



Parshas Vayakhel 2024, Commanded to Unite

**The Parsha Perspective is in honor of Eretz Yisroel. May G-d protect our brave soldiers.
May G-d return all the hostages in Gaza immediately.**

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna, Hinda Bas Udl. And in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Our Parsha begins with Moshe descending from Mt. Sinai with the second pair of Luchos. He did so only after successfully attaining forgiveness from G-d for the sin of the Golden Calf. He gathered the Jewish nation to teach them the intricate laws of constructing the Mishkan.

He explains that Betzalel and Oholiav were chosen by G-d to oversee and manage the construction of the Mishkan. The Torah then goes through the building of the Mishkan and its components. From the beams and sockets that comprised the walls to the priestly garments worn during their service.

However, a question comes to mind: The Torah uses a rather unique term to describe the nation assembling around Moshe. Our Parsha begins with ויקהל - *and Moshe gathered the people to remind them about the holiness of Shabbos*. The term ויקהל is used just three times in the entire Torah, twice in Sefer Shemos and once in Sefer Bamidbar. Many words can describe people gathering, yet, the Torah uses ויקהל to recount how the nation assembled around Moshe Rabbeinu. Why does the Torah use such a unique and rare term to relate how the Jewish People gathered together at Moshe's command?

Rashi, Rav Shlomo Yitzchaki, the leading Torah commentator gives a simple explanation. He answers that the term ויקהל is associated with a command or an order. Meaning, that Moshe Rabbeinu commanded that the Jewish nation assemble to hear what G-d had instructed while he was on the mountain. As previously stated, the Parsha begins the day after Moshe descended from Mt. Sinai for the final time and attained forgiveness for the Golden Calf.

However, the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh, Rav Chaim Ben Attar gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that it is no coincidence that the Torah uses the term ויקהל as it changes the narrative from the previous use. The other ויקהל in Sefer Shemos is when the nation aggressively surrounded Aaron Hakohen to force him to build a Golden Calf.

In Parshas Ki Tsia, the Pasuk says, (32:1) *"When the nation saw that Moshe was late from down from the mountain. The people gathered around Aaron and said to him: "Make us a G-d who shall go before us, for Moshe, the man who brought us from the land of Egypt—we do not know what has happened to him."* When Moshe asked Aaron why he listened to their demands, he responded that he was aggressively surrounded and was forced to fulfill their wishes. That same mob killed their nephew, Chur for attempting to stop them from fulfilling their sinful desires.

The Ohr Hachaim explains that the ויקהל of our Parsha reframes the focus and energy of the nation's gatherings. Previously, they assembled to force and pressure those who would not join them to take part in their sin. Now, with the same spirit and determination, they assemble to build a home and dwelling place for G-d.

The Ohr Hachaim continues that ויקהל not only indicates that Moshe Rabbeinu reframed the narrative, but also reunited the nation with a common goal. Despite the fact that they were sinning, the Jewish people united when they worshiped the Golden Calf. They danced and ate together as some built an altar and offered sacrifices in celebration of their sin.

When Moshe Rabbeinu descended from the mountain, he punished those directly involved in making the Golden Calf, while the others united to seek G-d's forgiveness. The Jewish nation had a collective understanding of how serious their mistake was, they were like one as they begged for mercy and compassion.

However, the spirit of unity and community began to fade and wear off just 90 days after they sinned with the Golden Calf. Their differences became more evident as they examined the motivation of their sinful actions. Some took responsibility for their inactions, while others blamed the crowd for enticing them to sin and rebel against G-d. Consequently, the nation was divided and disconnected despite the unity they had just experienced.

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh writes that the Torah used the term ויקהל to indicate the purpose of this assembly. They were gathered not only to be reminded of the holiness of Shabbos or how to build the Mishkan but to reunify and align their spirit and focus. To awaken their collective passion for each other and realize that they are just one family chosen by G-d to be His representative in this world.

The profound unity that Moshe Rabbeinu encouraged among the nation, turning them from divisiveness to collective purpose, mirrors the unity we must strive for today as we face the fight for our very existence. It has been already 5 months since the horrific attacks on October 7th, while our soldiers are fighting and hostages remain captive, our level of unity has noticeably declined. Protests and demonstrations are resuming as politics takes center stage in the fight for our existence.

While our differences are clear and contentions real, **they do not define us**. Our enemies do not discriminate based on the nuances that divide us, to them, **our distinctions are irrelevant**. While it is a fundamental aspect of human nature to notice the variance that makes us unique, they do not encapsulate the entirety of who we are. Our collective identity, when viewed through the lens of those who wish us harm is a testament to our true nature.

Such an understanding demonstrates a powerful lesson that is all too easy to forget amid our daily struggles: When we are united, our potential is endless and we are capable of achieving miracles like the Jewish nation experienced during the Purim story and becoming truly one once again.

For the sake of Jewish continuity, G-d requires from us the same unity, and understanding as He did from the Jewish nation in the desert. G-d needed us to realize that we are truly one and responsible for each other; this exact requirement is necessary now more than ever as desperately seek the ultimate redemption!

**"Unity is not uniformity;
it is the symphony of our differences played in harmony."**

Have a meaningful Shabbos!

Rabbi Sholom Yemini