

פרשת שמייני

The joke goes like this:

Reuven wanted to build a new house and since he was very devout he wanted the house to conform perfectly to the dictates of the Torah. He demanded that each and every aspect of his new dwelling would meet every Divine requirement.

So, Reuven went to the Rabbi to get direction and received the guidance that he sought. The Rabbi said he would check all of the relevant sources and he scoured the Gemara in order to present Reuven with a full and complete picture.

When the Rabbi completed his preparation he began to give Reuven the requisite information. On a constant basis, at every stage of the building, Reuven would consult and was told what to do and did not deviate even one iota from the instructions he received.

Following months of intense labor the house was completed. Inviting his family, friends, and of course the Rabbi, Reuven was going to hammer in the final nail and the house would be finished.

Climbing up on the ladder, with a prayer on his lips, he placed the nail in the appropriate place and gave a tap and two hard blows with the hammer and the nail was firmly placed in the house.

And the house collapsed.

Shocked and humiliated, Reuven turned to the Rabbi and asked, 'How could this have happened? I followed every instruction you gave me. I did exactly what the Gemara said to do!'

"Yes, said the Rabbi, you certainly did. And Tosfos asks that question, too."

Whether or not you are entertained by this joke, there is a bitter truth contained within it.

Sometimes we do our best to do what is correct and yet we do not succeed. How are we to relate to such disappointment?

Our Parshas Shmini provides us with insights into such situations.

The final half of the previous Parshas Tzav¹ and the first half of Parshas Sh'mini continue where Sefer Sh'mos concluded. In the intervening weeks, Parshas Vayikro and the first part of Parshas Tzav taught us the laws of most Korbonos and now we resume our connection to the dedication of the Mishkan.

The final Parshos of Sefer Sh'mos dealt with the instructions to build the Mishkan and the fulfillment of those instructions.

For those who are familiar with the brevity of the Torah in almost all areas, it is stunning to read and re-read the precise guidance that the Torah gives regarding the building of the Mishkan and the service that will be performed in it.

Because of its uniqueness, the Mishkan required a time of consecration, a time of *chinuch* to inaugurate its use. That consecration lasted for seven days, the final seven days of the month of Adar.

Two major parallel events occurred during that week of ימי המילואים, the days of consecration².

¹ In the last half of Parshas *Tetzaveh* in Sefer Sh'mos, we see that the service necessary for the *miluim*, inauguration of the Mishkan that we learn in Parshas Tzav is foreshadowed.

² Rashi, at the very beginning of Perek 8 at the end of Parshas Tzav notes that the instructions given there regarding the consecration of the Mishkan, the *miluim* are out of chronological order. He writes:

קח את אהרן - פרשה זו נאמרה שבעת ימים קודם הקמת המשכן, שאין מוקדם ומאוחר בתורה:
Take Aharon – this section was said seven days prior to the erection of the Mishkan. There is no chronological order in the Torah.

Thus, we will present a great deal of information in the next pages that is out of the order in which the Torah presents them, but are in chronological order.

As we learned in Parshas Pekudei at the end of Sefer Sh'mos, Moshe erected and took apart the Mishkan daily. We read there in Rashi (Perek 9/Posuk 23):

...שכל שבעת ימי המלואים, שהעמידו משה למשכן ושמש בו ופרקו בכל יום...

For the entire seven days of the consecration, Moshe erected the Mishkan, did the service in it and then dismantled it daily.

Rashi includes the second event that occurred during this time was that Moshe Rabbenu performed the service of the Kohen Godol during those seven days: ושמש בו, he did the service in it.

We read there as well (Sh'mos Perek 39/Posuk 33):

וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן אֶל מֹשֶׁה אֶת הָאֹהֶל וְאֶת כָּל כְּלָיו קַרְסָיו קַרְשָׁיו בְּרִיחָיו וְעַמֻּדָיו
וְאֹדְנָיו:

They brought the Mishkan to Moshe, the covering and all of its vessels, the clasps and the boards, crossbeams and uprights and sockets.

The ensuing verses give a detailed list of all that was brought to Moshe. We then read (ibid. Posuk 43):

וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל הַמְּלָאכָה וְהִנֵּה עָשׂוּ אֹתָהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' בְּן עָשׂוּ וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה:

Moshe saw all of the work and behold they did it as G-d commanded, so they did; and Moshe blessed them.

ויברך אותם משה - אמר להם יהי רצון שתשרה שכינה במעשה ידיכם, (תהלים צ"ד³) ויהי נועם ה' א...ל'קיננו עלינו ומעשה ידינו וגו':

The verse to which the above Rashi is associated will be brought in the coming lines.

³ The entire verse reads:

וְיִהְיֶה נֹעַם אֱלֹהֵינוּ... אֱלֹהֵינוּ... אֱלֹהֵינוּ... לְקִינֵנוּ עָלֵינוּ וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ כֹּונָהוּ:
May the pleasantness of our Master our G-d be upon us and may the work of our hands serve as a preparation for us and the may the work of our hands prepare it.

Moshe blessed them – He said to them, ‘May it be Hashem’s Will that His Shechinah will settle upon the work of your hands. May the pleasantness of Hashem our G-d be upon us and the work of our hands, etc.

Of course the blessing was that the Shechinah should appear before them when the *melech haMishkan* was completed.

Thus, together with the daily erection and service of the Mishkan, all according to the Word of G-d, it was certainly expected that His Shechinah would appear.

But, it didn’t.

What was the people’s reaction?

Rashi writes (Perek 9/Posuk 23):

לפי שכל שבעת ימי המלואים, שהעמידו משה למשכן ושמש בו ופרקו בכל יום, לא שרתה בו שכינה, והיו ישראל נכלמים ואומרים למשה משה רבינו, כל הטורח שטרחנו, שתשרה שכינה בינינו ונדע שנתכפר לנו עון העגל. לכך אמר להם זה הדבר אשר צוה ה' תעשו וירא אליכם כבוד ה' (פסוק ו), אהרן אחי כדאי וחשוב ממני שעל ידי קרבנותיו ועבודתו תשרה שכינה בכם ותדעו שהמקום בחר בו:

Rashi writes:

וְיִהְיֶה נֶעֱמָ אֲדָ... ד... גִּי... לְקִינֵנוּ - שְׂכִינָתוֹ וְתִנְחוּמָיו
May the pleasantness of our Master Hashem – His Shechinah and His consolations.

וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ כּוֹנֵנָה עֲלֵינוּ - לְשׁוֹן תְּחִינָה הוּא:
May the work of our hands serve as a preparation upon us – this is an expression of supplication.

כוֹנֵנָה - שְׁנֵי פַעְמִים וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ כּוֹנֵנָה אַחַת עַל מְלֶאכֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן שֶׁבִירְכַן לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַתְּפִלָּה שֶׁתִּשְׂרַח שְׂכִינָה בְּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵיהֶם בְּמִשְׁכַּן וְאַחַת שֶׁתִּהְיֶה בְּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵיהֶם:
Prepare it – It says ‘the work of our hands should prepare us twice. One time refers to the work of the Mishkan that He should bless Israel and Moshe prayed that the Shechinah would be upon the work of their hands in the Mishkan. The other time that there should be a blessing upon what they do.

For the entire seven days of the consecration when Moshe erected the Mishkan and did the service there and took it apart daily the Shechinah's presence did not come upon the Mishkan.

The people were shamed and they said to Moshe, "Moshe our teacher, all the hard work that we did in order that the Shechinah should come upon us and that we would know that we have received atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf [has it been for naught]?"

Therefore Moshe said to them, "This is the thing that Hashem commanded that you should do and the Glory of Hashem will appear to you." [He told them], 'My brother Aharon is more worthy and more important than me. It will be through his offerings and through his service that the Shechinah will come upon you and you will know that Hashem chose him [to be the Kohen Godol].

'Your expectations are untimely,' Moshe told the people. These seven days are only preparation for the actual service of the Mishkan. At that time my brother Aharon's merit will bring the Shechinah upon you and with that the knowledge that Hashem has provided you atonement for the sin of the *Eigel HaZahav*.'

In fact, the people could have been aware of this information regarding the time fixed for the dedication of the Mishkan already. Moshe was told, together with the instructions regarding the *miluim* (Sh'mos Perek 40/P'sukim 1-2):

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: בְּיוֹם הַחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ תִּקְיִם אֶת מִשְׁכַּן אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד:

Hashem spoke to Moshe saying. "On the day of the new moon of the first month on the first day of the month you shall erect the Mishkan-Ohel Moed."

And briefly, the Torah relates there that Moshe did as he was told (ibid. Posuk 17):

וַיְהִי בַחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִיית בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ הַיּוֹקֵם הַמִּשְׁכָּן:

And it was on the first month of the second year on the first of the month that the Mishkan was erected.

The Torah continues with the details of the erection of the Mishkan and the service done on that day.

In our Parsha, the Torah continues those verses and elaborates upon them. We read at the beginning of our Parsha (Vayikro Perek 9/Posuk 1):

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי קָרָא מֹשֶׁה לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו וּלְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

It was on the eighth day –The eighth day of the *miluim*, which was Rosh Chodesh Nissan; the Mishkan was erected on that day.

Rashi writes:

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי - שְׁמִינִי לְמַלּוּאִים, הוּא רֵאשׁ חוֹדֶשׁ נִסָּן, שֶׁהוּקָם הַמִּשְׁכָּן בּו בַיּוֹם:

It was on the eighth day – It was the eighth day of the *miluim*. It was Rosh Chodesh Nissan that the Mishkan was erect on that day.

Targum Yonoson ben Uziel is more elaborate in his translation/rendition of this verse. He writes:

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי לְרֵבּוּת אַהֲרֹן וּבָנָיו וַיּוֹם תְּמִינָא לְאַשְׁלֻמוּתָא הוּא יוֹמָא קַדְמָא לְיִרְחָא דְנִסָּן אֲקִים מֹשֶׁה יֵת מִשְׁכָּנָא וְלֹא פִרְקִיה וְלֹא שִׁמֵּשׁ תּוֹב עַל גְּבִי מִדְּבַחָא בְּכֵן קָרָא מֹשֶׁה לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו וּלְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

It was on the eighth day of the appointment of Aharon and his sons, the eighth day of *miluim*, the first of the month of Nissan – Moshe erected the Mishkan and did not dismantle it; Moshe no longer served upon the altar and with that Moshe called to Aharon and to Aharon's sons and to the elders of court of Israel.

This was the day of transition. The Mishkan would no longer be temporary and Moshe would no longer serve as the Kohen Godol. Aharon and his sons were now called upon to serve their designated roles⁴.

The Torah reminds us what was to transpire that day and what Israel was able to expect.

We read Hashem's instructions to Moshe regarding that culmination of the Miluim, at the end of Parshas Tzav (Vayikro Perek 8/P'sukim 2-4):

קח את אהרן ואת בניו ואת הבגדים ואת המשחה ואת פר החטאת ואת שני האילים ואת סל המצות: ואת כל העדה הקהל אל פתח אהל מועד: ויעש משה כאשר צוה ה' אתו ותקהל העדה אל פתח אהל מועד:

Take Aharon and his sons with him and the clothing and the anointing oil and the bullock for the sin-offering and the two rams and the basket of *matzos*. Gather the entire congregation to the opening of the Ohel Moed. Moshe did as Hashem commanded him and the entire congregation was gathered at the opening of the Ohel Moed.

The Torah leaves nothing open to interpretation or to ponder or to wonder when we read (ibid. Posuk 36):

ויעש אהרן ובניו את כל הדברים אשר צוה ה' ביד משה:

Aharon and his sons did all the things that Hashem commanded through Moshe.

And, finally, we read in our Parsha (Perek 9/P'sukim 2-6):

ויאמר אל אהרן קח לך עגל בן בקר לחטאת ואיל לעלה תמימם והקרב לפני ה': ואל בני ישראל תדבר לאמר קחו שעיר עזים לחטאת ועגל וכבש בני שנה תמימם לעלה: ושור ואיל לשלמים לזבח לפני ה' ומנחה בלולה בשמן כי היום ה' נראה אליכם: ויקחו את אשר צוה משה אל פני אהל מועד ויקרבו כל העדה ויעמדו לפני ה': ויאמר משה זה הדבר אשר צוה ה' תעשו וירא אליכם כבוד ה':

⁴ Not all opinions agree with the Targum that Moshe Rabbenu was no longer eligible to serve on the Mizbeach.

Moshe told Aharon, 'Take for yourself a calf of cattle for a sin-offering and a ram for a burnt-offering, both without blemish, and offer them before Hashem. Speak to B'nei Yisroel saying, 'Take for yourselves a goat for a sin-offering and a calf and a sheep, both one-year old and without blemish, for a burnt-offering. And an ox and a ram for a *Shlomim*-offering to offer before Hashem and a meal-offering mixed with oil, because today Hashem will appear to you. They took that which Moshe commanded to the face of the *Ohel Moed* and the entire congregation drew near and they stood before Hashem. Moshe said, 'This is the matter that Hashem commanded for you to do and the Glory of G-d will appear to you.'

Moshe Rabbenu makes it very clear that this is the prescription to follow for the Shechinah to appear before them and atonement being achieved.

What happened?

We read (ibid. Posuk 22):

וַיִּשָּׂא אֶהָרָן אֶת יָדָיו אֶל הָעָם וַיְבָרְכֵם וַיֵּרֶד מִעֲשֵׂת הַחֲטָאת וְהַעֲלָה וְהַשְּׁלָמִים:

Aharon raised his hands towards the people and he blessed them; he went down from doing the sin-offering, the burnt-offering and the *shlomim*-offering.

The Torah teaches us that Aharon had completed all of his tasks, each one as he was commanded. What happened next?

The following verse⁵ continues that Moshe and Aharon entered the Ohel Moed. And there Rashi comments:

ויבא משה ואהרן וגו' - למה נכנסו...כיון שראה אהרן שקרבו כל הקרבנות ונעשו כל המעשים ולא ירדה שכינה לישראל, היה מצטער ואמר יודע אני שכעס הקדוש ברוך הוא עלי ובשבילי לא ירדה שכינה לישראל. אמר לו למשה משה אחי כך עשית לי, שנכנסתי ונתביישתי.

⁵ That Posuk will be brought shortly.

Moshe and Aharon entered – Why did they enter the Ohel Moed? When Aharon saw that all of the *Korbonos* had been offered and all the acts that he was to do had been done and [still] the Shechinah had not come down to Israel he was distressed.

Aharon said, 'I know that Hashem is angry at me and it is because of me that the Shechinah did not descend to Israel.

Aharon said to Moshe, 'Moshe, my brother, this is what you did to me that I entered and was embarrassed?'

In fact, Aharon's sense of guilt and responsibility had already been shown to us.

We read earlier in this section (Posuk 7) as Moshe instructed Aharon about the actions he was to undertake:

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל אַהֲרֹן קְרַב אֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַעֲשֵׂה אֶת חַטָּאתְךָ וְאֶת עֹלֹתְךָ וְכַפֵּר בְּעֵדְךָ
וּבְעֵד הָעָם וַעֲשֵׂה אֶת קְרִבְנֵי הָעָם וְכַפֵּר בְּעֵדָם כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה':

Moshe said to Aharon, 'Approach the altar and do your sin-offering and your burnt-offering and bring atonement for yourself and for the people and do the people's offering and atone for them like G-d commanded.

It would seem that this instruction that Moshe Rabbenu gave the Kohen Godol-elect was superfluous. Aharon had been commanded to undertake all of the tasks that we have enumerated above. Did he need a reminder?

Rashi explains:

קרב אל המזבח - שהיה אהרן בוש וירא לגשת. אמר לו משה למה אתה בוש, לכך
נבחרת:

Approach the altar – Aharon was embarrassed and frightened to approach the altar. Moshe said to him, 'Why are you embarrassed? You have been chosen for this task.

Thus, the absence of the Shechinah when he finished all of the tasks for which he was instructed did not come as a surprise to Aharon the Kohen Godol-elect. He knew that he was unworthy.

In fact, as we know, that following verse, from which we brought only the initial segment as a continuation, reads in its entirety:

וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיֵּצְאוּ וַיְבָרְכוּ אֶת הָעָם וַיֵּרָא כְבוֹד ה' אֶל כָּל הָעָם:

Moshe and Aharon came into the Ohel Moed and they went out and they blessed the people and the Glory of G-d appeared to the entire people.

The following verse completes this one. We read (Posuk 24):

וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי ה' וַתֹּאכַל עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֶת הָעֹלָה וְאֶת הַחֲלָבִים וַיֵּרָא כָּל הָעָם וַיִּרְאוּ וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל פְּנֵיהֶם:

Fire went out from before Hashem and it consumed the burnt-offering and the fats on the altar and all the people saw and they praised G-d and they prostrated themselves on their faces.

What did occur when Moshe and Aharon entered the Ohel Moed? The conclusion of the Rashi cited above writes that when Moshe and Aharon saw that the Shechinah had not appeared:

מִיד נִכְנַס מֹשֶׁה עִמוּ וּבִקְשׁוּ רַחֲמִים וַיִּרְדֵּה שְׁכִינָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל:

Moshe immediately entered ⁶with Aharon and they beseeched for mercy and the Shechinah descended upon Israel.

⁶ By writing that 'Moshe went in *with Aharon*', I understand that Aharon took the lead. *He* descended from the people and he went in and Moshe accompanied him or followed him.

However, it seems that the Posuk itself does not say that. We read that the Torah writes:

וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן

Moshe and Aharon came.

Not only does the Torah write Moshe's name first but the Torah writes **ויבוא**, *he* came. Since Moshe's name is mentioned first, the *he* certainly refers to Moshe.

We have other instances in the Torah where multiple people undertake an action and the verb used to describe the action is in the singular. In such cases, the Torah is telling us that two people did the action but that the initiative or the leadership was that of the first person mentioned.

For example, when Shem and Yefes covered their father Noach, the Torah writes (B'reishis Perek 9/Posuk 23):

וַיִּקַּח שֵׁם וַיִּפֹּת אֶת הַשְּׂמֶלֶה וַיִּשִׂמוּ עַל שְׂכָם שְׂנֵיהֶם וַיֵּלְכוּ אַחֲרָיִת וַיִּכְסּוּ אֶת עֲרוֹת אֲבֵיהֶם וַפְּנֵיהֶם
אַחֲרָיִת וְעֲרוֹת אֲבֵיהֶם לֹא רָאוּ:

Shem and Yefes took the garment and they placed it on their backs and they walked backwards and they covered the nakedness of their father and their heads were turned backwards and they did not see the nakedness of their father.

Although the walking and the covering are described in verbs in the plural form, the initial taking, **ויקח**, is in the singular. Thus Rashi writes:

ויקח שם ויפת - אין כתיב כאן ויקחו אלא ויקח, לימד על שם שנתאמץ במצוה יותר מיפת:
Shem and Yefes took – It is not written 'they took' but 'he took'. This teaches that Shem's effort in the Mitzvah was greater than that of Yefes.

However, in Midrash Lekach Tov here we read:

ויבא משה ואהרן אל פני אהל מועד ויצאו ויברכו אם העם וגו'. מלמד שאחר שברכם אהרן לא נראתה שכינה והיה משה מצטער נכנסו שניהם ונתפללו שנאמר ויבא משה ואהרן אל אהל מועד וגו' עליהם הכתוב אומר (קהלת ד/ט) טובים השנים מן האחד. ואומר (תהלים קלג/א) הנה מה טוב ומה נעים שבת אחים גם יחד הוא שאמר למעלה זה הדבר אשר צוה ה' תעשו וירא אליכם כבוד ה'.

Moshe and Aharon came to the opening of the Ohel Moed and they went out and they blessed the people – This teaches that after Aharon blessed the people (Posuk 22) the Shechinah did not appear and Moshe was distressed. The two of them entered the Ohel Moed and prayed as it says 'Moshe and Aharon entered the Ohel Moed'.

Regarding them the verse says "Two are better than one." and it says 'How good and how pleasant is the dwelling of two brothers also together.' This is what it said above, 'This is the matter that you shall do and the Glory of Hashem will appear to you.'

This Midrash does not present any difficulty with the fact that the 'entering' was attributed to Moshe, even though both Moshe and Aharon entered the Ohel Moed.

First, it was Moshe who was distressed. Secondly, if Aharon was embarrassed it is easier to understand that he would not have entered the Ohel Moed on his own; he came only because Moshe brought him in.

However, it is also clear that Rashi understood this difficulty because his explanation which we quoted here as a continuation of the theme we are presenting is not the first explanation that he brings. The explanation that we cited is a דבר אחר, 'another explanation'. Rashi's initial explanation is:

ויבא משה ואהרן וגו' - למה נכנסו, מצאתי בפרשת מלואים בברייתא הנוספת על תורת כהנים
שלנו למה נכנס משה עם אהרן, ללמדו על מעשה הקטרת...

Moshe and Aharon entered – Why did they enter? I found in the *Parshas Miluim*, the additional Braisa to our *Midrash Toras Kohanim*:

Why did Moshe enter with Aharon? To teach him how to perform the offering of the *Ketores*-incense Korban.

The Braisa continues with its proof regarding the fact that Moshe came to teach Aharon the *Ketores*.

We note that with this explanation of Moshe's prominence is clear. It is he, Moshe, who is teaching Aharon. It is the initiative of Moshe Rabbenu and thus the verb refers to him alone.

See the commentary of Mizrachi who questions this *p'shat* noting that the *Ketores* had already been offered during the days of *miluim*. Why, then, would Moshe teach it to Aharon only now, on the 8th day?

See Gur Aryeh for his explanation of Rashi.

I believe that there can be another explanation as to why Moshe taught Aharon the *Ketores* at this particular time.

In Masseches Shabbos (89 a) we learned that the angels befriended Moshe Rabbenu at Mattan Torah and gave him the gift of the *ketores* as a preventative against disaster and plague.

Perhaps, the non-appearance of the Shechinah at this auspicious time was tantamount to a punishment and Moshe taught Aharon at this point to use the *Ketores* to avert that lack of appearance of the Shechinah.

If the above is correct, this could also explain the reason that, according to the words of verse (ibid. Perek 10/Posuk 1), Nodov and Avihu brought their illicit *Ketores* offering. Perhaps they thought that *their* *ketores* offering would insure the Shechinah's non-departure from before them.

Unlike the attempt at humor with which we began, this real-life incident was not funny but neither did it turn out bad.

The Shechinah did appear and Israel did rejoice seeing that G-d was truly willing to abide in their midst.

However, in the meantime, this long section in the Torah, with beginnings in Sefer Sh'mos and its conclusion in this third Parsha of Sefer Vayikro teaches us a lesson that goes beyond the Mishkan and its dedication.

The lesson we learn is one of responsibility.

In the very beginning of the Torah we learn of how wrong it is to shirk personal responsibility.

In Parshas B'reishis (Perek 3/P'sukim 9-12) we read:

וַיִּקְרָא ה' אֶל־לִיקִים אֶל הָאָדָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אַיֶּכָּה: וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת קִלְכָּךְ שָׁמַעְתִּי בְּגֶן וַאֲרָא כִּי עֵירִם אָנֹכִי וְאַחֲבָא: וַיֹּאמֶר מִי הִגִּיד לְךָ כִּי עֵירִם אָתָּה הַמֵּן הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לְבַלְתִּי אֲכַל מִמֶּנּוּ אֲכַלְתָּ: וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּה עִמָּדִי הִוא נָתַתָּה לִּי מִן הָעֵץ וְאָכַל:

G-d called to Odom and He said to him, 'Where are you?' Odom said, 'I heard Your voice in the Garden and I was afraid because I am naked and I hid.' Hashem said, 'Who told you that you are naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you from which not to eat?' Odom said, 'The woman whom You gave to me – she gave to me from the tree and I ate.'

Rashi points out that by saying that Chava was the source of his troubles, Odom presented a bad middah:

אשר נתת עמדי - כאן כפר בטובה:

That You gave to me – Here Odom denied the good that Hashem did for him by giving him a wife.

But Ibn Ezra tells us that it was not only a lack of appreciation that we see here. He writes:

וטעם האשה אשר נתת עמדי כי אתה היית הסבה. כי נתת עמדי הנותנת לי
מהפרי:

The explanation of “the woman that You gave to me’ is that Odom said to Hashem: ‘You G-d are the cause of my sin. Because You gave her to me she was the one who gave me the fruit.

Rather than accepting responsibility, Odom attempted to shift the onus of guilt onto HaKodosh Boruch Hu.⁷

⁷ The reader may remember that seemingly Moshe Rabbenu did the same thing as Odom HoRishon when he tried to shift the blame from Israel to HaKodosh Boruch Hu and thus absolve Israel from guilt regarding the *Eigel HaZahav*.

Moshe Rabbenu used the very essence of the *Aseres HaDibros* to defend Israel. We read (Sh'mos Perek 20/P'sukim 2-3):

אֲנִכִּי ה' אֵלֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל פְּנֵי:
I am Hashem your G-d Who took you out from the Land of Egypt from the house of bondage; you shall not have other gods before Me.

Rashi here, noting the singular form of the words, as if they were addressed to Moshe Rabbenu alone, writes:

ולמה אמר לשון יחיד, א...ל'קיר, ליתן פתחון פה למשה ללמד סיגוריא במעשה העגל, וזהו שאמר (שמות לב/א) למה ה' יחרה אפך בעמך, לא להם צוית, לא יהיה לכם אלהים אחרים, אלא לי לבדי:

Why is this written in the singular ‘your (singular) G-d’? This was done to provide Moshe Rabbenu with an opening to defend Israel regarding the event of the *Eigel*. That is what he says in that context, ‘Hashem, why are You angry at Your people?’ You did not command them. You did not say ‘you (plural) should not have other gods.’ You spoke to me alone.”

We read regarding Moshe’s defense of Israel another time as well (Sh'mos Perek 32/Posuk 31):

וַיָּשָׁב מִשָּׂה אֶל ה' וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי חָטָא הָעָם הַזֶּה חֲטָא גְדוֹלָה וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים זָהָב:
Moshe returned to Hashem and he said, ‘Please, this people has committed a great sin and they made for themselves a god of gold.

It would seem odd that when he is attempting to defend Israel that Moshe Rabbenu repeats their sin. Would it not have been better to omit the particulars? The nature of the sin was no secret.

Immediately following the words of Odom we find that Kayin, too, refuses to acknowledge personal guilt after killing Hevel.

We read there (Perek 4/Posuk 9):

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל קַיִן אֵי הֶבֶל אָחִיךָ וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יָדַעְתִּי הֲשֹׁמֵר אָחִי אָנֹכִי:

Hashem said to Kayin, 'Where is your brother Hevel?' Kayin said, 'I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?'

Rashi writes:

אי הבל אחיך - להכנס עמו בדברי נחת, אולי ישוב ויאמר אני הרגתיו וחטאתי לך:

Where is your brother Hevel – Hashem began His words with him pleasantly; perhaps *Kayin* will repent and say, 'I killed him and I sinned to You.'

לא ידעתי - נעשה כגונב דעת העליונה:

I do not know – He became like someone who was trying to fool G-d.

Thus Rashi writes:

אלהי זהב - אתה הוא שגרמת להם, שהשפעת להם זהב וכל חפצם, מה יעשו שלא יחטאו. משל למלך שהיה מאכיל ומשקה את בנו ומקשטו ותולה לו כיס בצוארו ומעמידו בפתח בית זונות, מה יעשה הבן שלא יחטא:

God of gold – You, G-d, caused them to sin. You showered them with gold [when they left Egypt] and all of their desires, what could they do and not sin?'

The parable is of the king who gave his son food and drink and dressed him in finery and put a money-purse on his neck and placed him at the door of a house of ill-repute. What could the son do and not sin?

The difference between Moshe and Odom HoRishon is, of course, that Moshe was not making excuses for himself. He was not deflecting his personal responsibility. Moshe was selflessly attempting to defend Israel and he had his cue from the Ribbono Shel Olom who wrote the commandment prohibiting idolatry in the singular.

On the other hand, Odom HoRishon was attempting to shift the blame from himself and place it upon Chava; it was self-serving.

Radak expands upon this idea:

ויאמר ה' - בא אליו הדבור להודיעו, כי לא יוכל האדם להסתר ממנו, וכל עניני בני אדם גלויים לפניו, וקין חשב להסתר ממנו כמו שנסתר מאביו שהרגו בשדה במקום שלא היה אדם:

Hashem said – Hashem spoke with Kayin to let him know that man cannot hide from G-d and that all matters of mankind are revealed before Him. Kayin thought to hide from G-d just like he hid from his father when he killed Hevel in the field, a place where there was no one else.

These inauspicious beginnings of mankind set a pattern that was to be regretted. Denying responsibility is akin to denying G-d's knowledge, Radak teaches.

When a person denies G-d's knowledge and awareness, he is denying G-d's Presence and Providence.

Our Parsha takes us to the Mishkan and its dedication. It promises the fulfilment of Hashem's promise made at the very onset of the multiple commandments regarding the Mishkan, its preparation and its service. We read (Sh'mos Perek 25/Posuk 8):

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם:

They shall make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them.

Now, I do not know how to explain the meaning of G-d having an abode any place or anywhere.

He is המקום – The Place. And that means as the Yalkut Shimoni writes (Parshas Vayetze 117):

הוא מקומו של עולם ואין עולמו מקומו

He is the place of the world; The world is not His place.

But I do understand that to have this unique *gilui ponim*, this on-going revelation of His Shechinah, requires an acknowledgement of His Presence. And, at the very least, that acknowledgement means that we know that He knows all!

G-d commanded the procedure for building the Mishkan. He commanded the nature of the inauguration to its last detail – except for one.

G-d did not command how man should think in relationship to His Mitzvos.

Chazal teach us in Masseches B'rachos (33 b):

הכל בידי שמים - חוץ מיראת שמים

All is in the hand of G-d except for the fear of G-d.

As Rambam teaches in Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah (Perek 2/Halachah 2), 'אהבת ה' and 'יראת ה' both imply a recognition that He is always present. We read there:

והיאך היא הדרך לאהבתו ויראתו, בשעה שיתבונן האדם במעשיו וברואיו הנפלאים הגדולים ויראה מהן חכמתו שאין לה ערך ולא קץ מיד הוא אוהב...וכשמחשב בדברים האלו עצמן מיד הוא נרתע לאחוריו ויפחד ויודע שהוא בריה קטנה שפלה אפלה עומדת בדעת קלה מעוטה לפני תמים דעות...אמרו חכמים בענין אהבה שמתוך כך אתה מכיר את מי שאמר והיה העולם.

What is the way to love Hashem and to fear Him? When a person contemplates His actions and His wondrous and great creations and sees in them His infinite wisdom, one immediately loves Hashem.

And when one thinks of these very things, he is immediately fearful and frightened as he knows that he is a small, lowly insignificant creature with meager knowledge before Him Who is of perfect knowledge.

Our Chachamim said regarding love of G-d, 'Through it you are able to know He Who spoke and the world came into being.'

Who would set the stage for that awareness to take place so that, in addition to the inaugural actions there would be inaugural *Kavanah*?

Who was a better candidate than Aharon, who at that moment knew his shortcomings, knew his sins and knew that G-d was totally aware of them, to inaugurate the indispensable *kavanah* that would give meaning to the physical building of the Mishkan and the acts of *Korban* that were performed there.

Aharon HaKohen HaGodol was aware of his errors at the time of sin of the *Eigel HaZahav*. He could have made excuses. He could have correctly cited the murder of *Chur* has an extraordinary extenuating circumstance. He could have correctly noted that he didn't make the *Eigel*; it was formed miraculously. He could have correctly claimed that his actions were intended to postpone the idolatry of Israel, not to enable it. He could have correctly argued that his entire intention was to deflect the blame from Israel and place it upon himself.⁸

Moshe Rabbenu was correct.

אהרן אחי כדאי וחשוב ממני שעל ידי קרבנותיו ועבודתו תשרה שכינה בכם ותדעו
שהמקום בחר בו:

My brother Aharon is more worthy and more important than me. It will be through his offerings and through his service that the Shechinah will come

⁸ Rashi writes in Sh'mos Perek 32/Posuk d.h. *vayomer*:

ויאמר חג לה' מחר - ולא היום, שמא יבא משה קודם שיעבדוהו, זהו פשוטו. ומדרשו בויקרא רבה (ה/ג) דברים הרבה ראה אהרן, ראה חור בן אחותו, שהיה מוכיחם והרגוהו...ועוד ראה ואמר מוטב שיתלה בי הסירחון ולא בהם, ועוד ראה ואמר אם הם בונים אותו המזבח, זה מביא צרור וזה מביא אבן, ונמצאת מלאכתן נעשית בבת אחת, מתוך שאני בונה אותו ומתעצל במלאכתי, בין כך ובין כך משה בא:
Aharon said tomorrow will be a holiday for Hashem – But not today. Perhaps Moshe will come tomorrow before they will worship the Golden Calf. That is the p'shat.

The Midrash writes 'Aharon saw many things. He saw *Chur* the son of his sister who rebuked them and they killed him.'

He also saw and said, 'Better that the ruination will be placed upon me and not on them. Additionally, he saw them building the altar – one would bring a rock and the other a stone and it would be finished immediately. [He said] 'If I build it and am lazy with my work, in the meantime Moshe will come.

We read there in Parshas Ki Sisa (Perek 32/Posuk 24):

וְאָמַר לָהֶם לְמִי זָהָב הַתְּפָרְקוּ וַיִּתְּנוּ לִי וְאֲשַׁלְכֶהוּ בְּאֵשׁ וַיֵּצֵא הָעֵגֶל הַזֶּה:
I Aharon said, 'Whoever has gold, take it off and I cast it into the fire and this calf came out.

Rashi writes (ibid. Posuk 4):

...כיון שהשליכו לכור, באו מכשפי ערב רב שעלו עמהם ממצרים ועשאוהו בכשפים...

Once they cast the gold into the furnace, the sorcerers of the *Eirev Rav*, the Egyptians who joined them coming up from Egypt, came and made the Golden Calf with their sorcery.

upon you and you will know that Hashem chose him to be the Kohen Godol.

It was only Aharon who, following his sin with the *Eigel*, could lead the path for Israel to have a *Mishkan*, a place for Divine dwelling, and to set the example that we read in Masseches Ovos (Perek 1/Mishnah 12) this week: משנה מסכת אבות

הלל אומר הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן אוהב שלום ורודף שלום אוהב את הבריות ומקרבן לתורה:

Hillel said, 'Be among the students of Aharon. He loved bringing *Shalom* between man and G-d; he pursued that *Shalom* and by giving that lesson he demonstrated his love for his people and his desire to bring them close to G-d and His Torah.'

Kayitz Ba'ri

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Pollock