

Vayakhel

Crowns, Forgetfulness and Shabbos

And Moshe gathered all the adas of the Jewish people, and he told them, “These are the things that Hashem has commanded you to do: For six days, your work shall be done, and the seventh shall be holy, a Shabbos of rest, for Hashem; he who does labor on it will die.”

Shemos 35:1–2

“The Jewish people left their jewelry at Horeb.”¹ “R. Simai taught, ‘When the Jewish people said the words *naaseh vinishma* – we will do and we will listen – 600,000 ministering angels came to each and every Jew, and fastened for him two crowns, one for *naaseh*, and one for *nishma*. When the Jewish people sinned by fashioning a Golden Calf, 1,200,000 angels of destruction came and removed them, as the verse says, “The Jewish people left their [spiritual] jewelry at the mountain of Horeb.”’”² The Gemara goes on to say that Moshe then gathered up all of the “crowns” that the Jewish people had left behind.

Moshe, in our Parsha, gathers all of the Jewish people together. The word used for the assembly of Jewish people is *adas*. Moshe gathered the *adas* of the Jewish people. The Apter Rav³ tells us that there is more going on here. The word used for the crowns of the Jewish people, which they left behind when they sinned at the Golden Calf, was *edyam*. This shares the same root as the word *adas*. What Moshe gathered, says the Apter Rav, was the lost jewelry of the Jews. He first took their lost crowns, and then gathered the people and taught them about the Shabbos. Moshe wanted to return these crowns to the Jewish people. “Moshe was satisfied with his portion,”⁴ explains the Apter Rav, means that he was happy with what he originally received, and made it his business to help the Jewish people reconnect with their own crowns. He did that, somehow, through the Shabbos. The Arizal⁵ teaches us that on Shabbos, Moshe gives these crowns back to the Jewish people. Only through our connection to Shabbos do we identify with these crowns.

But what are these crowns, and why did we lose them when we did? How do we get them back through Shabbos?

When the Jewish people sinned, it says in the Torah, regarding these crowns, that the people

1 Shemos 33:6

2 Shabbos 88a

3 *Ohev Yisrael* to Vayakhel. See also *Torah Emes* (Apta) to Vayakhel. In *Agra Dikallah* here, the Bnei Yissaschar also suggests this reading of the verse.

4 Shabbos Shacharis Shmoneh Esrei

5 *Shaar Hakavanos, Kaballas Shabbos, drush 1. Mishnas Chasidim, Shacharis Dishabbos*, 8.

“did not place their [spiritual] jewelry on them.”⁶ In the very next verse,⁷ the Torah tells us that Hashem spoke to Moshe and told him that the Jewish people are not to wear their crowns! This is troubling, since the previous verse tells us that no Jew had *shas* (literally, “placed”) his jewelry on him.⁸ How can one be told to take off something that he was never wearing in the first place? The Chozeh of Lublin⁹ explains that the word for “placed,” *shas*, also means to take something to heart, as we find when the Torah talks of Pharaoh “not taking this to heart either.”¹⁰ He explains that the Jewish people, even after the sin of the Golden Calf, remained nevertheless wearing their crowns. We are connected to God at all times, even when we have sinned. But the *passuk* tells us that “the Jewish people did not take to heart that their crowns were on them.” They did not realize that they were still wearing these crowns, and therefore, they were told to “take them off.” If you do not realize that you are still connected even after sin, then you, in fact, lose some of that connection.¹¹

Shabbos teaches that even after sin, one is still connected. When Adam sinned, he nevertheless was given one Shabbos in Eden before he was expelled.¹² Every Shabbos is a taste of the World to Come.¹³ Even if a person worships idols, as the generation of Enosh did, if he keeps the Shabbos, he is forgiven.¹⁴ Shabbos is the source of blessing for the whole week.¹⁵ Shabbos brings forgiveness for mistakes,¹⁶ for it is the center of our universe. We work for six days, and on the seventh, we have Shabbos. The Torah tells us that we *are* to work for six days, but that it is all to surround our Shabbos. We are to take from our lives and bring into Shabbos, and we are meant to realize how futile the rest of it is without Shabbos. Our first step toward forgiveness and atonement is when we stop identifying with our sins. When we know that, in fact, we are not really that person, for we only live for Shabbos – the days of connection and Heaven in this world – then, we begin to detach from our mistakes. When we realize that we are here for *Olam Habah*, for our souls are the main thing, and our mistakes do not really ever touch our souls, then through the message of the Shabbos, “*yoma dinishmasa*” (day of the soul),¹⁷ we can reclaim our crowns. We can discover that they never left us. Our sins can never really penetrate our cores, and our mistakes can never really destroy our pure souls. We learn this from the Shabbos, and when we discover this, we can then also discover that we are, in fact, still wearing our crowns.

6 Shemos 33:4

7 Ibid., 34:5

8 See *Sifsei Koben al Hatorah*, and *Maskil Lidavid* there.

9 Quoted in *Tefilah Limoshe* to Vayakhel

10 Shemos 7:23

11 See also *Yalkut Hagershuni* to *Orach Chaim* (p. 7a) *liklutim shonim*, quoting R. Yitzchak Elchanan, who also understands the word *shas* to mean “taking to heart,” though he understands that *passuk* slightly differently. *Yalkut Meam Loez* also does something similar.

12 *Pirkei Dirabbi Eliezer*, 20

13 Brachos 57b. See also Maharal in *Netzach Yisrael*, 46, where he discusses at length how Yom Tov is a taste of the days of Moshiach, and Shabbos is a taste of *Olam Habah*.

14 Shabbos 118b

15 *Zohar*, vol. 2, 88a. See also Lecha Dodi, “*ki bi mikor habracha*.”

16 See this elaborated upon by *Sfas Emes*, Shekalim, 5632, s.v. *Chazal*.

17 *Zohar*, vol. 2, 205a, and vol. 3, 95a.

Those crowns came through 600,000 angels, and yet, they left through twice as many. Each person was brought a crown for *naaseh* (“we will do”) and one for *nishma* (“we will listen”) by the same angels. This is important. As long as the Jewish people identified themselves with their beliefs, and the actions that were theirs were only the ones that were guided by the *nishma*, then they were both still brought by one angel. An angel only has one mission. The two crowns were really the same thing, and thus, one angel could bring them. The crowns were two, but really one, for they were a product of the Jewish people identifying with the reality that we are really only a soul, and a soul that wants to do the will of God. There is nothing else. No other action could possibly be mine, or yours.

But when they sinned, and they did not act properly, they lost those crowns; they were separated and removed. When the Jews said *naaseh vinishma*, a voice came from Heaven, comparing them to angels,¹⁸ for, indeed, having only one focus and one mission is what the angel has. But when they sinned, no longer did the actions of the Jewish people reflect their awareness that they were really nothing more than people acting out the directives of Truth. Now they saw themselves as people who could have the *naaseh* and the *nishma* separated. And so, there were two angels needed to remove these two crowns, for these two crowns were no longer connected, no longer one unit.¹⁹ Though a person is only really his soul, and the rest is insignificant, after this sin, the Jews were once again people viewing their souls as only a *part* of their being.

When the Jewish people sinned at the Golden Calf, and Moshe dropped the Tablets, all of the letters flew off of the Tablets.²⁰ And yet, wondered the Imrei Emes of Ger,²¹ we say every Shabbos morning²² that when Moshe came back with the tablets, “guarding the Shabbos” was written on them. Before they broke, all of the commandments were on them, not just Shabbos; and afterward, none of them were. What is special about the Tablets’ having Shabbos written on them? The Imrei Emes explains that, in fact, even after everything flew off of the Tablets, the commandment of Shabbos remained there! We only forget any Torah, says the Gemara,²³ because of the disconnect that was created when the *Luchos* were broken. Thus, writes the Sfes Emes,²⁴ when one learns Torah on Shabbos, he does not forget it!²⁵ The Shabbos is something that we can never, ever forget, at any time.²⁶ The level that the Jew was on before the sin, grew

18 Shabbos 88a

19 See R. Moshe Shapiro’s *Afikei Mayim* to Shavous, 42, where he discusses this more fully.

20 Shemos Rabbah 46:1

21 *Likkutei Yehuda* to Ki Sisa, p. 97a

22 Shabbos Shacharis Shmoneh Esrei

23 Eruvin 54a

24 Ki Sisa 662

25 Perhaps we can thus understand the words of the Yerushalmi (Shabbos, ch. 15) that the Shabbos was only given to the Jewish people in order that they learn Torah on it. And this also explains the words of the Arizal (*Pri Etz Chaim*, *shaar Hanbagas Halimud*, 1) that the words from Mishlei (24:14), “*deeh chochmah linafshech*” (know wisdom for your soul) have the same *gematria* as “Shabbos,” for Shabbos is a day when one connects to Torah learning in the deepest of ways.

26 Shemos 20:8

lost to him, because he did not realize that he was still there. The fellow who has the winning lottery ticket in his old pants pocket but never checks for it has, in a way, not really won the lottery. He will never use that money at all. The Shabbos is there to remind us that we never lost our crowns. We are always connected to that time when we received the Torah, and the Tablets were whole. We would never forget. We got both of our crowns. Moshe just wanted us to know that we still have those crowns. So he collected them all, and then, he taught us about the Shabbos.

“Moshe was happy with the gift of his portion; You placed a glorious crown on his head when he stood before You on Mount Sinai, and he brought down two tablets of stone, with ‘guarding the Shabbos’ written on them!”²⁷

27 Shmoneh Esrei, Shacharis of Shabbos.