

In פרשת ויקהל, the third פסוק (35:3), states: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל כָּל עַדְת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר זֶה הַדָּבָר. I originally heard a beautiful idea about this from R' Fabian Schonfeld זצ"ל, who was the Rav of the Young Israel of Kew Gardens Hills, and I never forgot it. What was the date of this ויקהל, this momentous gathering of כלל ישראל? יום כיפור, the day after תשרי, the 11th day of תשרי - ויקהל משה: למחרת יום הכיפורים says רש"י? The question is, what do we learn from this? What do we gain from knowing that this gathering happened the day after כיפור?

It's astonishing to consider the ramifications of this observation. הר משה had just come down from הר סיני after achieving something momentous - he had single handedly brought about כפרה for כלל ישראל for the חטא העגל. From that moment forward, יום כיפור would no longer be just the 10th of תשרי; it would be a day of כפרה for all generations, the day of יִכַּפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם ה' הַיּוֹם. That was an incredible accomplishment. So what do you do the day after כיפור? יום כיפור? Do you say, "I worked so hard, now I need a vacation?" The תורה teaches us otherwise. You don't take a break the day after כיפור - you get to work and build a משכן. You get to work and continue the עבודה, continuing to climb to higher levels of קדושה. יום כיפור is great, but the day after כיפור is even greater. That was the first observation he made.

Another fascinating insight is brought down in the ספר עוללות אפרים. We know that one of the fundamental requirements of יום כיפור, besides doing תשובה and seeking כפרה from Hashem for אדם למקום, is also doing תשובה and attaining כפרה for אדם לחברו. You can only do תשובה for אדם לחברו if you go around and make up with all the people that you may have offended or that you've not been able to talk to. You have to be מפיים them and talk to them and make up and bring about אחדות in כלל ישראל. The פסוק is teaching us that this process is not limited to יום כיפור. ערב יום כיפור. It applies just as much to the day after כיפור. What we have to do is continue that וַיִּקְהַל אֶת כָּל עַדְת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. We have to all work together to be together. Each and every one of us has that job to do the day after כיפור.

There are many reasons why רש"י highlights the significance of this gathering taking place on י"א תשרי. One additional aspect of the פרשה is the connection between שבת and the בנין המשכן. What did כלל ישראל do after כיפור? They built the משכן - a most fascinating and magnificent miniature of what would eventually become the בית המקדש. They carried this משכן with them for 40 years in the מדבר, and its כלים were used until שלמה המלך built the בית המקדש. That was a long span of time, but in the grand course of Jewish history, those hundreds of years seem like a short period. The question is: What can we do today, in our long and difficult גלות, to maintain the השפעה of the בית המקדש when we no longer have one?

שְׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי יִהְיֶה לָכֶם קֹדֶשׁ שַׁבָּתוֹן (35:2) שבת קודש is eternal. No matter how difficult the גלות may be, שבת can never be taken away from us. שבת gives us the ability to continue our ascent in קדושה. We should appreciate and cherish every שבת because each one gives us the opportunity to continue doing our עבודה, fulfill the מצות, and maintain our connection to הוא. The promise given to us at הר סיני remains alive through the משכן, through the בית המקדש, and through שבת.

This is a powerful way to begin פרשת ויקהל because all מפרשים ask what is the connection between שבת and the building of the משכן? There are countless answers to this question, but one that resonates deeply with me is that שבת is our opportunity to continue what we were meant to do with a בית המקדש - even in its absence. י"א תשרי teaches us that we must continue the עבודה of יום כיפור, and the fact that שבת is the first topic in the פרשה reflects that שבת gives us the ability to have the משכן eternally. Good Shabbos!

