Jewish Tribune – Vayakhel Pekudei

**The Power of Prayer**

As the second sefer in the Torah draws to a close, Moshe Rabbeinu sees that the Mishkan has been completed and he blesses the people.

The possuk (Shemos 39,43) says:

**וַיַּרְא מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל הַמְּלָאכָה, וְהִנֵּה עָשׂוּ אֹתָהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' כֵּן עָשׂוּ, וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה.**

Moshe saw the entire work, and behold they had done it, as Hashem had commanded, so had they done. And Moshe blessed them.

Rashi tells us what this beautiful brocha is:

**אמר להם יהי רצון שתשרה שכינה במעשה ידיכם, (תהלים צ יז) ויהי נועם ה' אלקינו עלינו**

He said to them: “May the Shechina rest in the work of your hands. May the pleasantness of my Lord, our G-d, be upon us.

This all seems straightforward and almost quaint. But there are some loose ends that need tying…

First of all, why did Klal Yisroel even need this blessing. HKBH had promised them:

וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ, וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם

They shall make a Sanctuary for Me so that I may dwell among them (Shemos 25,8)

That being the case, now that they had completed the structure, it was inevitable that Hashem would dwell in it. He had given that blessing! Why was it necessary for Moshe Rabbeinu to give a brocha to the same effect?

Furthermore, as Rav Dovid Hofstedter notes, Moshe Rabbeinu gave the identical brocha at the end of the “yemei hamiluim”, the inauguration of the Mishkan.

In the beginning of parshas Shemini (Vayikra 9,23), the possuk says:

וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיֵּצְאוּ וַיְבָרְכוּ אֶת הָעָם

Moshe and Aharon came to the Tent of Meeting, and they went out and blessed the people.

Rashi there cites the exact same brocha.

So the second question is: why did Moshe repeat the brocha after the seven days of inauguration?

I saw answers to these questions in one the marvellous seforim of my dear brother-in-law, Rabbi Jeremy Finn. And the answers to these questions are critically important.

Even if success is promised – even by Hashem Himself – we still need to daven for Divine assistance.

The Ramchal (Derech Hashem 5,1) writes that even when Hashem has prepared **שפע** bounty to rain on Klal Yisroel, they first need to act to draw near to Him and request it. If they don’t daven, the tap will not be turned on.

So, Moshe Rabbeinu blesses the people that even though HKBH has assured them that He will reside in the Mishkan, nonetheless, His Shechina will only appear if it is requested through tefilla.

Moshe Rabbeinu therefore says: **יהי רצון שתשרה שכינה במעשה ידיכם-** May the Shechina rest in the work of your hands, but you will need to pray for this first.

The Mishkan is then built and after seven days of celebratory inauguration, the mood in the camp is not positive. In fact, it’s all a bit of a disaster. The people have watched Moshe Rabbeinu put up and take down the Mishkan every day for seven days and there is no sight of the Shechina! It would seem that all the brachos, assurances, and tefillos have been in vain.

It is for this reason that Moshe Rabbeinu repeats the brocha. Never give up. Even when it seems that G-d is not responding, that He is not listening to us, we must not give up. When we are despondent and the chips are down, it is precisely the time to daven and renew our efforts to be closer to Him.

As a kid, there used to be a cartoon character in a comic who had a motto: “If at first you don’t succeed … use brute force!”

Our motto is a little different: “If at first you don’t succeed, try again and again. Daven and don’t stop davening. Never give up!”

So, two critical lessons emerge from our double sedra.

First, do not take success, even guaranteed success, for granted. Tefilla is always needed. It is tefilla that unlocks the blessings and bounty.

Second, even when it seems that He is not listening, He is! Prayer is the key even in the darkest moments.

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