

Discourse 30

“*Vayakhel Moshe - Moshe assembled*”

Shabbat Parshat Vayakhel, Parshat Shekalim

Shabbat Mevarchim Adar-Sheni, 5725

By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

The verse states,¹³⁶⁹ “Moshe assembled the entire community of the children of Israel and said to them: These are the things [that *HaShem*-יהו"ה commanded, to do them]: For six days, work may be done, and the seventh day shall be holy for you, a Shabbat of total rest for *HaShem*-יהו"ה.” The Chassidic discourses¹³⁷⁰ cite the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,¹³⁷¹ (also brought in the commentators of Torah),¹³⁷² that the juxtaposition of the Torah portion about Shabbat to the work of building the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*) is in order to teach us that the work of building the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*) must specifically be done on the mundane days of the week, but not on Shabbat. Amongst the explanations of this,¹³⁷³ is that the general matter of the labor in constructing the Tabernacle

¹³⁶⁹ Exodus 35:1-2

¹³⁷⁰ Torah Ohr and Torat Chayim, Vayakhel; Ohr HaTorah, Vayakhel p. 2,141 and on, and elsewhere.

¹³⁷¹ Mechilta to Exodus 35:2

¹³⁷² Rashi to Exodus 35:2

¹³⁷³ Ohr HaTorah, Vayakhel p. 2,141 and on, and elsewhere.

(*Mishkan*) is so that through it, there will be a drawing of *HaShem*'s יהו"ה Godliness from Above to below, so that [the verse], "I will dwell within them," will be fulfilled.¹³⁷⁴

[This matter comes about after one's toil from below to Above, beginning with the donations to the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*), as the verse states,¹³⁷⁵ "Take from yourselves a portion (*Terumah*-תרומה," which is of the root "uplifting-*Haramah*-הרמה"¹³⁷⁶ (meaning from below to Above) "to *HaShem*-יהו"ה, everyone whose heart motivates him shall bring it etc."

However, in order for man's service from below to Above to be in a way of an arousal from below, it must be preceded by an arousal from Above (both in order to awaken man to do his work as an arousal from below, as well is in order that the arousal from below should awaken and draw down the arousal from Above).¹³⁷⁷ This is the matter of "Moshe assembled."]¹³⁷⁸

Now, this is a matter of descent etc. By way of analogy, when someone writes a certain matter, the [act of] writing is a descent for him, in that he constricts himself to lower himself to engage in the labor of writing etc. However, the descent is for the purpose of ascent, in that he will benefit through this etc. The same is so of the matter of the drawing down and descent of the Supernal Man from Above to below to engage in the labor of the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*), in that there is a drawing down of

¹³⁷⁴ Exodus 25:8

¹³⁷⁵ Exodus 35:5

¹³⁷⁶ See Ohr HaTorah, *Terumah* p. 1,355 and on.

¹³⁷⁷ See *Likkutei Torah*, *Vayikra* 20b and on; *Shir HaShirim* 22b and on.

¹³⁷⁸ See Ohr HaTorah, beginning of *Vayakhel* p. 2,085

the [aspects of] Wisdom-*Chochmah*, Understanding-*Binah*, and Knowledge-*Da'at*. [This is similar to how it was in the actual literal construction of the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*), in that it was brought about through,¹³⁷⁹ “He filled him with Godly spirit, with wisdom, insight, and knowledge etc.”]

That is, in making and affixing the physical boards (*Kerashim*-קרשים), this is a lowering and descent. However, the descent is for the purpose of ascent, so that the boards (*Kerashim*-קרשים) will subsequently be elevated to holiness, so that His Godliness, blessed is He, will rest upon them. This is the general matter of the toil of affecting refinements (*Avodat HaBirurim*), to refine and purify the world, to affect in it that there will be a drawing down of holiness, so that it will be “a dwelling place for the Holy One, blessed is He.”¹³⁸⁰

With the above in mind, we can understand why the labor of [constructing] the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*) is specifically done on the mundane days of the week, rather than Shabbat. This is because Shabbat is the matter of ascent to Above, rather than a matter of descent for the sake of affecting refinements, (not even a descent to the aspect of Wisdom-*Chochmah*, by which to affect the matter of the refinements (*Birurim*-בירורים) in accordance to the teaching of Zohar,¹³⁸¹ “They are refined with Wisdom-*Chochmah*”), since on Shabbat, the matter of separating (*Borer*-בורר) [the bad from the good] is forbidden.¹³⁸²

¹³⁷⁹ Exodus 35:11

¹³⁸⁰ See Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 36.

¹³⁸¹ See Zohar II 254b (Heichalot); Tanya, Iggeret HaKodesh, Epistle 28 (148a)

¹³⁸² Tur, Shulchan Aruch, and Shulchan Aruch of the Alter Rebbe, Orach Chayim, 319; Also see Torah Ohr, Chayei Sarah 15c

2.

Now, the ascent of the day of Shabbat is also explained in the discourse entitled “*Vayakhel Moshe*” in Torah Ohr,¹³⁸³ in explanation of the [above-mentioned] teaching of our sages, of blessed memory, “Why was the Torah portion about Shabbat juxtaposed to the work of building the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*) etc.” That is, the matter of Shabbat is introductory to the labor of constructing the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*).

The essential point of the explanation¹³⁸⁴ is that the general matter of the labor of constructing the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*) is to affect the drawing down of Godliness from Above to below (as said before). However, since man is below within a physical body, therefore, to be able to affect the drawing down of Godliness to below, he first must undergo the matter of ascent to Above. This is the matter of Shabbat, at which time there is the ascent of the worlds from below to Above, all the way to the highest heights etc. This is why our teacher Moshe started with the command about Shabbat before the command about the labor of constructing the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*).¹³⁸⁵

3.

To further explain, even though in the two above-mentioned explanations, the reason for the juxtaposition of the

¹³⁸³ Torah Ohr, beginning of Vayakhel (86c and on).

¹³⁸⁴ Torah Ohr *ibid.* 88c-d; Also see Torat Chayim, Vayakhel 392b-c

¹³⁸⁵ Also see Likkutei Sichot Vol. 6 p. 217 (from this gathering).

Torah portion of Shabbat to the labor of constructing the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*) is to emphasize the matter of the ascent of Shabbat, nonetheless, they differ from each other.

The explanation is that the matter of the ascent of Shabbat, which is why the command about Shabbat precedes the command about the construction of the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*) (as explained in Torah Ohr) is solely the ascent of man, which comes **as an introduction** so that he will be able to affect the drawing down from Above to below through the labor of constructing the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*). In contrast, the ascent of Shabbat, on account of which there cannot be the construction of the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*) (the substance of which is drawing down from Above to below) on Shabbat (as explained in the above-mentioned Chassidic discourses), refers to the ascent **that follows after** the drawing down and descent from Above to below.

We should add that the above-mentioned Torah Ohr also explains the matter of the ascent that follows the drawing down and descent from Above to below. As explained there, upon the conclusion and ultimate descent of the upper bestowal (this being the matter of drawing down from Above to below, brought about through the labor of constructing the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*)), it then is the aspect of Shabbat, which is the rest and withdrawal to one's essential self, etc.

[This is the substance of the command of Shabbat said to Moshe in the Torah portion of Ki Tisa,¹³⁸⁶ after the commands regarding the construction of the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*) in the Torah portions of Terumah and Tetzaveh.

¹³⁸⁶ Exodus 31:12 and on.

(That is, it is unlike Moshe's command to the Jewish people in the Torah portion of this week, in which the command of Shabbat precedes that of constructing the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*)). This is because the matter of resting is not applicable, and there only is [the presence of] the rebounding light (*Ohr Chozer*) if there first was a drawing down of the aspect of the direct light (*Ohr Yashar*) and a drawing from Above to below etc.]

In other words, in addition to the ascent of Shabbat that brings about the ascent of man in the form of a preface, so that he will be able to affect the drawing down from Above to below through the labor of constructing the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*), there also is the ascent of Shabbat that comes after the conclusion of the drawing down from Above to below.

4.

Now, besides the matter of the ascent of Shabbat (in the two above-mentioned ways), on Shabbat there also is a matter of drawing down from Above to below. In regard to what was explained before (in chapter two) that the matter of Shabbat is that of ascent to Above, rather than descent to below, this only is in regard to the descent for the sake of affecting refinements (*Birurim*), in that this descent does not apply on Shabbat. Nevertheless, on Shabbat there is a drawing down of the Supernal pleasure brought about through the general labor during the mundane days of the week, and on the day of Shabbat it is revealed below.

This is as explained in Likkutei Torah in the discourse entitled, “*Re’u Ki HaShem Natan Lachem HaShabbat*,”¹³⁸⁷ in regard to the matter of “two Shabbats kept according to their laws,”¹³⁸⁸ that they are the two ways of motion on Shabbat, both the motion from below to Above, this being the matter of ascent, as well as the motion from Above to below, this being the matter of the revelation and drawing down of the Supernal pleasure to below.¹³⁸⁹

5.

Now, based on what was stated before, it is necessary to add and connect the conclusion of Torah Ohr with the beginning of Likkutei Torah,¹³⁹⁰ (the books of Chassidus of the Alter Rebbe which follow after the book of Tanya, which is the “Written Torah” of the teachings of Chassidus).¹³⁹¹ To preface, although in truth, they are one book which is divided into two volumes, seemingly for external reasons,¹³⁹² nonetheless, in actuality, we see that the two volumes are written in different styles and are called by different names, and a name is of significance and consequence.¹³⁹³

About this we see something wondrous. The book Torah Ohr concludes with the discourses of the Torah portion

¹³⁸⁷ Likkutei Torah, Beshalach 2c (also see Ohr HaTorah, Behar p. 629).

¹³⁸⁸ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 118b

¹³⁸⁹ Also see Torat Chayim, Beshalach 393b and on; 436c and on.

¹³⁹⁰ See the Sichah talk that follows after the discourse (Torat Menachem, Vol. 42 p. 306 and on), regarding the concluding of the printing of Likkutei Torah).

¹³⁹¹ See Igrot Kodesh of the Rebbe Rayatz Vol. 4 p. 261

¹³⁹² See Igrot Kodesh ibid. p. 560 and on; printed in the additions to Torah Ohr published by Kehot.

¹³⁹³ See Talmud Bavli, Brachot 7b; Yoma 83b

of Vayakhel. [Although at the end of the book there are discourses on Megillat Esther, nonetheless, this is a matter unto itself, as understood from the cover page [of the book, that these are] “discourses on the [first] two books of the Chumash, these being Bereishit and Shemot, **and also** includes discourses for Chanukah... and on Megillat Esther.” However, it is the “discourses on the [first] two books of the Chumash, these being Bereishit and Shemot,” that conclude with the Torah portion of Vayakhel.] In contrast, the discourses on the Torah portion of Pekudei are (not in Torah Ohr, but are) in Likkutei Torah.

However, at first glance, when dividing the book into two volumes, it seems to be more fitting that the division should be between the two (books) of Chumash, just as in a Torah scroll there is a separation of four columns between one [book] of Chumash and another [book] of Chumash.¹³⁹⁴ However, there is no place that there is [such a] division between two Torah portions within the same [book] of Chumash. This is especially so when it comes to the Torah portions of Vayakhel and Pekudei, which in many years are connected [and read together as one].

Even more wonderous¹³⁹⁵ is that Likkutei Torah does not begin (with the discourses of the Torah portion of Pekudei, but) with the discourses of the Torah portion of Beshalach, which is several Torah portions before the Torah portion of Vayakhel (which concludes Torah Ohr). This is particularly [astonishing] considering that in Torah Ohr there also are

¹³⁹⁴ Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 273:1

¹³⁹⁵ Also see Likkutei Sichot Vol. 26 p. 386

discourses on the Torah portion of Beshalach. Thus, at first glance, there seems to be no room [to reason] that a single Torah portion should be divided in a way that some of its discourses should be in Torah Ohr, and some of its discourses should be in Likkutei Torah.

Now, although I have not heard the reason for this, we see that there [indeed] is a **continuation** (*Hemshech*) between the conclusion of Torah Ohr and the beginning of Likkutei Torah. That is, in the discourses of the Torah portion of Vayakhel at the conclusion of Torah Ohr, it discusses the matter of Shabbat, both in regard to the matter of ascent from below to Above, as well as in regard to the matter of drawing down from Above to below. In continuation to this, at the beginning of Likkutei Torah, in the discourse entitled [and on the verse],¹³⁹⁶ “That *HaShem*-יהוה has given you the Shabbat,” it also discusses the two above-mentioned matters that there are on the day of Shabbat.¹³⁹⁷

6.

We should add that there also is a continuation (*Hemshech*) between the discourses on Megillat Esther at the conclusion of Torah Ohr and at the beginning of Likkutei

¹³⁹⁶ Exodus 16:29

¹³⁹⁷ We can add and further elucidate that even with respect to the second discourse in Torah Ohr, Vayakhel, this being a discourse for Pesach (as it states on the cover page, “One discourse for Pesach in the Torah portion of Vayakhel” – which can be connected with the discourse entitled “*Eileh Pekudei*” in the Likkutei Torah’s continuation of the book of Shemot were (4d) it explains the verse (Ezekiel 16:7), “I made you as numerous as the plants of the field; you increased and grew, and you came to have great charm, breasts developed,” which relates to the holiday of Pesach (see the Sichah talk of Shabbat Parshat Pekudei).

Torah. For, the final discourse of the teachings on Megillat Esther in Torah Ohr is the discourse beginning with [and on the verse],¹³⁹⁸ “And in this manner did the girl come etc.” About this the Alter Rebbe explains that [the word] “And in this manner-*uVaZeh*-וּבְזֶה” refers to the pillar between the lower Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden HaTachton*) and the upper Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden HaElyon*) by which and through which the souls ascend from the lower Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden HaTachton*) to the upper Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden HaElyon*), this being the meaning of [the continuation of the verse “did the girl] come to the king” etc., and the pillar is the matter of nullification of self (*Bittul*), in that all ascents are impossible except through first undergoing nullification of self (*Bittul*) etc., and this also is the meaning of [the verse] about Esther,¹³⁹⁹ “She did not request anything etc.,” being that she [already] was in the state of the utmost nullification of self (*Bittul*).

[To further explain, the nullification (*Bittul*) of the aspect of the pillar is not just after the withdrawal of the soul from the body, but can even be while the soul is in the body. This is understood from the verse, “She did not request anything etc.,” in that this matter was present even while she was a soul within a body.]

Likewise, in the first discourse of Likkutei Torah, in the discourse entitled [and on the verse], “That *HaShem*-יהו"ה has given you the Shabbat,” it discusses the matter of the ascent from the lower Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden HaTachton*) to the upper Garden of Eden (*Gaan Eden HaElyon*) through “the river

¹³⁹⁸ Esther 2:13

¹³⁹⁹ Esther 2:15

of fire (*Nehar Dinur*) that separates between them, within which one must immerse (which is the matter of nullification of self (*Bittul*)),¹⁴⁰⁰ in order to forget the pleasure of the lower Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden HaTachton*) upon his arrival in the upper Garden of Eden (*Gan Eden HaElyon*), so that this will not distract him there.”¹⁴⁰¹

¹⁴⁰⁰ See Torah Ohr, Mikeitz 31a; Hemshech 5666 p. 15

¹⁴⁰¹ [Likkutei Torah] 1d