



Yeshivat Ma'alot
Parashat Vayakhel- Pikudei
Rav Yehoshua Weitzman shlit"a

ישיבת מעלות
 פרשת ויקהל- פיקודי
 רב יהושע ויצמן שליט"א

Coming Together

At the opening of this week's parasha, Moshe Rabbeinu gathers Bnei Yisrael. He teaches them about the prohibition to work on Shabbat in general, and the prohibition to light fire, in particular. The pasuk states¹: "And Moshe gathered the congregation of Bnei Yisrael and said to them 'These are the things which Hashem has commanded to do. Six days one shall work, and the seventh day shall be holy for you, Shabbat Shabbaton for Hashem. Anyone who will work on it (Shabbat) shall die. Do not burn fire in your dwelling places on Shabbat.'" The Gemara in Masechet Shabbat² brings a drasha in the name of Rabi Natan. The pasuk in which Moshe Rabbeinu commands Bnei Yisrael not to light fire on Shabbat, comes directly after the opening of the parasha "gather the congregation of Bnei Yisrael and say to them 'These are the things which Hashem has commanded to do.'" Therefore, Rabi Natan derives that at that time, Hashem commanded Bnei Yisrael about the thirty nine melachot.

It seems that there is an additional significance between Bnei Yisrael congregating together, and lighting fire on Shabbat.

The Shlah Hakadosh³ explains that aside from the literal meaning of not lighting fire on Shabbat, the pasuk comes to teach not to let the fire of argument and the fire of anger burn on Shabbat. In truth, it is prohibited to let these fires burn all year round, and all the more so on Shabbat, when the fires of Gehennom do not burn. From this it can be understood why the Torah chooses to specifically point out that Moshe gathered the people together before warning them about the fires of conflict.

There are two different types of congregating. The Torah Shleimah⁴ says in the name of Chazal that the Va'yakhel, the congregating that Moshe facilitates in the beginning of the parasha, comes as atonement for the Va'yakhel, the congregating that Aharon facilitates to build the Egel Hazahav. With regard to the assembly around the Egel Hazahav it is written⁵ "I hate the congregating of evil-doers." To counterbalance coming together for evil reasons, there is the congregation at the beginning of the parasha, and there is the mitzvah of Hakhel, in which all of Klal

¹ Shemot 35: 1-3

² Shabbat 72b

³ Torah Sh'bichtav, Sefer Shemot, Parashat Hachodesh

⁴ Parashat Va'yakhel, Daled

⁵ Tehillim 36, 5

Yisrael comes together once every fifty years to learn Torah from the king. The foundation that lies behind these words of Chazal is that people can come together for positive or for negative purposes. People can join together to become one, yet there is also a risk that such interactions can be a basis for disagreement and hostility. Due to the fact of this duality, the Torah comes to give Klal Yisrael guidelines as to the proper way to interact, and how to live in such a way that fosters Yirat Hashem.

All of this takes on even greater value on Shabbat. Chazal teach that no where in the Torah does something open with the word “Va’yakhel”, except for in this week’s parasha. There is an innate connection between coming together and the Shabbat. Chazal continue to expound that Hashem said to Moshe Rabbeinu to teach Adat Yisrael, the Congregation of Yisrael, hilchot Shabbat in order that they can pass them down to future generations, and by doing so Hashem’s name will be greatened and praised. On Shabbat there is great importance in coming together to hear words of Chachamim, to learn halachot, mussar, and to receive chizuk. Still, one must be extra careful to ensure that such an assembly does not turn into conflict. Therefore the Torah warns not to ignite fire on Shabbat. The nature of fire is that it causes division. Whatever it consumes is broken down to its most basic components. The same is true of the fire of conflict; it consumes people that are connected one to another and breaks them apart.

On Shabbat, the day that the community comes together, there is an added importance to be mindful of not igniting the flames of disagreement. By doing this, one ensures that such assemblies will glorify and sanctify Hashem’s name in the world.