

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS

VAYAKHEL-PEKUDEI 5778

בְּשֵׁבַע

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
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Priceless People

The *Mishkan* was finally complete! In describing the exact accounting of the *Mishkan's* materials, the *Pasuk*¹ describes the *Mishkan* as a "*Mishkan Ha'Eidus*," - a "Tabernacle of Testimony." *Rashi*² explains that the *Mishkan* 'testified' that the Jewish people were forgiven for the transgression of the Golden Calf since He rested his *Shechinah* in the *Mishkan*.

The *Mizrachi*³ questions the necessity of this "testimony," as *Klal Yisrael* already has the greatest proof that they were forgiven. Hashem had given them the second set of *Luchos* - of course they must have been forgiven for Hashem to agree to give them the *Luchos* a second time.

The *Mizrachi* explains that the *Luchos* would have been given to the Jewish nation even if they weren't forgiven. Once *Bnei Yisrael* had accepted the Torah, there was nothing that they can do to remove the holy status that they earned as a result. That level of holiness would have warranted that they still receive the 2nd *Luchos* even if Hashem had not forgiven them.

The *Chidushei HaLev*⁴ (Rav Henschel Leibowitz, 1918-2008) describes how incredibly holy and important the 2nd *Luchos* were. The *Beis HaMikdash* was the holiest place on earth, and of that, the *Kodesh HaKedoshim* was the holiest room, and in that was the holiest vessel, and housed inside were these *Luchos*! Yet, the inherent holiness that each and every Jew retains is reason enough for Hashem to give these *Luchos* to the Jewish people regardless of their behaviors.

Each and every Jew is a walking *Sefer Torah*. No matter what we do, *we cannot detract from that innate holiness*. Understanding our amazing inherent value can affect us in a myriad of ways. Sometimes we fall short of doing certain *Mitzvos* or avoiding certain *Aveiros* simply because we underestimate who we are. However, viewing ourselves as a pure and spiritual person puts us in a very different light. The awareness of how special and divine we are re-frames the question from, "Should I, or shouldn't I..." to "How can I, or how can't I!" We can use this recognition of the basic aspect of our makeup to propel us in reaching our true potential as servants of Hashem.

1 *Shemos* 38:21

2 *ibid.* s.v. משכן העדות

3 *ibid.*

4 *ibid.*

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Is there a practical way to help us realize our inherent special purity? Though the idea sounds nice, how do we train ourselves to make this idea a part of our thought process?

In general, the verbal repetition of an idea, day in and day out, is a great way to help a person inculcate a particular idea or concept. The problem is that it is sometimes difficult to find time to do so, or to remember to do so.

However, we are in luck - every day we say the *Tefillah* of '*Elokai Neshomo*,' which essentially states that no matter what we do, our souls are as pure as the day we were born.

Use the opportunity! Just a bit of thought before uttering these words, and we have a built-in daily reminder of our precious self-worth.

Another idea is to see a tangible example. By seeing an example in front of us, we can then better apply the idea to ourselves.

Focus on a real-life child, perhaps even just one or two years old. Focus on the preciousness, the innocence, the beautiful purity of youth; and remember that's how Hashem sees you!

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DIGGING DEEP

Everybody knows that diamonds and gold are valuable. So valuable, in fact, that companies spend billions of dollars a year in an effort to find and mine gold and diamonds. It is worth the time, effort, and money, because they can sell the gold and diamonds for much more than the cost to mine them.

Many people are surprised to find out, though, that the diamonds and gold that we find in a jewelry store don't look anything like the diamonds and gold that are found in the ground.

A diamond in a diamond mine may look no different than the surrounding rock. One has to have a keen eye to spot the diamond hidden inside. Even after the diamond is mined, it still needs to be polished and cut before it resembles the jewel that we are familiar with.

The same is true for gold. Gold particles may be present in a rock, but to the untrained eye, it may appear no different than any other stone. One must know what they are looking for in order to find gold, and even then, the rock must be processed to properly extract pure gold.

It's not uncommon for a company to put in fifteen years of prospecting, exploration and developing before extracting a single gram of gold. But it's worth it! The most precious and valuable items we have are sought after, even in their rough and imperfect state, because of the hidden true value inside.

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DID YOU KNOW?

- The reason we are capable of *Kedushah* is because our soul comes from the Source of *Kedushah*, Hashem Himself.¹
- If one views oneself as lowly, there is no low behavior that they would not do.²
- Feeling that one has greatness can be a strong factor in preventing one from doing an *Aveirah*, stronger than the feelings of *Yiras Shomayim* that a *Tanna* has!³
- Due to so many different factors, we have no way of assessing whether we rank more or less in comparison to any other Jew, even a great learned sage. This fact is not just a concept, it has *Halachic* implications as well.⁴

1 *Rav Schwab on Prayer*, p. 26

2 *Rambam on Avos* 2:13

3 *Shabbos* 12b, see *Kavod Ha'Atzmi* p. 17

4 *Pesachim* 25b