. Rashi explains that even though mirrors can be a method of sin (involvement in beautification of oneself

can lead to sin) these mirrors were used to ensure the continuity of the Jewish people. That is, in Egypt when the men were exhausted the women would make extra effort to ensure they were beautiful to entice the men to have children with them. It could have made sense at the time not to rationally bring children into a world (for them) that was slavery, yet the women knew to have children, as this is paramount to the continuity of the Jewish people. The Kiyor also represents bringing peace between couples, which, according to the Gemara is a key to having good children.

The haftora for Vayakheil is from Melachim 1 7:13-26 for Sephardim, and Ashkenazim begin on Melachim 1 7:40-50. Vayakheil Haftora is rarely read, as Vayakheil is usually paired with Pekudei (for which we read the Haftora of Pekudei), and or the additional portion of Shekalim (one of the 4 additions to the weeks preceding Purim and Pesach). The haftora of Vayakheil for Sephardim introduces us to Chiram from Tzor (Tyre) who was a coppersmith that was sought after by Shlomo Hamelech for the building of the Beis Hamikdash. While gold and silver smithing were expertise of Chiram (according to mepharshim) his copper smithing abilities are highlighted. The focus on copper is likely due to its abundance in general, and to its abundance in the Beis Hamikdash. (Part of the Haftora from Ashkenaz backgrounds are read on Shabbos Chanuka-as the haftora relates to the dedication of the temple-i.e., Chanukas habayis-which is connected to Chanuka time and the rededication of the Beis Hamikdash).

The euphemism of copper to good deeds of the “sinners”, as described by the Rebbe makes a lot of sense. While gold and silver

type people exist, they are rarer, and more difficult to find. And when found they adorn whatever they are decorating. But, the foundations and principal metal use copper, which is abundant, and “the rest of us”. Sinners is a loose translation of “poshei yisrael” which can be the category of “mistaken ones of Israel”, that is the regular human who is fallible, and makes mistakes. Even this category is like the Gemara says “mileim mitzvos k’rimon”- which means that copper is in fact incredibly important-even if it is abundant- meaning common, it is a staple. In fact, the copper adornments were shaped like pomegranates. (The Rebbe explains in a sicha on the hem of the Cohen why there were bells and pomegranates versus other “beautiful fruits” such as apples).

Perhaps the meaning therefore is even though we may think on ourselves as not being worthy of important role in the community, or part of the mission to bring Mashiach and do as many Mitzvos as we can, nonetheless, the use of copper teaches us that we are important and matter. Furthermore, we see earlier in the parsha, that it was about expertise that can be donated to the service of development, not only precious objects (such as the metals, skins, or fabrics). The Torah explains that Nediv Libo- can also mean time and energy and expertise. We can derive from Chassidus, that every person is imperfectly perfect. That is on ourselves we may think we aren’t as beautiful as gold or silver, nonetheless we have a role, foundational at that, within Judaism, and as part of the Jewish community.

In Yoma 38a, the doors of Nicanor remained copper (because of the miracle that happened to them) because they were

refined copper and shone like gold, i.e., even copper can achieve gold status. The Alter Rebbe in Tanya explains this process (not with metallurgy, but in terms of souls of tzadikim, ba'alei teshuva, and poshim). We know from Chagiga that a coppersmith is hard work, (and even may exempt them from mitzva or Reyiah due to the bad smell from their work.)

Whatever the case, copper is a central (and precious for that matter) metal to the building of the Mishkan and Beis Hamikdash, like we are precious to Hashem. May we merit the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash Hashlishi.

Good Shabbos