

PARSHAT VAYAKHEL

PART I - QUESTIONS FOR THE 'SHABBOS TABLE'

A 'TZEDUKI' MEETS THE 'IBN EZRA' !

1. In his commentary to 35:3, in regard to whether it is permissible to leave a candle lit on Shabbat, Ibn Ezra ["katzar"] tells of his conversation with a certain Kaarite ["tzeduki"], who tries to determine the halacha based on the psukim of Chumash - without relying on the tradition of Chazal.

If you have some time (and understand Hebrew), read this Ibn Ezra, as he not only tells over a great story, but also gives us insight into his great appreciation of Chazal, despite his insistence to understand the literal meaning of every pasuk. Note especially Ibn Ezra's conclusion at the end of his commentary to 35:3, in regard to the balance between Biblical commentary and "psak halacha"!

BETWEEN SHABBAT & THE MISHKAN

1. As you most probably are aware, the halachic definition of **melacha** [work] that is forbidden on Shabbat [better known as the 'lamed-tet melachot'] is derived from the various categories of 'work' that were required to construct the mishkan.

[See Mishnayot Masechet Shabbat chapter 7.]

The opening three psukim of parshat Vayakhel are one of the primary sources for this definition.

As you review these psukim (i.e. Shmot 35:1-4) in their context, attempt to explain why. Would you consider this halachic interpretation as 'pschat' or 'drash'?

2. Next, carefully compare the topic and structure of the psukim in Shmot 35:1-4 to the content and structure of Vayikra 23:1-4.

What textual pattern is similar?

In your opinion, does the phrase 'eileh ha-devarim' in 35:1 relate to the laws of Shabbat that follow in 35:2-3, or to the laws of the mishkan that follow in 35:4-20? In your answer, be sure to relate to the phrase "la'asot otam" at the end of 35:1.

If you have ample time, see the following commentators:

See Ramban on 35:1. Note how Ramban relates to 34:32.

[See also Chizkuni.]

See Seforno, noting how he relates to 34:32.

See Ibn Ezra ('katzar') / and the gemara he quotes - Shabbat 70a. Why does Ibn Ezra argue with this interpretation?

Why do most all of the commentators explain 'eileh ha-devarim' as relating to the mishkan and **not** shabbat?

Is this pschat? If so, why is 'shabbat' the first mitzva that Moshe tells the people, before he tells over the laws of the Mishkan? [See Ramban on 35:1.]

Relate this to your answer to question #1 above.

3. If indeed the phrase "eileh ha-devarim" in 35:1 refers to the laws of the Mishkan that begin in 35:4 and onward, then note how 35:10 introduces the list of items that Bnei Yisrael must construct from the materials that they donate (in 35:5-9). Then, count how many different items that are in this list that continues from 35:11 thru 35:20. Does that number come close to number of categories of work that are forbidden on shabbat?

Are you aware of what led Chazal to conclude that there are specifically 39 categories of work that are forbidden on shabbat, and not more or less! [Relate to the list in 35:11-20 as well as to the parallel list in 39:33-42.]

4. Next, review the laws of shabbat as presented in 31:12-17, noting how these psukim form the final 'parshia' after a sequence of seven chapters of laws concerning the mishkan (i.e. the

mishkan unit of chapters 25->31). Explain how this juxtaposition supports Chazal's definition of "melacha" on shabbat. [Note especially the word "ach" in 32:13!]

5. Note the word 'brit' and its context in 31:16; relating this brit to the word 'ot' in 31:13. Where else in Chumash do we find the concept of an ot brit? [If you give up, try looking in Breishit chapters 9 and 17.] Why does a brit need an ot? [Or 're-phrased' - Why does a bride need a wedding ring?]

In your opinion, why would the concept of shabbat being an "ot brit" immediately follow the laws of the mishkan (whose focal point is the 'luchot ha-brit')? In your answer, relate to the mishkan's name - i.e. the "**ohel mo'ed**", and what that name implies. [Note also Vayikra 23:1-3!]. Relate this to Shmot 29:44-46 (and our shiur on parshat Tetzaveh).

6. In Parshat Emor, when the Torah forbids work on the "moadim" [Jewish holidays/ see Vayikra chapter 23], it consistently uses the phrase: "kol melechet avoda lo taasu" - in contrast to the phrase: "kol melacha" in regard to shabbat.

From what you recall, in what manner is the halachik definition of work for "yom-tov" different from its definition for shabbat?

Based on these two phrases, can you explain why?

In your opinion, does the prohibition of "melacha" on "yom tov" relate to the Mishkan as well, or is it forbidden for a different reason? If so, can you suggest a reason why?

In your answer, relate to the difference between 'creativity' and 'physical labor'; & the reason why we don't work on Yom Tov, based on the phrase "mikra kodesh" in Vayikra chapter 23.

[If you have ample time, see Ramban on Vayikra 23:7 for a comprehensive discussion of this topic.]

BETWEEN CHET HA-EGEL and the MISHKAN

1. When Moshe gathers the people (in 35:1) in order to command them concerning the laws of the mishkan, why do you think that Torah chooses specifically the word '**vayakhel**' to describe this gathering?

Relate to Shmot 32:1.

2. Is the melacha of 'ha'avara' (35:3 /increasing a fire, i.e. making a flame or furnace hotter) in any way connected to chet ha-egel? If so, how? [Relate to 32:4,24.]

Is this melacha connected in any manner to building the mishkan or making any of its vessels? [e.g. How did they make the **aron** & the **menora** etc.??]

3. What other parallels can you find in Vayakhel / Pekudei to chet ha-egel? Relate to the phrase "ohel moed" in 33:7 (in contrast to its use in 25:8), and see Rashi on Shmot 29:1 in regard to why Aharon must bring a "chatat" offering during the seven day 'miluim' ceremony, and why he offers specifically a "par" [bull] .

4. Even if we assume (like Ramban) that the commandment to build the mishkan was given **before** chet ha-egel, when do Bnei Yisrael first hear this mitzva? When they do hear this mitzva, would you expect that these laws be relayed in a manner that relates in some way to the events of chet ha-egel? If so, cite some examples.

PART II - QUESTIONS FOR PREPARATION (for weekly shiur)

1. Review parshat Vayakhel, noting the primary topic of each of its 'parshiot'. As usual, make a vertical listing of these parshiot, using one word (or at most a phrase) to summarize each parshia. After you complete your list, attempt to organize your list into an outline.

Then, take your outline, and compare it to the similar outline that you prepared for Parshat Teruma. Based on your comparison, attempt to identify the governing principle for internal structure of each outline.

What defines the order in Parshat Vayakhel?

What defines the order in Parshat Teruma?

In your opinion, which 'order' makes more sense? Attempt to explain the reason for the differences, based on the setting (and/or purpose) of each Parsha.

2. Is the description of how the vessels are made in Parshat Vayakhel exactly the same as their description in God's commandment to Moshe in Parshat Teruma? If not, what aspect is different?

Is there any mention in parshat Vayakhel concerning the **function** of the various vessels of the mishkan?

If so, where?

If not, in your opinion, why not?

3. Is there any mention of the **Shchina** in Vayakhel / Pekudei? Is there any mention of the **Shchina** in Teruma / Tetzaveh? If so, where, and why?

Can you explain the reason for the differences.

Are there any commandments in Teruma / Tetzaveh that are not repeated in Vayakhel / Pekudei? If so, which ones?

Are those commandments that are 'missing' here repeated somewhere else in Chumash? If so, where? [If you give up, see Vayikra chapter 8, & compare with Shmot chapter 29.]

Can you explain why?

In your answer, relate to the difference between 'building' the mishkan, and 'using' it.

Keep this question in mind when you study Sefer Vayikra.

4. Recall how the **aron** forms the focal point of the mishkan, and how the **kaporet** forms its 'protective cover' (see Shmot 25:10-22 & TSC shiur on Yom Kippur).

In your opinion, what is the purpose of the **keruvim** on the **kaporet**? Similarly, what is the purpose of the **keruvim** embroidered on the **parochet**? (See Shmot 26:31.)

Is there a mention of **keruvim** earlier in Chumash? If so, what was their function? [If you give up, take a look at the end of chapter three in Sefer Breishit.]

What is the thematic significance of this parallel?

5. Review Mishlei 3:1-18, noting especially 3:18 in its context. What does the 'etz chayim' refer to? Can you relate this to the etz ha-chayim in Gan Eden and the **keruvim** that protect it?

Relate your answer to the above question as well.

6. Attempt to find any thematic similarities between the story of Adam in Gan Eden, and the story of the first & second luchot (in relation to chet ha-egel).

See if you can relate this to any of the point discussed above in regard to the purpose of the mishkan and what it symbolizes.

PART III - PARSHANUT

[Even though the following questions begin with Ki Tisa, you'll soon see their connection to Vayakhel.]

WHEN WERE THE MITZVOT GIVEN TO MOSHE?

1. Based on what you remember thus far in Sefer Shmot, what specific mitzvot did Moshe Rabeinu receive on Har Sinai?

When did Bnei Yisrael receive these mitzvot?

[Support your answer with a pasuk!]

[In your answer, relate to mitzvot that Moshe received during both the first forty days **and** the last forty days.]

2. After you answer question #1, read Shmot 34:27-35, paying special attention to pasuk 32. [Did you relate to this pasuk in your answer to question #1? If not, re-answer question #1.]

In your opinion, which 'commandments' does this pasuk refer to? [You can suggest different possibilities.]

Now, see the following commentators on 34:32, Rashbam / [Explain the 'unit' he is referring to.]

Ramban / [In what way does he differ from Rashbam?]

Ibn Ezra / [What 'tna'im' is he referring to?]

In what way does he differ from Ramban?]

Seforno/ [Is this the same as Rashbam or different?

Explain what is different and why!]

Chizkuni / Does Chizkuni answer this question?

3. Carefully review this Chizkuni (on 34:32) once again, noting how he explains **how** and **when** the Torah, as we have it today, was written. See also the Gemara that he quotes from Gitin 60a concerning "torah megilla megilla nitna".

According to this Chizkuni, how can one understand the reason for Chazal's exegetic approach of 'ein mukdam u-me'uchar ba-Torah'?

FOR MEN & WOMEN?

4. Review 35:21-29, noting how these psukim describe what the people donated, in response to Moshe's request (in 35:4-5).

As you study these psukim, note how they describe the donations of both the women and the men (respectively).

Then, make special note of the opening phrase in 35:22 - "va'yavou ha'anashim al ha'nashim". As you attempt to translate this phrase, what problems do you encounter? In your opinion, what does this pasuk mean - based on both its words and context? [You can suggest several possibilities.]

See Ibn Ezra (katzar), noting how he offers three different interpretations. [In the Ibn Ezra aroch, he only brings one opinion.]

Next see Ramban, noting how he explains how the women brought their donation 'ahead' of the men. Can you explain what leads Ramban to this conclusion?

Then, see Chizkuni, who seems to imply that the men took away their wives' jewelry, for the sake of the Mishkan; but then offers a simpler interpretation. Can you explain what leads Chizkuni to his first conclusion?

Finally, see Seforno - who offers a very original interpretation for why the men had to 'accompany' their wives when they donated their jewelry. Note how he based this on Baba Kamma 119a. Can you explain what leads Seforno to his conclusion?

ANCIENT JEWELRY

5. In 35:22, we also find a list of different types of jewelry - "chach, v'nezem, v'taabat, b'chumaz...."

Note the various translations for each of these words in Rashi, Ibn Ezra (aroch), and Chizkuni. Attempt to explain the reason for the various differences.

VANITY MIRRORS?

6. Read 38:8, and attempt to translate this pasuk. Which words are difficult, and basically - why is important to know where the copper of the **kiyor** came from? (Where did the copper for the **mizbach ha-nechoshet** come from? See 38:29-31!)

See Rashi, noting how answers the above questions. According to Rashi, explain the difference of opinion between Moshe and Hashem concerning the use of this copper.

Next, see Ibn Ezra (also on 38:8). In what manner is his peirush totally different than Rashi's? According to each, **why** did the women donate their copper mirrors specifically for the **kiyor**?

Then, see Ramban, noting what point bothers him in Rashi's peirush. How does Ramban answer this question, why does he quote Unkelos, and why does he maintain that Unkelos seems to follow in the lines of Ibn Ezra's peirush.

Finally, see Seforno. What textual difficulty does his peirush deal with. How does his peirush relate to Ibn Ezra's?

be-hatzlacha,
menachem