

# Parsha Encounters

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Parshas Vayakhel-Pikudei- Rabbi Dovid Greenberg

## Shabbos-Heavenly Delight

**A**t the beginning of this week's parsha, Moshe tells Bnei Yisroel about the prohibition of doing melacha (work) on Shabbos. Immediately following that, Bnei Yisroel received the directive to begin the construction of the Mishkan. Rashi explains that these two events occurred side by side to teach us, that even the building of the Mishkan does not override the issur (prohibition) of melacha on Shabbos.

The beginning of Parshas Terumah states the purpose of the Mishkan; (25:8) "You shall make for Me a Mikdash, so I can dwell amongst you." Hashem's express desire is to have a dwelling place for His shechina here, in this materialistic, mundane world. The way this is accomplished is by the Jews sanctifying their gold, silver, fabrics etc. to be used for the Mishkan. These materialistic objects will then be infused with holiness, and thereby be worthy of the Divine Presence. In truth, all of a Jew's actions carry the potential to imbue the secular with G-dliness and make this world more suitable for the Shechina to dwell in. It is for this reason that the concept of "melacha" is not defined by any type of physical labor. Rather "melacha" is defined by which activities were necessary for building the Mishkan. For the "work" of a Jew in all his everyday endeavors is exactly like the purpose of the Mishkan - to elevate the mundane, and thereby make this world a place where Hashem can dwell amongst us. With this understanding, it is quite perplexing that such G-dly work with its lofty goals be stopped for Shabbos. Does this not seem to contradict Hashem's desire to be near us?

Indeed, this is not a contradiction at all. For on Shabbos, we don't have to bring the Shechina down to us, rather Hashem allows us to come up to Him. Shabbos is called "M'ain Olam Haba", a microcosm of the World to Come, where we'll all be able to bask in Hashem's glory. This is why Shabbos has similar ramifications to one doing the avodah in the Beis Hamikdash. In the Beis Hamikdash, one was punished with death for seemingly minor infractions, i.e. a non-kohen doing the service, or

a kohen not properly garbed. Even thinking a wrong thought during the service has tremendous repercussions. So too, on Shabbos, if one transgresses one of the myriad intricate laws of its observance the result may be the death sentence. The correlation between the two scenarios is, that just like in the Temple, one must realize that he's standing before the King of Kings, and is expected to act accordingly, on Shabbos one is also expected to constantly bear in mind, that on this day, we are in close proximity to our King.

This might explain a common Jewish custom. The gemara in Shabbos (119a) relates that on Friday night, every Jew is followed home from shul by two angels. Thus began the custom to recite the song, "Shalom Aleichem" which welcomes our celestial guests. The song concludes with the stanza, "Tzeischem L'Shalom", where we wish the angels farewell. It is a little puzzling, that we are in a rush to usher the angels out the door! The gemara Yerushalmi in Yoma discusses how on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, the Kohein Gadol was allowed to enter the Kodosh Hakadoshim. At that time, no one else was allowed to be in the Beis Hamikdash - not even the angels. The reason for this is, during that period of time there was an intense personal relationship between the Kohein Gadol and Hashem into which no other being may intrude. Similarly, on Shabbos, when a Jew has an opportunity to enter into the Divine realm, we bid farewell to our angelic visitors being that this is our time to have an intensely close relationship with our Creator, into which no one else may interfere - not even the angels.

May we merit to constantly grasp the opportunities Shabbos has to offer to bask in Hashem's Glory.

(Based on the writings of R' S.E. Brog and R' S. D. Pincus)

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# Halacha Encounters

## Auf Ruf

Rabbi Henoch Plotnik

It is a long-standing custom for a chosson to celebrate with what is commonly known as the “*auf ruf*” the Shabbos before his wedding. Certainly the expression “*auf ruf*” would have its roots in the chosson’s being called to the Torah, the highest level of *chiyuv* amongst all those we traditionally honor with an *aliyah*. Only a bar mitzvah boy can claim equal status. (According to the Shaarei Ephraim, the chosson’s father should receive an *aliyah* as well. Indeed the Teshuvos Hameyuchasos of the Rashba says that a bar mitzvah’s father should also receive an *aliyah*). This minhag of celebrating on Shabbos dates back to the Rishonim as mentioned in the Rashba’s *Toras Habayis*. (Although the reason he offers specifically relates to when weddings were held Fridays, the minhag remains in place even today) According to the midrash *Talpios*, the chosson’s status as king begins that Shabbos as well. By extension, some authorities hold that a chosson should not be left alone from that Shabbos onward (See *Nisuin K’Hilchosom* ch.6 note 7). It is because of his “kingly” status that he is entitled to two *aliyos*, one before the wedding, and one during *sheva brochos*, just like a king needed to have two *Sifrei Torah*. In earlier times the celebration would take place Friday night (*Maharil*). Nowadays, it is common to host a *kiddush* Shabbos day. There is a beautiful custom, still practiced in some communities, to accompany the chosson to shul. This is based on a braisa in *Mesechta Sofrim* (19:12) that teaches us that Shlomo HaMelech built gates by the Bais Hamikdash – one for *chassanim* and one for *aveilim* (mourners) *r”l* and those in excommunication. On Shabbos, the citizens of Yerushalayim would come there to express appropriate words. After the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash they instituted that the *aveilim* and *chassanim* were to be accompanied, and in the *chassanim*’s case, they are praised and escorted home.

The *Poskim* (Magen Avraham, *Levush*, etc.) specifically mention the minhag of “*mezamrin*”, to sing for the chosson after his *aliyah*. There were *piyutim* specifically composed for the event and *poskim* encouraged their recitation in their entirety. (The opening verse of these *piyutim* is brought in *Ta’amei Minhagim* #939. The author of *Noheg Katzon* Yosef frowns on those who skipped the rest and refers to it as a “great praise of Hashem that contains the fundamentals of our religion”). Our custom of singing *Siman Tov* or the like seems to be a small remnant of that minhag.

The most famous and beloved custom we practice to-

day is the “*bavarfenen*” – throwing bags of nuts and candy at the chosson after his *aliyah*. This minhag, albeit in a different form, is already mentioned in the Gemara (*Berachos* 50b) in the sugya of *bizui ochel*, treating food with respect. The Gemara sanctions the custom of pouring wine through pipes in front of the chosson and *kallah* as a sign that their good fortune should constantly flow. (The wine was caught in a vessel at the other end.) The same Gemara allows throwing toasted grain and nuts in the summer when these foods wouldn’t have become repulsive from the mud. The significance of throwing walnuts, *egozim* in Lashon haKodesh, is based on their gematria which equals the word *cheit* (sin). This is symbolic of the fact that the chosson’s sins are forgiven on his wedding day. It has been suggested that the “throwing” is a symbolic form of *skilah*, stoning, which serves as an atonement for sins, that the chosson merits on his wedding day. Almonds are sometimes used because they are quick to ripen and produce fruit. This symbolizes that the chosson should soon merit seeing children. *Tosfos* mentions the prevalent custom in their day was to throw wheat kernels, whereas a braisa in *Mesechta Smochos* (8:1) mentions hanging out strings of fish that produce abundantly in front of the chosson and *kallah* as yet another *siman tov*. The minhag mentioned by *Tosfos* is based on the pasuk, “*Hasum gevulaich shalom chelev chitim yasbeach*” – wheat kernels are a *siman* of *shalom bayis*. The *Darkei Chayim V’Shalom* (Munkacz) acknowledged and upheld a long standing custom that the women would do the throwing, even from inside the *Beis Medrash*!

Another beautiful, old Yerushalmi minhag is mentioned in the *S’dei Chemed* (chosson V’*Kallah* #22). On the Shabbos before the *chasuna*, the relatives of the chosson would accompany him to the homes of the *Rabbonim* and other *Talmidei Chachomim* so the chosson could kiss their hand and receive their *brochos*. This also served as a way to publicize the upcoming wedding.

*Seforim Hakedoshim* are replete with references to the *Zohar*, that the bounty we receive during the week is rooted in the previous Shabbos. Certainly, a Shabbos preceding the beginning of the establishment of a new family in *Klal Yisroel* is laden with *brocho* and *segula* for the *kedusha* that will permeate that new home, *im yirtzeh Hashem*.

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This week’s Halacha Encounter was written in honor of the *Auf ruf* of *Yisroel Mordechai Davis*.