

Potomac Torah Study Center
Vol. 7 #22, March 20, 2020; Vayakhel-Pekudei HaHodesh 5780

NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning almost 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his recent untimely death.

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah.

With everyone focusing on winter and the coronavirus scare, which has virtually shut down Israel, the United States, and many other countries, look what is sneaking up on us. March 19 was the first day of spring (earlier than normal this year). This Shabbat, we would complete Sefer Shemot, and Parashat HaHodesh would announce the holy month of Nisan, if we had a minyan on Shabbat morning. Pesach starts in less than three weeks, and of course, almost no one right now expects to be ready on time.

This Pesach, when we must practice social distancing to break the cycle of spreading the virus, our Seders will be small and lonely. One of my closest friends is home taking care of three very young children, while his wife works long hours as an emergency room physician. My friend realizes that all four members of his family are likely to catch the virus. His family must self quarantine from their parents, grandparents, siblings, and cousins. My son, who is on active duty with the military, must stay within the county in which he lives. Since my son will also be caring for coronavirus patients, he and his family are also likely to catch the virus. They cannot travel to Maryland to be with family for Pesach – and probably for months after.

The week after Pesach, we read about the treatment process for a metzora (one afflicted with tzoraat), which requires isolation away from everyone else until the skin affliction clears and a Kohen pronounces the person cured. The modern form of isolation, self quarantine, is not as lonely, because we have computers, radios, television, and books to occupy ourselves and to enable us to listen to services and study Torah electronically (except on Shabbat and Yom Tov).

“Vayakhel” is a very unusual word in the Torah. Other than here, where Moshe gathers (Vayakhel) the entire congregation, the only other instance of the word is when Korach gathers (Vayakhel) the entire congregation to challenge Moshe and Aharon. When Moshe gathers the people, he tells them Hashem’s commands – opening by stating that they may work for six days, but the seventh is to be holy, a day of complete rest, and anyone who works will be put to death (35:1-3). Later in the Torah, when Korach gathers the congregation, God tells Moshe to separate from Korach’s followers, because He will consume them in an instant. When Moshe gathers the people to separate Shabbat from ordinary days, completion is for a good purpose, for life. When Korach gathers the people to go against His commands, it is for evil, and completion is an act of destruction.

The root of Vayakhel, bet-daled-lamed, also occurs in a very different context. “Havdalah” shares the same root as Vayakhel. In the creation story, after a day of creation, Havdalah indicates completion of a day, a separation for good (Bereshis 1:18). Havdalah also separates Shabbat from ordinary days after the holiness of the day of rest from creation – for God and for Jews.

Separation can be for good, for holy purposes – or it can be for evil. In Vayakhel, Moshe reaffirms separation in time, between Shabbat and ordinary days. Shabbat is so important that even any activity involved in building a home for God’s presence among man, the Mishkan, must stay separate. During these days of medical crisis, we must separate, even from loved ones, even on Shabbat and during Pesach. Life comes first. A physician must break Shabbat to care for a sick person, to save life. All of us must keep separate for now on Shabbat and Pesach to preserve life – to break the infection connection for the disease so the number of seriously ill patients does not overwhelm the capabilities of our medical system.

First testing of vaccines to prevent coronavirus 19 started this week – in Israel and in at least two medical research facilities in our country. Some anti-viral treatments are also in initial testing, hopefully to point the way to a treatment for seriously ill patients. May these efforts prove successful so we can live through the current medical emergency..

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Nossan ben Pessel, Mordechai ben Chaya, Baruch Yitzhak ben Perl, David Leib HaKohen ben Sheina Reizel, Zev ben Sara Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, HaRav Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Amoz ben Tziviah, Reuven ben Masha, Moshe David ben Hannah, Meir ben Sara, Yitzhok Tzvi ben Yehudit Miriam, Yaakov Naphtali ben Michal Leah, Tova bat Narges, Zissel Bat Mazal, Chana Bracha bas Rochel Leah, Elisheva Chaya bas Leah, Leah Fruma bat Musa Devorah, Hinda Behla bat Chaya Leah, Beyla bat Sara, Nechama bas Tikva Rachel, Miriam Chava bat Yachid, Ruth bat Sarah, and Tova bat Narges, all of whom greatly need our prayers.

Hannah & Alan

Drasha: Parshas Vayakhel: More or Less

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 1998

[Please remember Mordechai ben Chaya for a Mishebarach!]

In a magnanimous show of unity, men and women of all tribes of the nation converge their hearts, minds, and pockets to complete the Mishkan. In the next two Torah portions, the Torah summarizes the accomplishments of the nation by detailing the work that was done by Betzalel and his host of artisans and craftsmen who were filled with Heavenly spirit.

Moshe declares the success of the campaign and the generosity of the donors by announcing, that “the work (and contributions) had been enough for all the work, to do it — and there was extra” (Exodus 36:7). Not only was there enough for the completion of the task there was extra.

But many commentaries are concerned about Moshe’s seemingly strange expression of completion. “There was enough, and there was extra.” After all, if there was enough, then there was not extra. And if there was extra then it should not be called enough! The Torah could just well have stated , “There were extra contributions of work and material for the work that was needed.”

It seems that only by having more than enough, by only having extra gifts, there was actually enough. Is that possible?

President John F. Kennedy loved to tell the story of a political battle for the mayoralty of the small manufacturing city of Fall River, Massachusetts.

The candidates scoured the industrial community for support, each pledging prosperity, growth, and increased productivity. But general promises would not persuade the voters. The candidates scoured the community, talking to citizens as if each vote would truly decide the election. They were right.

It was the tightest race in Massachusetts's history. During the vote counting the candidates sat nervously with their supporters awaiting the final tally. It took days to declare, and weeks to finally confirm, that the winner of the mayoral race was actually decided by one vote! But the winner's jubilation was muted only days after the results were declared.

You see, everyone in the town reminded him, “It was my vote that got you elected!”

The Sichos Tazdikim explains that Moshe wanted the proud accomplishment of building the Mishkan combined with humility, despite the enormity of the accomplishment. Had there been exactly enough gold, silver, copper, and other materials contributed in order to complete the construction, then perhaps a false sense of pride may have crept in.

If it were not for me, some may have thought, “there would be no Mishkan!” “I gave the contribution that turned the tide!” Everyone would have pinned the success on his or her copper or silver or gold.

The only way this false pride could be avoided was if there was a bit more given to the cause than actually was needed. Only then, would you have not only a Mishkan, but an edifice bereft of individual haughtiness. Therefore, only when there was more given than was actually needed, did Moshe feel that he truly had enough! When we face extreme situations, and we contribute to their positive resolution, it is important to realize that we are only messengers. If Hashem wants success it will come without us as well.

In that vein, our contribution will be even more pure, for it will have every good attribute and will only be missing only one ingredient. It will be missing a false sense of conceit. It will not only be enough, it will be more.

Good Shabbos!

Vayekhel: Blinded by the Light

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2020

What message can we learn from our Parsha to give us some guidance during this crisis?

Parshat Vayekhel-Pikudei opens with the second story of the Mishkan. After having been commanded by God in the building of the Mishkan in Terumah-TiZaveh, Moshe now, in turn, commands the people to build the Mishkan. They follow his command with enthusiasm, give large donations, and build the Mishkan. The parasha, and the Book of Shemot, end with the Glory of God dwelling the Mishkan, that is, with the fulfillment of the opening verse in Terumah – “And you shall build for Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell in your midst.”

This parsha is not, however, a simple duplication of the earlier parshot, and there are two striking differences in the sequence of the commands and their execution. VaYakhel opens with the command of Shabbat, and then turns to the command of the Mishkan. In contrast, when originally commanded, the command of Shabbat had followed that of the Mishkan (Shemot 31:12ff). The other difference is the order of the construction. Whereas God had first commanded the building of the Ark (Shemot 25:10ff), here the command of the structure – the Tent – comes first (Shemot 35:11) and its execution comes first (Shemot 36:8ff). Rashi famously notes this change with the following story:

Moshe commanded Betzalel to first make the vessels and then the Tent. Betzalel said to him: the practice of the world is to first make the house and then to put the vessels in it. Is this perhaps what you heard from God? [text following Berliner ed.] Moshe said to him: You were in the shade of God (b'tzel El)! For certainly this is what God has commanded me! (Rashi, Shemot 38:22. See Berakot 55a).

Within the context of this Midrash, we can ask – if this is true, why was Moshe originally confused? And at a pshat level, we can ask, what is the meaning of these differences of order between our parsha and the previous ones?

Regarding Shabbat and the Mishkan, regardless of order, the meaning of the juxtaposition is clear – not only that Shabbat is the other locus of kedusha, a kedusha of time and not of space, but also – as Hazal understand – that the kedusha of Shabbat is inviolable, and that even the building the Mishkan cannot supersede the Shabbat. While the building of the Mishkan is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and it is the process of bringing God’s presence to dwell among the people, it cannot override the regular, stable, foundational kedusha of Shabbat. The religious passion for achieving the intense connection to God is a powerful and laudable trait, but it cannot supersede the day-to-day serving of God.

The building of the Mishkan, then, must give way to the regular weekly kedusha of Shabbat. But the order of this juxtaposition also matters. The question still remains – are we to have a religion, an approach to God, that focuses on the passionate, intense experience of connection, or are we to have a religion and a connection that focuses on the day-to-day? Does our approach begin with Mishkan, but Shabbat serves as the ultimate constraint – our religious passion, our intensity, is the core, but it cannot override Shabbat? Or does our approach start with Shabbat, that our day-to-day kedusha is the core, but recognizes that we must seek out those opportunities of intense connection to build on that stable foundation? Our parsha weighs in favor of Shabbat. Our religious life is a life of Shabbat, not a life of Mishkan. It is founded on the kedusha of the day-to-day, not the kedusha of once-in-a-lifetime; it is founded on halakha, not on spirituality. Yeshayahu Leibowitz put it beautifully:

Resting religion on Halakha assigns it to the prosaic aspects of life, and therein lies its great strength. Only a religion addressed to life’s prose... is worthy of the name. This is not to demean the poetic moments, the rare occasions when a man breaks away from the routine, the experience of rising above the self spiritually and emotionally, the deeds performed fervently. It is quite possible that such moments mark the zenith of a human life. Nonetheless, the fundamental and enduring elements of human existence are in life’s prose, not its poetry. Moliere’s M. Jourdain discovered at the age of forty that he had unwittingly been speaking prose all his life. No one ever claimed to have been talking unwittingly in poetry.... The religion of halakhic practice

is the religion of life itself. (Yeshayahu Leibowitz, "Religious Praxis," in Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State, p. 13).

What happened between the previous parsha and this one? The sin of the Golden Calf. The Golden Calf was religious passion and fervor gone awry. For it is so difficult, so impossible, to sustain the fervor, to sustain the experience of Har Sinai. And when that cannot be sustained, and when the people can only focus on it as the true religious experience, then they will find false gods towards which to direct their passion. If they do not have a Mishkan to build, they will build a Golden Calf, all in search of reclaiming the intensity of the religious experience.

This is why the second time around the Torah was given quietly, without the thunder and lightning, without the unsurpassable, unattainable, direct connection with the Divine. Moshe receives the second tablets and comes down from the mountain so quickly and so quietly that you would almost not realize that it had happened (it did, in last week's parasha – Shemot 34:28-29). The people had to reorient themselves to a new Torah, to the second tablets, to a Torah of God's presence in the quiet, not in the thunder and lightning:

And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. (Kings I 19:11-12).

It is the religion of the still small voice that is the message of Parashat VaYakhel.

The focus on the day-to-day does not mean we should not seek out those moments of intense connection, that we should not cultivate our religious enthusiasm, that we should not answer the call to build the Mishkan passion when the call goes out, but we must first build our foundation. Shabbat must precede the Mishkan. And the Tent must precede the Ark. We must strive for the most intense place of God's presence, but it cannot come first. This is something that Moshe lost sight of. Being directly in the presence of God, he was blinded by the light, blinded by the intensity of the experience. It was only Betzalel, who was out of the direct light, who was in the shade of God, that understood that you need to first lay the foundation. Most of our life is lived in the shade, warmed and enlightened by God's indirect light, not set afire by it, but also not blinded by it. This is the kedusha of Shabbat and of our religious life.

We are now all facing an unprecedented crisis. In the past, no matter how bad things got, we could all pull together and congregate as one. Here, we cannot do that and we do not have the support and comfort that that brings. We are connecting in other ways – by phone, by Zoom – but that is not available to us on Shabbat. Our Shabbat, without shul, without friends, is a muted experience. And yet, no matter how muted, it comes each week, every week. Shabbat was always less intense than the Mishkan, and these days it is less intense still. But we can always look to Shabbat to bring warmth and kedusha into our lives.

Shabbat Shalom.

Vayakheil-Pikudei ~ Hachodesh -- Quarantined

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine ©2020 Teach 613

The Torah is a Torah of Chaim, the book of life and for life. It contains the life lessons we need to conduct ourselves properly. But, you have to know where to look.

In the story of the Exodus, which we will recount soon at the Pesach Seder (May it find all of us safe and in good health), there are two very different responses to situations of danger. In the fourth plague-- the one of wild animals-- the Mitzriyim (Egyptians) were affected by the plague. Miraculously, the Jews were not. Even as the wild animals attacked the Mitzriyim, a Jew was able to walk the streets of Mitzrayim safely, despite the rampant danger of wild animals. He could visit friends, take his child to a play-date, or visit the Shul or Beis Medrash for an invigorating session with a Chavrusa. The Jew could rely on the words with which Moshe expressed the plague to Pharaoh (Shemos/ Exodus 8:19): "I shall make a distinction between My people and your people." As the ArtScroll commentary explains: Firstly "God said that He would keep the swarm from entering Goshen [the neighborhood of the Jews] and secondly, the animals would not harm Jews anywhere, even if they were in the land of Egypt."

But, the Torah also tells us of a different reaction to danger at the time of the tenth and final plague. Then the Torah commanded (12:22), "As for you: Do not leave your house until morning." As Rashi explains, at times "once the plague is unleashed it does not differentiate between righteous and wicked." The only solution then is to follow the Torah's directive and behave safely.

In living our lives according to Torah, it is imperative to know which lesson, example, or experience recounted in the Torah is the appropriate one to apply to a given situation. Certainly, the model described at the time of the fourth plague is part of our Jewish legacy. It enables us to maintain serenity, and go about our business, even in times of danger. It enabled Rabbi Avraham Grozovsky, for example, in the early days of the Nazis, to enter the local Nazi headquarters and plead the case-- as a character witness-- for some

young students who were falsely charged with an offense for which they could have been killed. He did so, even though he knew it would target him as a religious leader and that his name would lead the list of Rabbis on the Nazi list. (Source: Shu"t Mimaamakim)

The quality of the fourth plague-- that we are untouchable-- enables us to go about our business of life, despite the existence of death. In fact, in an overly simplistic sense, we have the ability to feel that we are untouchable. We have the ability to delude ourselves that danger and death do not apply to us. We are simply not part of that club. It enables us to "whistle past the graveyard" and be productive, because "those issues" do not apply to us. This has value. In fact, one of the reasons that Halacha prohibits making a cemetery within a city is so as not to depress the people. (Be'erHeiteiv, YorehDeah 365)

Yet, there are times when a different type of attitude is called for, an attitude that says that we are not untouchable, and are indeed vulnerable to danger. In fact, when the Torah wants to emphasize a prohibition it will sometimes give an example, to make the importance of the prohibition abundantly clear. In the beginning of Parshas Acharei Mos, for example, the Torah instructs the Kohein Gadol to be cautious and not to enter the holiest part of the Mikdash (Sanctuary) except on Yom Kippur and, even then, only by following a special protocol. The Torah connects this directive to the title "Acharei Mos" – "after the death"–referring to the tragic passing of Aharon's sons Nadav and Avihu, who entered the holy area without permission and were killed. Rashi explains that it is like a doctor who can simply tell the patient what to do, or he can say, "Follow this directive, or else you will die like that other patient." Citing an example of how significant the directive is provides the gift of clarity.

The world today is in the midst of the covid-19 crisis, a virus that is quite contagious and can be fatal in certain situations. The Jewish world in particular should take note, as we are particularly vulnerable due to our frequent travel and close interactions. It is noteworthy that, for generations, throughout the exile we have had frequent connections between one city or state and another. In fact, banking originally was made possible by Jews who could easily tender a loan at a country-market in one country, with the borrower committing to pay the lender's brother or brother-in-law in a different country once the goods were sold. Even today, we are often blessed to find ourselves interacting at a Bar Mitzva in one state in the beginning of the week, and at a Chasuna in a different state at the end of the week. In a time of "plague," however, this habit of rapid travel can work against us, in spreading the virus faster than anyone can imagine.

So, how do we know if the danger should be viewed like that of the fourth plague, in which we had the right to say that we are "untouchable," or, whether we obligated to view it like the tenth plague in which we were ordered into full quarantine until the "all clear" is given?

Just as the Torah cites an example of "Acharei Mos" to emphasize its point, Hashem has already provided sufficient illustration that this virus can inflict significant damage and loss.

Some will argue that many scientists and doctors are working on a cure and treatment plans. That is good news.

Many will argue that the virus is not fatal in people under the age of 50, 60, or 70, or people who are not immunocompromised. This may be true. But, we all have loved ones who are in the vulnerable categories. In fact, with today's medical advances, there are many, many people walking around, thank G-d, living productive lives as a result of successful treatment, and they are immunocompromised. We must act in a way that protects them even if we don't feel vulnerable ourselves.

If we believe that life experience models itself after Torah, then Hashem has given us real life illustrations of what can happen if we don't take this virus seriously and quarantine properly. China, Italy, and the recent outbreak in the US should be illustration enough for us to realize that we are not at liberty to consider ourselves untouchable.

I am personally aware of families who reasoned that since schools in their neighborhood are closed and everyone is working remotely, this would be a great time to travel and visit the cousins. And, I am aware of the temptation faced by those young men and women who have just travelled from areas under lockdown, often through international airports, who are just bubbling over with excitement to run around in their hometown and interact with everyone they haven't seen in eight months. It behooves us to realize that what is demanded of us is a quarantine modeled after the tenth plague: by strictest order, do not leave your house, so that we can try to slow this down.

I am told by reliable sources in the kosher food industry that there is plenty of kosher food in the supply chain to get us through Pesach and beyond, provided that we don't panic and hoard. Now is a great time to think about what we really need, and buy that which we need in a safe and responsible way. We must avoid panic, and must avoid expressing our stress by yet another outing to buy things that we don't really need.

It is a time to daven, to learn, and to connect with people by phone or virtual connection, so that we give each other a sense of togetherness and strength.

And, it is a time to be safe. When shopping, do not go as a family. Only go out when truly necessary. Think twice: "Do I really need this item, or can I manage with one less instance of possible exposure."

Also, follow the safety protocol. Washing hands with soap and water is critical. Do not snack or touch your eyes in the car after shopping until you have washed or sanitized your hands. Wash well before eating. Recall that to make Matzoh we require good hand-washing before kneading the dough meant for the Pesach Matzoh. And, regarding Matzoh, the Torah only says "You shall guard the Matzoh." No adjective describes the guarding. But, when it comes to health, the Torah says, "You shall guard your health extremely."

Be calm. But, be responsible.

May Hashem protect us and the entire world.

Be safe. Be smart. Be well.

With all blessings best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos!

Rav Kook Torah

Vayakheil: Technology and the Sabbath

The Torah forbids 39 different categories of activity on the Sabbath. Yet only one — lighting fire — is explicitly prohibited in the Torah. Why?

And why does the Torah qualify the prohibition of lighting fire with the phrase, "in any of your dwellings"? Is it not forbidden to start a fire in any location?

Guidelines for Technology

The control and use of fire is unique to humanity. It is the basis for our advances in science and innovations in technology. Even now, fuel sources for burning, coal and oil, are what power modern societies. In short, fire is a metaphor for our power and control over nature, the fruit of our God-given intelligence.

What is the central message of the Sabbath? When we refrain from working on the seventh day, we acknowledge that God is the Creator of the world.

One might think that only the pristine natural world is truly the work of God. Human technology, on the other hand, is artificial and perhaps alien to the true purpose of the universe. Therefore, the Torah specifically prohibits lighting fire on the Sabbath, emphasizing that our progress in science and technology is also part of creation. Everything is included in the ultimate design of the universe. Our advances and inventions contribute towards the goal of creation in accordance with God's sublime wisdom.

Along with the recognition that all of our accomplishments are in essence the work of God, we must also be aware that we have tremendous power to change and improve the world. This change will be for a blessing if we are wise enough to utilize our technology within the guidelines of integrity and holiness.

Fire in the Temple

This caveat leads to the second question we asked: why does the Torah limit the prohibition of lighting fire on the Sabbath to "your dwellings"? The Talmud (Shabbat 20a) explains that lighting fire is only forbidden in private dwellings, but in the Temple, it is permitted to burn offerings on the Sabbath. Why should fire be permitted in the Temple?

The holy Temple was a focal point of prophecy and Divine revelation. It was the ultimate source of enlightenment, for both the individual and the nation. The fire used in the Temple is a metaphor for our mission to improve the world through advances in science and technology. We need to internalize the message that it is up to us to develop and advance the world, until the entire universe is renewed with a new heart and soul, with understanding and harmony. Permitting the technological innovation of fire in Temple on the Sabbath indicates that God wants us to utilize our intellectual gifts to innovate and improve, in a fashion similar to God's own creative acts.

We need to be constantly aware of our extraordinary potential when we follow the path that our Maker designated for us. At this spiritual level, we should not think that we are incapable of accomplishing new things. As the Talmud declares, "If they desire, the righteous can create worlds" (Sanhedrin 65b). When humanity attains ethical perfection, justice will then guide all of our actions, and scientific advances and inventions will draw their inspiration from the source of Divine morality, the holy Temple.

(Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 164-165. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. III, p. 53)

The Cloud

By Shraga Sherman* © Chabad 2020

This week we finish the reading of the book of Exodus, also known in the commentaries as the Book of Redemption because of its description of the people of Israel leaving Egypt. This second book of the Torah concludes by describing the establishment and dedication of the Tabernacle and, most importantly, the revelation of G-d's Divine Presence within it.

The Torah tells us: "When the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle, the Israelites would set out, on their various journeys." This seemingly simple verse raises two very significant questions.

First of all, what is the connection between the Jews traveling forward and the establishment of the Tabernacle in the desert? This information would seem to be more appropriate later in the book of Numbers, when it describes in great detail the various travels of the people of Israel during their 40 years in the desert.

Secondly, the verse implies that the Jews' march toward the Land of Israel is specifically connected to the Divine Presence leaving their camp in the desert. Only when "the cloud lifted" do "the Israelites set out." Why is this so?

Chasidic thought answers both of these questions by dealing with the ultimate existential nature of Creation. It understands the Tabernacle to be a paradigm for all of the world. What dynamic is at play behind the timing of the Jewish people's journeys? One answer is that there is no great spiritual accomplishment in fulfilling the Divine Will at a time when G-d's Presence is revealed and manifest.

The ultimate goal of existence is to rise up and connect to holiness even when it is hidden and concealed from us. The Midrash tells us that G-d desired a "dwelling place for Himself in the lower worlds." But relative to G-d, is there truly an upper or lower world? His realm is infinite.

We can now understand that when G-d's cloud was found among the Jewish people and His Presence was revealed, then the material world ceased to be "lowly." It is only when the cloud of G-d raises itself higher and higher, and His Divine Light is no longer revealed, can we begin the spiritual fulfilling of G-d's design. And the Tabernacle bestows upon the Jewish people the strength and faculties to bring holiness into the world, the ultimate purpose of Creation.

This is an extremely relevant message for us all at this time in Jewish history. We are in a spiritual state of exile. There is a darkness that rests on the world necessitating our best efforts, even more than before, to engage in the study of Torah and the fulfillment of mitzvot. We must understand that our ultimate goal and purpose is to illuminate that darkness with the light of Torah. Just as the disappearance of the Divine cloud from the Tabernacle became the sign to proceed forward, so, too, should today's conflicts encourage and arouse us to dedicate ourselves to the fulfillment of G-d's mission, which is to journey past this era and into the Messianic era of the complete and full redemption.

* Educational Outreach Director, Lubavitch on the Main Line, Suburban Philadelphia, PA.

Pekudei: Are You Stubborn, or Are You Stubborn?

by Rabbi Moshe Wisnfsky*

The artisans made the forehead-plate, and inscribed upon it "Holy unto G-d." Shemot 39:30

The high priest was required to wear the Forehead-plate because the forehead represents stubborn determination. We all naturally wrinkle our forehead muscles whenever we resolve to see something through despite all odds.

Stubbornness can be positive or negative. Brazen nerve or arrogance in showing contempt for G-d's law is negative. It is no coincidence that the stone thrown from David's slingshot hit and killed Goliath in the forehead, for Goliath brazenly and openly defied G-d. We are therefore taught that the high priest's forehead-plate atoned for the sin of arrogance.

An example of positive stubbornness is the resolve that enables us to stay true throughout the day to the spiritual awakening that we feel during our morning prayers. As we go about our daily business, it may be difficult to maintain the heightened Divine consciousness that we aspire to in prayer. But we can certainly maintain the attitude toward life implicit in this heightened awareness: that our Divine mission is our primary concern and the purpose of our involvement in the material world is to elevate it by using it for G-dly purposes.

Our goal of making everything "Holy unto G-d" was therefore inscribed on the Forehead-plate.

From Kehot's Daily Wisdom #1

* An insight from the Rebbe.

With heartfelt wishes for good health and safety for one and all--Gut Shabbos,
Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
Kehot Publication Society

To receive the complete D'Vrai Torah package weekly by E-mail, send your request to AfisherADS@Yahoo.com. The printed copies contain only a small portion of the D'Vrai Torah. Sponsorship opportunities available.

Likutei Divrei Torah

Gleanings of Divrei Torah on Parashat Hashavuah via the Internet

Sponsored by Arlene Pianko Groner and family
in honor of the first yahrzeit of her mother, Marion Pianko, z"l,
and the yahrzeits of her grandparents Jack and Anna Burstein, z"l

Volume 26, Issue 22

Shabbat Parashat Vayakhel-Pekudey - HaChodesh

5780 B'H

Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Making Space - With this week's double parsha, with its long account of the construction of the sanctuary – one of the longest narratives in the Torah, taking a full 13 chapters – comes to a magnificent climax:

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Sanctuary. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the Glory of the Lord filled the Sanctuary. (Ex. 40:34-35)

That is what the building of the sanctuary was about: how to bring God, as it were, from heaven to earth, or at least from the top of the mountain to down in the valley, from the remote God of awe-inspiring power to the Shekhinah, the indwelling Presence, God as shakhen, a neighbour, intimate, close, within the camp, in the midst of the people.

Yet for all this, we wonder why the Torah has to go on at such length in its details of the Mishkan, taking up the whole of Terumah and Tetzaveh, half of Ki Tissa, and then again Vayakhel and Pekudei. After all, the Mishkan was at best a temporary dwelling for the Shekhinah, suited to the years of wandering and wilderness. In Israel, it was superseded by the Temple. For two thousand years in the absence of a Temple its place was taken by the synagogue. Why, if the Torah is timeless, does it devote such space to what was essentially a time-bound structure?

The answer is deep and life-transforming, but to reach it we have to note some salient facts. First, the language the Torah uses in Pekudei is highly reminiscent of the language used in the narrative of the creation of the universe:

Genesis 1-2

Exodus 39-40

And God saw all that He had made and behold it was very good. (1:31)

Moses saw all the skilled work and behold they had done it; as God had commanded it they had done it. (39:43)

The heavens and earth and all their array were completed. (2:1)

All the work of the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting was completed. (39:32)

And God completed all the work that He had done. (2:2)

And Moses completed the work. (40:33)

Genesis 1-2

And God blessed... (2:3)

And sanctified it. (2:3)

Clearly the Torah wants us to connect birth of the universe with the building of the Mishkan, but how and why?

The numerical structure of the two passages heightens the connection. We know that the key number of the creation narrative is seven. There are seven days, and the word "good" appears seven times. The first verse of the Torah contains seven Hebrew words, and the second, 14. The word *eretz*, "earth," appears 21 times, the word *Elokim*, "God," 35 times, and so on.

So too in Pekudei, the phrase "as the Lord commanded Moses" appears seven times in the account of the making of the priestly garments (Ex. 39:1-31), and another seven times in the description of Moses setting up the Sanctuary (Ex. 40:17-33).

Note also one tiny detail, the apparently odd and superfluous "And" at the very beginning of the book of Exodus: "And these are the names ..." The presence of this connective suggests that the Torah is telling us to see Genesis and Exodus as inherently connected. They are part of the same extended narrative.

The final relevant fact is that one of the Torah's most significant stylistic devices is the chiasmus, or "mirror-image symmetry" – a pattern of the form ABCC1B1A1, as in "(A) He who sheds (B) the blood (C) of man, (C1) by man (B1) shall his blood (A1) be shed" (Gen. 9:6). This form can be the shape of a single sentence, as here, or a paragraph, but it can also exist at larger levels of magnitude.

What it means is that a narrative reaches a certain kind of closure when the end takes us back to the beginning – which is precisely what happens at the end of Exodus. It reminds us, quite precisely, of the beginning of all beginnings, when God created heaven and earth. The difference is that this time human beings have done the creating: the Israelites, with their gifts, the labour and their skills.

To put it simply: Genesis begins with God creating the universe as a home for humankind. Exodus ends with human beings, the Israelites, creating the Sanctuary as a home

Exodus 39-40

And Moses blessed... (39:43)

And you shall sanctify it and all its vessels. (40:9)

for God.

But the parallel goes far deeper than this – telling us about the very nature of the difference between *kodesh* and *chol*, sacred and secular, the holy and the mundane.

We owe to the great mystic, R. Isaac Luria, the concept of *tzimtzum*, "self-effacement" or "self-limitation." Luria was perplexed by the question: If God exists, how can the universe exist? At every point in time and space, the Infinite should crowd out the finite. The very existence of God should act as does a Black Hole to everything in its vicinity. Nothing, not even light waves, can escape a Black Hole, so overwhelming is its gravitational pull. Likewise, nothing physical or material should be able to survive for even a moment in the presence of the pure, absolute Being of God.

Luria's answer was that, in order for the universe to exist, God had to hide Himself, screen His presence, limit His Being. That is *tzimtzum*.

Now let us come back to the key words *kodesh* and *chol*. One of the root meanings of *chol*, and the related root *ch-l-l*, is "empty." *Chol* is the space vacated by God through the process of self-limitation so that a physical universe can exist. It is, as it were, "emptied" of the pure Divine light.

Kodesh is the result of a parallel process in the opposite direction. It is the space vacated by us so that God's presence can be felt in our midst. It is the result of our own *tzimtzum*. We engage in self-limitation every time we set aside our devices and desires in order to act on the basis of God's will, not our own.

That is why the details of the Sanctuary are described at such length: to show that every feature of its design was not humanly invented but God-given. That is why the human equivalent of the word "good" in the Genesis creation account is "as the Lord commanded Moses." When we nullify our will to do God's will, we create something that is holy.

To put it simply: *chol* is the space God makes for humankind. *Kodesh* is the space humankind makes for God. And both spaces are created the same way: by an act of *tzimtzum*, self-effacement.

To sponsor an issue of Likutei Divrei Torah:
Call Saadia Greenberg 301-649-7350
or email: sgreenberg@jhu.edu
<http://torah.saadia.info>

So the making of the Sanctuary that takes up the last third of the book of Exodus is not just about a specific construction, the portable shrine that the Israelites took with them on journey through the wilderness. It is about an absolutely fundamental feature of the religious life, namely the relationship between the sacred and the secular, kodesh and chol. Chol is the space God makes for us. Kodesh is the space we make for God.

So, for six days a week – the days that are chol – God makes space for us to be creative. On the seventh day, the day that is Kadosh, we make space for God by acknowledging that we are His creations. And what applies in time applies also in space. There are secular places where we pursue our own purposes. And there are holy places where we open ourselves, fully and without reserve, to God's purposes.

If this is so, we have before us an idea with life-transforming implications. The highest achievement is not self-expression but self-limitation: making space for something other and different from us. The happiest marriages are those in which each spouse makes space for the other to be his or her-self. Great parents make space for their children. Great leaders make space for their followers. Great teachers make space for their pupils. They are there when needed, but they don't crush or inhibit or try to dominate. They practice tzimtzum, self-limitation, so that others have the space to grow. That is how God created the universe, and it is how we allow others to fill our lives with their glory.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

"You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day" (Exodus 35:3) The Sages of the Talmud query the significance of this verse; after all, the Bible commands us in several places not to do "any manner of creative, physical activities on the Sabbath day" (Exodus 20:10, for example). In fact, the verse preceding this command not to light a fire on Shabbat says, "whoever does an act of physical creativity on [the Sabbath day] shall be put to death."

These are generic prohibitions, which include the 39 acts of physical creativity that according to our Oral Tradition are forbidden on Shabbat (Mishna Shabbat 7:2). "Kindling a fire" is one of those 39, so why is it singled out again in this week's biblical portion? Philo Judaeus (c. 20 BCE-c. 50 CE), a great Alexandrian rabbi, exegete and philosopher, explains and provides a fascinating spin on this prohibition, taking it to mean: "Do not kindle the fire of anger in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath." The Oral Tradition forbids kindling a fire. Philo interprets our biblical verse to be adding "the fire of anger" against any individual or familial member!

Allow me to record two anecdotes that will provide an interesting postscript to Philo's masterful interpretation.

There was a young man studying in the famed Yeshiva of Volozhin, bright and especially gifted of mind and pen, who began to go "off the derech" (lose his way religiously).

He was discovered smoking a cigarette on the holy Shabbat. The head of the yeshiva, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, asked to see the errant student, urging him to mend his ways. The young man audaciously responded that he was merely exercising his gift of free will.

The yeshiva head, who had given his life and finances to the institution – and who continued the difficult task of teaching and fund-raising to maintain his yeshiva even in his later years – was overcome with anger. He slapped the "student" on the cheek.

The mortified young man left the yeshiva and made his way to America, where he became a well-known author and editor of Yiddish newspaper The Jewish Daily Forward. He was for many years bitterly anti-religious, and under his watch, the famous (or infamous) "Yom Kippur Eve parties" were held in the Forward's building on the Lower East Side.

In the early 1970s, my family and I would vacation in Miami Beach, Florida, where on Shabbat afternoons I would give shiurim (Torah classes) at the Caribbean Hotel. On one particular Shabbat, I was speaking about the Mussar (Ethicist) Movement and specifically about the famed Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, known as the Hafetz Haim after his book against slander, I invoked a passage in the Talmud (B.T. Arachin 16b), in which Rabbi Tarfon maintains that "no one knows how to properly rebuke in our times; if one person says to another, 'remove the flint from between your teeth,' the other will respond, 'remove the beam from between your eyes.'"

However, I added, apparently the Hafetz Haim, who lived 2,000 years after Rabbi Tarfon, did know how to rebuke, and how to bring an errant Jew back to God. It is told that a student in the Yeshiva in Radin (the city of the Hafetz Haim) was caught smoking on Shabbat.

The Hafetz Haim spoke to him for two minutes, and the student not only repented, but even received rabbinical ordination from the Hafetz Haim.

As I concluded my lecture, an elderly gentleman, who had been visibly agitated as I spoke, grabbed my arm and urgently whispered, "Where did you hear that story?" I told him I didn't remember, and I didn't even know if it was true. "It is true," he said. "I was that boy; I was smoking on Shabbat and I have semicha from the Hafetz Haim. The great rabbi spoke to me briefly, after which I willingly and even gladly returned to the Yeshiva and would not leave until I received his ordination!"

Likutei Divrei Torah

We were both overcome with emotion. We left the hotel and silently walked along the beach. Finally, I couldn't restrain myself. "What did the Hafetz Haim tell you that changed your life in two minutes?" Here is what the elderly man responded, and his words remain inscribed on my soul.

"I was standing in front of the yeshiva with my belongings, ready to leave for home. Standing in front of me was the Hafetz Haim, who took my hand in his and politely asked if I would come to his house. I felt I couldn't refuse. We walked the two blocks in silence, hand-in-hand, until we reached his home. I entered a very small, dilapidated but spotlessly clean two-room hovel, in which not one piece of furniture was whole.

The Hafetz Haim, who was quite short, looked up at me and said only one word: 'Shabbes.' 'He gently squeezed my hand as an embrace, and there were tears in his eyes. He repeated again, 'Shabbes,' and if I live to be 120 I will never stop feeling the scalding heat of his tears as they fell on my hand. He then guided me to the door, embraced me and blessed me. At that moment, I felt in my soul that there was nothing more important than the Shabbat, and that – despite my transgression – this rabbinical giant loved me. I took an oath not to leave the yeshiva without rabbinical ordination from the Hafetz Haim."

The Person in the Parsha **Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb**

Black Sabbath

We were walking down the long airport corridor on the way to the boarding gate. Somehow, it seems that whenever my wife and I have a flight to catch, anywhere, our gate is always at the furthest end of the long hall. We had plenty of time until the airplane departed, but somehow I experience an urgent need to rush whenever I am in an airport, and so we were in a hurry.

There was a couple coming toward us, equally hurried. At first, they didn't even come into focus for me. They were just anonymous faces in a crowded hallway. As they came closer, there was something vaguely familiar about them. I turned to my wife and said, "Don't we know those people from somewhere?" "I don't think so," she responded, "but they resemble the Goldblatts."

As we came still closer to each other, we realized that indeed they were the Goldblatts, but a twenty years older version of the Goldblatts we knew. Of course, we were a twenty years older version too, so it was no wonder that they didn't recognize us either.

But soon we were face-to-face, and the intervening years vanished, and the good memories resurfaced. We all slowed down our rushed pace and took some time to reconnect with each other.

"We can never forget," exclaimed Mrs. Goldblatt, "the Friday night that you had us over for a Shabbat meal. What we remember most was the light – the candles, the chandelier, and the standing lamps in the corner. They made the entire dining room glow."

"Yes indeed," agreed her husband. "Real light and spiritual light; real warmth and the warmth of friendship."

I first met Mrs. Goldblatt in a professional context. She was the administrator of a large social services agency where I consulted. She was, to say the least, not a religiously observant Jew. But when her mother passed away, my wife and I paid her a condolence call. She did not "sit shiva" in any traditional sense, but let her friends and acquaintances know that she was home for the weekend and accepting condolences.

At that visit, we learned about her background. Her parents had been ardent communists, and in fact her father was the last editor of a once famous Jewish communist newspaper. She made it clear that she shared her father's atheistic vision as well as his social ideals. Her husband's Weltanschauung was not very different from hers.

As we left her house, my wife and I uttered the same words to each other: "We must have them over for a Shabbat meal!" And so we did.

Now do not think for a moment that I am about to relate some wonderful story of a religious transformation. Quite the contrary. The Goldblatts came to our home one Friday night, we had a stimulating conversation, good food, and our kids behaved themselves. And then we went our separate ways, occasionally exchanging greeting cards over the years, but no more. As far as we knew, they remained religiously indifferent.

Until that encounter in the airport corridor, it was then that we learned how much of an impression that Shabbat dinner made upon them, and about how that one evening had changed their attitude toward Judaism. And of all the things that they remembered, it was the light and warmth that they remembered most.

When we were finally on our flight, I had time to think, and I found myself reflecting upon a verse in this week's double Torah portion, Vayakhel-Pekudei, (Exodus 35:1-40:38). The verse occurs very near the beginning of the parsha and reads "...On the seventh day you shall have a Sabbath of complete rest, holy to the Lord... You shall kindle no fire throughout your settlements on the Sabbath day."

Two classic Jewish thinkers, neither of whom I mention frequently in this column, speak about this verse and its interpretation by an ancient sect of the Jewish people, the Karaite. This group denied that there was any interpretation

possible of the Bible except a literal one. They claim that there was no such thing as an Oral Law and rebelled against rabbinic tradition.

This sect persisted for many centuries and was persecuted, along with mainstream Jews, by our enemies throughout history. I have heard tell that there are still remnants of that sect in Israel and the Balkan countries.

But all I know about the Karaite is what I have read in the works of the great Jewish philosopher, Saadia Gaon, and in the biblical commentary of Abraham Ibn Ezra. Both of these sages see our verse and its interpretation as one of the major differences between traditional rabbinic Jews and the Karaite sectarians.

The rabbis understood this verse to mean that one could not kindle fire on the Sabbath, and that cooking was prohibited on that day. But they go into great detail about how to prepare in advance stoves and lamps that will heat and illuminate our homes and keep our Sabbath foods warm throughout the Sabbath day.

The Karaite understood the verse quite differently. "You shall kindle no fire..." meant, for them, that all fires had to be extinguished before sunset on Friday, and that the home had to remain dark and cold. They would partake of no warm food for the entire day.

Their Sabbath was darker still. They forbade intimate relations between husband and wife on the Sabbath, and they insisted that the biblical verse which enjoins us to remain in our places on the Sabbath was also to be taken literally. So they left their homes only to attend their houses of prayer, but not even to visit family and friends.

How different is the Sabbath prescribed by our rabbinical sages. They insist that our homes be well lit, and to this day we are careful to include at least one hot portion of food in our Sabbath day meal as a statement against the Karaite heresy.

The Goldblatts (this, of course, is not their real name) remain to this day as ignorant of rabbinic Judaism as I am of the Karaite version of our faith. But their one visit to our Shabbat table was sufficient to dispel their previous notion of the Sabbath as a day of darkness and despondency. They learned that the Sabbath home is a home of warmth and light, and that the Sabbath day is indeed a gift from the Almighty's special treasury.

My family and I are proud that we were able to create a Sabbath environment on that Friday night long ago which could teach that lesson to our ear and respected friends, the Goldblatts.

Would that each of us, less observant or more so, would create such a Sabbath environment this Friday night and for every Friday night for the rest of our lives. May we all bask in the

Likutei Divrei Torah

glowing light and loving warmth of Shabbat this week as we read Parshiyot Vayakhel and Pekudei.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Sanctifying the Mundane is Precious

The Torah tells us that the women donated their mirrors to the Mishkan building fund, and the mirrors were used to make the base of the Kiyor [Laver]. Rashi quotes Chazal that initially Moshe was hesitant to take this donation, because he felt that mirrors were a tool of the Yetzer Ha'rah [evil inclination]. Rashi uses a very strong expression. Not only did Moshe Rabbeinu reject these mirrors, "he was repelled by them" (haya mo'ays bahem). "How can the mirrors — which are made for sensual purposes — be used for a spiritual purpose in the Mishkan?" But the Almighty overrode Moshe's objections, also using a very strong expression in instructing him: "Accept them; for they are more precious to Me than any other donation!"

Rashi explains that in Mitzraim, the men did not want to engage in the act of procreation, because they felt they were in a futile situation where it was not worth bringing additional Jewish children into the world. The women were not so pessimistic. They used their mirrors to beautify themselves, went out into the field, and enticed their husbands. As a result, the Jewish population continued to increase. By virtue of the fact that these mirrors were used for such a positive purpose, the Almighty told Moshe that He considered them to be the dearest donation of the entire Mishkan fundraising effort.

I saw an interesting question raised by Rav Dovid Kviat, one of the Roshei Yeshiva in the Mir Yeshiva. Tosfos says in many places in Shas that Talmudic disputes do not result from "sevaros hafuchos" [diametrically opposed lines of reasoning], where one opinion says "black" and another opinion says "white." True, one point of view can be "mutar" [permitted] and another point of view can be "asur" [forbidden] or one point of view can be "Kosher" and another point of view can be "Treife", but that is only the practical outcome of the dispute. However, the source of the underlying dispute cannot come from diametrically opposed logical positions. In other words, if one "person" says something makes sense, how can the disputant take the exact opposite point of view?

In effect, Rav Dovid Kviat is asking, what happened to Moshe Rabbeinu here? Moshe considers the mirrors repugnant — he is repelled by them — while the Almighty finds them to be His favorite and most precious donation. How can that be? Moshe usually has a keen understanding of the Will of Hashem. After all, he was Moshe Rabbeinu! How could he be so off base here with his reaction to the mirrors?

Rav Kviat answers that Moshe Rabbeinu was

not off base. Moshe's reaction was logical and totally understandable. However, Moshe Rabbeinu was missing a piece of information that the Holy One Blessed be He possessed. Moshe Rabbeinu, who was in Midyan at the time, had no way of knowing what happened in Egypt regarding the intimate relationships between the Jewish men and their wives. He had no way of knowing that the men were hesitant to have children, and that their wives used these mirrors to encourage their them.

This is a way in which it is possible to have sevaros hafuchos. The Ribono shel Olam knew the purpose that the mirrors served. Had Moshe had this same "inside information" regarding the history of these mirrors, he would also have felt the same way. Moshe saw the mirrors simply as tools to put on eyeliner and mascara. As such, he felt they were a totally inappropriate gift for use in the Beis HaMikdash. The Almighty told him, "Moshe, you do not know the whole story. The whole story is that the women built Klal Yisrael with these mirrors. These are more precious to Me than anything else."

Chazal say, regarding the words "With all your heart," [Devorim 4:29] that a person must worship the Almighty "with both his inclinations" (i.e., the Yetzer Ha'tov and the Yetzer Ha'rah). It is obvious how a person serves the Master of the Universe with his "Good Inclination." How does a person serve Him with his "Evil Inclination?" One explanation is by conquering it. When someone has an urge to do something forbidden, he can subdue that urge, and thereby serve G-d by conquest of his Evil Inclination. However, there is a higher form of serving G-d through one's Yetzer Ha'rah. The highest form of serving G-d is to take that Yetzer Ha'rah and turn it into a Davar Kodesh [Holy Item]. That is what these women did. They leveraged something that is in fact the Yetzer Ha'rah. Lust for women, lust for sexual relations, can be internal drives that derive from one's "Evil Inclination." To take those urges, and to make them into an act of holiness, is the highest form of Divine Service. It gives special pleasure to the Almighty, and the tools used to accomplish this transformation became the most precious donation to His Mishkan.

A similar idea is found with the Tzitz [Headplate] worn by the Kohen Gadol [High Priest]. One of the eight garments of the Kohen Gadol was the Tzitz. The pasuk in this week's parsha says, "And they made the Headplate, the holy crown, of pure gold, and they inscribed on it with script like that of a signet ring, 'Holy to Hashem'" [Shemos 39:30]. The words "Kodesh l'Hashem" Were engraved upon the Tzitz, which was worn on the forehead of the Kohen Gadol. This is the only garment that has those words upon it. Why?

Chazal say that the Tzitz sat on the metzach

[forehead] of the Kohen Gadol, and the word metzach is symbolic of the term azus metzach, which means chutzpah. On Yom Kippur, as part of the Al Chet confession, we confess for sins we have committed with "azus metzach." Chutzpah is a terrible trait. The Mishna says "Az panim l'Gehinnom" [a person with chutzpah goes to Hell] [Avos 5:24]. The fact that they wrote "Holy to Hashem" on the metzach, which represents azus [chutzpah], is symbolic of the fact that sometimes the attribute of chutzpah can be transformed and sanctified. It can become Kodesh l'Hashem! The item which represents the bad and evil traits in man, when sanctified and transformed into holiness, represents the highest form of Divine Service.

Sometimes we need to stand up for principles, and take action that requires chutzpah. Such manifestation of chutzpah is called "azus d'Kedusha." Of course we need to be careful, but to take chutzpah and use it for fighting Hashem's battles can reflect a high level of spirituality.

Rav Tzadok comments on the famous Mishna at the end of Sotah. The Mishna writes that in the pre-Messianic era, "chutzpah will multiply." This is certainly true on a simple level in our own time. The Kotzker Rebbe gives this Mishnaic statement a positive twist, and says that in pre-Messianic times we will need to have chutzpah to spiritually survive. We will be in such a spiritually hostile environment, that unless a person has a certain degree of chutzpah, he will melt away in the corrupt society in which he finds himself. The Mishna says that in the time before the imminent arrival of Moshiach, we will need to take that attribute of azus-chutzpah, and turn it into a tool for our spiritual survival. This is an instance of having the words Kodesh l'Hashem engraved on the metzach.

This concept can allow us to properly interpret a famous statement of Chazal. The pasuk in Parshas Pekudei says that they finished the Mishkan, and Moshe Rabbeinu gave them a blessing: "Moshe saw the entire work, and behold, they had done it as Hashem had commanded — so had they done! — and Moshe blessed them." [Shemos 39:43] Rashi adds, "He said to them 'May the Divine Presence dwell in the work of your hands.'"

The simple reading of the pasuk is that now that the work was all done, and the Mishkan [Tabernacle] was built exactly to specification. Moshe gave the people a blessing that the Shechina should now come down to the Mishkan and dwell therein. Why would they need a bracha for this? This is what they had been promised all along. It was part of the deal. The Ribono shel Olam guaranteed, "You build for Me a Mishkan, and My Presence will dwell therein!" [Shemos 25:8] So what is this blessing doing here after they did everything correctly? They had every reason to expect the Shechina now, without any new blessings!

Likutei Divrei Torah

I once saw an interpretation that the expression 'May the Divine Presence dwell in the work of your hands' means more than just that the Shechina would come down to the Mishkan. "Yehi Ratzon she'Tishreh Shechina b'ma'aseh yedeichem" means that the effect of the Mishkan — the effect of having the Ribono shel Olam in your midst — should turn all of your mundane acts into vessels for the Shechina.

"The work of your hands" is not referring only to the Mishkan, to the act of construction. Moshe's blessing was that if you did this right and the Ribono shel Olam is going to dwell in your midst, consequently you will be different people. Your eating is going to be different, your sleeping is going to be different, your business is going to be different. Everything about you is going to be different because you are going to elevate yourselves. This is the ultimate tachlis [purpose] of the Mishkan. "Yehi Ratzon she'Tishreh Shechina b'ma'aseh yedeichem" is the highest possible level of spirituality. "Elu chavivim Alai min ha'kol."

If you can take a mirror, if you can take makeup, if you can beautify yourselves and that becomes a mitzvah — and that becomes "G-d's most treasured contribution" — that is because this is what Yiddishkeit is all about. "You shall be a holy people to me" [anshei kodesh...]. I want you to be human beings, but holy human beings. You should become different through your work and contributions towards establishing the Mishkan.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch says that in Sefer Vayikra, which we are about to start next week, the first Korban [sacrifice] mentioned is the burnt offering (Korban Olah). The unique feature of the Olah offering is that it was Kulah l'Hashem — it is entirely burnt as an offering to G-d. At the end of Sefer Vayikra, the last Korban mentioned is ma'aser be'heimah [animal tithe]. This is a form of Peace Offering [Korban Shlomim]. It is almost entirely consumed by those who bring it.

In other words, the Torah of Kohanim, the Book of the Law for the Priests (i.e., Vayikra), begins with an offering that goes entirely to G-d, but ultimately — at the end of Vayikra — the Torah demonstrates that it is possible to take something that is a Korban — Kodoshim Kalim — and enjoy it. We are supposed to eat it; we are supposed to take enjoyment from our consumption of this holy offering. It primarily belongs to the owners, and they are supposed to enjoy eating it as a spiritual experience.

That is what the Mishkan is all about, and that is what Torah of Kohanim is all about. This is what having a Beis HaMikdash is all about. It is about giving us the capacity to elevate our handiwork, to elevate our lives above the mundane. We are charged with taking the profane and making it holy. We take the mirrors and make a Kiddush Hashem with

them. We take Chutzpah, and use it for the Sake of Heaven. We take our possessions and our professions and make with them things which are holy. This is the blessing of “Yehi Ratzon she’Tishreh Shechina b’ma’aseh yedeichem”.

Dvar Torah

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

How would you conclude the most dramatic story ever told? This of course, is the story of the book of Shemot, and we end this week, with the Parshiot of Vayakhel and Pekudei. These portions are all about the Mishkan – the establishment and furnishing of the sanctuary, and the responsibility of the nation for this project.

I actually believe that this is an outstanding end to the book... let me explain. The book of Shemot contains three themes: first – we read about the oppression of our people and our Exodus from Egypt, second – we are taught about the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, and the third is all about the Mishkan – the sanctuary in the wilderness.

First of all, we attained our liberty and our freedom in order to live lives of responsibility – that is the reason we were given the Torah. And then there was one further important stage: the building of the Mishkan.

You see, when He created the world, the Almighty created a home for mankind. It is through the Mishkan that we create, in this world, a home for God.

However, do not be fooled. Do not presume that the Mishkan was a place where the presence of Hashem could be restricted to a specific place – quite the contrary.

God commanded us –“Ve’asu li Mikdash v’shachanti b’tocham” – “Make for me a Mikdash, a sanctuary, so that I shall dwell in them” – not in ‘it’, but in ‘them’. The whole purpose of the Mishkan was so that Hashem’s presence could be within us.

Rabbi Eliezer Askari, a Kabbalist who lived in the sixteenth century, was the author of the poem Yedid Nefesh, which we sing on Friday nights. He also authored another beautiful poem, Bilvavi, and in it he wrote, “Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh l’hadar k’vodo” – “In my heart, I will build a Mishkan, to reflect the glory of Hashem.”

This is the essence of what the Mishkan represented; through our experiences within it, it inspired us to carry within our hearts that little Mishkan, to take the presence of Hashem with us wherever we went.

This is what King David meant when he exclaimed in the Psalms – “Ve shavti be’veit Hashem le orech yamim” – “may I dwell in the house of the Lord for all time” – Not that King David would move into a Shul, but that every

house that he would enter would be a house of Hashem, because he would bring Hashem’s presence with him wherever he went.

It is the duty that each and every one of us has to utilise our precious freedom with responsibility, and to carry the radiance of the presence of Hashem with us, to reflect it beautifully wherever we go. I invite you all to build a Mishkan in your hearts.

Parsha to the Point

Rabbi David Stav

In its description of the Israelites’ fundraising drive to supply the Tabernacle (Mishkan) with gold and silver for its vessels, the Torah specifies that Moses counted all of the contributions and calculated the sums so that no one would, God forbid, complain about a lack of transparency on the use of the donations.

Casting the silver sockets would cost one talent of silver, and the remaining sum (1775 silver shekels) was used to prepare the hooks for the poles. In the words of the Torah: “One hundred talents of the silver were used for casting the sockets of the sanctuary and the sockets of the dividing curtain; one hundred sockets out of one hundred talents, one talent for each socket. And out of the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five [shekels], he made hooks for the pillars, and he covered their tops and banded them” [Ex. 38:27-28].

Later, the Torah lists the amount of copper collected, and how it was used for preparing the Tabernacle vessels – but the difference between the two descriptions is stark. In recounting how the copper was used, the Torah does not delve into finer details like how much it cost him to prepare the copper basin, or how much a copper socket cost. Here, the text is quite general, unlike the description of the preparation of the silver vessels, which specifies the exact cost of the hooks alongside the cost of the sockets. Why?

Our Sages tell us what lies behind these differences, which is truly dramatic. According to the Midrash, “Once the work of the Tabernacle was complete, he said to them: ‘Come, I shall prepare an account for you’. And Moses said to them: ‘These are the accountings of the tabernacle, this and that was spent on the Tabernacle...’” [Shemot Rabbah 51:6].

At first, Moses wanted to provide a detailed account of how the contributions were used, but something went wrong. “...As he sat and calculated, he forgot to take note of one thousand, seven hundred and seventy-five talents of silver he used to make the hooks for the poles.”

Moshe could not remember what happened to these 1,775 talents of silver. Where had they gone? And then, continues the Midrash: “... he began to sit and worry, saying: ‘Today, Israel

Likutei Divrei Torah

will accuse me of stealing the silver!””. Moses was worried that others would start complaining about him, claiming he had used the silver for himself.

God noticed Moses’ distress. “What did he do?”, asks the Midrash. “He prompted Moses to look up and notice the silver hooks, which He had fashioned from the silver talents.”

The Midrash does not explain why Moses forgot the silver hooks, specifically. The simple explanation is that these hooks were out of view, since they were located between the poles, and were designed to connect the poles. They were therefore less conspicuous as the other items in the Tabernacle, which explains why Moses had not paid attention to them.

Yet perhaps the Midrash is referring to something deeper. The Hebrew letter “vav” is usually used to link one person to another, or two different actions, and is thus called vav hahibur – the “linking vav”. Moreover, the Hebrew word vav, in contemporary usage, has an identical denotation: it means “hook”. We attach a hook to a wall so that we can hang clothes or other items on it that wouldn’t naturally be associated with that spot.

The act of linking is one of our most daunting challenges. Most of us prefer that with which we are familiar – or what we find convenient – and struggle to create genuine links between different things. When Moses calculates the Tabernacle expenses, he does not notice the links. He had presumably operated under the assumption that harmony has been achieved simply because all the vessels had been created. But this was not the case.

One tradition appearing in Jewish law is that every page of the Torah was worthy of beginning with the letter vav, as if to say that there are myriads of stories and commandments in the Torah, and we may sometimes ponder over this or that commandment or story, but we need to see the whole picture as an interconnected tapestry.

Likewise, the vav is supposed to form the link between Torah and the State of Israel: the army, society, the economy, social justice, and more. It is for good reason that in Gematria – Jewish numerology – the Hebrew word “vav” equals 12: the number of Israelite tribes. The link between the various tribes living in the modern State of Israel are the “pole sockets” of today.

This is a challenge that we tend to forget as we get preoccupied with the many divergent agendas and conflicts that envelope us. Different tribes live in this state, and what makes each group a tribe isn’t necessarily the ethnic makeup of its members, but rather how these individuals define their Israeli, Jewish and cultural identities.

The linking vav is not a melting pot vav, and it

is not meant to blur boundaries. Rather, it is designed to let each individual feel that his or her identity does not fade because of a desire to connect to others. To the contrary – that is exactly why it is so vital. We wish to create a nation that can enable tribal identities, while fostering full accountability and a deep connection to Israeli society as a whole. We must aim to create “pole sockets” adapted to how society builds itself today.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam

At the Speed of Thought

All the gold that had been used for the work in all the work of the Holy the gold of the waving was twenty nine talents, seven hundred and thirty shekels, according to the holy shekel. The silver of the community numbers was one hundred talents and one thousand seven hundred and seventy five shekels, according to the holy shekel. (Shemos 38:24-25)

There is a spiritual principle that “blessings cannot be counted” that is they cannot be quantified.” The Zohar asks, “How is it possible to count the vessels of the Mishkan? The answer in cryptic terms is that “from the left side they cannot be counted but from the right side Brocho- Blessing is relevant!” What in the world does this mean?”

Rabbi Dessler helps to decode the message and in doing he reveals a very big secret. Don’t worry, big secrets are not at risk of becoming too well known. They can be shouted out to the whole world and yet they would remain a secret. The left classically represents the weaker side and the right the stronger. It’s not so much about strong or weak but rather about the outer and inner realm. When it comes to what is visible and what can be counted that is the left side. It is the physical dimension of things. The right is stronger because it is eternal and unable to be measured.

There are 88 keys on a piano. How many different types of songs can be played on a piano with 88 keys? I believe the answer is, “Almost unlimited!” (What if there are 613 keys!?) That’s a different question.) The piano keys are numbered. That’s the view from the “left”. The infinite forms of musicality that it can express and the endurance of the compositions it births is the study of the “right” side. It is the fulfillment of the purpose for which this instrument was created.

Reb Dessler explains that that every object or entity in this universe whether big or small, simple or complex, has a root above and a reason for being that can be connected to serving The Creator. The Chovos HaLevavos, in the Gate of Serving G-d spells out that ultimately everything we do is either a Mitzvah or an Aveira, fulfillment of a Divine Commandment or a Violation! How so!?

Initially there are three areas of life. 1) Mitzvahs which occupy a slim slice of our working days.

2) There are Aveiros – sins which we would hope are not a routine in our schedule. 3) Then there is the largest part of our lives which is called R’SHUS- neutral and able to go either way.

R’SHUS may include sleeping, or eating, or getting dressed, or exercising, or driving to and from work. They are not Mitzvos and neither are they necessarily Aveiros.

Here’s the shocking news. At the end of the day, the Chovos HaLevavos states there are only two realms. Those eight hours of sleep, those two hours of commuting, and all the time and money spent eating and drinking are either connected to their blessed and unquantifiable source or they are by default counted amongst the finite domain of the mundane, to be piled nowhere with last year’s snow.

The real raging battle of life is the contest for the territory of the “in between”. If one can connect sleep to the need to get up and serve HASHEM with a refreshed mind then eight hours have been captured. If one can eat to gain strength to do Mitzvos then it becomes a Mitzvah, the eating and the food itself. Mitzvos have the power to rescue buried treasure. With these lenses we can see how the entire world and all of life is a giant field of opportunity and mine field riddled with risk.

The son of a very wealthy man once asked me many years ago, “What is the Torah’s view about having money? I told him, “Money is like manure! (Please pardon the crude analogy) If it is spread like fertilizer on a field where Mitzvah have been planted, it can accomplish worlds! If it’s just sitting around it tends to stink!”

The construction of the Mishkan was from gold and silver and regular earthly stuff. These are banal objects. A thing by itself is a bag of nothing until it is properly dedicated. Then suddenly it can be made holy, that fast, at the speed of thought.

Yeshivat Har Etzion: Virtual Bet Midrash

Shabbat - By Harav Yaakov Medan

And Moshe gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together, and said to them: These are the words which the Lord has commanded, that you should do them. Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord; whoever does work on it shall be put to death. You shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day. (Shemot 35:1-3)

The importance of these verses regarding Shabbat stems primarily from the juxtaposition of the mitzva of Shabbat to the building of the Mishkan, which we will discuss below. Let us begin with the section regarding Shabbat in the Ten Commandments: Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; on it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor

Likutei Divrei Torah

your manservant, nor you maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it. (Shemot 20:7-10)

I. the mitzva of remembering - The first mitzva in the Shabbat passage in the Ten Commandments is the mitzva of remembering: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Chazal learned from here the mitzva of reciting Kiddush: Our Rabbis taught: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" – Mention it over wine. (Pesachim 106a)

In other words, the mitzva does not involve remembering Shabbat in the heart, but rather mentioning it with the mouth, like other mitzvot involving remembering (remembering the Exodus from Egypt, Amalek, and others). One must make explicit mention of Shabbat on the day of Shabbat, along with a show of importance, as reflected in the recitation of the Kiddush over a cup of wine. In this way, a person sanctifies the day of Shabbat by mentioning it in a blessing, and in this way he even resembles God, who also sanctified Shabbat with a blessing: "Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it" (20:11). Blessing and remembering/mentioning are performed over wine: "The remembrance thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon" (Hoshea 14:8); "We will remember your love as more fragrant than wine" (Shir Ha-Shirim 1:4).

However, according to the plain meaning of the verses, it seems that the mitzva is also to remember Shabbat. The mitzva to remember applies before Shabbat; when Shabbat arrives, the person will be able to sanctify the day by refraining from work and through other means because he remembered Shabbat before it began. We have suggested elsewhere that this aspect of the mitzva is fulfilled when we refer to the other days of the week by numbers, rather than by names, as is the practice among non-Jews (the names of the days of the week in English are the names of idols). When a person counts the days of the week, he remembers every day how many more days it is until Shabbat and he knows every day how more days he has to prepare for Shabbat and to sanctify it. This is the mitzva to "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

II. Creative work and rest - The reason for keeping Shabbat, as it is explained in the Ten Commandments, is that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Knowing the number of days of creation might be intended to reinforce the idea that the world did not come into being through a gradual process of development (evolution), but rather through a series of deliberate steps arranged by God. The sanctity of the seventh day marks this. Knowing that God created the world from nothing, willingly and deliberately, is one of Judaism's fundamental beliefs; it reflects God's lordship over the world, with all that this implies.

But Shabbat marks not only the creation of the world in six days, but also God's "resting" on the seventh day. In our minds, rest is a need that stems from fatigue, but this is certainly not true of God's rest after His creation of the world. God's

rest is not a response to fatigue, but rather a phenomenon that meant to introduce the value of rest to the created world. The aim is that man, who was created in the image of God and whose destiny it is to continue God's work in the world and perfect it – "to work it and to keep it" (Bereishit 2:15) – should maintain in the world the value of rest that he learned from his Creator.

The value of rest that comes after toil and creative work lies in the contemplation of that creativity and the ability to mentally absorb its truth. Endless work raises the concern that the person will always look outwards, toward that work and its refinement, and not make room for internalization and emotional development. When Pharaoh enslaved the people of Israel more and more, even withholding from them the straw that they needed for the bricks, they reached the situation described in the verse: "But they hearkened not to Moshe due to anguish of spirit and difficult work" (Shemot 6:9). Rest, followed by internal absorption, is meant to develop the person himself, help him understand the value of his work, and raise him up further. A person's resting enables him to receive from God blessing and holiness; it allows him to refrain from trying to create everything by himself, as he will never reach blessing and holiness on his own.

Rest involves another principle: Together with the importance of creating and developing the world, there is a need to limit endless creative activity and refrain from it from time to time, so that we not live under the false impression that human creation has no boundaries. This is for three main reasons:

1) The story of the Tower of Bavel teaches us the limits of human creativity. Man should not say that "the sky is the limit." Shabbat fixes this principle in law. God limited His own creating with Shabbat and said "Enough" to His world so that man and the world, limited and partial as they are, should not compete, as it were, with their perfect and unlimited Creator.

2) Limiting human creative activity was meant to instill in man's consciousness the idea that this world is merely a vestibule to another world that is more real, the world of communion with God, and one should therefore not invest excessively in this world.

3) Breaching the boundaries of creative activity is liable to bring into the world unlimited destructive forces, forces that man also seeks to reach. And who can predict what will happen in the end with such forces?

III. What Creative work was forbidden on Shabbat? - The primary labors are forty less one: Sowing, plowing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, selecting, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, shearing wool, bleaching, hacking, dyeing, spinning, stretching the threads, the making of two meshes, weaving two threads, dividing two threads, tying and untying, sewing two stitches, tearing in order to sew two stitches, capturing a deer, slaughtering, or flaying, or salting it, curing it, curing its hide, scraping it [of its hair], cutting it up, writing two letters, erasing in order to write two letters [over the erasure], building, pulling down, extinguishing, kindling, striking with a hammer, [and] carrying out from

one domain to another. These are the forty primary labors less one. (Shabbat 7:2)

There are different sources for the list of these labors. The Tosefta in Berakhot discusses the blessing that one must recite upon seeing a multitude of people together. Ben Zoma thanked God on such an occasion because a person living alone must perform many different kinds of work in order to satisfy his needs. However, when many people live together, each person plies his craft, and the rest of a person's needs are satisfied by the others, who work in their own crafts, each person bartering for what he needs with what he can produce:

Ben Zoma, when he saw a large body of people on the Temple Mount, said: "Blessed is He who created these people to serve me." How hard the first man, Adam, must have labored before he could eat a bit of bread! He had to plow and sow and weed and hoe and reap and thresh, winnow and sift, grind, sift again, knead, moisten and bake, and only after all this eat his bread; whereas I get up in the morning and find the bread all ready for me. What toil Adam had until he could be clothed with the simplest raiment! He had to shear, bleach, beat the wool, dye it, spin it, weave it, wash it, and sew it together, and only after all this was he clothed; whereas I get up in the morning and find my clothes prepared for me. (Tosefta, Berakhot 6:2)

The Tosefta cites here as an example the many labors that a person would have to do for himself in order to satisfy his basic needs were he by himself, and these are identical to the labors that are forbidden on Shabbat. This implies that on Shabbat, one is forbidden to perform labors that are meant to satisfy man's needs.

This also follows from the count of the thirty nine labors that are forbidden on Shabbat: Again they sat and pondered: Regarding what we learned: The principal categories of labor are forty less one – to what do they correspond? R. Chanina bar Chama said to them: To the forms of labor in the Mishkan. R. Yonatan son of R. Elazar: Thus said R. Shimon the son of R. Yose ben Lakonia: They correspond to [the words] "work" [melakha], "his work" [melakhto], and "the work of" [melekheth], which are [written] thirty-nine times in the Torah. (Shabbat 49b)

The opinion of R. Yonatan son of R. Elazar implies, as it follows from the Tosefta, that the number and nature of forbidden labors is connected to the mundane work that a person performs in order to ensure his own existence in this world.

But the first opinion, that of R. Chanina bar Chama and many similar sources, indicates that the source of the forbidden labors on Shabbat are the labors that were performed for the construction of the Mishkan, as is learned from the juxtaposition in two different places of the prohibitions of Shabbat and the building of the Mishkan (Shemot 31 and 35):

For it was taught: Liability is incurred only for work of which the same was performed in the Mishkan. They sowed, hence you must not sow; they reaped, hence you must not reap; they lifted up the boards from the ground to the wagon, hence you must not carry in from a public to a private domain; they lowered the boards from the

Likutei Divrei Torah

wagon to the ground, hence you must not carry out from a private to a public domain; they transported [boards, etc.] from wagon to wagon, hence you must not carry from one private to another private domain. (Shabbat 49b)

It is possible that we have here different ways to understand the nature of the forbidden labors. The question that distinguishes between the two opinions is: Is a person forbidden on Shabbat to occupy himself with his physical needs, and is instead commanded to occupy himself with his spiritual needs? According to this, a person must prepare for all his physical needs on the weekdays, and also trust in God that He will provide for his material needs. On the other hand, it is possible to understand that a person is first and foremost forbidden on Shabbat to build a house for God, and from this stem all the prohibitions of Shabbat, as will now be explained.

According to the second approach – that the Shabbat prohibitions are derived from the labors that were performed in the Mishkan – the question naturally arises: Why is the main prohibition of Shabbat to build a Mishkan for God on Shabbat?

Shabbat is a reminder of the world that God created in order to put man in it. God Himself is found outside the world, as Chazal said: "He is the place of the world, but the world is not His place" (Bereishit Rabba 68:9). In other words, God's world needs Him, but He does not need His world.

But the Mishkan is a house that man builds, as it were, for God. King Shlomo already asked about this when he built the Temple: For will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house that I have built? (I Melakhim 8:27)

In this respect, Shabbat and the Mishkan are opposites regarding the question: Who needs whom; does man need God, or does God need man? It is necessary for the Torah to emphasize that the sanctity of Shabbat is greater than the sanctity of the Mishkan and that the fact that God created a place for man is more important than the fact that man creates, as it were, a place for God. That Shabbat is more important than the Mishkan is reflected in the fact that one must not perform any labors on Shabbat for the purpose of building a house for God. Therefore, it is forbidden for all generations to perform on Shabbat those labors that were connected to the building of the Temple.

IV. Time and place - There is another reason for the priority given to Shabbat over the Mishkan that explains the prohibition to build the Mishkan on Shabbat. Shabbat is the highest expression of the sanctity of time, whereas the Mishkan is the highest expression of the sanctity of place. The prohibition to build the Mishkan on Shabbat may express the superiority of the sanctity of time over the sanctity of place.

Why is the sanctity of time superior to that of place? Let us consider the verses that present these two types of sanctity: And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by My glory. And I will sanctify Aharon and his sons to minister to Me in the

priest's office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel and I will be their God. (Shemot 29:43-45)

The sanctity of meeting is the sanctity of time – the time when God decides to meet with man. In contrast, the sanctity of God's Shekhina in the Mishkan is the sanctity of the place where He chose to rest His name. The source of the sanctity of meeting is above the kaporet between the two keruvim, and it is the original and supreme sanctity. The sanctity of the Mishkan is at a level below it.

Let us now consider the juxtaposition of the mitzva of Shabbat to the mitzva of building the Mishkan from another perspective. The Torah says:

You shall keep My Sabbaths and revere My sanctuary; I am the Lord. (Vayikra 26:2)
This verse brings the sanctity of time (Shabbat) and the sanctity of place (the Mishkan) together as a single unit.

This common sanctity is a continuation of the revelation at Mount Sinai, and therefore its mitzvot were stated in a "gathering":

The day that you stood before the Lord your God in Chorev, when the Lord said to me: Gather Me the people together, and I will make them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children. (Devarim 4:10)

And Moshe gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together, and said to them: These are the words which the Lord has commanded that you should do them. Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord; whoever does work on it shall be put to death. You shall kindle not fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day. And Moshe spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: This is the thing which the Lord commanded, saying: Take from among you an offering to the Lord; whoever is of a willing heart... And every wise-hearted man among you shall come, and make all that the Lord has commanded; the Mishkan, its tent, and its covering. (Shemot 35:1-11)

What was established on Mount Sinai for eternity, and is strongly emphasized in the book of Devarim, is that God alone chooses the time and place for His encounter with man. Every encounter depends on time and place. If two parties arrive in the same place at different times or in the same place at different times, they do not meet. The fact that God alone dictates the time and the place of the meeting determines from the outset the nature of the encounter between God and the people. Sometimes, He dictates only the time or only the place – as in the Mishkan and on Shabbat – but this depends solely on His will. According to this approach, the juxtaposition between Shabbat and the Mishkan was not intended to subordinate one of them to the other, but rather to note what they share in common – the encounter with God depends solely on His choice.

V. Kindling - The passage from Parashat Vayakhel that was cited above prohibits all labors in general, with the exception of one labor that is

singled out and stated explicitly: You shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day. (Shemot 35:4)

What is special about kindling a fire that it alone was spelled out explicitly? Chazal struggled with this question and offered two halakhic answers: For it has been taught: The prohibition of kindling [on Shabbat] was singled out [from the general prohibition of work] to teach that it is merely the object of a negative precept; these are the words of R. Yose. But R. Natan says: It was particularly specified to indicate "separation." (Sanhedrin 62a)

According to R. Yose, kindling a fire is more lenient than the other labors. The assertion "Whoever does work on it shall be put to death," which was stated before it, does not apply to it, and so kindling a fire involves an ordinary negative precept. It is not clear why kindling a fire is forbidden by a more lenient prohibition than the other labors.

According to R. Natan, kindling a fire was specified in order to indicate "separation" – in other words, to clarify that the Shabbat is desecrated even with the performance of a single labor; one need not perform many labors to desecrate the Shabbat. It is not clear why kindling a fire was chosen to teach this.

Let us expand upon the position of R. Natan and then close with an explanation of the position of R. Yose.

It is possible that kindling expresses the essence of the prohibition of performing labor on Shabbat more so than do the others because it is the only labor that involves creating something out of nothing. Fire is created from something that did not exist before the person rubbed the two stones together or, in our day, lit a match. Therefore, this labor expresses the transition from sacred to mundane, as what happens during havdala on Motzaei Shabbat. We open the week with the allowance to create something from nothing on weekdays. Despite our human creativity, we bless God that it is He "who creates the light of the fire," and not us. Anthropologists and experts on ancient religions view the discovery of the secret of creating fire as the beginning of the human development that distinguishes man from all other creatures.

The Torah specifically records the prohibition of kindling a fire, and it would have been possible to conclude that it would be the only labor for which one is liable. But then we read of the building of the Mishkan and we discover that all of the labors of the Mishkan are treated like kindling; all of them are creative labors, for the highpoint of human creativity is the building of the Mishkan.

According to this, there is room for a position opposite that of R. Yose, a position that is more stringent about kindling than about the other labors: For R. said: I found a secret scroll of the school of R. Chiyya, wherein it is written: Issi ben Yehuda said: There are thirty-nine principal labors, but one is liable only [for] one. (Shabbat 6b and 96b)

It seems that the meaning of the phrase, "but one is liable only [for] one," is that one is liable for only one of the forbidden labors. It might be suggested that the only labor for which one should have been liable, according to Issi ben

Likutei Divrei Torah

Yehuda, is kindling, the only labor that is mentioned specifically in our parasha, which mentions the death penalty. For the reasons explained above, the other labors are only prohibited by an ordinary negative precept, the violation of which is punishable by flogging.

Perhaps this provides another explanation of the mitzva to light candles at the time that Shabbat enters. The woman (according to the prevalent custom) lights a fire, which is the labor that is most clearly forbidden on Shabbat, at the very moment that she rests from all labors. In this way, the moment that she rests from the prohibited labor and stops doing it, she accepts Shabbat. This rest from labor continues, as stated, until havdala, which involves renewed kindling of the havdala candle, which is the "one" labor, or the clearest and most explicitly prohibited labor. In this way, resting becomes a striking act, and not just a cessation of activity.

The gemara, however, rejected this option, and reformulated the statement of Issi ben Yehuda so that he says something entirely different: Rather, say thus: For one of these he is not liable. (Shabbat 6b)

In other words, he is liable for thirty eight labors, and for one labor alone he is not liable. Once again, we assume that this exceptional labor is kindling, but the gemara reverses the meaning of Issi ben Yehuda's words, so that they are now identical with those of R. Yose – that "kindling is merely the object of a negative precept," and that it is the only labor for which one is not liable for the death penalty. This understanding, however, is forced. The gemara in Shabbat (96b) suggests that it offered this forced explanation because we find that the gatherer of sticks in the wilderness was liable for the death penalty, and his transgression did not involve kindling, but rather reaping or binding sheaves.

However, according to the gemara's initial understanding and the plain meaning of Issi ben Yehuda's words, it is possible that Issi ben Yehuda understood that the "gatherer" gathered sticks and kindled them, similar to what is stated about the Tzidonian woman: And she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, but a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in the cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and prepare it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die." (I Melakhim 17:12)

The woman gathered sticks for the purpose of kindling them in order to create a fire on which to prepare the flour for eating. It is also possible that Issi understood that gathering sticks for the purpose of kindling them is a derivative labor of the principle labor of kindling, and for that reason the gatherer was liable for the death penalty.

We must still explain the position of R. Yose that kindling is a more lenient prohibition than the other labors. It might be that kindling – owing to its vital role in basic human functioning, which requires light and heat – is not considered creative work even with respect to Shabbat, and so it is only forbidden by way of an ordinary negative precept that is not punishable by the death penalty. (Translated by David Strauss)



BS"D

To: parsha@groups.io
From: cshulman@gmail.com

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAYAKHEL PEKUDEI – PARSHAS HACHODESH – MEVORCHIM - 5780

parsha@groups.io / www.parsha.net - in our 25th year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to parsha+subscribe@groups.io. Please also copy me at cshulman@gmail.com. A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net>. It is also fully searchable.

Sponsored in memory of
Chaim Yissachar z"l ben Yechiel Zaydel Dov

Dedicated for a refuah shleimah to **Yisrael Yaakov ben Rut**

To sponsor a parsha sheet contact cshulman@parsha.net
(proceeds to tzedaka)

from: torahweb@torahweb.org to: weeklydt@torahweb.org date: Mar 19, 2020, 10:11 PM subject:

The Correct Behavior When Dealing with Danger

Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Editor's note: more on this topic from Rav Schachter, as well as Dr. Daniel Berman and Rabbi Dr. Aaron Glatt, can be found at this link.

Many have the mistaken impression that the Jewish religion places much emphasis on death and respect for the dead; after all, we recite kaddish, yizkor, observe shiva, and yahrzeit, etc. This is a gross misunderstanding. The respect that we show for the dead is a carryover from the respect that we show for the living. The Gemorah (Kesubos 17a, see Shitah Mekubetzes) tells us that whenever there is a conflict between kovod ha'chayim and kovod ha'meisim, kovod ha'chaim takes precedence. When the chevra kadisha brings in the aron at a funeral, everyone stands up. People mistakenly think that we stand up out of respect for the niftar, but in many cases we never stood up for him when he was alive, so why should we stand up for him now that he passed away? The BarTenurah (Mishnayos Bikurim 3:3) explains that we are not standing up out of respect for the niftar but rather out of respect for the members of the chevra kadisha who are presently involved in the fulfillment of a mitzvah. The respect for the living is based on the premise that all human beings were created b'tzelem Elokim. When the Torah requires us to demonstrate kovod ha'meis, it means that even after the person passed away and no longer has tzemel Elokim, i.e. a neshama, we still have to act respectfully towards the body because it used to have a tzemel Elokim.

Of the six hundred and thirteen mitzvos, one of the most important is the mitzvah of v'chai bohem v'lo sh'yomus bohem (Yoma 85b). Not only does the halacha require that if there is a sofek sakana we must violate almost all of the mitzvos in the Torah to save a life, but we are also required to do so even if there is only a s'fek s'feika, a remote possibility (Yoma 85a). The Gemorah (ibid) adds that even if the likelihood is that by violating Shabbos or whatever other aveira we most probably will not be saving anyone's life,

we still do not abstain from the action due to that likelihood (rove - majority).

When Bnei Yisroel were traveling in the midbar for 40 years, the weather conditions were such that there was a slight sakana in performing bris milah. Most of the sh'votim did not fulfill the mitzvah except for sheivet Levi [1]. They had an Orthodox rabbi among them, i.e. Moshe Rabbeinu. Why didn't all the shevatim ask him what to about this sofek sakana? If it is a real sofek sakana he should not have permitted sheivet Levi to perform the mitzvah despite their pietistic protests, and if the sofek sakana was so insignificant that it simply should have been dismissed, why didn't he insist that all the shevatim perform the mitzvah of milah?

The Gemorah (Yevamos 12b) tells us that the answer is to be found in Tehillim (116:6), "Shomer p'soyim Hashem." Whenever there is a slight sofek sakana that is nowhere near fifty-fifty [2], the halacha declares that it depends on the attitude of the patient. If the patient whose life is at risk (or the parent of the patient who is responsible for his well-being) is personally not nervous about the danger, then the halacha does not consider it a sofek sakana; we apply "Shomer p'soyim Hashem." But if the patient whose life is at risk is nervous and concerned about the sofek sakana, then the halacha requires us to act based on, "V'chai bohem v'lo sh'yomus bohem", and the sofek sakana takes precedence over almost all of the mitzvos of the Torah. Shevet Levi had bitachon, and therefore were not concerned, and therefore for their children it was not considered a sofek sakana, but with respect to the other shevatim who were concerned it was in fact a sofek sakana, so every shevet was acting k'din.

However, if one individual is not concerned, but the nature of the sakana is such that everyone is interdependent and the individual who personally is not nervous may possibly spread a disease to others who are concerned about its spread, then the concept of Shomer p'soyim Hashem does not apply. The individual who is not concerned does not have the right to determine for the others who are concerned that there is no sakana for them.

The Rakanti [3] relates that one of Ba'alei Ha'tosfos was deathly sick before Yom Kippur and the doctors warned him that if he fasts he will certainly die but if he eats on Yom Kippur there is a slim chance that he may survive. He decided to fast, and of course he died. All of the Ba'alei Ha'tosfos were upset over his decision and felt that he went against the halacha.

If a terrorist threatens to kill me unless I violate one of the mitzvos of the Torah, the halacha usually is that pikuach nefesh takes precedence over most of the mitzvos in the Torah. What if an individual wants to put up a fight knowing that he may well lose his life but thinks that by being moser nefesh he will fulfill the mitzvah of kiddush Hashem? This matter was a famous dispute amongst the Rishonim. The Rambam's opinion is that one may not volunteer to give up his life al kiddush Hashem when not required by halacha because this is tantamount to suicide [4]. Many other Rishonim disagreed with the Rambam. However, if there is no terrorist pressuring me to violate my religion, but there is merely a dangerous situation of sickness then all of the Ba'alei Ha'tosfos agreed with the Rambam that it would not constitute a midas chassidus to ignore the sakana [5].

In determining what is a sakana and what is not, the practice of the Tanoim always was to follow the doctors of their generation. Every so often the Rambam would take a stand on a medical issue against what it says in the Gemorah and the Chasam Sofer (Teshuvos, Yoreh Deah #101) explains that the Rambam was a doctor and he did exactly as the Tanoim did, namely, to follow the doctors of his generation. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 331:9) also says explicitly that we follow the doctors of our generation even in contradiction to the medicine recommended in the Gemorah. We should certainly do the same as the Rambam and the Shulchan Aruch and follow the doctors of our generation in determining what is considered a sakana and what is not considered a sakana.

Some well-meaning individuals have blown out of halachic proportion the significance of tefillah b'tzibur and talmud Torah b'rabim and have opted to ignore the sofek sakana presented by the corona virus when in conflict with these two most important mitzvos. We live in a generation where many b'nei

Torah tend to exaggerate the significance of Torah and tefillah. Although their intention is certainly l'shaim Shomayim, we must all keep in mind that when paskening shailos, one may not rely on an exaggeration.

All exaggerations by definition are sheker - a misrepresentation of the truth of the Torah. Rav Chaim Volozhiner signs off quite a few of his teshuvos saying, "Keil Emes, Nosan lanu Toras Emes, u'bilti el ho'emes eineinu - the true God gave us the true Torah, and we only look for the truth." Any exaggeration in the area of Torah and halacha is clearly a misrepresentation of our religion. The commentaries on Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 157) refer to the comments of the Maharshal in his sefer Yam Shel Shlomo (Bava Kamma 38a) that to misrepresent a law of the Torah constitutes an aveira related to avodah zorah[6] and as such would be subject to the principle of yeihoreig v'al ya'avon.

With respect to a sofek sakana the halacha clearly requires that we go extremely l'chumrah. Especially religious Jews, who know that they are charged with a mission in life, should certainly be extremely machmir on matters of sofek sakana.

Although every word of a poem appears in the dictionary, the poet conveys an idea by putting the words in a certain order. So too, different people can have the same ideas and the same principles, but if you put them in a different arrangement you have changed the whole understanding if each one of the principles[7]. Once you exaggerate the significance of any particular mitzvah, you have misrepresented the whole picture of kol haTorah kula.

[1] See Rashi, Devarim 33:9. [2] See Achiezer, volume 1, #23,2. [3] Siman 166; see Teshuvos Dvar Yehoshua, vol. 2 #94 [4] Hilchos Yesodei haTorah, 5:1. [5] See Mishna Berura 328:6. [6] Because we believe that the Torah is a description of the essence of G-d, misrepresenting the Torah is tantamount to misrepresenting G-d Himself [7] Thoughts 1:22, by Blaise Pascal

copyright © 2020 by TorahWeb.org. All rights reserved. To subscribe, unsubscribe, or for any other questions or issues, please contact us Weeklydt mailing list Weeklydt@torahweb.org
http://mail.torahweb.org/mailman/listinfo/weeklydt_torahweb.org

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com from: Ohr Torah Stone
<ohrtorahstone@otsny.org> reply-to: yishai@ots.org.il subject: Rabbi Riskin on the Weekly Torah Portion

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Vayakhel-Pekudei (Exodus 35:1 – 40:38)

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – “You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day” (Exodus 35:3) The Sages of the Talmud query the significance of this verse; after all, the Bible commands us in several places not to do “any manner of creative, physical activities on the Sabbath day” (Exodus 20:10, for example). In fact, the verse preceding this command not to light a fire on Shabbat says, “whoever does an act of physical creativity on [the Sabbath day] shall be put to death.”

These are generic prohibitions, which include the 39 acts of physical creativity that according to our Oral Tradition are forbidden on Shabbat (Mishna Shabbat 7:2). “Kindling a fire” is one of those 39, so why is it singled out again in this week’s biblical portion? Philo Judaeus (c. 20 BCE-c. 50 CE), a great Alexandrian rabbi, exegete and philosopher, explains and provides a fascinating spin on this prohibition, taking it to mean: “Do not kindle the fire of anger in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath.” The Oral Tradition forbids kindling a fire. Philo interprets our biblical verse to be adding “the fire of anger” against any individual or familial member!

Allow me to record two anecdotes that will provide an interesting postscript to Philo’s masterful interpretation.

There was a young man studying in the famed Yeshiva of Volozhin, bright and especially gifted of mind and pen, who began to go “off the derech” (lose his way religiously).

He was discovered smoking a cigarette on the holy Shabbat. The head of the yeshiva, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, asked to see the errant student,

urging him to mend his ways. The young man audaciously responded that he was merely exercising his gift of free will.

The yeshiva head, who had given his life and finances to the institution – and who continued the difficult task of teaching and fund-raising to maintain his yeshiva even in his later years – was overcome with anger. He slapped the “student” on the cheek.

The mortified young man left the yeshiva and made his way to America, where he became a well-known author and editor of Yiddish newspaper The Jewish Daily Forward. He was for many years bitterly anti-religious, and under his watch, the famous (or infamous) “Yom Kippur Eve parties” were held in the Forward’s building on the Lower East Side.

In the early 1970s, my family and I would vacation in Miami Beach, Florida, where on Shabbat afternoons I would give shiurim (Torah classes) at the Caribbean Hotel. On one particular Shabbat, I was speaking about the Mussar (Ethicist) Movement and specifically about the famed Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, known as the **Hafetz Haim** after his book against slander, I invoked a passage in the Talmud (B.T. Arachin 16b), in which Rabbi Tarfon maintains that “no one knows how to properly rebuke in our times; if one person says to another, ‘remove the flint from between your teeth,’ the other will respond, ‘remove the beam from between your eyes.’”

However, I added, apparently the Hafetz Haim, who lived 2,000 years after Rabbi Tarfon, did know how to rebuke, and how to bring an errant Jew back to God. It is told that a student in the Yeshiva in Radin (the city of the Hafetz Haim) was caught smoking on Shabbat.

The **Hafetz Haim** spoke to him for two minutes, and the student not only repented, but even received rabbinical ordination from the Hafetz Haim.

As I concluded my lecture, an elderly gentleman, who had been visibly agitated as I spoke, grabbed my arm and urgently whispered, “Where did you hear that story?” I told him I didn’t remember, and I didn’t even know if it was true. “It is true,” he said. “**I was that boy**; I was smoking on Shabbat and I have semicha from the Hafetz Haim. The great rabbi spoke to me briefly, after which I willingly and even gladly returned to the Yeshiva and would not leave until I received his ordination!”

We were both overcome with emotion. We left the hotel and silently walked along the beach. Finally, I couldn’t restrain myself. “What did the Hafetz Haim tell you that changed your life in two minutes?” Here is what the elderly man responded, and his words remain inscribed on my soul.

“I was standing in front of the yeshiva with my belongings, ready to leave for home. Standing in front of me was the Hafetz Haim, who took my hand in his and politely asked if I would come to his house. I felt I couldn’t refuse. We walked the two blocks in silence, hand-in-hand, until we reached his home. I entered a very small, dilapidated but spotlessly clean two-room hovel, in which not one piece of furniture was whole.

The Hafetz Haim, who was quite short, looked up at me and said only one word: ‘**Shabbes**.’ He gently squeezed my hand as an embrace, and there were tears in his eyes. He repeated again, ‘Shabbes,’ and if I live to be 120 I will never stop feeling the scalding heat of his tears as they fell on my hand. He then guided me to the door, embraced me and blessed me. At that moment, I felt in my soul that there was nothing more important than the Shabbat, and that – despite my transgression – this rabbinical giant loved me. I took an oath not to leave the yeshiva without rabbinical ordination from the Hafetz Haim.”

Shabbat Shalom!

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com from: **Chanan Morrison**
<ravkooklist@gmail.com> reply-to: rav-kook-list+owners@googlegroups.com to: **Rav Kook List** <Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com> date: Mar 19, 2020, 5:19 AM subject: [Rav Kook Torah] Caution, Yes. But No Fear!

Caution, Yes. But No Fear!

Rav Kook Torah

In these troubling times, many are overwhelmed with fear and anxiety. In the excerpt from *Middot HaRe'iyah* which I have translated below, Rav Kook speaks about overcoming our fears. Yes, we should be cautious. But not anxious or fearful! Fear itself makes us stumble and fall.

The key, Rav Kook wrote, is cognitive: we must raise our sights to see the big picture. We need to recognize how everything in the world, even the dangerous and disturbing, has its place. By broadening our perspective, we gain the optimism and confidence we need to overcome the crisis and avoid the pitfalls of fear.

Rav Kook concludes with a crucial point: when we study Torah, perform mitzvot and help others, we feel the special joy experienced when one is engaged in holy matters. This joy gives us ometz-kodesh, the “fortitude of holiness” and resilience that we need to persevere in challenging times.

Thus, when the distraught crowds assembled in Jerusalem broke out in tears and weeping, Ezra encouraged them, “Do not be sad, for the joy of God is your strength” (*Neh. 8:10*).

Our source of strength is joy and ometz-kodesh!

Middot HaRe'iyah: “Fearfulness” sec. 4

בְּפָחָדִים כִּם פְּתִיּוֹת גְּמִוָּה. אַין לְאַדְם לְפָהָד כָּל-אָמֵן לְקָהָר. יוֹמָר שָׁהָר אָפָּחָד הָא נָפָל, וְכָשָׁהָא מְתָפָחָה, מַעַצְמָם כְּפָד אָל לוֹ הַאֲלָבָשָׁוֹל.

Fears are complete foolishness. A person should not be afraid at all, just careful. The more we are afraid, the more we fall. When we are frightened, the fear itself causes us to stumble.

Therefore it is important to bolster our recognition that there is nothing to be afraid of. All images of fear are merely scattered colors of the big picture that needs to be completed. When the picture is complete, the [isolated images] will merge together and elicit a robust, tremendous trust (*bitachon*) that fills the soul with resolve and courage. Even the evil spirits with all of their shadow-terrors are transformed into supportive forces, gladdening and broadening the mind. Their evil and damaging quality is completely nullified, while their life-giving energy is transformed into a force that encourages us with the fortitude of holiness.

“They will obtain gladness and joy” (*Isa. 35:10*). “The joy of God is your strength” (*Neh. 8:10*).

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

from: Aish.com <newsletterserver@aish.com> via em.secureserver.net

date: Mar 19, 2020, 11:18 AM

Communities and Crowds

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Melanie Reid is a journalist who writes a regular column for The (London) Times. A quadriplegic with a wry lack of self-pity, she calls her weekly essay Spinal Column. On 4 January 2020, she told the story of how she, her husband, and others in their Scottish village bought an ancient inn to convert it into a pub and community centre, a shared asset for the neighbourhood.

Something extraordinary then happened. A large number of locals volunteered their services to help open and run it. “We’ve got well-known classical musicians cleaning the toilets and sanding down tables. Behind the bar there are sculptors, building workers, humanist ministers, Merchant Navy officers, grandmothers, HR executives and estate agents... Retired CEOs chop wood for the fires; septuagenarians ... wait at tables; surveyors eye up internal walls to be knocked down and can-doers fix blocked gutters.”

It has not only become a community centre; it has dramatically energised the locality. People of all ages come there to play games, drink, eat, and attend special events. A rich variety of communal facilities and activities have grown up around it. She speaks of “the alchemy of what can be achieved in a village when everyone comes together for a common aim.”

In her column describing this, Melanie was kind enough to quote me on the magic of “I” becoming “we”: “When you build a home together ... you create something far greater than anything anyone could do alone or be paid to do.” The book I wrote on this subject, *The Home We Build Together*, was

inspired by this week’s parsha and its name: *Vayakhel*. It is the Torah’s primer on how to build community.

It does so in a subtle way. It uses a single verb, *k-h-l*, to describe two very different activities. The first appears in last week’s parsha at the beginning of the story of the Golden Calf. “When the people saw that Moshe was long delayed in coming down the mountain, they gathered (*vayikahel*) around Aharon and said to him: get up, make us gods to go before us. This man Moshe who brought us out of Egypt – we have no idea what has become of him” (*Ex. 32:1*). The second is the opening verse of this week’s parsha: “Moshe assembled (*vayakhel*) all the community of Israel and said to them: these are the things the Lord has commanded you to do” (*Ex. 35:1*).

These sound similar. Both verbs could be translated as “gathered” or “assembled.” But there is a fundamental difference between them. The first gathering was leaderless; the second had a leader, Moshe. The first was a crowd, the second a community.

In a crowd, individuals lose their individuality. A kind of collective mentality takes over, and people find themselves doing what they would never consider doing on their own. Charles Mackay famously spoke of the madness of crowds. People, he said, “go mad in herds, while they only recover their senses slowly, one by one.” Together, they act in a frenzy. Normal deliberative processes break down. Sometimes this expresses itself in violence, at other times in impulsive economic behaviour giving rise to unsustainable booms and subsequent crashes. Crowds lack the inhibitions and restraints that form our inner controls as individuals.

Elias Cannetti, whose book *Crowds and Power* is a classic on the subject, writes that “The crowd is the same everywhere, in all periods and cultures; it remains essentially the same among men of the most diverse origin, education and language. Once in being, it spreads with the utmost violence. Few can resist its contagion; it always wants to go on growing and there are no inherent limits to its growth. It can arise wherever people are together, and its spontaneity and suddenness are uncanny.”

The crowd that gathered around Aharon was in the grip of panic. Moshe was their one contact with God, and thus with instruction, guidance, miracle and power. Now he was no longer there and they did not know what had happened to him. Their request for “gods to go before us” was ill-considered and regressive. Their behaviour once the Calf was made – “the people sat down to eat and drink and then stood up to engage in revelry” – was undisciplined and dissolute. When Moshe came down the mountain at God’s command, he “saw that the people were running wild for Aharon had let them run beyond control and become a laughing stock to their enemies.” What Moshe saw exemplified Carl Jung’s description: “The psychology of a large crowd inevitably sinks to the level of mob psychology.” Moshe saw a crowd.

The *Vayakhel* of this week’s parsha was quite different. Moshe sought to create community by getting the people to make personal contributions to a collective project, the *Mishkan*, the Sanctuary. In a community, individuals remain individuals. Their participation is essentially voluntary: “Let everyone whose heart moves them bring an offering.” Their differences are valued because they mean that each has something distinctive to contribute. Some gave gold, other silver, others bronze. Some brought wool or animal skins. Others gave precious stones. Yet others gave their labour and skills.

What united them was not the dynamic of the crowd in which we are caught up in a collective frenzy but rather a sense of common purpose, of helping to bring something into being that was greater than anyone could achieve alone. Communities build; they do not destroy. They bring out the best in us, not the worst. They speak not to our baser emotions such as fear but to higher aspirations like building a symbolic home for the Divine Presence in their midst.

By its subtle use of the verb *k-h-l*, the Torah focuses our attention not only on the product but also the process; not only on what the people made but on what they became through making it. This is how I put it in *The Home We Build Together*: “A nation – at least, the kind of nation the Israelites were called on to become – is created through the act of creation itself. Not all the

miracles of Exodus combined, not the plagues, the division of the sea, manna from heaven or water from a rock, not even the revelation at Sinai itself, turned the Israelites into a nation. In commanding Moshe to get the people to make the Tabernacle, God was in effect saying: To turn a group of individuals into a covenantal nation, they must build something together.

“Freedom cannot be conferred by an outside force, not even by God Himself. It can be achieved only by collective, collaborative effort on the part of the people themselves. Hence the construction of the Tabernacle. A people is made by making. A nation is built by building.”

This distinction between community and crowd has become ever more significant in the 21st century. The classic example is the Arab Spring of 2011. Massive protests took place throughout much of the Arab world, in Tunisia, Algeria, Jordan, Oman, Egypt, Yemen, Sudan, Iraq, Bahrain, Libya, Kuwait, Syria and elsewhere. Yet it turned rapidly into what has been called the Arab Winter. The protests still continue in a number of these countries, yet only in Tunisia has it led to constitutional democracy. Protests, in and of themselves, are never enough to generate free societies. They belong to the logic of crowd, not community.

The same is true of social media even in free societies. They are great enhancements of existing communities, but they do not in and of themselves create communities. That takes face-to-face interaction and a willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of the group. Without this, however, as Mark Zuckerberg said in 2017, “social media can contribute to divisiveness and isolation.” Indeed, when used for virtue signalling, shaming or aggressive confrontation, they can create a new form of crowd behaviour, the electronic herd.

In his new book *A Time to Build*, Yuval Levin argues that social media have undermined our social lives. “They plainly encourage the vices most dangerous to a free society. They drive us to speak without listening, to approach others confrontationally rather than graciously, to spread conspiracies and rumours, to dismiss and ignore what we would rather not hear, to make the private public, to oversimplify a complex world, to react to one another much too quickly and curtly. They eat away at our capacity for patient toleration, our decorum, our forbearance, our restraint.” These are crowd behaviours, not community ones.

The downsides of crowds are still with us. So too are the upsides of community, as Melanie Reid’s Scottish pub demonstrates. I believe that creating community takes hard work, and that few things in life are more worthwhile. Building something with others, I discover the joy of becoming part of something greater than I could ever achieve alone.

Previous Britain’s Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years.

<https://www.hidabroot.com/article/197993/Lessons-for-the-Coronavirus-Crisis>

Lessons for the Coronavirus Crisis

How should we respond to the global Coronavirus crisis?

Rabbi Yehonasan Gefen | 19.03.20

There have been a number of requests for me to write about the Torah approach to these drastic times. In this *Dvar Torah*, I will focus on one aspect of this and will cite sources and stories from Chazal and our Torah leaders, that guide us as to how we should be acting and what we should be thinking during these trying times.

The first aspect is in terms of our actions – the Gedolim have clearly told us to follow the instructions from the authorities with regard to the regulations intended on stemming the spread of the virus. This in and of itself is a fulfillment of the Torah Mitzva of ‘Venishmartem b’nafshoseichem’ – you will guard your bodies. This may at times require

not fulfilling all the other Mitzvos in the ideal way, for example, if people have to be in quarantine, they will not be able to pray in a Minyan.

However, the following story demonstrates how, in times of danger to health, the primary focus must be on the Mitzva of ‘Nismartem b’nafshoseichem’. A man was very unwell and he was instructed by the doctors that he needed to eat on Yom Kippur, but he refused to listen, and planned on fasting.

When the great Rav Yisrael Salanter, zt’l, heard this, he came to the man and tried to persuade him that he had to eat. When the man remained in his stubbornness, Rav Salanter made a powerful point: The yetser hara is always trying to persuade us not to perform Mitzvos, but in your case, you are exempt from most of the Mitzvos, so the yetser hara has a dilemma of what it can do to hinder your avodas HaShem. Its solution is to focus on the one Mitzva that you do have – to guard your health! Hence, its attempts to make you want to fast when you are forbidden to do so[1]! We are not exempt from every Mitzva, but it is clear that the Mitzva to guard our health is of primary importance at this time.

Once a person is doing all the necessary hishtadlus (effort), then the question arises as to what is the appropriate attitude that he should have. There have been a number of cases of panic among people, expressed in various ways, but their common denominator is that they have caused some people to react with great fear and dread of what may happen.

The following Gemara[2] indicates that this does not seem to be a correct, or healthy, approach. A student was walking in the marketplace, and he began to sigh, indicating his fear of upcoming events. Rebbe Hamnuna told him that by sighing, he would bring upon himself suffering, based on a verse that states that the very thing that a person was afraid of, came upon him. We learn from here that there can be situations where the fear of something happening can be more damaging than the actual thing itself.

The following story involving the Rambam able expresses this point: The Rambam was a leading doctor in Egypt. He was once pressured by a jealous Egyptian doctor to a dangerous competition to prove who was the superior doctor. Each doctor would give the other a poison and he would have to use his medical expertise to protect it from harming him. The Egyptian doctor gave the Rambam a poison, but the Rambam was able to use his great knowledge to dilute its effect and he emerged unharmed. When the other doctor took the Rambam’s poison, he began to become ill. The Rambam gave him suggestions of what to do to save him, but he did not trust the Rambam and suspected that these suggestions would make it worse. Soon, the doctor became very ill and died. It then emerged that the Rambam had not given him a poison at all, rather it was a normal drink, but the doctor worked himself into such a frenzy at the potential harm of the ‘poison’ that his worry caused him to make his fears self-fulfilling. This teaches us that the worry of possible sicknesses can be more damaging than the sickness itself.

What then, can a person do to avoid falling into this cycle of damaging fear?

The answer is to remind himself that once he has done all the necessary hishtadlus to protect himself, then there is nothing he can do and he is totally in the hands of HaShem. At that point, there is nothing to worry about, because we know that HaShem only does what’s best for us.

Yet another story demonstrates this point as well: the great Brisker Rav was in Europe at the beginning of World War 2, subject to the relentless bombings of the German invasion. There were times when he was very anxious about what to do in order to be in the safest situation, and there were other occasions where he was completely calm. When asked about this seemingly contradictory behavior, he explained, that he was anxious in situations where there were various things that could be done to protect himself, and so he was concerned that he would fulfil the Mitzva to guard one’s health to the best of his ability. But there were other times, when he had made all possible effort, and there was nothing left to be done – in those situations, he was totally calm because he knew he was in the hands of HaShem[3].

In addition to all these sources, a verse in Mishlei[4] seems to address the exact situation we find ourselves in at this time. The verse states “the spirit of a man with overcome his illness, and a broken spirit, who will carry it.” The commentaries[5] explain that a person should accept what comes upon him with happiness and love, and if he is of good spirit, then his body will be able overcome illness. However, if he is feeling broken, then he will not be able to strengthen himself, and will be susceptible to illness. What is remarkable is that the Targum Yonasan[6] translates the word for illness into the word, ‘korhaneih’ which sounds eerily similar to the word Korona.

It seems clear that HaShem is communicating to us through all these sources that the correct attitude to have is one of vigilance, but with calmness and trust, remembering that HaShem is protecting us. May we merit to see a speedy end to this dreaded disease, and all the world will experience a refuah sheleimah.

Notes and Sources [1] Heard from Rav Mordechai Goldstein, shlit'a. [2] Brachos, 60a. [3] Heard from Rav Mordechai Goldstein. [4] Mishlei, 18:14. [5] Rashi, Metsudas David, ibid. [6] An ancient commentary on Tanach who received a tradition going back to Moshe Rabbeinu.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com from: Rabbi Yirmiyahu Kaganoff <ymkaganoff@gmail.com> to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com

Corona-virus Takeaways – One Man’s Perspective

Rabbi Yirmiyahu Kaganoff

This morning, I rather suddenly and perhaps rashly decided that I would put my thoughts on paper about the current world crisis. I take responsibility for these as my own opinions, although I believe that they are solidly built on Torah sources. Then again, I believe that everything I write falls under that category, and not everyone always agrees.

My first observation: None of us has ever experienced this type of pandemic before. Indeed, the world has become much more populated and much more of a global village in the last few years. There is no question that technology has added hours to our days and years to our lives. Technology provides medical care for the ill, at the same time that it indirectly caused the spread of this pandemic to places unimaginable previously, and with unprecedented speed.

My second observation: Most, if not all, of the worldwide crises that we have experienced in recent decades have been caused by man. Although there have been earthquakes, hurricanes, mine collapses, avalanches, tornadoes, and devastating forest fires, these are all relatively local crises, where people and nations distant from the catastrophe are not affected directly. Even the tsunami that killed hundreds of thousands of people affected only those near the Indian Ocean. In contrast are man-made crises: Terrorism of all types has become and remains a worldwide dilemma, and the 20th century took us through two catastrophic world wars. I do not want to enter scientific and political debate as to whether the crisis of global warming is manmade or not; even assuming that it is not manmade, it is not as acute a problem as the coronavirus is. Although many may be to blame for how they have dealt with this crisis, no one serious blames mankind for intentionally creating the coronavirus. Without question, this is a direct communication to all of mankind from Hashem. The entire world may perhaps not have had such a direct communication since all the rivers and oceans split along with the Yam Suf. And yet, few people seem to be attempting to learn any lessons from this. Now and again, I read or hear of an individual Rav expressing his personal takeaways from the crisis, but I have seen and heard no response from a world leader regarding any type of ethical or moral response. Quite the contrary: Politicians have been acting as politicians, rather than as the statesmen whose true leadership we would like to see. I have seen no one act as the King of Nineveh did upon hearing Yonah’s castigation – or, more accurately, Yonah’s threat.

I want to focus on obvious lessons that Hashem is clearly telling everyone in the world.

The basic instruction in order to limit the virus’s spread is social distancing. No hugging, kissing, or even handshaking. Eliminate all social gatherings. Maintain a social distance of several feet. Of what does that remind you? Around the world, people have been placed in social quarantine for fourteen days. Again, this is reminiscent of the laws of metzora, where the maximum time for someone who is a metzora musgar is two weeks. (Although the halacha is that for a metzora, “two weeks” means thirteen days, the association is there. Furthermore, the vast world of Bible readers who do not know about Chazal certainly associate this with two full weeks.) Aside from the prohibition of lashon hora, with which metzora is associated, Chazal have told us that there are many other social malpractices for which the punishment of tzaraas is a reminder and admonishment (see Arachin 16a; Midrash Rabbah on the verses of tzaraas).

My third observation For whatever reason, I had tremendous difficulty remembering the name COVID-19, the official name of this virus. However, two fairly simple memory devices have helped me: The word kavod, ????, (COVID) – and the gematriya of the word cheit, sin, including its kollel (a term for gematriya enthusiasts) equals 19.

My fourth observation: Do we need a crisis of this proportion in order to interact with our children on a daily basis?

My fifth observation: All of life is so unpredictable these days (I guess that’s another lesson) that I’ll wait to see what tomorrow brings, and then we’ll plan. I say this in a country in which until this point, thank G-d, there is some degree of control regarding the spread of the contagious malady; in many countries, the medical facilities have completely collapsed or are in serious danger of doing so. A physician in New York City dealing with the crisis reported to me earlier today that medical supplies are critically low and running out quickly – in the country that many, if not most, people consider the epitome of world civilization and development. To quote some of today’s news items: “Hospitals across the U.S. are running out of the masks, gowns and other equipment they need to protect staff against the novel coronavirus as they struggle to take care of patients, say hospital officials, doctors and others in the industry... The Pentagon stepped into the breach by offering on Tuesday to supply up to five million respirator masks, as health-care officials and workers say the situation is dire. Administrators at the headquarters of the Providence health system are in conference rooms assembling makeshift face shields from vinyl, elastic and two-sided tape because supplies are drying up. Nurses from Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston, preparing for a potential shortage, have pleaded with friends on Facebook for any goggles and other gear they might have lying around. ‘I’m reusing my mask from yesterday,’ said Calvin Sun, an emergency-room doctor in New York City. ‘We really have no choice.’” Perhaps we should have more of a day-to-day relationship with Hashem. As the Gemara states, the manna arrived daily for the Jews in the Desert, and then there was nothing to eat until the next day. When we have no idea what tomorrow will bring, our prayers to Hashem may take on greater seriousness.

My sixth observation – Hashem’s chesed #1 As contagious as coronavirus is, for the majority of people afflicted by it, its symptoms are generally no more serious than typical influenza, which strikes the world annually. If the virus spread this way were as deadly as the bubonic plague, AIDS, or various other maladies that have affected mankind, the death rate would be in geometric proportion to what it is. Assuming that this is a Divine message, wouldn’t we prefer this message to some of the alternatives?

My seventh observation – Hashem’s chesed #2 Assuming that Hashem needed to warn mankind of something, there is a lot of chesed involved in when and how he warned us. For example, it became a crisis after the tremendous kiddush Hashem of the worldwide Siyumei Hashas, all across the globe. Imagine if all of these siyumim had been forced to cancel! All that incredible kiddush Hashem would not have happened.

My eighth observation: The Economy This crisis without question is destroying economies. What we do not yet know is whether it will set off a worldwide recession, or be a temporary blip that passes soon. Perhaps the answer to this question depends on how we react and respond to it?

My ninth observation: The Elderly Coronavirus has proven much more lethal among the elderly, in which the death rate, I was told, is close to 20% of those infected. Some have stated that the slow response in some countries to the pandemic is related to their attitude toward the elderly and infirm, and perhaps toward the sanctity of life in general.

My tenth observation – Pesach hotels I write this observation with trepidation, since there is an implied criticism of many of my very close friends, and I certainly do not consider myself worthy of giving musar to them. Among the many businesses that this crisis has decimated is the vast business of Pesach hotels. In Israel, a newspaper report anticipates a matzah shortage caused by the 13% of Israeli residents who are not going to hotels for Pesach this year because of the crisis. Apparently, because they will be home they will need to acquire matzos, which will cause a shortage.

I was raised in what today would probably be called a modern orthodox family – and Pesach was spent with family. We had a well-established practice that we did not eat in anyone else's home on Pesach, unless we were spending Pesach in that home. Do we want our children to view Pesach as a family experience, or a social one?

I have other observations on the topic, but, as the old adage runs, not everything that you think should you say, not everything you say should you write, and not everything you write should you publish. With my best wishes that: 1. All of G-d's children who are ill should recover. 2. This crisis should pass quickly, and the economic repercussions should be mild. 3. All of mankind should learn the lessons that Hashem wants to teach us.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/>

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites
thekotel.org

Vayakhel Pekudei 5780

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Quarantine, Loneliness, and Unconditional Love

In the Torah portions of Vayakhel and Pekudei, we read about the establishment of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle, the temporary temple that accompanied the Jewish nation during its wanderings until the permanent temple was established on the Temple Mount. The Mishkan and the Temple were the nation's spiritual center. This was expressed by the nation camping around it in the desert, and by all legal and halachic (Jewish law) decisions being made in the court adjacent to the Temple in Jerusalem. After the Temple was built in Jerusalem by King Solomon, it became the only place where sacrifices were permissible, and the nation's only legitimate spiritual center. The parasha describing the Mishkan's establishment is called Vayakhel, from the word for gathering and union. This is to teach us that a spiritual center which is not based on unity has no value or right to exist. Our sages note that one of the reasons leading to the destruction of the Temple was baseless hatred. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Hacohen Kook, the chief rabbi of the Land of Israel at the beginning of the 20th century, wrote, "If we were destroyed, and the world was destroyed along with us, because of baseless hatred, we will be rebuilt, and the world will be rebuilt along with us, by unconditional love" (Orot Hakodesh 3, pg. 324). Seemingly, these words are particularly relevant to the unusual situation we have found ourselves in these past few weeks. The entire world has recently entered a state of emergency due to the spread of the coronavirus. Millions of people are in quarantine, hundreds of thousands have fallen ill, and sadly, thousands have died of this virus. These are difficult times. We all send wishes for a speedy and complete recovery to all those who are sick, and condolences to the bereaved families. Our hearts are with you! It is imperative that we all behave responsibly in accordance to the directions we are getting from the authorities, each country following its health experts' guidance. No one has the privilege to behave irresponsibly because he can harm others. This is in addition to the Jewish value "and you shall watch yourselves very well"

(Deuteronomy 4, 15). According to Jewish tradition, times of distress like the one we are in now are times for introspection. The individual and society are called upon to think about what they should repair. It seems that this virus that put millions of people into quarantine is hinting to us that there are two areas we should try to strengthen: the value of family, and the phenomenon of loneliness. Families going into quarantine together – parents with their children – offers an opportunity to repair what we sometimes can't manage to implement. These days can be days of quality time, in which we, the parents, can listen to our children, talk to them, laugh, tell stories – do everything we always want to do but can't find time for. This is a time for renewing and reinvigorating our frayed family relationships. And, as we said, it's a time for introspection, for thinking about whether we may have slightly neglected our spirit, unity, and community, paying exaggerated attention to individualism and "being in the now". This coerced ingathering of family reminds us where the true source of strength lies, what values are truly important to us, what we are really proud of – not career or financial success – but values of spirit, faith, morality, and family. Furthermore, the coronavirus that put many of us into quarantine reminds us that there are people who are always socially isolated. Do we notice those people who suffer from chronic loneliness, who return to an empty home night after night, those who have no family, or no parents; those who are at home waiting for someone to smile at them, to hear their voice? They are lonely. Do we remember these lonely people? Do we do enough for them? Loneliness can be excruciating, but it is also easy to help – with a smile, a good word, attention, a short phone call. If each of us remembers one person and makes sure to send a message, to call occasionally, maybe invite them to join you on a walk, or for a meal, or anything else that is shared – it might actually save their life. How can we heed that call? How can we make sure people understand the horrible feeling of loneliness? How can someone who does not suffer from loneliness understand someone who does? The coronavirus and the quarantine that has been imposed on us give us a bit of a taste of what loneliness feels like. We suddenly miss the social encounters we are accustomed to. Now we understand how much our work colleagues are part of our lives. Now we understand how much society contributes to our lives, and what a wonderful ability we have to lessen someone else's loneliness! Maybe now is the time to call out to everyone: Adopt another person, one lonely person, and make him or her happy! Each and every one of us can make this world happier, one in which more people walk around with smiles on their faces. If we increase unconditional love, in the merit of this, our prayers will be heard and we will overcome this threatening virus and get through these trying times in peace, health, and happiness. The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com> reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha VAYAKHEL – PIKUDEI Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

Moshe gathers all of the people of Israel into the courtyard of the Tabernacle to instruct them about the observance of the sanctity of Shabbat. That is the content of the lead verse of this week's Torah reading, The obvious question raised by all of the Torah commentators is whether there was insufficient physical space outside the Tabernacle to hold the entire population of the Jewish people. Talmud and Midrash, therefore, resort to a miraculous supernatural understanding of the event.

They state that here we are taught the concept that the small and few can somehow contain and hold the large and many. We naturally consider this to be miraculous. But in the realm of the Almighty, where space and time do not really exist, there is no problem in having millions occupy a limited area of space. And since the Tabernacle, and later the Jerusalem Temples, were miraculous in their very nature and essence, even in their construction, it is

obvious that such a supernatural phenomenon existed to gather all the Jewish people within a limited area.

The Talmud asserts that the Jewish people in that generation were accustomed to miracles and to the supernatural events. With regular exposure to the supernatural, it eventually makes it natural and easily accepted. The Torah also assumes that those that study Torah will never discount the presence of the supernatural in the Jewish narrative. In Jewish thought and experience, the dividing line between natural and supernatural is blurred. The Tabernacle is proof of this axiom.

The Talmud instructs us that this miracle of the limited containing unlimited also existed in the times of the Temple in Jerusalem. Pirke Avot teaches that the Jews in the Temple courtyard stood pressed against one another. However, during the Temple service, when the moment arrived for everyone to kneel and prostrate themselves before the Holy Presence, there was sufficient space for all to do so comfortably. The great moral and practical lesson derived from this phenomenon is obvious and telling. When people insist on standing erect, in protecting their own perceived interests and turf, the world is very crowded and there is always hostility to neighbors and companions. However, if we are willing to bow down, certainly to God – but even towards the needs and dignity of other human beings, there will always be enough space and room for all.

The Lord has so fashioned human society in a way that successful living – be it in the milieu of family or community or economic well-being – is always dependent on accommodating others. The customer is always right is the key to successful commercial enterprise. It is not within our nature to bow down easily. The Torah emphasizes, time and again, our individual responsibility to society as a whole. The tabernacle and Jerusalem Temples came to represent this basic concept of flexibility over rigidity and humility over selfish arrogance. Even though the Temple is not yet in our midst physically, its spiritual message certainly is with us. Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand
<ryfrand@torah.org> reply-to: ryfrand@torah.org, to: ravfrand@torah.org
subject: Rabbi Frand on Parsha

Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Vayakhel

The Will To Do More Than Is Necessary Pleases the Almighty

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya

In Parshas Vayakhel, the pasuk says, “Moshe commanded and they proclaimed in the camp, saying, ‘Man and woman shall not do more work toward the portion of the Sanctuary!’ And the nation was held back from bringing. And the work was sufficient for them for all the work, to do it – and having a surplus.” [Shemos 36:6-7] Moshe let out a clarion call that there was nothing more to bring, and the people stopped bringing. They already had more than necessary to complete the job.

Rashi comments on the word “Vayekaleh” (and the nation was held back): This is an expression of restraint (m’neeyah). I heard an observation from the Tolner Rebbe, shlit”a, explaining why the Torah in fact uses the language “Vayekaleh” rather than using the virtually synonymous word that Rashi uses to translate “Vayekaleh” (namely — the root word m’neeyah). In fact, the root mem-nun-ayin that Rashi uses is much more common than the word “Vayekaleh.” For instance, the expression Yakov uses in deflecting Rachel’s complaint to him: “...Am I in place of G-d who has restrained you (asher ma-nah mi’mech) from having children?” [Bereshis 30:2]. Likewise, we find this usage when Balak tells Bilaam: “Behold Hashem has restrained you (me’na-acha) from receiving honor” [Bamidbar 24:11]. In truth, there are numerous examples of each of these two synonyms. However, this is an interesting observation and the Tolner Rebbe explains this observation in a fantastic way.

The Medrash says in Parshas Pekudei, on the above quoted pasuk (“and the work was sufficient...”): Moshe came into Bezalel and saw that there was leftover material after the work of the Mishkan was completed. He asked the

Almighty – “Master of the Universe, we have completed the work of the Mishkan and have leftovers – what should we do with the leftover money?” The Medrash continues: “The Almighty responded and said ‘Go make with them a Mishkan for the Testimony (Eidus).’”

This is a very difficult Medrash to understand. The Mishkan is finished. Everything is complete. Bezalel tells Moshe they have a surplus. Moshe goes to the Almighty and asks what he is supposed to do with the surplus, and Hashem says to make a Mishkan for the Eidus. What is that supposed to mean?

The Yafei Toar on the Medrash says that there was a shteeble next to the Mishkan. It was a small little synagogue, perhaps like a Beis Medrash. This is a very difficult interpretation. So what does it mean that the Almighty instructed Moshe to take the surplus and make a “Mishkan l’Eidus”? The Tolner Rebbe says that the Chidushei haRim (the first Gerer Rebbe) once heard a very interesting observation from the Rebbe, Reb Bunim: When a person does any type of mitzvah – whether it is giving charity or davening, whatever it may be – and the person has the desire and the initiative to do even more than he has already done – that gives the Almighty nachas Ruach. A person’s will to do more (when there is really nothing more to do) gives the Almighty a certain satisfaction of Spirit that is even greater than He receives from the basic act itself.

A person needs to have a Chassidishe soul to appreciate this insight: We say in davening (at the end of Yishtabach) “The one who chooses musical songs of praise” (ha’bocher b’sheerei zimrah). The Rebbe Reb Bunim would say, “ha’bocher b’sheeyarei zimrah”), meaning the Almighty chooses that which is left over from davening.

Most of us finish davening – especially a long davening – and say, “Baruch Hashem, davening is over!” However, if someone has a desire – if only I could daven more.... If after Yom Kippur, a person feels “I wish I could stay longer...” That is an example of “ha’bocher b’sheeyarei zimrah“, the One who chooses the leftovers of davening!

The Eliyahu Rabbah mentions the widespread Jewish custom to sing Adon Olam at the end of davening. Where does this come from? He gives a beautiful explanation: When we finish davening, the Satan says “Aha! Do you see? They are finished and glad to go home!” No. We want to stay. What is the proof that we want to stay? It is the fact that we remain by our seats to recite Adon Olam after davening concludes. Adon Olam appears at the beginning of the siddur. We start davening with it. Therefore, by reciting it after davening, we are proclaiming – I would really want to start davening all over again! The proof? “Adon Olam” – this is exactly where I began three hours ago! This is “ha’bocher b’sheeyarei zimrah”.

The Chidushei haRim says that what happened by the Mishkan was that the people wanted to give even more. Moshe Rabbeinu told the Almighty “There is left over! The people want to give more!” The Almighty says “Go and make of them a Mishkan haEdus. Now, I want to reside with them. This echoes the vort everyone says at the beginning of Parshas Terumah: “They should take for Me a donation and I will dwell in their midst” (not in its midst – i.e. the Mishkan’s midst; but rather in their midst – i.e. in the midst of the Children of Israel). Here too, the desire they have to keep on giving demonstrates that they were not satisfied with merely their basic donation (which sufficed to build the Mishkan completely). That is the meaning of the Midrash’s statement “Aseh ba’hem Mishkan ha’Edus” i.e. – make with them (the people), [not with “it” (the money)] a Mishkan haEdus. They will be the Mishkan. I want to be with them. The resting of the Divine Presence will be amongst those people who possess such a desire (chev’shek) to donate more and more.

The Malbim, who is a master of nuance of the Hebrew language, wrote a volume called Sefer haKarmel, in which he explains the differences between various similar words. He discusses the difference between the expression va’Yeekeh (as it appears in Shemos 36:6) and the expression me’neah (which Rashi uses to explain the word va’Yeekeh). He says that va’Yeekeh is used when by nature one would want to do more, but one is stopped from proceeding. The proof is that the Hebrew word for prison is

“Beis haKe’lah” (kaf-lamed-aleph), as it appears in Bamidbar 11:28, where Yehoshua tells Moshe about Eldad and Meidad: “My master, Moshe, Kelaim – throw them in jail!” Why? It is because a person is jailed against his will. I want to be free. They put me in jail – that is the “Beis haKe’lah”. The word “me-nee-ah,” on the other hand, says the Malbim, does not indicate stopping caused by an outside force, but rather it indicates something that stops on its own.

The Malbim explains that this is the interpretation of the Rashi in our Parsha. The Biblical word Va’Yeekelel in the expression “and the nation stopped bringing” is appropriate because over here Klal Yisrael wanted to keep on giving. They did not want it to end. They wanted to contribute even more. The Almighty says this is literally a “shiyarei zimra” – this is what I love. The Malbim cites parallel usage by the cessation of rain in Parshas Noach. The pasuk says, “The rain from Heaven was restrained.” (vaYeekelel hamayim min haShamayim) [Bereshis 8:2]. Why? It is because the nature of rain is to descend. The Almighty had to hold it back, an act that went against nature. When the desire is there but outside forces stop it, the Torah uses the word vaYeekelel.

With this, the Chidushei haRim gives an amazing interpretation of a famous Gemara [Bava Metzia 62a]. Two people are walking in the desert and one has a jug of water in his hand. If they each consume half the jug, they will both die. If one of them drinks the entire jug, he will be able to make it out of the desert to civilization (and the other will die). What does the person with the jug of water do? Does he share it with his friend and they both die or does he drink it all himself, giving himself a chance to live?

Ben Petura rules that it is preferable that they both drink and both die and not have one witness the death of his friend. The Gemara continues “...until Rabbi Akiva came and expounded: ‘And your brother shall live with you’ [Vayikra 25:36] – your own life takes priority over the life of your friend.” The Chidushei haRim asks a question: What does it mean, “Until Rabbi Akiva came and expounded”? The Gemara does not frame this in the form of a standard disagreement between two Tanaim – Ben Petura says one thing; Rabbi Akiva says another thing. What do the words “ad she’ba Rabbi Akiva” imply?

The Chidushei haRim answers that when a person is in that type of situation, he is supposed to feel “I want to give you the water. My will is actually to share the water with you. I do not want to stand idly by and watch you die!” UNTIL RABBI AKIVA CAME ALONG and said you cannot do that! Without Rabbi Akiva’s teaching, I would have held – this is my will – to share the water. In other words, a person should not just view this as a machlokes Ben Petura and Rabbi Akiva and happily apply the principle that we rule like Rabbi Akiva over any individual colleague with whom he argues and thereby bid his friend farewell and drink the contents of the jug. No! He should want to share the jug! That should be his inclination UNTIL RABBI AKIVA CAME ALONG and gave him no choice because he taught, “your own life takes priority.”

This principle is that even if a person is prevented by outside forces – be it nature, be it halacha, be it the fact that no more supplies are necessary for the Mishkan, whatever it is – but the will and desire to do more than is necessary or more than is required should be there. This will and desire pleases the Almighty and it is about this will (to contribute even more to the Mishkan) that He said – take it and make with it (yourselves) a Mishkan l’Edus – the dwelling place of the Divine Presence in the sense of “And you shall make Me a Mikdash and I will dwell BACHEM.” I will not only dwell in the Mishkan, but I will dwell within you as well.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com
Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD
dhoffman@torah.org Rav Frand © 2019 by Torah.org.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Torah in Action /Shema Yisrael <parsha@torahinaction.com>
subject: Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Vayakhel- Pekudei

פרק י' קדש-פקודי ח"ב

ויעש בצלאל את הארן עצי שטים אמתים וחצי ארו ואמה וחצי רחוב

Betzalel made the Aron of Shittim wood, two and a half amos its length, an amah and a half its width. (37:1)

One of the miracles that occurred both in the *Mishkan* and in the *Bais Hamikdash* was: *Makom ha’Aron eino min ha’middah*; “The place occupied by the *Aron HaKodesh* was not included in its measurement.” This means that the *Aron* did not take up any space. The *Kodesh HaKedoshim*, Holy of Holies, was ten *amos*, cubits, by ten *amos*. The *Aron* was two and a half *amos* by one and a half *amah* by one and a half *amah*. When the *Aron* was brought into the *Kodesh HaKedoshim* and the space from its width and length was measured, every side of it allowed for a space of five *amos*. This was a special miracle in which a room that was 10x10, yet contained a “box” that was 2½ by 1½, still allowed for 5 *amos* of space on each side (a total of 10 *amos*, which was the size of the room). In other words, the *Aron* did not take up any space. Bearing this in mind, the commentators ask a compelling question: What is of greater spiritual significance: the *Aron* or the *Luchos*, Tablets, which were inside of it? – Or, alternatively, which one possesses a greater degree of *kedushah*, holiness: the *Aron* or the *Luchos*? Certainly, the response to this question is: the *Luchos*. They are the reason and purpose for the *Aron*. So, if the *Aron* did not occupy any space, then surely the *Luchos*, which maintained a higher degree of *kedushah*, should not have occupied any space. We know, however, that this is not true, for *Chazal* teach that the *Luchos* took up just about every inch of space within the *Aron*. [There is a dispute whether there remained one *tefach*, handbreadth, for the *Sefer Torah*.] Why did the *Aron* “deserve” a miracle, whereas the *Luchos* did not?

Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl, cites a powerful explanation. *Chazal* teach that the *Aron* serves as a metaphor for the *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar. The following *pasuk* reflects an example, *Mibayis u’mibachutz tetzpenu*, “From within and without, it should be covered with gold” (*Shemos* 25:11). (The *Aron* was actually comprised of three units, an outer gold shell, which contained an inner wooden box that contained within it another gold box.) This teaches us that the Torah scholar must be *tocho k’baro*, his external self must express his true inner essence.

Having said this, let us analogize the *talmid chacham* to the *Aron*. The Torah scholar is wholly devoted to Torah; his entire essence is subsumed by it. Thus, the Torah scholar (aptly compared to the *Aron*) takes up no space. He views himself as a nonentity, as nothing – so great is his humility. The Torah within him, however, takes up every bit of him. No area within the Torah scholar is devoid of Torah. This is the definition of *kulo Torah*, all (of him) is filled with Torah. The more Torah, the less “himself.”

Horav Eliyahu Mishkovsky, zl, was the distinguished *Rav* of Kfar Chassidim. Ten years before the saintly *Rav* left this world, he was taken gravely ill. It became so serious that when he lay comatose in Haifa’s Rambam Hospital, the physician in charge of his care declared, “We are done. There is no more we can do.” He despaired of seeing the *Rav* regain consciousness and be cured. On *Erev Yom Kippur*, *Horav Chaim Greinman* visited and related that he had spoken with a top neurologist at Hadassah Hospital in Yerushalayim concerning the *Rav*’s diagnosis. The neurologist claimed that if the *Rav* would survive the ambulance trip from Rambam to Hadassah, he felt that he could save him.

After some discussion, the decision was made to make the move. The comatose patient was driven in an ambulance (outfitted with the necessary therapeutic accoutrements for keeping him alive) by two EMS technicians, accompanied by *Rav Greinman* and *Rav David Mishkovsky*, the patient’s brother. In midst of the journey (somewhere between Haifa and Yerushalayim) *Rav Eliyahu* opened his eyes, looked at *Rav Chaim* and said, “*Nu, Rav Chaim, tell me a chiddush*, original Torah thought.” Understandably, *Rav Chaim* was in a state of shock and could not speak. *Rav Eliyahu* asked again, “*Rav Chaim, I asked you for a chiddush*.” The patient was totally oblivious to his condition and his surroundings. After asking one

more time for a *chiddush* and receiving no response, he said, "Fine, so I will say a *chiddush*," which he proceeded to do. After a few minutes of reciting a passage of *Talmud*, a question, an answer, a logical conclusion, followed by a penetrating analysis, the patient closed his eyes and lay his head down. Was this a miracle? Probably. Was this a manifestation of a person who was *kulo Torah*? – Certainly.

Chazal (*Horayos* 13a) teach: Shlomo *Hamelech* writes (*Mishlei* 3:15) concerning the Torah, *Yekaroh hee miPeninim*, "It is more precious than pearls." This means that the Torah (of a Torah scholar) is more precious (precedes) than even a *Kohen Gadol*, High Priest, who enters the innermost chamber (*Kodesh HaKedoshim lishnai v'lifnim*) in the *Bais Hamikdash*. This refers to the *halachah* that a *mamzer talmid chacham*, Torah scholar of illegitimate pedigree, takes precedence even over a *Kohen Gadol*. Torah is the greatest honorarium. *Rav Karlinstein* quotes the *Gaon*, *zl*, *m'Vilna*, who explains why Torah is more precious than pearls. The *Kohen Gadol* is the only one who is permitted to enter the Holy of Holies on the holiest day of the year – *Yom Kippur*. While he is there, he performs the *Ketores*, Incense, service which consists of placing a pan with burning coals on the floor of the *Kodesh HaKodoshim* as he stands *bein haBadim*, between the Poles, that jutted out of the *Aron*. During the Second *Bais Hamikdash*, when the *Aron* was no longer extant, he placed the pan with the coals on the *Even Shesiyah*, foundation stone, which took the place of the *Aron*, for this Priestly service.

The *Kohen* was permitted to stand only between the *Badim* – no more. He could go no further. The *talmid chacham*, by virtue of his study, enters into the *Aron HaKodesh* by clinging to the Torah; he becomes one with the Torah. Indeed, he resides within the *Aron HaKodesh*. This is the precious achievement of a *talmid chacham*, something for which even the *Kohen Gadol* cannot aspire – unless he is a *talmid chacham*.

In order to explicate the concept of *kulo Torah*, I cite from *Horav Pinchas Teitz*'s introduction to his 1989 edition of *Tzafnas Paaneach – Bava Metzia*, where he renders a personal appreciation of the venerable *Rogathchover Gaon*, *zl*. "It is not within the power of a man's pen to describe the gigantic character of the genius of the ages, the *Rogathchover*... In his entire perception and his entire being, there was only Torah. The Torah filled the cosmos he inhabited. This does not mean that he was cut off from the world of action – he knew and understood all the events and problems of the world and all that was happening with a profound, clear knowledge – but his approach was to examine everything through the Torah. In every case, he tried to penetrate to the *halachic* essence... In all events of the world, he saw only Jewish laws... We think of three dimensions for physical matter: length, width and height. He innovated that everything has a fourth dimension, the dimension of *halachah* that is found in everything... He was unable to distract himself from concentrating on the Torah for even a moment. The Torah was always before his eyes... He could see what he had learned – not just remember it. There was never a hint of sadness on his countenance, and, even when he endured pain, an expression of joy and contentment never left his face." *Kulo Torah*.

אללה פקודי המשכן משכני העדות

These are the mountings of the *Mishkan*, the *Mishkan* of Testimony. (38:21)

The word *Mishkan* is repeated (*Rashi*, citing the *Midrash*), alluding to the two *Batei Mikdash* (replacing the *Mishkan*) which were taken from us. The word *Mishkan* has the same letters as the word *mashkon*, which means collateral. This intimates (say *Chazal*) that the two *Batei Mikdash* are collateral for *Klal Yisrael*'s sins. When we sinned, we lost them, and they are being held in lieu of our repentance, after which the *Bais Hamikdash* will be restored to its previous glory.

Virtually, in Jewish society, the most important place of worship is one's own heart. The purpose of the *Mishkan*'s services was to remind us to live our lives in such a manner that Hashem would be "comfortable," feel at home with us – in our lives and in our hearts. The *Bais Hamikdash* replaced the *Mishkan* as the focus of service. As long as its purpose was being

fulfilled, it was untouchable. Once we chose to become apathetic to the vibrancy and centrality of our relationship with Hashem, however, the *Bais Hamikdash* no longer served a purpose. Its services became meaningless, so that Hashem destroyed the edifice. We destroyed the services; thus, the building was no longer necessary. The *Batei Midrash* were not destroyed; they simply died when we refused to sustain them through commitment and passion.

Horav Baruch Sorotzkin, *zl*, posits that actually only one *Bais Hamikdash* existed. The *Bais Hamikdash* was the edifice in which Hashem's *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, resided. When *Klal Yisrael* sinned, Hashem removed the *Shechinah* as collateral until we would do *teshuva*, repent, and then be worthy of the return of the *Shechinah*. The *churban*, destruction, of the edifice is the collection of collateral. We owe; Hashem collects the *mashkon*, much like the poor man who is unable to reimburse his debt. His lender takes whatever valuables the borrower has and holds it until that time that the borrower is able to pay his loan. Thus, Hashem collected His collateral twice. There was only one edifice. Hashem took it twice.

ויערכ עלייו ערכ לפני ד' כאשר צוה ד' את משה
He prepared on it the setting of bread before Hashem, as Hashem commanded Moshe. (40:23)

Everything in the *Mishkan* was carried out precisely as Hashem had commanded Moshe *Rabbeinu* – no more – no less – no infusion of self. Their personal zeal and enthusiasm in every aspect of their work were completely subordinated to the commands of Hashem. None of the craftsmen made any attempt to inject their own ideas or their own individuality to the construction of the *Mishkan*. They executed their mission obediently, with scrupulous care and precision, with unabashed joy at having been able to serve Hashem. By doing this, they achieved the sublime moral perfection which characterizes an *oved*, servant, of Hashem.

B'diyuk, precisely, expressly, rigorously: all these terms describe what it means to carry out a *mitzvah*/mission in accordance with Hashem's command. By performing exactly as Hashem instructs us, we become totally devoted to Him as *avadim*, slaves. The concept of precisely following instructions is underscored through the two following vignettes (related in *Nachalas Tzvi*). When *Horav Avraham Yitzchak Zimmerman*, *zl*, was called to become *Rav* of Kremenchuk (Central Ukraine), his son-in-law, *Horav Baruch Ber Leibowitz*, *zl* (*Bircas Shmuel*), was asked to fill his position in Halusk. His appointment did not sit well with the members of the *chassidic* community who preferred one of their own, a *Rebbe* who had *chassidic* leanings. *Rav Baruch Ber* might have been one of the most brilliant Torah minds in Europe, but he was not *chassidic*. While they respected his knowledge and piety, they insisted that one of their own guide them. Therefore, they hired their own *Rav*.

The city of Halusk now had two *rabbanim*, a situation that caused the lay leaders of the community some angst. As a result, tensions in the community reached tinderbox level. The *parnesai ha'ir*, lay leaders of the community, had commissioned *Rav Baruch Ber*, and, as a result, were prepared to enter the fray and create a serious controversy over this. *Rav Baruch Ber* turned to his supporters and declared, "My *Rebbe* instructed me to accept the *rabbanus*, rabbinic position. He did not instruct me to enter into a *machlokes*, dispute, over it."

Rav Baruch Ber understood and acted upon his *Rebbe*'s words verbatim. If his *Rebbe* would have acquiesced to his entering into a dispute over the position, he would have said so. He did not. Thus, *Rav Baruch Ber* said he would rather leave than quarrel.

The *Brisker Rav* was an individual who not only lived and served Hashem in a precise manner, but he also trained his family and students to act likewise. It was not an issue of *chumra*, stringency. It was about executing Hashem's command precisely, to the full letter of the law. The *Brisker Rav* once asked his son to go to the butcher store to see whether an apple was there. His son returned a few minutes later and said, "Yes, an apple is there." The *Brisker Rav* said, "If this is the case, go and bring it to

me.” His son returned to the butcher, purchased an apple and returned home. A few minutes passed, and the *Brisker Rav* once again asked his son to go to the butcher shop and see whether the shop had an apple. The son returned to the shop and then came home to inform his father that, indeed, the shop had an apple. The *Rav* told him to return and purchase the apple.

A student who had been observing the scene remarked, “I now understand the level of *Kibbutz Av*, honoring a father, that one should achieve. First, the *Brisker Rav* asked his son to see – not to buy. Had he wanted him to purchase an apple the first time he went to the store, he would have said so. He did not. Afterwards, he instructed his son to purchase an apple – which he did. He went through the same ritual a second time. This was the *Rav’s* way of training his son to a) listen, and b) follow instructions in accordance with the tone, vernacular and manner that they were given.

The legacy of Brisk is not about being *machmir*, looking for opportunities to act stringently. Brisk is about being *medakdek*, precise, to fulfill the *halachah* to perfection. This is not *chumra*, this is performing *halachah* correctly.

In memory of our Father and Grandfather - Martin Nisenbaum

נפטר ר' חנוך תשנ"ג ל' מרדכי בן ר' אפרים ז"ל

וכהה לדראות דרורית שסלים בתרה ייראת שמיים

Sponsored by Yaakov and Karen Nisenbaum and Family

Hebrew Academy of Cleveland, ©All rights reserved

<http://www.ou.org/> from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org>

Posted on March 17, 2020

Parashat Vayak’hel-Pekudei – An Upright Torah

Excerpted from **Rabbi Norman Lamm**’s *Derashot Ledorot: A Commentary for the Ages* — Exodus, co-published by OU Press, Maggid Publishers, and YU Press; edited by Stuart W. Halpern

An Upright Torah*. The focus of significance in any synagogue is the ark containing the Torah. That this is so we learn, according to Maimonides, from a verse in this morning’s sidra. When the building of the Tabernacle was concluded, Moses performed a final act: “vayikah vayiten et ha’eidut el ha’aron,” “and he took and he put the testimony into the Ark” (Exodus 40:20). The word “eidut,” “testimony,” refers to the two stone tablets, the *luhot*, upon which were inscribed the revelation of God. And, Maimonides teaches us at the end of his Laws of Sefer Torah (10:10), just as the tablets were placed in the Ark in the Tabernacle, so are we commanded to place the scroll of the Law in the ark in the synagogue:

It is a commandment to designate a special place for a sefer Torah, and to honor it and embellish it even more than one thinks adequate. The words on the Tablets of the Covenant are the same words which we have on our scrolls.

However, this tracing of the institution of the sefer Torah in the aron in the synagogue to the *luhot* in the aron in the Tabernacle presents certain difficulties. One of the commentaries on Maimonides’ famous Code, the author of *Hagahot Maimoniyot*, records a question asked of his teacher: If indeed the scrolls in the ark in the synagogue are of the same nature as the tablets in the Ark in the Tabernacle, then why is it that the *luhot* in the Tabernacle were placed in the aron in a prone position, lying down, whereas the sefer Torah that we place in the ark in the synagogue stands upright? If the source is the tablets in the Tabernacle, then why do we not store the scrolls in a synagogue too lying down?

There is compelling logic to this question. In fact, the author of this commentary records a responsum by the famous Rabbi Jacob Tam who said that had he realized this point earlier, when they were building his synagogue, he would have ordered a much broader and wider ark in order that he might have the scrolls lying down rather than standing upright.

Nevertheless, the force of Jewish law and the weight of Jewish custom is against this decision to have the scrolls lying down. In all of our synagogues the sefer Torah is stored upright; indeed, in some Sephardic synagogues the scroll is read while standing on the table. Why, then, do we keep the sefer Torah standing up, unlike the tablets?

A famous Talmudic scholar, Rabbi David Ibn Zimra, known as the Radbaz, wrote a responsum on the subject in which he offered three alternative answers. All three are meaningful. They contain or imply insights into the nature of Torah and Judaism that are significant for all times, including our very own.

His first answer is that there is a fundamental difference between the *luhot* and a sefer Torah. The tablets were meant as *eidut*, as a testimony, as symbols; they were not intended for reading. Their very presence was important, but people did not come especially to open the Ark and read the tablets in order to inform themselves of the Law. In contrast, the sefer Torah was meant specifically for reading and for instructing. Hence, the sefer Torah is kept in an upright position, always ready for immediate use.

What we are taught, therefore, is that the Torah must be for us more than a symbol, more than mere *eidut*. It must be a guide, a code for conduct. The very word “Torah” comes from the Hebrew “*hora’ah*” which means guidance, pointing out, instruction.

A symbol is revered; a guide is used and experienced. Because of its very sacredness, a symbol often lies prone. It is remote and is less likely to be involved in the turmoil and bustle of life. It is treated with antiseptic respect. A guide, a “Torah,” is of course sacred; but its sanctity is enhanced by its involvement in life with all its complexities and paradoxes, its anxieties and excitements. A Torah, in order to fulfill its holy function, must stand ready – literally, stand! – to be read and applied.

It is this lack of involvement in everyday life that has caused one contemporary Jewish thinker to bemoan what he has felicitously called our American-Jewish “theology of respect.” We American Jews are a very respectful people; we do not reject Judaism outright. Instead, we are more delicate. We “respect” it. We have respect for the synagogue – therefore, we keep miles away from it. We respect the rabbi – hence we never consult him as to the judgment of Judaism on significant problems. We respect Almighty God and therefore would never think of troubling Him about the things that really bother us. We respect Judaism and Torah so much that we never think of taking them seriously in the rigors and hardships of our daily existence. But respect alone is something that is offered to a symbol, to the tablets which are merely *eidut*, and which therefore lie prone. They are a symbol – and that is all. It is only when we have transformed the symbol into the scroll, the theology of respect in *Torat Hayyim*, a Torah of life, that our Torah stands upright and ready for use.

This is important for Jewish scholarship in our days as well. Great opportunities are open for scholarship today, the formulation of the attitude of Torah to the great ethical questions of our day. There is a businessman who wants to know the decision of Torah on price collusion, a young man who is interested not only in the morality but also in the ethics of courtship, and a government employee who wants to know how far he may go in accepting unofficial gifts. Halakha can yield such guidance. If we do not know all the answers of Halakha it is because we need scholars to search more diligently and in greater scope and depth than has been done heretofore.

But nevertheless, the greatest majority of the problems that occur to us can, without new halakhic research, be dealt with decisively and lucidly by Torah. Our Torah is an upright one when we make the decision to consult it in these practical problems. This, indeed, is the difference between an ideal and a principle: An ideal is an abstraction to which we offer our gesture of respect. A principle is that which governs our very real conduct. The *luhot* are symbols or ideals; the sefer Torah is a principle or guide. We have no dearth of ideals; we are sorely lacking in committing our lives to relevant principles. If our Torah is to be a Torah, it must be upright, ready to use.

The second solution offered by Radbaz is to make the following distinction between the tablets and the scrolls of the Law. According to tradition (Shabbat 104a), the engraving on the stone tablets went through the tablets from side to side. Nevertheless, a miracle occurred and these tablets could be read equally well from either side. In other words, despite the fact that the engraving went through and through, you were able to read the message on the stone tablets according to the normal Hebrew system, from right to left, no matter which side you approached them from. Whereas the sefer Torah was written only on one side, on the parchment. Therefore, the tablets could be placed lying down, for no matter how you laid them down, you could read them from the side you approached them. But the sefer Torah had to stand with its face, upon which was written the text of the Torah, facing the congregation, so that it might always be ready for immediate reading and consultation and study.

There was a time in Jewish life when Judaism was such that it could be approached from any point of view. In a total Jewish environment, even a semi-literate could be a good Jew. Where one’s milieu was fully saturated with Jewish feeling and Jewish life, study and scholarship were not quite crucial. One could

be unlearned and still sense the presence of God, the Shekhina. At the very least, one could benefit from the shekhuna, from the very Jewishness of one's neighborhood and surroundings. However, in a society depleted of Jewishness, in a milieu emptied of Jewish feeling and life, Jewishness can be acquired only by study and by scholarship.

We do not live in a total Jewish environment. Our surroundings are secularized and often antagonistic to the goals of Judaism. Therefore, for us, Jewish scholarship, Jewish education, Jewish study, are not only paramount, but indeed the only way to acquire Judaism in the full sense of the word. It is our only guarantee of survival. It is interesting that when, two or three generations ago, very wealthy and philanthropic Jews founded our great philanthropic organizations, they acted according to the noblest precepts of Judaism. It goes without saying that charity, *tzedaka*, is an all-important mitzva in our faith. Yet these people, who gave and worked so much for charity, who love their people so, completely neglected the study of Torah. And, tragically enough, today these founders of our Federation do not have one single Jewish survivor left! For indeed, Judaism without *tzedaka* is unthinkable, but Judaism without the study of Torah is impossible.

It is only recently that the day-school movement has won the approbation of larger sections of American Jewry. And not only Jewish studies for children, but also adult Jewish education has begun to show improvement. Only this week statistics were gathered that indicate that American Jews spend annually in the vicinity of \$3 million on adult education. Of course, there is a question as to the results, the extent of its work, the methods employed. But, nonetheless, it is encouraging news that we have finally come to understand the importance of a *sefer Torah* which stands ready to be read and studied and researched. For that is why our scrolls are placed in a standing position: to teach us the need for immediate reference and education.

The third answer provided by Radbaz is a rather daring idea. The synagogue, unlike the Tabernacle, was meant to be primarily a House of Prayer, not one of revelation and sacrifice. Therefore, since the worshippers come to the synagogue and stand facing the ark, the *sefer Torah* must stand when it faces the worshippers.

In a sense, this summarizes the other two reasons advanced by Radbaz. The *sefer Torah* stands because the worshippers stand. What a beautiful idea! There is a mutual and reciprocal honor exchanged by the Torah and its admirers. The Torah itself rises before the *mitpallelim* who take her seriously, who involve her in their daily life, and who study her assiduously.

We are told in the first book of Samuel that God says, "For I will honor those who honor Me, and those who neglect Me shall be disgraced" (2:30). God honors those who honor Him! The Torah stands out of respect before the worshipper!

One of the great and seminal thinkers of Hasidism, the renowned Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, has expressed this idea in yet another way. The Torah as the revelation of God, and indeed even as an aspect of God Himself, is filled with holiness and divine light. It contains sublime, heavenly illumination. When the student of Torah studies it sincerely and selflessly, without any thought of personal gain, what he accomplishes is the broadening of the absorptive capacity of Torah for this divine light. He adds to Torah's luster and brilliance. Whereas, if he studies it for selfish and unworthy reasons, the lights of Torah are dimmed and its brilliance diminished.

What a bold idea! The fate of Torah depends upon us. The sanctity of Torah is not a constant – its *kedusha* varies with the sincerity and application of the Jew who studies Torah. If we honor Torah, it honors us by being more sacred. And, Heaven forbid, if we neglect Torah, it contains less illumination and sanctity with which to bless our own lives.

That the destiny of Torah depends upon us we often see in unpleasant ways. Too often we discover that Judaism is reviled because of the personal conduct of individual Jews who are apparently committed to Torah, but who act in a manner that is unbecoming, unattractive, and unethical. A thousand years ago, the great Gaon, Saadia, at the end of his introduction to his Book of Beliefs and Opinions, offers eight reasons, all of them psychologically potent, as to why people reject God and Torah. One of them applies to our case: a man notices the obnoxious behavior of a Jew who believes in God, and he therefore rejects not only this inconsistent Jew, but also all that he professes, i.e. God and His Torah. It happens so often in our own experience. Let an Orthodox Jew misbehave, and people blame Orthodoxy rather than the individual. It is unfortunate, it is illogical, it ignores the weaknesses of all human beings no matter what their ultimate

commitments, but – it is a fact. And, it places upon us a heavy, yet marvelous, responsibility. This very fact, whether we like it or not, reminds us that each of us possesses great risks and tremendous opportunities. We can, each of us, by our actions, influence the destiny of Judaism. We can, by our attitude and approach, either diminish or enhance the luster of the light contained within Torah. If we are *omdim*, if we stand, then the *sefer Torah* too is *omeid*. If we stand upright, then Torah stands upright. Heaven forbid, if we lie down on our God-given duties, then Torah falls because of us.

This then is the significance of the position of the Torah in the ark. It is upright because it must be ready for use as a guiding principle in our lives. It is upright because it must be studied and its message plumbbed. It is upright because it stands in respect and honor of those who so use it and thereby enhance its own holiness and illumination.

Torah must never lie in state. It must stand in readiness. The Jew must never sink low; he must soar even higher – and thereby contribute to the sublimity of Torah. For as Maimonides put it in the passage we quoted in the very beginning, it is a mitzva to honor and glorify and embellish the Torah even more than we can. For if we will not strive to be more than merely respectful Jews, we will become less than respectful Jews. If we do not aspire to become more than human, we are in danger of becoming less than human.

The times we live in, the circumstances that surround us, and our ancient and hoary tradition all call out to us to stand up and live as upright Jews, and so keep our Torah in the ark upright as well. *March 6, 1965

OH R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYAKHEL-PEKUDEI • 25 ADAR 5780 MARCH 21, 2020 • VOL. 27 No. 19

PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Upgrading Shabbat

“But the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for G-d.” (35:2)

No one ever complained about the hotel that lets you check in to your room at eight in the morning and lets you stay there until nine at night on the day you leave.

No one ever complained about the tailwind that reduced the four-and-a-half hour flight from London to Tel Aviv by half-an-hour.

Or what about the audience with the Queen of England that starts ten minutes before schedule and goes on half-an-hour longer than you were told? No one ever said, *“Excuse me your Majesty, I’m sorry, but I’ve got to run out and do a little shopping. See you!”*

When something is special and important, we want it to go on forever. And when it’s a burden, it can never be too brief.

There are two places where the Torah lists the Ten Commandments: in the Torah portion of Yitro and in the Torah portion of Vaetchanan. In Parshat Yitro the Torah says, *“Remember the Shabbat day to make it holy...”* whereas in Parshat Va’etchanan it says, *“Guard the Shabbat day to keep it holy...”* The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni, Yitro 295) explains, *“Remember it beforehand, and guard it afterwards...”* – meaning that Shabbat is so special and important that we should begin it early and finish it late.

We find the same idea in this week’s Torah portion.

“But the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for G-d.”

In this verse, the word “holy,” *kodesh*, precedes the word *Shabbat*; however in Parshat Beshalach (16:23), in a virtually identical expression, the word *Shabbat* precedes *kodesh*. In other words, in our *parsha* the Torah says the *kodesh* should come before the *Shabbat* – the holiness of *Shabbat* should begin early, whereas in Parshat Beshalach the *kodesh* comes after the *Shabbat*, meaning that we should extend our *Shabbat* well into Saturday night.

It all depends on how you look at *Shabbat*. Is your *Shabbat* a 25-hour airline flight in Economy, or is it an uninterrupted audience with the *Shabbat* Queen?

subscribe @ ohr.edu

to receive Ohrnet directly to your email each week

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Vayakhel-Pekudei – Shabbat 9-15

Judgment in Focus

And the Sage said, “From the time the judges covered their heads (with taleiseim).”

are taught in a *mishna* that when we near the time of *mincha* – even during the week – it is forbidden to do certain activities before praying, lest the activity continue and the person forget to pray. However, continues the *mishna*, this is true only if the activity wasn’t yet begun, but if the activity was started, it may continue. The halacha regarding this topic is codified in *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 232.

One such activity is “entering into *din*” – opening a session in a court. The *gemara* discusses the exact definition of the beginning of the session, and two opinions are recorded: “When the litigants begin” and “When the judges cover their heads.” One definition was said by Rav Yirmiya and the other by Rabbi Yonah. Although these sound like different definitions, the *gemara* clarifies that these two opinions do not really disagree. If the court was not in session earlier, then the judges would need to don their *teleisim* before starting, but if the court is continuing after a morning hearing, the new case begins with the claims of the litigants.

A “Talmud Tip” may be learned here from the fact that the *dayanim* would cover their heads with *teleisim* when sitting in judgment. Their kippas and hats were not sufficient, it would seem. I once heard an explanation for this practice from Rav Moshe Carlebach, who said it with a big smile, yet with total seriousness. A *tallis* over the *dayan’s* head served as a type of “blinder.” Not in the sense of “blind justice,” but to help each *dayan* stay totally focused on the case from beginning to end, without any peripheral distraction.

▪ Shabbat 10a

A Full-Tilt Shabbat

Rabbi Yishmael said, “How great are the words of the Sages, who said that it is forbidden to read by the light of a lamp!”

learn in our *beraita* that despite a Rabbinical decree to forbid reading a *sefer* on Shabbat by the light of a lamp, Rabbi Yishmael thought he was allowed to do so since he was certain he would not tilt the lamp to improve the flame and would therefore not desecrate Shabbat. According to one opinion in the *beraita* he almost tilted the lamp, and according to another he actually did so *b’shogeg*. Based on this experience he proclaimed, “How great are the words of the Sages, who said that it is forbidden to read by the light of a lamp!”

Commentaries note that although the reason for the prohibition to read by a lamp – lest one tilt it – is explained in the *beraita*, the Tana of the *mishna* omits its mention. Why? They answer this question with an important Torah principle.

The reasons for the mitzvahs and prohibitions in the Torah were not revealed in the Torah so that a person shouldn’t think that if the reason for a particular mitzvah or prohibition doesn’t apply to him, that mitzvah or prohibition also doesn’t apply to him. In a similar way, the decrees of our Sages were enacted to apply to each person, regardless of any reason that might be associated with the decree. Rabbi Yishmael proclaimed that the words of our Sages in the *mishna* – which did not state a reason for the decree – were “great” in conveying the message that the decree was independent of any particular reason. (Maharitz Chiyus in the name of the Gaon from Vilna) Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg mentioned to me this teaching of the Gaon in a different context (*mayim achronim*), and added, in the name of the Gaon, that for each reason that our Sages may have revealed as being a basis for a decree, there are actually seventy reasons.

▪ Shabbat 11a, 12b

ASK!

Your Jewish Information Resource by the Ohr.edu team – www.ohr.edu

The Bedtime Shema

R. Berzack wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I'd like to know the details of the bedtime Shema regarding a woman's obligation. I've heard that you are not allowed to talk after you have said it. Is this true? And what about reading a book afterwards?

Dear R. Berzack,

Women should recite *Shema* and the *Hamapil* blessing immediately before retiring at night. Married women customarily say the blessing with their hair covered.

One shouldn't interrupt between the *Hamapil* blessing and sleeping. Therefore, one should not eat, drink, or talk after saying *Hamapil*. Some even have the custom to omit *Hamapil* altogether, or they say it but omit G-d's

Name and the phrase "King of the universe," out of concern that they will converse afterwards.

If one says the bedtime *Shema* and then has difficulty sleeping, he should keep repeating the first paragraph of the *Shema* or other verses of supplication until sleep overtakes him. Thinking Torah thoughts is also permitted – so reading a *sefer*, a book of Torah thoughts, is okay.

It is known that Rav Yehuda Segal, the late Rosh Yeshiva in Manchester, used to actually fall asleep while reciting the bedtime *Shema*, and he would wake from time to time and carry on exactly from the place he left off!

Sources: Shulchan Aruch 239:1 Mishna Berurah, ibid. 4,7 Halichos Bas Yisrael 2:40, Rabbi Y. Y. Fuchs

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Vayakhel

Moshe Rabbeinu exhorts *Bnei Yisrael* to keep Shabbat, and requests donations for the materials for making the Mishkan. He collects gold, silver, precious stones, skins and yarn, as well as incense and olive oil for the *menorah* and for anointing. The princes of each tribe bring the precious stones for the *Kohen Gadol*'s breastplate and *ephod*. G-d appoints Betzalel and Oholiav as the master craftsmen. *Bnei Yisrael* contribute so much that Moshe begins to refuse donations. Special curtains with two different covers were designed for the Mishkan's roof and door. Gold-covered boards in silver bases were connected, forming the Mishkan's walls. Betzalel made the Holy Ark (which contained the Tablets) from wood covered with gold. On the Ark's cover there were two figures facing each other. The menorah and the table with the showbreads were also of gold. Two altars were made: a small incense altar of wood overlaid with gold, and a larger altar for sacrifices made of wood covered with copper.

Pekudei

The Book of Shemot concludes with this *parsha*. After finishing all the different parts, vessels and garments used in the Mishkan, Moshe gives a complete accounting and enumeration of all the contributions and of the various clothing and vessels which had been fashioned. *Bnei Yisrael* bring everything to Moshe. He inspects the handiwork and notes that everything was made according to G-d's specifications. Moshe blesses the people. G-d speaks to Moshe and tells him that the Mishkan should be set up on the first day of the first month, i.e., Nissan. He also tells Moshe the order of assembly for the Mishkan and its vessels. Moshe does everything in the prescribed manner. When the Mishkan is finally complete with every vessel in its place, a cloud descends upon it, indicating that G-d's glory was resting there. Whenever the cloud moved away from the Mishkan, *Bnei Yisrael* would follow it. At night the cloud was replaced by a pillar of fire.

Q & A - VAYAKHEL

Questions

1. On which day did Moshe assemble the Jewish People?
2. Why is the prohibition against doing work on Shabbat written prior to the instruction for building the Mishkan?
3. Why does the Torah specify the particular prohibition of lighting a fire on Shabbat right after it had already noted the general prohibition of doing work on Shabbat?
4. What function did the "yitdot hamishkan" serve?
5. What function did the "bigdei hasrad" serve?
6. What was unusual about the way the women spun the goat's hair?
7. Why were the Nesi'im last to contribute to the building of the Mishkan? How does the Torah show dissatisfaction with their actions?
8. Who does the Torah identify as the primary builders of the Mishkan? From which tribes were they?
9. What time of day did the people bring their daily contributions for the construction of the Mishkan?
10. For what was the woven goat's hair used?
11. What image was woven into the *parochet*?
12. Why does the Torah attribute the building of the *aron* to Betzalel?
13. Where were the sculptured *cheruvim* located?
14. How many lamps did the *menorah* have?
15. Of what materials was the *mizbe'ach hakotoret* composed?
16. Of what material was the *mizbe'ach ha'olah* composed?
17. The *kiyor* was made from copper mirrors. What function did these mirrors serve in Egypt?
18. How did the *kiyor* promote peace?
19. The *kiyor* was made from the mirrors of the women who were crowding at the entrance to the *Ohel Mo'ed*. Why were the women crowding there?
20. Of what material were the "yitdot hamishkan" constructed?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Answers

1. 35:1 - The day after *Yom Kippur*.
2. 35:2 - To emphasize that the building of the Mishkan doesn't supersede the laws of Shabbat.
3. 35:3 - There are two opinions: One opinion is to teach that igniting a fire on Shabbat is punishable by lashes as opposed to other "melachot" which are punishable by death. The other opinion is to teach that violation of numerous "melachot" at one time requires a separate atonement for each violation.
4. 35:18 - The edges of the curtains were fastened to them. These were inserted in the ground so the curtains would not move in the wind.
5. 35:19 - They covered the *aron*, the *shulchan*, the *menorah*, and the *mizbachot* when they were packed for transport.
6. 35:26 - It was spun directly from off the backs of the goats.
7. 35:27 - The Nesi'im reasoned that they would first let the people contribute materials needed for the Mishkan and then they would contribute what was lacking. The Torah shows its dissatisfaction by deleting a letter from their title.
8. 35:30, 35:34 - Betzalel ben Uri from the tribe of Yehuda; Ohliav ben Achisamach from the tribe of Dan.
9. 36:3 - Morning.
10. 36:14 - It was made into curtains to be draped over the Mishkan.
11. 36:35 - *Cherubim*. (See Rashi 26:31)
12. 37:1 - Because he dedicated himself to its building more than anyone else.
13. 37:7 - On the two extremities of the *kaporet* (cover of the *aron*).
14. 37:23 - Seven.
15. 37:25, 26 - Wood overlaid with gold.
16. 38:1-2 - Wood overlaid with copper.
17. 38:8 - These mirrors aided in the proliferation of the Jewish People. The Jewish women in Egypt would look in the mirrors so as to awaken the affections of their husbands who were exhausted by their slave labor.
18. 38:8 - Its waters helped a woman accused of adultery to prove her innocence.
19. 38:8 - To donate to the Mishkan.
20. 38:20 - Copper.

Q & A - PEKUDEI

Questions

1. Why is the word Mishkan stated twice in verse 38:21?
2. Why is the Mishkan called the "Mishkan of Testimony"?
3. Who was appointed to carry the vessels of the Mishkan in the *midbar*?
4. Who was the officer in charge of the *levi'im*?
5. What is the meaning of the name Betzalel?
6. How many people contributed a half-shekel to the Mishkan? Who contributed?
7. Which material used in the *bigdei kehuna* was not used in the coverings of the sacred vessels?
8. How were the gold threads made?
9. What was inscribed on the stones on the shoulders of the *ephod*?
10. What was on the hem of the *me'il*?
11. What did the *Kohen Gadol* wear between the *mitznefet* and the *tzitz*?
12. What role did Moshe play in the construction of the Mishkan?
13. Which date was the first time that the Mishkan was erected and not dismantled?
14. What was the "tent" which Moshe spread over the Mishkan (40:19)?
15. What "testimony" did Moshe place in the *aron*?
16. What function did the *parochet* serve?
17. Where was the *shulchan* placed in the Mishkan?
18. Where was the *menorah* placed in the Mishkan?
19. Who offered the communal sacrifices during the eight days of the dedication of the Mishkan?
20. On which day did both Moshe and Aharon serve as *kohanim*?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Answers

1. 38:21 - To allude to the *Beit Hamikdash* that would twice be taken as a "mashkon" (pledge) for the sins of the Jewish People until the nation repents.
2. 38:21 - It was testimony for the Jewish People that G-d forgave them for the golden calf and allowed His *Shechina* to dwell among them.
3. 38:21 - The *levi'im*.
4. 38:21 - Itamar ben Aharon.
5. 38:22 - "In the shadow of G-d."
6. 38:26 - 603,550. Every man age twenty and over (except the *levi'im*).
7. 39:1 - Linen. (See Rashi 31:10)
8. 39:3 - The gold was beaten into thin plates from which threads were cut. (See Rashi 28:6)
9. 39:6, 39:7 - The names of the tribes.
10. 39:24, 25 - Woven pomegranates and golden bells.
11. 39:31 - *Tefillin*.
12. 39:33 - He stood it up.
13. 40:17 - *Rosh Chodesh Nissan* of the second year in the desert. For seven days before this, during the consecration of Aharon and his sons, Moshe erected and dismantled the Mishkan. (Rashi 39:29)
14. 40:19 - The curtain of goatskin.
15. 40:20 - The *Luchot Habrit*.
16. 40:21 - It served as a partition for the *aron*.
17. 40:22 - On the northern side of the *Ohel Mo'ed*, outside the *parochet*.
18. 40:24 - On the southern side of the *Ohel Mo'ed* opposite the *shulchan*.
19. 40:29 - Moshe.
20. 40:31 - On the eighth day of the consecration of the Mishkan.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language
by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Laborious Work and Angelic Creativity

The Torah forbids a Jew from performing any *melacha* on Shabbat (Ex. 20:10; 32:14-15; 35:2; Lev. 23:3; Deut. 5:14). Similarly, the Torah reports that when G-d finished creating the world after six days, He rested on the seventh day from all forms of *melacha* (Gen. 2:2-3). The word *melacha* is typically translated as “work” or “labor,” but in the laws of Shabbat it takes on a more exact meaning that bans 39 specific categories of work, but does not forbid other laborious activities. In this essay we seek to clarify the exact meaning of the word *melacha* by comparing it to its apparent synonym *avodah*, and mapping the relationship between these two Hebrew words.

Nachmanides (to Ex. 20:9, 35:3, and Lev. 23:4) understands that *avodah* is a subset of *melacha*. He notes that when forbidding work on Shabbat, the Torah uses the word *melacha*, but when it comes to the holidays, the Torah does not forbid *any melacha* – only a specific type of *melacha* called *melechet avodah*. That is the exact phraseology used by the Torah when it forbids working on Passover (Ex. 12:16; Lev. 23:7-8; Num. 28:18; 28:25), Shavuot (Lev. 23:21, Num. 28:26), Rosh Hashanah (Lev. 23:25, Num. 29:1), Succot (Lev. 23:35, Num. 29:12) and Shemini Atzeret (Lev. 23:36, Num. 29:35). In all those cases, the Torah forbids only *melechet avodah* but not *melacha* in general. Concerning Yom Kippur, the Torah clarifies four times that *any melacha* is forbidden (Lev. 23:28-31, Num. 29:7), just like Shabbat, and not just *melechet avodah*.

Accordingly, Nachmanides explains that there are two types of *melacha*: one is *melechet hanaah*, labors for human enjoyment, which means preparing food; while the other type of *melacha* is *melechet avodah*, which is all other “work” that does not provide for physical enjoyment. Based on this, Nachmanides understands that the above-mentioned phraseology serves to teach the halacha that on the holidays only forms of labor not required in preparing food (*melechet avodah*) are forbidden, but forms of labor necessary for preparing food (*melechet hanaah*) are not forbidden.

In fact, Nachmanides observes that the very first time the Torah mentions the prohibition of *melechet avodah* on a holiday, it follows up on that prohibition by explicitly

noting that food preparation is permitted (Ex. 12:16), and then assumes that the reader can extrapolate from this that the same is true of all holidays. By contrast, on Shabbat and Yom Kippur *all forms* of *melacha* are forbidden.

In a nutshell, Nachmanides understands that *avodah* refers to any labor that does not directly lead to physical pleasure, while *melacha* even includes labors that lead directly to physical pleasure (specifically, food preparation). That said, Abarbanel (to Ex. 20:9) disagrees with Nachmanides, arguing that *avodah* and *melacha* are true synonyms and do not convey separate ideas.

Rabbi Yitzchak Shmuel Reggio (1784-1855) explains in his commentary to the Pentateuch (Ex. 12:16; 20:9) that the term *melacha* refers specifically to an act that brings about an improvement in a specific object, while *avodah* refers to any act of labor, whether or not it brings about any changes that affect a specific item.

Rabbi Aharon Leib Steinman (1914-2017) illustrates this difference between *melacha* and *avodah* by using the classical *cheftza-gavra* (object-person) construct found in Yeshivas. He explains that the term *melacha* focuses on the object of work, and denotes performing acts of labor intended to yield certain products or results. The term *avodah*, on the other hand, focuses on the worker himself and his efforts, denoting work or labor as actions performed by a specific person.

Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) quotes an elaborate discussion about these words from the writings of R. Naftali Hertz (Wessely) Weisel (1725-1805) – a figure often maligned as a *maskil*, but whose rabbinic bona fides are also attested to. He writes in *Yayn Levanon* that the word *melacha* primarily refers to any sort of creative or innovative activity – whether by thought, verbalization or action – and need not require any physical act. The term *avodah*, in contrast, refers specifically to tangible actions.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Gen. 2:2, Ex. 12:16, 35:2) takes all the above-mentioned ideas and synthesizes them quite nicely. He argues that the term *avodah* focuses simply on the labor or toiling without consideration of

the result, but that the word *melacha* focuses on the result of one's work. As such, *melacha* refers to that which *avodah* can accomplish. Rabbi Hirsch writes that *melacha* is conceptually related to *malach* ("angel" or "messenger"). Just as the *malach* is the agent used to bring about the realization and execution of a certain idea, so does *melacha* take a thought or idea and carry through to turn it into a reality. In a nutshell, *melacha* denotes intelligent and creative labor, while *avodah* is brute work.

Rabbi Moshe Alshich (1508-1593) explains that *avodah* refers to labor that one performs on behalf of his master (it is related to the word *eved* — "slave" or "servant"), while *melacha* refers to any form of labor in which one might engage.

Along these lines, Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook (1891-1982) explains that *melacha* denotes a more abstract form of work which allows one to realize the contents of his own free thoughts. Because it is closer to the realm of the sublime than forced labor is, *melacha* is connected to the word *malach* ("angel"), which dwells in the lofty Heavens. *Melacha* is performed under the influence of one's own faculties and decisions. In *melacha*, it is man's own thoughts that drive him to do what he does.

The term *avodah* oppositely denotes a more concrete and focused form of work. Instead of being the product of one's freedom, it is the product of one's constrictions. As such, *avodah* is limiting. Instead of a person controlling his work, his work controls him. This can be a positive thing when *avodah* as the service of G-d controls a person. But on the flip side, it can also have negative results. About this, King Solomon wrote that even a king can become a slave to his field (Ecc. 5:8). With this in mind, Rabbi Kook warns that sometimes a person can become so involved and devoted to his work that his job or his tools are really controlling him, instead of him controlling them.

Malbim (1809-1879) and Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer (1866-1935) explain that the term *avodah* denotes a form of hard labor or work by which one must exert much effort (and to which one is subjugated/responsible — *mishubad*). Easier services that do not require so much effort or energy are branded as

sheirut ("service"), and a related word *misharet* refers to a "domestic helper" who carries out light household duties. [Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim (1740-1814) writes that since *avodah* refers to work that one is *obligated* to perform, it can include even lowly, disgraceful, or dishonorable forms of work that he would not otherwise do, even if they technically do not require much effort.]

Nonetheless, Malbim notes, when it comes to the service of G-d, even the easiest forms of ritual worship (like singing, which requires barely any physical exertion) are called *avodah*, because the importance of the service makes it as intense as harder forms of labor.

Following this basic approach, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum of Satmar (1887-1979) notes that the word *melacha* is related to the word *malach* ("angel") because just as an angel exerts no physical effort in performing his duties, so does *melacha* refer to a labor that is not as physically straining as *avodah*.

When the Torah refers to the Levitical duties of the family of Kehat, it refers to those duties as *melacha* (Num. 4:3). Yet, when referring to the duties of the families of Gershon (Num. 4:23) and Merari (Num. 4:30), the Torah switches to the word *avodah*. The Tosafists and *Peirush HaRokeach* account for this word-switch by explaining that Kehat's responsibilities were less difficult and required less effort than the other families' responsibilities, since they only had to carry the components of the Mishkan and did not need to do anything else. Because of this, the Torah uses the word *melacha*, which implies a lighter form of labor, when speaking about Kehat. Rabbi Shmuel David Ungar of Nitra (1885-1945) notes that this is especially true in light of the fact that the Holy Ark actually carried those who seemed to carry it (Sotah 35a).

On the other hand, the other families of Levites were expected to assemble and disassemble the Mishkan, which is a more difficult task. Therefore, the Torah uses the term *avodah*, which implies a more difficult form of labor, when speaking about their duties.

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Hershman

Carrying the Nation

On Shabbat, we cease all *melacha*. It is not laborious work that is prohibited; it is *productive* work. Creative, productive activity exercises our mastery over the natural world, and by ceasing these activities on Shabbat we affirm that the world does not belong to us, but to He Who created man and the world.

The thirty nine prohibited categories of activity are all productive work: plowing, threshing, grinding, dyeing, weaving, writing, to name a few. Only the last of the thirty nine – carrying from one domain to another – appears to lack this quality of productive, creative activity. Yet, this prohibition assumes great significance in the teachings of the prophets. In the last days of the Jewish state, Yirmiyahu was commanded to proclaim that the state would endure and even flourish only if the nation would observe the Shabbat and keep it holy. Apart from the general admonition, Yirmiyahu singled out carrying:

For the sake of your own souls, take care not to carry anything on the Sabbath day... if you will earnestly obey Me, not carrying anything through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, and keeping the Sabbath day holy, not doing any work on it, then through the gate of this city with come kings and princes... But if you will not obey Me to keep the Sabbath day holy, and not to carry things through the gates of Yerushalyaim on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it will consume the palaces of Yerushalayim and not be extinguished." (Yirmiyahu 17)

Why is the prohibition on carrying treated as separate, running parallel to the general keeping of Shabbat?

The common idea underlying the other *melachot* is man's position as master of all things of the physical world. Carrying, however, belongs to the social sphere. It is symbolic of a robust societal life, where the individual contributes to the society and the society contributes to the individual. Hence, the scope of the prohibition includes carrying from the individual domain to the public domain and vice versa.

If the prohibition of the other *melachot* subordinate man to G-d as regards his position in the physical word, the prohibition of carrying expresses man's subordination to G-d in the social sphere. The former affirms G-d as the master of nature, and the latter affirms G-d as the master of history. His sovereignty over the world includes His direction of both. These two facets of our homage on Shabbat are memorialized in the two reasons mentioned in the Torah for Shabbat: the *creation of the world* and the *exodus from Egypt*. The former attests to G-d's sovereignty over nature and the latter to His sovereignty over the lives of nations.

Now it is clear why the words of Yirmiyahu hang the survival of the Jewish state on keeping Shabbat specifically through obeying the laws of carrying, and why their desecration heralds the fall of the state. Carrying tears away the banner of G-d from the state and from the social life within it – but honoring the Sabbath by refraining from carrying impresses the seal of G-d on national life.

- Sources: Commentary, Shemot 35:2

For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at rcklein@ohr.edu

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

Love of the Land, written by RAV MENDEL WEINBACH, zt"l • General Editor: RABBI MOSHE

NEWMAN • Design: RABBI ELIEZER SHAPIRO z"l / DANIEL FREEDMAN

© 1992 - 2020 Ohr Somayach Institutions - All rights reserved • This publication contains words of Torah.

Please treat it with due respect. Editor's disclaimer: Ohrnet Magazine is not intended to be a source for halachic rulings. In any real and specific case one should consult a qualified halachic authority for a ruling

Parshat Vayakhel: A Conspiracy to Forgive (Part II)

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

PARASHAT KI TISA (Part II)

Last week we began to look carefully at the process by which Moshe 'convinces' Hashem to forgive Bnei Yisrael for worshipping the golden calf. Just to review briefly, we noticed the following elements of the conversations between Hashem and Moshe:

1) WHO TAKES THE BLAME: Hashem and Moshe struggle over who is truly responsible for the people. Hashem claims that the people are Moshe's, that he took them out of Egypt; Moshe insists that the people are Hashem's and that He took them out of Egypt.

2) OUT OF THE LOOP: While Hashem and Moshe debate, the people are busy dancing around their idol, unaware of the wrath they have provoked. Moshe's plea to Hashem for their preservation illustrates their distance from Hashem: as Moshe begins his plea, the Torah refers to Hashem as "Moshe's God" -- "Moshe beseeched HIS God," since at this moment, Hashem is Moshe's God alone, not the God of the people. The people have claimed the Egel as their god: "THIS is your god, Yisrael, who took you out of the land of Egypt." Furthermore, when Moshe offers Hashem three reasons to spare the people, none of the reasons suggest that the people actually deserve to survive. Moshe turns to history - to Yetziat Mitzrayim (the Exodus) and the promises made to the Avot (forefathers) -- and to Hillul Hashem (desecration of Hashem's name) to convince Hashem to stay His hand.

3) FIGHTING ON TWO FRONTS: Once he has saved the people from immediate destruction, Moshe's next goal is to get Hashem to forgive the people completely. This struggle takes place on two fronts:

- a) Moshe faces the people, punishing the worst offenders and motivating (or shocking) the rest of the people into doing teshuva (repenting).
- b) Moshe faces Hashem, convincing Him to forgive the people and return His Presence to them. Hashem's withdrawal of His Presence in response to the people's worship of the egel (golden calf) meant the canceling of the Mishkan; the return of His Presence signifies the reinstatement of the Mishkan plan.

4) PLAN FOR ATTACK: Moshe employs several strategies to get the people back on track:

- a) He shatters the Luhot (Tablets), symbol of the covenant with Hashem, in front of the people, halting their idolatrous merry-making; according to the Seforno, he aims to shock the people into teshuva.
- b) He grinds up the egel and feeds it to the people. While most mefarshim (commentators) interpret this as a way of showing the avenging Leviyim which of the people had worshipped the egel (as the offenders' bodies would somehow be physically changed in an obvious way by their ingestion of the Egel dust, as the sota's [woman suspected of adultery] body is disfigured by ingestion of the sota waters), Ramban interprets this act as Moshe's way of forcing the people to express disgust for and absolute rejection of the egel: making their god into fertilizer is a most graphic way to accomplish this psychological goal.
- c) He commands the Leviyim, those most devoted to Hashem, to execute the worst offenders.

5) MOSHE'S ROLE: At this point we stopped to consider a puzzling question about Moshe's role in mediating between Hashem and the people: Moshe seems to be coming and going, playing both sides of the issue. When facing Hashem, he defends the people, begging Hashem not to be angry, not to kill the people. But then he goes down the mountain and does exactly these things to the people himself! First he gets angry -- the Torah uses the same words, "haron af," to describe Moshe's anger as Moshe himself used to describe the anger Hashem should really not be feeling -- and then he commands the execution of those involved in the worship. Facing the people, he plays the tough guy, recriminating, unyielding, full of vengeance. Facing Hashem, he *also* plays the tough guy, recriminating ('blaming' Hashem for taking them out of Egypt, accusing Him of not meeting His commitments), unyielding, and full of vengeance (trying to 'punish' Hashem by having himself erased from Hashem's book of life). Will the real Moshe please stand up?

Last week we sketched an approach to this question:

Moshe must play different roles on different stages: facing Hashem, Who is angry and ready to destroy, Moshe must act as a calming force, ready to defend. He certainly must hold his own anger and destructive impulses in check in order to counterbalance Hashem's anger. But when he faces the people, Moshe must show passionate anger in order to shock the people out of their gleeful worship of the calf, into realization of sin, and into doing teshuva. This is why we hear that as Moshe witnesses the worship of the calf, he "becomes angry," although he has known about the calf since Hashem informed him of it atop the mountain; his anger is not an artificial show, it is Moshe allowing his own genuine anger to burn now that he can discard the role of defender.

Moshe's use of his anger shows his emotional flexibility and self-control. Before Hashem, he stifles his anger to achieve one goal; before the people, he releases his anger to achieve another. Maintaining an emotional balance between these extremes is a precarious tightrope-walk; if the inappropriate emotion emerges at the wrong time, disaster will follow. This sort of mediation also calls on Moshe to display absolute selflessness: he does not have the luxury of indulging whatever emotions he happens to feel, as many of us might. He

must channel his emotions to the needs of the hour.

[Imagine the emotional roller-coaster of a typical Sunday for the rabbi of a nice-sized congregation: first he attends a brit milah, then a funeral, then a wedding, then counsels a troubled marriage, then goes to the hospital to visit a new mother and baby and a terminally ill congregant with cancer. The rabbi has to feel the appropriate emotions at the appropriate time, and he can't fake it. To perform successfully, the rabbi (and all of the rest of us) must develop great emotional sensitivity, flexibility, generosity, selflessness, and energy.]

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE:

This brings us to our next question, which we touched last week and which will keep us busy this week:

Where does Moshe find the chutzpah to challenge Hashem? Hashem tells him that He intends to destroy the people, yet Moshe stands in the way and refuses to allow it! Some examples of Moshe's puzzling (or shocking) behavior:

1) Hashem tells Moshe to stand aside so that He can destroy the people; instead, Moshe stands in the way and begins to pray for their salvation.

2) The next time Moshe talks to Hashem, he tries to blackmail Hashem with an ultimatum: "Forgive the people or kill me!" We might expect that Hashem would do exactly that, and kill Moshe just for his chutzpah!

3) Hashem refuses to forgive the people and tells Moshe to go back to leading the people onward. But Moshe refuses, and Hashem has to repeat the command; even then, Moshe does not obey.

4) Moshe next claims that Hashem had promised him all kinds of wonderful things, but that He has not delivered. If this accusation were not astounding enough, Moshe musters the audacity to take this opportunity to ask for a special 'private screening'/revelation of Hashem's mysteries -- and then he asks to *see* Hashem Himself!

These would be pretty tall requests under any circumstances, but in this context, in which Moshe has stubbornly refused to do anything Hashem tells him to do and has accused Hashem of renegeing on His commitments, what makes Moshe think that Hashem will not just zap him into a cloud of vapor, much less grant all of these requests? How does he know how far to push Hashem before he walks into the danger zone and finds himself on the wrong end of a Divine lightning-bolt?

CONSPIRACY OF MERCY:

Last week we introduced the idea that Hashem and Moshe are collaborators in a "conspiracy of mercy." Hashem doesn't really want to destroy the people, He wants to forgive them. But justice and His own anger make it impossible for Him to just forget the whole thing and pretend it didn't happen. Moshe's job is to calm Hashem and find a way for Him to be merciful.

How does Moshe know he is really supposed to resist Hashem's anger and behave so aggressively and stubbornly in the process of attaining forgiveness for the people? Hashem's first hint is when He tells Moshe to "leave Me alone" so that He can become truly angry and destroy the people: paradoxically, telling Moshe about this plan is really Hashem's way of hinting that Moshe is supposed to resist the plan, because certainly, if Hashem wanted to destroy the people, He would not have to say "excuse Me" first to Moshe. This perspective is expressed by the Midrash Rabba:

SHEMOT RABBA, PARASHA 42, SECTION 9:

"Now leave Me, so that My anger may burn against them, and I shall destroy them!" Now, was Moshe indeed grasping onto the Holy One, blessed be He, that He had to say, "Leave Me"? To what is this comparable? To a king who became angry at his son, put him into a bedroom, and began to try to hit him; as he did so, the king shouted from the bedroom, "Leave me alone, so that I can hit him!" [The boy's] teacher was just outside. He said, "The king and his son are [alone] in the bedroom -- why is he saying, 'Leave me alone'? It must be because the king wants me to calm him down over his son; this is why he shouts, 'Leave me!'" In the same way, Hashem said to Moshe, "Now leave Me!" Moshe said, "The reason why the Holy One, blessed be He, says 'Leave Me' is because He wants me to appease Him over Yisrael." Immediately, he began to seek mercy for them, and this is why "Moshe beseeched the face of Hashem, his God."

[One other example of a situation in which Hashem warns Moshe to clear out of the way so that He can blast the people -- and where Hashem is again really hinting that Moshe should intercede -- is the story of the rebellion of Korah, BeMidbar 16:19-27.]

We should also note that our parasha's story is not the first in which Moshe refuses to carry out Hashem's will. The very first time Hashem communicates with Moshe, He commands Moshe to take Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt. Moshe says no -- five times, in five different ways. The first four times, he gives a reason for refusing, but the fifth time, he just flatly refuses. Finally, Hashem becomes angry with him and forces him to take on the mission. Perhaps, though, Moshe's refusals at that early stage in his career were what confirmed for Hashem that Moshe was the man to lead Bnei Yisrael: He needed someone who could "stand up" to Him in his anger.

Some see Moshe's initial refusal to undertake the divine mission as negative -- Hazal say that Moshe was to have been the Kohen

Gadol (High Priest) but lost this honor because of his stubbornness; Aharon, who became Moshe's spokesman to Paro, received the Kehuna Gedola in Moshe's place. But even if Moshe's early intransigence was a mistake, at other times, like in our parasha, Moshe's willingness to take a stand against Hashem makes the difference between life and death for Bnei Yisrael. Ultimately, it makes the difference between a nation accompanied by Hashem and a nation abandoned by Him.

Getting back to our issue -- how Moshe knows to behave the way he does -- this first hint is the only indication we have seen so far. For the full picture, we must return to the text, which will also reveal Moshe's strategy is in his successful bid to get Hashem to forgive the people.

MOSHE MOVES OUT:

SHEMOT 33:7-11 --

Moshe took the tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the "Ohel Mo'ed" [Tent of Meeting"]. Whoever sought Hashem would go out to the Ohel Mo'ed, which was outside the camp. When Moshe would leave to go to the tent, all of the nation would stand up and wait, each person at the door of his tent, and look after Moshe until he came to the tent. When Moshe came to the tent, the pillar of cloud [i.e., God's Presence] would descend and stand at the door of the tent and speak with Moshe. All of the people would see the pillar of cloud standing at the door of the tent; they would all stand up and bow down, each at the door of his tent. Hashem would speak to Moshe face to face -- just as one speaks to his friend -- and then he would return to the camp. But his servant, Yehoshua bin Nun, an acolyte, would never leave the tent.

As we encounter the scene described above, Moshe has tried once for forgiveness, but Hashem has resisted and told him to return to leading the people. Of course, Moshe is not actually going to listen to Hashem, but he does change tactics. Instead of working on Hashem directly, he returns to the other front of the battle -- the people -- and strengthens his position by deepening their teshuva, making it 'harder' for Hashem to resist forgiving them.

He takes a tent outside the camp and makes that tent the "Ohel Mo'ed," the "Tent of Meeting" [=meeting between Hashem and people]. He even calls it the "Ohel Mo'ed," an appellation the Torah uses over 30 times in Sefer Shemot to refer to the Mishkan. This gesture communicates to the people that Hashem is no longer in their midst: instead of the beautiful Mishkan, a center of national worship, a meeting-place with the Shekhina [Presence of Hashem] at the center of the camp, the "Ohel Mo'ed" is a plain tent planted "outside the camp," "far from the camp," to which interested individuals have access but to which there is no national dimension at all.

The people get the message. Whenever Moshe leaves the camp to communicate with Hashem, they look longingly after him; they show the utmost respect for the appearance of the Shekhina by bowing when it appears. These people appreciate what their sin has caused and are deep in the throes of teshuva.

JUST LIKE FRIENDS:

Note that the Torah also takes this opportunity to contrast the distance between Hashem and the people with the intimacy between Hashem and Moshe. They speak "face to face," "like friends," while the rest of the people watch from afar. But besides this contrast, the Torah's observation that Hashem and Moshe communicate as friends also expresses several other ideas:

1) Hashem and Moshe's speaking like friends means that Moshe can speak freely, as one would speak to a friend. He argues with Hashem head-to-head, openly challenging, debating, rejecting unsatisfactory alternatives. The Torah is confirming what was suggested above: Moshe has been given permission to adopt a posture of equality with Hashem which in other circumstances, or for other people, would earn Hashem's anger. Hashem expects Moshe to speak to him like a friend would. The purpose of this permission is so that Moshe can facilitate the process of forgiveness.

2) Hashem and Moshe's speaking like friends implies that Hashem has taken on a human persona. He will be Moshe's "friend," his equal, subject to being swayed by Moshe's arguments the way friends debate one another. Moreover, Hashem's behaving humanly means that He is taking on a human, **emotional** way of interacting with Moshe during this crisis. He can be swayed by arguments which are not purely rational, but instead appeal to the emotions; He may also be swayed by the mere persistence of His opponent, as people can be swayed. This facet of the interaction is hinted in Midrash Tanhuma:

MIDRASH TANHUMA, KI TISA, CHAP 27:

"Hashem would speak to Moshe face to face": we do not know [from this] whether the low one [i.e., Moshe] lifted himself up or the High One lowered Himself down. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said, "As it were, the Highness of the world bent Himself over, as it says, 'Hashem descended to the tent.'"

Instead of raising Moshe higher, closer to His own level, Hashem lowers Himself to Moshe's human level, making Himself vulnerable to arguments which would sway a human.

3) Hashem's and Moshe's speaking like friends draws our attention to the strategy which Moshe will now implement to push Hashem once again toward forgiveness: making it personal. Quite aware of his special relationship with Hashem, Moshe is about to take

advantage of that friendship to the maximum.

MAKING IT PERSONAL (I):

SHEMOT 33:12-13 --

Moshe said to Hashem, "Look, You told me, 'Bring the nation up [to Eretz Yisrael],' but You have not told me whom You will send with me! And [yet] You have said, 'I [Hashem] will know You [Moshe] through the Name,' and also, 'You [Moshe] have found favor in My [Hashem's] eyes.' Now, if I have really found favor in Your eyes, let me know Your ways -- then I will know You and I will be able to find favor in Your eyes. And see, too, that this nation is Your nation!"

The **way** Moshe formulates his argument is crucial to understanding the substance of the argument. Note that Moshe makes everything here completely personal:

- 1) "You have not told **ME** whom You will send with **ME**."
- 2) "You promised **ME**"
- 3) "You said **I** found favor"
- 4) "If so -- if **I** have found favor"
- 5) "Let **ME** know Your ways"
- 6) "Then **I** will know You"
- 7) "**I** will find favor"

Not only are Moshe's formulations personal, the content of his claims is personal as well. Moshe claims that Hashem had promised him that He would maintain intimacy with him, that Moshe had found favor in His eyes -- yet He has decided to send a faceless, nameless angel along with him instead of accompanying him Himself! Of course, the reason the angel is faceless and nameless, the reason the angel does not carry Hashem's name and represent a high level of Divine Presence, is not because of Moshe, but because of the people's own abandonment of Hashem. Moshe argues, however, that this is simply not fair: Hashem had promised that He would remain close to Moshe, and sending this angel means punishing Moshe for a crime he did not commit.

WHAT'S IN A NAME:

What promise is Moshe referring to when he says that Hashem told him that He would "know him through the Name"? And what does that mean anyway -- is Hashem about to forget Moshe's name? Has He forgotten the names of the rest of Bnei Yisrael? The Ramban suggests a possibility:

RAMBAN, SHEMOT 33:14 --

... Moshe said [to Hashem], "You have not told me which angel You are sending with me," and he [Moshe] made two requests: One, "I will know you by name," meaning that "I [Hashem] will become known through you [Moshe]"; and perhaps Moshe's saying "And You said," refers to what Hashem had said to him, "I was not known to them by My name Y-HVH."

All the way back in Parashat Va-Era, Hashem appeared to Moshe and told him that although He had revealed Himself to the Avot (forefathers) as "E-I Shad-dai," He had not made Himself known to them as "Y-HVH." Of course, they knew the name Y-HVH, as is clear from its appearance all over Sefer Bereshit (Genesis); but the name "Y-HVH" means "The One Who is Present," and while Hashem had 'visited' the Avot, He had not yet emerged publicly on the stage of history. To them, He was not actively Y-HVH, not constantly present.

This state of affairs changes dramatically with the plagues, Hashem's primary vehicle for manifesting His Presence to the world in a show of power. The key phrase, repeated many times through the course of the plagues -- "So that Egypt will know that I am **Y-HVH**" -- is the signal of this new stage in Hashem's open participation in history. Paro begins his dealings with Moshe with the arrogant claim, "I do not know Y-HVH"; by the end, we can see that he "knows" Y-HVH, the Present One, quite well! (The fact that this process of Self-revelation is important to Hashem explains why Moshe uses it effectively in the beginning of our parasha to argue that decimating Bnei Yisrael would counter Hashem's purposes.)

Hashem's decision to dwell among Bnei Yisrael further manifests His presentness, His quality of "Y-HVH." Moshe is now arguing that when Hashem told him that He was now making Himself known as Y-HVH, that meant that He would remain present. But now He has decided to send only an angel with them; He is withdrawing the aspect of Y-HVH, as it was withdrawn in the time of the Avot.

MAKING IT PERSONAL (II):

But why does Moshe formulate his argument so personally? Why is his argument so focused on the closeness Hashem has promised to *him*? If his goal is to gain forgiveness for the people, how will it help to focus on himself? Can it be that he has given up on this goal and is trying to preserve his own relationship with Hashem?

Moshe has been paying careful attention to Hashem's responses to his requests and he has noticed that Hashem has singled him out several times in favorable ways:

1) When Hashem tells Moshe to stand aside so He can destroy the people, He tells Moshe that He will replace this nation with a nation produced by Moshe's descendants. Moshe rejects this plan, but he learns just how important he is to Hashem.

2) As Moshe begins his prayer to save the people from destruction, the Torah reinforces the impression of a special personal connection between Hashem and Moshe by referring to Hashem as "Moshe's God."

3) When Moshe moves the "Ohel Mo'ed" out of the camp, the Torah again emphasizes that Hashem and Moshe maintain their close relationship. One might even suggest that Moshe becomes closer to Hashem than before -- after all, the Torah never before described Hashem and Moshe as "speaking face to face, as friends do." Now that Bnei Yisrael have been rejected, Hashem devotes all of His attention, so to speak, to Moshe.

Moshe notices this trend and expands it into a strategy: he will use his closeness with Hashem to pressure Him into forgiving the rest of the people. Moshe's strategy unfolds in several stages in the parasha.

First Moshe takes a direct tack, demanding that Hashem forgive the people or "erase me from the book You have written" -- forgive them or kill me (erase me from the Book of Life, as most commentators interpret). Moshe makes no attempt to address the substance of the relationship between Hashem and the people. Hashem should forgive them not because they deserve it and not because of His relationship with them but because He prefers forgiving the people to killing Moshe. Hashem rebuffs this demand and asserts that He will punish only the sinners. But He also commands Moshe to take the people to Eretz Yisrael, so Moshe has won something in this exchange: the people will not only survive, they will realize the destiny promised to their forefathers of inheriting Eretz Cana'an.

Moshe realizes two things:

1) Hashem refused his bold attempt because Moshe was asking Him to simply ignore the demands of justice in favor of Moshe's counter-demand. Moshe must take a more subtle path.

2) He had supplied no intrinsic reason for Hashem to forgive the people; instead, he had applied the 'external' leverage of his own death. He must supply an intrinsic rationale for forgiving the people.

Moshe now begins to follow an indirect path to forgiveness: he casts all of Hashem's promises as promises made to *him* (although these commitments were made to the people as a whole) and argues that it is unfair for Hashem to deprive him of this closeness. At the same time, he supplies an intrinsic reason for forgiving the people: making a sudden transition from the personal to the national, he sounds a theme he has sounded before: "See, also, this nation is Your nation!", the insistent reminder to Hashem that these people are His people.

MOSHE TURNS THE TABLES:

Having argued that Hashem 'owes' him, Moshe now spells out the essence of his demand: Moshe wants Hashem Himself to teach him how to achieve forgiveness for the people! This is what he means by "Tell me Your ways, so that I will know You and therefore will be able to find favor in Your eyes." Tell me how to handle a situation like this -- how do I successfully arouse Your midat ha-rahamim, your merciful qualities? This perspective is articulated by Rashi:

RASHI, SHEMOT 33:19 --

"I will call before you with the name Y-HVH" -- To teach you the way to find mercy [before Me], even if the merits of the forefathers become used up.

Moshe is ostensibly asking Hashem to teach him what to do next time, how to handle crises in the future. Hashem's revelation of His merciful characteristics, the thirteen attributes of mercy, is a lesson to be used to defuse subsequent incidents of Divine anger.

How does Hashem respond to Moshe's audacious request?

SHEMOT 33:14 --

He said, "My face [personal presence] will accompany you; I will lead you."

On the one hand, it seems that Hashem has finally given in. He agrees to personally lead the people. But this is very strange for two reasons: First, the demand Moshe just made was not that Hashem lead the people, but that Hashem show him how to achieve

forgiveness for the people in future incidents. So the words above seem to ignore Moshe's request. Second, if Hashem is giving in, why does Moshe say what he says next?

SHEMOT 33:15-16 --

He said to Him, "If Your face [personal presence] will not go [with us], do not bring us up from here! How, indeed, will it be known that I have found favor in Your eyes -- I and Your nation -- is it not through Your going with us, singling out myself and Your nation from all the nations on the face of the Earth!?"

Moshe seems so dissatisfied with Hashem's response that he declares a sit-in. What did Hashem say to bring on this strong reaction? Ibn Ezra offers a very sharp answer:

IBN EZRA, SHEMOT 33:21 --

... In my opinion, when Hashem said to him, "I will send an angel before you," Moshe responded, "But You have not told me whom You are sending with me," i.e., whether he [the angel] is the one about whom it was written, "My name is within him." Hashem answered, "I Myself will go; I will lead you." The meaning of "you" ["lakh"] is that "I will go with you alone; I will not dwell among Bnei Yisrael. Moshe responded, "If You Yourself do not go" with the whole nation mentioned above ("Look, this is Your nation!"), then "do not take us up [to Eretz Yisrael]!" -- using plural language. The proof of this interpretation is [Moshe's question], "How will it be known [to the world] that I have found favor in Your eyes, I and Your nation -- is it not through Your going with us"

Hashem focuses on the opening and closing of Moshe's statement and ignores the demand in the middle: Moshe had opened with a complaint that Hashem had promised Him that He would remain closely connected with Moshe, and that He now seems to be moving away; he had closed with a reminder that the nation is really Hashem's nation. In response, Hashem proposes that He remain with Moshe but not with the people. Moshe had tried to blur the line between himself and the people, beginning his argument by focusing on the relationship between Hashem and himself and then 'sneaking' the people in at the end -- but Hashem refuses to group Moshe and the people as a unit. Keep in mind, however, that Hashem has not yet responded to Moshe's request for a tutorial in "Divine Mercy Arousal."

Moshe responds as boldly as he has throughout the parasha:

SHEMOT 33:15-16 --

He said to Him, "If Your face [personal presence] will not go [with us], do not bring us up from here! How, indeed, will it be known that I have found favor in Your eyes -- I and Your nation -- is it not through Your going with us, singling out myself and Your nation from all the nations on the face of the Earth!?"

As Ibn Ezra pointed out, Moshe understands that Hashem has agreed to accompany him exclusively, but that He will not accompany the people. As far as Moshe is concerned, that is just not enough! Once again, Moshe rejects Hashem's offer, refusing to be separated from the people. This has been his position all through the parasha, we should note:

- 1) He refuses to let Hashem kill the people and make him into the new divinely chosen nation.
- 2) He attempts to refuse to continue living if the people are not forgiven (but Hashem rejects his ultimatum).
- 3) He refuses to accept Hashem's offer of a special Divine Presence which will accompany him but not the people.
- 4) In his response here, Moshe hammers away at this point once again, emphasizing that he is part of this group entity: "Do not take *US* up from here"; "How will it be known that *I AND YOUR NATION* have found favor in Your eyes"; "*I AND YOUR NATION* will be distinguished." As far as Moshe is concerned, the only way for him to participate in all of these things is if the people can participate as well.

How does Hashem respond this time?

SHEMOT 33:17 --

Hashem said to Moshe, "Also this thing that you have spoken, I will do, because you have found favor in My eyes -- I will know you through the Name."

What does Hashem mean by "this thing that you have spoken"? Some possibilities:

- 1) Hashem has agreed to Moshe's most recent demand: He will accompany the people as He had originally planned before the egel. This is the simplest reading of the text -- but it is probably wrong, as we will see.
- 2) Hashem has agreed to Moshe's earlier demand: that He Himself show Moshe how to achieve forgiveness for the people in future

incidents in which they anger Him.

That the second is the better reading of the text is not only a point of view articulated by Hizkuni (a medieval commentator), it is also supported by the following evidence:

- a) We noted above that Hashem did not respond to Moshe's request ("A") for a divine how-to in achieving forgiveness for the people; instead, He offered to accompany Moshe personally ("B") while repeating that He would not accompany the people. Since Moshe has just rejected ("B") that deal, it makes sense that Hashem should eventually respond ("A") to Moshe's original request for the "divine forgiveness tutorial" (A-B-B-A).
- b) Hashem's statement here comes as an introduction to His description (which we will look at in a moment) of how He will reveal His merciful attributes to Moshe; this is exactly what Moshe had asked for above.

c) Most convincing of all, Hashem's response here cannot be an affirmative response to Moshe's demand that Hashem accompany the people, because if so, Moshe would have no need to request the very same thing again below, just after Hashem reveals the attributes of mercy (34:8-9)! So Hashem must be agreeing to Moshe's previous request for Hashem to teach him how to successfully arouse His mercy.

BRING ON THE FIREWORKS:

Moshe sees that Hashem has responded favorably -- "This thing you have spoken, I will do" -- so he ups the ante just one more notch:

SHEMOT 33:18 --

He said, "Show me Your glory!"

Hashem had just agreed to grant Moshe's request to teach him how to find mercy for the people. But that was only an agreement to provide information: "Let me know Your ways, and then I will know You and I will be able to find favor in Your eyes." There is no experiential component involved, just a transfer of secret information. What Moshe really wants -- and we will see in a moment why -- is an experience of the divine, an experience unparalleled by any other such experience at any point in the past and future of the God-man relationship. He wants more than to know -- "hodi'eini" -- He wants to *SEE* Hashem -- "har'eini"!

In response, Hashem describes how He will orchestrate the revelation:

(A) -- SHEMOT 33:19 --

He **SAID**, "I will pass all of My goodness before you and call out in the name 'Y-HVH' before you. [But] I will favor whom I want to favor; I will be merciful to those to whom I want to be merciful!"

(B) -- SHEMOT 33:20 --

He **SAID**, "You cannot see My face, for man cannot see me and survive."

(C) -- SHEMOT 33:21 --

Hashem **SAID**, "There is a place here by Me, where you shall stand by the rock. When My glory passes, I will place you in the crevice of the rock and cover you with My hand until I pass. I will then remove My hand and you will see My back -- but My face cannot be seen."

(D) -- SHEMOT 34:1-3 --

Hashem **SAID** to Moshe, "Carve out for yourself two tablets of stone. I will write on the tablets the things that were on the first tablets, which you shattered. Be ready in the morning, ascend in the morning to Mount Sinai and wait for me there at the summit of the mountain. No one should ascend with you; no one should be seen on the whole mountain. Even the sheep and cattle should not graze opposite that mountain."

MOSHE PLAYS HARD TO GET:

Note in the pesukim above that the Torah uses the word "Va-Yomer" -- "He said" -- four separate times, at the beginning of each statement made by Hashem. As we have seen several times in the Torah, this is the Torah's way of indicating that between each of Hashem's statements, He pauses and waits for Moshe to respond, but Moshe remains silent. Moshe's silence should make us 'suspicious': what is Hashem adding each time in the expectation that Moshe will finally agree? We must look for the progression in Hashem's statements:

(A) -- SHEMOT 33:19 --

He said, "I will pass all of My goodness before you and call out in the name 'Y-HVH' before you. But I will favor whom I want to favor; I will be merciful to those to whom I want to be merciful!"

Hashem responds quite warily to Moshe's request for the full divine experience. Still playing the 'role' of angry and distant God, Hashem 'suspects' that Moshe plans to somehow take advantage of the situation when He reveals Himself. He promises to reveal His merciful attributes, but insists that Moshe is not to attempt to use this opportunity to gain mercy and forgiveness for anyone whom Hashem is not ready to forgive: "Although I am revealing My goodness to you, calling out the name Y-HVH before you [signifying Presence, the opposite of Hashem's abandonment of the people], I will forgive only those I want to forgive, and I will have mercy only on those upon whom I want to have mercy!"

Moshe, unsatisfied with this offer, does not respond; he wants more than just a personal experience of Hashem's merciful attributes, more than just the text of the prayer he should use next time. He wants this intimate experience of Hashem's revelation to offer him a context in which to seek mercy for those whom Hashem is, so far, unwilling to forgive. Hashem has agreed to reveal His merciful attributes, but refused to allow Moshe to grab the opportunity to gain forgiveness for Bnei Yisrael: "I will favor whom I want to favor; I will be merciful to those to whom I want to be merciful!" For Moshe, this is simply not enough, and ultimately, his silence wins out, as Hashem capitulates on this point and merely offers Moshe another challenge. He 'attempts' to put Moshe off by reminding him of his limitations as a human being, arguing that the intense Divine experience he has requested will kill him:

(B) -- SHEMOT 33:20 --

He said, "You cannot see My face, for man cannot see me and survive."

But Moshe maintains his stony silence. He knows of his limitations, but he also knows that Hashem can find ways to shield him from a fatal exposure to the Divine. Hashem gives in once again, promising to make this revelation the ultimate prophetic epiphany Moshe requests and also promising to shield Moshe from harm:

(C) -- SHEMOT 33:21 --

Hashem said, "There is a place here by Me, where you shall stand by the rock. When My glory passes, I will place you in the crevice of the rock and cover you with My hand until I pass. I will then remove My hand and you will see My back -- but My face cannot be seen."

But -- incredibly -- Moshe is still not satisfied! He maintains a stubborn silence, waiting for Hashem to give in. Hashem finally does so once again, promising that this experience will culminate in the establishment of a new covenant with the people Moshe so stubbornly represents:

(D) -- SHEMOT 34:1-3 --

Hashem said to Moshe, "Carve out for yourself two tablets of stone. I will write on the tablets the things that were on the first tablets, which you shattered. Be ready in the morning, ascend in the morning to Mount Sinai and wait for me there at the summit of the mountain. No one should ascend with you; no one should be seen on the whole mountain. Even the sheep and cattle should not graze opposite that mountain."

Moshe's gamble has been successful. Hashem has agreed to become an open participant in the "conspiracy of mercy." Moshe, acting on Hashem's own instructions, has 'worn Hashem down.'

Note, though, that despite Hashem's agreement to reestablish a relationship with the whole nation, He still focuses on Moshe alone: only Moshe is to ascend the mountain, unlike at the original revelation of the Decalogue (Ten "Commandments"), when various privileged groups ascended to different levels on the mountain. Hashem communicates in no uncertain terms that He is participating in this covenant only on Moshe's merit. The covenant comes completely through Moshe; the people have no role in the Divine experience accompanying the giving of the Torah this time.

MOSHE TAKES ADVANTAGE:

All that remains now is for the Torah to tell us how the event takes place:

SHEMOT 34:4-7 --

He carved out two tablets of stone like the first ones. Moshe arose early in the morning and ascended Mount Sinai as Hashem had commanded him. He took in his hands the two tablets of stone. Hashem descended in a cloud, stood with him there, and called out the name, "Y-HVH." Hashem passed before him and called out, "Y-HVH, Y-HVH, God of mercy and kindness, slow to anger and great in kindness and truth; maintaining kindness for thousands, forgiving sin, iniquity, and transgression, but who will not simply excuse sin, remembering the sin of the fathers [with punishment] upon the children to the third and fourth generation."

Many people think that we have just read the most important part of this story: Hashem's revelation of His attributes of mercy. But the most important moment is still ahead:

SHEMOT 34:8 --

Moshe *hurried* to prostrate himself on the ground and bow. He said, "If I have truly found favor in Your eyes, then let Y-HVH please go in our midst, though it is a stiff-necked nation; forgive our sin and transgression, and make us Your possession!"

We will never know what Moshe saw as he peeked through the cracks between Hashem's protecting 'fingers,' but what we can understand is that **Hashem has detonated a hydrogen-bomb of divine mercy (so to speak) right in front of Moshe. Harnessing the power of this unparalleled expression of divine mercy-energy, Moshe does exactly what Hashem had warned him not to do (but eventually capitulated to): he takes advantage of the situation to attain forgiveness for the people. As He articulates the Midot Ha-Rahamim, Hashem's mercy creates such a powerful wave of divine Presence that Moshe must be shielded from it to survive. Moshe seizes the opportunity to make his final attempt to attain forgiveness for Bnei Yisrael: Hashem, who has just proclaimed in more than a dozen different ways how merciful He is, simply 'cannot' deny Moshe's request for mercy! He simultaneously agrees to forgive the people and establish a new berit (covenant) with them:**

SHEMOT 34:10 --

He [Hashem] said, "I hereby make a covenant: I shall perform wonders before your entire nation, which have never been created in the whole world and among all the nations; THIS **WHOLE** **NATION,** in whose midst you are, shall see the acts of Hashem, who is awesome, which I perform with you."

Note that the argument between Hashem and Moshe about whose nation this is has not been settled. Moshe begins his final request with a focus on himself -- "If I have found favor in Your eyes" -- and calls the nation "stiff-necked" -- but continues by grouping himself completely with the people, even making it sound as if he needs forgiveness along with them: "May Y-HVH go with *us*", "Forgive our sin and our transgression, and take us as Your inheritance." But Hashem responds by reasserting that he sees Moshe as separate from the people: he calls the nation "Your [Moshe's] nation" and refers to them as a separate entity from Moshe ("The nation *in whose midst* you are").

A SECOND COVENANT:

Hashem next commands a string of mitzvot which will be the substance of the new covenant. These mitzvot are a combination of the post-Exodus mitzvot, such as the sanctification of firstborn people and animals, and the mitzvot of the original Sefer ha-Berit ("Book of the Covenant"), the legal section of Parashat Mishpatim. Note what is missing here but present in the mitzvot of Parashat Mishpatim: all of the interpersonal mitzvot (the laws of damages, treatment of slaves, kindness to orphans, converts, and others, theft, murder, judicial laws, etc.). Instead, all of the mitzvot repeated here relate to our responsibilities to Hashem. We don't have the time to discuss the details here, but the choice of these mitzvot is certainly not random: a close look suggests that in different ways, **these mitzvot all reinforce allegiance to Hashem** (especially, of course, those which command us to keep away from idol worship). The original covenant, shattered by the worship of the calf, must be recast in this new berit, through its repetition of key mitzvot of the original berit.

MOSHE, LIMINAL FIGURE:

In the final piece of the parasha, a veil now covers Moshe's face, symbolic of what has taken place over the course of the parasha. Although Moshe has remained deeply loyal to Bnei Yisrael, the events of the parasha have driven a wedge between him and the people forever. He will always be on one side of this miniature mechitza/veil -- with Hashem -- and the people will always be on the other side. In a sense, although Moshe has won the 'struggle' with Hashem over forgiving the people, Hashem has won the struggle over whether Moshe is truly a part of the people, indistinguishable from them.

Ironically, although we would think that the major result of Hashem's forgiving the people is that He is now closer to them, what the Torah chooses to emphasize is that as a result of Hashem's having forgiven the people, He is now closer to *Moshe.* The second revelation of the Torah is given to the people, but they are absent from the event itself. The forgiveness of Hashem is granted to the people, but they are absent from this story as well. Moshe is not only the conduit for Hashem's interaction with the people, he has become one of the major reasons why Hashem chooses to interact with the people at all!

MALAKHI 3:22 --

"Remember the Torah of My servant Moshe, which I commanded him at Horev upon all of Yisrael, laws and statutes."

Our Torah is truly Moshe's Torah, given to us not only through him, but because of him.

Shabbat Shalom
Emphasis added

PARSHAT VAYAKHEL

Is Parshat Vayakhel simply a repeat of Parshat Teruma?

Indeed, the details of the mishkan are practically identical in both parshiot - however, their manner of presentation is quite different.

To explain why, this week's shiur first considers the different purpose of each Parsha. Afterward, we will attempt to tackle the more difficult question concerning the necessity of this 'repetition'.

INTRODUCTION

Before we discuss the similarities between Teruma and Vayakhel, let's first note the obvious difference between these two Parshiot.

In Parshat Teruma / Tetzaveh, the Torah records God's **commandment to Moshe** to build the mishkan - or in Hebrew, what we refer to as 'tzivui ha-mishkan'. In contrast, Parshat Vayakhel / Pekudei describes how **Moshe conveyed** these instructions to Bnei Yisrael.

Let's explain how this affects their order:

THE ORDER IN PARSHAT TERUMA

The primary focus of the **tzivui ha-mishkan** unit (i.e. chapters 25-29) is the tabernacle's **function**, hence this unit opens with its 'statement of purpose':

"And you shall build for Me a **mikdash** in order that I shall **dwell** among you" (see 25:1-8).

and closes with an almost identical statement:

"And I shall **dwell** among **Bnei Yisrael**, and I will be for them a God, and they shall know..." (see 29:45-46).

In our shiur on Parshat Tetzaveh, we explained how these opening and closing psukim serve as 'matching bookends' that highlight how the Mishkan serves first and foremost as the place where God's **shchina** can dwell with His nation. This observation helped us understand the logic of its flow in topic.

For example, that unit began by describing the **aron** [ark of the covenant], which will house the **luchot** [tablets] - the symbol of **brit Sinai** - and hence the focal point of the mishkan, as well as the **kaporet**, the protective cover of the **aron**, from where God will speak to Moshe.

The next set of parshiot described the various 'keilim' (vessels) that are situated in the **ohel mo'ed**, such as the **menora** and **shulchan** (25:23-40). This was followed by a detailed description of the **ohel mo'ed** - the portable structure [i.e. the canvas for the tent /'yeriot ha-mishkan' and its poles /'kerashim' (see 26:1-37)] that will house those vessels.

In this unit, the description of vessels precedes the details of that tent, for they perform its key functions, while the structure that houses them serves only a secondary function.

These instructions are followed by the commandment to build an altar ['mizbach ha-nechoshet'], which will be placed in front of this **ohel mo'ed** (see 27:1-8), and a courtyard ['chatzer'] constructed from curtains and poles that would encompass it (see 27:9-19).

This **Shchina** unit concludes with the laws concerning the **kohanim** who are to officiate in the mishkan (chapter 28), and the seven day dedication ceremony (chapter 29).

In chapters 30 and 31 we found an additional unit, that contained a list of peripheral mitzvot relating to the mishkan (and its protection from the shchina), including the 'mizbach ketoret' and the 'kiyor'.

At the very conclusion of the **tzivui ha-mishkan** we find the instruction to appoint Betzalel to build the mishkan, and the important reminder not to build it on Shabbat.

The following table summarizes this order in Parshat Teruma according to its most general categories:

Intro - Shchina

Keilim - the vessels (chapter 25)

* The aron - which will house the **luchot**

The kaporet - from where God will speak to Moshe

* The shulchan - on which the **lechem** will be placed

* The menora - which will provide light

Structure - the **ohel mo'ed** (the tent - chapter 26)

* The yeriot

* The krashim

* The "parochet"

Chatzer - The courtyard (chapter 27)

* The mizbeiah - the altar in front of the **ohel mo'ed**

* The courtyard - "amudei ve-kelei ha-chatzer"

Kohanim (chapters 28 & 29)

* The bigdei kehuna

* The dedication ceremony (**milu'im**)

Misc. Topics (chapter 30)

The Builder - Betzalel (chapter 31)

Shabbat (not to build the mishkan on Shabbat/ 31:11-17)

In contrast to this 'functional order', the order in Parshat Vayakhel is quite different, for in this unit - Moshe must explain to Bnei Yisrael **how** to build the mishkan. Therefore, the sequence will follow a more **practical** order, reflecting the considerations of its construction.

For example, the tent will precede the vessels, for the **ohel mo'ed** will house them. Furthermore, this time, the mizbach ketoret will be included with the other vessels, even though its function in regard to the shechina is different. Similarly, this time the kiyor will be recorded together with the mizbach ha'Olah.

The following table summarizes this 'practical' order, as presented in Parshat Vayakhel:

Shabbat

* Guidelines re: **when** construction work is permitted (35:1-3);

Teruma

* The collection of the building materials (35:4-29);

The Builder

* The appointment of the chief architect - Betzalel - and his fellow artisans (35:30-36:7);

Structure - the ohel mo'ed - the tent (36:8-38):

* the yeriot

* the kerashim

* the parochet

Keilim (chapter 37)

* the aron

* shulchan

* menora

* mizbach ketoret (from misc. above)

Chatzer (chapter 38)

* the mizbeiah

* the kiyor (from misc. above)

* the courtyard

Kohanim (chapter 39)

* their garments

Construction

* assembly of the mishkan on the 1st of Nissan (40:1-33)

Shchina

* God's glory dwells on the mishkan (40:34-38)

As you review (and compare) these two tables, be sure to note their similarities and differences. Doing so, while considering this distinction between 'function' and 'construction', will help you

understand how and why the order in Vayakhel / Pekudei differs from the order in Teruma / Tetzaveh.

[Note as well that the mizbach ha-ktoret and the kiyor that were omitted (for thematic reasons) from the **Shchina** unit in Teruma / Tetzaveh are now included (for practical reasons) in Parshat Vayakhel - right where they belong!]

[See also TSC shiur on Parshat Tetzaveh.]

WHY THE REPETITION?

With this distinction in mind, let's consider now a more basic question, i.e. the very need to repeat anything!

After all, the building of the mishkan was only a 'one-time' mitzva. Would it not have been sufficient for the Torah to simply tell us in one pasuk that Bnei Yisrael constructed the mishkan 'as God commanded Moshe on Har Sinai'?

To answer this question, we return to our study of the overall theme of Sefer Shmot.

THE MISHKAN EXCLUSIVE

In Sefer Shmot, from the time that Moshe ascended Har Sinai to receive the first luchot (see 24:12), the mishkan emerged as its primary focus. Even though Moshe received numerous other laws during these forty days, in chapters 25 thru 31 Sefer Shmot records **only** those mitzvot relating to the mishkan.

Likewise, when Moshe descends from Har Sinai (after the last forty days), even though the Torah informs us that he conveyed **all** the mitzvot to Bnei Yisrael at that time (see 34:32), nevertheless Sefer Shmot chooses to record only Moshe's transmission of the mitzvot concerning the mishkan (i.e. chapters 35->40). All the other mitzvot appear only later, in the books of Vayikra, Bamidbar and Devarim (see Chizkuni 34:32)!

So the question is not only - why the 'repeat'; but also why the exclusivity of the mishkan in Sefer Shmot?

Ramban, in his explanation of the overall theme of Sefer Shmot, suggests an answer:

"... Sefer Shmot discusses the exile [i.e. the slavery in Egypt]... and Bnei Yisrael's redemption from that exile... for the descent of the children of Yaakov to Egypt marked the beginning of that exile... and that exile does not end until they return to the spiritual level of their forefathers... Even though Bnei Yisrael had left Egypt [i.e. physical redemption], they are not yet considered redeemed... [However,] when they reach Har Sinai and build the mishkan, and God returns His **Shchina** to dwell among them, **then** they have returned to the spiritual level of their forefathers [spiritual redemption]... Therefore, Sefer Shmot concludes with the topic of the mishkan and the constant dwelling of God's Glory upon it [for this marks the completion of the Redemption process]."

(see Ramban, introduction to Sefer Shmot)

According to Ramban, Sefer Shmot concludes with the story of the mishkan because its construction marks the completion of Bnei Yisrael's redemption. His explanation can help us understand the manner in which the Torah repeats the details of the mishkan in parshiot Vayakhel / Pekudei.

SPIRITUAL REHABILITATION

As Ramban explained, the 'spiritual level' that Bnei Yisrael had achieved at Ma'amad Har Sinai was lost as a result of chet ha-egel. Consequently, God had removed His **Shchina** from Bnei Yisrael (see Shmot 33:1-7), effectively thwarting the redemption process that began with Yetziat Mitzrayim.

Moshe Rabeinu's intervention on Bnei Yisrael's behalf (see 32:11-14) certainly saved them from immediate punishment and secured their atonement (see 32:30, 34:9). However, that prayer alone could not restore Bnei Yisrael to the spiritual level achieved at Har Sinai. The **Shchina**, which was to have resided in their midst, remained **outside** the camp (see 33:7, read carefully!).

Moshe interceded once again (see 33:12-16), whereupon God declared his thirteen 'attributes of mercy' (33:17-34:8), thus allowing

Bnei Yisrael a 'second chance'. Nonetheless, the **Shchina** did not return automatically. To bring the **Shchina** back, it would be necessary for Bnei Yisrael to do something - they must actively and collectively involve themselves in the process of building the mishkan.

In other words, Bnei Yisrael required what we might call 'spiritual rehabilitation'. Their collective participation in the construction of the mishkan helped repair the strain in their relationship with God brought about by chet ha-egel. Or, using more 'kabalistic' terminology, the construction of the mishkan functioned as a 'tikkun' for chet ha-egel.

A closer examination of parshiot Vayakhel / Pekudei supports this interpretation and can explain why Sefer Shmot repeats the details of the mishkan in Vayakhel / Pekudei.

TEXTUAL PARALLELS

Let's take for example the Torah's use of the word '**vayakhel**' at the beginning of the parsha. This immediately brings to mind the opening line of the chet ha-egel narrative:

"**Va-yikahel** ha-am al Aharon - and the nation **gathered** against Aharon..." (32:1).

This new 'gathering' of the people - for the purpose of building the mishkan, can be understood as a 'tikkun' for that original gathering to build the **egel**. As opposed to their assembly to fashion the golden calf, Bnei Yisrael now gather to build a more 'proper' symbol of God's presence.

Similarly, the commandment for the people to 'donate their gold' and other belongings for this project (see 35:5) can also be understood as a tikkun for Aharon's solicitation of the people's gold for the **egel** (32:2-3).

However, the strongest proof is the Torah's glaring repetition of the phrase: "ka'asher tziva Hashem et Moshe" ["as **God** commanded Moshe"]. This phrase not only appears in both the opening commandment (35:1 & 35:4) and the finale (39:32 & 39:43), but it is repeated like a chorus over twenty times throughout Vayakhel-Pekudei, at every key point of the construction process. [I recommend that you note this using a Tanach Koren. See 35:29; 36:1; 36:5; 39:1,5,7,21,26,29,31,32,42,43; and especially in 40:16,19,21,23,25,27,29,32, as each part of the mishkan is put into its proper place.]

Clearly, the Torah's repetition of this phrase is intentional, and may very well point to the mishkan's function as a tikkun for chet ha-egel. Let's explain why:

Recall from our shiur on Parshat Ki Tisa that the people's initial intention at chet ha-egel was to make a physical representation of their perception of God. Despite the innocence of such aspirations per se, a man-made representation, no matter how pure its intention, may lead to idol worship (see Shmot 20:20). This does not mean, however, that God cannot ever be represented by a physical symbol. When God Himself chooses the symbol, it is not only permitted, but it becomes a **mitzva**. It is this symbolism that makes the mishkan so important. [See 23:17,19; 34:24; Devarim 12:5,11 & 16:16.]

The Torah therefore stresses that Bnei Yisrael have now 'learned their lesson'. They construct the mishkan **precisely** 'as **God** commanded Moshe,' down to the very last detail, understanding that there is no room for human innovation when choosing a symbol for His Divine Presence.

AN APPROPRIATE FINALE

This concept of tikkun for chet ha-egel finds further support in the very conclusion of Sefer Shmot.

Although the aspect of **Shchina** (a central feature in Teruma / Tetzaveh) is mentioned nowhere throughout the detail of the mishkan's construction in Vayakhel / Pekudei, it makes a sudden reappearance at the very end of the sefer. After each component of the mishkan is put into place on the first of Nissan (see 40:1-33), this entire process reaches its dramatic climax:

"When Moshe had finished his work, the **anan** (cloud) covered the **ohel mo'ed** and **God's kavod** ('glory') filled the mishkan" (40:34).

This pasuk describes the dwelling of the **Shchina** on the **mishkan** in the exact same terms used to depict the dwelling of the **Shchina** on **Har Sinai**:
 "When Moshe ascended the **har** [Mount Sinai, to receive the first **luchot**], the **anan** covered the **har**, and **kvod Hashem** (God's glory) dwelled upon **Har Sinai...**" (24:15-16).

Clearly, the Torah intentionally parallels, thereby associating, the descent of the **Shchina** onto Har Sinai with the dwelling of the **Shchina** on the mishkan. Only **after** Bnei Yisrael meticulously complete the construction of the mishkan - precisely 'as God commanded **Moshe**' - does the **Shchina** return to Bnei Yisrael and dwell therein (40:34), just as it had dwelled on Har Sinai.

Thus, the end of Sefer Shmot marks the completion of the tikkun for chet ha-egel. Accordingly, as Ramban posits, the entire 'redemption process' - the theme of Sefer Shmot - has also reached its culmination.

The Shchina's return to the camp also signifies Bnei Yisrael's return to the stature they had lost after the golden calf. Recall that in the aftermath of that incident: "Moshe took his tent and set it up outside the camp, **far away** from the camp, and called it the **ohel mo'ed** [tent of meeting (with God)], such that anyone who would search for God was required to go out to this **ohel mo'ed, outside the camp**" [see 33:7 and its context in 33:1-11].

This **ohel mo'ed**, located **outside** the camp, symbolized the distancing of the **Shchina**. Once the mishkan is built, God will bring His **Shchina** back **inside** the camp. [See 25:8 and 29:45.]

BACK TO BREISHIT

Thus far, we have shown that the manner by which Bnei Yisrael construct the mishkan serves as a tikkun for chet ha-egel and relates to the overall theme of Sefer Shmot.

One could suggest that the very concept of a mishkan - irrespective of its mode of construction - may constitute a more general tikkun, beyond the specific context of the golden calf. In this sense, the mishkan relates to a more general biblical theme developed in Sefer Breishit.

As explained in our shiurim on Sefer Breishit, the Garden of Eden reflects the ideal spiritual environment in which Man cultivates his relationship with God. After Adam sinned and was consequently banished from the Garden, God placed **keruvim** to guard the **path of return** to the Tree of Life (see Breishit 3:24).

It may not be coincidental that the mishkan is the only other context throughout the entire Chumash where the concept of **keruvim** appears. Recall how the mishkan features **keruvim**: 1) on the **kaporet** as protectors of the **aron**, which contains the **luchot** (Shmot 25:22), and 2) woven into the **parochet**, the curtain which guards the entrance into the kodesh ha-kodashim - the Holy of Holies (where the **aron** and **kaporet** are located).

This parallel suggests a conceptual relationship between Gan Eden and the mishkan. The symbolic function of the **keruvim** as guardians of the kodesh kodashim may correspond to the mishkan's function as an environment similar to Gan Eden, where man can strive to come closer to God:

1) The **keruvim** of the **kaporet**, protecting the **aron**, indicate that the 'Tree of Life' of Gan Eden has been replaced by the **Torah**, represented by the **luchot** inside the **aron**.

[*"Etz chayim hi la-machazikim bah"* - see Mishlei 3:1-18.]

2) The **keruvim** woven into the **parochet** remind man that his entry into the kodesh kodashim, although desired, remains limited and requires spiritual readiness.

[Note that **keruvim** are also woven into the innermost covering of the mishkan (see Shmot 26:1-2).]

In this sense, we may view the mishkan as a tikkun for Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden. Should man wish to return to the Tree of Life, he must keep God's covenant - the laws of the Torah - as symbolized by the **luchot ha-eidut** in the **aron**, protected by the **keruvim**.

If so, then the Torah's repetition of the laws of the mishkan, as well as there exclusivity, may be alluding to one of the most important themes of Chumash - man's never ending quest to develop a relationship with his Creator.

shabbat shalom,
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. An important clarification

It is important that we clarify this tikkun aspect of the mishkan.

We do not claim that the mishkan itself constitutes a tikkun for chet ha-egel. Rather, the **manner** by which Bnei Yisrael must build it serves as a tikkun. Consequently, our analysis here stands independent of the controversy between Rashi and Ramban as to **when** God commanded the building of the mishkan. As we explained in our shiur on Parshat Teruma, Ramban (mishkan commanded **before** chet ha-egel) and Rashi (mishkan commanded **after** chet ha-egel) argue only whether the need for a **temporary** mishkan resulted from chet ha-egel. However, Rashi must agree that the basic concept of a mikdash is necessary to perpetuate the experience of Har Sinai, just as Ramban in Parshat Vayakhel must agree that the manner in which Bnei Yisrael ultimately construct the mishkan reflects their correction of the sin of chet ha-egel.

B. 'Shchina tamid'

We stated that Teruma / Tetzaveh describes the function of each object in the mishkan. It may be suggested that the actual function of each 'kli' relates to the constant presence of the **Shchina** in the mishkan.

The following table demonstrates the three levels of kedusha in the mishkan, according to the functions of the accessories contained in the three regions of the mishkan:

Kodesh Kodashim

the aron - contains the 'luchot ha-eidut'
the kaporet - from where God will speak to Moshe

Kodesh

the shulchan - 'lechem panim lefa'nai **tamid**'
the menorah - 'leha'ilot ner **tamid**'
the mizbach zahav - 'lehaktir ktoret **tamid**'

Chatzer ha-mishkan

the mizbach nechoshet- 'lehakriv olat **tamid**'

The kodesh kodashim contains the luchot, the eternal testament to the covenant at Har Sinai. God **speaks** to Moshe from in between the **keruvim** (25:21-22), thus perpetuating the Har Sinai experience. In this domain, God 'comes down' to man; as such, no 'avoda' (ritual) is performed.

Outside this domain, in the kodesh, the kohanim perform their daily **avodat tamid** - lighting the menorah, offering the ktoret, and keeping bread on the shulchan.

Outside the mishkan is the chatzer (courtyard). Here, Am Yisrael collectively offer their **korban tamid** on the **mizbeiaach**. [See shiur on Parshat Tetzaveh for a complete analysis.]

Significantly, each 'kli' requires an 'avodat **tamid**'. The word **tamid** means everlasting or continuous. Am Yisrael must perform their daily avodat tamid in order to deserve the continuous presence of the Shchina.

A relationship with God does not come automatically; it requires constant effort on the individual's part.

C. Beyond the parallels between the mishkan and Gan Eden (as noted in the shiur), there exist as well textual parallels between the mishkan and the story of Creation in the first perek of Sefer Breishit. For example, "va-techel kol avodat ha-mishkan..." (39:32) and "va-yar Moshe et kol ha-melacha..." (39:43) correspond to Breishit 1:31 and 2:1. Indeed, several Midrashim view the mishkan as the completion of the Creation process.

1. Based on the above shiur, explain this parallel.
2. The entire mishkan plan is repeated a total of seven times in Sefer Shmot: Teruma Tetzaveh - 25:10-30:38 / 31:7-11, Vayk.Pkd: 35:11-19 / 36:8-39:32 / 39:33-42 / 40:1-16 / 40:17-33. Connect this as well to Breishit 1 (the seven-day process of creation).
3. Relate this parallel to the location of mitzvat shabbat, which concludes the tzivui ha-mishkan unit (31:12-17) and opens the binyan ha-mishkan unit (35:1-4).

D. The highest level of hitgalut, experienced by Moshe (33:11) and Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai (Dvarim 5:4), is known as 'panim be-fanim' - literally, face to face. When God 'changed' His attributes to 'midot ha-rachamim' (Shmot 33:17-34:9), He states that man can no longer see His 'face', only His 'back' (33:20-23).

1. Find the allusions to the human face in the mishkan:
For example: menora=eyes, shulchan=mouth, etc.
2. In your opinion, could this represent 'pnei Hashem'?
3. How would the aron fit within this parallel?
How about the function of the 'erot izim ve-elim' as a cover for the mishkan?
4. Accordingly, what is the significance of the 'masach le-petach ha-mishkan' and the parochet, and the general concept of limited entry into the mishkan?
5. According to Rashi, would this have been the structure of the mikdash before chet ha-egel? According to Ramban?

E. The theme of Sefer Shmot

Throughout our study of Sefer Shmot, we traced three primary topics: (1) the Exodus (Yetziyat Mitzrayim, chapters 1->17); (2) Ma'amad Har Sinai (chapters 19->24, 32->34); (3) the mishkan (chapters 25->31, 35->40).

Based on the above shiur, we can suggest a fundamental relationship between these three sections:

- 1) Through the process of Yetziyat Mitzrayim, God fulfills His covenant with the Avot (the theme of Sefer Breishit) to redeem Bnei Yisrael from their bondage in Egypt so as to facilitate their development into His special nation.
- 2) To become this special nation, God and Bnei Yisrael enter into a covenant at Har Sinai (chapters 19->24). Bnei Yisrael receive the commandments which will mold their national and individual characters, transforming them into God's special nation.
- 3) The mishkan, the symbol of the special relationship established at Har Sinai, becomes the vehicle through which that relationship can continue. Although chet ha-egel calls into question Bnei Yisrael's ability to survive the terms of this covenant, the new terms of the **second luchot** allow them to build the mishkan, to which the **Shchina** returns.

An important pasuk in Parshat Tetzaveh highlights this overall theme. As explained in our shiur on that parasha, chapters 25-29, which appear amidst God's instructions regarding the mishkan, form a distinct unit which we may call the '**Shchina** unit' (compare 25:8 with 29:45).

The closing pasuk of that unit - "And I shall **dwell** among the people of Israel, and I will be their God" (29:45) - is followed by an important summary pasuk: "And you shall know that I am the Lord your God who took you out of the Land of Egypt - **leshochni betocham** - in order to dwell among you; I am the Lord your God" (29:46).

This pasuk accurately reflects the overall theme of Sefer Shmot. It ties together (1) Yetziyat Mitzrayim, (2) Matan Torah, and (3) the

mishkan with the concept of Shchina. God takes Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt in order that they become His nation, and this relationship reaches its highest level with the presence of the Shchina. This level was attained at Har Sinai, and it forever remains within Bnei Yisrael's reach through the 'heir' and closest substitute to Har Sinai - the mishkan.

Parshas Vayakhel: Mishkan and Shabbat

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

I. A SIGN BETWEEN GOD AND THE B'NEI YISRA'EL

After concluding the many commands regarding the construction of the Mishkan (Tabernacle), God gave the following instruction to Mosheh:

You yourself are to speak to the Israelites: You shall keep my Shabbatot, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, given in order that you may know that I, Hashem, sanctify you. You shall keep the Shabbat, because it is holy for you; everyone who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever does any work on it shall be cut off from among the people. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Shabbat of solemn rest, holy to Hashem; whoever does any work on the Shabbat day shall be put to death. Therefore the Israelites shall keep the Shabbat, observing the Shabbat throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days Hashem made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed. (Sh'mot 31:13-17)

This is not the only place where the commands regarding the Mishkan and Shabbat are juxtaposed. Following the tragic narrative of the Golden Calf, at the beginning of our Parashah,

Mosheh prefaced his presentation of the commands of the Mishkan to the B'nei Yisra'el with a short statement about Shabbat:

Mosheh assembled all the congregation of the B'nei Yisra'el and said to them: These are the things that Hashem has commanded you to do: Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy Shabbat of solemn rest to Hashem; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. You shall kindle no fire in all your dwellings on the Shabbat day. (Sh'mot 35:1-3)

Immediately afterwards, he presented the details of the Mishkan to the people, whereupon they began their donations and building.

II. SHABBAT PRECLUDES EVEN THE MISHKAN-CONSTRUCTION

Beginning from the Mekhilta (at the beginning of Parashat Vayakhel), many commentaries maintain that the juxtaposition of Shabbat with the construction of the Mishkan teaches us the limits of the Mitzvah of building a Mishkan – that even that, the noblest of human endeavors, must cease on Shabbat. Note R. Hirsch's words (from his commentary at the beginning of our Parashah):

The mastery of Man over matter, in getting, producing, changing, manufacturing the raw materials of the world, attains its highest meaning in the Temple. The world submits to Man, for him to submit himself and his world to God, and for him to change this earthly world into a home for the Kingdom of God, to a Temple in which the Glory of God tarries on earth. The building of the Temple is a sanctification of human labor, and in the context here, it is represented as being a combination of all those creative activities of Man, by the cessation of which – by cessation from all M'lakhah – the Shabbat is made into an acknowledgment of man's allegiance to God...

III. M'LAKHAH IN THE MISHKAN = M'LAKHAH ON SHABBAT

There is another significant connection between the Mishkan and Shabbat made by the Rabbis.

The Torah, in its initial command to avoid a certain class of activities on Shabbat, does not specify those actions. Rather, the Torah states: "Do not do any M'lakhah." (Sh'mot 20:10). This command is repeated in many other Shabbat-passages (31:14-15, 35:2, Vayyikra 23:3, Devarim 5:14). What is the meaning of M'lakhah? This key word – which is not only the principal phrase of prohibited work on Shabbat but also on the other Holy Days of the calendar (see Sh'mot 12, Vayyikra 23) – means something akin to "work" and is first used in the description of God's creation of the world (B'resheet 2:2-3). Nevertheless, it is not at all clear which type of work is prohibited on Shabbat. How do we distinguish prohibited actions from those which are permitted on Shabbat?

The Gemara (Shabbat 49b) records a B'raita that indicates that the definition of M'lakhah is based upon its meaning in the Mishkan (see Tosafot ibid. who indicates that this is the reason that the two sections were juxtaposed in the Torah) – any activity which was an integral part of the construction of the Mishkan is defined as M'lakhah and is, therefore, prohibited on Shabbat.

This association, while explaining the significance of the Torah's juxtaposition of these two institutions on one occasion (most probably at the beginning of Parashat Vayakhel) does not explain our section, nor does it explain the passages cited below from Vayyikra. [As to why the operative and categorical definition of prohibited "work" on Shabbat should be derived from the Mishkan – that is a topic in and of itself, beyond the scope of this shiur].

IV, KEEPING SHABBAT AND REVERING THE MIKDASH

There are two other places in the Torah where Shabbat and Mishkan are linked – but, in those passages, the importance of both of these institutions is linked within one verse:

Et Shab'totai Tish'moru v'et Mikdashi Tira'u, Ani Hashem – You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am Hashem. (Vayyikra 19:30, 26:2)

Why does the Torah associate the observance of Shabbat with proper reverence for the Mikdash?

These questions lead us to a larger one regarding Shabbat as presented in our Parashah. Up until this point, the commands regarding Shabbat (in the Mahn and in the Ten Statements) were framed in terms of a "gift from God" (Mahn) or testifying to God as the Creator (the Ten Statements). In addition, the selection in the Ten Statements would seem to imply that Shabbat should ideally be observed by all of humanity, as God created us all and we should all testify to that fact. Yet, in our Parashah, Shabbat is clearly presented as a uniquely Israelite practice, one which does not "belong" to other nations. (Indeed, the Rabbis stated that a non-Jew should not observe

Shabbat – see BT Sanhedrin 58b, MT M'lakhim 10:9). Besides this “nationalistic shift”, several new terms are introduced in our Parashah:

* Chillul: A term with which we are most familiar, denoting a violation of Shabbat, is Chillul Shabbat. This term shows up, for the first time in a Shabbat context, in our Parashah – M'challeleha (everyone who profanes it – 31:14). Although translated “desecration”, the word Chillul actually means “defilement” or “pollution”. It is usually associated with holy people (e.g. Kohanim – Vayyikra 21:9), places (e.g. the Mishkan – Vayyikra 21:23) or sancta (e.g. Terumah – Bamidbar 18:32). How can such a term be associated with a time period, such as Shabbat? How can a day become polluted or defiled?

* Ot: Shabbat is a sign of a covenant between God and the B'nei Yisra'el. Although hand-T'fillin are called an Ot (Sh'mot 13:9,16), as was the blood to be placed on the doorposts in Egypt (ibid. 12:13), Shabbat was never previously referred to in this manner. Each of these two earlier occasions are “signs” which tell us (or remind us) about some other event (e.g. the Exodus) and might properly be called an Ot – but how can a day be considered a “sign”? What “other event” is signified here?

* Karet: the punishment of being “cut off from the people” for violating Shabbat. Until now, we have not been told what the punishment is for a violation of Shabbat – but why is it Karet – and why is it first mentioned here?

* laDa'at Ki Ani Hashem M'kadish'khem – “that you may know that I, Hashem, sanctify you.” How does the “sign” of the Shabbat inform us that God sanctifies us? In addition, why mention this here, instead of earlier (e.g. during the Mann narrative)?

In this shiur, I would like to suggest an additional reason for the Shabbat-Mikdash association (besides the two mentioned above – that even the building of the Mishkan ceases for Shabbat and that the activities involved in the construction of the Mishkan define “M'lakhah” for Shabbat) – one which would explain the appearance of these new terms in our Parashah.

V. THE PURPOSE OF THE MISHKAN

In order to understand the significance of this command regarding Shabbat given at the conclusion of the command regarding the Mishkan, we have to go back and review the purpose of the Mishkan:

v'Asu Li Mikdash, v'Shakhanti b'Tokham –

“Let them make a Mikdash for Me, that I may dwell among them” (Sh'mot 25:8).

The phrasing here is odd – it should have said “Let me dwell in it (i.e. the Mishkan)”. The implication is that by constructing this sanctuary, God will cause His presence to be manifest among the people.

This signals a fundamental change in the relationship between God and the B'nei Yisra'el – one which implies a unique statement not only about that relationship but also about the quality and nature of the community of the B'nei Yisra'el. Up until this point, God had made covenants, promises and oaths to our ancestors which He began to fulfill through the Exodus. God has commanded us and brought us close to Him in order to be a “kingdom of Kohanim and holy nation” (19:6) – but none of these events, commands or promises imply anything about our direct encounter-relationship with the Divine.

With the command to build the Mishkan, that relationship shifts from a purely command-driven one to an encounter-laden one. Besides sanctifying ourselves and becoming God's Kohanim (see Yeshayahu 61:6), we are now God's people and stand in His Presence – at least potentially. God “walks in our camp” (Devarim 23:15 – compare with B'resheet 3:8).

How is this new relationship manifested? What indicates – both to us and to the rest of the world – that God is, indeed, “in our midst”?

VI. CHILLUL – INTRODUCING DEATH

Before answering this question, let's examine the difficult word “Chillul” which is first introduced into the lexicon of Shabbat in our Parashah.

Although, as mentioned above, Chillul is translated as “defile” or “pollute” (see BDB, p. 320), it has another meaning which may be informative in both the context of Mikdash and that of Shabbat.

A Challal (same root) is a corpse (see B'resheet 34:27, Bamidbar 19:18). The Mikdash becomes defiled by bringing Tum'ah (impurity) into it (or by contact on the part of a person who is impure with the sancta). The most essential source of Tum'ah is a corpse (read Bamidbar 19 carefully); since the Mikdash is the focus of the encounter between the B'nei Yisra'el and the Living God (see Sh'mot 29:43), any contact with death (a Challal) serves to defile (Chillul) that encounter.

We can see this most clearly from the closing verses of Parashat Yitro:

Make an altar of earth for Me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats and your cattle. Wherever I cause My name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you. If you make an altar of stones for Me, do not build it with hewn stones, for by your sword upon them vat'Challalehah (you will defile it).

As Rashi points out (ad loc.), since the purpose of a sword is to shorten a man's life and the altar's purpose is to lengthen man's life, it is inappropriate to wield the “shortener” on the “lengthener”. This comment becomes more impactful when viewed against the backdrop of the previous promise, “...I will come to you and bless you.” The encounter with God (which, at this point in Sefer Sh'mot, is limited to the place and time of an offering and not extended to the entire community, as it is through the construction of the Mishkan) is defiled via contact with (an instrument of) death.

VII. KARET – VIOLATION OF THE SPECIAL NATURE OF AM YISRA'EL

The punishment which is introduced (along with death) into the Shabbat vocabulary in our Parashah is Karet – excision. Whatever Karet may mean, it implies some sort of disconnection or excommunication (by God) from the people of Yisra'el.

The first occasion where Karet is found (explicitly; it may be the notion behind Man's exile from Eden) is in B'resheet 17. Avraham is commanded to circumcise himself and all of the males in his household, and "If any male fails to circumcise the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off (root: K-R-T) from his people; he has broken My covenant." (17:14)

Karet here seems to be the natural result of communal disassociation – since this individual is unwilling to demonstrate his fellowship with the people of Avraham via circumcision, he is, indeed, separated from them.

The second occurrence of this punishment (although not mentioned explicitly until later, in Bamidbar 9:13) is failure to participate in the Korban Pesach (Pesach offering). Here again, the individual who doesn't see himself as a member of the people and does not identify with their destiny and history is excised from the people.

These two Mitzvot 'Aseh (which are the only two which carry this punishment for non-fulfillment), in combination, serve as rituals which affirm the individual's identification with- and allegiance to – the history (Pesach) and mission (B'rit Milah) of Am Yisra'el. (Rabbi Soloveitchik zt"l refers to two covenants – the B'rit Goral – covenant of fate – and the B'rit Yi'ud – covenant of destiny – shared by all members of K'lal Yisra'el.)

Put together, we see that Karet is a punishment given by God to someone who denies the special Godly character of the B'nei Yisra'el.

This can be seen in several of the Mitzvot Lo Ta'aseh which carry this punishment. Karet is the indicated Divine punishment for entering the Mikdash (or eating sancta) while in a state of Tum'ah; in the same way, performing some of the rituals unique to the Mikdash outside carry this punishment. See, for instance, earlier in our Parashah (30:33,38); using the special formula for the K'toret (incense) or Shemen haMish'chah (anointing oil) for your own purpose makes the violator liable for Karet.

One other example of this Karet-communal identity connection is found in the laws of Yom haKippurim. Someone who fails to afflict himself on that day of atonement is excised from the people. "Indeed, any person who does not afflict himself throughout that day shall be excised from among his people" (Vayikra 23:29).

VIII. SHABBAT – TEACHES THAT GOD HAS SANCTIFIED US

We can now understand the enhanced nature of Shabbat as reflected in this Parashah – and the import of this new "terminology" we find here.

As opposed to the earlier presentation, Shabbat is presented here as a "sign" (Ot) – because, with the introduction of the Mishkan, God's Presence will become manifest among the people. Shabbat is the weekly sign of that constant Presence. Unlike the physical Mishkan, the existence of which has not always been assured in our history, Shabbat is an eternal (l'doroteikhem – for your generations) focal point and sign of our ongoing encounter with God. Note that unlike the earlier presentation (in Sh'mot 20), where we are told that in response to His "rest", God sanctified and bless the day of Shabbat (which is why we should avoid M'lakhah), here, we are just told that on the seventh day Shavat vaYinafash – He rested and had repose. We cease work on Shabbat out of a sense of shared repose with God, much more than just the commandedness implied in the earlier passages.

Since Shabbat is the sign of the special relationship between God and the B'nei Yisra'el and of the "shared experience" between the two (as evidenced by the twinned phrases "holy for you" and "holy to Hashem"), this special "place in time" must be guarded carefully.

The newly introduced phrase "Sh'mirat Shabbat" takes on a new meaning in this light. As opposed to the purely Halakhic meaning – avoiding M'lakhah (see BT Berakhot 20b and Rashi ad loc. s.v. biSh'mirah) – "guarding" Shabbat means that it is now a possession (as R. Hirsch points out) and a "closed circle" between God and the B'nei Yisra'el which must be protected. This also explains why Shabbat is not to be celebrated or observed by other nations; even though creation is a universal experience which should be declared by all creatures, the partnership-fellowship with God which is unique to the B'nei Yisra'el and which informs the meaning of Shabbat is not to be shared with others.

This sense of "Sh'mirah" is perhaps best expressed by Rambam in his prescription for the mood and mode just before the onset of Shabbat:

What is honor? – This is what the Sages have said, that it is incumbent on one to wash one's face, hands, and feet in hot water before Shabbat because of the honor of Shabbat, and he wraps himself in tzitzit and sits seriously, waiting for to greet the Shabbat, as one who goes out to greet the king. The early Sages would gather their disciples before Shabbat and wrap themselves (in the tallit) and say: Let us go out to greet the Shabbat King. (MT Shabbat 30:2)

Someone who violates the Shabbat by bringing mundane activities into this sphere is not only violating God's commandment – and failing to testify to God's creation of the world, he is also denying the special Godly nature of the Jewish people. This is as much of a Chilul as bringing impurity into the physical Mishkan.

Shabbat is a Mishkan in time, where Am Yisra'el and HaKadosh Barukh Hu encounter each other as the beloved and lover of Shir haShirim (the Song of Songs) (which explains the custom to read this beautiful love song every Friday evening at the onset of Shabbat).

Text Copyright © 2014 by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom and Torah.org. The author is Educational Coordinator of the Jewish Studies Institute of the Yeshiva of Los Angeles.

Parshat Pekudei: Summing up Shemot, Introducing VaYikra

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

TRANSITION: SEFER SHEMOT / SEFER VAYIKRA

This week, we will split our focus between a retrospective on Sefer Shemot (Exodus) and an introduction to Sefer VaYikra (Leviticus). Since the Torah is split into five independent units, there must be some reason why each book ends at a particular place and the next book begins there. It seems reasonable to assume that the Torah begins each new sefer (book) not simply to break a long text into manageable sections, but because each book develops a different central theme. It is worth stepping back for a moment from the particular themes of each parasha we have seen in Sefer Shemot to identify the broader and perhaps more subtle theme which unites the sefer. I hope this will help summarize what we have learned on the way through Sefer Shemot and begin to provide us with a grasp of Sefer VaYikra.

SEFER SHEMOT, IN 481 WORDS:

Sefer Shemot opens with the growth of Ya'akov's family into a nation. Fearing an uprising, Egypt enslaves the fledgling nation; eventually, the enslavement turns into the systematic murder of all potential rebels and leaders, but despite the Egyptians' best efforts, leadership appears in the form of Moshe. We follow Moshe through his infant adventures in the Nile, his first contact with his Jewish brothers after a childhood spent in the royal palace, and his long years shepherding for Yitro, his Midianite father-in-law. Then Hashem contacts Moshe in the famous scene of the (non-) burning bush; Moshe reluctantly accepts the mission of representing Hashem to Paro and Bnei Yisrael and demanding that Paro release Hashem's people. Paro claims that he "does not know Y-HVH" and rejects Moshe's demand for freedom, but by the end of the plagues, Egypt lies in smoking tatters and Paro, finally recognizing Y-HVH, releases the people. Soon he changes his mind and pursues Bnei Yisrael into the desert, where Hashem lures him and his army into the sea and drowns them. The people celebrate their salvation with the Song of the Sea.

Bnei Yisrael journey from the sea but soon complain of their lack of food and water. Hashem provides their needs and they move on. Yitro briefly visits the nation, and, among other things, helps reform the judicial system to lighten the burden of judgment heretofore borne by Moshe alone. The people move to Sinai, where they prepare for the revelation of the Torah. Amid thunder, lightning, earthquakes, and other frightening phenomena, Hashem descends on the mountain and delivers the Decalogue, but the people, already overcome and fearing death if they continue to hear Hashem's voice, beg Moshe to listen to the rest and report it to them. Moshe agrees and ascends the mountain, where Hashem teaches him the halakhot (laws) of Parashat Mishpatim. Moshe then descends the mountain, teaches the laws to the people, and establishes the covenant between Hashem and the people.

Moshe ascends the mountain again (at Hashem's behest), and in great detail, Hashem shows him the plans for the Mishkan (movable Temple), its Kelim (altars, candelabrum, ark, etc.) and the clothing to be worn by the Kohanim (Priests). While Hashem and Moshe discuss the Mishkan, the people become unstable without a leader and create a golden egel (calf) and worship it. Moshe successfully convinces Hashem not to destroy Bnei Yisrael and descends the mountain to deal with the people. Moshe then returns to Hashem to ask forgiveness for the people's sin, and Hashem, while at first distant and resistant, eventually returns His Presence to the nation, restoring the plan for the Mishkan in which He will reside among the people. Moshe then communicates the Mishkan plan to the people in all of its myriad details; the people do as commanded, and with the construction of the Mishkan and its contents, Sefer Shemot ends.

OK, SO WHAT?

Sefer Shemot brings us slavery, destructive miracles, redemption, revelation, laws, the Divine Presence, and the establishment of the cult.* But this list can hardly be thought of as a "theme."

(*Please note that while the word "cult" is popularly used to refer to groups -- like the Moonies -- which use mind control and other evil methods to gain adherents, in our discussion it is being used in the sense of "formal religious veneration; a system of religious beliefs and ritual" [Webster's Collegiate dictionary]. I obviously do not consider anything about the Torah to be cultic in the popular -- derogatory -- sense. I use it to refer primarily to the laws of sacrifices.)

How about this: The first part of the sefer describes the creation of a nation (growth, slavery, miracles, redemption, judicial reform), the middle describes the revelation of Hashem (the Decalogue, Parashat Mishpatim), and the latter part describes the institutionalization of Hashem's Presence among the people (Mishkan, Egel, Mishkan again).

BUT:

But this neat classification of the sections of the sefer is really false. While it does seem that the first part of the sefer focuses on the emergence of a nation, this first section also contains all of the plagues and the miracle at the sea -- and the Torah repeatedly makes explicit that the plagues are intended not simply to convince Paro that the smart choice is to release these slaves, but to teach Bnei Yisrael and Egypt "that I am Y-HVH." The plagues are primarily a tool for theological instruction, a way for Hashem to communicate to His new nation and to Egypt (representing the nations who embrace the pagan pantheon) that He is present and all-powerful. If the first part of the sefer is about the creation of the nation and the middle is about the revelation of Hashem, then the plagues really belong in the middle of the sefer.

A perhaps even more explicit example of the revelation of Hashem in the first part of the sefer is the conversation between Hashem and Moshe at the beginning of Parashat Va-Era in which Hashem announces to Moshe that a new stage of Divine revelation is about to begin. Although He had revealed Himself to the Avot (forefathers) only in the aspect of E-I Shad-dai, Hashem will now reveal Himself in the aspect of Y-HVH. As we discussed at the time, these divine names indicate different modes of divine action; E-I Shad-dai is the mode of divine action through which Hashem makes covenants and establishes the destiny of the people, but Y-HVH is the mode in which He appears before the world in all of His majesty and power. Hashem demonstrates His presence in history and in human affairs by bringing powerful Egypt to its knees. Clearly, this is not about nation-creation, it is about theology; therefore it seems out of place in the first part of Sefer Shemot.

The neat classification seems suspect also when we look at the middle of the sefer: If the middle is about Hashem's revelation, it is strange to find that this section contains material essential to the formation of the nation and its character, such as "You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

In any event, even if the "neat classification" theory did a good job of splitting up the sefer (which we have just seen is questionable), it would not explain what holds the sefer together. Three themes seem to be struggling for prominence: the development of the nation, the revelation of Hashem, and the Presence of Hashem among the people.

THE KEYS:

As usual, the keys are in the text itself. A look at Parashat Ki Tisa, in the thick of the debate between Hashem and Moshe about whether Hashem will accompany the people now that they have worshipped the Egel, is telling:

SHEMOT 33:15-16 --

He [Moshe] said to Him [Hashem], "If You will not accompany us personally, do not take us up from here! For how would it be known that I have found favor in Your eyes, I and Your nation? Certainly, it is [made known] by Your going with us, singling us out, myself and Your nation, from all nations on the face of the Earth!"

As we saw this past week in our discussion of this section, Moshe is arguing that the entire purpose of Hashem's having created this nation is that it should bear His name. This is Hashem's nation, and through it, Hashem is made known in the world. If so, then Hashem's decision to withdraw His Presence from among the people (in response to their worship of the Egel) makes their existence meaningless; they might as well stay put in the desert forever, perhaps to die there. It doesn't really matter anymore.

The theme of Sefer Shemot is the public revelation of Hashem to the world. The primary way that Hashem chooses to accomplish this goal is by creating a nation to bring Him into the consciousness of the world and spread His name.

STAGES:

It is true that the different sections of the sefer appear to focus on different themes -- the first focuses on the nation, the second on revelation, and the third on the Divine Presence among the people -- but these are all simply developing stages in or aspects of the creation of the nation and the infusing of the Divine into the nation so that it can execute its mission.

STAGE 1:

In the first stage, the nation reflects Hashem passively: the people do nothing at all to spread knowledge of Hashem, and instead they are used by Hashem as objects which He has selected because of His promises to their ancestors. Hashem inflicts a series of plagues on Egypt which demonstrate His power, but He does not strike His own people with the plagues -- and He makes a point of this to Paro on several occasions. He thereby identifies these people as His own while demonstrating that He is in full control of the calamities He has brought upon Egypt, fully able to limit the effect of the plagues so that those He favors are not afflicted.

STAGE 2-A (responsibility of the people):

In the second stage, the people are charged with Hashem's commands (through the Decalogue and Parashat Mishpatim), which when performed sanctify Hashem by demonstrating to the world both the perfection of the divine system of law and the devotion of His nation to His commands. The people become active reflections of Hashem's perfection. This is recognized by Hashem through His response -- stage 2-B.

STAGE 2-B (response of Hashem):

In response to the people's acceptance of the responsibility of reflecting Hashem's justice and wisdom through performing the mitzvot, the people are infused with holiness by the resting of the Divine Presence among them. Not only is this nation Hashem's favored nation (stage 1), and not only do they perform His will (stage 2-A), but they maintain an intimate relationship with Him in a bond of holiness (stage 2-B). The Presence of Hashem's tent among the tents of the people (and, at a later stage in history, Hashem's house among the houses of the people) demonstrates to the world that Hashem rests among those who accept His will and perform His commands; His open manifestation in the daily life of the Mishkan and Mikdash clearly advertises that Hashem is present in the world (chiefly among His closest adherents).

EXAMPLE: MOSHE AFTER THE EGEL:

It is telling that when the people worship the Egel, causing Hashem's Presence to withdraw (2-B) because they have disobeyed His will (2-A), Moshe can fall back only on stage 1-related arguments in trying to prevent Hashem from destroying the people:

- a) The fact that Hashem has already identified Himself with this nation, and that to destroy them would indicate to Egypt (=the nations of the world) Hashem's failure (or that He is evil by nature);
- b) The fact that He took them out of Egypt with great power and obvious divine intervention, which indicated His connection with them;
- c) The fact that Hashem had promised to the Avot that He would give Eretz Yisrael to their descendants.

All of these arguments ignore stage 2 (obedience to mitzvot and Hashem's consequent Presence) because the people have shown themselves disobedient, rejecting Hashem for a false god. This posture of Moshe's -- the focus on stage 1 -- characterizes many sections of Sefer Yehezkel (Ezekiel), in which Hashem makes it clear to the sinful people of that time that He remains supportive of them only because His name is connected with theirs, not because they deserve good treatment. Under these circumstances, favoring the Bnei Yisrael is only damage control, a way to prevent hillul Hashem (profanation of the Divine name).

IN CLOSING, A SHORT SERMON:

Normally, I try to avoid getting up on the soapbox, but I do want to close our study of Sefer Shemot by drawing some of the implications of the sefer for practical application. The practice of closing a unit or sefer with something slightly 'different' is enshrined in our mesorah (tradition) by the examples of Rav Yehuda ha-Nasi (redactor of the Mishna) and the Rambam (Maimonides), both of whom often closed major units of their works with inspirational material.

The lowest level of relationship between Hashem and ourselves is that His name is identified with us. This makes us responsible not to behave in ways which reflect poorly on Hashem and means that sometimes Hashem will do us a favor we don't deserve just to prevent hillul Hashem. But we are responsible to bring that relationship to stage 2, where we become active emissaries of Hashem by observing the mitzvot in the eyes of the world; in the words of Moshe to Bnei Yisrael as they prepare to cross to Eretz Yisrael, "Take care to do [the mitzvot], for they show your wisdom and understanding before the nations, who will hear of all these laws and say, 'This great nation is surely a wise and understanding one!'; for what nation is so great that it has a God close to it, like Hashem, our God, whenever we call Him? What nation has laws and statutes as just as this Torah, which I place before you today?" (Devarim 4:6-8). We are responsible to ready ourselves to accept the Presence of Hashem into our 'camp' -- our homes and our personal lives, so that Hashem's holiness is apparent in the way we live.

THE CHALLENGE OF SEFER VAYIKRA:

Most of us have an easy time relating to the stories in Sefer Bereshit (Genesis) and remembering them because they are stories about individuals. We compare ourselves to the heroes and villains of the sefer and use our sense of psychology to try to understand the figures we encounter.

Some of us have slightly more difficulty with Sefer Shemot (Exodus) despite its many stories because 1) it contains a good amount of halakha (law), always more dense than narrative, and because 2) the stories are often national narratives; we are now dealing with a group, not individuals.

Almost all of us have even more difficulty grasping Sefer VaYikra (Leviticus): not only are there almost no stories, and not only is the sefer almost wall-to-wall halakha, but the halakha it contains is largely ritual, technical, abstract, and sometimes -- particularly when we come to the korbanot (sacrifices) and issues of tahara (ritual purity) -- no longer relevant to our everyday lives.

Without being aware of it, many of us are profoundly alienated from large parts of our most basic and important text, the Torah itself. We may be well acquainted with Sefer Bereshit, the 'user-friendliest' of the books of the Torah, and we may also maintain a warm relationship with the first half of Sefer Shemot, with its miracles of redemption and the giving of the Torah. But already beginning with Parashat Mishpatim (in the middle of Sefer Shemot), with its dense legal material, we may begin to feel that we are out of our depth or just no longer interested. We remain numbly detached all the way through Sefer VaYikra, until we reach Sefer BeMidbar (Numbers), where the stories begin again.

This, of course, is a tragedy and a failure.

Understanding the Torah's stories is obviously part of our responsibility as Jews, but so is understanding the Torah's laws. Many of the most important lessons Hashem teaches us are expressed only through halakha and not (or not explicitly) through the Torah's narratives.

Part of the responsibility for our attitude toward Sefer VaYikra is ours. But part is to be laid squarely at the feet of some of our educators! In the elementary school I attended, we skipped (if memory serves) straight from the end of Shemot to the beginning of Bemidbar, completely avoiding VaYikra and its challenges. That curricular decision has always affected me profoundly: The message was that the teacher had no confidence in my and my peers' ability to handle the material, or perhaps no confidence in his own ability to bring the material to life and make it relevant.

My impression is that many of us share this attitude. Either we have tried VaYikra and grown bored with its technicalities, or we have absorbed the impression that it is beyond us.

Our challenge in learning Sefer VaYikra is to destroy or overcome all of these assumptions. But let me say at the beginning that this will demand work, just as understanding Bereshit and Shemot demanded work. Whatever narratives we have encountered until now have always been only the surface. We have been peeling back that surface, asking what is *really* going on: What value is being expressed here? What does this event mean for the development of the nation? How does this affect the individual's or the nation's relationship to God? Why does God behave in certain ways, and why do people? We will be asking the same kinds of questions about the mitzvot of Sefer VaYikra. Just as it was important not to get lost in the details of the stories, and instead to move the details for the meaning and messages latent in the narratives, it is crucial not to get lost in the details of the halakha we will be encountering. Instead, it will be our job to first become familiar with the details of the halakhot and then to use them to answer the same questions of inner meaning and message.

THE STRUCTURE OF SEFER VAYIKRA:

As usual when we face a new sefer, our job is to survey the contents of the sefer and try to get a feel for its theme. Obviously, since we have yet to learn through the sefer, we are not qualified to say definitively what the theme is and how it plays out in the sefer. But it is important to try to make some preliminary generalizations at the beginning, which we will test as we go through the sefer and refine when we reach the end.

On that note, we will take a look at the actual content of Sefer VaYikra, perek (chapter) by perek. Our tasks as we become more familiar with the sefer will be:

- 1) To understand what connects one topic to the next, how the text flows.
- 2) To recognize what the major sections of the sefer are and what the main theme of each section is.

3) To step back from the whole sefer and come to a reasonably precise formulation of what holds the sefer together.

Perek Topic
(chap.)

- 1 Korban: the "Olah" (completely burned sacrifice).
- 2 Korban: the "Minhah" (flour offering).
- 3 Korban: the "Shelamim" (meaning to be discussed).
- 4-5 Korban: the "Hatat" (sin sacrifice type I).
- 5 Korban: the "Asham" (sin sacrifice type II).
- 6-7 Instructions for korbanot, mostly addressed to the Kohanim.
- 8 Moshe inaugurates the Mishkan and Kohanim.
- 9 The Kohanim take an active role in the Mishkan inauguration.
- 10 The death of Aharon's sons & its aftermath.
- 11 Pure (kosher) & impure (non-kosher) animals, birds, etc.
- 12 Purity and giving birth.
- 13 Purity: diagnosing & treating tzara'at (growths) on skin and fabric.
- 14 Purity: post-tzara'at purification.
- 14 Purity: diagnosing & treating tzara'at on a house.
- 15 Purity: genital & menstrual discharges.
- 16 Purity: repurification of the Mishkan & atonement (Yom Kippur).
- 17 Where to bring sacrifices; how to properly treat blood.
- 18 Sexual crimes.
- 19 A little of everything! (interpersonal, ritual, religious, etc.)
- 20 Idolatry; sexual crimes.
- 21-22 Kohanim: maintaining high standards.
- 22 Sacrifices: maintaining high standards.
- 23 Shabbat and other Mo'adim (special times).
- 24 Oil for the Menora; bread for the Shulhan (table).
- 24 "Blessing" God (a euphemism for the opposite).
- 25 Transactions of land in Eretz Yisrael.
- 26 Reward and punishment for our behavior.
- 27 Making donations to God's treasury.

It should already be clear that certain issues come up with frequency in Sefer VaYikra:

- 1) Laws of korbanot:
 - a) Under what circumstances are various korbanot offered?
 - b) How to properly offer each type of korban.
- 2) Purity and impurity:
 - a) What animals, birds, etc. may be eaten?
 - b) Giving birth and how it affects purity.
 - c) Tzara'at.
 - d) Genital and menstrual discharges.
 - e) Repurifying the Mishkan (Yom Kippur).

Beyond these patterns, it is not obvious what the other major themes of Sefer VaYikra are; to put it another way, it is not clear how to categorize the rest of the material in the list above. In a sense, at the same time as the list above answers the question, "What is in Sefer VaYikra?", it also asks several questions:

- 1) What is the purpose of korbanot? What is their role in the God-human relationship? How do the specific details of each type of korban reflect what each type of korban tries to accomplish?
- 2) There seems to be a great emphasis on ritual status -- purity and impurity, "taharah" and "tum'ah." What do these concepts mean? Why is the Torah so concerned with them? Is the Torah trying to communicate a system of values through the laws of purity, or just the natural laws of metaphysics (in which case it would make as much sense to look for moral meaning and values in the halakhot of purity as it would to look for moral meaning and values in the law of gravitation or the laws of thermodynamics)? Perhaps both? If the Torah is communicating a system of values, how are these values developed by the different areas of halakha in which purity plays a central role?
- 3) From childhood, we are bombarded with the idea that Sefer VaYikra is all about holiness. This raises all kinds of questions: Where does the theme of holiness appear in Sefer VaYikra -- what halakhot are cast as manifestations of the imperative that we be holy? What does holiness mean in Sefer VaYikra? Why should we try to be holy?

These are some of the questions which will be keeping us busy over the next nine weeks or so.

A WORD ON "TA'AMEI MITZVOT":

This brings us to the issue of ta'amei mitzvot, reasons for the commandments. Discussions about ta'amei mitzvot stereotypically begin with a classic caveat which applies to what we will be doing as well: No matter what we say here about the reasons for the mitzvot, our conclusions are at best educated guesses at some of the possible messages of each mitzva, and at worst can completely miss the point. Moreover, some mitzvot have traditionally been understood as hukkim, laws whose rationale is inaccessible to us.

'BONUS': THE RAMBAM ON IMPURITY

I want to close with a fascinating piece from the Rambam (Maimonides). The piece addresses the question implicit above: Should we be looking for rationales to the mitzvot, particularly those which seem highly ritualistic and technical, like the halakhot of purity and korbanot, or should we assume that these matters are beyond us?

As I mentioned above, the Rambam made a practice of closing major sections of his halakhic code with inspirational material. It is appropriate that we spend some time looking at the last halakha (paragraph) in the Rambam's "Book of Purity":

RAMBAM, HILKHOT MIKVA'OT 11:12 --

"It is clear and obvious that impurity and purity are decrees of Scripture; they are not matters which human intelligence judges/discerns, and they are included among the 'hukkim.' Immersion [in a mikvah] for the purpose of removing impurity is also among the hukkim, for impurity is not tar or filth, which would be removed by water, but instead it is a decree of Scripture and a matter which depends on the intent of the heart. Therefore the Sages said, "If one immerses [in a mikvah] without conscious intent, it is as if he has not immersed"

On the surface, it seems that the Rambam is saying that we have no access to the rationale behind purity and impurity; these laws are "decrees of Scripture" and "hukkim" (the 'code word' in Talmudic and halakhic literature for laws which escape human understanding). But two features of what the Rambam says raise questions:

- 1) If the Rambam's point is that we have no access to the rationale, why does he seem to connect this with the fact that matters of purity "depend on the intent of the heart"? There seems to be little connection between the claim that these laws are beyond our understanding and the halakha that in order for ritual immersion to 'work,' it must be done with the conscious intent of the immersee to become pure.
- 2) We know very well (if we have indeed read through all of the Rambam's halakhot of purity until this final halakha) that immersion in the mikvah has nothing to do with physical cleaning and that impurity is not some sort of dirt. How does asserting this strengthen or somehow explain further what the Rambam means when he says that these matters are "decrees of Scripture"?

In several places, the Midrash (Rabba, Tanhuma, and Pesikta) records that in truth, a human corpse (the source of the most severe form of impurity, according to the laws of impurity) does not make things impure, and in truth, a mikvah does not restore things to purity; instead, it is all a "decree of Scripture"; these halakhot are "hukkim" which we are to follow.

While the Midrash appears similar to the Rambam, it requires explanation: If a corpse, the most extreme example of an impurity-passing entity, does not actually pass impurity, and a mikvah, the prescribed place of return to purity, does not actually purify, then what are the laws of purity and impurity all about? The answer: It is a "decree of Scripture," a set of "hukkim." In other words, by giving us all of the laws of purity and impurity, the Torah is not communicating to us the laws of a sort of spiritual physics; in fact, there IS NO SUCH THING as purity and impurity. Dead bodies are not somehow spiritually impure, and the mikvah does not somehow "fix" whatever is spiritually wrong with something which is considered impure. What the Torah has done is to create an artificial construct in which there are two pretend statuses -- purity and impurity. Calling something "pure" means that certain rules apply to it, and calling it "impure" means that other laws apply to it. But in essence, there is no such thing as purity and impurity. This is what the Midrash means when it tells us that the corpse does not truly pass impurity and that the mikvah does not truly remove impurity.

The obvious question, then, is why bother? If purity and impurity truly existed, it would make sense to take great care about them, but if they are an invention of the Torah, why invent them? Clearly, to teach us a lesson of some sort. But the Rambam and the Midrash are silent on what that lesson might be . . . that is, the Rambam in *that* book is silent; in his Guide to the Perplexed, however, where he divides the mitzvot into categories, he makes his attitude much clearer:

GUIDE TO THE PERPLEXED, 3:35 --

"The twelfth class [of mitzvot] includes mitzvot which depend on impurity and purity. The purpose of all of them as a class is to keep people from entering the Temple [often], so that they should maintain their awe of it and fear it, as I will explain."

The Rambam asserts that since the Torah's rules of purity make it rare for a person to find himself pure, he is rarely able to enter the Temple, since the impure may not enter such a holy place. Whether we accept this explanation is, for now, not the point; the point is that the Rambam is making an attempt to articulate the lesson behind purity and impurity.

In case we need stronger proof that the Rambam considers purity and impurity artificial statuses, imaginary inventions of the Torah:

GUIDE OF THE PERPLEXED 3:47 --

" . . . It therefore is clear that the word "impurity" is used in three different senses: 1) to indicate rebellion by man and transgression of the commandments in deed or thought; 2) to refer to dirt and filth; and 3) in reference to these IMAGINARY MATTERS, like touching or carrying certain things"

These "imaginary matters" are what the Rambam was referring to in Hilkhot Mikva'ot when he said that these laws are "decrees of Scripture," that they "depend on the conscious intent of the heart" -- the whole point is that they do not actually exist, even on the spiritual plane, and that their entire purpose as halakhot is to teach us something -- so if we immerse in the mikvah without the intent to purify, nothing at all has happened. Unlike taking a shower, which cleanses us of dirt whether we think about it or not, the mikvah works only if our minds are involved, because purity and impurity are artificial which are meant to teach us something. They are not only not physical dirt, they are also not spiritual dirt or contamination; they do not exist, they are simply "decrees of Scripture" about how we are to treat certain objects.

Of course, there is a lesson behind this demand by the Torah, a lesson we will examine more carefully as we move through the sections of VaYikra on purity. The point for now is that the Torah can create an artificial status in order to communicate something important (as yet unexplained). This, we will see, is a strategy particularly employed by Sefer VaYikra's focus on purity and impurity.

Shabbat Shalom

Parshas Pekudei: Siyyum on Sefer Sh'mot

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

As recorded in the Gemara (BT Shabbat 118b), it is traditional to celebrate the conclusion of the study of a book of Torah. Whereas this tradition chiefly impacts on the study of a Massechet (Tractate) of Talmud or a Seder (Order) of Mishnah, it is certainly applicable to the completion of a book of the Torah. This "concluding celebration" is known as a "Siyyum".

I. AN OVERVIEW OF SEFER SH'MOT

As we come to the conclusion of this Sefer, it is appropriate to look back on the past 11 weeks of study (and "leining") and try to get a sense of the larger picture of Sh'mot. Even though (as noted earlier), chapter/verse divisions in the Torah are a Christian invention from the 11th century, the division of the Torah into five books is inherent in the text itself and built into the structure of the physical Sefer Torah from which we read. As such, it stands to reason that this unit, called Sefer Sh'mot, has an underlying theme which informs its narrative and legal passages and which finds its denouement at the conclusion of the Sefer.

The Sefer divides, quite easily, into several sections, as follows:

I. Exodus (Chapters 1:1-13:16)

- A. Description of Servitude
- B. Selection of Mosheh
- C. Plagues
- D. Korban Pesach
- E. Exodus

II. Travels (13:17-18:27)

- A. The Splitting of the Reed Sea
- B. The Song at the Sea
- C. Thirst, Hunger, Thirst
- D. Amalek
- E. Interaction with Yitro

III. Giving of the Torah (19:1-24:18)

- A. Agreement to Enter the Covenant
- B. The Ten Statements
- C. The "Mishpatim" given to Mosheh
- D. The covenant ceremony

IV. Commands of the Mishkan (25:1-31:17)

V. Golden Calf (31:18-34:35)

- A. The Sin
- B. Mosheh's plea for Divine compassion
- C. Mosheh's chastisement of the people
- D. Second plea for Compassion
- E. The Divine agreement to stay with the people
- F. The Second Tablets
- G. The reconstituting

VI. Construction of the Mishkan (35:1 – 40:38)

I. DETAIL AND REPETITION

It would be simplest to posit a three-fold theme – Exodus, Covenant and Mishkan. First of all, God brought the B'nei Yisra'el out of Egypt, then He brought them close to Mount Sinai in order to initiate an encounter and enter into a covenant with them – and finally, to command them (and see the fulfillment of the command) to build a Mishkan. While this is an accurate overview, it would be more satisfying – and, hopefully, more intellectually honest and probing – to isolate and identify one theme which ties these three notions together.

Before exploring the theme of the Sefer, there is a textual oddity relating to the Mishkan which we must address – considering that it constitutes over a fourth of the Sefer.

Whereas the laws of the Torah are usually given in brief form – either general overview (e.g. "You may not do any M'lakhah on Shabbat), case law (e.g. "if a person gives his fellow a donkey...") or coded phrases ("You shall put a sign on your hand) – the details of the Mishkan are spelled out in almost excruciating detail. Every item, its length, width and height; the materials from which it is made and so on are delineated such that these commands take up 7 complete chapters (if we include the details of the sanctification of the Kohanim) in Sefer Sh'mot. Why the detailed description, so atypical of legal text in the Torah?

A second question (which we addressed in our shiur on Parashat Terumah – you can find it at <http://www.torah.org/advanced/mikra/sh/dt.57.2.07.html>) comes on the heels of this one. After reading about God's detailed commands to Mosheh regarding the construction of the Mishkan, we are presented with an equally detailed description of the fulfillment of those commands by the B'nei Yisra'el under the direction of Betzalel. As much as we are bothered by the wordiness and minutiae of these commands, their repetition stands all the more in stark distinction to the way we usually read the Torah.

Following these two questions – detail and repetition – we can ask them again when we look at the description of the offerings of the

N'si'im (heads of the tribes) in Bamidbar Chapter 7. Each tribe brought the common offering (see there), which is described in detail, on successive days during the first 12 days of the first month. Why does the Torah repeat this offering in all of its detail twelve times? Wouldn't it have been sufficient – and efficient – to present the offering once and then indicate which Nasi brought for his tribe on which day? Over 60 verses (longer than several complete Parashiot!) could have been “shaved” if the Torah had followed this briefer form; why is the “longer version” given?

We will have to file these questions – all of which are different ways of asking the same question – until we address our original topic: What is the theme of Sefer Sh'mot?

III. FROM THREE THEMES TO TWO

Ramban, in his introduction to Parashat Terumah, explains the purpose of the Mishkan in a fashion which helps us “whittle down” the broad themes of Sefer Sh'mot from three to two.

The Mishkan, Ramban explains, serves as a vehicle to perpetuate the Sinai experience. Once B'nei Yisra'el had experienced the great encounter with God at the mountain, it was His desire that they be able to keep this experience – albeit in a more confined manner – with them as they travelled to Eretz Yisra'el.

The Ramban's approach explains the numerous similarities between the Mishkan and Ma'amad Har Sinai (the encounter at Mount Sinai). Here are a few examples:

* Just as God had spoken to the B'nei Yisra'el at Mount Sinai, so too does He continue to speak to them (via Mosheh) from the Kodesh haKodoshim (Holy of Holies), through the K'ruvim (Cherubim) atop the Aron (Ark) (25:22);

* The Luchot Ha'eidut (Tablets of Testimony) which Mosheh will receive (24:12) on Mount Sinai, serve as a testimony to the giving of the Torah and thus, will be kept in the Aron, the focal point of the Mishkan (25:21);

* The Cloud created by the Incense Altar (30:1-10) symbolizes the Cloud that covered Mount Sinai (19:9, 24:15-18);

* The Fire on the Altar (Vayyikra 6:6) symbolizes the Fire that descended on Mount Sinai (Sh'mot 24:17). The laws of the Altar reflect the Covenant ceremony that took place just before Mosheh ascended Mount Sinai (see 24:4-5).

We can now define two overarching themes in the Sefer – Exodus and Encounter. The first 13 chapters detail the successful political liberation of the B'nei Yisra'el from Egypt – (the next few chapters are the bridge which brings them to Sinai) and the rest of the Sefer is dedicated to bringing the B'nei Yisra'el into encounter with God. That encounter begins with the Revelation at Sinai and continues with the construction of the Mishkan. The encounter theme is interrupted by the narrative of the golden calf – which we will explore a bit further on.

Before pursuing our attempt to isolate the one theme which ties the Sefer together, it is appropriate to share a wonderful insight (which I first saw in a marvelous book about the Beit HaMikdash titled “The Temple” by Rabbi Joshua Berman – highly recommended!) on the Mishkan and its role.

IV. RETURN TO THE GARDEN

At the center of the Mishkan (thus the heart of the Camp), sitting in the Kodesh Kodoshim (sanctum sanctorum), sat the Aron (Ark), housing the Tablets of Testimony. These tablets symbolize the most powerful revelation experienced by Man and are representative of Torah. Sitting above the Aron was a Kaporet (gold covering), above which (but fashioned from the same piece of gold) were the K'ruvim – (Cherubim). These K'ruvim show up in only one other context in the Torah narrative – as the sentinels, guarding the path into Eden after Adam's expulsion. Specifically, they were set up to “guard the path to the Tree of Life”.

The Tree of Life, in Mishleic metaphor, is the Torah (see Mishlei 3:18). The K'ruvim which guarded Adam's path to the Tree of Life now guard the “new” Tree of Life – the Torah.

Rabbi Berman suggests two approaches to the Mikdash-Eden analogy. On the one hand, the Mikdash may represent the ideal of Eden. Just as God is described as Mit'hailekh (walking) in the Garden (B'resheet 3:8), so God says:

I will place my Mishkan in your midst, and I shall not abhor you. V'hit'halakhti b'tokhakhem (And I will walk among you – (same word as Mit'hailekh)), and will be your God, and you shall be my people. (Vayyikra 26:11-12) Just as Adam's accountability was higher when in the Garden (=nearness to God), so too the level of purity and sanctity which must be maintained within the Mishkan is higher. Alternatively, he suggests that the Mishkan is a “post-expulsion” replacement for Eden. While it would be inappropriate to replicate too much of his thesis here, one point will suffice to make the point. The multiple levels of distance (Kodesh/Kodesh haKodoshim) and the presence of the K'ruvim (both woven into the Parokhet [curtain] dividing the Kodesh from the Kodesh haKodoshim and in gold over the Aron) seem to make the statement that the distance caused by the original expulsion is permanent and that the Mishkan is as close as any human can come to reentering – but can not truly come all the way back.

Following this general thesis, we can now find a greater “inclusio” at the end of Sefer Sh'mot. Instead of being a fitting conclusion to the Sinai experience (as per Ramban), with God's Presence now accessible to the B'nei Yisra'el as they travel, the end of our Sefer concludes a saga whose onset is at the beginning of B'resheet. The intervening chapters (from B'resheet 3 until the end of Sh'mot) are, effectively, the story of Man's attempt to return to the Garden. The end of Sh'mot gives us either the “mini-return” afforded to us by God – or the closest possible access.

While this approach is appealing and has much merit, it still leaves us searching for a unifying theme within Sefer Sh'mot. Let's turn to the beginning of the Sefer for some clues.

V. V'ELE SH'MOT B'NEI YISRA'EL

Our Sefer begins with a recounting of the descent of Ya'akov's children to Egypt:

These are the names of the sons of Yisra'el who came to Egypt with Ya'akov, each with his household: Re'uven, Shim'on, Levi, and Yehudah; Yissachar, Zevulun, and Binyamin; Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. The total number of people born to Ya'akov was seventy. Yoseph was already in Egypt. (1:1-5)

This introduction is difficult on two counts:

* It seems superfluous, as we have already been told about the descent of Ya'akov's household – along with a complete listing of the names of the family members – in B'resheet 46 (vv. 8-27);

* In that earlier counting, the grandchildren were listed – whereas here, only the sons appear.

The Rishonim are sensitive to these problems and are divided in their approaches to a resolution.

Rashi (ad loc.) says that this recounting shows the depth of God's love for the B'nei Yisra'el – just as He lovingly "brings out" the stars every night and calls them by name – and then calls them by name when He "puts them away" (see Yeshaya 40:26); similarly, He reckons the B'nei Yisra'el in their lifetime (in B'resheet) and again after their death (at the beginning of Sh'mot).

Ramban (ad loc.), while favoring the sentiments expressed in Rashi's approach, challenges it as an accurate reading of p'shat in the verse. Ramban suggests that the book of Sh'mot is an holistic unit – telling the story of redemption. As such, the story had to pick up from the roots of servitude – from which that redemption would take place. Even though we had already learned of the descent into Egypt (indeed, the last four chapters of B'resheet take place there), the Torah wants to teach us one story in this Sefer and, as such, needs to begin it at the genesis of that story. There is a need for a short recap, bringing us back into the story of descent and oppression, setting the stage for redemption.

Ramban explains that since this is only a recap, there was no need to list the entire family, just the heads of household (Re'uven, Shim'on etc.).

Ramban anticipates the challenge that if the theme of this Sefer is redemption (as it is sometimes called Sefer haG'ulah – the book of redemption), why doesn't it end when the B'nei Yisra'el exit Egypt? Why are the stand at Sinai and the construction of the Mishkan included in this Sefer?

He explains that G'ulah implies a restoration to previous glory. When the Avot (patriarchs) resided in Eretz Yisra'el, they interacted with God and His Presence was felt among them. Only after restoring His Glory to the camp and assuring the welcome of His Presence in the Mishkan were they truly redeemed and "restored to the stature of their ancestors."

Building on the Ramban, I would like to suggest another understanding of the underlying theme of our Sefer in a way that integrates Rashi's approach to the beginning of the Sefer and which explains the repetition and details of the construction of the Mishkan.

VI. SH'MOT B'NEI YISRA'EL IN THE MISHKAN

Among all of the vestments and vessels in the Mishkan, only three had some form of writing on them:

* The Hoshen (breastpiece) worn by Aharon. The Hoshen had four rows of three precious stones each (parenthetically, the prophet identifies nine of these twelve precious stones as being in Eden! – see Yehezqe'el 28:13). Each stone was engraved with the name of one of the tribes:

So Aharon shall bear the names of the B'nei Yisra'el in the breastpiece of judgment on his heart when he goes into the holy place, for a continual remembrance before YHVH. (Sh'mot 28:21)

* The shoulder-pieces of the Ephod (apron) worn by Aharon. Each piece had an onyx stone and between the two stones, all twelve names (Re'uven, Shim'on etc.) were engraved:

You shall set the two stones on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, as stones of remembrance for the B'nei Yisra'el; and Aharon shall bear their names before YHVH on his two shoulders for remembrance. (ibid. v. 9)

Aharon is to wear them as a Zikkaron (remembrance) – what is the goal of this Zikkaron? Is it to be a remembrance before God, that He should bless His people? Is it something for the B'nei Yisra'el to remember?

Note that in 28:28, we are commanded that the Hoshen and Ephod are not to be separated.

* The Tzitz (headband) worn by Aharon. On the Tzitz, the words KODESH LASHEM (holy to God) were represented (ibid. v. 36) What is the meaning behind these words and their presence as a Zikkaron in the Mishkan?

Let's look back at the stated purpose of the Mishkan: "Let them build for Me a Mikdash, that I may dwell among them" (25:8). The Mishkan was to be a vehicle through which God would manifest His Presence among the B'nei Yisra'el. Aharon's job – as the great Ohev Yisra'el (lover of Israel) – was to be the "shadkhan" (matchmaker) between God and His people. He was to bring the B'nei Yisra'el back to God, by bringing them into the Mishkan. Carrying their names at all times was a reminder to Aharon of his task. He was not in the midst of the holiest possible place on his own merit, rather, he was there as a representative of two sides – God and the B'nei Yisra'el.

This explains why there was one garment with their names – but why both the Hoshen and the Ephod? In addition, why did the Hoshen carry each name on its own stone, whereas the Ephod combined them into two onyx stones?

VII. THE GOAL OF DIVINE WORSHIP

Avodat Hashem – the worship of God – demands a delicate balance between individual expression and communalism. Although there is a great deal to be said for communal worship, as the members stand as one unit and in common practice, nonetheless, it is not the Torah's goal to obliterate the individual talents, needs, creative urges or expressions found in each member of the community. Some religions maintain an ideal of group worship, where the individual submerges and negates his or her own needs into the expression of

the group (perhaps the strongest and most frightening examples of this extreme are contemporary “cults”). Others (such as some schools of Zen) place the entire emphasis on individual expression – paying little or no heed to the power of the community. In both Halakhic and extra-Halakhic literature, the sensitive balance between individual and community is addressed. On the one hand, we pray the most central prayer – T’fillah – silently. On the other – it is (during the day) followed by a public repetition, known as T’fillat haTzibbur – the prayer of the community.

God’s directive to us contains both of these pulls – “You shall be a Kingdom of Kohanim and a Holy Nation” on the one hand; “You shall worship YHVH your God with all of your heart...” on the other.

The Mishkan is the nexus of our worship of God. Even worship which takes place outside of the Mishkan is oriented around it (note what direction we face when saying T’fillah). Aharon’s job was to bring the B’nei Yisra’el back into encounter with God – on two almost opposing levels. He was to (help Mosheh) lead them as a nation, as a community, as a group. He was also to lead each of them – in his or her own way – into a more sincere and honest encounter with God. Thus, he had to carry their names as individuals (represented by the individual tribes), each in his own glory (represented by a different precious stone) – and as a group. Note that the two stones on the ephod shoulder-pieces were both onyx – and (following Rambam’s approach – see MT K’lei Mikdash 9:9) the names were listed in birth order, alternating between the right and left shoulder-pieces. This is clearly a statement about the unification of the families into one unit. The third component – the Tzitz – was the focus through which this worship was able to unify the people. Note that the individual representation of the names sat on Aharon’s breast; moving up towards his head (where the Tzitz rested) were the two shoulder-pieces which unified their names. The message is fairly self-explanatory: **The method by which the tribes of Ya’akov properly unite is in their common focus upward towards God.**

VIII. THE MISHKAN AS A COMMEMORATION OF THE EXODUS

We can now posit a third role of the Mishkan. Not only is it a return to Eden and a continuation of Sinai – it is also a commemoration of the Exodus (Zekher liY’tzi’at Mitzrayim). The Exodus is introduced by the listing of the Sh’mot B’nei Yisra’el who descended into Egypt (away from God’s presence – see B’resheet 46:4 and Rashi ad loc.; compare with Vayyikra 18:1-3). As mentioned above (in Rambam’s name), **the entire goal of the Exodus was to bring them back to the lofty stature of their ancestors – with the Shekhinah (Divine Presence) resting among them. That is why the Torah begins Sefer Sh’mot with a partial listing of their names – unlike the narrative in B’resheet which is telling a story, the opening paragraph in our Sefer is setting a scene. These names have been exiled from the Shekhinah! Their return is only assured when Aharon comes into the Mishkan with these same twelve names on his vestments – thus bringing these names, both as individuals and as a unit (on the Ephod) back into the proximity of God’s Presence, back to the gates of Eden. The very existence of the Mishkan, with all of its vessels and Kohanic vestments, stands as a commemoration of the renewed nearness of God’s cherished people – and of the balance of individual and community in Divine worship.**

We now understand why the Torah places such an emphasis on detail in building the Mishkan – because, as the very focus of our relationship with God, we need to remember that every step in the Mishkan must be exact and deliberate (note what happens to Nadav and Avihu when they fail to comply); just as the standards in the Garden of Eden were very exacting, so too in this Dwelling Place for God. Whereas other Mitzvot serve as vehicles of worship, the Mishkan is the nexus of that worship and must be guarded and cared for much more scrupulously.

This seems to be the reason for the repetition of the details of the Mishkan (not only command – also fulfillment). In the intervening time, the B’nei Yisra’el had tried to worship via their own methods (not commanded by God) – and they ended up with a golden calf that served as the archetype of all future sin and punishment (see 32:34). Thus, the description which repeats, like a refrain, that they built each component “just as God had commanded Mosheh”, serves to indicate a realization that the only way to enter God’s Presence is – on His terms!

We also understand the repetition of the offerings of the N’si’im in Bamidbar 7. Even though each one brought the same offering as the others, indicating the “communal” approach to worship, each one brought his own intention and motivation to that service (see Midrash Rabbah ad loc.) – supporting the individual component of Avodat Hashem. The Torah repeats them to show us this lesson – that although we may have a common worship structure, we (not only may, but must) bring our own personalities, conflicts, concerns etc. to the act of worship, making it our own and solidifying our own relationship with haKadosh Barukh Hu.

IX. POSTSCRIPT: KODESH YISRA’EL L’YHVH

At the end of the first prophecy of Yirmiyah, the prophet relates:

The word of YHVH came to me, saying: Go proclaim in the ears of Yerushalayim, Thus says YHVH: I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Kodesh Yisra’el L’YHVH (Yisra’el was holy to YHVH), the first fruits of his harvest. All who ate of it were held guilty; disaster came upon them, says YHVH. (Yirmiyah 2:1-3). In this passage, Yirmiyah uses an odd phrasing to describe the relationship between God and the B’nei Yisra’el – Kodesh Yisra’el Lashem. What does this mean?

Following our explanation of the Hoshen-Ephod-Tzitz continuum (the seeds of which came from a shiur by R. Elyakim Krumbein of Yeshivat Har Etzion), it seems that Yirmiyah is describing a (tragically) past relationship in which (the name of the B’nei) Yisra’el fit between the words Kodesh and Lashem which sat upon the Tzitz. Note how Yirmiyah associates this relationship with our travels in the desert – when we had the Mishkan at the heart of our camp, assuring us not only of God’s Presence but of our place in that Edenic Sanctuary.

HAZAK HAZAK V’NIT’HAZEK

Text Copyright © 2010 by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom and Torah.org. The author is Educational Coordinator of the Jewish Studies Institute of the Yeshiva of Los Angeles. Emphasis added.