

Why was the Avodah in the Mishkon taken away from the first-born?
 אֵלֶּה פְּקוּדֵי הַמִּשְׁכָּן מִשְׁכַּן הָעֵדוּת אֲשֶׁר פָּקַד עֲלֵי פִי מֹשֶׁה עֲבֹדַת הַלְלוֹת בְּיָד
 אִיתָמָר בֶּן־אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן; (לח:כא) And these are the accounts of the
 Mishkon, the Tabernacle of the Testimony, that were calculated by
 Moshe. It was the service of the Leviyim under the authority of
 Isamar, the son of Aharon the Kohen. (38:21) The pasuk refers to
 the Mishkon as the Tabernacle of the Testimony. Rashi explains
 that the Tabernacle indicated that Hashem had forgiven Klal
 Yisrael for the sin of the Egel HaZahav - the Golden Calf.
 Upon completion of the Mishkon, the Divine Presence
 descended upon it. This indicated that the relationship with
 Hashem was reestablished.

This interpretation of the Midrash creates a difficulty. The end of the pasuk explains that the service in the Mishkon was entrusted to the Leveyim and Kohanim. However, initially, service was commanded to the first-born. When the first-born became involved in the sin of the Egel, the Leviyim and Kohanim withstood temptation and opposed the Egel. As a consequence, the responsibility for service in the Mishkon was transferred from the first-born to the Leviyim and Kohanim. According to the Midrash, the pasuk delivers a confusing message. The first part of the pasuk indicates that the Mishkon testified to Hashem's forgiveness. The second part of the pasuk seems to indicate the opposite. The service was not restored to the first-born, which implies that the sin of the Egel had not been completely forgiven!

The Meshech Chachmah offers an interesting answer to this question. The Rambam Maimonides explains that a Kohen who practices or confirms idolatry may not serve in the Temple. This law applies even if the Kohen repents fully from his sin. Why can the repentant Kohen not return to service? Presumably, Hashem has forgiven him! It seems that once the Kohen becomes associated with idolatry he is permanently unfit for service in the Mishkon. Repentance and forgiveness do not remove this association.

Based on this law, the Meshech Chachmah explains the message of the pasuk. The pasuk explains that Bnai Yisrael had, indeed, been forgiven for the sin of the Egel. Nonetheless, the first-born were no longer qualified to serve. They had identified with the idolatry of the Egel, and were permanently disqualified from service in the Mishkon.

Moshe showed what strength really means

וַיִּקֶם מֹשֶׁה אֶת-הַמִּשְׁכָּן וַיִּתֵּן אֶת-אֲדָרְיוֹ וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת-קַרְשָׁיו .. כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' וַיִּקֶם מֹשֶׁה אֶת-הַמִּשְׁכָּן וַיִּתֵּן אֶת-אֲדָרְיוֹ וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת-קַרְשָׁיו, *Moshe set up the Mishkan, placed its sockets, put up its planks, put in its bars, and set up its pillars, as the Lord had commanded Moshe.*(40:18-19) We see that the final setup of the Mishkan was placed in the hands of Moshe. In the previous Parsha it says: וַעֲשֵׂה בְצִלָּל וְאַחֲלִיב וְכָל אִישׁ חֶסֶם-לֵב אֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן ה' חֲכָמָה וַתְּבוֹנֶנָּה בְּחָמָה לִדְעוֹת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת כָּל מְלָאכַת עֲבֹדַת הַקֹּדֶשׁ: (ל:א)

Betzalel and Oheliov and every wise - hearted man into whom God had imbued wisdom and insight to know how to act, shall do all the work of the service of the Holy." The blueprint and the brains of building the Mishkan were given to Betzalel. The task of Moshe was to put together the Mishkan, the tall and heavy planks and the bars, etc.. Now, one might think that Betzalel was a brilliant man, but not strong. Therefore, Moshe, who was strong, was given the task of setting up the Mishkan. This brings us to the Gemara (Nedarim 38a): Rabbi Yochanan said: **Hashem rests His Divine Presence only upon one who is mighty...** And it is derived from Moshe. He was mighty, as it is written: *"And he spread the tent over the Tabernacle"* (40:19), and the Master said: Moshe, our teacher, spread it himself. And it is written: *"Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and a cubit- and- a- half, the breadth of each board."* (Shemos 26:16) Moshe was tall and strong enough to spread the tent over the boards alone. The Gemara, however refutes the proof: We can say that he was tall and thin, but the fact that he was mighty cannot be derived. The Maharsha concludes that we really have no proof from here that Moshe was strong. **HaRav Chaim Shmulevitz** in his sefer **Sichas Mussar** makes a powerful point. When it was said **אִין הַקְבִּיָּה אֵלָּא עַל גְּבוּרָה**, מְשַׁרָּה שְׂכִינָתוֹ that Hashem only allows the Shechina to rest upon a mighty man, it is not referring to physical strength, but rather alluding to the Mishna in Avos 4:1 **אֵיזֶהוּ גְבוּרָה, הַבּוֹשֵׁשׁ אֶת יָצְרוֹ Who is the mighty one? He who conquers his impulse, the Yetzer Hara.** Reb Chaim says: Moshe wanted to do the command of Hashem, and his determination helped him gather inner strength and set up the Mishkan. Hashem knew very well that Moshe would do anything He commanded. Chazal teach us that credit for a Mitzvah is given to the one that finishes it, and Hashem wanted to give Moshe that honor.

The four special Parshios are Shekalim, Zachor, Parah and HaChodesh. Parshas **Shekalim** is read on the Shabbos preceding Rosh Chodesh **Adar**. Parshas Vayakhel fell on Shabbos Mevarchin Adar, and we read the Parsha of Ki Sisa for Shekalim. Parshas **Zachor** is the Shabbos preceding Purim, which this year would be Parshas Vayikra. This Shabbos, Pikudei, will be an “off Shabbos” per se, or Shabbos Hafsaka. Parshas **Parah** is usually read on the Shabbos after Purim. However, Parshas **Parah** and Parshas **Hachodesh** are to be read on consecutive Shabbosim. Now, Parshas **Hachodesh** is read on the Shabbos closest to Rosh Chodesh **Nissan**. This year, 5779, we would read Parshas Parah on Shabbos Shemini, and Parshas **Hachodesh** on Shabbos Tazria. Therefore, Shabbos Tzav, right after Purim would also be an “off Shabbos” or Hafsaka. In this year we have two hafsakos in Adar. There is a Remez: ״וְכַזֵּה״ which means: When Rosh Chodesh Adar falls out on 1 Friday, then the Hafsakos are: the following Shabbos

which is ב, the second day of Adar which this year is Shabbos
Pikudei. Also י"ז, the sixteenth of Adar, which is Shabbos Tzav,

would also be an off Shabbos.

STORY OF THE WEEK (By Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

***** **Reb Meir Premishlaner's pipe-cleaner provides the key to a bride's dowry** *****

Reb Yitzchak lived near the famous city of **Premishlan**. He was poor, but had faith and trust in Hashem. He had fine and worthy children. A shidduch was proposed for his oldest child, a daughter, and the shidduch was finalized, and a wedding date was set. The dowry was agreed upon, and Reb Yitzchak, trusting in Hashem assured the Mechuten- (**Father of the future Choson**) that he would provide it honorably. Yet as time moved forward, the wedding was approaching and R' Yitzchak still had no solution for the looming dowry. He was not a Chasid, but he had heard of the tzaddik Reb Meir of Premishlan and of his ability to open the gates of heavenly blessing through his fervent and exalted prayers. He headed straight for Rav Meir's court and laid forth his plight to the tzaddik. Rav Meir was duly impressed with R' Yitzchak's seriousness, and calm and serene faith even in pressing times. R' Yitzchak was dumbfounded when Rav Meir asked, out of the blue: "Would you perhaps have a pipe-cleaner on you (a flexible wire covered with absorbent fabric for cleaning the inside walls of the stem of a smoker's pipe.)?" Yitzchak exclaimed: "Rebbe, what would I be doing with a pipe cleaner? I have never smoked a pipe in my life." "Well, unless you bring me the pipe-cleaner I need, don't bother coming back here, because I have no solution for your problem."

Yitzchak was beside himself with confusion and dashed hopes. "What does a pipe-cleaner have to do with a dowry for my daughter?" Still, his trust in the tzaddik, spurred him on to say, "Rebbe, of course I will bring you the pipe-cleaner, even if it means turning the whole world upside down!" Rav Meir seemed glad to hear this, and Yitzchak launched a search for the needed pipe-cleaner. It was not a simple matter, since no nearby shop was able to supply the item. In desperation, R' Yitzchak turned to a Gentile metal-smith, who offered to construct one for him, but at a high price. Apparently, Yitzchak was in need of a custom-made product, requiring highly skilled and intricate work to produce. The metal-smith seemed to take a liking to his customer, and invited him to remain in the shop for the duration of the job. They got to talking about everything under the sun, and the smith revealed to Yitzchak that he was alone in the world. Yitzchak asked where he kept his money, and surprisingly, the man showed him one empty barrel among his wine barrels which held his life savings in cash from a lifetime of hard work. He said that he had decided to close his metal shop and spend the rest of his life touring the world and living off his savings. When the custom-made pipe cleaner was ready, the metal-smith let Yitzchak take it on credit, to be paid for when he would be able, and Yitzchak, with a new sense of encouragement, sped off for Rav Meir's court to deliver the merchandise. To his dismay, the gabbai met him with the news

that the Rebbe was not accepting visitors that day, but instructed him to return the next day and hope for admittance then. Yitzchak retained his composure, and set out to find a place to spend the night. He heard a man pounding on a drum in the town square, with people gathering around him. **This was the way of making public announcements in those days.** Yitzchak perked up his ears and listened to what the man was shouting. **"By order of the court, there will be an estate liquidation auction tomorrow of the holdings of the metal-smith who lived on the edge of town and who passed away this morning, and left no heirs.."**

After hearing these words, Yitzchak thanked Hashem for leading him to the metal-smith's hut, striking up a friendship there, and learning about the small fortune stashed away in a nondescript old barrel. He canvassed his friends to borrow enough money to buy the property at auction -- and, of course, all that it contained. He appeared at the appointed place and time, and bid up the price so much that the other bargain-seeking bidders thought he was deranged, little suspecting what the property really held. The competing bidders soon dropped out, shaking their heads at the crazy man who was paying so much for a ramshackle house and shop. Yitzchak was carrying enough money to close the deal with the city auctioneer, and walked away with the deed and keys to the metal-smith's estate. He lost no time in inspecting the property, and quickly found the "magic barrel". The treasure was intact, with enough gold and silver there to pay for all his children's weddings. His first action was to "skim off" enough funds to repay the auction lenders. Now his theme was **הודו לה' כי טוב!**, and he marveled at the open Ruach Hakodesh of the Rebbe, for setting in motion all of the events which led to his salvation, even going so far as denying him an audience the day before, which led the way to the life-altering auction. He rushed to report back to the tzaddik and found Rav Meir waiting for him with open arms, but with the key question on his lips: **"Nu? Did you bring me my pipe-cleaner?"** Rav Meir had no need for a custom-built pipe-cleaner! But he chose that object as the vehicle for a Yid's salvation. Needless to say, Yitzchak was transformed overnight from a pauper to a wealthy man. He rented a fine wagon for his trip home, which, in order to avert suspicion, he loaded with all the wine barrels from the metal-smith's house. He headed to the Mechuten (**Father of the future Choson**) to pay the dowry he had promised. He also rebuilt the shack and furnished it as a guest house for Jewish travelers visiting Premishlan. He remained tightly bound to Reb Meir and became one of his staunchest supporters, using his new found wealth for charitable causes -- a direct result of Reb Meir's brocho. **זיע"א ספר מרגיטא דר' מאיר**

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