

ALSHICH

INSIGHTS FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

ספר שמות

פרשת ויקהל

SERIES 1: ISSUE 22

HOW THE JEWISH PEOPLE HAD THE SKILLS TO BUILD THE MISHKAN

Chapter 35

1) Moshe gathered the entire congregation of Bnei Yisrael and he said to them, "These are the things that Hashem has commanded to do them.

2) "Work shall be done six days and on the seventh day there shall be for you holiness, a Shabbos of Shabbosos for Hashem; whoever does work on it will be put to death.

10) "Every wise-hearted person among you, they shall come and they will do everything that Hashem has commanded."

א) וַיִּקְהַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל עַדְת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אֱלֹהִים הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתָם.

ב) שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי יִהְיֶה לָכֶם קֹדֶשׁ שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּתוֹן לַה' כָּל הָעֲשִׂיָה בּו מְלָאכָה יוּמָת.

י) וְכָל חָכֵם לֵב בְּכֶם יָבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה'.

Consider the following questions:

1. The words "to do them" (verse 1) seem redundant here. And if the phrase is necessary, why doesn't it say "that Hashem has commanded **you** to do them"?
2. Why does Moshe say (verse 2), "Work shall be done," as opposed to "You shall work"?
3. Why does it say "six days" (שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים) rather than "in six days" (בְּשֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים)?
4. Why does Moshe use the double expression שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּתוֹן, a Shabbos of Shabbosos?

Before answering these questions, we must ask how was it possible for Hashem to command the Jewish people to build such a complex structure, including vessels of gold, silver, and copper, as well as doing gem-work and making articles involving intricate weaving and embroidery? Even a collection of world-famous craftsmen would have been dumbfounded by the difficulty of the task Hashem was commanding — and the Jewish people had just left Egypt, presumably skilled only, as *Shemos* 1:14 states, "with mortar and with bricks and with every labor in the field"!

A second difficulty is that even if the Jews had all been skilled craftsmen from their youth, Hashem showed Moshe a purely spiritual vision of the Mishkan and all its vessels, and Moshe then verbally described them when instructing Betzalel and his helpers. How were they to reproduce precisely what Moshe had seen?

They were confronted by a third difficulty as well. How would they know how to imbue the Mishkan with the spirituality required for the Divine Presence to rest within it?

Hashem's words here to the Jewish people addressed these concerns. He instructed Moshe to give the people the following message: "What is it that Hashem requires from us? Only to fully commit ourselves to serve Him, to do

His will and have faith that He will take care of everything. With respect to the Mishkan, then, just do what He commands and have faith that He will do the rest.” This is the implication of Moshe’s words here, “*These are the things that Hashem has commanded to do them.*” It specifically does not say “that Hashem has commanded **you** to do them,” for actually Hashem will be the One to do them and bring about their completion. **[This answers Question 1.]**

Moshe continued (verse 2), “*Work shall be done six days (שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים)...*” He did not say, “*Work will be done in six days (בְּשֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים).*” Similarly in the Ten Commandments, it says (20:11), “*Six Days (שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים) Hashem made the heavens and the earth.*” If it had said there, “*In six Days (בְּשֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים) Hashem made ...*” it would have seemed that Hashem’s creation of the heavens and earth was only possible through the passing of this amount of time. Therefore, it says just “*Six Days Hashem made...*” – there were six Days, and there was also Hashem’s act of Creation, but it was not limited by the constraints of time. Here, too, with the Mishkan, the Jewish people were only to start performing acts of construction under the influence of an outpouring of Heavenly *shefa* (spiritual bounty), and then the construction would happen by itself through Divine intervention. Moshe therefore stated, “*Work shall be done six days*” – as if to say that just as during the Creation, the days (i.e., the passage of this amount of time) will not be connected to the work. **[This answers Question 3.]** How could this be? Because it is not that you will do the work of construction. Rather, the work *shall be done* – by itself, with Hashem’s intervention. **[This answers Question 2.]**

We can see this from verse 10: In the generation that left Egypt, there was no shortage of people who were *wise-hearted*, i.e., had highly developed intellectual abilities, but who could not make things with their hands. To them Hashem said, “*Every wise-hearted person among you who have not been trained in any craft, they shall come and they will still be able to do everything.*” How was this possible? It was in the merit of their ardent desire to *come* and participate in the construction of the Mishkan that Hashem imbued them with the Divine inspiration to *do* all the necessary, highly-skilled tasks.

Now, if Hashem is the One doing the work and not the Jewish people, it would seem that it should override Shabbos. The reason it does not is that *on the seventh day there shall be for you holiness* – i.e., the issue is not connected to Hashem but to you, the Jewish people: Shabbos is a day of holiness for you, when you cannot do any work. And since it is a *Shabbos* for you, it is also a *שַׁבָּתוֹן* for Hashem. Because Hashem has made His part in completing the construct of the Mishkan contingent on Bnei Yisrael doing their part, i.e., beginning to work even without knowing how to actually create the Mishkan, as part of their commitment to do Hashem’s will and have faith that He will do the rest, and on Shabbos they cannot do so, Hashem will not do work on the Mishkan on that day, either. **[This answers Question 4.]**

THE ALSHICH AND HIS COMMENTARY

The Alshich (1508–1600), was one of only five famous rabbis in Jewish history universally known by the title “HaKadosh” (the holy one). He served on the same Beis Din as Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of the Shulchan Aruch. The Alshich is most noted for his monumental Tanach commentary.

The Alshich uses his creative insight and encyclopaedic knowledge of Tanach, Talmud, and Midrash to weave together his profound interpretations. He simultaneously focuses on the text as well as the context of a series of verses by listing a range of questions and then answering them all with one or two concepts.

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