

## מתוקים מדבש

*Dei'ah, Binah and Haskel on the weekly parashah*

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**Bemachashavah Techilah**

“**V**e’asu Li mikdash, veshachanti besocham – They shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in their midst” (Shemos 25:8). This is how Hashem introduces the commandments to build the Mishkan. Moshe was standing on Har Sinai, in the midst of the greatest experience of the Divine Presence in history. In this setting, Hashem promises Moshe Rabbeinu that building the *Mishkan* could allow us to experience that Presence, the *Shechinah*. The common root of the two words hints at this connection.

The Midrash describes the Jews leaving Mount Sinai wearing three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of Priesthood and the crown of kingship. R. Shimon<sup>1</sup> enumerates the same “crowns” and he adds a fourth – “the crown of a good name rests on all three.” These three crowns are similarly related to three of the utensils of the *Beis Hamikdash*. Three of the utensils had a crown-like ornament, called a *zeir*, decorating their tops: the *mizbei’ach hazahav*, the golden altar used for incense; the *aron*, the ark; and the *shulchan*, the table of showbread. The gemara writes:

R’ Yochanan said “There were three crowns: that of the altar, that of the ark, and that of the table. The one of the altar, Aaron deserved and he received it. The

one of the ark, David deserved and received. The one of the ark is still lying and whoever wants to take it, may come and take it. Perhaps you might think it is a small matter, therefore the text reads: ‘In me kings will rule’<sup>2</sup>.”<sup>3</sup>

Rashi explains:

*Three crowns: were made on the holy vessels. [The one] of the mizbei’ach, was a symbol of the crown of kehunah; of the aron, a symbol of the crown of Torah, and of the shulchan, was the symbol of kingship, for the table represented the wealth of kings.*

*This is how it should be written...: For the priesthood was given to Aharon and his sons as an eternal covenant<sup>4</sup>. Similarly, kingship was given to David and his descendants<sup>5</sup>.*

*In me kings will rule: And greater is the one who is ruled than the ruler. This verse speaks of the Torah.<sup>6</sup>*

The Gemara spells out a parallel between the Sinai experience and the Mishkan. Each involves three crowns, the mastery of the same three basic gifts. The *mizbei’ach* is where sacrificial service was performed, so it represents *kehunah*. The *shulchan*, containing one loaf of bread for each *sheivet* (tribe),

shows fellowship between one Jew and another – *gemillus chassadim*. By symbolizing prosperity, it shows the king as an exemplar of proper use of the physical world.

But while the first two crowns were given as an inheritance, the Torah is available to anyone who will grasp it. The crown of the *aron*, which held the *luchos* (tablets) and the original *sefer Torah*, was not given to any one family. Yet, the crown of Torah is greater than the others. As Shelomo writes in the verse the Gemara quotes, even the king must rule from within the boundaries set by halachah.

Why are these three crowns so central to experiencing the *Shechinah*?

*Shimon the Righteous was of the survivors of the Great Assembly. He often said, “Upon three things the world stands: on the Torah, on avodah — service [of G-d], and on gemillus chassadim — acts of loving-kindness.”<sup>7</sup>*

The Maharal explains, “you must understand that all creations depend on man. For they are created for man, and if men do not live up to what they ought to be, behold all is nullified.” The universe stands on these three principles because man does.

*“Therefore, the godly tanna writes that one pillar on which the*

<sup>1</sup> Avos 4:17

<sup>2</sup> Mishlei 8

<sup>3</sup> Yoma 72b

<sup>4</sup> Lit. a covenant of salt. Bamidbar 18

<sup>5</sup> Tehillim 18

<sup>6</sup> Rashi, ad loc.

<sup>7</sup> Pirkei Avos 1:2

universe is the Torah, for the pillar completes man so that he can be a finished creation with respect to himself.

“After that he says ‘on avodah’.... For this man can be thought to be complete and can be good toward He Who created him — by serving Him.... With regard to the third, it is necessary for man to be complete and good with others, and that is through gemillus chas-sadim.

“You also must understand that these three pillars parallel three things in each man: the mind, the living soul, and the body. None of them have existence without G-d. The existence of the soul is when it comes close to Hashem by serving Him.... From the perspective of the mind, man gets his existence through Torah, for it is through the Torah that man attaches himself to

G-d. To the body, man gets his existence through gemillus chas-sadim for the body has no closeness or attachment to Hashem, just that Hashem is kind to all. When man performs kindness, G-d is kind to him and so gives him existence.”<sup>8</sup>

A person’s life centers around three relationships – his relationship with himself, perfected through learning to think and feel according to the Torah; his relationship with Hashem, through proper avodah; and his relationship with others, dominated by gemillus chas-sadim.

The three crowned vessels of the Mishkan embody the crowning, the mastery, of these three themes. But the other three utensils seem to also address these relationships. Not as crowns, as perfected forms, but the

<sup>8</sup> Derech Hachaim 1:2

domains as a whole. In addition to the golden *mizbei’ach* inside the *heichal*, most of the avodah, of man’s relationship with G-d, was performed on the larger brass *mizbei’ach* in the courtyard. The *kiyor*, which was used to wash the dirt of this world off the *kohen’s* feet, was made out of the mirrors of the women in the desert, corresponds to *chessed*. The menorah, like the *aron*, represents Torah, “for a mitzvah is a candle, and the Torah, a light”.<sup>9</sup>

The Mishkan’s structure gives us a bridge between the real and the ideal, between the three facets of the human condition, the three pillars of all of existence, and the pinnacle one can only sense in the ineffable experience of G-d.

<sup>9</sup> Mishlei 6:23

## RABBI GIL STUDENT

### Bakeish Shalom

It is generally difficult for weekly reviewers of the parashah to find significance in the orders of lists. However, there is definitely meaning to be deduced from the sequence of items. The following is the inventory of materials that were necessary to receive via donation for the construction of the Mishkan. As we shall see, the order of materials listed is quite significant.

“This is the portion that you shall take from them: gold, silver, and copper; and turquoise, purple and scarlet wool; linen and goat hair... shoham stones and stones for the settings, for the *Ephod* and the Breastplate” (Shemos 25:3-7). The stones discussed were precious, multi-colored stones that, seemingly, should have been listed along with the gold, silver and copper rather than after a long list of cloths, spices, etc. One would think that the place for

precious stones is at the beginning with the precious metals. However, the Torah did not list them at the beginning. Why not?

In Parashas Vayakhel, the actual process of people bringing materials for the construction is described in detail. “The men came with the women; everyone whose heart motivated him brought bracelets, nose-rings, body-ornaments – all sorts of gold ornaments – every man who raised up an offering of gold to G-d. Every man with whom was found turquoise, purple, and scarlet wool,... brought them. Every man who separated a portion of silver or copper brought it as a portion for G-d... Every wise-hearted woman spun with her hands; and they brought the spun yarn... The leaders (*hanesi’im*) brought the shoham stones and the stones for the settings for the *Ephod* and the Breastplate” (Shemos 35:22-

27). Once again, the order is significant. The leaders are listed after all of the people. Additionally, the Hebrew word for the leaders – *hanesi’im* – is spelled *chaseir* without a *yud*.<sup>1</sup> Rashi quotes the midrash as explaining that the leaders had seen how enthusiastic everyone was about donating to the construction of the Mishkan so they had decided to wait until everyone donated what they could and then the leaders would fill any remaining needs. To their surprise and disappointment, the leaders found that the people brought everything that was necessary for the Mishkan so the leaders could only donate precious stones for the clothing of the *Kohen Gadol*. Thus, they gave last so the Torah mentions

<sup>1</sup> The *Minchas Shai* suggests that Torah should have written “and the leaders – *vehanesi’im*” and the absence of the *vav* is what the midrash intended to point out.

them last. However, this attitude displeased G-d and He, therefore, spelled their names defectively, missing one letter.<sup>2</sup>

Based on this, the Or HaChaim<sup>3</sup> explains the order of the items listed in Parashas Terumah. Because the leaders delayed in bringing material and, in the end, only brought the stones, these precious stones were listed at the end of the sequence even though they should have rightfully been immediately after the gold, silver and copper. The leaders had good intentions, the Or HaChaim adds. They wanted to allow other people the chance to do the mitzvah of donating for the construction of the Mishkan. However, G-d was displeased because in doing this the leaders were neglecting their own opportunity to perform a mitzvah. This was improper and caused their names to be spelled defectively and their contributions to be listed last.

The Or HaChaim's explanation is somewhat counter-intuitive. There was no actual obligation to donate to the Mishkan. Such contributions were only expected from the generous of heart, those who sincerely desired to give. Additionally, the leaders did not refrain from donating immediately out of selfish reasons, according to the Or HaChaim, but out of concern and deference to others. Let others have an opportunity to perform this

<sup>2</sup> Rashi, Shemos 35:27; Bamidbar Rabbah 12:16.

<sup>3</sup> Shemos 25:7

mitzvah, they thought. Despite both of these factors, G-d still considered them to be at fault for not availing themselves of the opportunity to perform a mitzvah by donating to the Mishkan. Evidently, in this case the mitzvah *bein adam laMakom*, between man and G-d, took precedence over the mitzvah *bein adam lachaveiro*. They should not have deferred to their fellows but rather should have taken the opportunity for themselves.

This is surprising, not only because it is being quoted in a column ostensibly devoted to Mussar ideas, but because it runs counter to concepts with which we are familiar and about which we are frequently exhorted. Every generation has its own difficulties and ours is no exception. Some would suggest that our generation's smallest successes lie in our treatment of our fellows, our mitzvos *bein adam lachaveiro*. For this reason, we are accustomed to hearing appeals from rabbinic figures to be more careful in our treatment of others. For example, we are reminded not to run to kiss the Torah if it means knocking other people<sup>4</sup> and not to recite the *Shemoneh Esreih* loudly if it will disturb the concentration of others.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the primary talmudic example, one that is not entirely similar but is still worthy of mention, is the inability to perform a mitzvah

<sup>4</sup> Kaf HaChaim, Orach Chaim 149:10

<sup>5</sup> Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 101:2

with a stolen object. If a lulav is stolen then one cannot fulfill one's obligation with that stolen object.<sup>6</sup> Concern for one's fellow does, indeed, seem to take precedence over, or at least demands consideration regarding, one's obligations to G-d. Yet, from the Or HaChaim above, we see that this is not the case. The leaders should not have put other people's opportunity for a mitzvah before their own.

The solution to this enigma, I believe, is simply that there is no easy answer. Like many aspects of life, one's obligations to one's fellow and one's obligations to G-d frequently clash and the resolution is always difficult. The very concern over the difficulties and the heartaches over the contradictions are what is most important and, ultimately, heighten one's concern for both aspects. To easily set aside one's obligations to G-d or, in the other direction, to automatically override one's obligations to one's fellow is certainly wrong. While one direction must always win, at times one and at times another, and each decision must be rendered within the confines of halacha and, frequently, after consultation with a wise sage, true personal growth will come more from the struggle than from the conclusion.

<sup>6</sup> Sukkah 29b-30a

### RABBI MICHA BERGER

## Sefesai Tiftach

**W**e have explored the standard formula for *berachos* in these pages in the past. However, the opening *berachah* of *Shemoneh Esreih* diverges from that norm. *Berachos* require "*sheim umalchus*", mentioning both the names of G-d "*Hashem E-lokeinu*" as well the

concept that He rules the world, "*Melech ha'olam*".

However, this *berachah*, *birkas Avos*, does not continue with a direct reference to *malchus*. Instead, we say "*Hashem E-lokeinu veE-lokei avoseinu, E-lokei Avraham, E-lokei Yitzchak veElokei Yaakov...*" – Hashem our G-d and the G-d of

our forefathers, the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak and the G-d of Yaakov..." The closing of the *berachah* similarly omits *malchus*, simply reading "*Baruch ata Hashem, magen Avraham – Blessed are You, Hashem, the Protector of Avraham.*"

In the opening of the *berachah*, *malchus* is replaced by a second and third clause describing Hashem as the G-d of someone. First *E-lokein*, our G-d, then *E-lokei Avoseinu*, our fathers' G-d, and then by naming each forefather separately. How do these three clauses differ? If it were only that *E-lokei Avoseinu* adds a historical component to our relationship with Hashem, then the clause naming each forefather separately would be redundant.

The name "*E-lokim*" is used when G-d's actions are similar to those a person would do when acting out of strict justice. *E-lokim* refers to the G-d of law. But there are two types of law, natural law and moral law. Hashem is the Legislator of both. The difference is that the laws of nature are imposed regardless of the person's will, whereas moral law is very much the subject of free will.

In what sense is G-d "*E-lokein*"? Within our own relationship with Him, we all too often ignore Hashem's commandments; we really only sense Hashem as the author of nature. Our forefathers, however, did relate to Hashem in terms of the moral law as well. In fact, the *avos* are credited with being able to intuit and observe the entire Torah; such was their unity with the moral law.<sup>1</sup> This is the difference between *E-lokein* and *E-lokei avoseinu*.

According to the Maharal<sup>2</sup>, the laws that people experience are a direct product of that person spiritual level. As Rav Dessler<sup>3</sup> explains, to most people the world of the senses holds the greatest attraction. It is to what we pay attention, and

<sup>1</sup> Yoma 28b

<sup>2</sup> Gevuros Hashem, 2<sup>nd</sup> Introduction. See also Bemachashavah Techilah for Beshalach <<http://www.aishdas.org/mesukim/5764/beshalach.pdf>>

<sup>3</sup> Michtav me'Eliyahu vol. I pg 306

therefore what we perceive as the most objective and absolute. However, if someone lifts his sights and attention above the physical so that concepts such as liberty, justice and oppression take on the greater reality, then that world and its laws would dominate his experience. As we noted in these pages in the past, Rav Chaim Volozhiner defines "*E-lokim*" as "the master of all the forces".<sup>4</sup>

From this perspective, the distinction is between "*E-lokein*", the Master of the forces of the world in which we live, and "*E-lokei avoseinu*", who controls the laws of miracle, of that higher world that our forefathers reached. As Rav Dessler writes, each perspective is a reflection of the other. By adopting Hashem's moral law one becomes more subject to that law; whether earning greater providence than being subject to pure nature, or even the miracles that our forefathers merited.

Each of the *avos* found a different center for their relationship to the A-lmighty, a different means of accepting this higher law. Avraham sought to emulate His kindness to others. To Yitzchak, the means of having a relationship to Him is to encounter Him in dialogue, "*lasuach basadeh*".<sup>5</sup> Yaakov, the one who "sat [in study] in tents"<sup>6</sup>, sought to come close to by absorbing His Thought, His Torah.

According to Rav Chaim Volozhiner<sup>7</sup> the usual structure for *berachah* is one of descent from the Source to us, the recipients. *Baruch*, You are the *berereichah*, the well-spring, from which everything comes. *Atah Hashem*, we are "up" with the Cause of existence (the tetragrammaton meaning "causes to

<sup>4</sup> Nefesh haChaim sec. 1, ch. 2

<sup>5</sup> Bereishis 24:63

<sup>6</sup> Ibid 25:27, interpolated words based on Rashi ad loc

<sup>7</sup> Nefesh haChaim 2:1-5

exist"), so that we can speak to Him as "You". In the usual *berachah*, we then speak of the results of that flow, the laws that emerge from Hashem, and His kingship over the universe as a whole. Rav Chaim sees the purpose of the *berachah* as increasing that flow by consciously retracing its path.

We can understand *birkas Avos*, however, as continuing the theme by speaking of our own ascent, striving back upward to G-d, as the *avos* did. Focusing not on the path, but on our act of retracing it. We therefore speak of the G-d of natural law, followed by the G-d of moral law and of defying nature, followed finally by the various means of reaching that level. We then describe Him, as did Moshe, as "the G-d, the Great, the Mighty and the Awe Inspiring", praising G-d from this relatively "closer" perspective.

A *melech* is someone who organizes and oversees society as a whole. From these lofty heights, we cannot stop there. We do not use the form of *sheim umalchus* because it is insufficient from the perspective of the *avos*. They saw a "*Melech, Ozeir, uMoshi'ah, uMagen* – King, Helper, Savior and Protector." Not just Hashem as the Organizer of civilization, but also as a personal Helper, a Savior from trouble and a Protector from even encountering such troubles. Thus we conclude, "*Magen Avraham*".

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