



SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM
VAYAKHEIL / ויקהל
THE POWER OF SPEECH

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PARSHA:

VAYAKHEIL / ויקהל

SERMON TITLE:

THE POWER OF SPEECH

A PROJECT OF THE SHLUCHIM OFFICE

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In loving memory of
ר' מנחם זאב בן פנחס ז"ל
Emil W. Herman who loved and supported Torah learning.



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Just a couple of weeks ago we read the instructions for the construction of the Mishkan and its special furniture in great detail. However this week the Torah repeats the whole thing as if for the first time!

Sometimes, at a concert when a certain act really thrills the audience the crowd will cry out for an encore. But who could possibly have been so thrilled by Moses' presentation of the tabernacle's blueprints that they needed a second dose?

Also, it is quite clear that the Mishkan was meant to be very temporary. In fact, the Mishkan was used for quite a while. Fourteen years it stood in Gilgal. Then it moved to Shiloh where the wooden posts were no longer used. Instead stone walls were erected and the curtains and skins were spread over them. However, at the time the instructions were given the plan still was to go directly from Sinai into the Promised Land, a journey of just few days!

Even more perplexing is the fact that some of the most prominent mitzvos in Torah are recorded in just a few short words, even hints. The mitzvah of Tefillin is recorded as follows, "And you shall bind them as Tefillin between your eyes and as a reminder upon your hand". Torah does not describe what they should look like, how they are to be tied or what color they should be. All of this has been passed down in the oral law.



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The entire portion discusses the construction of the Mishkan except for the first few verses. The portion opens with the commandment not to do any work on Shabbat. The Rabbis however added to this and banned mere talk of work on Shabbat. They said, "Your manner of speech on Shabbat shall not be the same as during the week. For example to say, "Tomorrow I will be building my house." is forbidden.

It has become the custom that if one must discuss weekday matters on Shabbat, he does so in a roundabout way. For example in place of the word dollar one might say, "It costs five challos". Another favorite loophole is to finish any work related sentence with, "Nisht um shabbos geredt," meaning, "not to talk business on Shabbat!"

Jewish folklore tells of a Jew walking over to another in Shul on shabbos and saying, "Nisht um shabbos geredt, I'm selling my car for \$2200."

The other responds, "Nisht um shabbos geredt, I'll consider it."

After the services ended the other approaches the car salesman and says, "Nisht um shabbos geredt, I would buy it for \$1800."

"I'm sorry," the first man replies, "Nisht um shabbos geredt, I sold it at musaf."

Though this law may seem a bit extreme, if you think about it, especially these days, almost all of our daily work related chores are done without lifting a finger.



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Meetings, phone calls and emails all involve speech. Today more than ever we see the power of words. Today more than ever we rely heavily on speech to bring us success.

With one word from Ben Bernanke hundreds of people the world over can gain millions of dollars in profits. His *word* can raise or destroy entire states. In fact it was G-d's word that created the universe!

Our daily prayers begin with liturgy about the various sacrifices offered in the temple. This offering of words is post scripted with these words, "Master of the Universe, you commanded us to bring the *Tamid* sacrifice in its time... but now because of our sins we have no Bet Hamikdash and we are unable to offer sacrifices... therefore may it be Your will that our words be accepted before You as though we had sacrificed the *Tamid* in its time... as it is written, 'our lips will replace the bullocks'."

Torah says that if we can't perform the services we can at least describe what we would have done if we were able."

The Rebbe stresses this point by quoting the Midrash where the prophet Ezekiel objects to describing the layout of the Holy Temple to the Jewish people while they are in exile. G-d responds, "If my children study the layout of the temple while they are in exile I will consider it as though they were actually working on its construction." And the Rebbe points out that this is not a remembrance service. By

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studying the Torah portions about the mitzvos we are unable to perform actually, we are actually performing them in the best way we are able.

Hereby we can well understand why torah chooses to record the instructions for building the Mishkan in such detail while recording other, more prominent mitzvos in just a word or two.

Any mitzvah that Jews have been able to perform throughout the various exiles there is no need to go into vivid detail about them, for we fulfill them every day.

However, building a temple for G-d is a mitzvah that we cannot actually fulfill while in exile. The only way we can fulfill it is by reading and studying the Torah portions on the subject. Therefore it is necessary to record the instructions in great detail.

It's like the difference between looking at a picture and describing it to another. When you look at a picture you take it all in, in a single glance but when you want to describe it to someone else you need to go into great detail for the other to appreciate it.

Thus when we read the instructions for the construction of the Mishkan today we were actually involved, on a certain level, in the creation of a dwelling place for G-d in this world.

The lesson for us is a simple one. Those mitzvos that we can perform these days, words will never suffice. Those need to be performed in actuality. However those



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mitzvos that cannot actually be fulfilled in any way these days can be fulfilled through words, the words of Torah.