

INSIGHTS

Into The Weekly Parsha

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This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Ruth bas Leopold.
"May her Neshama have an Aliya!"

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Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

PARSHAS VAYAKHEL-PEKUDEI

Haziness of Laziness

And the Nesi'im [heads of the tribes] brought onyx stones, and stones to be set, for the ephod, and for the breastplate (35:27).

Rashi (ad loc) points out that by the inauguration of the Mizbeach (*Bamidbar* 7:1-2) the *Nesi'im* were the first to contribute, yet by the construction of the Mishkan they lagged behind everyone else. Rashi explains that by the Mishkan the *Nesi'im* decided that they should wait to see what everyone else contributes, and then they would supply whatever was still missing.

Yet the *Nesi'im* underestimated the generous spirit of Bnei Yisroel; almost everything necessary for the Mishkan was donated. The only thing left to bring were the stones mentioned in the *possuk*. For this reason, they were the first to contribute by the inauguration of the Mizbeach. Rashi continues; "Because they were lazy [by the construction of the Mishkan], a letter was removed from their title" – והנשאם is written without a letter *yud*.

Rashi's characterization of the *Nesi'im* as being lazy can be difficult to comprehend. After all, the *Nesi'im* offered to complete whatever was missing from the communal contributions. In essence, they were offering to deficit fund the construction of the Mishkan. This is every fundraiser's dream. Obviously, they cared enough to make sure that the Mishkan would be completed properly; so, why are they referred to as lazy?

What is the definition of lazy? Most people assume that being lazy has something to do with how slow you move. In fact, the very slow moving animals of

the Central and South American jungles are known as sloths – a synonym for lazy. Just how slow does someone have to be in order to be considered lazy?

In truth, laziness has nothing to do with how fast or slow one moves. Shlomo Hamelech characterized the thought process of a lazy person; "A lazy person says there is a lion on the road" (*Mishlei* 26:13). Why is this the quintessential example of laziness? If there is a lion in the road then he is right for staying at home and not venturing out. However, if there is no lion outside, then he isn't lazy, he's delusional! What does Shlomo Hamelech mean?

"A lazy person says there is a lion on the road"

The key to understanding laziness is the analysis of individual motivation. Is the motivation internal or based on external factors? In other words, do I go to work because I want to be productive or because my wife wants or needs to go shopping?

Many people say that they work best under pressure – and this is the reason they leave important projects or term papers to the very last moment. In truth, they are just lazy and unmotivated to excel unless there is an external pressure forcing them to achieve.

This is what Shlomo Hamelech means; of course there is a lion on the road, but a lazy person sees that as an insurmountable obstacle, while an



industrious person just looks at the situation as a problem that he must overcome. After all, there is no shortage of solutions to almost any situation. Lazy people find excuses while motivated people find solutions. The key to curing laziness is to have goals that both inspire and motivate you.

There are dozens of excuses as to why one cannot contribute to communal projects like Shuls and schools; "The Rabbi isn't inspiring enough" or "The board isn't transparent enough" or "the education isn't as good as it could be." At the end of the day, these are all merely the excuses of lazy individuals who do not have the community's best interest at heart. Committed community minded individuals are inspired and motivated to look for solutions, not excuses.

This was the mistake of the *Nesi'im*. They weren't motivated enough to actually help with the building of the Mishkan; they were only motivated by the external pressure of not having a Mishkan. This is why they only offered to deficit fund the Mishkan, in case Bnei Yisroel did not come through. However, as community leaders they should have led the contributions. For this reason the *Nesi'im* are called lazy and had a letter removed from their name. The Torah tells us in *Sefer Bamidbar* that they actually learned from their mistake, and by the inauguration of the Mizbeach they were the first to contribute.

Creating Shabbos

And Moshe assembled the entire assembly of Bnei Yisroel and said to them: “These are the things that Hashem commanded to do them...” (35:1)

Moshe Rabbeinu gathers all of Bnei Yisroel to instruct them on the laws of Shabbos and the commandment to construct a Mishkan. The Gemara (*Shabbos* 97b) derives from the words “*These are the things*” that there are thirty-nine creative acts that are forbidden on Shabbos (See Rashi ad loc for a detailed explanation).

Yet the Torah’s characterization that “*these are the things that Hashem commanded to do them*” seems a little odd. After all, these are things that Hashem is very specifically asking us not to do! Why doesn’t the Torah just simply state, “These are the things that Hashem has forbidden us to do on Shabbos?”

Additionally, all of the Torah is meant to apply to all of Bnei Yisroel; so why does Moshe specifically gather everyone as an assembly to teach them about Shabbos?

The Torah is teaching us a remarkable aspect of Shabbos, one that we are all responsible to see fulfilled. If one drives

down the street early on a Sunday morning, or on a national holiday like Thanksgiving, it is readily apparent that it is not a typical weekday. The normal hustle and bustle of everyday life is missing and the day actually feels different.

This is what the Torah is teaching us, each and every one of us has a responsibility to create an environment of Shabbos. For six days a week, we are enjoined to do creative acts (35:2). Yet, on the seventh day, we are prohibited from doing those very same acts. By abstaining from the thirty-nine *melachos* we are actually differentiating Shabbos from every other day of the week and doing something much greater – we are creating a feeling of Shabbos in our community.

There are many things that one can do on Shabbos that doesn’t technically violate any of the Torah prohibitions: One can move furniture around for hours, go jogging, reorganize cabinets and freezers,

etc. However, these activities actually detract from the feeling of a Shabbos environment, and therefore should not be done.

This also explains a Gemara in *Bava Kama* (37A) that says that a bull that only gores on Shabbos isn’t considered dangerous on weekdays. Tosfos (ad loc) asks; how is this possible? An animal doesn’t know what day of the week it is! Tosfos answers that perhaps it recognizes that it’s a different day because people dress differently. Perhaps we can add that, in a proper Shabbos environment, the atmosphere feels so different that a bull feels that he can do whatever he wants.

This is why Moshe gathered everyone together to teach them about Shabbos. It is incumbent on every single person to promote this environment and create a special atmosphere of Shabbos. Each individual has to recognize that his/her actions also effect everyone else’s feeling of Shabbos.

Did You Know...

In this week’s double *parsha*, Hashem commands Moshe to anoint everything in the Mishkan, including Aaron, his sons, and the Mishkan itself. Moshe himself made the special anointment oil, under Hashem’s instruction. This oil was used to anoint all high priests, kings, and the vessels of the Mishkan. Here are a few interesting facts about the oil:

1. This oil was very fragrant; it was made with four of the finest perfumes, though there is some dispute as to what they were exactly. The perfumes are *Mor Deror* (musk, or myrrh, or a certain root), *Kinman Besem* (aloe wood, or Mecca straw, or a type of grass), *Keneh Bosem* (probably cinnamon), and *Kidah* (cassia or ginger).
2. Another opinion of what *Keneh Bosem* is that it is marijuana (*The Living Torah* on *Ki Sisa*). This is based on the fact that cannabis and *Keneh Bosem* have almost the same pronunciation. This certainly brings a new meaning to the term “high priest.”
3. The oil was made by soaking the different ingredients in water,

until the fragrance was fully removed. They then added a gallon of oil and boiled away the water to infuse the oil with the scent.

4. Interestingly, this oil was only made once (by Moshe).
5. Furthermore, even though it was only made once – with just a single gallon of oil – they never ran out of it. Obviously, this was an enormous miracle as all the vessels and every high priest and king was anointed with it.
6. The oil was not used in the second Beis Hamikdash; the high priests were anointed by wearing the holy clothes. The oil will be hidden until the times of Moshiach, when Bnei Yisroel is worthy again.
7. There was a very specific way of anointing everything, and of course there are different opinions on this as well. The high priests would be anointed by first placing oil on their head and above their eyebrows, then joining them together to make the letter *chaf* (for Cohen). All the vessels were anointed in the same way, but kings had the oil placed all around their head like a crown. The Gemara (*Kereisos* 5b) says that the symbol made on the high priest’s head was actually the Greek letter *chi*, which looks just like the letter X.



4000 Alton Road
Miami Beach, FL 33140

To dedicate an issue of Insights please email:
info@talmudicu.edu
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