

The CHASSIDUS PERSPECTIVE with Reb Yoel Kahn

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MOSHE'S BUSINESS ADVICE

Parshas Vayakhel begins by describing how Moshe gathered the Yidden together, saying, "These are the things Hashem has commanded to do: Six days work shall be done, and the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of Shabbos for Hashem."

What does "the things Hashem has commanded to do" refer to? Some commentators explain that it refers to the building of the Mishkan, mentioned a few pessukim later. However, the command to build the Mishkan is prefaced once again by the words, "Moshe told the congregation of Bnei Yisrael, 'This is what Hashem has commanded.' " It seems that the earlier possuk is referring to something else.

Others explain that the first command refers to keeping Shabbos, mentioned immediately afterward. But this command wasn't a chiddush; the Yidden were told to keep Shabbos a long time beforehand. Why did Moshe need to gather all the Yidden together to tell them something they had already heard? We must say there was a chiddush he was trying to convey.

Additionally, the terminology "Six days work shall be done" is unusual. Why doesn't the possuk state simply, "Six days you shall do work"?

AVOIDING AVODAH ZARAH

Rashi comments that Moshe gathered the Yidden together the day after Yom Kippur. It thus follows that this gathering was directly related to the events of the previous day.

What happened on Yom Kippur? On that day, Hashem pardoned the Yidden for *chet ha'egel*, the sin of avodah zarah. Hence, the very next day, Moshe transmitted a directive aimed at ensuring that the Yidden would not repeat their mistake and serve avodah zarah once again (as will be explained).

What exactly is the sin of avodah zarah?

The Rambam explains that initially, when the generation of Enosh began to worship the heavenly bodies, they knew full well that Hashem is the ultimate source of

everything. However, they believed that the sun and moon play a conscious role in supplying His sustenance to this world. They felt that since they have an active part in providing light, warmth, and so on, they are deserving of honor as well.

"The very next day, Moshe transmitted a directive aimed at ensuring that the Yidden would not serve avodah zarah once again."

This can be compared to the mitzvah of *kibbud av va'eim*. Of course, it is Hashem who creates the child. From the three "partners" in the creation of the baby, the parents merely provide the body, while Hashem provides the most crucial element—the neshamah. Furthermore, even the creation of the body is a G-d-given gift and brachah. But despite this, since the parents are the ones who allowed this G-dly *ko'ach* to come to fruition, they deserve the child's respect.

However, while this is true with parents, applying this to the heavenly bodies is avodah zarah. The truth is that the sun and moon are "as a chisel in the hand of the sculptor." No one would think of thanking the chisel for building the house; it is just an inanimate tool entirely at the whim of the craftsman. Similarly, the celestial beings are merely Hashem's "tools" and have no say in the matter whatsoever.

PLANTING WITH FAITH

This doesn't only apply to the sun and moon—it relates to everything else in nature as well.

Take business, for example. A person may say: "Of course my livelihood comes from Hashem. However, the business 'has an opinion' as well. The more thought and talent I invest in it, the more income it will generate." In other words, he is granting significance to another entity other than Hashem. On a subtle level, this is the same as the sin of avodah zarah.

The Gemara cites a possuk that contains six words, and explains that each word corresponds to another one of the six *sidrei Mishnah*. The first word, *emunah*, corresponds to Seder Zera'im.

What is the connection between emunah and Seder Zera'im? Tosafos explains that a Yid places his trust in Hashem, and this is why he sows and plants.

"For one to sit back and rely on bread to descend from the heavens, he must have emunah. But why does one need emunah to plant a kernel?"

This seems hard to understand. Why does one need emunah to plant? For one to sit back and rely on bread to descend from the heavens, he must have emunah. But why does one need emunah to plant a kernel in the ground? A heretic can plant as well!

The Rebbe explains that to the contrary, this expresses a Yid's emunah even more. If he wants food to fall from the sky, of course he must have emunah. But here, he is performing an action that will seemingly produce automatic results, and yet he realizes this alone cannot supply him with his sustenance. The only reason he is planting is because Hashem said, "I will bless you in *all that you do*," implying that a person must create a vessel in the natural order to accept His brachah. This, and only this, is why he plants.

This attitude is the ultimate antithesis of avodah zarah. Why does a Yid plant or engage in business? Not because it will accomplish anything on its own, but because this is the way Hashem directed him to act so he can receive His brachos.

HANDS OR HEAD?

These two approaches—to rely on the business itself or on Hashem—not only reflect variant viewpoints but have practical ramifications as well.

One who relies on Hashem follows the possuk, "If you eat from the *toil of your hands*, you are praiseworthy and it is good for you." On the one hand, the possuk uses the term "toil." But which part of the person is toiling? Only his hands, and whatever focus of the brain necessary for the hands to work. The brain's primary occupation, however, is to study Torah.

After all, the only reason he is engaging in business is because this is what Hashem commanded, and he therefore only invests as much toil as the Torah requires and nothing more. First of all, why waste unnecessary time and focus on business? Better use it to study Torah! And more importantly, he recognizes that doing so will not increase his success. Working more than necessary demonstrates that he grants significance to the work itself.

Of course, this doesn't mean that one should open a store at night far away from town and claim that he has done his part. Similarly, he must keep track of his business dealings, or else he might buy for more and sell for less! When Hashem says "I will bless you in *all that you do*," the action must be one that can

receive Hashem's brachah *al pi teva*. The idea, however, is that one should not become *engrossed* in it.

Cheating and *hasogas gevul* are out of the question; since the only reason he is working is to receive Hashem's brachos, it must be done in the way He directed. But even when everything is done correctly, he feels he is being forced to do it, and he would rather spend the time learning Torah.

This is why the possuk uses the terminology "Six days work *shall be done*." It should be done by itself as it were, without preoccupation.

THE CHIDDUSH OF VAYAKHEL

We can now understand what Moshe was trying to convey to the Yidden when he gathered them the day after Yom Kippur, when Hashem forgave the Yidden for the *chet ha'egel*. Even before telling them about the Mishkan—in which Hashem's shechinah, which withdrew as the result of the *chet ha'egel*, returned and

rested among the Yidden once more—he told them how they can ensure this sin would not repeat itself: "These are the things Hashem has commanded to do: Six days work *shall be done*," as if on its own, without preoccupation. When a person adopts such an attitude toward his work, he will not come to serve avodah zarah, as explained above.

And when a person acts this way during the week, then "the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of Shabbos for Hashem." Since his week was holy, Shabbos is even holier; he views it not merely as a day of rest, but as a

time to devote himself to Torah and tefillah (as the saying goes, *אזוי ווי דער וואך, אזוי גייט דער שבת*). And when his Shabbos is the way it should be, it will in turn have a positive effect on the following week, so that his work "shall be done," without preoccupation.

For further study, see *Lekutei Sichos*, Vol. 1, Vayakhel

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