

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Vayak'el	2 Mar., 2019	25 Adar I 5779	Exod. 35:1-38:20	2Kings 11:21-12:16	Matt 17:22-27

The Yisraelites were given two Commandments when they told Moshe to give them the rest of the Commandments as they were afraid of dying after hearing the voice of Hashem (Shemot 20:18-21). Moshe came back from Mount Sinai on Yom Kippur and gave them the Oral Torah, and the Written Torah until the end of parashat Yitro. The rest of the Torah was written later during their journey in the desert. He wrote 13 scrolls of the Torah on the last of day of his life, one for each Tribe and the other to be placed next to the Ark.

It is written in the parashat Mishpatim that Moshe sat down and began to make judgment against the nation. The people who came out of Mitzrayim (Egypt) with Moshe had suits against each other. The parashat vayak'el begins immediately a day after Yom Kippur when Moshe brought judgments (Shemot 18:13). The suits were brought against the Yisraelites for not returning the items given to them as they borrowed (Shemot 12:35). This is very important because in Shemot 35:5-9, Moshe asks the Yisraelites to make offerings.

The purpose of parashat vayak'el is to teach the Yisraelites about Shabbat and to announce the beginning of the process of creating Mishkhan (Tabernacle). Therefore, Moshe needed donations to build Mishkhan. The Mitzrim (Egyptians) were contending that the Yisraelites 'borrowed' the money and they have not returned it. Thus, the Yisraelites stole their money. And the judgment needed to be passed down before the donation was taken as the stolen money cannot be used to build the Mishkhan. On the very same day, after the judgment was delivered, he gathered all the Yisraelites in the evening and asks for donation. Therefore, the parashat vayak'el begins the day after the Yom Kippur (Tishrei 10th).

The halachot (oral laws) are clear that we cannot accept money that is earned on Shabbat or earned in any deceitful way. For example, let's say a rug is worth \$100 and you clean the rug for \$200, and you donate \$100 from cleaning the rug. In such case, this money was earned in a deceitful way and therefore it cannot be accepted as a donation. It is indeed costed you \$200 in materials and labor. But, you did not mention to the owner that the rug is not worth cleaning as it cost more than the value of the rug. The Gemara explains that Hashem does not just look at you for your action, but He also looks for your intent deep within our heart. Thus, the purpose of life is that we are to be righteous. There are four criteria: 1. Keep the Mitzvot (Laws); 2. Not allowed to sin; 3. To fix *midot* (traits); 4. And to keep scriptural ideology.

"Moshe assembled all the congregation of the children of Yisrael" in verse 1. Meaning, women and children were included in the meeting. It is nearly impossible to get all the people in one place. Here, we are talking about three million people. For example, if President Trump sends out invitation for dinner to 100 people, there would be some people who cannot attend the dinner for illness, death, or other emergencies. So, to gather all the children of Yisrael itself is a miracle.

Why the miracle? It is normal for a baby to be born, or death, or illness, etc. But on this day, there was no birth, nor death, nor illness, nor other 'emergencies' (excuses). When the children of Yisrael sinned by worshipping a Golden Calf, Moshe lost his status as a king. That is why he had to repent not only for Yisrael but for himself as well to regain his status. Only after Yom Kippur, he regained his status as a king. That is the reason he was able to seat on the judgment.

In Shemot (Exodus) 20:9 says “shabbat” (to rest). In Shemot 35:2 says “shabbat Shabbaton” (a shabbat of solemn rest). What is the difference? As we know, the Shabbat is the source of blessing in life. The Gemara says that Hashem told Moshe, “I have a special present in My treasure house that I want to give.” And that is the Mitzvah of Shabbat. Those who keep Shabbat can attest to its beauty. They look forward to it all week. Chazal tells us that the Mitzvah of Shabbat is equal to all of the other Mitzvot combined. Thus, it is the source of merit and blessing. It is the blessing of wealth, family, health, etc.

The Shabbat is for everyone. It is not just given to the Jews (in today’s terminology). It was given to ALL the people as Hashem rested on the seventh day (B’resheet 2:2). The Shabbat in Shemot 20:9 is just ‘keeping’ the shabbat. There are many stories of miracle for ‘just keeping’ the Shabbat. But shabbat Shabbaton is a higher spiritual essence that you keep ‘strict’ Shabbat. When we have reached this level, everything is done for you by Hashem. We all can improve. We have to remember that Shabbat is Hashem’s gift to us, for our benefit. It is the source of blessing.

“These are the Words which YHWH has command you to do” (verse 1). “To do” in this verse represents ‘actual labor’ that is performed while building the Tabernacle. There are 39 categories of the Tabernacle’s labor are the ones that are forbidden on the Shabbat.¹ These 39 categories are to recuperate the curses given to Adam, Chava, Snake, and the Ground.

The Zohar says that all blessings above and below depend upon the seventh day. So, what you put into Shabbat is what you get out of it. The amount of spirituality (energy) you put into sanctifying the Shabbat, will determine the amount of blessing that will be deposited into the coming week. The reason that manna did not appear on the seventh day because the blessing was prepared for all six days. From that day (Shabbat) all six supernal days are blessed, and every single one conveys nourishment, each on its day, from the blessing bestowed upon it on the seventh day. Therefore, whoever attains the rung of faith should arrange his table on the eve of Shabbat, so that his table may be blessed throughout those six days.² Thus the reason for arranging the table on Shabbat eve with bread and food.

Ohr HaChaim says that the commandment of Shabbat observance as a prerequisite to the Tabernacle. We are taught that there are two Commandments that would negate all other Commandments: Not keeping the Shabbat and worship of an idol. The Shabbat is a mean to repair the damage of the Golden Calf. The commentators say that this sin was not forgiven completely as each generation suffers much disasters and ordeals. Therefore, the Tabernacle had to be built for Yisraelites to accept once again all 613 commandments.

The construction and the detail of the Tabernacle is mentioned first in parashat Terumah and Tezaveh. Then in parashat Ki Tisa, the observance of Shabbat is mentioned. The essence of the Shabbat is the glory of Hashem who created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. The Tabernacle is a reflection of the glory of Yisrael in that Hashem chose them as His Presence dwell among them. Therefore, Hashem is presenting two ideas: Tabernacle and Shabbat. Hashem put the Tabernacle first in His love of Yisrael whereas Moshe put the Shabbat first because, for us, the honor and glory of Hashem takes precedence.

¹ BT, Shabbos 97b

² BT, Beitsah 16a