

Vayakhel: A Shiur on Mishkan and Shabbat

- A shiur explaining both views about why the Shabbat takes precedence over the building of the Mishkan. Two views about the 39 melachot, one - categories of work found in the Mishkan, two - universal concept concerning human creativity. Both views explained.

VAYAKHEL A SHIUR ON MISHKAN AND SHABBAT

Begins with Shabbat. SHESHET YAMIM... LO TEVAARU ESH... You shall work for six days, the seventh day is a holy day of rest, whoever... Do not burn a fire in all your places of sojourn... on the holy Sabbath.

We may ask, why the repetition of Shabbat again? Rashi, to teach the Jewish people not to build the Mishkan on Shabbat. Why not? After all the service within the Mishkan took precedence over the Sabbath! It did not cease on the Sabbath! If so, why not build the Mishkan on Shabbat?

The Gemara has two views concerning the 39 types of work forbidden, either they represent the 39 categories of work done by humanity, or the 39 categories of work found in the construction of the Mishkan, and this determines what is Melacha and therefore forbidden on Shabbat.

Does it refer to a universal concept, human creativity, KENEGED KOL MELACHOT SHEBETORAH, then the idea of rest on Shabbat is clear. It is testimony to the true creator. All human creativity is pale copy of God's master creation.... according to His will, and on Shabbat we declare that we understand this, refrain on Shabbat from creation, in order to contemplate this concept and give thanks for Hashem's works.

However if SHEVITAT SHABBAT is KENEGED AVODAT HAMISHKAN, then the concept of Shabbat depends on another idea. Why did God require us to work through the rest of the week? In the Ten Commandments we read "For six days you shall toil and do all your work." It sounds almost like an imperative, a mitzvah, to produce during the six days of the week.

The answer is that in a sense it is an imperative. "And the Lord God took the Man, and placed him in the Garden of Eden, LEAVDA ULESHAMRA. Man and woman should be productive, shape and protect the Almighty's world. This is their natural role. But to what end? That the world, and particularly human society, become a MISHKAN for SHEHINA. An abode and resting place for the Almighty. The human role is to build and protect a Gan Eden, a world in which God's presence will reside in our midst.

Yet, though man has this task, and struggles with it during the six weekly days of activity, on Shabbat this task pauses, for on Shabbat, the SHEHINA comes of and by itself, into the world. VEYOM HASHEVIT SHABBAT LAADOSHEM ELOKECHA, LO TAASE KOL MELACHA. The seventh day of the week is a Sabbath for the Lord your God, do not do any work.

SHABBAT KEDOSHA VEKAYAMA MISHESHET YEMEY BERESHIT, The Sabbath is holy from the day of creation. Every seventh day from the time of creation of the world, the Almighty brings His presence into the world, and KEDUSHAT SHABBAT MEEYN OLAM HABA of

YEMOT HAMASHIACH, of GAN EDEN. On Shabbat, the world in toto becomes a MISHKAN, a dwelling place for SHECHINA.

Our work during the six days is to convert the secular into holy, HOL into KODESH, to be MEKADESH the world, and all the material in it. Therefore the work of the Mishkan ceases on Shabbat, the reason being that the SHEHINA comes into the world at BEN HASHEMASHOT on Shabbat, and the world becomes MEEYN OLAM HABA.

The world on Shabbat is a mishkan, filled with God's presence, as it says in the awesome description, of the KEGAVNA prayer from the Zohar, VELES SHULTANA AHARON BEKOLEY ALMA BAR MINA, There is no other master of the universe in all the universes on shabbat except for the Shabbat itself. No other force exists in all the spiritual worlds, except for Shabbat; the KEDUSHAT SHEHINA gushes forth into the world, and that is why the Torah prohibits BINYAN HAMISHKAN on Shabbat.

On six days man creates a man-made abode for God. On the seventh day God Himself converts his entire universe into His holy house and dwelling.

We read further in Vayakhel, LO SEVAARU ESH BECHAL MOSHVOSEYCHEM BEYOM HASHABAT. Many interpretations. Rambam, Mishna Torah, no court punishment to be meted out on the Shabbat day. Not by the courts in this world, not by the heavenly court in the world to come. Neither the living nor dead are punished on Shabbat. Punishment can exist only when human souls are distant from the Almighty, adrift and alienated from the source of holiness, in exile.

On Shabbat night and day, when the spirit of the Kadosh Baruch hu pours into the world, all souls are at peace, close to the source of reality, attached to Him, caressed by the holy spirit of the Sabbath. Jewish souls discover a NESHAMA YESERA, an added spirituality not experienced during the six days of creation.

Shabbat is also a day of VAYAKHEL MOSHE, of KEHILOS GEDOLOS, as the Midrash says, day of learning and study in our study halls. On Shabbat Jews gather KEHILA KEHILA, to study Torah,... On Shabbat the world becomes a MISHKAN and its centre is TALMUD TORAH, just as the MISHKAN has as its centre the ARON HAKODESH. The KRIAT HATORAH on Shabbat and ZEMAN BET HAMIDRASH are the central Jewish preoccupation. TORAH SHEBIKTAV, KRIAT HATORAH, and TORAH SHEBEAL PE, the learning of Torah, in Bet Midrash, are the spiritual loci of the KEDUSHAT SHABBAT.

As shabbat leaves, we pray that in our own world we shall merit to make the profane holy there too. YEHI RATZON SHETISHRE SHECHINATHA BEMAASE YADENU.

(Submitted by Nisson Shulman)