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WEEKLY SHMUESS

SHMINI

**Integrating
With Hashem**

**DRASHA FROM THE
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בלבבי משכן אבנה על התורה תשס"ו

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Parshas Shmini – Integrating With Hashem

Moshe Rabbeinu's Refusal To Do The Avodah on The Eighth Day of the Mishkan

“And it was on the eighth day that Moshe called to Aharon and his sons and to the elders of Yisrael”. The *Targum Yehonasan* explains, “It was on the eighth day [specifically] in order to include Aharon and his sons. In addition, the eighth day was the completion [of the Tabernacle]. It was the first day of the month of *Nissan*, when Moshe erected the *Mishkan* but did not disassemble it, and he did not serve anymore on the Altar.

Thus Moshe called to Aharon and to his sons and to the elders of Yisrael.”

The eighth day of the inauguration of the *Mishkan* was *Rosh Chodesh Nissan*, and on that day, the *Mishkan* was assembled. In the first seven days, Moshe served [as *Kohen Gadol*] and offered sacrifices on the Altar.

On the eighth day, however, the *Targum Yehonasan* states that he did offer any sacrifices on the Altar. Moshe Rabbeinu stopped doing the *avodah* on that day.

Two things happened on the eighth day of the *Mishkan*, which are really one. During the first seven days, Moshe assembled the *Mishkan* and also disassembled it, but on the eighth day, he assembled it and did not disassemble it afterwards.

An additional factor that occurred was that during the first seven days, Moshe served on the Altar like a *Kohen Gadol*, and from the eighth day onward, he stopped serving.

The First 7 Days of the Mishkan vs. the 8th Day

The *Baal HaTurim* cites the words of the Sages that the *gematria* of the “On the eighth day, Moshe called” *משה קרא השמיני* is equal in value to the word “It was on the day of *Rosh Chodesh Nissan*” *היה ביום בראש חודש* and that Moshe was saying, “Since I refused [Hashem’s command to lead] by the Burning Bush for seven days, I did not merit to serve [as *Kohen Gadol*] except for seven days.” Thus, Moshe’s refusal by the episode of the Burning Bush, which lasted for seven days, corresponds to the seven days which he merited to serve as *Kohen Gadol*.

This simply needs understanding. It seems to be that Moshe’s refusal by the Burning Bush was a bad thing, not a good thing. If so, why did he merit to serve as *Kohen Gadol* for seven days, corresponding to the seven days in which he refused Hashem’s command to lead the people, by the episode of the Burning Bush? Although he only merited to serve as *Kohen Gadol* for seven days and not more, why should the seven days of his service be a result of refusing to approach the bush for seven days, if this refusal was not a good thing? Simply speaking, Moshe’s refusal was not the reason that he merited to serve as *Kohen Gadol* for seven days.

The depth of the matter appears to be as follows.

For each of the seven days of the inauguration of the *Mishkan*, Moshe assembled the *Mishkan* and also disassembled it. The design of the *Mishkan* resembled the design of the heavens and the earth for the Sages state that Betzalel’s knowledge of designing the *Mishkan* came from his knowledge of combining the Hebrew letters from which the heavens and earth

were created. Thus, the assembling and disassembling of the *Mishkan* corresponds to the concept of “He creates worlds and destroys them”.

When Moshe assembled the *Mishkan* during the first seven days, this corresponded to the ongoing “building” of the universe. When Moshe disassembled it, this corresponds to the ongoing “destruction” of the universe. On the eighth day, there was only assembling/building, and no more disassembling/destroying.

During the first seven days, when Moshe served as *Kohen Gadol* and offered sacrifices on the Altar, and on the eighth day, he discontinued his service. The simple understanding of this is that he had the *zechus* (merit) to serve for seven days, and on the eighth day, he no longer had the *zechus*. This is in line with the words of the *Baal HaTurim* in the name of the Sages, that Moshe merited to serve as *Kohen Gadol* for only seven days because he refused [Hashem’s command to lead] for seven days by the Burning Bush.

But there is a deeper understanding. There were really two points in the assembling of the *Mishkan*: When Moshe served as *Kohen Gadol*, and when Moshe did not serve as *Kohen Gadol*. When Moshe served as *Kohen Gadol*, this represents action. For the seven days, Moshe acted as the *Kohen Gadol* and performed service. This is the inner reason behind why the *Mishkan* had to be assembled and then disassembled for the seven days – since it involved the actions of a human being, it was eventually disassembled, for all actions of all created beings must ultimately reach the state of *bittul* (nullification) to the Creator. Thus, the *Mishkan* was assembled and disassembled for each of the first seven days.

But on the eighth day of the *Mishkan*, when Moshe stopped serving, the *Mishkan* no longer involved Moshe’s actions. Just as the *avodah* in the *Mishkan* on the eighth day did not involve action, the actual assembling of the *Mishkan* on the eighth day

was also not through Moshe’s actions. Therefore, on the eighth day, the *Mishkan* did not have to be disassembled.

In summation, the first seven days of the *Mishkan* involved the actions of Moshe, when he served as *Kohen Gadol* for this time, and thus it was assembled and disassembled for these first seven days, whereas the eighth day of the *Mishkan* represented a point above the *avodah* of Moshe – where there is only assembling and no disassembling.

The Full Revelation of the Shechinah Is Only Through Self-Nullification

Rashi in this week’s *parshah* states that Aharon saw that all the *korbonos* had been brought and everything had been done, and yet the *Shechinah* still had not descended. This was painful and he said: “I know that Hashem is angry with me, and that it is because of me that the *Shechinah* has not descended.” He said to Moshe: “Moshe, my brother. Should this happen to me, that I should enter and be shamed?” Immediately, Moshe entered with him and they entreated Hashem for mercy, and then the *Shechinah* descended.¹

We see from this that in spite of all the strenuous work that had been performed in the *Mishkan*, the *Shechinah* still would not come. This was not a coincidence. Rather, it is the very design of Creation, that the handiwork of man is not able to create the absolute reality of a *Mishkan* in its completion. The *Shechinah* did not descend – the *Mishkan* could only be assembled and disassembled. It was not permanent yet.

Aharon was afraid to enter because he knew that he would be ashamed. When a person is ashamed, his face turns to white. The *Gemara* explains says that if one shames someone else, it is a branch of murder.

¹ Rashi, *Vayikra* 9:23

The shame causes the face to become white as the red color of the face drains, which is like removing a person's blood and killing him.

The feeling of shame is therefore an example of *bittul* (self-nullification). When Aharon felt ashamed, he became essentially nullified to Hashem.

Only after all the actions for the *Mishkan* had been done, did the *Shechinah* descend! The *Shechinah* does not come as a result of bringing *korbonos*, from any actions. Rather, the *Shechinah* will fully descend only when all of the actions have ceased. Thus, there were two aspects in establishing the *Mishkan*. There was first a stage where Moshe was actively involved, and then there was a point where Moshe ceased from any actions. The stage of action eventually ceased, whereas the stage of non-action remained and did not cease.

For seven days, Moshe assembled and disassembled the *Mishkan*. Simply speaking, the assembling of the *Mishkan* was a more prominent level than disassembling it. During the seven days in which the *Mishkan* was assembled and disassembled, we can look at it simply that it was first assembled and eventually disassembled.

But the deeper understanding is that the **disassembling** of the *Mishkan* was more prominent! The deeper way to understand this is that it was assembled so that it could be disassembled, so that the actions of Moshe could be negated. [The cessation of action was revealed, which is the purpose. **The purpose was self-nullification**].

The Depth of Moshe's Refusal – Self-Nullification

This was the depth behind Moshe's refusal for seven days by the episode of the Burning Bush. When Hashem requested "Go and take them out", and Moshe refused, this was not simply an act of refusal. Rather, it was the revelation of the place in Moshe's soul which negates action.

The seven days of Moshe's refusal to lead the Jewish people out of Egypt was essentially a revelation of how the redemption from Egypt was through "I, and not through an angel. I, and not through a *seraph*. I, and not through a messenger. Only through *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, in His glory and Himself!"

This fact, that the redemption from Egypt would not come about through any means other than through Hashem Himself, is represented by the power of Moshe's refusal to lead.

In an inner sense, the seven days of Moshe's refusal was a removal of the seven active forces of the soul, also known as the "seven shepherds", and the revelation that there is only one Performer – Hashem, for there is no one else besides Him.

Thus, Moshe said that "Since I refused [Hashem's command] for seven days by the Burning Bush, I did not merit to serve [as *Kohen Gadol*] except for seven days."

The depth behind this, as it has been explained here, is that Moshe's refusal for seven days meant that he revealed the negation of action. For seven days, he removed his power of action, and therefore his actions of serving in the *Mishkan* would eventually cease.

This represents the light of the future, the era of *Moshiach*, symbolized by the "eighth day" of the *Mishkan*.

The day that Moshe ceased from his service in the *Mishkan* was the day that he stopped disassembling the *Mishkan*, and it remained as it is. When Moshe removed himself from action, this is exactly the power that allowed the *Mishkan* to remain eternal, from the eighth day onward.

This is the inner light that was contained in the eighth day of the *Mishkan*.

Rosh Chodesh Nissan – The Time When Kings Become Nullified To The Creator

Rosh Chodesh Nissan is called the “Rosh HaShanah” for kings of the Jewish people, as explained in the *Gemara*.²

There is a well-known question: There is a *mitzvah* in the Torah to appoint a king, yet when Shaul became the first king of the Jewish people, the generation was held accountable for a lack of faith in the Creator for requesting a king. There is a well-known answer to this that it is only improper when a king anoints himself, but the ideal Jewish king is anointed for the purpose of nullifying himself to the Creator, which reveals how only Hashem is the true King. [Hence, this perspective was missing in the people when they anointed Shaul as king, so the generation is criticized for requesting a king].

Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the time when a Jewish king is anointed, is therefore a day of *bittul*, of becoming nullified to the Creator. When a new Jewish king is appointed, his royalty is really an expression of the royalty of Hashem, Who is the only true King.

On the eighth day of the *Mishkan*, the *Mishkan* remained assembled and was no longer disassembled. The depth of this is because there was no longer a need for *bittul* (nullification) after the eighth day, for the *Mishkan* that Moshe made had already ceased – it had been disassembled. It was like how a Jewish king is nullified to the Creator, which reveals the Kingship of Hashem.

The *Mishkan* which Moshe made was not destroyed – instead, it became concealed. Had Moshe built the *Beis HaMikdash*, it would have been eternal, as the Sages state. The depth of this is because Moshe built the *Mishkan* from the perspective that he will stop serving as *Kohen Gadol* on the eighth day –

² *Rosh HaShanah 3a*

revealing how the actions of the *Mishkan* were not being done through Moshe [but through the Creator alone].

The Deeper Meaning of the Deaths of Nadav & Avihu: The Avodah of Hiskalelus (Integrating With Hashem)

Parshas Shmini begins with the verse *ויהי ביום השמיני* “And it was on the eighty day.” The *Gemara* says that whenever the Torah uses the word *ויהי* “And it was”, it suggests something painful that transpired. In this week’s *parshah*, what painful event transpired? The *Gemara* identifies it as the deaths of the two older sons of Aharon HaKohen, Nadav and Avihu,³ who were punished by death by Hashem [for entering the *Kodesh Kodashim*].

The simple understanding is that it was a painful time, due to the deaths of Nadav and Avihu. According to this understanding, it was pain in the simple sense. But there is a deeper understanding, that the deaths of Nadav and Avihu were a form of the “kiss of death” of Hashem [the most sublime form of death possible which is reserved for the greatest *tzaddikim*], and therefore, they died out of the sheer experience of unifying and integrating their being with Hashem. They did not die in the usual sense.

The simple type of death is when the body and soul are separated from each other, where a separation is created. Normally, death is a power of *tzimtzum*/constriction, which causes separation, the opposite of connection. However, on an inner level, we explained earlier that *tzimtzum*/constriction is a form of unification, so there is an inner level of death which is experienced as “Kiss me with the kisses of Your mouth” – the bonding of the soul of a created being, with its Creator.

³ *Megillah 10b*

The “pain” which the people felt because of the deaths of Nadav and Avihu was therefore not simply the normal form of pain which we are familiar with, but a “pain” which can be defined as “pain” because it is a contraction of the self. This is exactly what happened at the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, who died through the “kiss of death” of Hashem. They became integrated (*miskalel*) in the Creator.

This happened specifically on the eighth day of the inauguration of the *Mishkan*, in line with the concept that we explained earlier. The first seven days of the *Mishkan*, in which there was *avodah* of Moshe, represents action. As long as there is action, there is a sense of self. Whenever a person is in a state of action, he cannot “contract” the self and expose his true inner dimension. When a person “contracts” into himself because he is in a state of action, he cannot access the Infinite and instead he will experience his own existing self.

In contrast to this, the eighth day of the *Mishkan* represents the removal of the self. It is precisely this removal of the self which Nadav and Avihu reached, which brought about their deaths.

Integrating With Hashem – In Place, Time and Soul

Moshe said to Aharon, “Aharon, my brother. I had known all along that the Temple would become sanctified through those who know the Creator” (referring to the deaths of Nadav and Avihu).” How was it that Moshe could say “I had known all along”? Why should Moshe think that on this great day of rejoicing, a tragedy like this would occur at the very place of the celebration? And why would the deaths happen specifically to “those who know the Creator”?

It is based upon what we have explained until now. The eighth day of the *Mishkan* represents the point where there is a removal of the self, and an integration

of the inner self with the Creator. It is a “contraction” in the sense of contracting the self, and entering into one’s innermost dimension [which is beyond the self, for it is the point of integration with the Creator]. Since there exists such a point in the soul, it follows that there must be an ability in a person to accept this integration.

[Everything is revealed in three dimensions - place, time, and soul.] In “place”, this concept of integrating with the Creator existed by the *Mishkan*. In “time”, it was manifest on *Rosh Chodesh Nissan*, the time when kings are anointed. In the “soul”, it is manifest in the concept of the “kiss of death” of Hashem, which is a form of integrating (*hiskalelus*) with the Creator. It can only be experienced by one who “knows the Creator” – such as the souls of Nadav and Avihu.

“In The Shadow of Your Wings, Take Shelter”

The inner point of all of Hashem’s creations is when they become integrated (*miskalel*) with the Creator. The root of this matter, as explained here, is the concept of the *tzimtzum* (constriction), in which the Infinite, so to speak, contracts.

The *Mishkan* served as “testimony” to the world that the sin with the golden calf had been atoned for. The depth of this testimony is the verse, בצל כנפיו יחסיין “*In the shadow of Your wings, take shelter*”.⁴ The deep mission of each created being is to take shelter in the shadow of the “wings” of the Creator [so to speak].

A shadow, at first glance, seems to be nothing more than an absence [of light]. Why then must a person take shelter in the “shadow” of Hashem? Simply speaking, isn’t the *avodah* of a person, as explained in *sefarim hakedoshim*, to become attached to the light of the Infinite (the *ohr EinSof*)? Why does

⁴ *Tehillim* 36:8

a person have the task to attach himself to the “shadow” of Hashem, which implies an absence of Hashem’s light?

But according to what we have explained here, the *avodah* of a person is to attach himself to the state of *tzimtzum*/contraction, a contraction of the self, which represents concept of “shadow”. On a more cosmic level, at first, the light of the Infinite filled all of the empty space of Creation, so to speak, and then Hashem made a contraction (*tzimtzum*) and removed some of His light. The removal of His light corresponds to the concept of “shadow”.

This is the deeper implication of “*In the shadow of Your wings, take shelter.*” When one attaches himself to a state of contraction of the self, the very opposite of expanding the self – this is the state of *hiskalelus* (integration with Hashem), and this is what it means to attach oneself to the state of “shadow”.

The Sages explain that Betzalel was called so because he was *b’tzeil Keil*, “in the shadow of G-d.”⁵ This is the exact concept being described here. Betzalel was appointed to prepare and arrange everything in the *Mishkan*, because the *Mishkan* was the revelation of the “shadow” of Hashem [which corresponds to a removal of the self, enabling the soul to enter into a state of non-self and to thereby integrate with Hashem], which one must connect to.

When The Light of The Beginning Shines Within The End

In the perspective of the current 6000 year era, we are an *eved* (servant) to Hashem, we have *avodah* to do, and we are in a period of action. But from the perspective of the light of the future, the light of *Moshiach*, where we will be above *bechirah* (free will), we will access the point that is above *avodah*.

⁵ *Berachos 55a*

The death of Moshe revealed a higher point of the *avodah* that he personified in his lifetime. Moshe’s title of “trustworthy servant” of Hashem represented his lower aspect, in which he had the *avodah* of being *Kohen Gadol* and serving on the *Mizbeiach* – the epitome of *avodah*. But his refusal to serve on the eighth day of the *Mishkan* represented the point above *avodah*. It was an illumination of the spark of Moshe’s future, which is the “light of *Moshiach*” that is above the point of *avodah*.

This is also the root of *Moshiach*’s royal status of “*Melech HaMoshiach*”, (“The King, the Messiah”). *Rosh Chodesh Nissan* is the time of renewal for kings of the Jewish people, and the title of “king” mainly applies to *Moshiach*, whose royalty will be complete. This is the depth behind “In *Nissan* they were redeemed, and in *Nissan* they will be redeemed in the future” – since the month of *Nissan* is associated with kingship, it is also the root of *Melech HaMoshiach*.

Rosh Chodesh Nissan represents the point where there is no more *avodah*, which is the higher aspect of Moshe, when he refused to do *avodah* on the eighth day of the *Mishkan*. Until *Rosh Chodesh Nissan*, Moshe operated in the mode of *eved Hashem*, doing his respective *avodah*. From *Rosh Chodesh Nissan* onward, he ceased with *avodah* - for *Rosh Chodesh Nissan* contains the light of the King *Moshiach* - where there is no more *avodah*.

The root of this is in the concept that the *Mishkan* was not destroyed, and instead concealed. In terms of our own souls, this idea represents the light of the future when all the souls of the Jewish people will become concealed [nullified], and when all of the creations will become integrated with their Creator.

“The end is wrapped in the beginning”. The spiritual light of the *Mishkan* was the beginning of the settling of the *Shechinah* upon the world. The end of Creation will reflect this state as well, when the third *Beis HaMikdash* will descend from Heaven and it will

never be destroyed. The first seven days of the *Mishkan*, where Moshe kept building and taking apart the *Mishkan*, represents the first two Temples which were destroyed. The eighth day of the *Mishkan*, when the *Mishkan* remained erect and it was not taken apart, is the root of the light of the third *Beis HaMikdash*, which will never be destroyed.

This concept, that the “light of the beginning” will shine amidst the end, will be manifest in the three areas of place, time, and soul. In “place”, it will be manifest with the structure of the third *Beis HaMikdash* which will never be destroyed. The “time” when this concept will be manifest is Rosh *Chodesh Nissan*, when *Moshiach* will reign as king. And in terms of “soul”, this concept will be revealed within all of the creations, when they will all “die” as Nadav and Avihu did, who were pulled after their Root of a desire to attach and integrate themselves with their Creator.

Then, it will be clearly revealed that there is *Ain Od Milvado*, “nothing besides for Him”.