

SHABBAT LASHEM

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Rabbi Meir Nehurai | Former Shaliach to BA UK

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Vayakhel and Pekudei describe the making of the Mishkan. These Parshiot repeat much of what is said in Parashot Terumah and Tetzaveh, and therefore, we must examine carefully to compare and contrast between them. The Torah never repeats for no reason and would certainly not repeat such a large number of Pesukim for no reason.

I would like analyse an idea from the Passuk: "Moshe said to the Children of Israel: See! God has called in the name of Bezalale son of...of the tribe of Yehuda..." The Passuk emphasizes Moshe's desire that the people pay particular attention to what is going on. The Torah is not merely relaying what happened in but stressing how Moshe called to the people, and asked them to pay attention. "See!". What, however, is so important about Bezalel being appointed to build the Mishkan that the people have to listen so closely? The Midrash Tanchuma says, that when Moshe descended the mountain and told the people that Hashem had chosen Bezalel to build the Mishkan, the people began to shout at Moshe. They claimed that it was not Hashem that had appointed Bezalel, but it was Moshe himself who had appointed him. Moshe replied that he had not acted from his own will but rather from that of Hashem's.

The Mishkan is the first Jewish factory. It belonged to all the people and everyone willing to donate money and jewellery. Many of the people saw themselves as fit to fill the main roles involved in building the Mishkan. Moshe, as the main leader of the project wished to take precautionary measures. He knew that the people would view the appointment of Bezalel as "political" and as a result if his "protexia". Therefore, Moshe saw it as his moral obligation to give the people details about the man who was to be responsible

over the building of the Mishkan. Moshe was overcome with emotion "See! Hashem has called!" Moshe is being honest with the people and saying it was not him that chose Bezalel but Hashem. Anyone who has to appoint someone else for a particular job, must be very careful in their choice. They must choose a person that people want and that will be good at the task. They must refrain from asking "what will the people say?".

The person appointed must always represent a personal example to the masses so that they can learn from the leader. "The face of a generation is according to the face of its leader". Moshe and also Bezalel were leaders chosen by Hashem, not by a vote of the people. They received their power from Hashem and not from the people. However despite this, they never closed their ears to the people. We are approaching the elections in Israel. In the past we have witnessed awful events and leaders who acted in an amoral way. There is no doubt that the new way of electing a prime minister directly is dangerous. It gives full power to one person. A leader must have a special character of humility that emphasises the power and the rule given to him by the people and must be conscious of this throughout.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: Early general elections for both the Prime Minister and the Knesset were held in Israel on 17 May 1999 following a vote of no confidence in the government; the incumbent Likud Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, ran for re-election. This election was only the second time in Israeli history an election had been held for the Prime Minister's post in addition to elections for the Knesset. Ehud Barak, promising to storm the citadels of peace regarding negotiations with the Palestinians and withdraw from Lebanon by July 2000, won the election in a landslide victory.

The Limits of Understanding

Rav Aharon Herskovitz | Rav Shaliach

This week we read Parshat Parah in addition to the regular Torah reading. This addition, which deals with the process of becoming pure after impurity caused by contact with the dead, has at its centre the command of the פרה אדומה, the red heifer. Chazal connect the use of this animal for the purity process to the sin of the golden calf, which we read last week (Bamidbar Rabbah 19:3):

And why are all sacrifices brought from male animals, but this (the red heifer) is a female? Rabbi Ayvo said: this is a parable to the son of the maidservant, who soiled the palace of the king. The king said: his mother should come and clean up the mess! So too Hashem declared "The heifer should come and atone for the sin of the golden calf."

Commentators over the centuries have tried to understand the connection between the sin of the golden calf and the command to use the red heifer for our purification process: at first glance, the two topics don't seem to be related one to the other. Additionally, the sin of the golden calf did not take place with an actual calf at all—why is the red heifer acting as its "mother" and repairing the sin that was done?

Rav Kook, in his work Midbar Shur (Drush 35), attempts to answer this question with another question: if we examine the sin of the golden calf, we can see that the people desired not to create a new god, but to have a replacement for Moshe. In other words, to still serve Hashem, but to be able to do so with a new intermediary that would help them achieve a greater connection. What is the problem with what they did? If people feel

that certain things will bring them closer to Hashem, shouldn't they be encouraged to do them?

Rav Kook explains that our human ability to innovate, while beneficial in other areas, can often end up being harmful in the area of religion. Even if we believe that we know that a certain act would be a positive contribution to our service of Hashem, it is entirely possible that we will miss the mark due to the finite nature of our understanding, and that what we perceive as beneficial is actually harmful. In this light, the sin of the golden calf was the fact that Bnei Yisrael instituted a human initiative when they had no business doing so.

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Contrastingly, the red heifer is an act that flies in the face of human understanding, the fact that the heifer "purifies the impure and defiles the pure" (Yoma 14a). We are told that when Shlomo HaMelech attempted to understand

the entirety of the Torah, he testified that he could understand all besides for this command, as "it is out of my grasp" (Bamidbar Rabbah, ibid). The seeming contradiction of the red heifer is precisely the point of the command: the declaration that our knowledge is limited and we accept the fact that Hashem's plan is complete, even though we are not necessarily able to comprehend it. For this reason, the heifer comes to purify from death, a natural occurrence that our belief in a benevolent God causes us confusion: if Hashem desires life, how does He allow death?

This, explains Rav Kook, is the connection between the golden calf and the red heifer: the golden calf represented an illegitimate

attempt by humans to add on to Hashem's Torah, while the red heifer is a declaration that we do not understand all of God's ways, as our own understanding is limited.

Although this does not mean that the entire endeavour of human initiative in religion is to

be frowned upon, I think that it should give us pause when we contemplate ideas regarding our individual and communal service of Hashem. May Hashem grant us the wisdom to understand what is right and desirable.

Shabbat Shalom!

Dvar Halacha: Weekly Question

Have a question? Please email rav@bauk.org or call Rav Aharon at 07976642135.

QUESTION: WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH PARSHAT PARAH?




ANSWER: Great question! The Mishna in Masechet Megillah (29a) mentions that we read Parshat Parah the week before reading Parshat HaChodesh. The reason for reading it at this point is either as a preparation for bringing the Korban Pesach (for which we would need to purify ourselves) or because

the original parah adumah was brought at the beginning of the month of Nissan. Although there are some opinions that this reading is Torah-level obligation (as the Shulchan Aruch paskens 685:7), many are of the opinion that the obligation is rabbinic in nature (eg. Mishna Berura 685:15), although we must be scrupulous in fulfilling this obligation. There is a debate as to whether women as well are obligated in this reading, though common practice is that women do not come specifically to hear the reading.



SUMMER MACHANE

Applications are now open!
1st - 14th August 2018

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camps@bauk.org

 תנועת בני אקבה
BNEI AKIVA UK

Community Updates

Israel Machane 5777 reunions have started! RAFI COHEN, Madrich for Group 2 wrote about their weekend reunion:

Israel Machane 5777 Group 2 were reunited at the London bayit last week to spend Shabbat together. Wonderfully uplifting davening, delicious meals and fantastic ruach were interspersed with reminiscing, playing in the snow, and catching up with friends not seen for a long time. Ideas were shared for everyone's future involvement with Bnei Akiva and everyone is getting excited to take Machane in the summer! The weekend was capped off with great fun at Hollywood Bowl and pizza and rave back at the bayit! A huge thank you to the Mazkirut for making it all possible!

Purim festivities took place in the LONDON BAYIT with a Comedy and Cocktails evening. Bogrim enjoyed hearing hilarious sets from Wisebaum, Adele Cliff, Josh Howie and the



evening was compered by Phillip Simon. Huge thanks to RACHEL CREEGER for helping to organise the event!

A Purim Seudah for Bogrim was held at the Rav and Rabbanit Shaliach's house. It was a lovely meal with wonderful company.

PINNER BNEI AKIVA have their Shabbat Ha'Irgun this week. We wish them behatzlacha!

MAZKIRUT Elections are open until March 16th. If you are interested in applying to the MAZKIRUT please contact joe@bauk.org.

Our SVIVA FIELDWORKER, JOSH ZELTZER ran a Lunch and Learn in Yavneh College on the topic of "Yetziat Mitzrayim: What are we remembering and why?"

