

The
CHASSIDUS
PERSPECTIVE
with Reb Yoel Kahn



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Prepared by
Rabbi Yehudah Leib Altein

A LESSON FROM AHALIAV

Parshas Pekudei describes how the garments of the Kohen Gadol were prepared, and continues with a description of the Mishkan's erection on Rosh Chodesh Nissan. Throughout the *parshah*, a certain phrase is repeated time and again: "...as Hashem commanded Moshe."

Interestingly, according to the Yerushalmi, this is one of the sources for the eighteen *berachos* of Shemoneh Esrei: "Why do we say eighteen blessings? They correspond to the eighteen times the term 'command' is mentioned regarding the Mishkan [in Parshas Pekudei]."

Opening a Chumash reveals that this word is actually mentioned nineteen times. The Yerushalmi clarifies this as well, stating: "[The list totals eighteen] as long as it begins with the *possuk*, 'Along with him was Ahaliav.'"

In other words: The first time this term is mentioned is in the second *possuk* of the *parshah*: "Betzalel, son of Uri, son of Chur, from the tribe of Yehudah did all that Hashem *commanded* Moshe." The next *possuk* continues, "Along with him was Ahaliav, son of Achisamach, from the tribe of Dan." The list of eighteen includes only those times the term "command" is written *after* Ahaliav's name is mentioned. By contrast, the list does not include the first time "command" is written, with regard to Betzalel alone (without Ahaliav).

This Yerushalmi begs for an explanation. What is the connection between the *berachos* of Shemoneh Esrei and the amount of times "command" is written regarding the Mishkan? And why is it associated specifically with Ahaliav?

DOUBLE MISHKAN

Let's first focus on the content of the entire *parshah*, along with Parshas Vayakhel. These two *parshiyos* seem to merely be repeating what was stated in the *parshiyos* of Terumah and Tetzaveh, where Hashem instructs Moshe in great detail how each part of the Mishkan should be made. Instead of repeating each and every detail, seemingly the Torah could have stated: "The Jews built the Mishkan, exactly as Hashem had commanded

Moshe"! Why the duplication?

A similar question is asked regarding the *karbanos* brought by the *nessi'im* to initiate the Mishkan, as related in Parshas Nasso.

The Torah repeats the identical details of the *karbanos* no less than twelve times. Why not enumerate the details once, and then simply state that each *nassi* brought the same *karbanos* as the first?

Chassidus explains that there is good reason for the repetition. The *nessi'im* were not merely copying each other. Although on the outside their *korbanos* were identical, the *kavanos* of each *nassi* and the divine energy they elicited differed.

The same can be said regarding the Mishkan. In Terumah and Tetzaveh, Hashem showed Moshe each detail of the Mishkan

as it existed in the supernal realms. In Vayakhel and Pekudei, by contrast, Moshe instructed Betzalel and Ahaliav to build a physical, tangible Mishkan. These *parshiyos* are not duplications, rather they are referring to two distinct levels: the supernal Mishkan, and the corporal one.

WHICH IS GREATER?

At first glance, it would appear that the supernal Mishkan is the greater of the two. After all, it was viewed by Moshe, the greatest prophet of all times. Not only that, but Moshe was then on Har Sinai, and was thus on an even loftier plane. The second Mishkan, on the other hand, was built by humans using physical materials.

However, the truth is actually otherwise.

The opening *possuk* of Parshas Pekudei reads, "These are the tallies of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of the Testimony..." The word "Mishkan" is repeated here twice, corresponding to the two levels of the Mishkan mentioned above. However, it is specifically with the second Mishkan that an adjective is added: "the Mishkan of the Testimony."

What is the idea that lies behind the word "testimony"?

A testimony is not required for something that is revealed, as everyone is aware of it. Nor is it needed for something that is presently concealed but is subject to revelation. A testimony is necessary only when something is concealed and would otherwise remain unexposed.

Chassidus explains that the level of *Memalei* is revealed; the level of *Sovev* is subject to revelation; and *Atzmus Or Ein Sof*—Hashem’s essence—is concealed and beyond revelation. Accordingly, “the Mishkan of Testimony” means that the Mishkan was a vessel for Hashem’s essence.

But which Mishkan attained such heights? Specifically the one built in our lowly world. The Mishkan seen by Moshe on Har Sinai was indeed spiritual and lofty, but it portrayed *revelations* of G-dliness. Hashem’s *essence* was revealed particularly in the physical Mishkan built by Bnei Yisroel down here.

Or to put it this way: When the Jews built the Mishkan below exactly as it was shown to Moshe Above, with each physical aspect properly corresponding to its spiritual counterpart, an even higher dimension of G-dliness was revealed, even greater than the spiritual Mishkan it was representing.

THE SHEMONEH ESREI CONNECTION

The Mishkan of Parshas Vayakhel and Pekudei thus signifies the idea of elevating the material to the spiritual. This is a theme that is shared with Shemoneh Esrei as well.

On the one hand, the requests made during Shemoneh Esrei are physical in nature (such as health and sustenance). Even the more spiritually-inclined requests, such as Moshiach and the service in the Beis Hamikdash, relate to our physical existence. But at the same time, a Jew realizes that he must turn to Hashem and ask Him to provide all his needs, and that he must connect to Him. (As Chassidus explains, the word *tefillah* denotes not only prayer but also connection.)

It is through focusing our time and energy on others, whatever their spiritual state, that we can connect to the deepest levels.

What’s more, Chassidus explains that Shemoneh Esrei corresponds to the World of Atzilus. *Tefillah* thus symbolizes how we can elevate the material to the spiritual, and even to the level of Atzilus.

This is why Shemoneh Esrei is associated specifically with Ahaliav. Ahaliav was from the tribe of Dan, one of the lowliest *shevatim* (as opposed to Betzalel, who was from the tribe of Yehudah, one of the greatest *shevatim*).

The fact that Ahaliav joined Betzalel in building the Mishkan reflects the general theme of both the Mishkan and Shemoneh Esrei: elevating the lowly to the lofty.

TO BE MEKAREV AHALIAV

Shemoneh Esrei represents the idea of elevating one’s material elements to G-dliness. But this is not limited to one’s own self. Before *davening* we say Hareini, accepting the mitzvah of *ve’ahavta lere’acha kamocho*. This teaches us that this is the perspective we should adopt towards others as well.

One may sometimes feel it beneath his dignity to interact with someone who is of a lower stature. “I am a spiritual person,” he may argue. “When it comes time to *daven*, my spiritual heights are even greater. I am like Betzalel, who ‘resided in the shadow of G-d.’ This person, on the other hand, is like Ahaliav; he is a simple person who cannot relate with spirituality. We have no common ground. Why should I spend time to learn with him, guide him, and elevate him?”

The Mishkan teaches us that this is incorrect. Ahaliav joined Betzalel in building the physical Mishkan, and it was this Mishkan that was a “testimony” to G-d’s essence. We must similarly focus our time and energy on others, whatever their spiritual state, and it is through elevating them that we can connect to the deepest levels.

For further study, see *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 1, pp. 195ff.



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info@merkazanash.com
347.471.1770

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