

+PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Vayek'hel / Pekudei	21 Mar 2020	25 Adar 5780	Exo. 35:1-40:38	Ezek 45:16-46:18	Luke 22:1-13

This week's Torah portion is double, Vayek'hel and Pekudei, the last two Torah portion of Shemot. They relate how Moshe and the Yisraelites fulfilled Hashem's instruction to build the Tabernacle, furnish it, and make the garments for the priests who would officiate in it. The parashat Vayek'hel opens with Moshe informing the people that working on the Tabernacle does not supersede the Shabbat. This portion is essentially repeating parashat Terumah, only changing the predominant verb from "you must take" to "he made." Similarly, much of parashat Pekudei is a repetition of the first half of parashat Tetzaveh with similar verse changes, "you are to command" to "these are the appointment."

It is written (Exo. 35:1), "And Moshe assembled all the congregation of the children of Yisrael." We need to understand why the Torah goes out of its way to point out that Moshe assembled the children of Yisrael when it was a normal practice every time that he communicated the Word of Hashem to them after returning atop Mount Sinai. This Torah portion takes its name from the first Hebrew word of Exodus 35:1, "*vaykhel*." The verb *kahal* (קהל) means "to assemble," so *vaykhel* (ויקהל) means "and he assembled."

As a noun, the Hebrew word *kahal* means "assembly," "congregation," or "community." The Torah refers to the community of the tribes of Yisrael as the *kahal*, a common term denoting all Yisrael. The word *kahal* passes into the Greek Septuagint version of the Scriptures as *ekklesia* (ἐκκλησία). The Greek word *ekklesia* appears throughout the Greek version of the *Tanach* (Old Testament) to speak of the assembly of Yisrael. However, when it occurs in the Renewed Covenant (New Testament), English translators rarely render it as "assembly." Inexplicably, English translators substitute the theologically charged term "church."

Returning to our verse in question, the Hebrew word *et-kol* (אֶת-כָּל; *et-kol*: the entire) includes orphans who are minor and women, that Moshe made sure to include them in this assembly in which he told the people to contribute. Normally, there are restrictions on taking donations for charity from orphans who are minors, from married women, and from people who have a tendency to give beyond their means. However, this was not the case when it came to accepting donations for the construction of the Tabernacle. The Hebrew words *me-et kol-ish* (מֵאֵת כָּל-אִישׁ; *me-et kol-ish*; from every man) in Shemot 25:2, come to teach that it was permitted to take unlimited contributions for the Temple even from these three categories of donors. It was for this reason that even "the serving women who did service at the door of the Tent of Meeting" (Shemot 38:8) who were considered the lowest class, to forge the Laver.

"These are the words which YHWH has commanded, that you should do them" (v. 1). This phrase introduces the next two verses, which discusses the obligation to keep Shabbat. In Tractate Shabbos (97b), R' Yehudah HaNasi derived 39 different works that are prohibited on Shabbat. The Hebrew word *el-leh* (אֵלֶּה; these) has a numerical value of 36. Since this word is a plural, it is counted as two, and an extra word *hei* (הֵי; the) in *ha-de-va-rim* (הַדְּבָרִים; the words) is counted as one, making the total of 39. So, what are the things "to do"?

Or HaChaim explains by referring to Bemidbar (Numbers) 15:22, "When you sin by mistake, and do not do all these commands." This verse speaks about the sin of *avodah zarah* (idol worship), and since *avodah zarah* is equal to a rejection of all the *mitzvos*. Therefore, the *avodah zarah* is a violation of "all these commands"; meaning it is one transgression that is equivalent to a rejection of the entire Torah. Since by

sinning with the Golden Calf, the Yisraelites were considered to have blemished all of Hashem's commandments and they need to repair the observance of all of the 613 *mitzvos* (deeds). However, rectifying all 613 is beyond a person's ability. Hashem therefore gave this command (in verse 2 and 3) that we should keep the *mitzvah* (deed) of Shabbat meticulously. Because, of 613 *mitzvos*, there are some that applies to women only, for kohanim (priests), for men, etc. Thus, the *mitzvah* of Shabbat is equivalent to all the *mitzvos* of the Torah and rectifying the blemish of the sin of Golden Calf.

A question is raised: Why does the Torah repeat the command about observing Shabbat, after having already issued this command several times? (20:10, and 31:13-17) Another question is why is it mentioned here just before the command about construction the Tabernacle? The answer is that Hashem is commanding the Yisraelites to rectify what they did wrong in the past, so that they will be worthy of having Him dwell in their midst. Therefore, a careful observation of Shabbat, that is equal to all the *mitzvos* of the Torah, they will achieve the necessary rectification for the sin of *avodah zarah*. That whoever observes Shabbat properly, even if he worshipped *avodah zarah* like the generation of Enosh who initiated the practice of idolatry and served idols exclusively, he is forgiven.

In verse 2, "Work is done for six days, but on the seventh day it shall be set-apart to you, a Shabbat of rest to YHWH. Anyone doing work on it is put death." Questions are: First, why was work mentioned here when the verse is describing the Shabbat? Second, how is the seventh day be set-apart? This verse surely does not mean to command that work be done on every weekday. Rather, the Torah means to forbid all performance of *melachah* (prohibition) on Shabbat on a person's behalf, whether one does it by himself or by non-Yisraelite.

A key to understand this verse lies in "shall be done" which is translated from the Hebrew word תַּעֲשֶׂה (*te'a-seh*) with the vowel *tsere* under the *tav* (ת,) so that the meaning is that for six days your work "shall be done by someone, either by yourself or by others", as opposed to תַּעֲשֶׂה (*ta'a-she*) with the vowel *patach*, which would mean "you (yourself) shall do." Meaning, on the weekdays you may have work done for you by others, but on the seventh day, you shall not have work done for you even by others. The verse thus teaches that we are prohibited not only to perform *melachah* ourselves, but also have a non-believer perform it on our behalf. This explanation fits with the opinion that instructing a non-believer to do *melachah* on Shabbat is Scripturally forbidden.

In verse 21, "everyone whose heart lifted him up and everyone whose spirit moved him came, and they brought the contribution." There are two different categories of donors. The first, "everyone whose heart lifted him up," means one who donates wholeheartedly in accordance with his financial means as opposed to doing it with an embittered soul. The second, "everyone whose spirit moved him," means literally that his heart elevates him, and causes him to assess himself as though he were wealthier than he actually is, so that he gives generously, beyond his means. 9