

The
CHASSIDUS
PERSPECTIVE
 with Reb Yoel Kahn



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Parshas Shemini begins with the words, "It was on the eighth day." The number eight is in reference to the seven previous days of *milu'im*, during which Aharon and his children were trained into the *avodah*. Then, on the next day—day number eight—a new event took place: the *mizbei'ach* was inaugurated.

The Kli Yakar raises the following question: The inauguration of the *mizbei'ach* on this day was a new event, unrelated to the training of Aharon and his sons that happened earlier. That being the case, why should this day be described as the eighth, indicating that it was a continuation of the days preceding it?

He explains that since this would be the day when Hashem's glory would appear, there's a need to address why this day was special, featuring the revelation of the Shechinah. To explain the unique caliber of this day, the Torah refers to it as "the eighth."

THE EIGHTH DAY

Seven represents our universe; eight indicates Hashem's presence. The world was created in seven days, *shivas yemei bereishis*; on a level beyond that, there's Hashem, eight. Bris Milah overrides Shabbos because Shabbos takes place on the seventh, while *milah* occurs on the eighth, indicating that it is of a superior quality. The harp in the Beis Hamikdash had seven strings, while when Moshiach comes, it will possess eight. And so, by referring to the day in our *parshah* as the eighth, we can understand why it was special and merited Hashem's revelation.

[The Kli Yakar's language is that seven is "*chol*," mundane, while eight is holy. However, "*chol*" should not be taken in the literal sense, considering his example of *milah* and Shabbos, where Shabbos is holy as well. "*Chol*" is being used in a relative sense, because as holy as Shabbos is, eight is entirely G-dly.]

However, the more the Kli Yakar explains why eight is superior, which is intended to justify why Hashem appeared then, the more his original question looms larger. The Kli Yakar had questioned the fact that this day is referred to as "eighth," which denotes that it is a continuation of what preceded it. But based

THE PARADOX OF EIGHT

on his explanation, the seven days of *milu'im* seem even more unrelated than before, because the greater eight is, the more disconnected it becomes from the first seven!

We must therefore conclude that eight somehow includes both ideas: it demonstrates superiority over the seven on the one hand, yet displays a connection to them on the other.

BETWEEN SEVEN AND EIGHT

The Kli Yakar also cites a Midrash which states that Moshe's great moments are always accompanied by the word "*az*," "then" (for example, "*Az Yashir*—Moshe then sang"). He continues that "*az*" (which equals eight) signifies that "the *aleph* rides upon the *zayin*."

Zayin is seven, representing this world; either worldly things in the literal sense, or even Shabbos, but all within the world's parameters. But the *aleph* of eight is higher, and "rides" upon the *zayin*.

What does this mean? Riding doesn't just entail being higher; it also means impacting the entity below. When you ride an animal, you have affected it: until now it was just an ordinary animal, but now it has become elevated—it is transporting a human being.

Eight is completely G-dly, while seven is holy but still relatively so. Sometimes Shabbos is differentiated from the six days of the week, "Hashem created the world in six days, and on the seventh day He rested."

However, on other occasions all seven are combined (as in the term *shivas yemei bereishis*). In fact, Shabbos is sometimes included in the seven days of Creation, because it is the day when Hashem created rest (as Rashi explains).

Both work and rest demonstrate an association with worldly matters: either one is dealing with them, or he is taking a break from them. On a level beyond that paradigm, neither work nor rest would be possible. The fact that Shabbos is the day when Hashem created rest shows that it is still part of Creation.

So while Shabbos is still a part of the seven days of Creation, "eight" represents two ideas: on the one hand a reality that is completely unrelated, yet, ultimately, "the *aleph* rides upon

Eight represents a reality that is completely transcendent yet has a thorough impact.

the *zayin*." Shabbos isn't too removed from the six days of the week but doesn't greatly affect them either, while the eighth is completely transcendent yet has a thorough impact.

NEW LINE OF VISION

We mentioned that when Moshiach comes, the harp in the Beis Hamikdash will possess eight strings. The idea of eight—transcendent yet impactful—is demonstrated in a verse describing that era: "Hashem's glory will be revealed, and all flesh will see together that Hashem's mouth has spoken."

Seemingly, the second half of this verse is redundant. By saying that "Hashem's glory will be revealed," the *possuk* is telling us that even physical eyes will be able to perceive it, because if the revelation will only be accessible to those who possess spiritual eyes, then it isn't truly revealed. Describing it as revealed indicates that it will be perceivable even with eyes of flesh. That being the case, what does the second half of the *possuk* add by saying that "all flesh will see together that Hashem's mouth has spoken"?

In truth, however, these words are a significant addition. Although we already know that physical eyes will see the revelation from the first half of the *possuk*, the second half clarifies why this will be so.

One way of explaining this phenomenon is that the revelation of Hashem's glory will be so great that even eyes of flesh will be able to perceive it. The great revelation will allow the eyes to see what they naturally cannot. This can be compared to *krias Yam Suf*, where we are told that even maids saw things Yechezkel did not. Does this mean that the maids became people of stature, greater than Yechezkel? Of course not. The maids remained maids, even at that very moment, but the revelation was so strong that even they were able to see it. We might similarly believe it will be the same when Moshiach comes, just instead of the revelation lasting one night, it will remain that way constantly.

But that's what the second half of the sentence clarifies. It

redefines what eyes of flesh will be like: Today our eyes see physicality, not spirituality. However, when Moshiach comes, our eyes will acquire new characteristics, enabling them to see G-dliness. Today, when our eyes see physicality, it is not due to outside forces but is purely a natural phenomenon. Similarly, our eyes will then perceive Hashem not due to the great revelations of the time, but because they will naturally be able to do so.

RIDING WITH AN IMPACT

That's what "the *aleph* rides upon the *zayin*" signifies. Eight on the one hand is much greater than seven, yet "the *aleph* rides" and impacts the *zayin*. "Riding" indicates that the world itself is transformed so that it can perceive the highest levels, and that's what "*shemini*," the eighth, signifies.

This will happen on an absolute scale when Moshiach comes. However, even before then, when the Mishkan was inaugurated, Hashem's appearance didn't just feature a great revelation from Above; it was the kind that transforms the world, the *zayin* rising to the level of the *aleph*. And that's what is meant in our *possuk*: Hashem's revelation on this day was because it was "the eighth." It was far beyond the seven days of *milu'im* (which related to this world), yet at the same time it penetrated the seven.

What's the lesson in our *avodah*? *B'chol drochecha da'eihu*, "in all your ways you should know Him." Our knowledge of G-dliness must permeate not just Torah and mitzvos but everything we do. This will enable our very flesh to perceive "that Hashem's mouth has spoken."

For further study, see *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 3, pp. 973-974 and vol. 17, pp. 93-94.

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