

Parashat Vayakel The Assembly To Heal The Collective Jewish Soul

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“And Moshe assembled the entire congregation of the children of Israel and said to them: These are the things that HaShem has commanded, to do them.” (Ex. 35:1)

Introduction

A great rule of the Torah, and thus of life, is that to everything there must be equal and opposite balance. G-d created the universe through His holy Name Elokim. This Name represents G-d's attribute of law and balance. Therefore, as Kohelet says, “there is a time and a season for everything under Heaven” (Ecc. 3:1). Balance is an integral part of creation. Everything requires balance. This is true of physical realities such as chemical formulas and architectural designs. It is also true of non-physical realities such as emotions and thought patterns. Balance is necessary on both an individual and collective level. This lesson is learned from this parasha.

Previously Israel was led by the Erev Rav to sin with the golden calf. The perpetrators of the crime and those involved with them were executed by the Levites. G-d forgave the people by manifesting His highest attributes of mercy. Nonetheless, the initial bond of passionate unity between G-d and Israel forged when G-d spoke at Mt. Sinai became imbalanced. The death of the guilty removed the cause of the imbalance, but it did not remove the imbalance itself. As the Jewish people entered into a state of imbalance with HaShem, so now was there need for new balance.

The Ar'zal addresses this most important issue in a way that only a holy Mekubal (Kabbalist) could, with depth and subtlety, psychological insight and compassion. The following text is from Sefer Likutei Torah of Rabbi Haim Vital, page 71a.

Sefer Likutei Torah 71A

Text “And Moshe assembled.” [He did this] because Moshe was of the aspect of the Yesod of Abba.

Commentary The parasha opens with the rectification of the sin of the golden calf. While the great damage was done and Mashiah would now be delayed until the end of days, still there was need for the children of Israel to renew their faith in G-d. As will be seen Moshe assembled the people in order to

gather their fallen sparks of holiness that were scattered by the sin. The text says that Moshe did this because he was an “aspect of the Yesod of Abba.” Abba is the sefirotic Face attributed to the sefirat Hokhma (wisdom, intuition). Yesod is the sefirah that is the accumulator of sexual/creative energy. The Yesod of Abba is a metaphor for one who manifests highly potent creative intuitive energy. Only such a one is creative and intuitive enough to know how to innovate a relationship (and in this case a rectification of relationship) between Israel and their Father in Heaven.

Text *The generation of the wilderness was also of this aspect.*

Commentary Each and every person of the generation of the exodus was actually an individual spark of the greater soul of Moshe himself. As such, Moshe was the source soul of that entire generation of Israel. Therefore, he alone was responsible for them. He was the spiritual father of all 600,000 souls.

Text *Because they made the [golden] calf Moshe needed to assemble and gather them to himself. [He needed to do so in order to] return them to their source, so that they can all be included within him [to rectify] the sin of “and they assembled around Aharon” (Ex. 32:1).*

Commentary There is a power in numbers that does not exist with single individuals. For this reason, Torah law requires that there be a minyan of ten men in order to conduct public prayer services. The reason for this is that the ten men, regardless of intent or awareness are still creating a corresponding pattern to the ten supernal sefirot.

When the Erev Rav approached Aharon with the idea for the golden calf, they did so as a united group of large number. This multiplied their spiritual energy geometrically. In other words, their united power was greater than the aggregate sum of the individual members. Their combined strength enabled such an evil act to manifest. Therefore, in order to neutralize the negative spiritual effect of the golden calf correctly, there had to be an equal but opposite gathering and manifestation of spiritual energy from the side of holiness. This is accordance to the Torah secret of “zeh l’umat zeh asah Elokim” (what G-d created in holiness, He also allows its counterpart in uncleanness to exist).

The result of the sin of the golden calf was that the unity of the souls of collective Israel was shattered. This same result resulted from Adam eating of the fruit from the forbidden Tree. Moshe, who was the source soul of the Jewish souls of his generation, had the obligation to gather those souls which were “blown away” by the sin. What this means is this, although many individuals did not participate in the direct act of the sin, nonetheless, they might have been complacent about it occurring. This attitude of complacency

ingrained in their souls would inevitably be passed down genetically to their children. As such, as the generations would pass the children of Israel would grow more and more apathetic to the presence of evil. Evil would thus eventually overtake them all, with the wrath of G-d's judgment not too far behind.

Therefore, the psychological breach in the collective Jewish psyche had to be healed. This could only come about by restoring all Jewish souls, at the conscious and unconscious levels, to their spiritual source, which is the creative intuitive energy of Moshe referred to earlier as the Yesod of Abba. This could only be accomplished by gathering them all so that the mass of their number would geometrically multiply their spiritual energy to offset the psychological/spiritual contamination caused by the sin of the golden calf.

Text [Moshe needed to] radiate within them the light of holiness, to remove from them the uncleanness of the [golden] calf. Thus does [the verse say] “the entire congregation,” who were from the secret of the Da’at.

Commentary The entire congregation of Israel needed to gather here. If there were those who would not attend they would remain contaminated with unconscious psychological blemishes. These souls in turn would eventually poison other souls and like a cancer attempt to destroy the entire body of collective Israel. Therefore, everybody had to be there. This gathering served as a “mega-dose” of medicinal healing, to root out and destroy a cancer within Israel. As we know with the disease of cancer, if it is not all removed or killed, it will grow back more ferociously and will require even greater efforts to remove it a second time.

The secret of Da’at is this: Da’at is knowledge. Knowing, in Hebrew, has a sexual content to it, as it is written, “and Adam KNEW his wife Eve.” True knowledge, therefore, is never academic. It is experiential. The generation of the exodus are called the Dor De’ah (the generation of knowledge). This is because they experienced the revelation of Sinai and all the miracles, unlike us who only learn about them from a book.

In the sefirot, Da’at is the place where the Yesod of Abba meets the Yesod of Imma. Da’at in and of itself is not a sefirah. It is only a meeting place for Hokhma and Binah. The Yesod of Abba is the creative energy of intuition. The Yesod of Imma is the creative energy in rational analysis. When creative energy combines intuition and rational analysis, the resulting conclusions are clear, lucid and well thought out original ideas that are packed with excitement. This is true knowledge. This is what embodied the generation of the wilderness and what was in danger of being lost due to the sin of the golden calf.

Text *Now, [the words] Erev Rav are [numerically] equal to [the value of the word] Da'at, for they were also of the aspect of Da'at, but from the dross thereof.*

Commentary As was said above “zeh l’umat zeh asah Elokim” (what G-d created in holiness, He also allows its counterpart in uncleanness to exist). As Israel emanated from the “place” of knowledge above in the sefirot, so the Erev Rav emanated from a “dark place” as their evil counterpart. Thus the words Erev Rav are numerically equal to Da’at to show their equal, yet, inverse and opposite relationship to this “place” of holiness.

The nature of the Erev Rav is to use subterfuge, to persuade people to their point of view using deceptive arguments, thus twisting their knowledge. This is how they deceived Aharon and the Children of Israel into helping them with their diabolical plot of building the golden calf. This is also how the Erev Rav, to this day, succeeds in causing grievous harm to Jews and Israel. The Erev Rav are those individuals who claim to be Jews and who attempt to turn other Jews away from Torah and mitzvot using arguments of apparent logic. They will say that this or that mitzvah does not make any sense, or that it is too hard or that there are easier ways of observing it. They twist logic to condemn true Torah believers and call them “overly strict” or “backwards” or narrow-minded.” The Erev Rav says that they only want Jews to be more “modern.” Yet, this is their code word to begin the unraveling of Torah Law and tradition. Once one is deceived by these arguments and starts observing Torah in a more “modern” way, this is the beginning of a downhill slide, the bottom of which will leave the person bereft of Torah and holiness and in exile from both HaShem and self. This is the subtle plan of the Erev Rav today to destroy Jewish souls, just like they did with the sin of the golden calf.

Text *In addition, because they sinned with the golden calf in an assembly, as it says, “they assembled around Aharon” they needed [another] assembly to rectify them as it says, “and Moshe assembled.”*

Commentary Again, “zeh l’umat zeh asah Elokim.” As the assembly of the golden calf generated great amounts of unholy energy, so this assembly of Moshe assembled great amounts of holy energy to restore the balance. This is also a lesson for us today. As there is so much unholiness surrounding us at every moment, we must take extra measures to create as much holiness and righteousness as we can, on both an individual and collective level.

Text *Being that they sinned with “these” when they said, “these are your god Israel” (Ex. 32:4), corresponding to this comes the rectification [when] it says, “These are the things...”*

Commentary Even though one golden calf was formed and not two, the Erev Rav still referred to the golden calf in the plural tense. Corresponding to this,

Moshe now assembled the people to restore to them two commandments. The two chosen are integrally connected with one another and both serve as witnesses to the Children of Israel's desire to be right with HaShem and to rebalance their relationship.

Text [Because] the one who acknowledges idolatry is as one who denies the entire Torah, they were commanded to rectify two things that are considered equal to the entire Torah.

Commentary Idolatry is considered the ultimate denial of G-d. The prominent psychologist Erich Fromm, puts it this way, "We forget that the essence of idolatry is not the worship of this or that particular idol but is a specifically human attitude. This attitude may be described as the deification of things, of partial aspects of the world and man's submission to such things, in contrast to an attitude in which his life is devoted to the realization of the highest principles of life, those of love and reason, to the aim of becoming what he potentially is, a being made in the likeness of G-d." (Psychology and Religion page 118).

The two commandments chosen to restore the balance between G-d and Israel both had to be considered essential Torah principles, both as important as the entire Torah itself.

Text [First was] the matter of [the] Shabat. For the one who observes the Shabat is equal to the entire Torah.

Commentary The Talmud teaches us (Shabat 118b) that if all Israel were to observe the Shabat perfectly only twice, Mashiah would come immediately. (Shemot Rabbah 25:12 mentions that even one time is enough). Shabat is the ultimate expression of faith in G-d and acceptance of His Lordship. On the Shabat, man does nothing to manipulate nature. On this day, we release ourselves from all manner of change, be it on a natural or social level. Shabat thus becomes the day when G-d alone is in charge. When one proclaims this by one's actions, as ordained by Divine edict, one truly bonds with G-d. For G-d is the Lord of nature and the one who observes the Shabat rises above nature. His/her soul rises on high and is restored to its spiritual splendor. For this reason did G-d give Israel the Torah in the first place. Thus, the one who observes the Shabat fulfills the purpose for why the Torah was given.

Text [This is true] also, [with] the making of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). Now it begins by saying "six days shall you perform work." (Ex. 35:2), meaning that the Mishkan shall be built on the six days [of the week].

Commentary The building of the Mishkan is integrally connected to the Shabat in that the act of building was ceased on the Shabat day. Therefore, when G-d forbade work on the Shabat day, the Torah is implying that the

types of work performed in the building of the Mishkan was what was forbidden.

There is an even greater purpose and meaning to the building of the Mishkan. Rabbi Haim of Volozhin, the top student of the Gaon of Vilna reveals to us in his work, "Nefesh HaHaim (1:4) the true meaning of the Mishkan.

"Do not think that the purpose of the building of the Mishkan [was for the sake of] having an external building. Rather, know that HaShem's desire and purpose [in the building of] the Mishkan, and all its vessels was to hint to us that we should observe them and learn that [like the Mishkan vessels], it is we ourselves that are to be the Mishkan [of G-d's Divine Presence]. We, by our admirable actions must be a Mishkan, full of all its vessels, all being holy, worthy, and ready to have the Shekhina (G-d's Divine Presence) dwell within us specifically. This is the meaning of the pasuk, "Make for Me a Mishkan, and I will dwell within them" (Ex. 25:8). "Within them" specifically, for as HaShem has shown us the order of the building of the Mishkan, so should we learn, and make ourselves to be the Mishkan of HaShem."

Text Therefore was this spoken in the language of a command, to warn them about the work of the Mishkan.

Commentary To signify the forbidden works of Shabat.

Text With this "and the seventh day will be to you holy." Being that you are [already] holy on the weekdays through the building of the Mishkan, on Shabat you will certainly be holy, with additional holiness.

Commentary Building the Mishkan is two fold. It is built as an external building and it is built as internal psychological development that purifies our personalities and draws us closer to G-d. Therefore, even today, without physical Mishkan or Temple, both still exist and reign in the hearts of those who truly serve G-d. This surrender of soul and personality makes one to be a "place" where G-d's Presence can be found, in the heart, words and deeds of those who study and observe the holy Torah. This is what makes us holy all the week long. It is this level of observance that enables us to properly appreciate the Shabat and receive thereon a greater influx of holiness than that which we have already during the week.

Text and an extra soul.

Commentary On the holy Shabat, it is taught that one receives an extra soul. This needs to be explained in brief. It is not that someone receives another soul, other than the one he/she has, rather the Shabat day enables one to integrate and connect with one's own higher soul or Self. On the Shabat, one's spiritual abilities are greatly enhanced. Learning and comprehension

come with greater ease. Spiritual perceptions become clearer. One's soul indeed rests because one is in touch with one's source. On the Shabat, the Jewish soul is truly at home and no longer in exile. There is no greater rest than this.

Conclusion G-d has placed before us abundant blessings to enable us to spiritually mature and to evolve our personalities to become truly human, created in the image of G-d. Yet, we must serve G-d during the week as His Mishkan, allowing ourselves to become His vessels of service, to shine the light of Torah and mitzvot to the world. Only then will we have true rest for our souls on the holy Shabat.

These two observances together completely surround us with G-dliness and enable us to become pure of mind (Da'at). When we are of such a pure mind, we cultivate the ability to be smarter and wiser than the Erev Rav who seeks to deceive through deceptive arguments. True Torah observance brings peace and balance to both the mind and body. It is the greatest gift that G-d has ever given us.

