



# Likkutei Sichos

Volume 16 | Pekudei | Sichah 1

## A Willing Servant

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## Introduction

Over the course of four *parshiyos*, the Torah repeats details of the *Mishkan* several times:

1. In *parshiyos Terumah* and *Tetzaveh*, **Hashem instructs Moshe:**
  - a. What materials to donate;
  - b. How to build the *Mishkan*;
  - c. How to make the utensils;
  - d. How to make the priestly garments.
  
2. In *parshas Vayakhel*, **Moshe instructs the Jewish people:**
  - a. Which materials to donate;
  - b. What type of *Mishkan* structure to make;
  - c. What types of utensils to make;
  - d. What types of priestly garments to make.
  
3. *Parshiyos Vayakhel* and *Pekudei* tell us that **the people actually:**
  - a. Donated the materials;
  - b. Constructed the structure of the *Mishkan*;
  - c. Fashioned the utensils;
  - d. Made the priestly garments
  
4. *Parshas Pekudei* repeats the list of all the parts of the *Mishkan*. At this time:
  - a. The people brought the finished products to Moshe;
  - b. Hashem instructed Moshe how to set up the *Mishkan*;
  - c. Moshe set up the *Mishkan*.

## 1.

SAY THAT AGAIN?

As previously mentioned on many occasions,<sup>1</sup> in his Torah commentary, Rashi addresses (and explains) **everything** that needs clarification according to *pshat*.<sup>2</sup> [When Rashi does not offer an explanation of a difficulty in *pshat*, he writes, “I don’t know” or something similar.]<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, when we come across something that seems difficult to understand in *pshat* that Rashi does not address, this difficulty can be explained in one of two ways: Either, according to *pshat*, no difficulty exists at the outset; alternatively, the difficulty is resolved by a **previous** explanation in Rashi’s commentary.

In these *parshiyos*, there is a difficulty in *pshat* that Rashi does not address in his commentary — that is:

In *parshas Vayakhel*,<sup>4</sup> the Torah describes how Moshe conveyed Hashem’s command to the Jewish people regarding the *terumos* {donations} for the *Mishkan*, including **all the particulars**: “Take from yourselves a donation...,” bring gold and silver, etc., for the construction of the *Mishkan*. This is followed by the command to construct the *Mishkan* and its utensils,<sup>5</sup> again including all of their **details**.

Subsequently, the Torah describes the Jewish people bringing the *terumos* for the construction of the *Mishkan*.<sup>6</sup> This is followed by a **detailed** description

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<sup>1</sup> See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 10, p. 13, loc. cit., fn 1.

<sup>2</sup> {The plain meaning of the text. Rashi states in his commentary to *Bereishis* 3:8: “I have come only to explain the plain meaning of the Torah.” When the plain meaning is understood clearly, Rashi does not comment. Though there are many levels and depths of interpretation on the Torah, Rashi adopts a straightforward approach.}

<sup>3</sup> *Bereishis* 28:5, and other places. See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 5, p. 1, fn. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Shemos* 35:5 ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Shemos* 35:10 ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Shemos* 34:21 ff.

of how the craftsmen actually built the *Mishkan*<sup>7</sup> — the curtains, etc., and all utensils of the *Mishkan*, and (in our *parshah*)<sup>8</sup> how they made the priestly garments.<sup>9</sup>

Seemingly, it would have sufficed for the Torah to have stated briefly that Moshe conveyed to the Jews **all** of Hashem's instructions regarding the gifts and the construction of the *Mishkan* (the details of which are included in Hashem's **commands** to Moshe in *Terumah*, *Tetzaveh* and *Ki Sisa*). The Torah could have said {simply}, "The Children of Israel did all that Hashem had commanded Moshe." Alternatively, the Torah could have been even more succinct: After recounting Hashem's instructions to Moshe, it should have said: "The Children of Israel carried out all that Hashem had commanded Moshe."<sup>10</sup> Examples of this {brevity} can be found in various places in Torah and in these *parshiyos* themselves. So, why must these details be repeated, both when they were conveyed to the Jews and again when they actually carried out these instructions?

This is especially difficult in light of Rashi's remarks at the beginning of *parshas Vayakhel*: "I have already explained {the details regarding} the donations to the *Mishkan* and its construction in the section where they were commanded." This shows that there is nothing new in these *parshiyos* that has not been conveyed in the previous *parshiyos*; therefore, Rashi has nothing to add in his commentary on our *parshah*. Thus, this point is even more perplexing: If so, clearly the **Torah** did not need to recount these ideas a second (or a third) time.

All this poses an obvious question in *pshat* that is addressed by many Torah commentaries. Rashi, though, does not explain this — neither when this subject is introduced in *parshas Vayakhel* nor when this subject is concluded in our *parshah*.

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<sup>7</sup> *Shemos* 36:8 ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Shemos* 39:2 ff.

<sup>9</sup> {To summarize: The Torah repeats the details of the construction of the *Mishkan* three times: a) When Hashem instructs Moshe; b) When Moshe instructs the Jews; c) The actual construction.}

<sup>10</sup> {Without saying that Moshe conveyed the instructions.}

Rashi's silence is especially astonishing since **previously**, in *parshas Ki Sisa*, Rashi takes pains to justify the repetition of only a few repeated words, explaining why the Torah writes three times,<sup>11</sup> "Do not cook a kid in its mother's milk." But when entire *parshiyos* consist of lengthy reiterations, Rashi offers no commentary!

## 2.

### THE ORDER OF THINGS

Seemingly, part of the question can be resolved based on a remark in Rashi's commentary on our *parshah*.

On the verse,<sup>12</sup> "Betzael ben Uri... did all that Hashem commanded Moshe," Rashi comments that when "Moshe instructed Betzael to fashion the utensils before constructing the *Mishkan* {structure}, Betzael responded: 'Common practice is to first construct a structure into which utensils can then be placed.' Moshe responded, 'this is indeed what I had heard from Hashem.' ... And so, first he constructed the *Mishkan* and then he fashioned the utensils."

In light of this explanation, perhaps the reason the Torah repeats its detailed description of the *Mishkan's* construction and the fashioning of its utensils is to let us know that Betzael reversed the order (from the order outlined in *parshas Terumah*) and built the *Mishkan* before fashioning its utensils.

However [this answer does not explain why the Torah repeats all the details in its narrative of Moshe **commanding** the people to donate materials, construct the *Mishkan*, and fashion its utensils.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, this answer also doesn't explain the need for such a protracted description of the construction itself]:

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<sup>11</sup> {Shemos 34:26.}

<sup>12</sup> *Shemos* 38:22.

<sup>13</sup> If the Torah just wants to teach us that Betzael changed the order, it should only repeat the details of construction later when it describes what Betzael and the people actually made. It is not necessary for us to hear the details a third time.

a) The Torah could have simply said that the *Mishkan* was built before the utensils were fashioned. The description of how each utensil was made, and in particular, the detailed description in our *parshah* of the way priestly garments were made are unnecessary, because when making them, Betzalel did not introduce any modifications or innovations.<sup>14</sup>

b) Most importantly: In order to inform us of the **order** {that Hashem's instructions were executed} — the *Mishkan* was constructed first and the utensils afterwards — the lengthy description of the manufacturing **details**, the measures, etc., was unnecessary.<sup>15</sup>

Additionally: After having being informed about all the details previously {in *parshas Vayakhel*}, we are told in our *parshah* that “they brought the *Mishkan* to Moshe” {and then}:<sup>16</sup>

c) The Torah {continues and} again lists all the particulars of the *Mishkan* and its utensils;<sup>17</sup>

d) and only afterwards does the Torah {finally} conclude: “The Jewish people did all the work exactly as Hashem had commanded Moshe”!<sup>18</sup>

### 3.

SAY THAT AGAIN

The explanation is **straightforward**:

To the Jewish people, the *Mishkan* and its utensils were incredibly important and cherished because through the *Mishkan*, the *Shechinah* {Divine Presence} dwelt among the Jewish people, etc.

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<sup>14</sup> {If there were no modifications, then what purpose was there in repeating the instruction.}

<sup>15</sup> {At the beginning of *parshas Pekudei*, the Torah lists how much of each material was used. This seems completely unnecessary if the point of this *parshah* is just to teach us that Betzalel changed the order of construction.}

<sup>16</sup> {*Shemos* 39:33.}

<sup>17</sup> {The Torah lists again all the details when it describes the finished products they brought to Moshe.}

<sup>18</sup> {*Shemos* 39:32. Seemingly, by writing this one line, the Torah would not have needed to repeat all the details!}

This is evident from **Rashi's remark** in our *parshah* explaining why the *Mishkan* is called *Mishkan Ha'eidus* {the *Mishkan* of Testimony}:<sup>19</sup> “The *Mishkan* was a testimonial for Israel that the Holy One, blessed is He, forgave them for the incident of the Calf, for He caused His *Shechinah* to rest among them {in the *Mishkan*}.”

This highlights the preciousness and centrality of the *Mishkan*, because the sin of the Golden Calf was the worst (and most comprehensive) sin of all. It had caused such a serious concealment of Hashem's Presence that as a result, the destruction of the Jewish people, Heaven forbid, was decreed. (Although the Jewish people were {ultimately} pardoned, Hashem still said, “On the day that I make a reckoning, I will bring {their sin} against them.”)<sup>20</sup>

It is therefore understood (on the other hand) that the *Mishkan*, which caused the “*Shechinah* to rest amongst them,” was exceedingly comprehensive and lofty.

Consequently, we now understand that the Torah mentions all the details of the *Mishkan* repeatedly because the *Mishkan* was so **cherished** to Hashem (and the Jewish people).

Rashi did not need to provide this reason **here**, since he already explained this **previously** in *parshas Chayei Sarah*.<sup>21</sup> The Torah relates the story of Eliezer, Avraham's servant (who went to bring Rivkah)<sup>22</sup> and everything that happened, and then the Torah repeats the entire story as Eliezer retells this narrative to Rivkah's family. Rashi explains ({that this repetition demonstrates} how cherished this story is {to Hashem}): “Rabbi Acha said: The ordinary conversation of the Patriarchs' servants is more pleasing to Hashem than the Torah of the Patriarchs' children. For the section concerning Eliezer {and his story to find a bride for Yitzchak} is repeated in the Torah, whereas many

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<sup>19</sup> {*Shemos* 38:21.}

<sup>20</sup> *Shemos* 32:24. {Rashi explains that although they were not destroyed for worshipping the golden calf, no punishment befalls Israel in which there is not a part of the punishment of the Golden Calf}

<sup>21</sup> *Bereishis* 24:42.

<sup>22</sup> {Eliezer was sent by Avraham to find a wife for his son Yitzchak and bring her back to Canaan. The Torah repeats the narrative several times with all its details.}

fundamentals of the Torah were recorded {in the Written Torah} only through allusions.”<sup>23</sup>

We understand from this that something which is dear to Hashem is repeated in the Torah, in detail, even though its repetition may not teach us anything new. The same principle applies to our *parshah*.<sup>24</sup>

#### 4.

##### TALK IS NOT CHEAP

We still need to clarify: These remarks of Rashi seem to prove the opposite — Rashi’s reasoning {that the Torah repeats what Hashem holds dear} is irrelevant here. For the saying that “the ordinary conversation of **the Patriarchs’ servants... than the Torah of the Patriarchs’ children**” (understood simply) means that Hashem does not consider the “Torah of the Patriarchs’ children” (after the Giving of the Torah) so precious as to merit “being repeated in the Torah as is the ordinary conversations of the **Patriarchs’ servants.**” As such, this explanation does not justify the Torah’s repetition of the construction of the *Mishkan*, since the *Mishkan* is part of the Torah of their **children.**<sup>25</sup>

The explanation is as follows:

When Rashi quotes, “the ordinary conversations of the Patriarchs’ servants are more pleasing... than the Torah of the Patriarchs’ children,” his intention was not to emphasize the virtue of “the Patriarchs’ servants” over the “children.” Rather, Rashi wishes to point out that (sometimes) “ordinary conversations” can be {in a certain respect} greater and dearer than “Torah”:

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<sup>23</sup> {*Bereishis Rabbah*, sec. 60, par. 8.}

<sup>24</sup> {The Torah repeats details of the construction of the *Mishkan* and its furnishings again because it is so dear to Hashem.}

<sup>25</sup> {The instructions to build the *Mishkan* and its construction took place after the Giving of the Torah.}



The simple difference between these two is that “Torah” {in this context} means a set of instructions, commands, or laws by which Hashem commands what to do and how to do it. “Ordinary conversations” consist of speech which on the surface does not communicate any obvious commands or instructions; rather, it recounts a certain situation, an event, an action, **or the like**. We see an example of this in the monologue of Avraham’s servant, Eliezer, who (according to *pshat*) told {Lavan} about Avraham and Yitzchak, how his journey was miraculously shortened, and how Hashem arranged that he should meet Rivkah, etc.

This statement {that the ordinary conversation of the Patriarchs’s servants is more pleasing... than the Torah of the Patriarchs’ children} emphasizes the superiority of an “ordinary conversation” {over Torah}. An ordinary conversation (**even**) of the “**our Patriarchs servants** is (sometimes) “more pleasing” than the “**Torah** of (**even**) the Patriarchs’ children.”

In light of this teaching, we can understand {the repetition found in} our *parshiyos* {of *Vayakhel* and *Pekudei*}, which **follow** the *parshiyos* of *Terumah* and *Tetzaveh*. The intent of our *parshiyos* is not to present commands and instructions on what to make and how to make it (which otherwise we wouldn’t have known). Rather, the Torah describes in detail and at length how Moshe relayed to the Jews all of Hashem’s commands relating to building the *Mishkan*, and how the Jews actually carried them out, etc. This was all written in the form of “ordinary conversation.” Since this *conversation* concerning the ***Mishkan*** which is so **dear**, the Torah describes all of its details at length — it is “repeated in the Torah.”

## 5.

IT’S ALL IN THE NAME

In light of this, we understand why (in *parshas Chayei Sarah*) Rashi cites the author of this statement<sup>26</sup> by name: “Rabbi Acha.” (We have mentioned many times that knowing the name of the author can afford us with a better

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<sup>26</sup> {“The ordinary conversation of the Patriarchs’s servants is more pleasing... than the Torah of their children.”}

understanding of the author’s message.) By citing “Rabbi Acha,” Rashi clarifies that the statement, “the ordinary conversations of the Patriarchs’ servants are more pleasing to Hashem...” does not emphasize the superiority of the “Patriarchs’ servants” over “the Patriarchs’ children,” but rather, the greatness of an “ordinary conversation.” It also sheds light on why indeed “the ordinary conversations... are more pleasing... than the Torah...”

In tractate *Yoma*,<sup>27</sup> the *Beraisa* says:

Our Sages taught: “*Vedibarta bam*”<sup>28</sup> {“you shall speak of them,” implies}, “them,” and not prayer.<sup>29</sup> “*Vedibarta Bam*” {also implies that regarding} “them,” you are permitted to talk, but not regarding other matters.<sup>30</sup> **Rabbi Acha** says, “*Vedibarta Bam*” — make them {Torah matters} a permanent fixture {in your life} and not a temporary pursuit.

Rabbi Acha only relates this obligation (and prohibition) to words of Torah: “Make them a permanent fixture and not a temporary pursuit,” but he does not negate speaking about other matters (as his interlocutor does, “you shall speak of them... but not regarding other matters.” This seems to imply that **according to Rabbi Acha** speaking of other matters is not prohibited. However, can we say that Rabbi Acha maintains that it is permissible to speak of other matters — idle talk?<sup>31</sup>

The explanation is as follows: Rabbi Acha emphasizes that regarding words of Torah, we have a permanent obligation to “speak of them” so that words of Torah are a permanent fixture of life and not a temporary pursuit. However, he does not rule out absolutely talking about “other matters” because there is a type of “other talk” that is considered “ordinary conversation.” The category of

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<sup>27</sup> 19b.

<sup>28</sup> *Devarim* 6:7

<sup>29</sup> {The verse which can be found in the first passage of the *Shema* is commanding the Jewish people to recite the *Shema*. Rashi explains that the *baraisa* understands the word ‘of them’ to be exclusionary, and comes to teach us that unlike the *Amidah* prayer which must be uttered quietly, one should enunciate the words of the *Shema* loud enough for them to be heard.}

<sup>30</sup> {Rashi explains this to mean that we only have permission to speak about Torah matters, and not worthless idle chatter of children and conversation involving levity.}

<sup>31</sup> {It seems inconceivable that Rabbi Acha would permit idle talk as described in the previous footnote.}

“ordinary conversation” is not considered idle talk, yet it is not “Torah” in the sense that it does not relate instructions, commands, rules, or the like. Rather, such “conversation” consists of talks, stories (and inspiration). (As such, even these “conversations” can be considered “more pleasing than the Torah.”)

Nevertheless, it is specifically regarding words of Torah that we are commanded to “make them a permanent fixture and not a temporary pursuit.” For it is self-understood (even by a beginner Torah student)<sup>32</sup> that we must **always** remember (and, of course, review, discuss and study) the laws (words of Torah) — which sets forth what we are obligated and prohibited to do, etc.

## 6.

LOVE TO SERVE

A deeper explanation of the above:

We find two general ideas in the two *parshiyos* in which the Torah repeats the details of the *Mishkan* and its furnishings:

- a) The generosity of the Jews, as expressed by donating everything necessary for {the construction of} the *Mishkan* with alacrity and generosity to the extent that the Jewish people had to be told that they “shall not do more work” {i.e., they should stop bringing donations,} and “there was extra.”<sup>33</sup>
- b) The “wise hearted” fulfilled Hashem’s command and made the *Mishkan* and its furnishings “exactly as Hashem had **commanded** (and moreover, as Hashem had commanded) **Moshe**.”<sup>34</sup>

More specifically, we can see how these two ideas are interrelated: When the Jews brought donations for the *Mishkan*, they also fulfilled the command (as

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<sup>32</sup> {In the original, “a five-year-old.” Rashi wrote his commentary to be understood by “a five-year-old” novice Torah student.}

<sup>33</sup> *Shemos* 36:6-7. {The emphasis here is that the donations were given willingly, with a full heart.}

<sup>34</sup> {*Shemos* 39:32. The emphasis here is that the construction was done with dutiful obedience, as a servant who serves his master.}

servants) of Hashem, “Take for Me a donation from every person whose **hearts** motivates him....”<sup>35</sup> So, too, the construction {which was done} “by all the wise of heart” was also carried out by those “whose **hearts** were lifted up.”<sup>36</sup>

In light of this observation, we can understand how these ideas express the {abovementioned} concepts of “ordinary conversation” and “servants (of our Patriarchs).”

Ordinary conversation is symbolized by “heart,” for our Sages teach that “ordinary conversation” alludes to prayer,<sup>37</sup> and prayer is “service of the *heart*.”<sup>38</sup> A “servant” underscores the fulfillment of the *mitzvos*, since a servant is characterized by his compliance with his master’s will.

These are the two ideas {underlying the two ways that the *Mishkan* was constructed}: The donations toward the construction of the *Mishkan* and the {concomitant} expression of the Jews’ generosity represent ordinary conversation; fulfilling the command to construct the *Mishkan* represents {the dutiful compliance of} a “servant.”

These two approaches need to be integrated: The fulfillment of *mitzvos* — servitude — must be done with a “willing heart.” And *mitzvos* done with “a willing heart” must be sensed as being motivated by Hashem’s **command**.

-Based on a talk delivered on Tu Bishvat, 5735 (1975)

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<sup>35</sup> {The donations were given both dutifully and obligingly.}

<sup>36</sup> {The construction was done both dutifully and obligingly.}

<sup>37</sup> *Berachos* 26b.

<sup>38</sup> *Taanis*, beg.