



MISHNAS CHAYIM

משנהת החיים

MISHNAH ON THE PARSHAH

Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei 5770 ט-ז

THE JOY OF TZA'AR (ANGUISH)

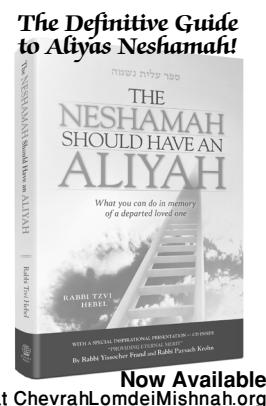
They were finally nearing the completion of the entire glorious project. After collecting all of the valuable contributions, providing the instructions and materials, and, of course, performing the actual construction and craftsmanship themselves, the Mishkan (Tabernacle) was ready. But there was one hitch: no one could figure out how to get it to stand. As the Medrash relates:

“... They approached the wise men and said to them: ‘... Set up the Mishkan....’ They attempted to do so but did not know how and were unable... when they tried, it would fall. They immediately went to Betzalel and Ohaliav (who managed the Mishkan’s construction)... but (even) they were unable...” (*Medrash Tanchuma, Pekudei, 11*).

The builders’ final hope was Moshe Rabbeinu himself. Yet, as the Medrash continues, even Moshe encountered trouble, until finally... “Moshe cried out: ‘Master of the World! I do not know how to stand it up!’ Hashem replied, ‘Using your hands, start demonstrating, making it appear *as if* you are raising it, and then it will stand up on its own. I will attribute it to you as if you yourself accomplished the task,’ as the verses state (in this week’s *parshah* – *Shemos* 40:17, 18): ‘... And the Mishkan was raised; and Moshe set up the Mishkan...’” (*ibid.*).

BE ALL THAT YOU CAN BE

According to R’ Baruch Sorotzkin (*Habina V’haberachah, Pekudei* 39:33), this series of mysterious events actually contains a valuable lesson regarding the building of the Mishkan in particular and *avodas Hashem* (Divine service) in general. The construction



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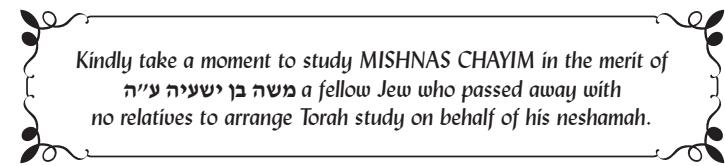
of the Mishkan was an awesome project, entailing a lot more than the mere physical fashioning of the edifice and the furnishings. The main feature of the process was bringing the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) down to an earthly habitation, an endeavor that could only be possible with an immense measure of *Siyata Dishmaya* (Divine Assistance). And this *parshah* instructs us how to merit receiving such distinctive Assistance.

What was the purpose of what appears to be a “show” of some sort, in which Moshe Rabbeinu was supposed to “pretend” that he was picking up the Mishkan, when, in fact, Hashem was facilitating its miraculous self-raising? R’ Baruch explains that the Torah here is demonstrating one of the essential components in achieving *Siyata Dishmaya*: Hashem desires that the individual exert himself to his utmost, to the very limits of his abilities. When he gets to the point where he literally cannot do more, Hashem then “takes care” of the rest.

R’ Chatzkel Abramsky had a somewhat frail constitution. He would bundle up in response to even the slightest breeze. One day, however, he was seized by the wicked Russian government and exiled to a place where water – when poured out of a cup – would freeze before hitting the ground. This place was the infamous Siberia.

Knowing that countless individuals who were usually strong and healthy would drop like flies in that frozen wasteland, R’ Chatzkel offered the following prayer: “Master of the Universe! I normally try to guard my health from the elements. Here, however, that is totally beyond my control. May I transfer this responsibility now to You, instead?” He later reported that he never even caught a cold the entire duration of his exile.

A SNAPSHOT OF GEHINOM





There is yet another condition for acquiring *Siyata Dishmaya* in one's endeavors that emerges from this narrative. Why, indeed, did Hashem orchestrate the above scenario, withholding the know-how for the raising of the Mishkan, such that it would fall on Moshe alone to solve the dilemma? The key, explains R' Baruch, is also found in the aforementioned Medrash:

"... Moshe was pained that he had no part in the fashioning of the Mishkan (which was overseen by Betzalel)... Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Moshe: 'Since you were so distraught that you had no participation in the Mishkan construction, I purposely withheld the knowledge of its final raising from all of the wise men (and that task would devolve onto you)..." (*ibid.*).

This, then, is the other vital component: *tza'ar* (anguish). When a person yearns so strongly to attain a certain level in *avodas Hashem* or to gain an understanding in Torah, he becomes eligible for an extra measure of *Siyata Dishmaya*, as demonstrated by Moshe and the Mishkan.

This idea is included in the immortal words of the

well-known Mishnah in Avos (5:23). Succinct in its wording, the Mishnah is voluminous in its meaning:

בוֹהַא אָוּמֵר, לְפָום צָעָרָא אֲגָרָא.

"Ben Hei-Hei says: According to the anguish is the gain."

The legendary R' Shach once approached an individual with what appeared to be a major revelation.

"Would you like me to tell you what Gehinom is?" he asked and continued: "I will tell you exactly what it is like.

"It is Shabbos night. You are sitting and learning, poring over a volume of the Rambam, desperately trying to attain true understanding of his words.

"After a long while of intense mental exertion, an idea begins to take shape in your mind; you think you may have hit upon the solution, one which answers all of the knotty problems that were raised.

"You go review the calculations, and everything begins to fall into place. Excitement builds as the realization dawns that you may have discovered *p'shat* (the true meaning) in the Rambam!

"Exhilarated, all that remains is to re-check the Rambam's exact language, to make sure the explanation squares with his words.

"All of a sudden, the electricity fails. It is Friday night, so you can't light a candle or use a flashlight. You're stuck in the pitch black, unable to ascertain if your *p'shat* is correct!

"That," the sage concluded, "is Gehinom."

The individual was puzzled until R' Shach's relative confirmed that this very experience had occurred to R' Shach the previous Shabbos.

And because of such "anguish" and such yearning, R' Shach was able to develop into the premier *gadol hador* (leader of the generation).

Imagine the new heights we could achieve if we would also cultivate such a burning desire to learn and to grow.

Mishnas Chayim

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