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Assembly Notes
PARSHAS VAYAKHEL, PARSHAS POROH 5785
Assembly Theme: Acknowledging The Effort That Others Make For You

A normal relationship is give and take. Each partner gives to the other. You know that it is a healthy relationship when each party also recognises what they are getting from the other. This can explain an interesting aspect of Pesach, which we will welcome soon.

The Torah (and the Siddur) refers to the Yomtov as Chag Hamatzos. Yet, Jews throughout history have called it Pesach. Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev explains that this reflects the love between Hashem and the Jewish people.

Matzo recalls the deep faith and love of the Jews for G-d. They went, with their families, into a desert, without knowing where their food would come from. They did this in haste, and didn't even wait for the dough to rise. Hashem acknowledges this Emunah (faith) and Bitachon (trust) by referring to the Yomtov as the Festival of Matzos.

The Jewish people express their gratitude to Hashem for saving them and "passing over" (Pesach) their houses. That's why jews have always called this Yomtov Pesach.

Perhaps we can connect this with an observation in our Sedra Vayakhel. When the Mitzvah to build the Mishkan (Sanctuary) was given earlier, the Torah follows it with the Mitzvah of Shabbos. When Moshe repeats the content, he talks first of all about Shabbos and only then gives over the details about how to build the Mishkan.

Hashem speaks first about the love and dedication of the Jews to use their possessions to make a Mishkan for Him. His priority is to acknowledge what the Jewish people do for Him. On the other hand, Moshe first of all refers to the importance of Shabbos, the gift of Hashem to us.

The most powerful relationship is one where each partner appreciates what they are receiving from the other.

STORY OF THE REBBE

As a young man, Ami Pykovski ran a clothing business in Los Angeles, in a prime location. It was early in his journey to Judaism and the store was open on Shabbat. On a typical Saturday he would make much more money than on any other day, probably the majority of his weekly income.

He wanted very much to close on Shabbat, but if he did, he would lose about $40,000 a month. After a lot of thought, he decided that for now he would close on Saturday. However, although the store would be closed on Saturday he would continue working until late on Friday nights.

He wrote to the Rebbe about his decision to close the business on Shabbat, but he did not say anything about Friday night. The Rebbe's answer was, "Start from before sunset and great is your merit to joyously spread Judaism" (he underlined the word "joyously"). The Rebbe also enclosed 18 dollars and wrote that he should give them to charity locally -- a ten dollar bill, a five dollar bill, a two dollar bill and a bill of one.

Now it was clear: the business would be closed the entire Shabbat. But in order to do so, he had to break the lease with the landlord for the space he rented for his store. It was a huge area that was spread out over an entire block, so the cost of canceling the ten-year lease was enormous. He tried convincing friends to buy the lease from him, but nobody wanted to. He saw that he had no option, and decided to inform the landlord that he was breaking the lease.

When he went to the landlord's office, the landlord wasn't there. He went back to his own big store and a businessman whom he did not know walked in and said he wanted to buy the property. "I'm not the owner," he said. "You must talk to the landlord."

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"I already spoke to the landlord," he responded, "and he is ready to sell, but he said that you hold the lease. This is why I am here – to buy you out."

Suddenly Ami realised that he had the upper hand. He started thinking hard how much money to ask from the landlord for breaking the contract. Before he said a word. the businessman offered an amount that was much higher than Ami would have dared to ask for. They signed an agreement and Ami evacuated the premises.

With the money that he received for the arrangement, Ami bought a building and established a clothing factory, something he never would have dreamed he could do. In the normal course of things he would have had to work for decades in order to achieve such a thing. Yet, the Rebbe had shortened the way for him in the merit of Ami deciding to keep Shabbat.

Ami built up his business and was very successful. If you sacrifice for Shabbos, Shabbos will definitely pay you back.

Good Shabbos!