

# Parsha Ponders

Vayakhel | Mar 7, 2024 | 29 Adar I 5784

## *Whose handiwork is it*<sup>1</sup>

ויקהל משה את-כל-עדת בני ישראל ויאמר אלהם אלה הדברים אשר-צוה יקוק לעשת אתם: ששת ימים  
תעשה מלאכה וביום השביעי יהיה לכם קדש שבת שבתון ליקוק וגו'

Moshe gathered the entire assembly of the Jewish people and said to them: "These are the matters that Hashem commanded to do. Six days work shall be done, and on the seventh day it will be for you a holy sabbatical Shabbos for Hashem"<sup>2</sup>

Our Sages note<sup>3</sup> an interesting juxtaposition between the commandments regarding Shabbos and the building of the *Mishkan*. It is understood that the Torah is telling us not to build the *Mishkan* on Shabbos. This is the basis for the prohibited creative labor on Shabbos, namely any activity involved in the creation of the *Mishkan* is forbidden to perform on Shabbos.

However, some ask<sup>4</sup>: the entire purpose of the *Mishkan* was for Divine Service, namely offerings and their related rituals. Bringing offerings also involves Shabbos desecration (slaughter, kindling, cooking, etc.), and yet it is permitted when required. Why then doesn't building the *Mishkan* override Shabbos?

Another question: The Torah says that for six days, work shall be done [תעשה]. This word is written passively. Why doesn't the Torah write this in an active way, you shall work [תעשה] for six days?

In fact, one question answers the other. Offerings are considered the handiwork of man. People bring the animal, slaughter it, treat it as required, etc. Hashem takes our contributions so seriously that He allows the offerings to be done even on Shabbos.

However, this is not so for the building of the *Mishkan*. The construction was actually considered the handiwork of Hashem. If we look carefully, parts of the *Mishkan* were beyond human capabilities of creation. We are taught<sup>5</sup> that Moshe was unable to fathom the structure of the Menorah, so he was told to throw a block of gold into the fire, and the Menorah emerged. We are further taught<sup>6</sup> that it was impossible for anyone to raise the golden beams of the *Mishkan*, so Hashem had Moshe miraculously lift them. This was all Hashem's doing.

This is alluded to in the Torah's statement that for six days, work *shall be done*, passively. Meaning, the construction of the *Mishkan* wasn't really our doing. We stood back and Hashem took care of everything. Since it wasn't considered our handiwork, unlike offerings, Hashem didn't see reason why it should override Shabbos. Instead, Shabbos remained a day off from creative labor.

Good Shabbos

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Nachalas Ya'akov to Exodus 35:1, by Rav Yaakov MiLisa, the renowned Nesivos

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 35:1,2

<sup>3</sup> Rashi to v. 2, quoting Mechilta to v. 1

<sup>4</sup> Alshich to v. 1

<sup>5</sup> See Rashi to Exodus 25:31

<sup>6</sup> See Rashi to Ibid 39:33