



The Amazing Connection between the Parshiyos of Vayakheil-Pekudei and Shabbas HaChodesh

Betzalel Perceived the Inner Thoughts of Those Donating to the Mishkan and Used Only the Gold of Tzaddikim to Construct the Aron in the Kodesh HaKodashim

The auspiciously approaching Shabbas Kodesh, on which we will bless the upcoming new month of Nissan, is called **Shabbas HaChodesh**. This designation is due to the institution of Chazal to read the passage in parshas Bo—“hachodesh hazeh lachem”—as the Maftir. This passage emphasizes the unique status of the month of Nissan; it is the first and foremost of the twelve months of the year. As it is written (Shemos 12, 2): **“החודש הזה לכם ראש חדשים, ראשון הוא: —this month shall be for you the beginning of the months; it shall be for you the first of the months of the year.** This Maftir will be read in conjunction with the double-parshah of Vayakheil and Pekudei.

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by pointing out the common denominator shared by these two parshiyos—the building of the Mishkan and its vessels by Betzalel. In parshas Vayakheil, it says (ibid. 35, 30): **“ויאמר משה אל בני ישראל, ראו קרא ה' בשם בצלאל בן אורי בן חור למטה יהודה, וימלא אותו רוח אלקים בחכמה בתבונה ובדעת ובכל מלאכה, ולחשוב מחשבות.”** Moshe said to Bnei Yisrael, **“See, Hashem has called by name, Betzalel ben Uri ben Chur, of shevet Yehudah. He filled him with the spirit of G-d, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with every craft—to make artistic designs, to work with the gold, with the silver and with the copper.”** Similarly, at the beginning of parshas Pekudei, it says (ibid. 38, 21): **“אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדות אשר פוקד על פי משה עבודת הלויים ביד איתמר בן אהרן הכהן, ובצלאל בן אורי בן חור למטה יהודה עשה את כל אשר.”** These are the accountings of the Mishkan,

Mishkan HaEidus (of Testimony), that were ordered by Moshe to be counted—the work of the leviim, overseen by Itamar, the son of Aharon the kohen. Betzalel, son of Uri, son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah, did all that Hashem commanded Moshe.

Betzalel Was Chosen to Construct the Mishkan on Account of His Grandfather Chur

In the Gemara (Sanhedrin 69b), our blessed teachers teach us a tremendous chiddush. **“וכי עבד בצלאל משכן בר כמה הוי בר תליסר—when Betzalel built the Mishkan, how old was he? Thirteen years old.** This deserves further scrutiny. Indeed, the Torah attests to the fact that Betzalel was uniquely qualified to perform this task; he was imbued with a divine spirit. Notwithstanding, of all the available G-d-fearing, meritorious tzaddikim in Yisrael to choose from, why did HKB”H choose the young Betzalel in particular to construct the Mishkan and fashion its vessels? We find an explicit answer to this question in the Midrash (S.R. 48, 3):

“See, Hashem has called by name, Betzalel ben Uri ben Chur.” Why was it necessary for the passuk to mention Chur here? Because when Yisrael wished to worship idolatry, he sacrificed his life for HKB”H and did not allow them to do so; consequently, they assaulted him and murdered him. HKB”H said, **“On your life (I promise you), I will compensate you (for this heroic act).”** It is analogous to a king whose legions rebelled against

him. His general stood up and opposed them. He said to them, “You are rebelling against the king!” They proceeded to murder him.

The king declared, “If he had given me money, wouldn’t I have been obliged to repay him?! All the more so, since he sacrificed his life for me. So, what will I do for him? I will make all of his offspring ministers and governors.” Thus, when Yisrael made the eigel, Chur opposed them and sacrificed his life for HKB”H. So, HKB”H said to him, “On your life (I promise you), all of your progeny, I will elevate them and make them reputable.” As it states, “See, Hashem has called by name, Betzalel . . . and He has filled him with the spirit of G-d.”

It behooves us to add another crucial point concerning HKB”H’s decision to appoint Betzalel, Chur’s grandson, to construct the Mishkan and its vessels. We are taught by Chazal that HKB”H commanded Yisrael to build the Mishkan as an atonement for the “cheit ha’eigel.” Let us refer to Rashi’s comment on the first passuk of parshas Pekudei: “משכן העדות, עדות לישראל שוויתר להם הקב”ה על מעשה העגל שהרי” —the Mishkan was **testimony for Yisrael that HKB”H overlooked** (forgave them for) **the incident of the eigel; seeing as He rested His Shechinah amongst them** (in the Mishkan). The source for this fact comes from the Midrash Tanchuma (Pekudei 2):

“משכן העדות, עדות לכל האומות שנתרצה הקב”ה לישראל על מעשה העגל. כיצד, כשעשו אותו מעשה, עמד משה ולימד עליהם סגוריה, עד שנתרצה להם הקב”ה. אמר משה, רבונו של עולם ומי מודיע לאומות שנתרצית, אמר לו, לך אמור להם ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם, לכן כתיב משכן העדות, שהמשכן מעיד שהשכינה בישראל.”

The Mishkan was testimony to all the nations of the world that HKB”H forgave Yisrael for the act of the “eigel.” When they did that ignoble deed, Moshe pleaded on their behalf (defended them) until HKB”H forgave them. Moshe said, “Master of the Universe, who will inform the nations of the world that you were appeased?” He said to him, “Go tell them (ibid. 25, 8): ‘And they shall make Me a Sanctuary so that I may dwell among them.’” Therefore, it is referred to as “the Mishkan of Testimony,” because the Mishkan attests to the fact that the Shechinah is present in the midst of Yisrael.

We learn an additional chiddush from Chazal concerning this matter. HKB”H commanded Yisrael to bring gold for the construction of the Mishkan to atone for the fact that the eigel was made of gold. This is taught in the Midrash Tanchuma (Terumah 8):

“They shall make Me a Mikdash, so that I may dwell among them.” So that all of the nations will know that they were forgiven for the incident of the eigel. Therefore, it is referred to as the “Mishkan of Testimony”; for, it is testimony to all mankind that HKB”H dwells in your Mikdash. HKB”H said: Let the gold in the Mishkan come and atone for the gold with which the eigel was made (ibid. 32, 3) . . . Therefore, they receive atonement through gold . . . HKB”H said (Yirmiyah 30, 17): “For I will make a cure for you, and I will heal you from your wounds.”

We can now better comprehend why HKB”H chose Betzalel specifically to build the Mishkan. After all, he was the grandson of Chur, who sacrificed his life attempting to prevent Yisrael from making the eigel. Hence, it was fitting for Betzalel to build the atonement for the “cheit ha’eigel.”

The Arizal provides us with an additional chiddush pertaining to this subject in Sefer HaLikutim (Vayakheil 35). He cites the Midrash above teaching us that Betzalel was chosen for this task, because he was Chur’s grandson. With this in mind, he interprets the following passuk in this week’s parsha: “See, Hashem has called by name, Betzalel ben Uri ben Chur”—by appointing Betzalel to perform this task, HKB”H wanted to show Yisrael that He forgave them for murdering Chur.

To make this point even more compelling, let us add a tremendous revelation from the Sefas Emes (Likutim Vayakheil). He asserts that Chur himself reincarnated into Betzalel, and HKB”H even transformed Betzalel to look identical to Chur. This can be inferred from Moshe’s statement: “See, Hashem has called by name, Betzalel ben Uri ben Chur”—Yisrael, could see with their own eyes that **Betzalel** looked identical to **Chur**.

Betzalel Could Read the Minds of Those Donating to the Mishkan

It gives me great pleasure to apply what we have learned to interpret the unique quality the Torah attributes to Betzalel: **“He filled him with the spirit of G-d, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with every craft—to think thoughts (“לחשוב מחשבות”), to work with the gold, with the silver and with the copper.”** The words **“לחשוב מחשבות”—to think thoughts**—seem unclear and even superfluous; it would have sufficed to simply say **“to work with gold . . .”** This would have informed us that Betzalel was an extremely skilled craftsman qualified to build the Mishkan and its vessels.

The great author of the Chiddushei HaRim, zy”a, (Ki Sisa), enlightens us. It is apparent from the narrative that there were various degrees of importance for which the gold that was donated to the Mishkan was used. Some of the gold was used to cover the beams and the sockets. Some of the gold was used to make the Menorah, the Shulchan, and the Golden Mizbeiach upon which the incense was burnt. Clearly, this constituted a higher level of kedushah. But the highest level of kedushah was reserved for the gold used in the Kodesh HaKodashim to make the Aron, the Kapores, and the Keruvim.

Therefore, HKB”H imbued Betzalel with a unique form of “ruach hakodesh”—he was able to discern people’s true intent—the sincerity with which they donated to the Mishkan. With the gold donated by truly pious tzaddikim, he built the vessels located in the Kodesh HaKodashim. With the gold donated by tzaddikim who were on a lower level, he fashioned the Menorah, the Shulchan, and the Golden Mizbeiach, located in the Heichal outside of the Kodesh HaKodashim. Whereas, the gold donated by the remainder of Yisrael, not on the level of tzaddikim, he used merely to gold-plate the beams and sockets and the like.

This then is the deeper significance of the depiction: **“He filled him with the spirit of G-d, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with every craft—to think thoughts (“לחשוב מחשבות”), to work with the gold, with the silver and with the copper.”** Betzalel was able to divine and discern the intent with which people donated

to the Mishkan. Thus, he knew how to properly allocate each person’s donation of gold, silver, and copper—i.e., for which level of kedushah they were suited. This concludes his sacred insight.

Betzalel Fashioned the Vessels in the Kodesh HaKodashim from the Donations of Tzaddikim Who Were Not Involved in the Cheit HaEigel

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to embellish this fantastic notion. We have learned in the Gemara (R.H. 26a): **“אמר רב חסדא, מפני מה אין כהן גדול נכנס בבגדי זהב.”** **Rabbi Chisda said: Why doesn’t the Kohen Gadol (on Yom HaKippurim) enter the inner sanctum (Kodesh HaKodashim) to perform the service in the golden garments? Because the prosecutor cannot become an advocate.** In other words, it is because the golden garments are reminiscent of the golden calf—the “cheit ha’eigel”—i.e., we do not want to evoke that memory in that place at that time.

The Gemara finds this explanation problematic: **“וזהא איכא בגדי זהב מבחוץ”**—yet, the Kohen Gadol performs other parts of the Yom Kippur service outside of the Kodesh HaKodashim in the golden garments without the concern that “a prosecutor cannot become an advocate”? The Gemara answers: **“מפנים קא אמרינן”**—this concern only applied to the service performed in the Kodesh HaKodashim, where the Shechinah dwelt between the two Keruvim.

The Gemara is still not satisfied. So, they continue to question: **“וזהא איכא ארון וכפורת וכרוב”**—what about the gold used to fashion the vessels housed in the Kodesh HaKodashim, namely, the Aron, the Kapores, and the Keruvim? Why don’t they pose a concern of “a prosecutor cannot become an advocate”? The Gemara answers: **“חוטא בל יקריב קאמרינן”**—we only say that a sinner should not enter the inner sanctum in golden garments on account of the concern of “a prosecutor cannot become an advocate.” Now, with respect to the Kohen Gadol on Yom HaKippurim, he is entering as Yisrael’s representative to atone for all of their iniquities. This dictum—“a prosecutor cannot become an advocate”—does not apply to the vessels in the Kodesh HaKodashim; so there was no problem making them out of gold.

Nevertheless, we will endeavor to explain in greater depth why the “keilim” in the Kodesh HaKodashim could be made of gold, whereas the Kohen Gadol could not enter the Kodesh HaKodashim (whose “keilim” were all made of gold) in golden garments.

Betzalel Could Discern Who Performed Teshuvah from Ahavah

I would like to propose a wonderful explanation. We learned in the Gemara (Yoma 86b): **“אמר ריש לקיש, גדולה תשובה... איני והאמר ריש לקיש, גדולה תשובה שזדונות שזדונות נעשות לו כשגגות... לא קשיא, כאן מאהבה כאן מיראה.”** **Reish Lakish said: Teshuvah is so great in that a person’s deliberate transgressions are transformed into inadvertent ones . . . Is that so? But did not Reish Lakish himself say: Teshuvah is so great in that a person’s deliberate transgressions are transformed into** (accounted for as) **merits!?** **This is not difficult.** The Gemara resolves the dilemma as follows: **Here** (this second statement) is referring to teshuvah motivated **by “ahavah”** (love), **whereas here** (the first statement above) is referring to teshuvah motivated **by “yirah”** (fear). In other words, due to teshuvah stemming from the fear of punishment, deliberate transgressions are regarded as inadvertent ones; while due to teshuvah inspired by love of the Almighty, deliberate transgressions are regarded as merits.

Based on this distinction, we can suggest that to fashion the Aron, the Kapores, and the Keruvim, Betzalel only used gold donated by consummate tzaddikim—such as members of shevet Levi, who did not participate in the sin of the eigel—and those who did participate in the “cheit ha’eigel,” but saw fit to perform teshuvah motivated by “ahavah”—cleansing them completely of any wrongdoing. Therefore, there was no concern of “a prosecutor cannot become an advocate” in relation to any of the gold used to make the “keilim” of the Kodesh HaKodashim, since none of it was tainted by the “cheit ha’eigel.”

That was not the case for gold donated by the members of Yisrael who participated in the “cheit ha’eigel” but only performed teshuvah motivated by “yirah.” There, the concern of “a prosecutor cannot become an advocate” remained, because their deliberate sins remained sins,

albeit inadvertent ones. As such, they were liable to serve as reminders of the “cheit ha’eigel” and were disqualified by Betzalel for use in making the “keilim” of the Kodesh HaKodashim, the dwelling place of the Shechinah. Instead, he used that gold only for the Menorah, the Shulchan and the Golden Mizbeich, which were located outside of the inner sanctum. As the Gemara explains, the concern of “a prosecutor cannot become an advocate” does not apply to the service there.

With great pleasure, we can now interpret the pesukim as follows: **“Moshe said to Bnei Yisrael, ‘See, Hashem has called by name, Betzalel ben Uri ben Chur, of shevet Yehudah’**” to be in charge of the construction of the Mishkan and its vessels, whose function is to atone for the “cheit ha’eigel.” That sin was associated with the murder of Betzalel’s grandfather, Chur, who refused to accede to the people’s demand to make the eigel. To endow Betzalel with the qualities necessary to build the Mishkan properly: **“He filled him with the spirit of G-d, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with every craft, להשוב מחשבות, to work with the gold, with the silver and with the copper.”** According to the Chiddushei HaRim, zy”a, this means that Betzalel was able to perceive the inner thoughts and intents of those who donated to the building of the Mishkan.

As explained, this divine intuition “להשוב מחשבות” was required in order to allocate the gold properly. If the gold was donated by someone who had performed teshuvah from “ahavah,” it could be used for the “keilim” in the Kodesh HaKodashim. If, however, it was donated by someone who only performed teshuvah from “yirah,” Betzalel only used it for vessels and items located outside of the Kodesh HaKodashim, where the concern of “a prosecutor cannot become an advocate” was irrelevant.

All of these concerns only applied to the gold that was to be used for the Kodesh HaKodashim and its “keilim.” The necessity to avoid the concern of “a prosecutor cannot become an advocate,” only applied there. Hence, they were fashioned from gold that came exclusively from consummate tzaddikim, who did not participate in the “cheit ha’eigel,”

or “ba’alei teshuvah,” who sinned with the eigel but who subsequently performed teshuvah from “ahavah”—thereby transforming their deliberate sins into merits.

On Yom HaKippurim, however, when the Kohen Gadol entered the Kodesh HaKodashim to atone for the iniquities of Bnei Yisrael, he was prohibited from entering clothed in his golden garments. As the Kedushas Levi (Vayeilech) teaches us, on Yom HaKippurim, Yisrael perform teshuvah from “yirah”; for they are fearful of the day of judgment. Hence, their deliberate sins are only transformed into inadvertent sins. Therefore, in order not to bring to mind the gold used for the “cheit ha’eigel,” the Kohen Gadol, Yisrael’s advocate, did not wear golden garments on that occasion.

The Term “שנה” Connotes Change for the Good the Term “חודש” Connotes Renewal

Following this line of reasoning, we will now examine why our sages instituted that we read the following passage in parshas Bo on Shabbas HaChodesh: **הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רִאשׁוֹן הַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי—this month shall be for you the beginning of the months; it shall be for you the first of the months of the year.** The Ramban teaches us that it is a mitzvas-asei to count the month of Nissan as the first of the twelve months of the calendar year. Thus, we will always remember the importance of this month—the month of the exodus from Mitzrayim.

Further on in his commentary, the Ramban explains why the Torah refers to Nissan both as the **“beginning of the months”** and the **“first.”** We are not to err by thinking that the month of Nissan is the beginning of the year; for, as we know, Rosh Hashanah is in Tishrei, not in Nissan. When we refer to the months of the year, however, we count Nissan as the first month. Without a doubt, this deserves further clarification. Why did HKB”H opt to make a distinction between the year and the months in this manner? Why is the month of Tishrei the beginning of the year and not the first of the months? Conversely, why is the month of Nissan the first of the months but not the beginning of the year?

It appears that we can explain the matter based on what the Orach L’Chaim (Mishpatim) brings down in the name

of the holy Maggid of Mezritch, Rabbi Dov Ber, zy”a. He explains the difference between a “chodesh” and a “shanah.” “Chodesh” implies a renewal (“hitchadshut”) of the intellect; whereas “shanah” implies a change (a “shinui”) from what was beforehand.

Let us elaborate. What indeed is the difference between a change from the previous status quo versus being renewed or rejuvenated like a newborn? Furthermore, how does this distinction answer our question? Why did HKB”H opt to begin the yearly cycle with Tishrei as opposed to the monthly cycle which He began with Nissan?

To answer these questions, let us refer to a teaching from the holy Sar Shalom of Belz, zy”a, related to what we have learned in the Gemara (Pesachim 42a) and which is the halachic ruling in the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 455, 1). When baking matzos, we must draw “our own water”—water that has remained overnight prior to the baking. He explains the rationale for this prerequisite based on the fact that teshuvah from “yirah” transforms deliberate sins into inadvertent sins, whereas teshuvah from “ahavah” transforms them into merits.

Now, as we know, on Rosh HaShanah, Yisrael perform teshuvah motivated by “yirah.” They are fearful and in awe of the Day of Judgment, when all creatures are held accountable for all of their actions and wrongdoings. Consequently, all of their deliberate sins are only transformed into inadvertent sins. Therefore, they go to the sea to perform **Tashlich**—to dispose of all the iniquities that have been transformed into inadvertent sins in the sea, in keeping with the passuk (Michah 7, 19): **“וְתִשְׁלִיךְ בַּמַּצּוֹלוֹת יָם כָּל חַטּוֹתֶיךָ—You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.**

Yet, on Pesach, HKB”H elevates every single Jew enabling him to exit his own personal version of Mitzrayim. Hence, at that time, Yisrael perform teshuvah motivated by “ahavah.” Consequently, all of the iniquities that they threw into the sea on Rosh HaShanah have now become merits. Therefore, we go to draw **“our own water,”** retrieving all the iniquities that have been transformed into merits. These are his sacred remarks.

**On Account of Our Teshuvah from “Yirah”
in Tishrei We Are Able to Perform Teshuvah
from “Ahavah” in Nissan**

We can now rejoice; for, we have shed some light on the teaching of the Maggid of Mezritch, zy”a. The term “**shanah**” indicates a change for the better—a positive “shinui.” The term “**chodesh**,” on the other hand, indicates a renewal, becoming like a newborn infant. In the month of Tishrei, during the days of judgment, we need to change ourselves for the better—to at least perform teshuvah from “yirah.” So, even though this type of teshuvah does not eliminate a sin completely; nevertheless, it transforms it into a much lesser form of sin, which is a significant change for the better.

In contrast, in the month of Nissan, when HKB”H lifts us out of Mitzrayim, we are given a new lease on life. By performing teshuvah from “ahavah,” our deliberate sins become merits, not merely inadvertent sins. This is much

more than a change for the better. As a result, we ascend the ladder of kedushah.

Following this sublime path, we can now comprehend HKB”H’s rationale for beginning the yearly cycle with the month of Tishrei and the monthly cycle with the month of Nissan. The Orach L’Chaim (Bereishis) teaches us in the name of the holy Maggid of Mezritch, zy”a, that when serving Hashem a person’s primary focus and effort should be aimed at achieving “yiras Hashem”—fear and reverence of the Almighty. In this manner, he will ultimately attain “Ahavas Hashem” as a gift from above. So, in Tishrei, the beginning of the “shanah,” we exert ourselves to the max to perform teshuvah from “yirah”; we change ourselves for the better. In this merit, we are privileged to have HKB”H take us out our spiritual Mitzrayim in the month of Nissan. It is His gift to us for performing teshuvah from “ahavah,” allowing us to become like newborn infants free of any impurities and flaws.



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