

# Parsha Ponders

Ki Sisa | February 21, 2019 | 17 Adar I 5779

## Order of greatness<sup>1</sup>

וידבר יקוק אל-משה לאמר: ראה קראתי בשם בצלאל בן-אורי בן-חור למטה יהודה: ואמלא אתו רוח אלקים  
בחכמה ובתבונה ובדעת ובכל-מלאכה: ואתה דבר אל-בני ישראל לאמר אך את-שבתתי תשמרו כי אות הוא  
ביני וביניכם לדרתיכם לדעת כי אני יקוק מקדשכם

Hashem said to Moshe, saying: “See that I have called to prominence Betzalel, the son of Uri, the son of Chur, from the tribe of Yehudah. I will fill him with a spirit of G-d, with wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and every workmanship [ability]...And you shall speak to the Children of Israel, saying: ‘However, guard my Shabbos, since it is a sign between Me and You, for your generations, to know that I am G-d, who sanctifies you’”<sup>2</sup>

This week’s *parsha* contrasts the construction of the *Mishkan* with the observance of Shabbos. The *Mishkan* was an incredibly complicated structure, with intricate details to its vessels and overall set-up. Hashem chose Betzalel to be the master architect behind the project. In order for him to be fit for the job, it wasn’t enough that he be the most talented and qualified individual. He had to receive Divine assistance. The Torah tells us that he received an extra level of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.

These weren’t ordinary attributes. These were the very attributes with which the Heavens and Earth were created<sup>3</sup>. It says in Proverbs that Hashem founded the Earth with wisdom, established the Heavens with understanding<sup>4</sup>, and that with [G-d]’s knowledge the depths burst and the skies distilled<sup>5</sup>. We can conclude from here that the *Mishkan* wasn’t any ordinary structure. It had the same Divine planning, attention, and oversight as the Heavens and the Earth. In fact, the creation of the *Mishkan* is considered greater than the creation of the Heavens and the Earth<sup>6</sup>. This must have instilled it with tremendous holiness.

Following Betzalel’s introduction are verses emphasizing the importance of Shabbos. We are taught that this juxtaposition is to teach us that despite the *Mishkan*’s prominence and importance in Judaism and the service of Hashem, its construction doesn’t override Shabbos<sup>7</sup>. The complex craftsmanship consists of the very acts of creative labor that are forbidden on Shabbos. This precedence teaches us that Shabbos is considered greater than the *Mishkan*, which in turn makes it greater than the Heavens and the Earth<sup>8</sup>.

However, a single Jewish life is considered greater than the Shabbos. This is because as much as the observance of Shabbos is important, it doesn’t override the saving of a human life<sup>9</sup>. If one can only save someone in danger of death by profaning Shabbos, such as driving them to the hospital, one is **required**

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<sup>1</sup> Based on [Chasam Sofer Al HaTorah](#) to [Exodus](#) 31:13

<sup>2</sup> [Exodus](#) 31:1-3, 13

<sup>3</sup> [Berachos](#) 55a

<sup>4</sup> [Proverbs](#) 3:19

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid* verse 20

<sup>6</sup> [Kesubos](#) 5a teaches that the Heavens and the Earth were each created with just *one* of Hashem’s “hands”, whereas the *Mishkan* was created with *both* “hands”

<sup>7</sup> [Rashi](#) to [Exodus](#) 31:13. The source for this is [Mechilta](#) to [Exodus](#) 31:5, which actually learns from the juxtaposition that appears in *parshas Vayakhel*, and not this one. See [Torah Sheleimah](#) to [Exodus](#) 31:13 § 34

<sup>8</sup> Shabbos is in fact meant to recall the creation of the Heavens and the Earth, as stated in the Friday night *kiddush*

<sup>9</sup> The [Chasam Sofer](#) brings our verse as the source for this idea. Various sources which use our verse for this law include [Mechilta ad. loc.](#), [Tosefta Shabbos](#) 15:15, and [Yerushalmi Yoma](#) 8:5

to do so. Jewish life is so sacred. This is because Jews are so attached to Hashem, that just like He is called Holy, one day we will be called Holy<sup>10</sup>, and we will be called by His name. We see from here that a single Jew is greater than the entire Heavens and Earth.

This is all hinted to in the first verse of the *Shema*: שמע ישראל יקוק אלקנו יקוק אחד. The word *Shema*, or שמע, is an acronym for שבת, Shabbos, משכן, *Mishkan*, and עולם, universe. These three things, hinted to in the word *Shema*, are followed by the word ישראל, Yisroel. This teaches us that a single Jew is greater than the Heavens and the Earth, the *Mishkan*, and Shabbos. What follows is the word יקוק, Hashem, to teach us that only G-d is greater than a Jew.

Although the verse we started with is on a simple level teaching the importance of observing Shabbos, the juxtaposition to the *Mishkan* shows us that there's a deeper message being conveyed. Hashem is telling Moshe to tell the people the importance of the *Mishkan*, and the holiness of Shabbos. At the same time, realize the prominence of the Jewish people. This itself is the sign between us and Hashem, so that we should know that He is the one that sanctifies us. He gives us this lofty level; greater than the Heavens and the Earth.

Good Shabbos

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<sup>10</sup> [Bava Basra 75b](#)