

Menachem Persoff

VAYAKHEL 5778

Parshat Vayakhel interrupts the narrative relating to the preparation of the Mishkan by introducing the notion of desisting work on Shabbat. Rashi explains that this is so to teach that one may not profane Shabbat even for the purpose of edifying the Mishkan, as holy as it is (see Rashi on Sh'mot 5:1-2).

Rabbi M. Miller makes an interesting distinction between Shabbat and the Mishkan that, perhaps, enables us to understand more incisively why the Shabbat supersedes the Mikdash.

The Temple is included in one of the three gifts that were given, conditionally, to the Jewish people - namely, Eretz Yisrael, the dynasty of (the House of) David and the Beit HaMikdash. If, for example, the people became unworthy, they forfeited the Beit HaMikdash.

By way of contrast, the Torah, the Covenant with Aharon, and Shabbat are unconditional gifts; they remain with us in perpetuity. They are symbolic of G-d's unconditional love for His people. The conditional divine gifts, it seems, are dependent on our level of refinement and on our ability to appreciate their significance. For that we need an elevated level of spiritual sensitivity.

But Shabbat is different: Like the Torah, it remains with us under all circumstances, whatever our level of religiosity - "in triumph and in humiliation". Indeed, we are commanded to keep the Shabbat throughout the generations for an everlasting covenant (31:16).

Yes, Shabbat is our permanent free gift from Hashem, "anointed and crowned with holiness". All we have to do, to cite the rabbi, is to grasp it eagerly and gratefully. **MP**