

Parsha Ponders

Terumah | February 7, 2019 | 2 Adar I 5779

*The most desired form of service*¹

ככל אשר אני מראה אותך את תבנית המשכן ואת תבנית כל-כליו וכן תעשו

[Construct] as I have shown you, [i.e.] the form of the *Mishkan* and the form of all of its vessels, and so shall you do²

There's a *Midrash* which brings³ an interesting dispute: which verse contains the most all-encompassing *mitzvah* in the Torah? Ben Zoma feels it's the famous verse *Shema Yisroel*, "Hear, O Israel!"⁴. It's a declaration of a Jew's faith in Hashem, and their dedication to follow His *mitzvos*. Ben Nanas disagrees, and says that the *mitzvah* of loving your neighbor as yourself⁵ is more inclusive. Shimon ben Pazi brings an unexpected verse to show his opinion: Prepare one lamb in the morning, and the second lamb in the afternoon⁶. This verse refers to the twice daily *tamid* offering in the Temple. He somehow sees this verse as being more all-encompassing than the other two. Rabbi Ploni is described as having stood on his feet, declaring that the *halacha* is like Shimon Ben Pazi. He proves it from a verse in this week's *parsha*: [Construct] as I have shown you, [i.e.] the form of the *Mishkan* and the form of all of its vessels, and so shall you do⁷. This is a very perplexing *Midrash*, which begs to be expounded.

We declare twice a day *Shema Yisroel*, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One. This is our way of accepting the yoke of Heaven. We accept that Hashem is the source of all sustenance, and all life is in His hands. Anyone who understands this fully automatically becomes obligated to fulfill His will, by performing His *mitzvos*. From this we can understand why Ben Zoma feels that *Shema Yisroel* is the most inclusive verse. It leads to the performance of the entire Torah.

However, this verse more directly affects our performance of *mitzvos* between Man and his Creator. Interpersonal *mitzvos*, between Man and his fellow, are not as evident from *Shema Yisroel*. Although they too are the will of G-d, it's harder for us to associate improving our interpersonal relationships with Divine service. Therefore, Ben Nanas chose the verse of loving our fellow as ourselves. Just like a person loves themselves and wants to improve their connection with Hashem in order to reach perfection, so too they must want the same for their friend. This verse then includes more than the first: *mitzvos* between Man and his Creator as well as between Man and his friend.

There's yet a third level that is missing from these two verses. We are taught that there is no comparison between *mitzvos* performed by an individual and those performed by the community. A group that gets together with one collective will accomplish a lot more than the same number of individuals doing the same act separately. Collective Torah learning⁸, *tzedakah* giving⁹, prayer reciting¹⁰,

¹ Based on [Kesav Sofer](#) to [Exodus 25:9](#)

² [Exodus loc. cit.](#)

³ This *Midrash* has no known origin. The earliest source for it is in the introduction to [Ein Yaakov](#), where the author says that he found it among his collection of *Midrashim*. [Torah Sheleimah](#) doesn't seem to bring it in his work, implying that he doesn't believe it to be from *Chazal*

⁴ [Deuteronomy 6:4](#)

⁵ [Leviticus 19:18](#)

⁶ [Numbers 28:4](#)

⁷ [Exodus loc. cit.](#)

⁸ See [Megillah 3b](#)

⁹ I'm not sure the source of this

¹⁰ A *minyan's* prayers are more heard than that of an individual (see [Berachos 8a](#))

are always better than when done by individuals. When done together, the *mitzvah* is greater, and each contributor gets a portion in the reward. Not only that, but they get reward as if they had solely performed the *mitzvah*, since without them it wouldn't have happened.

All of this is something that we can learn from the *tamid* offering in the Temple. It's one of the communal offerings in the Temple, where one offering is brought for the entire Jewish people. Each individual contributed towards it, and therefore is considered as if it was offered for their sake. Hashem prefers communal offerings, as they're the paradigm example where everyone collectively is involved in the *mitzvah*. Hashem considers it as if each individual themselves brought the offering. From this offering we learn the importance and potency of collective *mitzvah* performance. This is why Shimon ben Pazi decided that the verse about the *tamid* offering is more inclusive when it comes to the service of Hashem. The other verses simply taught that each individual should perform their *mitzvos*. This verse teaches that it's better for the community to get together to perform a *mitzvah*.

Rabbi Ploni then brought a verse in this week's *parsha* to prove that Shimon ben Pazi has the correct understanding. The verse ends "and so shall you do". The word "and" seems out of place, as the phrase is seemingly summarizing what was just stated. The word "and" implies that the conclusion of the verse is focusing on a different aspect¹¹. In *parshas Terumah*, Hashem commanded that every individual donate towards the *Mishkan* whatever their heart directed. In reality, there wasn't need for each individual to contribute. The Jews at that time were so rich that a single individual could have provided all the materials for the *Mishkan*¹². However, Hashem's desire was different. If every Jew contributed to the *Mishkan*, then each person would have a portion in it. Every aspect of the *Mishkan* would be considered a communal *mitzvah*, which is more desired by Hashem.

The verse that Rabbi Ploni brought says: "and so shall you do". Meaning, just like the *Mishkan* was a communal *mitzvah*, with all that comes with it, so too shall you try to perform other *mitzvos* as well. Hashem's desire is that all the Jews should come together to serve Him. We see this as well in the *mitzvah* of the *tamid* offering, that communal *mitzvos* are highly desired by Hashem. That verse however only teaches us this concept with regards to the *tamid* offering. We only see in our *parsha* that this concept applies to all *mitzvos* as well.

Good Shabbos

¹¹ Cf. [Rashi](#) and [Ramban](#) *ad. loc.*

¹² [Shemos Rabbah](#) 33:8