



Ashreinu | אשרינו

ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

פרשת שקלים

THE TAKEAWAY

RABBI AVI HOCHMAN

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NETANYA MEYEROWITZ ('17)

LANA ROSENTHAL ('17)

DANIEL FELDAN ('16)

ILANA RINDSBERG ('17)

Our parsha opens with the following:

וַיִּקְהַל מֹשֶׁה, אֶת-כָּל-
עֵדֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

“And Moshe gathered together the entire congregation of Bnei Yisrael...” (35:1)

However, when Moshe finishes talking to Bnei Yisrael, the Torah tells us:

וַיֵּצְאוּ כָל-עֵדֶת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, מִלִּפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה

“And the entire congregation of Bnei Yisrael left from Moshe” (35:20)

Is it not obvious? Could we not deduce that after Moshe finishes speaking to Bnei Yisrael that they leave his presence? If the Torah starts with Moshe speaking to Bnei

Yisrael and then they leave, it would not be preposterous to assume that they left from Moshe's presence! After all, he was talking to them, and then he was finished. Of course they left and went home!

Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian, in his sefer *Lev Eliyahu*, shares what I think is a life-altering understanding of these seemingly extra words. He explains that when Bnei Yisrael leave Moshe's presence, they are different. They gain from the experience of standing in front of Moshe, and are no longer the same as when they first came to Moshe. Being in the presence of Moshe has such a strong impact upon them, that everyone can tell from their actions and mannerisms that they have just been in Moshe's presence.

There are many experiences that we encounter on a daily basis that impact us in many ways. They change how we talk, what we eat, how we dress, how we spend our money, and how we live our lives. For this reason, when a person leaves the Kotel or from closing

the Aron Hakodesh, they walk backwards. They want to retain that experience that just took place.

The Torah is teaching us that whenever we are involved in an event, it should be noticeable from our deeds and traits where we have been. When we learn Torah, it should be obvious from how we behave outside of that Torah environment that the Torah has made an impact upon us.

Learning Torah should be incorporated into our very selves and should impact and refine our midot. The Torah teaches us how to interact with others in the world, how to control our animalistic desires, how to learn to be satisfied and not jealous of others, and so much more.

If this is true about Torah, then it is certainly true about other events that take place in our lives. Whether it be Color War, an AIPAC Policy Conference, Sarachek Tournament, a shabbaton, a summer program, a tanach class, or even a family dinner, we can never make the mistake of thinking that what we learn and experience has no effect on our lives. Our challenge is to be able to take from these experiences and apply them to our daily lives. Through our actions and behavior, these events should shape who we are and who we want to become.

TOGETHER FOR SHABBAT

NETANYA MEYEROWITZ ('17)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Vayakhel, the importance of unity is a recurring theme. Moshe reiterates that the Jewish people must keep the mitzvah of Shabbat, a day which unifies the Jews.

Bnei Yisrael also bring gifts morning after morning for the construction of the Mishkan, bringing the Jewish people closer to Hashem. Clearly, Hashem is suggesting the importance of a Jewish unity. The Torah states:

וַיִּקְהַל מֹשֶׁה, אֶת-כָּל-עֵדֻת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

“And Moshe gathered together the entire congregation of Bnei Yisrael...” (35:1)

“Moshe gathered the entire assembly of the Children of Israel” (Shmot 35:1) in order to speak to them before the construction of the Mishkan. It is extremely important for the Jewish people to have this closeness; when the Jews do not have this closeness, we get punished by Hashem. For example, when the Jewish people act with baseless hatred towards each other, Hashem destroys the second Beit Hamikdash. Perhaps Hashem is warning the Jewish people of the importance of unity.

Shabbat, a weekly happening, should feel like more than just an event to us. This parsha teaches us the importance of acting like a united nation and connecting with one another. Therefore, we need to feel grateful that we are given the opportunity each week to feel extra-connected to Hashem and our nation with our friends, family, and community. Let us not only relax and enjoy Shabbat, but also understand the importance of the oneness of our nation and continue to be united through this special day.

A FOR EFFORT

LANA ROSENTHAL ('17)

This week's parsha, Parshat Vayakhel, discusses Moshe's collection of the materials needed for the Mishkan and Betzalel's subsequent creation of the Mishkan according to Hashem's instructions. This parsha seems to be recounting the actual performance of Hashem's previous commandments in Parshiyot Terumah and Tetzaveh. While there appears to be an emphasis on the importance of following Hashem's outline exactly as commanded, Vayakhel also highlights the importance of effort over outcome.

Moshe tells the people to bring materials for the Mishkan, “asher yidvenu libo” --“a person accord-

ing to his generosity” (25:2). There was no specific amount of material each person had to bring; instead, it was up to each one to donate as much as he could, to truly make an effort. Rashi (35:27) underscores this theme by pointing out that the word **נְסִיִּים**, the princes of the tribes, is spelled without a yud. He explains that because the Nesi'im only offered to fill in with the materials that Bnei Yisrael did not donate instead of being enthusiastic and eager to give to the Mishkan, the word Nesi'im is spelled incorrectly. Even though they ended up donating the stones for the choshen, the most expensive contribution, it was not the amount that one contributed that mattered, but the way in which he gave it. It was not about the materials themselves, but the way in which the materials were given. Because the Nesi'im lacked initiative, the spelling of the word is incomplete. We also see this concept in the commandment of Shabbat. We receive a day of rest only after six days of hard work and effort.

This idea is echoed in next week's parsha, Pekudei, which is often read together with Vayakhel. Rashi (39:33) explains that Hashem gave Moshe the honor of raising the Mishkan. But it was impossible for one person to erect such a heavy structure. Further, the Torah (40:17) says: **הִקָּם הַמִּשְׁכָּן**, the Mishkan was raised by itself. Clearly, Moshe did not do it. Rashi explains that Moshe was given the honor of exerting himself to raise the Mishkan; even though, miraculously, it was raised by Hashem, due to Moshe's effort, he is credited with the act.

Even natural talents cannot be maximized without effort. We must always be willing and eager to give and to put effort into our pursuits.

RAGS AND RICHES

DANIEL FELDAN ('16)

This week at YHS we had color war, for which the students were split up into 4 teams to compete in a wide variety of challenges. The four teams were

named chachmah, osher, gevurah, and kavod, after the four attributes Ben Zoma talks about in the first mishna of the fourth perek of Pirkei Avot.

In the mishna, Ben Zoma discusses what it truly means to become wise, rich, strong, and honorable. He says in order to become wise, you have to learn from others. In order to become strong you have to conquer your inner emotions. And in order to become honorable, you have to honor others.

However, if one were to analyze how Ben Zoma defines being rich, he would recognize an apparent question. Ben Zoma says, “Who is the rich man? The man who is happy with what he has.” In contrast, the Google definition of being rich is, “having a great deal of money or assets; wealthy.” With all of his other statements, Ben Zoma suggests a way to become strong, smart, or honorable. However, being happy with what you have does not make you rich. If I appreciate what I have, that does not mean I have more money than Bill Gates. Being rich is defined by having money. Appreciating what you have does not provide you with more money?!

A possible answer to the question lies within this week's maftir, Parshat Shekalim. In the maftir, all of the Jews are commanded to give a half-shekel for a census. God commands both the rich and poor Jews to give half a shekel, not more or less. A commonly accepted reason for this commandment is that God wanted the people to realize that in God's eyes, everyone is equal. In God's eyes, your wealth is not important.

This idea explains Ben Zoma's definition of wealth. Every man, no matter his physical wealth, is given the exact tools he needs to accomplish his goal. Everyone has the half-shekel that God needs him to give.

We must realize that God has given us what we each need, whether it is a lot of money or not a lot of money. Once we realize this and appreciate and maximize what is given to us, we will become rich with what we have.

ON THE FRONT LINES

ILANA RINDSBERG ('17)

This week's parsha, Parshat Vayakhel, describes the contributions of each tribe to the Mishkan. However, when the Torah describes the leaders' contributions (Shmot 35:27), it misspells and writes והנשאם without the letter *yud* instead of נשיאים. This signifies a lack of something in what the leaders were doing. Rashi tells us that the leaders vouched that they would cover anything that was missing after all the donations had been collected, however Bnei Yisrael donated everything, so there was nothing left for them to give. Since they waited to give, the Torah removes a letter.

Now, the leaders' offer does not seem to be flawed; in fact, it seems to be quite the opposite. Their willingness to give any necessary materials is extremely generous. So why is the Torah hinting that what they did was flawed?

To answer this question, we must visit a truth of life. In order to have success, one must not only be capable but motivated. Perseverance is the main component in this equation for success. When one has drive and initiative to do something, that person is more likely to succeed than one who is unenthusiastic.

A great example comes directly from this week's parsha. When describing the men who were going to volunteer to help build the Mishkan, the Torah uses the word "inspired." This signifies that those who were going to do holy work were inspired by their faith, which is what led them to volunteer for this task. They were eager and excited to do the work.

The leaders of the tribes say that they will give anything that is needed at the end. They should have instead been at the front of the line, overjoyed to give donations to the Mishkan.

In Judaism, we are taught that thoughts are not what matter most, but actions. We must seize every opportunity to do a mitzvah and do it with all of our hearts.

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