

21.

VAYAKEL 1981

In the Torah portion Vayakel we have mentioned the Sabbath. There are two aspects to the Sabbath. One where we remember the creation of the world and we speak of G-d as the creator. The other aspect of the Sabbath is we talk about remembering the Exodus from Egypt. We speak about G-d as the G-d of providence. G-d has acted in human affairs. In past generations the concept of G-d the creator has come under challenge. Now the concept of G-d as a force still active in human affairs is being called into question. In order for us to believe in objective morality we must believe that G-d is still active in human affairs. Many of the social sciences today are trying to undermine this belief.

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Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

In the Torah portions Vayakhel-Pekude we have recounted how the Tabernacle was finished. We learn how afterwards the cloud covered the Tabernacle and the glory of G-d filled the Mishkan. G-d's presence could be felt by everyone. It is interesting to note that this book of Exodus, Shmos, is known as Sefer Haga'ula, the book of the redemption. It, of course, deals with the redemption of the Jewish people from Egypt and it also deals with the building of the Mishkan. In fact, if we were to deal with the number of verses there are probably more verses to do with the building of the Mishkan than the redemption from Egypt itself. This is a little hard to understand. What's more, interspersed throughout the reciting of the details of the building of the Mishkan are the laws of the Sabbath. In fact, the very opening of the Torah portion, Vayakhel, teaches us that we are not to create fire on Sabbath. We can use one already in existence, but we cannot create fire. Why should it be that the glory of G-d did not descend upon the Jewish people until after they had built the Mishkan? After all, wasn't the Exodus from Egypt the greater event? What did the completion of the Mishkan have to do with G-d's glory descending and why is the whole book of Shmos called the book of redemption when only the first part deals with the redemption from Egypt? It seems to me that we are being told something very important here. This is indicated by the use of the word Vayakhel. The word Vayakhel<sup>chul</sup> is used when we refer to something which is finished but not completed. In the very beginning when G-d created the world it said, "Vayakhel<sup>chul</sup>, He finished the world", but it was not completed. We are given the job of completing the world. It is very easy to start things. It is harder to finish them, and it is the most difficult to maintain them, to complete them. So many people who have started buildings have even finished them, but then they let them run down. They do not maintain them. There are many people who start things but do not know how to maintain things. This is especially true in relationships. They just cannot maintain them. There are many people who know how to start things and know how to finish them, but are very poor administrators. There are many synagogues in the United States which are falling apart because people do not know how to maintain them. In life it is very important that we know how to maintain relationships, that we know how to nurture them and let them grow. Some women are accused of not being creative because they stay home

and raise a family. Here they have children and are nurturing them and letting them grow. What could be more creative than that? G-d's glory could not come down on the Jewish people until they learned how to maintain their relationship with G-d. The Rabbis say that they were not allowed to build the Mishkan on Shabbos because Shabbos is a day where we maintain what we have, where we learn how to complete what we have finished. Our use of fire is limited on Shabbos to teach us that the highest form of creativity, the highest form of human achievement is not in creating but in maintaining. G-d's glory did not come upon the Mishkan until it was actually in use. The Mishkan was finished actually around Chanukah time in the month of Kislev. It was not dedicated and used until Nissan. Only then did G-d's glory descend. G-d's glory did not descend upon the Jewish people in full force when they left Egypt, only when they learned how to maintain their relationships. The story about the man who came into an antique shop and asked how much an item was. He was told it was \$450. He came back the next week and asked how much the same item was. He was told it was \$500. He asked why and the owner said, "Don't you realize how much labor and materials have gone up?". We, too, have sacrificed permanent values for the restless pursuits after new starts. It is not as important starting as it is to learn how to maintain and deepen what you have.

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In the Torah portion Vayakhel we learn all about the construction of the Tabernacle. Before we learn about how the Tabernacle was all put together and how Moshe Rabbeinu took donations for it, we learn about the Shabbos. This, of course, was to teach us that the Mishkan could not be built on Shabbos. Creativity has its limits. It is strange, though, that when G-d first commanded Moshe about the Tabernacle He first told him about how they were to build the Tabernacle and only afterwards did He tell him about the Shabbos. Here, when Moshe gathers together the people he first tells them about the Shabbos and only afterwards about building the Tabernacle. What's more, the Rabbis learn a very interesting Halacha from the sentence which says "You shall not burn fire in all your habitations on Shabbos." They learn from this passage that no punishment is to be meted out on the Shabbos. How could they derive this Halacha from these words? It seems to me that the answer to these questions lie in the timing of G-d speaking to Moshe and Moshe speaking to the people. When G-d spoke to Moshe He had talked to him before the sin of the golden calf. Moshe was talking to the Jewish people after the sin of the golden calf. What was the sin of the golden calf? The main sin of the solden calf was that the people worshipped the work of their own hands. They thought that creativity was everything. They failed to realize that even their creativity was limited. There are certain experiments we cannot do because they will harm human beings. What's more, even whether or not we can use our talents is limited. You might be born the greatest violinist in the world, but if you were born 2000 years ago you would not play because the violin was not invented yet. You might have been the greatest auto racer, but if you were born 300 years ago you never would have had a chance to use that talent. You might be the greatest space drive, but today you cannot use this talent. If you were born 50 years ago with great computer skills you would not have been able to use these skills until very recently. Even in sports Earl Campbell could not have been a great fullback or halfback because football was not invented. Then he would have to kick the ball, not carry it. Many times we find that people worship the creation of their hands. I remember how a few years ago there were

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several terrorist attacks in Israel and people were killed. Israel retaliated by destroying 100 planes in Beirut. People were up in arms, not because people were killed, but because millions of dollars worth of property was destroyed. People worship the creation of their hands. I remember, too, being called by a very old woman who was very upset because she had almost no contact with her family. Nobody wanted to come and see her. I went there and I found that she not only had a cover over her furniture, but she had a plastic cover over that and a newspaper on top of the plastic cover. What's more, she told me she never allowed her grandchildren to sit in the living room or dining room. She also had a beautiful garden, but would allow no one to play ball in it. I did not have the heart to tell her she was worshipping her things instead of establishing relationships with her family. I did sit on her chair which I think made her mad because she never called me again. We find sometimes that people worship the creation of their own hands. That's why when Moshe told the Jewish people about the Tabernacle he first prefaced it by telling them about the Shabbos. People, relationships are much more important than things, even the creation of our own hands. G-d told Moshe first about the Tabernacle and only about the Shabbos afterwards, because the people had no yet sinned with the golden calf. They had not yet worshipped the creation of their own hands, and perhaps they would not, but Moshe knew they would and, therefore, he told them about the Shabbos first. That's, too, why we learn from this passage that we are not to punish anyone on this day. It is a day for establishing relationships, even with people who are unworthy and have done terrible things. Too often in our day all people are interested in is the creation of their own hands and not people. I am reminded of the story of the man who, upon his retirement, was given a dinner. At the dinner someone stood up and said, "This man, Mr. Jones, does not know the meaning of the word dissembling. Mr. Jones does not know the meaning of the word quit. He does not know the meaning of the words to be late. He does not know the meaning of the word failure. Therefore, we have all pitched in together to buy him a dictionary." Unfortunately, in life today too many people do not know what really counts. It is relationships, not things.

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Today we took out two Torahs because today is also Parshas Parah. We read about the special ceremony that was performed when the Temple stood to purify people who were ritually impure. Ritual impurity did not have anything to do with committing a sin. Ritual impurity had to do with things that make a person psychologically depressed, liked taking care of the dead. Caring for the dead, of course, is a great Mitzvah. The High Priest on his way to perform the Yom Kippur services, if he found an unattended dead body, was told that he must stop and take care of this body even though he would by so doing become ritually impure and become ineligible to conduct the Yom Kippur services. People who were ritually impure had to become pure before they could enter the Temple. There was something strange, though, about this ceremony. Everybody who prepared the ashes of the red cow, which were used in the sprinkling, became themselves impure while those who were ritually unclean and were sprinkled by these ashes became pure. This seems very strange that those who prepared the mixture became unclean while those who were sprinkled with it became clean. Perhaps we can understand this by what we learn in our Torah portion Vayakhel. In the Torah portion Vayakhel we learn about the construction of the Tabernacle and all the objects in it, how the people contributed for it, and how each part of the Mishkan was made. The Torah portion starts out by telling us about Shabbos and then it goes into the details of the building of the Mishkan. Originally, when G-d told Moshe to build the Tabernacle, He told him first about all the details of the Tabernacle and then about the Shabbos. Why did Moshe reverse the order? Why when G-d told him about the building of the Tabernacle He put the building first and the Shabbos second, but when Moshe told the people he put the Shabbos first and the building of the Mishkan second. The rabbis tell us that something very significant occurred between the time when Moshe received the commandment from G-d to build the Tabernacle and the time when Moshe communicated this commandment to the Jewish people. The people in the interim had sinned by worshipping the golden calf. They had committed a terrible sin. What was their sin? They worshipped the works of their own hands. Today we find people performing this same sin. They worship their own abilities. They worship their own talents, the works of their own hands. If they are a businessman

or a professional they consider their business or profession the highest value. They are willing to sacrifice their family and friends and even morality for the sake of success or developing their own talents. This is worshipping the works of your own hands. It is true it is important that we develop our own talents, and it is important that we be creative, but not at the sacrifice of our family or friends or of being immoral. That's what the Shabbos teaches us. Shabbos teaches us that we are not only man the creator, but man the appreciator and mediator. We not only must create, but we must relate. In the beginning before the people had sinned with the golden calf G-d stressed man's creative ability, and then He put down the laws of the Shabbos to teach us that we must learn to relate. When Moshe relayed the laws to the people, after the sin of the golden calf, he knew that he had to stress the fact that man had to learn to relate as well as create. We create six days a week. Creation is important, but without learning how to relate we end up worshipping our own creations. This, too, was one of the reasons why the ashes of the red heifer made all who prepared it impure and purified those who were impure. This was not a magic potion. The people who created it had to realize that their creation was not everything. Their creation was not a magical potion which would save the Jewish people alone from ritually impurity. It was only a means to an end, just like all creation is a means to an end so we can better learn how to relate. The people became pure because others sprinkled them. You could not purify yourself. You need others in order to get out of a depression. In life we have to realize how to relate as well as create. Unfortunately, we have only stressed creation in our modern era. Therefore, many people do not develop at all their ability to relate. This Torah portion teaches us that it is wrong to worship the works of our hands. We must never let developing our abilities be our first and primary value. Our first and primary value must be to be people who know how to relate and have moral values. I am reminded of the story they tell about a woman who had a fight with her husband. She went home to her mother and said, "Mommy, I decided to teach my husband a lesson. I'm going to live with you." Her mother looked at her

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and said, "Daughter, if you really want to teach your husband a lesson you'll go home and I'll come live with you." The major lessons of life are learning how to relate. Creation is important but so is learning how to relate.

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In the conclusion of the Torah portions Vayakhel-Pekude we conclude the second book of the Bible, the Book of Shmos. The rabbis call the Book of Shmos (Numbers in English) by two names. They call it Shmos, which means "names", and they also called it "Sefer HaGula - the Book of the Redemption". It is hard to understand why the rabbis call this second book of the Bible Sefer HaGula, the Book of Redemption. After all, only the first part of the book talks about the redemption from Egypt while the second half, the greater portion of the book, speaks about the Mishkan, the Tabernacle, how it was constructed, what materials were used to construct it, etc., yet the rabbis insist on calling the whole book Sefer HaGula. Why should this be so? What's more, when we read the Torah portion Pekude it says over and over again that the people did "as G-d had commanded Moshe". Why this repetition? And why also did Moshe Rabbeinu bless the people? It says that "Moshe saw all the work and behold they did it as G-d had commanded so they did, and Moshe blessed them." Rashi and the commentators explain that the blessing that Moshe gave the people was that G-d's presence should be felt in the work of their hands. But why did Moshe have to give this blessing to the Jewish people? After all, G-d, Himself, had given this promise to the Jewish people when He said, "And you make Me a Tabernacle, and I will dwell in their midst." Why, then, did Moshe have to bless the people? Furthermore, we will notice that as we read about the construction of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle, that interspersed throughout we learn about Shabbos. What does Shabbos have to do with the construction of the Mishkan?

To my mind, the answer to all these questions can be found in the words that the Torah used in explaining the construction of the Mishkan and the finishing of the constructing of the Mishkan. It says, "Vayakhel Moshe -

and Moshe finished the construction of the Mishkan". It uses the word "Vayakhel". This is a strange word. This is exactly the same word that G-d uses when He finishes creation. It says, "And they were finished the heaven and the earth and all their hosts." What does it mean when we use the word "Vayakhel"? Vayakhel really does not mean "to finish". Vayakhel means "to complete" but not finish. Something can be completed but not finished. That is why it says, "And it was complete all the work of the Tabernacle of the tent of meeting". We use the word complete but not finish. G-d completed the world, but He did not finish it just the same way we can complete the building of a Mishkan, of a Tabernacle, of a shul, but we are not finished. You can have a beautiful structure but if there are no services in there, if there are no study groups in there, if there are no benevolent societies that meet in there like a Chevra Kadisha or Free Loan Society, then the structure is complete, but it is not finished. That is the same thing G-d did when He completed the world. He completed it, but it is not finished. That is why it says, "Lasos - to do" at the very end, because He gave lots for us to do. The world is complete. Everything is here. We just have to learn how to use it in the proper way. All diseases have their proper cures. We just have to look for the cures. That is why we always say G-d created the cure before He created the disease. This is true of every aspect of life. We could think that the world's climates would be so inhospitable to man that we could not live in the world, but we know, because of our ingenuity and scientific skill, that we can invent different things which will allow us to live in all the climates of the earth. The world is complete. Everything is here that we need, but it is not finished.

That was true also of the Mishkan. It was completed but was not finished.

Too often in life we look to create but not to relate. We do not understand that it is not enough to create an object, but we have to relate to it in the proper way. That, of course, is what Shabbos is teaching us. That's why Shabbos is interspersed among the building of the Mishkan, because the Shabbos teaches us that we are to be man the meditator, man the appreciator, that we not only have to create things, but we have to learn how to relate to things. We have to learn how to appreciate them. We have to learn to extend ourselves and how to help others and not just be concerned with creating objects, because man has been granted by G-d. That, of course, was the blessing that G-d gave man, that if you will build the Mishkan, then I will dwell in their midst, that G-d has given man great creative powers, but these creative powers are not enough. We have to learn how to relate these powers to everybody else. We have to learn how to relate ourselves to these powers. That is why it is so important that Moshe also bless the Jewish people. He blessed them that G-d's presence should rest in the work of their hands, not only that they should have the creative ability but they should know how to use this creative ability in a way to better society, in a way to develop themselves spiritually, in a way to make themselves better people. A synagogue can be complete, but it is not finished until there are services there, until there are people working together as a unit, until there is a Sisterhood, a Men's Club, study groups, etc. Something can be complete but not finished.

That is also why we say over and over again that the people did as G-d commanded Moshe, because G-d just does not want us to create. Creation alone without learning how to relate, without learning how to appreciate can be a trap in which we are just greater and greater weapons of destruction instead of learning how to relate to each other, learning how to appreciate

each other, learning how to make a spiritual life that is important. You can the most beautiful house but if the people inside are always fighting and tearing at each other it is not going to do any good. You can have a hovel, but if the people relate to each other in a loving and caring way you can have a wonderful experience. This, too, is very important for us to grasp. It is not things which will help us bring Ge'Ula, redemption, to the world. Both parts of the Book of Shmos deal with redemption. We have to have physical redemption in order to create. A slave has no time. A slave cannot follow truth. A slave cannot have a family. A slave cannot be creative, because a slave must do what his master says. Therefore, the three disabilities of Jewish law that a slave cannot testify because he does not know the truth, and a slave cannot fulfill the commandments that have to do with time because time is not his, and a slave cannot get married. He cannot have a family in the sense that we mean a family. Therefore, G-d tell us, "You want to bring Ge'ula to the world? You want to bring redemption to the world? You want to finish what I complete? Then first be free and learn how to relate. If you can do these things then you can bring Ge'ula to the world."

We today are celebrating the birth of a beautiful baby girl. We thank G-d with all our heart that she is born complete. All her limbs are there. Nothing is missing. She is a healthy normal baby. She is complete, but she is not finished. She can only grow and mature if she learns how to respond and relate to her parents. Her parents, too, grow and her grandparents and friends when they learn how to relate to her. How does a baby mature? By learning how to respond, by imitating her parents and those around her, and if a baby learns the right things then they grow up to be a mensch. They grow up to want to bring redemption to the world. May little Aviva Yael

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grow up to be such a person. May her parents have much naches and joy from her, and may she, by learning to create and relate, help bring Ge'ula to the world, and may we all work together so that the Ge'ula Shleimal will come.

VAYAKHEL 1992  
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

In the Torah portion Vayakhel and Pekude we learn about the construction of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. In Judaism we have two temples. We have a temple of time and a temple of space. That's why interspersed among the descriptions of how the Tabernacle was built are admonitions of how we are to keep the Sabbath. The things that occupy no space are many times more important than those things which occupy space: love, devotion, dedication, etc. When the Jewish people complete the building of the Tabernacle Moshe blesses them. The rabbis all ask why does Moshe bless them? After all, G-d, Himself, had blessed them earlier when He said, "And they shall make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst". Why did Moshe have to bless them?

The answer can be found perhaps in the word Torah, itself. If we add up the letters of the word Torah they add up to 611. We all know that there are 613 commandments. The rabbis tell us that at Mount Sinai the Jewish people themselves heard the first two commandments. They apprehended G-d when G-d said, "I am the Lord your G-d and you shall have no other gods before Me". We all know that each of us has a piece of G-d in us. Each of us knows that there is more to life than life itself. Each of us knows that we are more than just a physical creature. G-d had promised the Jewish people that if they would build a Tabernacle He would dwell in them. The rabbis tell us that each of us is a temple. Each of our bodies is a sanctuary, that G-d has given us the Torah in order to help us make each of our bodies, themselves, a Tabernacle. However, we have to want to make our bodies a Tabernacle. G-d gave us the Torah, 611 of the commandments, to help us make our body a sanctuary, but we have to want to do it.

