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Potomac Torah Study Center
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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 more than 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his 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 archives.

Hersh ben Perel Chana, cousin of very close friends of ours, has been confirmed as one of approximately 240 initial hostages to Hamas in Gaza. The Wall St. Journal featured Hersh and his family in a front page article on October 16. Chabad, OU, and many synagogues recommend psalms (Tehillim) to recite daily for the safety of our people. May our people in Israel wipe out the evil of Hamas, protect us from violence by anti-Semites around the world, and restore peace for our people quickly and successfully – with the help of Hashem.

"Vayakhel" is about separation. The positive sense of Vayakhel is Havdalah, a separation between the holy and mundane, between Shabbat/Yom Tov and ordinary days. The negative sense is a gathering such as of Korach and his rebels from the followers of Hashem and Moshe. The concept of separation carries through into the meaning of the Mishkan.

Rabbi David Fohrman notes that the curtains of the Mishkan resemble a rainbow – stripes of various colors. A rainbow is what one sees when breaking up white light into its component parts. To Rabbi Fohrman, the stripes of multiple colors constitute the human perspective, while white is Hashem's view of light. In the Mishkan, the rainbow curtains are at the entrance and on the outer walls while God's holy parts (Aron and luchot) are in the middle. When the Kohen Gadol enters the Mishkan, the human section is at the edges while Hashem's presence and exclusive parts are in the center. As humans enter God's home in our world, we must remember that Hashem is the center of His world, and He has set aside a small portion of His world for us.

Rabbi Mordechai Rhine observes that Shabbat, the subject of much of the parsha, is a metaphor for the world to come (Olam Habah). Observed properly, Shabbat is a time of rest, joy, and delicious meals with family and friends -- Hashem's gift to us. Rabbi Rhine contrasts the positive sense of Shabbat with the Sadducees, the ancient Jewish sect of 2200 years ago, whose overly strict interpretation of the restrictions turned Shabbat into a time of cold and darkness – an unpleasant day every week. One of their interpretations was that a Jew could not derive any benefit from fire during Shabbat – no light, warmth, or freshly cooked food, even if the family completed all the Melacha before the beginning of the day. Under such an interpretation of Shabbat regulations, would Judaism have survived until today?

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, z"l, reminds us that in contrast, Moshe uses positive reinforcement to guide B'Nai Yisrael. After the sin of Egel Zahav, following God's direction, Moshe invites our ancestors to give voluntarily to work for a common goal, to build a home for Hashem within our camp. Rabbi Yehoshua Gordon, z"l, adds that the Mishkan is a manifestation of Hashem's presence in this world and within each of us. When do our people start building the Mishkan? One the day following Yom Kippur. We should follow this example and take the holiness of Yom Kippur into the rest of the year and into our lives.

Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander observes that when Jews go into battle, they take the Aron Kodesh, the Holy Ark, with them into battle. The Aron is always on poles, ready to move immediately when needed. The Aron symbolizes that the Torah is always with us. Torah carries and guides B'Nai Yisrael, governs our behavior, and is our guide even in the most difficult times and situations. The Aron (Hashem's presence) only protects us when we obey the Torah. Torah protects us from evil instincts and moral shortcomings. When the Aron goes to war, it contains only the broken luchot. War is a time of brokenness, such as the past five months since Hamas invaded and attacked our people. Rabbi Brander reminds us that our challenge after we return from Gaza and the wave of anti-Semitism throughout the world is to build anew, reconnect with fellow Jews, and move away from splits among Jews that have occupied politics in Israel and separated various groups within Jewish communities in Israel and abroad.

Rabbi Sacks illustrates his discussion of Moshe's positive reinforcement approach to the Mishkan by discussing social science experiments to resolve hostile factions among boys in summer camp. The experiments showe that the best way to turn hostile factions into a single cohesive group is to give the factions shared challenges that neither group could accomplish alone but all could achieve together. When my older son was in second grade, he and the other boys were too much for their secular teacher to handle. Rabbi Yitzchak Charner, the principal, defused the situation in one day by introducing "Mench of the Month," a contest in which the students with the best middot (evidence of character development) that month would receive special rewards. (By the end of the school year, every student won the award for some middah during one of the months.) Positive reinforcement, instituted properly, works remarkably well.

May some of the lessons from the past five months be what we learn from the Devrei Torah below. We should search for the Mishkan within ourselves, among our fellows, and work toward eliminating the differences that keep us apart. When we work together to fight evil, overcome differences among our fellows, and make room for Hashem in our lives, we improve life for all of us. My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, opened my world to the beauty and lessons of the Torah nearly 55 years ago, and his lessons were consistent with the beautiful messages below. May we take these insights from our parsha, teach them to ourselves, and then instruct our children and grandchildren to live by these principles.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah and Alan

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during and since the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Hersh ben Perel Chana (Hersh Polin, hostage to terrorists in Gaza); Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Reuven ben Basha Chaya Zlata Lana, Yoram Ben Shoshana, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Asher Shlomo ben Ettie, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Rena bat Ilsa, Riva Golda bat Leah, Sarah Feige bat Chaya, Sharon bat Sarah, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, and all our fellow Jews in danger in and near Israel. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom

Hannah & Alan

Vayakhel: Excited by a Sacred Fire

By Rabbi Label Lam © 5767

> *Moshe said to the Children of Israel, "See HASHEM has proclaimed by name, Betzalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Yehuda. He filled him with G-dly spirit, with wisdom, insight, and knowledge, and with every craft.* (Shemos 35:30-31)

Betzalel knew how to combine the letters with which heaven and earth were created! (Brochos 55A)

That sounds like pretty mystical stuff. We knew Betzalel was a talented craftsman but how do we understand his ability to combine letters? What is the practicality of us knowing this information? Not too many of us are Kabbalists! I'm not going to claim to understand it myself but perhaps we can gain a partial appreciation about the specialness and uniqueness of the Hebrew Letters and the Holy Language that we are busy with a good part of each day.

Every day we declare loudly, *"SHEMA -- Hear O Israel HASHEM is our G-d, HASHEM is ONE!"* How can we comfortably appreciate that HASHEM is one? There are so many varieties and types of shapes and dimensions and species and textures and tastes in this multifarious world. The ancient and primitive view was to perceive a splintered congress of competing forces slugging it out for control or dominance. The poor frightened and confused constituent – man would not know which power to throw his support to or how to hedge his bet, just in case he was wrong. That was until Avraham Avinu strode onto the scene. He was a dedicated researcher that posited a unified field theory of physics and spirits.

Avraham is reputed to have written a book called Sefer Yetzira -- *Book of Creation,* which is still extant today. Here is a sample of what's written there: *"Twenty-Two foundation letters: He engraved them. He carved them. He permuted them. He transformed them, and with them He depicted all that was formed and all that would be formed."*

What does this mean? He is talking about the Hebrew Aleph - Beis! Was the world really created with the letters of the Aleph - Beis? Imagine artistically as you read the statement above from Sefer Yetzira that he is talking about elements on the periodic table: *'He engraved them and carved them and permuted them and transformed them and with them he depicted all that was and would be formed!'* Amazing! Everything in the room, between us, and including us is made up of some combo of basic elements from that periodic table, from the lightest gases to the heaviest metals.

Now even more remarkable to consider and contemplate is the fact that all those various elements from Hydrogen to Uranium are all composed of the very same stuff with differing densities of neutrons and protons and electrons orbiting at various valences. When you open up any one of them, if you would be able, oceans of sublime energy comes pouring out. It's all at the core a rich concentration of the same pure power.

An English scientist, Paul W. Davies concludes,

> *"Undoubtedly the most awesome fact to emerge from our study of the micro-world is how exceedingly ingenious nature turns out to be… Mathematics and beauty are the foundation stones of the universe… No one who has studied the forces of nature can doubt that the world about us is the manifestation of something very very clever indeed…Today it is fashionable to speculate that all forces have a common origin in a single 'super-force' that is explicitly revealed only at ultra-high energies."*

Now we can reinsert the Hebrew Aleph - Beis chart and reimagine a world built from letters and words and sentences as the Sefer Tanya states, *"If the letters with which heaven was made were to remove themselves for an instant, G-d forbid,*

and return to their source, the entire heaven would become an absolute vacuum." We affirm daily in prayer, "Blessed is He Who spoke and the world came to be…" And so our entire world is built by words, excited by a sacred fire.

https://torah.org/torah-portion/dvartorah-5771-vayakhel/

Parshat Vayakhel: Broken Tablets

By Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander

President and Rosh HaYeshiva, Ohr Torah Stone © 5784 (2024)

The Jewish people do not go out to battle alone. When setting out for the battlefield, we are commanded to take along the Aron Kodesh, the holy ark of the covenant, carrying within it the *luchot*, inscribed with the Ten Commandments given by God at Mt. Sinai)Rashi, Bamidbar 10:33(.

The Aron generally resided in the inner sanctum of the Tabernacle; however, at times of war and crisis, it is removed from its sacred abode in order to accompany the Jewish people. When the Aron was stationary, as noted by the Sefer Hachinuch)Mitzva #96(, the poles had to stay in place, perhaps so that if war were to break out, the Aron could be immediately carried to join the Jewish army, even at a moment's notice. What's more, perhaps this symbolizes that the Torah is always with us – always carrying us and guiding us, ever on the move with us and governing our behavior, and with us even in our most difficult moments in battle.

There were times that the Israelites did not fully appreciate the function of the Aron in wartime. In the days of the Judges, before the beginning of Jewish monarchy, the Jews fought a war against the Philistines, suffering heavy losses. Fearful for what lay ahead, the elders decided to go to the town of Shilo, where the Mishkan stood, to bring the Aron to the battlefront, *"so that]God[will be present among us and deliver us from the hands of our enemies"*)Shmuel I 4:3(. Yet despite the palpable excitement among the people at the arrival of the Aron, the Jews once again suffered losses, and the Aron itself was seized by the Philistines)ibid 4:10,11(. In his commentary, Malbim)Shmuel I 4:3(questions how the story came to unfold the way it did. Shouldn't the presence of the Aron have brought merit to the Jewish people?

The answer lies, Malbim argues, in the perspective held by the Jewish people, who believed that as long as they had the Aron along with them, God would certainly save them, even if they were idol worshippers, a belief Malbim describes as *'a faith of folly.'* For in reality, *"the covenant of the Ark is not an end in itself, but is only so they)the Jewish people(will observe what is written within."*

The Aron does not go out to battle as an elaborate amulet, securing the protection of those around it. On the contrary, the Aron comes to the battlefield as a reminder, to ensure that even in the face of the pressures of war, when fear and anxiety are high and danger is present, we mustn't lose sight of the great moral and spiritual expectations the Torah demands of us.

There is no time or place, even in war, that the Torah does not challenge us to fulfill the Divine Will. The Aron does not protect us from our enemies; it protects us from our basest instincts when our moral guardrails are challenged.
The Jerusalem Talmud in Shekalim)6:1(presents an argument between the Rabbis and R' Yehuda ben Lakish regarding how many Aronot)arks(existed. According to R. Yehuda ben Lakish, there were in fact two Aronot, two arks containing the words of the Torah. The official ark, residing in the Holy of Holies, held the second set of intact *luchot*, tablets and a Torah scroll, while the wartime ark contained the *shivrei luchot*, the shattered first tablets.

If we are to follow R' Yehuda ben Lakish's position, adopted by Sifri)Bamidbar 10:33(, Midrash Gadol)ad. loc.(, Rashi)ad.loc.(and the Netziv in Harchev Davar)ad. loc.(, then it strikes me as no mere coincidence that the ark taken out to battle is the one carrying the broken tablets. For wartime is inseparable from brokenness. We are all experiencing the

brokenness wrought by this war: our soldiers in battle; the new widows and orphans; the soldiers who are now physically disabled; families of hostages waiting for their loved ones to return; entire communities that have been dislocated; the innocent civilians; as well as the broader circle of impact on college campuses or communities under threat in the Diaspora.

The fact that the Aron with the shattered tablets was the one sent out to the battle is a recognition of the reality of war. The brokenness of war is reflected within the brokenness of the tablets. During wartime, we all carry the ark with the shattered tablets.

In this moment, our challenge is to face the brokenness created by this war and to refashion ourselves and our society. We are also reminded that this Aron must return back to its home in that Mishkan. As our soldiers make their way home, we need to work to ensure wholeness in our homes, with our spouses and children, and in our places of work and communal spaces. A great deal has been broken, but as with the shattered *luchot,* we find wholeness through the opportunity that has come in rebuilding anew. After all, the second, complete set of *luchot* are a direct result of learning from the experience of the shattered first ones. Please God we will carry and be carried by the ark with the shattered tablets, as well as the ark with the complete ones.

* Ohr Torah Stone is a modern Orthodox group of 32 institutions and programs. Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin is the Founding Director, and Rabbi Dr. Brander is President and Rosh HaYeshiva. For more information or to support Ohr Torah Stone, contact ohrtorahstone@otsyny.org or 212-935-8672. Donations to 49 West 45th Street #701, New York, NY 10036.

Vayakhel --The Rosh Yeshiva Responds: Can a Quilt be Holy?

by Rabbi Dov Linzer
President and Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah

> *"Them has He filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of workmanship, of the craftsman, of the skillful workman, of the weaver in blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any workmanship, and of those that devise skillful works."*)Shemot 35:35(.

QUESTION - Northwest, USA

We received a quilt with Jewish-themed squares from a relative. Some of the printed fabric squares depict the Shema including Sheim HaShem)God's name(spelled with two yodim as well as Elokeinu spelled out. Is this sheimot? Does the quilt need to go to the genizah, or at least those squares? Can one use it on a bed in a bedroom where one will be naked occasionally? I don't know how the fabric is made. It wasn't hand-painted, but I don't know how it was printed or dyed. Online a similar product is just listed as "100% cotton."

ANSWER

Two yodim mean nothing. It is a printer's convention, a way of not writing Sheim HaShem. As to Elokeinu, that is a problem, at least if it is possible that one will be having marital relations in the room. See Shulchan Arukh OC 240:6 and the related Mishnah Berurah.

> *One may not have conjugal relations in a house that contains a sefer Torah or individual books of the Torah written on parchment scrolls unless there is a mechitzah in front of it… and if he has another house, he must remove the sefer Torah to that house; and if the house contains tefillin or sefarim, including Gemara, he must put them in a double container.* Shulchan Arukh O.C. 240:6

)28("Or sefarim" – the intent is holy books that are not written on parchment, as those have the rule of a sefer Torah.

)29("including Gemara" – the intent is that even though in the earliest generations Gemara wasn't written down, as the oral law was not permitted to be written, even so, since in the end the Amoraim permitted them to be written… they are like all sifrei kodesh and nowadays the rule is that all sefarim whether hand-written or printed are considered holy. Mishnah Berurah 240

If it is a sefer Torah or pesukim written on klaf, it needs to be behind a mechitzah. If it is a Gemara, or any sefer of a similar kind, it needs to be in a double container. I think that God's name would definitely be in this latter category.

If it is just about being naked and not about having marital relations, this is less of an issue, although when dealing with God's name)as opposed to a sefer(, one should be strict – see Rema)Shulchan Arukh OC 275:12(regarding neirot Shabbat)not exactly the same(: *The custom is to cover small children so they will not be naked in front of the candles, for fear of disrespecting the mitzvah.* And see, more to the point: *But if someone there is naked one may not enter with tefillin or holy writings since one may not stand naked before God.* Mishnah Berurah 45:5

The issue of standing naked before God's name is from Shabbat 120b, and that actually is an issur, but in a case such as ours where it is printed and not written, I don't think it would be technically forbidden, although it definitely should be avoided.

* President and Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, Bronx, NY.

https://library.yctorah.org/2024/02/ryrkitisa/

What It Means to Choose Freedom

By Bari Weiss ***** © thefp./com (February 29, 2024) ******

This past Sunday, I gave a speech at the 92nd Street Y called "The State of World Jewry." The address is a historic one. Over four decades, it has been delivered by the likes of Elie Wiesel, Abba Eban, Amos Oz, and more.

But for a sense of the state of Jewish life in America these days, you need only to have walked by the building that night. You would've found that police had cordoned off the entire block — and for good reason. Anti-Israel protesters, many wearing masks, gathered to intimidate those who came to the lecture. On the way in, you would've been screamed at — told you were a "baby killer" and "genocide supporter" among other choice phrases. You might have even glimpsed Jerry Seinfeld being heckled and called "Nazi scum" on his way out of the talk.)Classy.(

This is of a piece with what's happening across the country at Jewish events.

On Monday at the University of Berkeley, to choose one of so many examples, a violent mob gathered outside an event featuring an IDF reservist. The students who gathered to hear him — and never got a chance to — were forced to evacuate. One student reported being physically assaulted. Another says he was spat on. Various students say the mob yelled slurs including "Jew, Jew, Jew."

I am beyond grateful to the NYPD, and the entire staff of the 92nd Street Y, for making sure that everyone who attended the talk was able to do so safely. But everyone must ask themselves: Do we want to live in a country in which simply giving a speech about a Jewish subject requires serious police protection? What does that reality say about the state of our country and our freedoms?

***** Journalist and Founding Editor, *The Free Press*. For the complete transcript, go to the Internet address below. https://www.thefp.com/p/bari-weiss-what-it-means-to-choose

******]ed. Note[: I consider this material important enough to repeat from last week.

Shabbat's Sanctuary

by Rabbi Daniel Levitt *

Parashat Vayakhel opens with a seemingly paradoxical statement. After urging the Israelites to construct the Mishkan)Tabernacle(, God instructs Moses to emphasize the importance of refraining from work on Shabbat. The Malbim, a prominent Torah commentator, asks, how can the Torah state *"These are the things the Lord has commanded you to DO,"* when the command is actually not to do any labor.

Building the Mishkan might appear more urgent, a tangible expression of devotion. But this juxtaposition highlights the profound significance of Shabbat. Shabbat transcends the everyday, offering a sanctuary in time. It's a refuge from the relentless pursuit of *"more,"* reminding us that true meaning lies not in material gain but in the present moment.

As Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel teaches, Shabbat is not about idleness, it's about building a sanctuary in time rather than space. It's about stepping away to reconnect with something larger than ourselves. In this act of *"not doing,"* we create time and figurative space for reflection, appreciation, and a renewed perspective.

The constant pressure to be productive can make rest feel like a luxury. Yet neglecting Shabbat diminishes our well-being. Like an artist who pauses to refresh their vision, we too need to step back and recalibrate. Shabbat provides this sacred space, allowing us to return to our endeavors with renewed clarity and purpose.

The seemingly contradictory language of *"doing nothing"* on Shabbat underscores the transformative power of rest. It reminds us that our work is not an end in itself, but a means to create space for experiences that truly enrich our lives. Just as we prepare for Shabbat to ensure its sanctity, all our actions, including our work, should ultimately contribute to a meaningful and purposeful life.

This lesson is echoed in Pirkei Avot,)4:16(*"This world is an antechamber to the World-To-Come. Prepare yourself in the antechamber so that you may enter the banquet hall."* Just as a grand hall demands a moment of composed entry, so too do our lives. The relentless pursuit of daily tasks can leave us ill-equipped to reflect on the big picture of our lives.

***** Director of the Daniel and Louise Cohen Adult Jewish Learning Program at Gratz College; Semicha at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah.

https://library.yctorah.org/2024/03/vayakhel5784/

Smaller and Greater: Thoughts for Parashat Vayakhel

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

During the early 1960s, Dr. Robert Coles spent time in the American south studying the moral life of children. This was a time when schools were being racially integrated and when racial hatred came to a head. Black children who attended public schools were cursed, spat upon, and threatened with violence. And yet, in spite of the hatred spewed out against them, they persisted in attending school. White children who befriended black children were ostracized by their white classmates…and often by their own parents. But they persisted in their friendships with black students.

Dr. Coles wanted to know what gave these children the moral strength to stand up to their detractors. After all, many other children did not demonstrate the moral character to resist the status quo.

In his interviews with black students, he found that many of them drew moral strength from their churches. The ministers preached about righteousness, about the importance of standing up against evil, about God's love of those who were strong in their faith and commitment to justice. A black student who attended a high school in Atlanta told Dr. Coles about how important the church was. *"I'm not as small after church as I am before church.")The Moral Life of Children,* p. 153(.

I first read Dr. Coles' book about 30 years ago, and that black student's statement made a lasting impression on me. In fact, it encapsulated my own feelings about the role of a religious leader and of a religious institution. I transposed the statement into a Jewish context: one who attends synagogue services should feel as though he/she has grown in the process, that he/she is stronger, better, more inspired, more courageous. *"I'm not as small after synagogue as I am before synagogue."* The rabbi should be a source of spiritual strength and inspiration. The prayers should offer comfort, confidence, and a profound sense of God's love.

Here is a question of the highest importance: when you leave synagogue services, do you feel that you've come closer to God, that you've become spiritually more alive, more courageous? Can you honestly say: *"I'm not as small after synagogue as I was before synagogue?"* Did your rabbi engage your mind, heart and soul…or did he tell jokes, tell you how sinful you are, lament anti-Semitism, offer his views on the latest news stories? Did those who led the synagogue services bring you closer to God and to your own soul…or did they seek to show off their voices, or rush through the services by rote, or chant the prayers without seeming to understand that they were in the presence of God? For some)many?(congregants, the best part of Shabbat morning services is the Kiddush where they can socialize, eat and drink.

This week's Torah portion includes the description of how the Israelites built the sanctuary in the wilderness. The Torah states that God called upon those who were *"wise of heart"* to do the work. This refers to a special kind of wisdom, not merely a high I.Q. God appointed those who had an aesthetic sense, who were receptive and imaginative, whose hearts were in tune with the history and destiny of their people. It refers to spiritual wisdom…the humility and profundity of feeling God's presence.

The Talmud)Berakhot 55a(states that God only gives wisdom to one who has wisdom. Shouldn't God be giving wisdom to those who lack it, rather than to those who already have it? We may understand this Talmudic passage in light of this week's Torah reading.

God gave wisdom – and gives wisdom – to those who are receptive to receiving wisdom in this special way. Those who lack *"wise hearts"* are simply not receptive to this wisdom.

This quality of having a *"wise heart"* is vital to the wellbeing of every society, and certainly of every sacred endeavor. It is a repudiation of egotism and an affirmation of loyalty to the greater glory of God. It is a sensitivity to the historical context of the people. It is a rejection of the quick-fix attitude that cares more for self-gratification than for the greater good of society. The sanctuary was to be a place in which people could sense God's love and God's concern. It was a place for each person to develop a wise heart.

Our contemporary synagogues need to draw on the lessons of the ancient Mishkan. We, too, need to have wise hearts. We, too, need to increase our sensitivity to the holy and to the transcendent.

The rabbi, hazzan and congregation come together to elevate each other, to help all of us strengthen our character, and to gain spiritual and moral uplift from communal prayer and study.

After services, ask yourself: *"Am I better after synagogue than I was before synagogue? Am I greater, if only a bit, after services and sermon than I was before services and sermon?"*

If the answer is yes, you are truly fortunate.

If the answer is no, either find another synagogue or actively seek to effect positive change in the synagogue you attend. If we are not made greater by synagogue, we become smaller.

"…and every wise hearted person in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom…"

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has experienced a significant drop in donations during the pandemic. The Institute needs our help to maintain and strengthen our Institute. Each gift, large or small, is a vote for an intellectually vibrant, compassionate, inclusive Orthodox Judaism. You may contribute on our website jewishideas.org or you may send your check to Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2 West 70th Street, New York, NY 10023. Ed.: Please join me in helping the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals during its winter fund raising period. Thank you.

https://www.jewishideas.org/smaller-and-greater-thoughts-synagogue-life

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The Great Privilege of Being a Jew

By Douglas Altabef *

Let's face it: the raging debate about Jews having white privilege is a bit absurd.

Jews are basically a historical Rohrschach depiction of a People. In other words, we take the form, we are regarded through the eyes of those who perceive us.

For most of the past two millenia, Jews were certainly not regarded as being like other people. In Europe, we were first the Christ-rejectors/killers, who per Augustine, were being kept around in order to bear witness to our own degradation and supersession by the Church.

Not too much privilege there.

Come the Enlightenment, and we became the great chameleons of civilization. We could be morphed from usurious capitalists to stateless communists in the blink of an eye. We were vermin, who were still managing somehow, thanks to the Rothschilds, to control the world.

Pretty exhausting, if you ask me.

Jews were a subhuman race, who threatened the purity of the Aryans. But we also threatened the peasantry of Poland and Russia. And after the Enlightenment, we were a threat by virtue of the fact that many Jews sought to convert to Christianity in order to gain access to the higher reaches of their society.

In Muslim countries, we were tolerated as dhimmis, second class citizens. We couldn't wear the same clothes as others, nor walk on the same sidewalk if it meant inconveniencing a passing Muslim.

So where is the privilege from? It comes from the now dirty word called *"achievement."*

Jews who fled pogroms, death sentence conscriptions in the Tsar's or the Sultan's armies, who typically came to America with nothing, worked hard and saw their children and grandchildren rise.

Jews sacrificed, educated their children, embraced America and the American dream and vision, and they succeeded.

Somehow, that has a sinister ring to it. Somehow, to a great many people today, that cannot explain what Jews are about. There must be some secret sauce, some hidden card that has made it all possible. Could that be our latent privilege?

Or is privilege what happens when you work hard and succeed? Besides achieving material success, and social acceptance, can you achieve privilege?

Well, allow me to let you all in on a little secret. I, a proud Jew, am wildly privileged. Not because I might or might not be white, but because through no work of my own, by happy Providence, I was born into a Jewish family of two wonderful Jewish parents and was raised to be the next link of the Jewish chain.

I was shown that, despite the mind-boggling persecution, disdain, vulnerability, powerlessness, instability and uncertainty of what it meant for thousands of years to be a Jew, I was somehow, nevertheless, a card carrying, bona fide Jew.

Meaning, that against any and all odds of historical endurance, I was allowed to come into the world as a Jew. I was privileged to stand on the shoulders of generations of ancestors who had decided, against all good common sense, to stay as Jews.

I had ancestors who were expelled from Spain rather than take the easy way out of kissing a cross and letting it all go.

I had ancestors who toiled in poverty and constant uncertainty in Galicia, and in the Ottoman Empire, yet who believed that they had been endowed with something worth keeping.

So yes, I am enormously privileged. Because I have had the privilege to validate the struggles and sacrifices of those who enabled me to do all of that.

And to top it all off, I packed up my privileged self and, together with my privileged wife and one of our privileged children, moved to Israel, which has to be the most privileged place on earth.

We moved to a place that for almost 2000 years was a dream, an idea, a memory, a yearning. But not really a place.

But through the will power, fueled by the suffering of all those generations who were -- let's be candid here -- hated, despised and loathed by most everyone around them -- of Jews who refused to give up the fraught privilege of being Jews, the place that was a dreamy memory, became a gritty reality.

And the gritty reality survived against the same kind of odds that Jews have been facing for close to forever. So, this place, Israel, succeeded, and of course by doing so, it must be guilty of unspeakable crimes against -- you fill in the blank – because that is what it means to be a Jew.

You do things that shouldn't be able to be done. You endure things that shouldn't be put up with. That is part of the existential job description of what it means to be a Jew.

And I cannot imagine a greater privilege than the opportunity to be part of it all.

* Chairman of the Board of Im Tirtzu, Israel's largest grassroots Zionist organization; Director of the Israel Independence Fund. Reprinted from the *Jewish Press,* February 25, 2022.

https://www.jewishideas.org/article/great-privilege-being-jew

Vayakheil: A Taste of the World to Come

By Rabbi Mordechai Rhine *

Shabbos is central to Judaism. In this week's Parsha the Torah says, *"Six days you shall work, and the seventh day shall be holy Shabbos."* (Shimos 35:2) Shabbos is more than a day of rest. Shabbos is a destination. Shabbos serves as a metaphor for the World to Come. As our sages taught as a lesson of life*, "One who toils during the week shall have what to eat on Shabbos."* (Avodah Zorah 3a) Shabbos represents the idea that we work today to reap reward and blessing tomorrow.

No wonder Shabbos is a day of joy and happiness. Shabbos represents the World to Come, a time when we will be rewarded for our efforts in this world. In the World to Come there will be treats, both physical and spiritual. (Rambam, Milochim 12) It is proper, therefore, to enjoy treats on Shabbos to symbolize the goodness promised in the Afterlife. As we say so beautifully in the Friday evening service, *"[on Shabbos] we are a nation saturated with pleasure."*

Interestingly, there was a divergent sect of Jews who did not share our joyous perspective of Shabbos. The Tzedukim, or Saducees as they are known, were a group of Jews who existed in large numbers during the time of the second Beis Hamikdash. The Tzedukim believed in their own understanding of Jewish Scripture, rather than the traditional understanding as passed on from parent to child since the revelation at Sinai.

For example, when the Torah prohibits the use of fire on Shabbos (Shimos 35:3), the traditional understanding is that one may not kindle a light on Shabbos, but one may benefit from the effects of a fire that was set up before Shabbos. According to the traditional understanding of Torah it is perfectly acceptable to light a fireplace or set a thermostat before Shabbos, so that the effects of the resulting fire can be enjoyed on Shabbos. Similarly, one may leave food on slow cook before Shabbos begins and enjoy that food on Shabbos.

The Tzedukim disagreed. According to the Tzedukim, the Torah prohibition against fire included all benefit from fire, even if it was set up before Shabbos began. Thus, the intensely religious Tzedukim prohibited the use of lights and fire on Shabbos. They would sit in the cold and dark and eat cold food on Shabbos.

I recall learning about the Tzedukim in grade school, and my first impression was simply that they were different. They had a different way of understanding Judaism, and a different method of observance. It was clear to me that they were wrong. There is no reason to make up a new Judaism if your parents and teachers can tell you what G-d said at Sinai. But it wasn't until recently that I truly appreciated the difference between the traditional, joyous way of observing Shabbos, in contrast with that of the Tzedukim.

When you peruse Talmudic literature, you will encounter mention of the Tzedukim in a number of places. For example, in Avos 1:3 the Rambam tells us that Tzedukim were people who do not believe in the World to Come. Similarly, the Mishnah (Brachos 54a) tells us that traditional Jews instituted the phrase of *"Blessed is G-d from this world until The World"* as a means of objecting to the *"Tzedukim who taught that there is only one world."*

If indeed the Tzedukim believed that life, as we know it, is all that there is, it follows that their method of understanding Shabbos was not merely a different perspective or interpretation, but rather an expression of their religious philosophy. They believed that one's existence ended with death, that there was no afterlife, and no reward. Their method of observing Shabbos was indeed a taste of [their perspective of] the world to come. They sat in cold and darkness because the grave was the way they understood the step after one's lifetime.

No wonder that our Rabbis placed such emphasis on enjoying Shabbos, and having Shabbos candles, warmth, comfort, and hot food. Shabbos is intended to foreshadow the joy of the world to come, a spiritual reward and a delight. In our physical world we commemorate this by experiencing Shabbos in a festive way. (See Ramoh 257:8)

It is common for fairy tales to end with the words, “They lived happily ever after.” Interestingly, Shabbos is meant to be a happy-ever-after experience on two levels. Firstly, we observe it joyously in a way that reflects our belief that the Afterlife is a joyous time. Secondly, Shabbos is a time to leave our workweek behind and focus on spirituality. By davening and learning more, by connecting with family and friends in healthy and nurturing ways, we are connecting with the values and happiness of the World to Come.

Shabbos is meant to be a World to Come experience. It is a day that we prepare for and work towards in anticipation. It is also a day of happiness — symbolic of the joyous conclusion of a life well spent.

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos!

* Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of more than 20 years. Based in Maryland, he provides services internationally via Zoom. He is the Director of TEACH613: Building Torah Communities, One family at a Time, and the founder of CARE Mediation, focused on Marriage/ Shalom Bayis and personal coaching. To reach Rabbi Rhine, his websites are www.care-mediation.com and www.teach613.org; his email is RMRhine@gmail.com. **For information or to join any Torah613 classes, contact Rabbi Rhine.**

Vayakel

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer *

[The Devrei Torah I have from Rabbi Singer focus on Pekudei, so I shall run one of his Devrei Torah from the double parsha next week rather than this week.]

* Savannah Kollel; Congregation B’nai Brith Jacob, Savannah, GA. Until recently, Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD. Rabbi Singer will become Rosh Kollel next year.

Vayakel

by Rabbi Herzl Hefter *****

[Rabbi Hefter did not send a new Dvar Torah for Vayakel. Watch this space for further insights from Rabbi Hefter in future weeks.]

* Founder and dean of the Har’el Beit Midrash in Jerusalem. Rabbi Hefter is a graduate of Yeshiva University and was ordained at Yeshivat Har Etzion. For more of his writings, see www.har-el.org. To support the Beit Midrash, as we do, send donations to America Friends of Beit Midrash Har’el, 66 Cherry Lane, Teaneck, NJ 07666.

VaYakhel -- Holy Romance

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia * © 2024

> *Moses made the basin and its base from copper, from the mirrors of the gathering women, who gathered at the gate of the tent of meeting.*)Ex. 38:8(

This seemingly trivial detail, not included in God's instructions to the builders of the tabernacle, but rather an extemporaneous decision of Moses, directs us towards a very serious problem in marital relationships, that of spouses who grow tired or bored of each other at a certain stage of their marriage. There are marriage counselors who suggest that the spouses will seek adventure in the form of extra-marital affairs, and there are those who seek such affairs on their own. One does not need to stretch his memory to recall a list of American public figures, mostly men, whose dissatisfaction with their spouses led them to commit preposterous acts. The case of John Edwards was particularly troubling, as he was having an affair while his wife was battling with cancer.

This problem is not new, and in antiquity, men came up with what they thought was a brilliant solution for it. Pagan religions created a dual system of physical relationships, a system which abused women in order to satisfy the demand of men to produce children who will carry their genes, while simultaneously having non-committal relationships. That system was cult prostitution, and the women serving the men's needs are referred to in the bible as Qedesha, from the root Q.D.SH. – sanctified or designated, since they provided that *"service"* on the temple premises. The existence of religiously sanctioned prostitution enabled men to have a dual relationship, marrying for the sake of having children, and satisfying their carnal needs under the pretext of religious rites.

The Torah is bent to relinquish this practice. Already in the second chapter of Genesis we read:

> *A man shall therefor leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*)Gen. 2:24(

The emphasis here is on the man. He must leave his parents, who for him symbolize the providers of all his needs and be fully committed to his wife, never wavering, and never looking elsewhere to satisfy his needs.

Though the bible does not openly forbid bigamy, Hakham Yitzhak Sassoon suggests that the verse traditionally understood as a prohibition against marrying one's wife's sister, is actually a rejection of bigamy: Do not marry a woman, and another woman, to make her an adversary]to the first[and to expose her shamefully in her lifetime)Lev. 18:18(. As a support for this interpretation, one should consider all the cases of bigamy or polygamy mentioned in the bible, none of which had a happy end)e.g., Lemekh, Abraham, Jacob, Elkana, David, and Shelomo(. This is another proof that the bible advocates deep and long-lasting relationships between husband and wife.

Another area where we can see the concern for wholesome relationships is in the way the bible treats divorce. It was allowed only in extreme cases, where there was hatred between husband and wife, and we do not know of any biblical couple who got divorced. When the prophet Malachi)2:14(wants to rebuke the Israelites for abandoning God, he uses the analogy of divorce, and then describes with very strong words a failed relationship, putting the blame on the man:

> *God has testified]in the trial[between you and the woman of your youth, whom you have betrayed, while she is your friend and the woman of your covenant.*

The biblical ideal, of course, is somewhat utopian, and there are many cases when it is necessary for spouses to part ways, for the sake of their sanity and that of their children, but it is important to understand that the ideal relationship according to the bible is a monogamous one, compared to a covenant, and imbued with love, affection, and respect.

We could safely say that the center of gravity of an observant Jew's life, according to the Torah, is not the sacred place, but the home. Better yet, the home becomes the sacred place, and the marital relationships a divine covenant. The tabernacle is a replica of the ideal home, and its Holy of Holies symbolizes the private chambers and the intimate love between a husband and wife. The Torah which is contained in the ark is called *Tree of Life,* and an ideal couple creates loving relationships and true commitment, thus eating from its fruits and correcting the misdeeds of the first couple, Adam and his wife.

The women who congregated at the Tabernacle thought that they would be requested to offer the pagan service of cult prostitution in that newly minted holy place.)Evidence for this statement in a planned future article; citations in original omitted here.(Moses tells them that the Torah's approach is diametrically opposed to that of paganism, and that men should invest in creating a wholesome relationship with their wives. The mirrors, the accessories of promiscuity, were brilliantly converted by Moses into a vessel serving the Kohanim for cleanliness.)A similar incident is when Hashem had Moshe convert the pans of Korach's congregation into an alter; Num. 17:1-5(Having clean hands is a biblical metaphor for honesty and transparency)Is. 1:15-16; Ps. 24:4, Ps. 26:6(, and so the conversion of the mirrors to the washing basin symbolizes the rejection of duplicity and unfaithfulness. Moses' act serves as a call to bring the spirituality of man and woman into marital relationship, and with love, commitment, and honesty, build together a life revolving around their own Holy of Holies.

Shabbat Shalom.

* Torah VeAhava. Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan (Potomac, MD) and faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school(. **New: Many of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah are now available on Sefaria.** The Sefaria articles include Hebrew text, which I must delete because of issues changing software formats.

Dvar Torah from Rabbi Ovadia this year come from an unpublished draft of his forthcoming book on Tanach, which Rabbi Ovadia, who has generously shared with our readers. Rabbi Ovadia reserves all copyright rights to this material.

A Sanctuary for Our Times

By Rabbi Moshe Rube *

There's an old saying that "We shouldn't mistake the forest for the trees." This holds true not only when tramping in Stewart Island)which is 95% forest and trees(but in also matters of construction.

When assembling the materials to build a house, synagogue or office building, we all must not mistake having the best bricks, piping, cement and wood, i.e. the trees, for the ever important "forest values." These include what will the structure be used for and how all the pieces will be assembled the best to serve its intended use.

All these considerations went into our site at Remuera and for the construction of the Tabernacle)Mishkan in Hebrew(. This is why our portion this week goes into great detail about the assembly of the Mishkan even though we already have learned all the details of its parts. Because the Mishkan)the model for synagogues everywhere(is much more majestic than the sum of its parts. When everything works together in harmony, a greater truth and beauty emerges.

May we continue to see this in our own "Remuera Mishkan."

Shabbat Shalom.

* Senior Rabbi of Auckland Hebrew Congregation, Remuera)Auckland(, New Zealand. Formerly Rabbi, Congregation Knesseth Israel)Birmingham, AL(.

Rav Kook Torah
VaYakheil: Stars in the Tabernacle

There is an interesting tradition concerning the beautiful tapestries covering the Tabernacle. The covering was comprised of ten large tapestries with patterns of cherubs woven into them. These colorful tapestries were sewn together in two sets of five, and the two sections were then fastened together with fifty gold fasteners.

We know that the structure of the Tabernacle corresponded to the entire universe. What did these metal fasteners represent?

Like the Stars

The Talmud)Shabbat 99a(tells us that from inside the Tabernacle, the gold fasteners would sparkle against the background of the rich tapestries — like stars twinkling in the sky.

This analogy of fasteners to the stars requires further examination. Stars and constellations represent powerful natural forces in the universe, influencing and controlling our world. *"Good are the luminaries that our God has created... He granted them strength and power, to be dominant within the world"*)from the Sabbath morning prayers(.

The Tabernacle fasteners, however, indicate a second function of the stars. The fasteners held the tapestries together. In fact, they emphasized the overall unity of the Tabernacle. By securing the two sets of tapestries together, they would *"make the Tabernacle one"*)Exodus 36:13(.

Holding the Universe Together

In general, the design of the Tabernacle reflected the structure of the universe and its underlying unity. For example, the Tabernacle building consisted of wooden beams with pegs that slid into silver sockets, called adanim. The precise interlocking of the Tabernacle's supporting base of adanim with the upright beams symbolizes the harmonious synchronization of the universe's foundations with the diversified forces and mechanisms that regulate and develop the world. When we reflect on the beautiful harmony of the different parts of the Tabernacle, we begin to be aware of the fundamental unity of the universe and all of its forces. This insight allows us to recognize that everything is the work of the Creator, Who unites all aspects of creation in His sublime Oneness.

For all of their grandeur and apparent autonomy, the true function of the stars is to act like the Tabernacle fasteners. They hold together the great canopy of the cosmos, in accordance with the Divine plan of creation. Like the sparkling fasteners, the stars *"are filled with luster and radiate brightness"* on their own accord. Yet their true function is to bind together the forces of the world, making the universe one.

)Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 168-169. Adapted from *Ein Eyah* vol. IV, p. 245.(

https://ravkooktorah.org/VAYAKHEL_65.htm

Vayakhel: Team-Building (5774, 5781)

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.*

How do you re-motivate a demoralised people? How do you put the pieces of a broken nation back together again? That was the challenge faced by Moses in this week's parsha.

The key word here is vayakhel, *"Moses gathered."* Kehillah means community. A kehillah or kahal is a group of people assembled for a given purpose. That purpose can be positive or negative, constructive or destructive. The same word that appears at the beginning of this week's parsha as the beginning of the solution appeared in last week's parsha as the start of the problem:

> *"When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered]vayikahel[around Aaron and said, 'Make us a god to lead us. As for this man Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.'"*

The difference between the two kinds of kehillah is that one results in order, the other in chaos. Coming down the mountain and encountering the Golden Calf, we read that *"Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies."* The verb פרע, like the similar פרא, means *"loose, unbridled, unrestrained."*

There is an assembly that is disciplined, task-oriented, and purposeful. And there is an assembly that is a mob. It has a will of its own. People in crowds lose their sense of self-restraint. They get carried along in a wave of emotion. Normal deliberative thought-processes become bypassed by the more primitive feelings or the group. There is, as neuroscientists put it, an *"amygdala hijack."* Passions run wild.

There have been famous studies of this: Charles Mackay's *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*)1841(, Gustave Le Bon's *The Crowd: a study of the popular mind*)1895(, and Wilfred Trotter's *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*)1914(. One of the most haunting works on the subject is Jewish Nobel Prize-winner Elias Canetti's *Crowds and Power*)1960, English translation 1962(.

Vayakhel is Moses' response]1[to the wild abandon of the crowd that gathered around Aaron and made the Golden Calf. He does something fascinating.

He does not oppose the people, as he did initially when he saw the Golden Calf. Instead, he uses the same motivation that drove them in the first place. They wanted to create something that would be a sign that God was among them: not on the heights of a mountain but in the midst of the camp. He appeals to the same sense of generosity that made them offer up their gold ornaments. The difference is that they are now acting in accordance with God's command, not their own spontaneous feelings.]ed. note: this paragraph assumes that the incident of Egel Zahav preceded the instructions to build the Mishkan and that the Torah moved Ki Tisa after Terumah and Tetzaveh for thematic reasons. Rabbi Sacks follows a majority opinion in making this assumption. See, e. g., footnote 1[

So he asks the Israelites to make voluntary contributions to the construction of the Tabernacle, the Sanctuary, the Mikdash. They do so with such generosity that Moses soon has to order them to stop. If you want to bond human beings so that they act for the common good, get them to build something together. Get them to undertake a task that they can only achieve together, that none can do alone.

The power of this principle was demonstrated in a famous social-scientific research exercise carried out in 1954 by Muzafer Sherif and others from the University of Oklahoma, known as the Robbers' Cave experiment. Sherif wanted to understand the dynamics of group conflict and prejudice. To do so, he and his fellow researchers selected a group of 22 white, eleven-year-old boys, none of whom had met one another before. They were taken to a remote summer camp in Robbers Cave State Park, Oklahoma. They were randomly allocated into two groups.

Initially neither group knew of the existence of the other. They were staying in cabins far apart. The first week was dedicated to team-building. The boys hiked and swam together. Each group chose a name for itself – they became The Eagles and the Rattlers. They stencilled the names on their shirts and flags.

Then, for four days they were introduced to one another through a series of competitions. There were trophies, medals and prizes for the winners, and nothing for the losers. Almost immediately there was tension between them: name-calling, teasing, and derogatory songs. It got worse. Each burned the other's flag and raided their cabins. They objected to eating together with the others in the same dining hall.

Stage 3 was called the 'integration phase.' Meetings were arranged. The two groups watched films together. They lit Fourth-of-July firecrackers together. The hope was that these face-to-face encounters would lessen tensions and lead to reconciliation. They didn't. Several broke up with the children throwing food at one another.

In stage 4, the researchers arranged situations in which a problem arose that threatened both groups simultaneously. The first was a blockage in the supply of drinking water to the camp. The two groups identified the problem separately and gathered at the point where the blockage had occurred. They worked together to remove it and celebrated together when they succeeded.

In another, both groups voted to watch some films. The researchers explained that the films would cost money to hire, and there was not enough in camp funds to do so. Both groups agreed to contribute an equal share to the cost. In a third, the coach on which they were travelling stalled, and the boys had to work together to push it. By the time the trials were over, the boys had stopped having negative images of the other side. On the final bus ride home, the members of one team used their prize money to buy drinks for everyone.

Similar outcomes have emerged from other studies. **The conclusion is revolutionary. You can turn even hostile factions into a single cohesive group so long as they are faced with a shared challenge that all can achieve together but none can do alone.** [emphasis added]

Rabbi Norman Lamm, former President of Yeshiva University, once remarked that he knew of only one joke in the Mishnah, the statement that *"Scholars increase peace in the world"*)Brachot 64a(. Rabbis are known for their disagreements. How then can they be said to increase peace in the world?

I suggest that the passage is not a joke but a precisely-calibrated truth. To understand it we must read the continuation:

> *"Scholars increase peace in the world as it is said, 'All your children shall be learned of the Lord and great will be the peace of your children')Isaiah 54:13(. Read not 'your children' but 'your builders.'"*

When scholars become builders they create peace. If you seek to create a community out of strongly individualistic people, you have to turn them into builders. That is what Moses did in Vayakhel.

Team-building, even after a disaster like the Golden Calf, is neither a mystery nor a miracle. It is done by setting the group a task, one that speaks to their passions and one no subsection of the group can achieve alone. It must be constructive. Every member of the group must be able to make a unique contribution and then feel that it has been valued. Each must be able to say, with pride: I helped make this.

That is what Moses understood and did. He knew that if you want to build a team, create a team that builds.

FOOTNOTE:

[1] I mean this only figuratively. The building of the Tabernacle was, of course, God's command, not Moses. The fact that it is set out as Divine command before the story of the Golden Calf)in parshat Terumah(is intended to illustrate the principle that *"God creates the cure before the disease"*)Megillah 13b(.

Around the Shabbat Table:

[1] Does Moshe's solution surprise you?

[2] How does your community encourage its members to build and bond?

[3] What sort of initiatives can you think of that might increase the team-building within your community?

https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/vayakhel/team-building/ Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar.

Seeing the Forest Through the Trees

By Yehoshua B. Gordon, z"l * © Chabad 2024

Most years, the Torah portions of Vayakhel and Pekudei are combined and read in the same week. In a Jewish leap year like the current one, however, they are read separately, each assigned its own week.

The Rebbe often expounded upon the significance of the title of a Torah portion. While at first glance the title may seem to simply be the first word or perhaps the first unique word in the portion, there is a deeper meaning. Not only is every Torah portion replete with practical lessons, taught the Rebbe, but the particular title is in and of itself a lesson.

The Big Picture

In the parshah of Vayakhel we read that Moses gathered the Jewish people and informed them*, "We're building a Tabernacle; here's a list of items I need you all to contribute."* Remarkably, the people contributed so generously that Moses had to instruct them to stop giving — the only time in recorded history where a rabbi had to stop an appeal because too much was contributed!

What does the name Vayakhel signify? Vayakhel means to assemble, to gather — it embodies the concept of summarizing, tallying up a total, and seeing the big picture.

The opening verse of Pekudei reads*, "These are the numbers of the Tabernacle … which were counted at Moses' command …,"*1 and there follows an exact accounting of the component parts that were used in the construction of the Tabernacle.

What does Pekudei represent? Pekudei means numbers — it emphasizes counting each part, enumerating each item, and focusing on the details.

Life is made up of two parts: The individual parts, and the total, or sum of the parts. The big picture and the little picture. Vayakhel imparts the crucial lesson that we must consider the big picture; we must look at the entire project; we must look at the Jewish People as a whole. Pekudei, on the other hand, underscores the value of the individual part — every item is important; every Jew is important.2

I am reminded of an adorable story about a mechanic that was called in to try to fix a gigantic cruise ship that suddenly stopped working. Surveying the situation, and after making an elaborate show of taking out all his tools, he proceeded to tighten one single screw, and then announced that the ship was repaired. The mechanic's bill arrived a few days later, for $10,000! Unwilling to pay such a hefty sum for seemingly minimal work, the cruise operator requested an itemized invoice. The revised invoice arrived: $1.00 for turning the screw; $9,999 for knowing which screw to turn.

There is a big picture and a little picture.

That's the essence of Vayakhel — the big-picture approach, knowing which screw to turn.

Taking the First Step

On a personal level, I underwent my own "Vayakhel" experience when I decided to embark on the enormous undertaking of teaching the entire *Mishneh Torah*)Maimonides' halachic teachings(, making these classes available online on Chabad.org. Maimonides' work comprises 1,017 chapters, and I committed to tackling one chapter daily.

At the outset, it was overwhelming, even mind-boggling — 1,017 chapters at a pace of one chapter per day would take the better part of three years! But then I remembered that as a young man, I once entered the office of a dear friend of mine, Rabbi Yaakov Noach "Yankel" Krantz, of blessed memory. At the time, his office was in Oak Park, Michigan, and there was a large poster on the wall. The poster depicted an overgrown field with very tall weeds — probably 12 to 15 feet tall — and in the corner was a fellow with a lawn mower, the weeds towering over him. The caption on the poster read: *"The best way to finish a large project is to begin."*

How do you complete a massive project? By taking the first step. And then by taking it one step at a time after that. With this approach, thank G d, we successfully completed this amazing project!

And that is Vayakhel: Focus on the big picture and move forward one day at a time, one act at a time, one step at a time.

Tabernacle Within

The portions of Vayakhel and Pekudei, which detail the construction of the Tabernacle, its vessels, and the specifics of the priestly garb, are a veritable repeat of the portions of Terumah and Tetzaveh. The Torah is well known for its brevity; so much so, that some laws are derived from what seems to be an extra word or even an extra letter. And so, the question arises: why repeat two entire portions?

Rashi addressed a similar question in the portion of Chayei Sarah, where Abraham sends his servant Eliezer to find a wife for Isaac. The story is initially told as it unfolds and it is then repeated. Rashi, citing the Midrash, comments*, "The ordinary conversation of the servants of the Patriarchs is more beloved before the Omnipresent than the Torah of their sons, for the section dealing with Eliezer is repeated in the Torah, whereas many fundamentals of the Torah were given only through allusions."*3 Clearly, when something is repeated in the Torah it's because it's very precious to G d.

In a similar vein, the Tabernacle — and later, the Holy Temple — signifies the manifestation of G d's presence in this world and within each of us. The primary purpose of a Jew is to create a dwelling place for G d in our hearts and in our lives. The Torah conveys the significance of this theme by telling us about the Tabernacle in detail and at length, and then repeating it again for emphasis.

Divine Work-Life Balance

Our parshah begins with Moses gathering the Jewish people and stating, *"These are the things that the L rd commanded to make …"*4 Then, just as he starts speaking about the Tabernacle, Moses unexpectedly transitions to the laws of Shabbat: "*Six days work shall be done, but on the seventh day you shall have sanctity, a day of complete rest to the L rd; whoever performs work thereon]on this day[shall be put to death."*5 Why is Shabbat inserted here?

Rashi explains that Shabbat is mentioned in order to convey to the Jews that, despite the immense importance of constructing the Tabernacle, this activity must not be pursued on Shabbat. Shabbat is considered holier even than the crucial task of building the Holy Temple.6

However, in a sense, Shabbat is mentioned here precisely because it is very much a part of building the Tabernacle — of creating a dwelling place for G d in this world with all our actions and in everything we do.

One might argue: *"You want me to create a dwelling place for G d? I can do that by resting on Shabbat. But the other six days? I've got to stay focused on my work; I've got to make a living. You know what it takes to be a successful businessman? You've got to work. It's not easy. You've got to pound the pavement, day and night!"*

In truth, however, there are two ways to approach work:

One way is to believe that your success is commensurate with your effort. To believe that if you don't throw yourself — body and soul — into the rat race, you cannot make a living.

The other way is the Torah's approach: *"Six days work shall be done."* The work will *"be done"* — by itself. Yes, He expects us to work and create a channel for His blessing, but it is ultimately G d who provides us with a living.. We should invest just enough effort that we don't feel like we're getting it for nothing.

That is why the laws of Shabbat are an integral part of building the Tabernacle: not just that the *"Seventh day shall be … complete rest,"* but also the *"Six days work shall be done."*7

The Day After

After the Jewish people sinned with the Golden Calf, Moses spent 40 days on Mount Sinai praying to G d to forgive them, and on the 40th day — the 10th of Tishrei, Yom Kippur — G d forgave them. Moses' address to the people at the beginning of Vayakhel took place the following day.8

Most of us take Yom Kippur very seriously. Even many Jews who do not regularly go to synagogue make it a point to show up. It's amazing. Nobody will miss Kol Nidrei. When the services are over at the close of Yom Kippur, some people approach me and say, *"Rabbi, it was great to see you. See you next year!"*

There's a cute story about a little girl whose parents moved away from their Jewish observance. Her grandparents, however, remained observant. One summer, the little girl was sent to stay with her grandparents. Bubby and Zaidy utilized every moment to instill Jewish teachings and practice into this little girl. She began to recite blessings, observe the Shabbat; she was taught to read Hebrew, keep kosher, and so on. When her parents came to pick her up, the girl thanked her grandparents and headed out to the car. *"One minute,"* the little girl said to her parents, as she ran back up to the house, extended her little hand to the mezuzah on the doorpost, and said, *"Goodbye G d! See you next year."*

Coming to synagogue on Yom Kippur is great, and we certainly are not critical of those who come only on that day. In fact, Yom Kippur is called *"achat bashanah"* – *"the one day of the year."*9 The *"one day"* that the spark of oneness is awakened within each and every Jew to recognize the One G d. But what happens the day after?

Moses gathered the people the day after and told them. *"If you want to create a dwelling place for G d, it has to be not just on Yom Kippur, but the day after. And the day after that. And every day of the year."*

My father, Rabbi Sholom B. Gordon, of blessed memory, used to share a wonderful teaching with me based on a verse in Psalms: *"My tears were my bread day and night when they say to me all day long, 'Where is your G d?' "*10 The simple meaning of the verse is that the Jew cries day and night because the nations of the world taunt him, saying, *"Why are you suffering? Where is your G d? Why is He not saving you?"*

But there's a deeper meaning. *"I know you're a Jew in the synagogue. I know you're a Jew when you pray, when you're swaying back and forth with a tallit over your head. But 'where is your G d all day long' Where is your G d the rest of the day?"* G d must be present in our business lives, our personal lives, our everyday lives.

This is the profound life lesson that we learn from Vayakhel taking place the day after Yom Kippur. When do we begin construction of the Holy Temple? When do we make sure our hearts are a Tabernacle and a home for G d? The day after Yom Kippur.

One year, at the conclusion of Yom Kippur, the Sixth Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, of righteous memory. turned to his father, the Fifth Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom Dov Ber, who was known as the Rebbe Rashab, and asked, *"What is the Divine service that is required of us now?"*

The Rebbe Rashab replied, *"Now we begin to do teshuvah)repenting and coming close to G d(."*11 Having just concluded Yom Kippur — the day that is entirely dedicated to the spiritual work of repentance, atonement, and coming closer to G d — now, taught the Fifth Rebbe, is when we must repent. Now is when we have to come closer to G d. Now, when Yom Kippur is behind us and everyday life resumes, that is when we have to create a dwelling place for G d.

As we navigate our daily lives, the holiest days and the most mundane moments, let us take to heart the timeless lessons of Vayakhel, of the day after. Every day holds the potential for Divine connection, and our mission is to build a sanctuary for the Divine both in this world and in our hearts. May each step, each act, and every day of our lives contribute to creating a dwelling place for G d. May we merit to usher in the Ultimate Redemption and along with it the Third Temple, with the coming of our righteous Moshiach, speedily in our days. Amen.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Exodus 38:21.

2. Likkutei Sichot, vol 21, pg 250.

3. Genesis 24:42.

4. Exodus 35:1.

5. Exodus 35:2-3.

6. Rashi to Exodus 35:2.

7. Likkutei Sichot vol. 1 , Vayakhel, pg. 187

8. Rashi to Exodus 35:1.

9. Exodus 30:10.

10. Psalms 42:4.

11. Recounted by the Sixth Rebbe, on the night following Yom Kippur, 5689)1928(.

* Rabbi Yehoshua Gordon directed Chabad of the Valley in Tarzana, CA until his passing in 2016. Adapted by Rabbi Mottel Friedman from classes and sermons that Rabbi Gordon presented in Encino, CA and broadcast on Chabad.org. "Life Lessons from the Parshah" is a project of the Rabbi Joshua B. Gordon Living Legacy Fund, benefiting the 32 centers of Chabad of the Valley, published by Chabad of the Valley and Chabad.org.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/6339300/jewish/Seeing-the-Forest-Through-the-Trees.htm

Vayakheil: How Is Your Ark?

by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky *

The Ark of Inspiration

Betzalel made the Ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits long, one and a half cubits wide, and one and a half cubits high.)Ex. 37:1(

Betzalel directed the fashioning of all the Tabernacle's furnishings, but the only time his name is mentioned with regard to a specific item is here, with the Ark. Rashi explains that this is because Betzalel not only directed the other artisans how to fashion the Ark but oversaw the execution down to its most minute detail.

The reason that Betzalel gave such special attention to the Ark was because the Ark was the main channel of revelation of the Divine Presence in the Tabernacle. As such, the Ark – more than any other vessel in the Tabernacle – expressed how the Tabernacle atoned for the sin of the Golden Calf.

Betzalel drew the inspiration and power for his selfless devotion to the work of the Ark from the example of his grandfather Hur, who was killed for opposing the making of the Golden Calf.

Similarly, the task of our generation is to bring G-d's presence down to earth, thereby making the world into G-d's true home. Just like Betzalel, we can draw the inspiration and power to accomplish this task with selfless devotion from the example of our grandparents and their generation, who in many cases had to exhibit self-sacrifice in order to study the Torah and observe G-d's commandments.

— from *Daily Wisdom* 3

May G-d grant a decisive victory over our enemies.

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
Kehot Publication Society

* Insights from the Rebbe.

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Volume 30, Issue 22 **Shabbat Shekalim - Parashat Vayakhel** **5784 B"H**

God's Shadow

In Vayakhel we meet, for the second time, the man who became the symbol of the artist in Judaism, a man by the name of Betzalel.

Then Moses said to the Israelites, "Know that the Lord has chosen Betzalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and has filled him with a Divine spirit of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge in every craft, to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver, and bronze, as well as cutting stones for setting, carving wood, engaging in every other craft. He has also given him the ability to teach others, together with Oholiav, son of Achisamach of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with the skill to do all kinds of work as engravers, designers, embroiderers in sky-blue, purple, or scarlet wool or fine linen, and as weavers. They will be able to carry out all the necessary work and design. Ex. 35:30-35

It would be Betzalel (together with Ohaliab) who would make the Tabernacle and its furnishings and be celebrated through the centuries as the inspired craftsman who used his skills for the greater glory of God.

The aesthetic dimension of Judaism has tended to be downplayed, at least until the modern era, for obvious reasons. The Israelites worshipped the invisible God who transcended the universe. Other than the human person, God has no image. Even when He revealed Himself to the people at Sinai: "You heard the sound of words but saw no image; there was only a Voice." Deut. 4:12

Given the intense connection – until around the eighteenth century – between art and religion, image-making was seen as potentially idolatrous. Hence the second of the Ten Commandments: "Do not make for yourself any carved image or likeness of in the form of any creature in heaven above or the earth beneath or in the waters below." Ex. 20:4

This concern continued long after the biblical era. The Greeks, who achieved unrivalled excellence in the visual arts, were, in the religious sphere, still a pagan people of myth and mystery, while the Romans had a disturbing tendency to turn Caesars into gods and erect statues to them.

However, the visual dimension was not wholly missing from Judaism. There are visible symbols, like tzitzit and tefillin. There is, according to the Sages, a meta-mitzvah known as hiddur mitzvah " –beautifying the command" – to try to ensure that all objects used in the performance of a command are as beautiful as possible.

The most significant intrusion of the aesthetic dimension was the in Tabernacle itself, its framework and hangings, its furniture, the cherubim above the ark, the menorah, and the vestments of the priests and the High Priest, lekavod uletifaret, "for dignity and beauty" (Ex. 28:2).

Maimonides in The Guide for the Perplexed (III:45) says that most people are influenced by aesthetic considerations, which is why the Sanctuary was designed to inspire admiration and awe; why a continual light burned there; why the priestly robes were so impressive; why there was music in the form of the Levitical choir; and why incense was burned to cover the smell of the sacrifices.

Maimonides himself, in the work known as The Eight Chapters – the introduction to his commentary on Mishnah Avot – speaks about the therapeutic power of beauty and its importance in counteracting depression:

Someone afflicted with melancholy may dispel it by listening to music and various kinds of song, by strolling in gardens, by experiencing beautiful buildings, by associating with beautiful pictures, and similar sorts of things that broaden the soul… The Eight Chapters, chapter 5

Art, in short, is balm to the soul. In modern times, the thinker who spoke most eloquently about aesthetics was Rav Kook. In his Commentary to the Siddur, he wrote: "Literature, painting, and sculpture give material expression to all the spiritual concepts implanted in the depths of the human soul, and as long as even one single line hidden in the depth of the soul has not been given outward expression, it is the task of art [avodat ha-umanut] to bring it out." Olat Re-ayah, II, 3

Evidently these remarks were considered controversial, so in later editions of the Commentary the phrase "Literature, painting, and sculpture" was removed and in its place was written, "Literature, its design and tapestry."

The name Betzalel was adopted by the artist Boris Schatz for the School of Arts and Crafts he founded in Israel in 1906, and Rav Kook wrote a touching letter in support of its creation. He saw the renaissance of art in the Holy Land as a symbol of the regeneration of the Jewish People in its own land, landscape and birthplace. Judaism in the Diaspora, removed from a natural connection with its own historic environment, was inevitably cerebral and spiritual, "alienated." Only in Israel would an authentic Jewish aesthetic emerge, strengthened by and in turn strengthening Jewish spirituality.

Perhaps the most moving of all remarks Rav Kook made about art came in the course of a conversation he had with a Jewish sculptor: "When I lived in London I used to visit the National Gallery, and my favourite pictures were those of Rembrandt. I really think that Rembrandt was a tzaddik. Do you know that when I first saw Rembrandt's works, they reminded me of the rabbinic statement about the creation of light?

We are told that when God created light [on the first day of Creation, as opposed to the natural light of the sun on the fourth day], it was so strong and pellucid that one could see from one end of the world to the other, but God was afraid that the wicked might abuse it. What did He do? He reserved that light for the righteous in the World to Come. But now and then there are great men who are blessed and privileged to see it. I think that Rembrandt was one of them, and the light in his pictures is the very light that God created on Genesis day."[1]

I have often wondered what it was about Rembrandt's paintings that so enthralled the Rav. Rembrandt lived in the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam, knew Jews and painted them, as well as painting many biblical scenes, though

By Rabbi Tuvia and Feigy Grauman
on the 8th yahrzeit of brother Max Grauman, a"h,
(Moshe Menachem ben R'Yisroel Yehudah)
on the first day of Rosh Chodesh Adar Beis

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the closeness or otherwise of his connection with Jews has been the subject of controversy. Rav Kook's admiration for the artist had, I suspect, nothing to do with this and everything to do with the light Rembrandt saw in the faces of ordinary people, without any attempt to beautify them. His work let us see the transcendental quality of the human, the only thing in the universe on which God set His image.

Art in Hebrew – omanut – has a semantic connection with emunah, "faith" or "faithfulness." A true artist is faithful both to his materials and to the task, teaching us:

> To see a world in a grain of sand,
> And a heaven in a wild flower,
> Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
> And eternity in an hour.[2]

The name Betzalel means, "in the shadow of God." Art is the shadow cast by the radiance of God that suffuses all things: The world is charged with the grandeur of God. It will flame out, like shining from shook foil.[3]

And as Goethe said: "Where there is much light, the shadow is deep."[4] When art lets us see the wonder of creation as God's work and the human person as God's image, it becomes a powerful part of the religious life, with one proviso. The Greeks believed in the holiness of beauty. Jews believe in hadrat kodesh, the beauty of holiness: not art for art's sake but art as a disclosure of the ultimate artistry of the Creator. That is how omanut enhances emunah, how art adds wonder to faith.

[1] Rav Avraham Kook, article in The Jewish Chronicle; London; 13 September 1935, p. 21.
[2] From Auguries of Innocence by William Blake.
[3] From God's Grandeur by Gerard Manley Hopkins.
[4] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Götz von Berlichingen with the Iron Hand, translated by Walter Scott, London; 1799.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Sanctuary and Sabbath Revisited

"And Moses assembled [vayakhel] all of the congregation of the children of Israel and said unto them: …Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day shall be for you, a day of complete rest for the Lord." (Exodus 35:1–2)

The portion of Vayakhel opens with the command to keep the Sabbath. This raises once again that fundamental question of the very strange order of the last five portions of the book of Exodus: Sanctuary – Sabbath – golden calf – Sabbath – Sanctuary.

Thus the Torah commands us first to create a Sanctuary, to establish a center of the sacred, which is after all the purpose and ideal of a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. But the sacred can easily be profaned – as history in modern life can testify – with holy wars, Iranian Khomeini-ism and fanatical stone-throwing and book burning. Hence, in the middle of the construction of the Sanctuary (the first two portions, Teruma and Tetzaveh, are dedicated to the Sanctuary) comes the travesty of the golden calf (the portion of Ki Tisa), which serves as an eloquent warning to subsequent generations not to pervert, or idolify, the holy. It then becomes perfectly logical, or rather psychological, to now return and conclude with the positive message of the Sanctuary as the Torah does in its two concluding portions of Vayakhel and Pekudei. And the Sabbath is the beacon of light which teaches the essence of Judaism, preventing its perversion into a golden calf of idolatry.

The Sabbath is the most central pillar of our faith. It is no accident that the very first law which was given to the Israelites after the splitting of the Reed Sea – before the revelation at Sinai – was the Sabbath (Ex. 15:25; Rashi ad loc. citing Sanhedrin 56b), and the first law explained to a would-be convert (Jew by choice) is likewise the Sabbath (Yevamot 47). In all of my experience in attempting to expose Jews who have wandered far afield from their faith to the glories of their Jewish heritage, I have found that there is no more powerful introduction to returning to Judaism than the Sabbath experience.

And how does the Sabbath accomplish this? Certainly the delightful glow of the Sabbath candles, the warmth of the Kiddush wine, the familial and congenial togetherness of delectable Sabbath meals replete with angels of peace, praises to women, blessings of children, songs of holiness and words of Torah, all contribute to the creation of a special and unique day dedicated to physical relaxation, spiritual creativity and existential well-being.

But the Sabbath is more than that. It contains the essence of the Jewish ideal, the purpose for which we were chosen by God, and the mission which has the power to unite all of us in the pursuit of a common historic goal (vayakhel). The "oasis in time" evokes the three most seminal moments in Jewish history, three moments of past and future that more than any others serve to define our Jewish present. A description of these moments is to be found in each of three main Amidot (standing prayers) which are recited by observant Jews every Sabbath. On Friday evening we evoke and re-experience the creation of the world ("And God completed the heavens and the earth and all their hosts…"), on Sabbath morning we evoke and re-experience the revelation of the law at Sinai ("Moses rejoiced with the gift of his portion…the two tablets of stone he brought down in his hands"), and on Sabbath afternoon we evoke and attempt to experience the redemption ("You are One and Your Name is One" – and the prophet Zekhariah teaches that only "…. on that day [of Messianic redemption and universal peace] will God be One and will His name be One").

Creation, revelation and redemption are the three pillars which form the bedrock of the Jewish message and mission.

Creation reminds us that there is one omnipotent creator, and the entire world consists of His limited, but still exalted, creatures. The very creaturehood of all of humanity serves to unite all individuals in a bond of inescapable unity. The very fact that we share the same parent in heaven means that we are all of us siblings on earth: whites and blacks, Israelis and Palestinians. The corollary of God the Creator is God the Redeemer, God who will not allow any of His children to be enslaved by any of His other children. Hence the two versions of the Decalogue as well as the Kiddush prayer define the Sabbath as both a memorial to creation as well as a memorial to the Exodus from Egypt. And the Sabbath remains an eternal reminder that any expression of the sacred which does not include sensitivity to every human being and respect for the freedom and integrity of each of God's children can only lead to the perversion of the golden calf idolatry.

Revelation reminds us that there can be no freedom without structure, no respect for self without taking into account the needs of others, no love without law. The Torah remains our God-given blueprint for the kind of meaningful and sacred lives which lead to more perfect families and societies. In this sense, Judaism is a revolutionary concept, an idea and lifestyle which will not rest until human nature is perfected and the world is redeemed. Thus the final Sabbath Amida evokes that longed-for period when the world will be redeemed as a result of the Torah, which has the power and the purpose to perfect the universe under the kingship of God, in effect to revolutionize society.

But the tragedy of most revolutions is that the leaders themselves usually lose sight of what it was that they fought for in the first place. Indeed, all too often the beneficiaries of the revolt are guilty of greater crimes of avarice and greed and despotism than were those against whom they rebelled. This was true of the Maccabean revolt, the French revolution, and the Communist revolution in our own time. Equality and fraternity were the sanctuaries of Voltaire and Lenin; the blood baths of Robespierre and Stalin became their golden calf perversion.

The genius of Judaism lies in its ability to maintain the future ideal as an ever-present reality of our daily lives. In this way we can never forget what we are striving to accomplish, nor can we allow ourselves to become cynically disillusioned as to the possibility of our attaining it. Hence each workaday week of frustration and sadness is climaxed by a Sabbath – a taste of the World to Come, a glimpse into the longed-for period of peace and harmony. Each Sabbath reminds us of the pure taste of the Sanctuary, and prevents us from descending into the depths of golden-calf materialism and idolatry.

The story is told of a Hassidic rebbe who always rejoiced mightily upon sharing the Sabbath meals with his congregant-disciples. People who were bent over with burden and toil each week, whose brows were creased with anxiety and whose eyes were clouded with worry, would become almost miraculously transformed into tall and clear-eyed princes and princesses with their new-found freedom and faith at the advent of Shabbat. But alas, the picture would change during the "third meal" late on Shabbat afternoon. As the sun would begin to set, the songs would become somber and the mundane concerns would return to haunt the faces and backs of the Jews who were forced to return to reality. And the rebbe would look heavenwards and beseech: "How long, dear Father? Can you not redeem us now!?"

But at one particular Sabbath "third meal," the rebbe's eyes became animated with a strange glow. He banged on the table, crying out: "I have it, my beloved disciples. We shall force God's hand, wage a rebellion against Heaven. We will bring about the redemption – now. The plan is breathtakingly simple. We will not recite the havdala [the prayer of "separation" which concludes the Sabbath and begins the week]. If the Sabbath never ends, redemption never ends. If there is no havdala, we will never have to return to the weekday world."

The Hassidim were entranced. They danced and sang joyous tunes long past the appearance of three stars, long past the conclusion of the Sabbath in other congregations. But then their wives began looking for them; after all, the children had to be fed and bathed, clothes had to be washed, food had to be cooked. One by one each disciple embarrassedly returned to his family, leaving the rebbe as the lone revolutionary – until the rebbe's rebbetzin entered the scene, complaining that the week had to begin, for there was much necessary work to do.

With tears coursing down his cheeks, the defeated rebbe made havdala. A voice then came down from heaven: "Redemption shall come, and the world will experience a never-ending Sabbath. But this cannot occur until all of Israel really wants to be redeemed, really works to be redeemed, and until every Jew internalizes the message of the Sabbath and reaches out to every human being, making each day a Sabbath, creating a new world order, an eternal period of peace and love."

Yeshivat Har Etzion: Virtual Bet Midrash

Personalizing Religion
Rav Moshe Taragin

God is a creator and Man His creature. What happens when Man tries to imitate his G-d and transform himself into a creator? In many religions the usurping of creative ability from G-d is blasphemous or disrespectful to divine supremacy. For example, in Greek mythology, Man illegally snatched creativity from his gods; Prometheus ascended to heaven, embezzled fire - the universal symbol of creativity - and was severely punished by the gods. For his heist, he was eternally chained to a rock fighting off the wild-birds who pecked away at his life. Throughout Western culture there has always been an uneasy relationship between human creativity and religious reverence. This relationship became even more strained in the modern world of industry, science and technology. As man became more god-like he had less need for gods in heaven. It was never easy to reconcile human creativity with the belief in One absolute creator.

Judaism never sensed any tension between human creativity and divine supremacy. Hashem freely inspirited his creatures with their own creative capacity - so that we could be more like Him. He intentionally left His world incomplete, inviting us to become partners with Him in crafting perfection. He lovingly equipped us with the tools to be a partner.

After completing six days of creation, Hashem withdrew His creative spirit, allowing room for human life and for human creation. Shabbat marked the withdrawal of the divine creative force, and the carving out of human space. After Shabbat concluded, G-d handed fire to Man, thereby passing the baton to His creatures who would now perfect a world He left intentionally unfinished. When we create, we express our own divine image. Moreso, when our creations improve this world, we partner with our own Creator. Human creativity is driven by a religious impulse.

At no point in history was this creative union between Hashem and Man more evident, than during the construction of the house of G-d. Divine plans for the mishkan were implemented through human ingenuity. Celestial blueprints were applied by terrestrial ingenuity. Months earlier, during the Exodus, Hashem had sacked the planets and had miraculously split the riotous ocean. He could easily have fashioned His temple in heaven and "shipped" it down to the human community below. Instead, He invited His people to unleash their creative spirit in the service of Hashem, to build a palace of splendor for His name.

Human creative instinct is a primal echo of our innate desire to be more like our Creator. We sense His divine spirit in ourselves. We alone have been granted the gift of creativity and when we create, we become similar to our Creator. Sculpted in the image of G-d we yearn to create, just as He created us. Creativity is deeply embedded within religious identity.

Additionally, when we create, we become more personally attached to our creations. As creatures of Hashem, we sense that He is personally invested in our lives - showing us His love, care and pity. Creativity generates personal attachment and investment. Having personally crafted something, we feel "ownership" and feel more personally invested in our "product." The pattern is also true about our religious identity. If we personally create individual religious experience, we feel greater passion and greater commitment. By customizing religion, it feels more personal and more genuine.

The concept of "creating" personal religious experience may sound odd or even sacrilegious. Religion is based on obedience, submission, dependence, hierarchy, and reverence. There appears to be very little room for creativity in our religious lives.
Yet Hashem invested us with creativity, and personal religious experience will always resonate with greater authenticity. The Vilna Gaon depicts a bygone world in which each individual received personalized prophetic direction along with specific instructions about personal development. After this supernatural "guidance" vanished, we withdrew from specialized religious experience toward a more homogenous religious experience based upon standardized religious "actions." Personalized religious identity represents an ideal which was forfeited with the loss of prophetic guidance.

Interestingly, Rav Kook believed that even in a post-prophetic era religious experience can, and should still be, customized. Of course, halakhic observance must remain standard and absolute, but within the framework of universal halackhic behavior, individualized religious experience is still desirable and can generate a more passionate religious experience. Though religion often feels very standardized, many core elements should still be personalized. Creating personalized religion can potentially invigorate and intensify our religious experience.

Torah study - As the eternal word of Hashem, Torah is immutable and unchanging. Passing societal fads and historical fluxes have no impact upon eternity. However, that word of Hashem isn't one-dimensional or binary. Many truths were delivered at Sinai; though the various strands of divine truth may seem contradictory to us, they are all part of a larger system of divine wisdom. Ideally, each person identifies their own Torah "stream"; as we pray on Shabbat "v'tein chelkeinu b'toratekha - we all seek our individualized "segment" of Torah. There are different spheres of Torah study and even within each sphere, there exist almost unlimited ways to study it. Any style or methodology which is faithful to Torah's foundational guidelines uncovers a part of the divine masterpiece. Torah study is meant to be dynamic and personalized not fixed and rigidified.

Chumra adoption - As opposed to the theoretical world of Torah study, the field of practical halakhic behavior leaves less room for personalization. Though Hashem's word at Sinai incorporated multiple truths, over the centuries, halakha has developed a consensus whose authority cannot be overturned. Ashkenazic and Sephardic cultures still present different halakhic options, but within each cultural halakhic stream, absolute and inflexible rules are still normative. However, even within the rigid experience of halakha there is room and necessity for personalization. Halakha may be relatively inflexible but chumra or halakhic stringencies should be personal and flexible. Stringencies should be carefully and privately adopted, based on personal predilections and character traits. Chumrot present an opportunity to adapt our religious behavior to our personal and ever-changing lifestyles. By calibrating which chumrot to adopt and when to adopt them, a person can personalize religion into a more authentic and internal experience.

In our day, the notion of "personal chumra" has waned. Halakhic stringencies have become contagious - they rapidly spread from individuals to the broader community. Stringencies are meant to be very private and personal expressions of religious vigilance and zeal. The institutionalization of a stringencies strips them of their "personalization" potential.

The Talmud in Chulin cites an early and high-ranking Babylonian amora named Mar Ukva who marveled at his father's piety. Though Mar Ukva himself waited six hours between meat and dairy, his father adopted the stringency of waiting twenty hours. At no point does Mar Ukva express any interest or plans to simulate his father's behavior. What was appropriate for his father may not have been necessary or appropriate for his own religious state. Chumrot are not for herds.

Tefilla - Our tefillot are patterned after the Temple ceremony. In one of the greatest shifts of religious history, the encounter with Hashem shifted from the national altar to our individual lips and hearts. In addition to being patterned after sacrifices, our prayers are modelled after the prayers of our founding fathers, who each prayed differently - at different times of the day, at different stages of life and facing extremely different personal circumstances. Their prayers remind us that our own prayers must be "human' expressions and not just ceremonies modeled after sacrifices. For our prayers to be heartfelt, they must be shaped by our ever-changing emotional inner world. We all jointly recite the same words. Otherwise, we compromise the gravitas of "standing before G-d." Standing in unison and uttering words which have been sanctified by Jewish history preserves magnitude of the moment. Though we recite the same words we all feel very different emotions. Ideally, even a single person's prayers should differ from day to day, just as their emotional religious world is in a constant state of flux.

Religion is based upon the absolute and the common. We all stand together before G-d and obey His commandments and His will. Yet, for religion to be fresh and fervent it must be personally crafted. We must create our religious identity. It began by creating the mishkan and continues as each of us creates his inner religious world.

Rabbi Dr. Norman J. Lamm's - Derashot Ledorot

Mirror, Mirror On The Wall; Reflections on Orthodoxy in Politics

At the end of our Sidra, Moses is commanded to construct the laver and its base out of brass. Where is he to get the material from? The Torah says: במראות הצובאות, from the mirrors, made of burnished copper, which the women had donated at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

An old tradition has it that these mirrors were a point of contention between Moses and the women. He refused to accept the mirrors, because he considered them a token of vanity, a quality which has no place in the Sanctuary. However, the Almighty interceded on behalf of the women, and insisted that the mirrors be accepted. The reason, as quoted by Rashi, is that the women used these mirrors to make themselves attractive, thus enabling the continuation of Jewish family life even in the bitter circumstances of Egyptian slavery.
I suggest a modified interpretation of that controversy between Moses and the women. The mirror is not only a specifically human invention, but it also elicits a special response. Ethnologists tell us that most animals, in looking into a mirror, believe that they are facing some other member of the same species. It is only man, and the higher primates such as chimpanzees, who recognize that the image they see in the mirror is–oneself. Thus, the mirror is a symbol of viewing oneself in the eyes of another; it represents the capacity and tendency to see oneself as others do.

It is for this reason that Moses refused to countenance a mirror in the Temple. To be concerned with the impression one makes on another is an insult to authenticity. Moses demanded of his people to act on principle, not for effect; out of conviction, with no concern for "public relations"; because they believe in what they do, not because others approve. He wanted substance, not image; persuasion and not projection. The mirror represented what the sociologist David Riesman, in our days, has called "other-directedness," and this Moses considered inauthentic.

A similar thought comes to us from the Kotzker Rebbe. When the spies came back from Canaan and the majority reported to Moses and the Israelites that they could never conquer the land because the inhabitants were giants, they said: והיינו בעינינו כחגבים וכן היינו בעיניהם "We were in our eyes as grasshoppers, and so did we appear in their eyes." The Lord was incensed, and Moses considered their report unforgivable. But what was wrong with the statement? Were they not telling the truth– that they considered themselves little grasshoppers compared with the giants whom they met? The Kotzker Rebbe answers: when they said that they appeared in their own eyes as grasshoppers, they were merely reporting a fact. But when they added the last three words, וכן היינו בעיניהם, that this is how we appeared in their eyes, then they had reached the nadir of inauthenticity: they began to be concerned with their appearance in the eyes of the others! A true person of principle is never concerned with the impression he makes on others.

מראותAnd yet, God wanted the women to prevail, and he forced Moses to accept their the mirrors. Why? We are here taught something of the greatest significance. Principle , הצובאותalone, in and of itself, is sometimes inadequate. Along with principle must come another element, that of relationship, founded on the importance of other human begins. Relationship means that the I and the Thou are bound together in such a way that each is not only concerned about the other, but also sensitive to how the other views him. If the I truly respects the Thou, then the I will also be concerned as to how the I appears to the Thou.

Principle alone, without relationship, can subvert communication and can sometimes devour itself. Principle pursued without concern for others can bring society into disarray. In seeking to build, it can sometimes destroy. More than once in human history has the fire of righteous passion consumed its advocates and turned life into ashes – in the name of high ideals. Principle by itself shuns the mirror and considers it a violation of its integrity. Relationship needs and uses the mirror to reinforce its sensitivity.
The French dramatist, Jean-Paul Sartre describes, in one of his plays (I believe it is "Les Mouches"), a house full of every delight. This house is–Hell. The inhabitants may have whatever they wish, of every material pleasure, every intellectual indulgence, all that their heart desires. Only one thing may they not have–a mirror. For all eternity, they cannot look at themselves, they may not know how they appear to others. That, Sartre tells us, is Hell.

That is why the women offered the mirrors to the Temple. Moses as the prophet, as the the man of uncompromised integrity and unimpeachable authenticity, could not abide a , איש האמתmirror, the symbol of moral weakness and compromised principles, in the Sanctuary. But the women knew that there can be no life, no family, no society, without relationship; and there can be no relationship without sensitivity to the effect we have on others.

Thus the great principle of Kiddush Hashem, the sanctification of God's Name, is an expression of sensitivity of reputation. God, as it were, demands that we be concerned with how He is received by the people of the world. It is a kind of sacred public relations: we must always act in such a manner that God is reverenced and when we do–that is a sanctification of His Name. Should we act in such a manner as to bring God's Name into disrepute, then we have performed Hillul Hashem, we have desecrated Him. Hence, sensitivity to how others look at us is not altogether invalid; it has its place in the Sanctuary of life.

So that God voted in favor of the מראותwomen, and insisted that Moses accept the but in a gesture to Moses and his high advocacy of personal autonomy in matters of ; הצובאותprinciple, He did not demand that the mirrors become prominent but that they be used only for .the laver and its base ,כיור וכנו

The lesson for us is urgent indeed. It tells us that, at all times, we must live in a constant tension between principle and relationship, between truth and peace, between personal and ideological authenticity and the concern for communal harmony. We must always maintain the balance, always remain within the dialectic, yielding neither the one nor the other. If we do not take the mirror into the Temple, if we insist upon pure principle alone, we run the risk of alienating all potential worshippers and keeping the Temple empty. If we are concerned only with relationships, only with communal peace, only with maintaining harmony, then we have abandoned all principle and given up on Truth. If we are over-concerned with the mirror, then we have converted the Temple into a beauty parlor, we see nothing but ourselves and each other, and we have lost our souls.

So we must hold on to both elements. We must, of course, never give in on matters of principle; but good relationships too are a principle of Judaism. What you are counts most; but what you look like to others is not entirely insignificant consideration.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Why No Praise for the Acacia Wood Schleppers?

Parshas Vayakhel contains a review of the process of constructing the Mishkan and its furnishings, beginning with the solicitation of donations for the various building materials necessary for this construction. Among the significant items brought was Atzei Shittim (Acacia wood). The pasuk says, "…anyone with whom there was found shittim wood for any work of the labor brought it." (Shemos 35:24). In fact, there was a significant need for Shittim wood, which was both long and heavy. The Medrash in Shir HaShirim speaks of the central beam (Beriach haTichon) that wrapped around the walls of the Mishkan being 32 cubits long.

Where did they find such long beams? They were hidden in Egypt (Mitzrayim) from the days of Yaakov Avinu. Chazal teach that Avraham Avinu originally planted the trees for the wood for the Mishkan in Be'er Sheva, and when Yaakov Avinu relocated to Mitzrayim, he took the wood from those trees and brought it with him to Mitzrayim. The people took this wood with them when they left Mitzrayim. They carried it into the Midbar and eventually they used this "wood with a pedigree" for the beams of the Mishkan. This is referenced in the above-cited pasuk.

The sefer Darash Mordechai by Rav Mordechai Druk brings a question from his own son: We know that Chazal spend a lot of time praising Moshe Rabbeinu for the fact that he spent his final hours in Mitzrayim locating and retrieving the bones of Yosef which he took with him. (Shemos 13:19) Chazal praise Moshe by noting that the rest of the Jewish people were occupying themselves with collecting "the booty of Egypt" while Moshe occupied himself with Mitzvos, quoting the pasuk "The wise in heart, will take Mitzvos…" (Mishlei 10:8) The son of the Darash Mordechai asked his father: "Why is there no praise given to the people who made it their business to gather up the Acacia wood that Yaakov brought down to Mitzrayim and schlep it out with them?" If we consider that the central beam (Beriach ha'Tichon) was approximately 64 feet long (32 Amos) then that was certainly a cumbersome task, to say the least. There is no doubt that it was much harder to take responsibility for all that wood than to take responsibility for Yosef's bones. The wood schleppers also did a very noble act. What is the difference between Yosef's bones and Avraham and Yaakov's Acacia wood?

The Darash Mordechai suggested an answer to his son, and then his son responded with an answer of his own.

Rav Mordechai Druk answered that the praise bestowed upon Moshe was not merely for the fact that he schlepped, but rather for the fact that he did it while everyone else was busy collecting money. What does someone do when he is confronted with the following choice: On the one hand, there is a mitzvas aseh from the Ribono shel Olam to collect money—go into the vault and take out gold and silver, no strings attached! Who will hesitate to fulfill a mitzvah and get rich in the process?

On the other hand, what did Moshe Rabbeinu do? Forget the money. Forget the riches. I am just going to do the mitzvah of taking Yosef's bones. The praise bestowed on Moshe is not for the weight he had to carry. If we would bestow praises based on pounds or kilograms carried, the wood carriers should be considered far greater heroes. Rather, Moshe was praised for forgoing the mitzvah with which he could acquire great wealth for himself, and instead focusing on a pure unadulterated mitzvah with no "matan sechara b'tziddah" (immediately accompanying reward).

Rav Druk's son offered another answer: Moshe saw the distinction being between a mitzvah bein Adam l'Makom (between man and G-d) and a mitzvah bein Adam l'Chaveiro (between man and his fellow-man). Work to build a shul is an attractive mitzvah. People will come to shul and see the wood that I broke my back schlepping. It is a mitzvah that will bring me praise and social accolades from my friends and neighbors. It is not hard to find people anxious to work for such a mitzvah.

However, it is not so easy to find people willing to do a private kindness for someone else. A personal mitzvah bein Adam l'Chaveiro has neither the glory nor the publicity of a mitzvah involving public worship in a Mishkan of the Ribono shel

Olam. Such a public mitzvah is actually less of a mitzvah than a private chessed to an individual. Yosef haTzadik had children and grandchildren. Really, it should have been their responsibility to take care of their grandfather's bones. Let them do it! The fact that Moshe Rabbeinu chose a Mitzvah bein Adam l'Chaveiro has value and superiority that trumps even a Mitzvah bein Adam l'Makom.

I heard an interesting incident that bears this out.

Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein has a sefer in which he brings interesting incidents related to Chodesh Nissan and to Pesach. His first story concerns the mitzvah of Birkas Ilanos (making a bracha on the first blooming fruit trees of the spring season). There is a Kabbalistic concept which emphasizes the preference of making this Bracha specifically over two trees.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt"l, was walking down the street in Chodesh Nissan and he passed a house with a fruit tree. He paused in front of that house and prepared to recite the bracha. Another Jew passed by and said to the respected sage, "If you go two blocks down the street, you will find a house with two blossoming fruit trees in front of it. Why don't you wait two blocks and fulfill the mitzvah in accordance with the Kabbalistic preference?"

Rav Shlomo Zalman pointed out to this Jew the window of the house in front of which he was now standing. "Do you see the woman in the window? She is a widow. She is standing in the window and is bursting with pride that I, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, posek of the generation, am making my Birkas Ilanos on her tree! It is better to do a chessed by bringing pleasure to a widow, even if it means making the bracha on just one tree, rather than adding the dimension of the Zohar's preference of making the Birkas Ilanos on two trees."

This is again an example that if a person can combine into his Man-God mitzvos a dimension of a Man-Man mitzvah, that is indeed preferable. Thus too, the private chessed that Moshe Rabbeinu performed with the bones of Yosef haTzadik was an even bigger mitzvah than schlepping the wood for the Mishkan.

Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

What will you be doing on the day after Parshat Vayakhel commences (Shemot 35:1), "Vayakhel Moshe et kol adat Bnei Yisroel." – "Moshe congregated the entire assembly of the People of Israel." Rashi comments "Lemacharat Yom Hakippurim," – "This took place on the day after Yom Hakippurim."

Which yom Kippur is Rashi referring to and why is it important for us to know this? Rashi continues, "Kesheyarad min hahar," – "When Moshe came down from the mountain." Now we see that he was referring to that original Yom Kippur when we received the second tablets of the Ten Commandments.

You will recall that after initially spending 40 days and nights on Mount Sinai, Moshe received the first tablets and then, when he came down and witnessed the nation worshipping the golden calf, he smashed them. On the first of Elul, Moshe ascended the mountain again and 40 days later, on the 10th of Tishrei, he received the second set of tablets.

Timing - Why did Moshe not wait? Why was he so keen to gather the people together immediately after the receipt of the second tablets? The answer is surely that Moshe Rabbeinu recognised that on the previous day, the nation had had the most extraordinary, uplifting experience, a transformational day for one and all. And he wanted to guarantee that there would be follow-up.

He didn't want that to be a one day memory. Rather, he wanted it to genuinely change their lives for the better, and so he purposefully, proactively created an event to guarantee that the inspiration which they had received would now continue well into the future.
Follow-up

We can learn so much from Moshe Rabbeinu's lesson. For example, immediately following a Bar Mitzvah or a Bat Mitzvah, we can't just leave it up to chance that our children will remain connected to our people and our tradition. We need to proactively create programmes of study and engagement for them to continue their commitment. Similarly, after many years of immersive Jewish education, it's important for us to create opportunities for ongoing Jewish education and commitment well into adulthood. I find all this to be of great relevance right now. The pandemic has provided us with an extraordinary, nprecedented, long opportunity for cheshbon hanefesh, introspection. During Covid we've been reassessing our lives and now we have fresh priorities. As we now emerge from the pandemic towards a more regular rhythm of life, let's learn that lesson from Moshe Rabbeinu – let's do something proactively to guarantee that all our Covid resolutions will be translated into action, to ensure that the inspiration that we have received will continue for the rest of our lives.

Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

"And they shall make for Me a sanctuary and I shall dwell in their midst"
Rabbi Daniel Epstein

We are approaching the end of the Book of Shemot, the book of revelation. In the arid vastness of the desert, a place devoid of civil glamor, a place untouched by the commotion of the city – Moshe ascends the mountain, and enters the cloud of fog to receive the Tablets of the Law, inscribed by the Divine hand. Such is the Torah's recount of man's encounter with God; when the mortal body of man, created from the earth and infused with a Divine soul, meets the Almighty, upon which no mortal has ever set eyes.

Moshe emerges from the cloud of fog bearing the Tablets, upon which are inscribed the Ten Commandments, later to be translated into laws and statutes explicated and elaborated upon in the Shulchan Aruch. This Divine revelation, which no human can even glimpse without becoming blinded, is manifest in the "ordinances which you shall set before them". These laws and ordinances are the human reflection of the Divine. Perhaps this is the meaning of the words in Devarim (5, 4): "The Lord spoke with you panim be'fanim in the mount out of the midst of the fire."

The Torah chooses its phrasing with precision: panim be'fanim [literally: "face inside a face"] and not panim el panim ["face to face"]. The words seem to convey that in every person's face there is also an inner face, hidden within but reflected outwards – much like the letters inscribed upon the Tablets. The story of the revelation, which transpired as a face-to-face encounter " –as a man speaks unto his friend" – is, in fact, a story about mankind, whose existence takes place on the axis between the revealed and the hidden; the immanent and the transcendental.

We live in a reality in which the word mikdash, mishkan and shechinah are reminiscent of the distant past. We utter these words in our prayers; however, the endless repetition of these words makes us none the wiser as to their meaning. Our own lives are like a stage, where everything is exposed. A stage – and not a mikdash, a sanctuary.

In today's reality, the trendiest word is "transparency", and even the innermost chambers of our hearts have been unable to evade it. In our present times, everything must be transparent, put out on display for all to see. Literally everything: body, soul and life itself.

If so, how could we possibly understand a story about a Divine revelation that takes place within a cloud of fog? Or identify with a prophet who hides his face? Or grasp the concept of a mishkan that is completely

covered in cloth curtains and divided into sections separated by partitions? Or that behind the curtain that separates the Kodesh – the Inner Sanctuary – from the Kodesh HaKodashim – Holy of Holies – there dwells the Holy Ark, which lies beneath the kaporet, a golden covering that hides the Tablets of the Law from the eyes of all humans?

And into this innermost sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, the Kohen Gadol enters once a year, enveloped by a cloud of incense.

These days, funnily enough, the word cloud evokes another image altogether – the virtual space where all our digital information is stored. The cloud has transformed from a means of bringing one closer to the Divine secret, into a data-storing entity. In much the same way that the virtual data-cloud is constantly under threat by hackers, near is the day when the secret of the Divine cloud will be subject to attempts of penetration. An ever-growing chasm seems to be forming between the reality described by the Torah, and the reality in which we live. Our role is to deal with this disparity, and for this purpose we turn to the commentary offered by the great exegetes of the Torah, who understood well that this discrepancy is hardly new – it has been there since the revelation at Mount Sinai.

So where do we begin? From the verses we do not understand? I suggest we begin with the reality in which we live, one disguised by "normalcy", and, seemingly, the only one which exists.

In 2013, a Korean-born German philosopher by the name of Byung-Chul Han, wrote a manifesto titled The Transparency Society. This is the summary given on the book's back cover:

"Transparency is the order of the day, and from now on will frame every aspect of our lives – from the public domain to the individual; from the political to the intimate. In this straitjacket of sorts, all things are refined and integrated, without an ounce of opposition; dissolving into the streams of communication, disrobed of their uniqueness. Like produce in the market, everything is put on display, labeled by its price, robbed of its story. All objects are rendered meaningless; faces become void of expression; time is divided into molecules. We find ourselves in the "hell of homogeneity", in which news is constantly produced, yet never able to fill the infinite void in which we are encaged – from which the only escape is to click Accept and Like.

The society of transparency, which cannot tolerate breaches of any kind, challenges us with the following choice: to be seen or to be a suspect. Can one escape this society of absolute supervision?"

The book's main thesis is that the transparency society is one that believes in absolute positiveness, and, as such, dismantles anything it considers negative. However, "man's soul requires spaces where it can be completely alone with itself, observed by no one. The soul assumes it is impenetrable. Complete exposure would burn it to nothingness, and lead to a soul burn-out. Only machines are completely transparent. True spontaneity, unfiltered experience and complete freedom – all of which are the makeup of our lives – cannot tolerate transparency."

The author goes on to cite W. von Humboldt, who wrote:

"When one hears a word, one never thinks of it in the exact manner another would. This minute difference has a ripple effect, and spreads beyond language itself. It follows then that every understanding is also a misunderstanding; every compatibility of thought is always, by nature, a separation."

Complete exposure is a falsity: it may promise closeness and wholeness, but it actually produces alienation and emptiness. Instead of satisfying people's passion, it stimulates it infinitely. There is one secret that must never be exposed – the secret of individuality.

Byung-Chul Han's book ends with a statement which correlates with the opening word of our parsha – vayakhel ["and he assembled"]:

"In the transparency society, there are no communities, in the empathetic sense of the word. There are only random gatherings, or masses of isolated individuals; multiple egos chasing a common interest or brand communities, which cluster around a specific brand. They are distinct from assemblies that are capable of collaborating politically or otherwise, and creating a collective "we". They lack the spirit."

This is an important statement about the concept of congregation. In our portion of Vayakhel, the congregation first assembles at the bottom of the mountain and later around the mishkan. The people were prohibited from ascending the mountain, and they only had limited access to the mishkan, the part beyond the parochet being off limits.

The Sefat Emet (R 'Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter) draws our attention to the proximity between the end of the portion of Ki-Tisa and the beginning of Vayakhel. The last verses in Ki-Tisa relate Moshe's descent from the mountain with the second Tablets, and tell us how he was compelled to cover his face with a veil because his face radiated with a light that the people couldn't bear to look upon.

And thus writes the Sefat Emet: "As to the veil which is mentioned right before 'And Moshe assembled the congregation – 'vayakhel – and the mitzvah of Shabbat… this teaches us that on the Sabbath, Moshe Rabeinu gives the Children of Israel the ornaments that had been taken from them [following the sin of the calf], because Moshe Rabeinu's strength is notable on the holy day of the Sabbath more than on any other day. On all the days of the week the light of the Torah is manifest through the veil of Creation. However, on the Sabbath, the light of the Torah is revealed unfiltered."

The mishkan envelopes and conceals the Holy of Holies – dwelling place of the Holy Ark – much like Nature camouflages the Ten Utterances with which the world was created; or human skin conceals the inner light found in the soul and found, too, in language and expression.

On the Sabbath, when we extinguish the flame of labor and put out the fire of disputes, something of the hidden light that connects mortals and their Creator is revealed; God and man can sit at the same table, and mortal eyes are not consumed by the Divine fire. As it is written quite plainly in our portion:

"You shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day."

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Mordechai Willig

Shabbat Shalom

א. פרק לה

א) ויקהל משה את כל עדת בני ישראל ויאמר אלהם אלה הדברים אשר צוה יקוק לעשת אתם:

ב) ששת ימים תעשה מלאכה וביום השביעי יהיה לכם קדש שבת שבתון ליקוק כל העשה בו מלאכה יומת:

ג) לא תבערו אש בכל משבתיכם ביום השבת

(1) Moses assembled the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and said to them: These are the things that Hashem has commanded to do them:

(2) On six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for Hashem; whoever does work on it shall be put to death.

(3) You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day.

Aside from the simple meaning, these three pesukim hint at a critical lesson for Shabbos and beyond. The Shelah interprets "fire" as referring to the fire of divisiveness (machlokes) and the fire of anger (ka'as). Although one must always be careful not to kindle either of these fires, on Shabbos one

must be even more wary of them. The Chasam Sofer explains the need for extra caution based on the previous pasuk: all week long people are preoccupied with their work, but on Shabbos, when work is prohibited, people have more unstructured time and thus there is a greater chance that the fire of machlokes will be kindled. The Torah therefore warns: do not kindle the fire of divisiveness and anger on Shabbos when you are not busy with work.

This is an appropriate introduction to the parsha which deals entirely with the construction of the Mishkan. "Moshe assembled the entire assembly of B'nai Yisrael" - unity and the avoidance of machlokes are critical. When Jews engaged in baseless hatred (sin'as chinam), the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed (Yoma 9b). Conversely, gathering all Jews without the fire of divineness enabled the construction of the Mishkan and will hasten the construction of the third Bais Hamikdash.

"Every generation during which the Bais Hamikdash is not rebuilt is as if they destroyed it" (Yerushalmi Yoma 1:1). Evidently our generation is not better than the generation alive when the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed with respect to sin'as chinam. Fights within shuls and communities, and even families, are more frequent on Shabbos when people spend more "free" time together.

During these months when we read about the mishkan every Shabbos, including the korbanos, we must focus on our own role in its renewal. It is not sufficient to pray for Hashem to restore the avoda to His Beis Hamikdash. We must deserve it by avoiding the fire of divisiveness at all times, but especially on Shabbos.

The Shelah extends the cautionary period to Friday afternoon (See Gittin 52a). Anger and fighting often occur in Jewish homes because of the pressure and tension to prepare for Shabbos on time. These six hours, plus the twenty five hours of Shabbos itself, total thirty one hours. The numerical value of "לא", as in "לא תבערו אש", is thirty one. Jewish homes, and shuls, must make a special effort to avoid machlokes before and during Shabbos.

II. Tikunei Zohar (48) interprets "do not kindle a fire ... on Shabbos" as follows: One who gets angry is as if he lit the fire of Gehinom. In the Gemara (Shabbos 105b) and the Rambam (Hilchos De'os 2:3) anger is equated with idolatry. It is a foreign god within a person (See Tehillim 81:10).

Anger at a person fans the fire of machlokes. But why is it like idolatry? The Ba'al HaTanya (Igeres Hakodesh, 28) explains that if, at that moment, he believed that Hashem ordained that which angered him, he would not get angry at all. The one who cursed or hit him, or damaged his property, will be punished, but the damage was already decreed from Heaven. The Chovos HaLevavos (Sha'ar Habitachon, 4) elaborates upon this idea. When one's enemies, who are jealous, wish to harm him, he should have bitachon in Hashem and tolerate their insults. He should remember that his gains and losses are in the hands of Hashem. He should pray to Hashem to atone for the sins which caused his enemy to hate him. This can lead to peace (Mishlei 16:7). He then takes it one step further (Sha'ar Hakeniya, 7). One should be grateful to a person who slanders him, since the reward for his good deeds is transferred to you, and he incurs the punishment for your sins.

The Chafetz Chaim (Shmiras Halashon, Sha'ar Hatevuna, 8) cites the Gemara (Shabbos 88b) which rewards one who is silent, and even happy, when he suffers the yisurim of being shamed by another. He gains atonement for his sins, and his reward is unlimited. Instead of being angry, he should feel joy akin to hearing musical instruments playing; he should sing and dance.

The Maharal (Gevuros Hashem, 7) explains the sin of Moshe Rabbeinu when he hit the rock. He became angry (Bamidbar 20:10) and Hashem punished him "because you did not believe in Me." Belief in Hashem leads to song and joy, and Moshe's anger was the opposite of emuna. This lack of emuna, not the anger itself, led to Moshe's punishment.

Shabbos is the day when we are to strengthen our emuna. One who desecrates the Shabbos denies that Hashem created the world in six days and rested on the seventh (Mechilta Yisro, See Rashi Chulin 5a). Anger, which also reflects a lack of emuna, is a form of chillul Shabbos.

The Chazon Ish (Emuna Ubitachon 3:15) echoes the explanation of the Ba'al Hatanya, and, like the Maharal, views anger as a lack of emuna. Shabbos, the day of emuna, is the day of peace, when we extinguish the fire of ka'as and machlokes.

The first words at the Shabbos table are Shalom Aleichem, directed at angels. Many preface Shalom Aleichem, by reciting three times "Shabbos shalom u'mevorach" (see Siddur of Rav Yaakov Emden based on the Arizal), the source of the common greeting of "Shabbat Shalom". May all of us fulfill "You shall not kindle fire - of anger and divisiveness - on the day of Shabbos", and thereby be blessed with Shabbos shalom u'mevorach, a Shabbos of peace and blessing.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah
by Rabbi Label Lam

The Deepest Desire in the Universe

Moshe said to the Children of Israel: “See, HASHEM has called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. He has imbued him with the spirit of G-d, with wisdom, with insight, and with knowledge, and with [talent for] all manner of craftsmanship to do master weaving, to work with gold, silver, and copper, with the craft of stones for setting and with the craft of wood, to work with every [manner of] thoughtful work. And He put into his heart [the ability] to teach, both him and Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. He imbued them with wisdom of the heart, to do all sorts of work of a craftsman and a master worker and an embroiderer with blue, purple, and crimson wool, and linen and [of] weavers, those who do every [manner of] work, and (V’Choshei Machshavos) master weavers. (Shemos 35:30-35)

Now here we have assembled an all team of artisans to do the actual building of the Mishkan. We would expect to see in their resume other great projects that they worked on or a certification from whomever they apprenticed. It is seemingly strange that their spiritual powers and prowess should be their main qualifications for this task. “Imbued with the spirit of HASHEM, wisdom, with insight, and with knowledge, (Chochmah – Binah -and Daas), wisdom of heart and finally V’Choshei Machshavos -thinker of thoughts, which is for some reason is translated as master weavers. Why is this so?

Let us take a step back and appreciate what it means to be an artisan/ and an artist.

Everything that exists in this world whether “naturally” or man made is the product of a thought. If you are sitting on a chair, take a moment to consider that this chair is the result of some general and detailed thought. Somebody, someplace had a deep enough desire to create a comfortable sitting experience for you and many others. They approximated how big you are and that you would appreciate a cushion, and back support. It should be pleasant looking and appealing to the eye. It should be sturdy and reliably long lasting. It would have to be easily built so that the costs would not be prohibitive and many other hidden features, too many to mention. Now that is just one item in your miniature universe. We can zero in on any article of clothing or any object in the building in which you live and admire the details that were included for your good.

The "natural" universe is densely packed with too many examples to count. Why is it that the nose protrudes in front of our faces? We can ask like that about anything in the world since HASHEM looked into the Torah and created the world, and the world is a reflection of HASHEM's wisdom. Just as we can ask a question about the use of a given word in a verse we can ask about the positioning of the nose.

Everyone knows that the ELAL has the best security monitoring system in the world. They are best equipped and able to stop and prevent horrific events by setting up advanced screening programs. They are watching people in the parking lot before they ever enter the airport building.

Similarly, the nose is positioned to discover if a food is too foul and noxious to be first tested in the mouth where it might be too late. Lemon scented Clorox would be a disaster to imbibe but the nose is uniquely positioned to detect and reject before it's too late. In that way the nose knows.

So, everything in the world is designed for us in ways we cannot comprehend. It's the result not just of thought but a thoughtful thought and a desire to please. From that thought a plan is developed and executed with precision, like the flow of thought, speech, and action.

To build something- create something is to read the mind of the end consumer, to anticipate the needs of the one who is to be the beneficiary of that creation.

Maybe now we can begin to detect why being hand was not enough to qualify as a builder of the Mishkan and why those spiritual qualities would be essential for this holy of holiest projects. To create a place for HASHEM in this world would require minds, hearts, and hands that can read the highest thought and the deepest desire in the universe.

Mizrachi Dvar Torah

Rav Doron Perez

Emotional Intelligence - Who is an intelligent person? 25 years ago, Professor Daniel Goldman writes that for 100 years it was thought that IQ, a person's reasoning, rational, logical thinking and other qualities was the single greatest indicator of intelligence and success in life.

Research after research proved that this was not the greatest indicator.

So many other softer qualities – self-awareness, self-control, empathy, listening, understanding, seeing trends in society and others. These are the greatest indicators of success in life.

This is exactly what is hinted to in this week's parasha. Those chose to build the Tabernacle and bring G-d's Presence into the world – they need to be 'chacham lev', wise of heart.

We see how a person perceives themselves, how aware they are, how they control their emotions, how they direct their passions in life, how they understand others and empathize with others – ultimately this emotional intelligence is the greatest indicator of life wisdom and success in life.

Weekly Parsha VAYAKHEL
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

One of the main questions raised by the commentators to this week's parsha is why the Torah again discusses the prohibitions of the Sabbath. The Torah has done so a in the previous parshiyot of Shemot, so one might question this seemingly unwarranted repetition. In their comments, I feel one of the ideas presented to be especially relevant to our world. We do not find that at the time of creation, the Torah sanctified any given place or location on the face of the earth. The entire idea of the uniqueness of the Land of Israel does not appear in the Torah until the time of our father Abraham. And there it appears as a promise of a homeland to Abraham's descendants without any mention of holiness or sanctification.

Holiness only appears regarding a place and location in the story of our father Jacob and his heavenly dream at Beit El. Already in the first section of the Bible, in the story of creation itself, we read that the Lord sanctified time. "Therefore, did the Lord bless the seventh day and sanctify it." Time is the holiest of all factors in human life. It is the one thing that, since creation, has been blessed, sanctified, and made very special. It is no wonder that the holiness of the Sabbath is emphasized in the Torah. In human behavior and thought, time is as important as wealth or location or the accomplishment of any human deeds. The Torah comes to warn us not to succumb to such a viewpoint or behavior pattern.

The holy Tabernacle, according to most commentators, was ordered and built after Israel sinned in the desert by worshiping the golden calf. These commentators saw this Tabernacle as an accommodation, so to speak, of Heaven to the human condition. People somehow require a tangible place of worship, a holiness of space and locality, something solid that can represent to them the invisible and eternal. The Tabernacle, in a sense, came to replace the necessity for a golden calf created by human beings.

The Lord gave Israel detailed instructions how this Tabernacle and its artifacts should be constructed and designed. Even though holiness of space, location and of actual structure is necessary for human service of God, it must be done solely under God's conditions. There can be many designs to build a golden calf. To build a Tabernacle to God there can only be one ordained holy design and plan. Even when building a Tabernacle according to God's plan, the Jewish people were instructed and inspired to remember that holiness of time is always greater than holiness of place and of structure.

The Sabbath, which has accompanied us from the time of creation, takes precedence over all else except for human life itself. The Tabernacle and its succeeding Temples were all temporary and subject to the events of time. Even the holy Land of Israel disappeared from Jewish history for millennia. But the Sabbath never stopped accompanying the Jews wherever they lived and under whatever the circumstances. And this is why this lesson is drummed into us in the narrative of the Torah. How pertinent this lesson is in our time and in our environment.

Shabbat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

God's Shadow
VAYAKHEL
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

In Vayakhel we meet, for the second time, the man who became the symbol of the artist in Judaism, a man by the name of Betzalel.

Then Moses said to the Israelites, "Know that the Lord has chosen Betzalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and has filled him with a Divine spirit of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge in every craft, to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver, and bronze, as well as cutting stones for setting, carving wood, engaging in every other craft. He has also given him the ability to teach others, together with Oholiav, son of Achisamach of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with the skill to do all kinds of work as engravers, designers, embroiderers in sky-blue, purple, or scarlet wool or fine linen, and as weavers. They will be able to carry out all the necessary work and design.

Ex. 35:30-35

It would be Betzalel (together with Ohaliab) who would make the Tabernacle and its furnishings and be celebrated through the centuries as the inspired craftsman who used his skills for the greater glory of God.

The aesthetic dimension of Judaism has tended to be downplayed, at least until the modern era, for obvious reasons. The Israelites worshipped the invisible God who transcended the universe. Other than the human person, God has no image. Even when He revealed Himself to the people at Sinai:

"You heard the sound of words but saw no image; there was only a Voice."

Deut. 4:12

Given the intense connection – until around the eighteenth century – between art and religion, image-making was seen as potentially idolatrous. Hence the second of the Ten Commandments:

"Do not make for yourself any carved image or likeness of in the form of any creature in heaven above or the earth beneath or in the waters below."

Ex. 20:4

This concern continued long after the biblical era. The Greeks, who achieved unrivalled excellence in the visual arts, were, in the religious sphere, still a pagan people of myth and mystery, while the Romans had a disturbing tendency to turn Caesars into gods and erect statues to them. However, the visual dimension was not wholly missing from Judaism. There are visible symbols, like tzitzit and tefillin. There is, according to the Sages, a meta-mitzvah known as hiddur mitzvah – "beautifying the command" – to try to ensure that all objects used in the performance of a command are as beautiful as possible.

The most significant intrusion of the aesthetic dimension was the in Tabernacle itself, its framework and hangings, its furniture, the cherubim above the ark, the menorah, and the vestments of the priests and the High Priest, lekavod uletifaret, "for dignity and beauty" (Ex. 28:2).

Maimonides in The Guide for the Perplexed (III:45) says that most people are influenced by aesthetic considerations, which is why the Sanctuary was designed to inspire admiration and awe; why a continual light burned there; why the priestly robes were so impressive; why there was music in the form of the Levitical choir; and why incense was burned to cover the smell of the sacrifices.

Maimonides himself, in the work known as The Eight Chapters – the introduction to his commentary on Mishnah Avot – speaks about the therapeutic power of beauty and its importance in counteracting depression:

Someone afflicted with melancholy may dispel it by listening to music and various kinds of song, by strolling in gardens, by experiencing beautiful buildings, by associating with beautiful pictures, and similar sorts of things that broaden the soul…

The Eight Chapters, chapter 5

Art, in short, is balm to the soul. In modern times, the thinker who spoke most eloquently about aesthetics was Rav Kook. In his Commentary to the Siddur, he wrote:

"Literature, painting, and sculpture give material expression to all the spiritual concepts implanted in the depths of the human soul, and as long as even one single line hidden in the depth of the soul has not been given outward expression, it is the task of art [avodat ha-umanut] to bring it out."

Olat Re-ayah, II, 3

Evidently these remarks were considered controversial, so in later editions of the Commentary the phrase "Literature, painting, and sculpture" was removed and in its place was written, "Literature, its design and tapestry."

The name Betzalel was adopted by the artist Boris Schatz for the School of Arts and Crafts he founded in Israel in 1906, and Rav Kook wrote a touching letter in support of its creation. He saw the renaissance of art in the Holy Land as a symbol of the regeneration of the Jewish People in its own land, landscape and birthplace. Judaism in the Diaspora, removed from a natural connection with its own historic environment, was inevitably cerebral and spiritual, "alienated." Only in Israel would an authentic Jewish aesthetic emerge, strengthened by and in turn strengthening Jewish spirituality.

Perhaps the most moving of all remarks Rav Kook made about art came in the course of a conversation he had with a Jewish sculptor:

"When I lived in London I used to visit the National Gallery, and my favourite pictures were those of Rembrandt. I really think that Rembrandt was a tzaddik. Do you know that when I first saw Rembrandt's works, they reminded me of the rabbinic statement about the creation of light?

We are told that when God created light [on the first day of Creation, as opposed to the natural light of the sun on the fourth day], it was so strong and pellucid that one could see from one end of the world to the other, but God was afraid that the wicked might abuse it. What did He do? He reserved that light for the righteous in the World to Come. But now and then there are great men who are blessed and privileged to see it. I think that Rembrandt was one of them, and the light in his pictures is the very light that God created on Genesis day."[1]

I have often wondered what it was about Rembrandt's paintings that so enthralled the Rav. Rembrandt lived in the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam, knew Jews and painted them, as well as painting many biblical scenes, though the closeness or otherwise of his connection with Jews has been the subject of controversy. Rav Kook's admiration for the artist had, I suspect, nothing to do with this and everything to do with the light Rembrandt saw in the faces of ordinary people, without any attempt to beautify them. His work let us see the transcendental quality of the human, the only thing in the universe on which God set His image.

Art in Hebrew – omanut – has a semantic connection with emunah, "faith" or "faithfulness." A true artist is faithful both to his materials and to the task, teaching us:

To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour.[2]

The name Betzalel means, "in the shadow of God." Art is the shadow cast by the radiance of God that suffuses all things:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil.[3]

And as Goethe said: "Where there is much light, the shadow is deep."[4] When art lets us see the wonder of creation as God's work and the human person as God's image, it becomes a powerful part of the religious life, with one proviso. The Greeks believed in the holiness of beauty. Jews believe in hadrat kodesh, the beauty of holiness: not art for art's sake but art as a disclosure of the ultimate artistry of the Creator. That is how omanut enhances emunah, how art adds wonder to faith.

Rav Avraham Kook, article in The Jewish Chronicle; London; 13 September 1935, p. 21.

From Auguries of Innocence by William Blake.

From God's Grandeur by Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Götz von Berlichingen with the Iron Hand, translated by Walter Scott, London; 1799.

questions english 5783 Around the Shabbat Table

How does Betzalel's story inspire us to use our talents for meaningful purposes?

Can you think of other times in the Tanach where someone uses their "artistic" talents to connect with their spirituality?

Rav Kook believed in the deep connection between art and spirituality. How can art help us express or understand our spiritual beliefs?

With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship of Covenant & Conversation, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel.

"I have loved the Torah of R' Chaim Schimmel ever since I first encountered it. It strives to be not just about truth on the surface but also its connection to a deeper truth beneath. Together with Anna, his remarkable wife of 60 years, they built a life dedicated to love of family, community, and Torah. An extraordinary couple who have moved me beyond measure by the example of their lives

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Israel is the Source of Blessing

Revivim by Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

It is forbidden to take charity from non-Jews because of desecration of God's name * Accepting charity from non-Jews also causes the exile to continue and delays the redemption * It must be seriously considered whether the aid budgets that the State of Israel receives from the United States are included in the prohibition of accepting charity from non-Jews

It is forbidden for a Jew to accept charity from non-Jews. The prohibition against accepting charity is because of the desecration of God's name, so that the non-Jews will not say: How despicable are the Jews, and how despicable is their religion, that they do not support their own poor, and members of other nations need to support them (Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 254:1; Shach, Taz, and Levush there). However, donations to a synagogue and public needs are permitted to be accepted, since receiving those does not express humiliating dependence. But accepting personal charity desecrates God's name, since the purpose of the Jewish nation is to be a light unto the nations, and bring goodness and blessing to all peoples. And when they need the help of non-Jews, they humiliate themselves, and fail in their role. And as our Sages said: "Since the receivers of charity from idol worshipers increased – the Jews became lowly, and the non-Jews became elevated; the Jews behind, and the non-Jews ahead" (Sotah 47b; the Gemara expresses it euphemistically).

Accepting Charity from Non-Jews Delays the Redemption

Our Sages further said (Bava Batra 10b) that when the Jews accept charity, the non-Jews become haughty over the Jews and despise them, and are strengthened to continue enslaving the Jews. Therefore, Jews who accept charity from them cause the exile to continue and delay the Redemption, as it says: "When its crown is withered, they break; women come and make fires with them. For they are a people without understanding; that is why Their Maker will show them no mercy" (Isaiah 27:11). That is, when the merits of the non-Jews who enslave Israel dry up and are used up, they will be like dry straw that is easily broken and burned, and Israel will be freed from them. But when Israel does not act wisely, and accepts charity from them, the merits of the non-Jews increase, and they continue to enslave Israel, and God does not have mercy on Israel to redeem them.

Our Sages also said (Sanhedrin 26b) that the one who transgresses and receives charity from a non-Jew is invalid for testimony, because since he committed a desecration of God out of greed for money, one must fear that he will lie in his testimony for bribery (Rashi). In addition, since he agreed to shame his honor by receiving charity from a non-Jew, there is concern he will agree to shame his honor with false testimony (Rambam, Edut 11:5).

It is Permitted to Accept Charity from Non-Jews When There is No Choice

The prohibition against accepting charity from non-Jews is on condition that the poor person can barely subsist without it, but if he cannot subsist, he is permitted to secretly accept charity from non-Jews. And when they do not give it to him in secret, and there are no Jews who can support him, he is permitted to openly accept the charity, and he is not disqualified by this from being a witness, since he did it under duress (Rambam Laws of Edut 11:5, and Laws of Gifts to the Poor 8:9; SA YD 254:1, Responsa 'Rishon LeTzion', Aruch HaShulchan).

Lenient Opinions and the Halakha

Some poskim (Jewish law arbiters) are lenient for an individual poor person to secretly accept charity, since in their opinion, the prohibition is

specifically for charity collectors (Drisha). And some permitted this when the non-Jew is not donating specifically to Jews, but donates to Jews as well as to non-Jews, in which case he does not have a great mitzvah for it (Taz), or that the prohibition to secretly accept charity is only from an official, but not from an individual (Rabbi Chaim Palagi).

However, in practice, as long as the Jewish poor can subsist in hardship, even in secret, one should not accept charity from non-Jews. Because any acceptance of charity from non-Jews involves desecration of God's name and shame, that their Jewish brethren do not support them, and non-Jews sustain them, and in doing so, we continue to be dependent on non-Jews, and the yoke of exile remains on our necks (Responsa Rishon LeTzion to SA YD 254:2; Beit Hillel,1; Aruch HaShulchan 254:1).

Accepting Charity from Righteous Non-Jews

It is permitted to accept charity from a kosher, non-Jew who observes the seven Noahide commandments. On another occasion we will clarify who is a kosher non-Jew, and explain that this also is only after the fact.

Prohibition against Accepting Charity from Officials and Countries

It is forbidden for Jews to accept charity from officials and countries, because if accepting from individuals debases the honor of Israel and prolongs the exile, how much more so when accepting from officials and countries. And only when refusing to accept the donation could endanger the Jews, due to 'shalom malchut' ("sake of peace with the kingdom") is it permitted to accept it. As related in the Talmud (Bava Batra 10b) about Ifera Hurmiz, the mother of the King of Persia, who sent four hundred dinars to Rabbi Ami to distribute to the poor. And even though Ifera Hurmiz was personally known as a righteous woman, since she was the mother of the king who enslaved the Jews, Rabbi Ami refused to accept her donation.

Ifera Hurmiz sent the four hundred dinars to Rava, and he accepted them. They told this to Rabbi Ami, and he scolded Rava, arguing how could he make it easy to support the Jewish poor with the charity of non-Jews, and not worry that by doing so, he prolongs the exile, as it says: " When its crown is withered, they break; women come and make fires with them" (Isaiah 27:11).

However, the Gemara relates that Rava accepted the donation because of shalom malchut, that if he had refused to accept, they might have borne a grudge against Israel for it. Afterwards, without Ifera Hurmiz knowing about it, he distributed the charity to poor non-Jews. And there was no deception towards Ifera Hurmiz in this, since it is known that Jews support the non-Jewish poor together with the Jewish poor (Gittin 61a; Rashi, Bava Batra 11a, "de'lo"). And this man who told Rabbi Ami about Rava accepting the charity money from Ifera Hurmiz did not finish the story by saying that Rava was careful to use it to support non-Jewish poor, and thereby violated the prohibition of gossip. Perhaps he sinned inadvertently, since Rava gave the charity in secret to non-Jewish poor, so that it would not become known to the kingdom, he thought that Rava supported Jewish poor with it.

However, in another case Ifera Hurmiz sent a large sum to Rav Yosef for charity, and explicitly requested he make with it a "great mitzvah". And since this was the case, if Rav Yosef had diverted the charity to the needs of non-Jewish poor, which is not a "great mitzvah", he would have violated the prohibition of deception (Chullin 94a), therefore Rav Yosef used her money for redeeming Jewish captives, which is the greatest charity (Bava Batra 8a; Tosafot "yativ").

The Problem with Accepting Financial Aid from the United States

Today, there is room for concern that aid budgets the State of Israel receives from the United States are included in the prohibition of accepting charity from non-Jews, since there is desecration of God's name in that the State of Israel needs assistance, and cannot cope on its own with the challenges it faces. And if an individual Jew accepting charity desecrates God's name, how much more so when the State of Israel accepts aid. In addition, as a result of receiving aid, the State of Israel is forced to accept dictates from the United States and other countries, that harm fulfilling the mitzvah of Yishuv ha'Aretz (settling the Land of Israel), and its ability to defeat its enemies, and thereby, the yoke of exile continues, to some extent, on our necks.

Indeed, some claim that since there are many Jews living in the United States, the aid coming from the United States is not considered aid from non-Jews, but from a joint fund. However, in practice, since it is a large country with clear interests, and only two percent of US citizens are Jewish, the aid cannot be defined as coming from a fund jointly owned by non-Jews and Jewish partners.

Charity versus Partnership

Nor can it be argued that since the aid is not intended for the Jewish poor, it is considered a gift, and not charity. Because a gift is for someone who is self-sufficient and does not need assistance, and giving the gift is meant to express the connection to him, and make him happy. Charity, on the other hand, is for one who struggles to get by on his own and needs assistance, and it does not matter if with the assistance, he will buy food, or furniture, or security means.

Some argue that the aid money is actually money that the United States invests in Israel so that it will safeguard its interests in the Middle East for it, and assist it in developing cutting-edge combat capabilities. Indeed, if the aid is defined as dignified cooperation, which both sides are equally interested in, it would not be considered charity. But for that, the annual aid budgets would have to be canceled, and every collaboration must be privately summarized how much each party invests, as partners do.

The Big Question

However, some argue that without the aid, Israel will find it difficult to withstand its war against its enemies, and then, because of the urgency, it is permitted to accept the aid. This claim indeed needs to be seriously considered by Israel's leaders, while at all times remembering to make great efforts to free ourselves from the need to receive charity from non-Jews. Because the fact that the State of Israel receives aid is a situation of desecration of God's name, which causes the State of Israel to be enslaved to the interests of foreign countries, and prevents it from fulfilling its aspirations independently.

Our Situation Fifty Years Ago, and Today

When the State of Israel was poor and needed help (at the end of the War of Attrition in 1971), Rabbi Mordechai Frum ztz"l, a senior rabbi of Yeshivat Merkaz HaRav, wrote that it is permitted to receive aid from foreign countries, because the State of Israel is an independent state, and the Jewish people are no longer in exile, and therefore, there is no concern that by accepting charity, they prolong the exile. In addition, it should be permitted since we are surrounded by many enemies, and involves pikuach nefesh of the Clal (saving lives of the general populace) (in the collection 'Zachor Zot Le'Yaacov').

In 1990, Rabbi Ben Zion Kriger deliberated whether there is still an urgent necessity or not (Techumin 11).

However, in the meantime, our situation has changed tremendously. In 1990, Israel's annual GDP was about $61 billion, and American aid of $3 billion was about five percent of it. In 2023, Israel's GDP was $488 billion, and annual aid was $3.8 billion, so it constituted only 0.8 percent.

Moreover, according to various economists, Israel loses money as a result of receiving aid, since receiving it is conditioned on severe restrictions on the arms industry and large deals with various countries in the security field.

Therefore, it is fitting that decision makers seriously consider the possibility of relinquishing aid funds, in order to strengthen our independence and enhance our achievements in the economic, security and social spheres, and fulfill our destiny to be a source of blessing for all the nations of the world.

Parshat Vayakhel: Sanctuary and Sabbath Revisited

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin

"And Moses assembled [vayakhel] all of the congregation of the children of Israel and said unto them: …Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day shall be for you, a day of complete rest for the Lord." (Exodus 35:1–2)

The portion of Vayakhel opens with the command to keep the Sabbath. This raises once again that fundamental question of the very strange

order of the last five portions of the book of Exodus: Sanctuary – Sabbath – golden calf – Sabbath – Sanctuary.

Thus the Torah commands us first to create a Sanctuary, to establish a center of the sacred, which is after all the purpose and ideal of a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. But the sacred can easily be profaned – as history in modern life can testify – with holy wars, Iranian Khomeini-ism and fanatical stone-throwing and book burning. Hence, in the middle of the construction of the Sanctuary (the first two portions, Teruma and Tetzaveh, are dedicated to the Sanctuary) comes the travesty of the golden calf (the portion of Ki Tisa), which serves as an eloquent warning to subsequent generations not to pervert, or idolify, the holy. It then becomes perfectly logical, or rather psychological, to now return and conclude with the positive message of the Sanctuary as the Torah does in its two concluding portions of Vayakhel and Pekudei. And the Sabbath is the beacon of light which teaches the essence of Judaism, preventing its perversion into a golden calf of idolatry.

The Sabbath is the most central pillar of our faith. It is no accident that the very first law which was given to the Israelites after the splitting of the Reed Sea – before the revelation at Sinai – was the Sabbath (Ex. 15:25; Rashi ad loc. citing Sanhedrin 56b), and the first law explained to a would-be convert (Jew by choice) is likewise the Sabbath (Yevamot 47). In all of my experience in attempting to expose Jews who have wandered far afield from their faith to the glories of their Jewish heritage, I have found that there is no more powerful introduction to returning to Judaism than the Sabbath experience.

And how does the Sabbath accomplish this? Certainly the delightful glow of the Sabbath candles, the warmth of the Kiddush wine, the familial and congenial togetherness of delectable Sabbath meals replete with angels of peace, praises to women, blessings of children, songs of holiness and words of Torah, all contribute to the creation of a special and unique day dedicated to physical relaxation, spiritual creativity and existential well-being.

But the Sabbath is more than that. It contains the essence of the Jewish ideal, the purpose for which we were chosen by God, and the mission which has the power to unite all of us in the pursuit of a common historic goal (vayakhel). The "oasis in time" evokes the three most seminal moments in Jewish history, three moments of past and future that more than any others serve to define our Jewish present. A description of these moments is to be found in each of three main Amidot (standing prayers) which are recited by observant Jews every Sabbath. On Friday evening we evoke and re-experience the creation of the world ("And God completed the heavens and the earth and all their hosts…"), on Sabbath morning we evoke and re-experience the revelation of the law at Sinai ("Moses rejoiced with the gift of his portion…the two tablets of stone he brought down in his hands"), and on Sabbath afternoon we evoke and attempt to experience the redemption ("You are One and Your Name is One" – and the prophet Zekhariah teaches that only "…. on that day [of Messianic redemption and universal peace] will God be One and will His name be One").

Creation, revelation and redemption are the three pillars which form the bedrock of the Jewish message and mission.

Creation reminds us that there is one omnipotent creator, and the entire world consists of His limited, but still exalted, creatures. The very creaturehood of all of humanity serves to unite all individuals in a bond of inescapable unity. The very fact that we share the same parent in heaven means that we are all of us siblings on earth: whites and blacks, Israelis and Palestinians. The corollary of God the Creator is God the Redeemer, God who will not allow any of His children to be enslaved by any of His other children. Hence the two versions of the Decalogue as well as the Kiddush prayer define the Sabbath as both a memorial to creation as well as a memorial to the Exodus from Egypt. And the Sabbath remains an eternal reminder that any expression of the sacred which does not include sensitivity to every human being and respect for the freedom and integrity of each of God's children can only lead to the perversion of the golden calf idolatry.

Revelation reminds us that there can be no freedom without structure, no respect for self without taking into account the needs of others, no love without law. The Torah remains our God-given blueprint for the kind of meaningful and sacred lives which lead to more perfect families and societies. In this sense, Judaism is a revolutionary concept, an idea and lifestyle which will not rest until human nature is perfected and the world is redeemed. Thus the final Sabbath Amida evokes that longed-for period when the world will be redeemed as a result of the Torah, which has the power and the purpose to perfect the universe under the kingship of God, in effect to revolutionize society.

But the tragedy of most revolutions is that the leaders themselves usually lose sight of what it was that they fought for in the first place. Indeed, all too often the beneficiaries of the revolt are guilty of greater crimes of avarice and greed and despotism than were those against whom they rebelled. This was true of the Maccabean revolt, the French revolution, and the Communist revolution in our own time. Equality and fraternity were the sanctuaries of Voltaire and Lenin; the blood baths of Robespierre and Stalin became their golden calf perversion.

The genius of Judaism lies in its ability to maintain the future ideal as an ever-present reality of our daily lives. In this way we can never forget what we are striving to accomplish, nor can we allow ourselves to become cynically disillusioned as to the possibility of our attaining it. Hence each workaday week of frustration and sadness is climaxed by a Sabbath – a taste of the World to Come, a glimpse into the longed-for period of peace and harmony. Each Sabbath reminds us of the pure taste of the Sanctuary, and prevents us from descending into the depths of golden-calf materialism and idolatry.

The story is told of a Hassidic rebbe who always rejoiced mightily upon sharing the Sabbath meals with his congregant-disciples. People who were bent over with burden and toil each week, whose brows were creased with anxiety and whose eyes were clouded with worry, would become almost miraculously transformed into tall and clear-eyed princes and princesses with their new-found freedom and faith at the advent of Shabbat. But alas, the picture would change during the "third meal" late on Shabbat afternoon. As the sun would begin to set, the songs would become somber and the mundane concerns would return to haunt the faces and backs of the Jews who were forced to return to reality. And the rebbe would look heavenwards and beseech: "How long, dear Father? Can you not redeem us now!?"

But at one particular Sabbath "third meal," the rebbe's eyes became animated with a strange glow. He banged on the table, crying out: "I have it, my beloved disciples. We shall force God's hand, wage a rebellion against Heaven. We will bring about the redemption – now. The plan is breathtakingly simple. We will not recite the havdala [the prayer of "separation" which concludes the Sabbath and begins the week]. If the Sabbath never ends, redemption never ends. If there is no havdala, we will never have to return to the weekday world."

The Hassidim were entranced. They danced and sang joyous tunes long past the appearance of three stars, long past the conclusion of the Sabbath in other congregations. But then their wives began looking for them; after all, the children had to be fed and bathed, clothes had to be washed, food had to be cooked. One by one each disciple embarrassedly returned to his family, leaving the rebbe as the lone revolutionary – until the rebbe's rebbetzin entered the scene, complaining that the week had to begin, for there was much necessary work to do.

With tears coursing down his cheeks, the defeated rebbe made havdala. A voice then came down from heaven: "Redemption shall come, and the world will experience a never-ending Sabbath. But this cannot occur until all of Israel really wants to be redeemed, really works to be redeemed, and until every Jew internalizes the message of the Sabbath and reaches out to every human being, making each day a Sabbath, creating a new world order, an eternal period of peace and love."

Shabbat Shalom

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Mar 7, 2024, 5:05 PM

A Cover-Up of Biblical Proportions
A Tribute to My Dear Student Nadiv

By: Rabbi YY Jacobson

The Truth, the Whole Truth and…

Harry gets stopped by a police car. When the police officer gets to his car, Harry says, "What's the problem officer?"

Officer: You were going at least 65 in a 50mph zone.

Harry: No sir, I was going 50.

Wife: Oh Harry, You were going 70.

Harry gives his wife a dirty look.

Officer: I will also give you a ticket for your broken brake light.

Harry: Broken brake light? I didn't know about a broken brake light!

Wife: Oh Harry, you've known about that brake light for months.

Harry gives his wife a really dirty look.

Officer: I am also going to book you for not wearing your seat belt.

Harry: Oh, I just took it off when you were walking up to the car.

Wife: Oh Harry, you never wear your seat belt.

Harry turns to his wife and yells, "Shut your mouth!"

The officer turns to the woman and says, "Madam, does your husband talk to you this way all the time?"

Wife: "No, only when he's drunk…"

Smooth or Problematic?

In the Torah, the building of the Mishkan (Tabernacle)—culminated in the Torah portion of this and next week Vayakhel & Pekudei—is presented as a seamless flow of command, collection, and finally, construction. G-d commands Moses, Moses presents the people with the plans, the people respond over-enthusiastically, donating more than necessary (for the first and last time in Jewish history…), and all Moses has to do is tell them when to stop. The construction goes ahead according to plan, and in no time at all—six months in total (compare that with construction nowadays)—the Mishkan is up and ready to function.

However, the student of Midrash—the Talmudic and Midrashic commentary to the Torah, transmitted orally throughout the generations till transcribed—makes aware of the "politics" behind the events. It was anything but smooth. The Midrash[1] tells us, shockingly, that there were those who suspected Moses of pocketing funds and they insolently demanded that Moses make an accounting for every ounce of every item. Moses conceded to their demands and humbly presented a detailed account of every "dollar" collected for the grandiose "building campaign."

The Midrash[2] also tells us that Moses actually forgot what he did with some of the silver, and the rumors began circulating… The Rabbi is driving a new BMW… Who paid for his cruise to the Bahamas… How did he manage to buy the two-million-dollar home for his daughter? How can he afford such a grandiose wedding?... Did you see his new kitchen?… Till Moses reminded himself that he used them for hooks on the pillars in the Tabernacle, and the Jews calmed down.

There was another obstacle in the process. There were times—the Midrash tells us—when Moses struggled with understanding G-d's directions, and G-d had to show him a detailed vision of what He wanted.[3] Once, during the formation of the Menorah, the sages relate, that too did not work. Moses completely gave up and G-d had to make the menorah Himself.

Then the Sanctuary was completed much earlier than expected, and it had to remain idle for three months.[4]

When the time came for the actual erection of the Mishkan, they again ran into a glitch: No one could succeed in lifting the walls. Even collectively, it was impossible. Imagine the anti-climax, the fear that all was in vain. At the end, Moses miraculously lifted the beams alone.

Yet here is the astounding part in all of this:

All of these parts of the story are completely ignored in the biblical text itself! There are a few tantalizing hints, but overall, the story presented in the Torah is one of a holistic, pure, and ideal experience. No glitches, no politics, no accusations, no problems; a perfectly smooth ride.

One wonders how do we reconcile the biblical and oral traditions of the narrative? If the Midrashic traditions are presenting what happened, why are these details ignored in the biblical text? Is the Torah trying to brush over the disturbing truths? Is the Torah teaching us to repress uncomfortable facts; to ignore the real story, to make believe everything is "perfect" when in fact it's far from it? And if so, why did the Rabbis in the Midrash "ruin the party" and "spill the beans"?

Creation Cover-Ups

This is not the only incident with this birthmark. We find this tendency at least twice more.

The opening of Genesis records eloquently but concisely the facts of creation and it sounds like pretty smooth sailing. "In the beginning, G-d created heaven and earth…" Over the next six days, a universe is formed. The Talmud and the Midrash, however, tell us that even G-d ran into some seemingly unexpected delays and had to make some serious alterations. Each of the six days presented another challenge.

For starters, the Midrash relates[5] that the attribute of Truth opposed creation, and G-d had to cast Truth away in order to create our universe. The sages also relate that G-d attempted to create the world with the quality of Judgment and was forced to retract to Mercy when He saw that the world could not handle it.[6]

Then: He created light on the first day, hoping it would serve all of creation, but it was too great and luminescent and He deemed it useless (and had to stow it away as a reward for only the truly meritorious.)[7]

Next: On the second day, he constructed heaven and separated higher waters from lower waters. According to the Midrash, the lower waters "revolted" and are still weeping about their rejection.[8]

Next: On the third day, G-d designed trees with edible branches, but the trees disobeyed and produced only edible fruit.[9]

Next: On the fourth day, the sun and the moon were created to be equals, the moon complained that "two kings cannot serve with one crown," and hence the moon was diminished.[10]

Next: On Thursday, G-d created the fish, including the Leviathan. Then, realizing that if the Leviathan would procreate, it would spell the end of the planet, He killed the partner of the Leviathan.[11]

Next: On Friday, when He wished to create man, the angels in heaven complained it would be a fatal mistake.[12] Indeed, shortly after Adam and Eve were created they disobeyed G-d's commandment to refrain from eating the Tree of knowledge.

Can you see a pattern? Not a single day passed without some glitch or crisis. Yet, none of these "glitches" or "issues" are recorded explicitly in the actual biblical text. There it is as smooth a process as can be. How can we make sense of this shocking discrepancy?

Even more perplexing is the fact that following the six days of creation, the Torah sums it all up with these stunning words:

וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי.

And G-d saw all that He made and it was very good.

Very good? Really? Each day brought another headache, another meltdown, and another crisis. What makes it so good?

The Second Cover Up

The Tanach describes glowingly and in minute detail the materials and construction and dedication of the First Temple built in Jerusalem without the hint of a glitch. Yet the Midrash adds the "problematic" information: During construction, they hit an underground spring that threatened to flood the entire world;[13] then, at what was to be the climactic finale, the entering of the Ark to the Holy-of-Holies, the gates refused to open against all efforts.[14]

According to the Midrash,[15] the entire dedication of the First Holy Temple was heavily delayed because the night before King Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh and he slept in! It was his mother, Bat Sheba, who had to enter his bedroom, wake him up, and chastise him for oversleeping on the day the Temple was to be dedicated.

We are left with a striking enigma: The biblical text ignores the disturbing details. Then the rabbis come and share with us "the rest of the story." Why?

What Is Your Story?

The answer is a crucial and profound lesson in life. It captures a basic perspective of Judaism. The Torah is not trying to hide anything (a general pattern in Torah is that it tolerates no cover-ups, for anybody), and that is why the Sages felt comfortable exposing all of the details. Rather, the Torah is telling us that when one develops a proper

perspective of his or her life, the problems do not always deserve to be mentioned. Not because they don't exist, but because they don't define the story of our lives, and therefore we can decide not to make them part of the narrative.

In each of these three series of events—creation of the universe; construction of the Sanctuary and the Jerusalem Temple—something awesomely cataclysmic and earth-shattering is occurring. The infinite fuses with the finite; the impossible becomes possible, Man meets G-d and G-d meets Man. Out of cosmological emptiness and infinite Divinity, creation develops; something-ness is made out of nothingness. G-d "squeezes" his omnipotence and omnipresence into a Mishkan (sanctuary) of a few square cubits, into a building of stone, into the heart of mortal man.

This, then, is THE story; this is what happened. The bumps on the road, true as they may be, do not constitute the story, not because they didn't happen, but because they are not what really happened; they should not, they cannot, obscure or even dampen the majestic power and beauty of the events.

The Torah is teaching us how to live. Life is tough. The really important things are even tougher. Raising and support a family requires strength and courage. Building a good marriage is often challenging and difficult. To develop a relationship with G-d may be frustrating and lonely. Many things will not work out as we hoped they would. We face adversity, grief, and loss. There are inevitably times of pain and heartbreak. There are quarrels and squabbles, moments of anger and setbacks. We must confront depression, illness, mental challenges, financial stress, and spiritual confusion.

But we have the choice not to make all of these THE story of our lives. Sure, raising children is challenging, but when you gaze into the loving and trusting eyes of your child—that is THE miracle of existence, not the challenges leading toward that moment. When you connect to your spouse in a truly meaningful way, in a moment of real camaraderie and respect—that is the miracle of love playing itself out in your life. A bad day at work, hours of frustration in running your business, all melt away before the power of something so much greater, so much more real—your growth as a human being and your ability to help others with your money and your experience.

We must look at our lives and ask what is the real story happening here? Is my life a story of hardship and struggle, or am I part of something incredible: I am building a home for G-d; I am constructing a fragment of heaven on planet earth; I am building a Jewish family, a loving marriage; I am helping people; I have the privilege of studying Torah, of spreading Torah, of doing a mitzvah, of inspiring others to light up the world. This is my story; this is my life. The other parts are of course also true and deserve to be acknowledged as such, much as the Midrash acknowledges the other side of the story with creation, the Mishkan and the Temple. I must deal with every challenge and I must attempt to repair it, but I cannot allow it to become THE STORY.

Here we have the origin, thousands of years ago, of what is known today as Narrative Therapy. Each of us has the choice to define and reframe the story of our lives.

When I wake up in the morning, I know that I have fifty things to do today, most of them are not fun; some are difficult and frustrating. But that is not THE story. The real story is captured in the words a Jew says the moment he or she opens his eyes: "Modeh ani lefanecha… shehechezarta bi nishmasi…" I am alive; G-d gave me back my soul for another day. Gevald! How awesome is that? I can now talk to G-d face to face, learn Torah, pray, share my heart and love with another human being, give charity, and become an ambassador for love, light and hope. I can embrace an aching soul, and touch a bleeding heart. Now that's a life!

Yes, I got to pay my bills, I have to deal with headaches, I need to catch the bank, I have to fix my garage, I need to call my son's principal, I have to pick up the cleaners, I need to go to the dentist, and I need to pay back the loan, and I was just called to do Jury Duty. But do not let that become the story of your life. Stay focused on the real story – that at every moment you can construct a home for G-d in your corner of the world and bring redemption one step closer.[16]

My Dear Student

At this time of the year, I remember a dear student who passed on on the 18th of Adar, nine years ago. Nadiv Kehaty was only 30 years old when he died. A loving husband, and the father of four young children, his sudden passing left a family and a community in shock.

Nadiv's very presence made you feel how much possibility life contained if it was filled with laughter, love, and innocence. For Nadiv, all of life consisted of one story: An opportunity to laugh and make others laugh.

A memory: I was a teacher, sitting at my desk in the lecture hall, presenting a Talmud class to 25 students. I was focused, immersed, and serious. But then, suddenly, one student leaped into the classroom, jumped over the tables, and after listening to a few sentences, exclaimed with his genuine giggle and pure selflessness: "Rabbi, you are awesome; I love you!"

This was Nadiv on a regular day. I'd melt away. It was clear that his soul was sent to this world to teach us how to love and laugh.

I love you too, Nadiv. _____

[1] Shemos Rabbah 51:6 [2] Ibid. [3] Shemos Rabbah 52:4 [4] Shemos Rabbah 52:2 [5] Bereishis Rabbah 8:5 [6] Bereishis Rabbah 12:15. Rashi Genesis 1:1 [7] Talmud Chagigah 12a [8] Tikunei Zohar Tikun 5 (19b). [9] Rashi Genesis 1:12 [10] Talmud Chulin 60b [11] Rashi Genesis 1:21 [12] Midrash Tehilim 8:2 [13] Talmud Sukkah 53a [14] Talmud Shabbos 30a [15] Bamidbar Rabbah 10:4 [16] My thanks to Rabbi Avraham David Shlomo for his help in preparing this essay.

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parsha Insights

For the week ending 9 March 2024 / 29 Adar Alef 5784

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Parshat Vayakhel

The "New Israel"

"And he made the breast-plate as a craftsman, like he made the ephod – from gold, turquoise, purple and crimson wool..." (39:8)

At the beginning of the Scroll of Esther, Achashverosh throws a party to end all parties. The party of the millennium. He was celebrating his unassailable grip on the throne of the Persian Empire. At this party, he brought out the vessels of the Holy Temple, which the Babylonians had plundered and caroused with. More than this: Achavshverosh's party attire consisted of the vestments of the High Priest. Why did he do this? Was it some elaborate spoof? Was he poking fun at the Jewish People and their prophecies of the demise of his all- mighty kingdom? Or was there something more sinister behind this charade?

"And the land was formless and empty and darkness on the face of the deep."(Genesis 1:2)

These words form part of the opening words of the Torah. They hint to four mighty empires who will subjugate the Jewish People. The first, Babylon, will snatch the crown of Empire from the Jewish People, and then the Persian, Greece and Roman empires will successively snatch world domination one from the other. Eventually, the last of those empires, Rome and its cultural heirs, will return the kingship to the Jewish People. When that happens, "The lost ones will come from the land of Ashur…" (Isaiah 27:13) and the final exile will end. The name Ashur is related to the Hebrew word "ishur." An ishur is a certification. Each nation who takes the kingship from the Jewish People seeks to "certify" itself as being the true and final recipient of the crown of the world. But they can only do this by proclaiming themselves the true heirs. They claim to be the "New Israel." They claim that the testament of faith of the Jewish People is old; that they have a new one. That, in essence, was what Achashverosh was attempting to do at his millennial party. He was certifying himself as the New Israel. His party was a grotesque replication of the Temple service. The vessels of the Temple were there and being used. He was dressed as the Kohen Gadol, the High Priest. He even went so far as to name his ministers after the offerings of the Holy Temple. He was trying to utilize those forces of

holiness for his own means, to set his seal on world domination using the higher spiritual forces. This was no charade.

And we all know how his plan backfired and all turned upside-down, with the Jewish People surviving and thriving, as is beautifully recorded in the Scroll of Esther. May we always merit the same help from Heaven, especially in light of the current security situation in Israel and across the globe.

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Office of the Chief Rabbi
The true meaning of Shalom: Shabbat for Israel
7 March 2024

I'm standing here at the entrance to Kibbutz Be'eri in southern Israel, right on the border with Gaza. A place where so many terrorist atrocities took place on the 7th of October. And from here I'd like to pose the following question to you. Why is it that in Hebrew, we have the same word for 'hello' and 'goodbye'? 'Shalom' means hello, 'Shalom' means goodbye. And of course, Shalom also means peace.

Well, I'll tell you. The reason is that Shalom is also one of the names of Hashem. So therefore, when you greet a person, you say, 'Shalom', may Hashem's peace be with you. And when you depart from a person, again you say, 'Shalom'. Now, that we are leaving, may Hashem's peace be with you. *Peace is right at the heart of everything we yearn for and everything we pray for.* And that is my prayer, standing here in a place of such awful destruction. And as we enter into Shabbat for Israel, together with so many thousands of people, our prayer is, may this indeed be a 'Shabbat Shalom'. *A Shabbat through which ultimately our prayers will be heard and peace will reign. Shabbat shalom. Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.*

Drasha Parshas Vayakhel - Focal Points
Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

The commands for the building of the Mishkan were fully meted. The job was winding down, and this week in Parshas Vayakhel Moshe instructs the nation with the final directives of the monumental task. First, however, he has a message. The portion begins telling us that Moshe gathered the nation and told them that "six days you shall work and the seventh day shall be holy – you shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day" (Exodus 35:1-2). Only then does he continue with the directives that pertain to the erection of the Mishkan.

The strange juxtaposition of the laws of Shabbos in the midst of all the instructions of building a sanctuary is cause for concern. That is why our sages explain that Moshe was informing the Jewish people that despite its importance building a Mishkan does not pre-empt the Sabbath. All work must cease on Shabbos regardless of how it may impact the progress of the Mishkan.

Yet what must be analyzed are the seemingly disconnected verses. Why didn't the Torah tell us of Shabbos' power in a straightforward way, by openly directing the nation "thou shall not construct the Mishkan on the Shabbos." Why juxtapose Shabbos as a stand-alone unit, leaving us to infer its overriding power through scriptural juxtaposition? In fact the words "you shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath" make the command seem totally irrelevant to Mishkan per se and applicable to each and every individual homemaker. If so, the command truly seems out of place. It seems that regardless of its relation to the laws of construction, the theme of Shabbos plays a greater role vis-a-vis the Mishkan. What is it?

A famous Magid was asked to lecture in a prosperous and modern city. Before he was to speak he was told to consult with the synagogue's president. "This is a very distinguished community," he was told "and we must be careful. We surely would not want to offend anyone with, even the slightest rebuke." The Magid met the president who was sitting in a richly upholstered leather armchair behind a mahogany desk. As the Magid entered, the man rested his lit cigar on the corner of a brass ashtray.

"Rabbi," asked the president, "you have a reputation as a remarkable speaker. One who inspires crowds and makes – might I say – waves. Pray tell me," he continued "what are you intending to speak about in our town?"

The Magid promptly replied, "I intend to talk about Shabbat observance."

The president's face turned crimson. "Oh no dear rabbi, please. In this town, such talk will fall on deaf ears. We all struggle to make a living and Shabbos is just not in the cards. I implore you. Talk about something else."

The rabbi pondered. "Perhaps I should talk about kashrut." "Kashrut? Please," begged the president, "don't waste your time. There hasn't been a kosher butcher in this town for years."

"How about tzedaka?" offered the Magid. "Charity? Give us a break. Do you know how many shnorrers visit this town each week. We are sick of hearing about charity!"

Meekly the Magid made another suggestion. "Tefillah? (prayer)"

"Please. In a city of 1,000 Jewish families, we hardly get a weekday minyan. The synagogue is never filled except on the High Holy Days. No one would be interested."

Finally the Magid became frustrated. "If I can't talk about Shabbos, and I can't talk about tzedaka, and I can not discuss kashrut, what do you want me to talk about?" The president looked amazed. "Why, rabbi" exclaimed the president. "That's easy! Talk about Judaism!"

By placing the concept of Shabbos in general, and one of its detailed laws in particular, smack in the middle of the architectural directives of a most glorious edifice, the Torah was telling us that although we may build beautiful palaces in which to serve the Almighty, however, if we forget the tenets of our faith, those great structures are meaningless. Shabbos was mentioned as a separate unit because its relevance is even greater than its ability to halt construction. A Jew must remember that without Shabbos, without kashrut, without tefillah, a beautiful sanctuary is no more enduring than a castle in the air.

Dedicated in honor of the naming of Shantal Ariana Kash, daughter of Donna and Peter Kash

Good Shabbos!

Rabbi M. Kamenetzky is the Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore.

Rav Frand - Parshas Vayakhel
The Rich Get Richer and the Wise Get Wiser

The following thought on Parshas Vayakhel is from the sefer Nachalas Eliezer, written by Rav Eliezer Cohen, who was a mashgiach in the Gateshead Yeshiva in England.

The pasuk says, "And He filled him with the spirit of Elokim, with wisdom, with understanding, and with knowledge and with every craft." (Shemos 35:31) The Medrash, according to the interpretation of the Etz Yosef, takes note of the verb va'y'MALEH, which means "and he filled him up." Filling something up implies that there is already something there prior to filling it up to full capacity. So, if the pasuk says that Hashem filled up Bezalel with wisdom, it means that Bezalel was already wise.

Hashem gives wisdom to people who are already chachomim (wise people). This is reminiscent of a pasuk in Parshas Ki Sisa: "And in the heart of everyone wise of heart, I gave wisdom" (Shemos 31:6). Superficially we might ask, if a person is already a chacham-lev (wise of heart), why does he need to be given wisdom? The answer is that Hashem only gives wisdom to people who are already chachomim.

The Medrash comments that a certain Roman matron asked Rav Yosi ben Chalafta about the interpretation of a certain pasuk in Doniel (2:21): "…He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who know how to reason." The matron protested: What is this business of G-d giving wisdom to the wise? It should say that He gives wisdom to the fools! They are the ones who really need wisdom!

Rav Yosi ben Chalafta answered her: My daughter, if you came across two individuals who wished to borrow money from you – a rich man and a poor man – to whom would you rather lend the money? She

responded, "Obviously, I would lend my money to the person who already has money, so that if he loses the money I lent him, he still has other money with which to pay me back. If I lend money to a poor man and he loses it, from where will he have money to pay me back?"

Rav Yosi bar Chalafta told the matron, "Let your ears listen to that which your mouth has spoken! So too it is with wisdom. If G-d would give wisdom to the fools, they would waste it in the taverns and pool houses (i.e. indulging in foolish pleasures). Therefore, He gives wisdom to the wise, who take it and sit in the synagogues and houses of study and occupy themselves with His commandments."

However, we can ask a big question on this Medrash. Isn't the Medrash comparing apples to oranges? It is true that someone would rather LEND money to a wealthy person than to a poor person. But if someone is GIVING AWAY money, then clearly, it is preferable to give the money to a poor person, who does not possess any money, rather than to a rich person, who already possesses plenty of money. Lending money is a business deal, so you prefer to give it to a person who can pay it back. But that is not what the pasuk in Doniel is discussing. The pasuk is talking about GIVING wisdom to the wise. If we are talking about GIVING wisdom, Hashem should in fact GIVE it to the one who has no wisdom. What then is the parable of the Midrash?

The Nachalas Eliezer explains that we are missing the point here. When Hashem "Gives wisdom to the wise," it is also not really a GIFT, but rather it is a LOAN. A person with true wisdom understands that the wisdom he possesses is not really his wisdom, but rather, it is on loan. ("Talent on loan from G-d", so to speak.) When a person recognizes that the talent he has been given is "only on loan," he realizes that he needs to guard it and do the right things with it. "It's not mine. It is on lease."

When someone is driving a leased car, he knows that he cannot bang it up. He is going to need to pay for the damage. He needs to return it someday. That is what the Medrash is saying. When Hashem gives us wisdom, money or anything – He is not GIVING! He is only LENDING. When you lend something precious, you lend it to a person whom you know will not abuse it or misuse it.

Therefore, chachomim are the appropriate recipients of wisdom. They realize that wisdom is a loan, which will someday be returned, and that they must use it appropriately while it is in their possession. Fools would think that the wisdom they were given is "theirs," to do with whatever they wish. They would feel that they own it, and therefore they would abuse it.

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Shema Yisrael Torah Network
Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Vayakhel
פרשת ויקהל תשפ"ד

ששת ימים תעשה מלאכה וביום השביעי יהיה לכם קדש

On six days work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you. (35:2)

Rashi teaches that, in the text, the *mitzvah* of *shemiras Shabbos* precedes the building of the *Mishkan* to warn us that *shemiras Shabbos* overrides the building of the *Mishkan*. Interestingly, in *Parashas Ki Sisa* (preceding the creation of the molten Gold Calf), the Torah introduces the *mitzvah* of building the *Mishkan* prior to mentioning the injunction concerning *Shabbos*. The *Chidushei HaRim* explains that, prior to the sin of the Golden Calf, the six weekday/workdays prepared for *Shabbos Kodesh.* (*Shabbos* was the focal point of the week, with each day bringing one closer to the ultimate goal of *Shabbos Kodesh*.) After the *cheit ha'eigel*, the nation needed their *Shabbos* observance to elevate them to the point that they be worthy of building the *Mishkan*.

We understand from the above that the nation's participation in the Golden Calf debacle harmed them spiritually. They plummeted from the unprecedented level of *kedushah* they achieved when they received the Torah. A number of spiritual deficiencies seemed to "occur" following their sin. They lost the crowns of *Naase v'nishma*: "We will listen, and we will do" (placed on them by Heavenly Angels). Moshe *Rabbeinu* appeared to have some difficulty grasping the idea of the *machatzis ha'shekel*, half shekel, every Jew was to donate. *Horav Zev Weinberger, zl,* explains that, following their sin, Moshe did not see how they could have the *nedivus halev*, heartfelt donations, that were necessary for the building of the *Mishkan*. Hashem showed Moshe a fiery coin (representing the half-*shekel*). This hinted to Moshe that actually the intrinsic sanctity of the Jew did not become tarnished. The "other half" *shekel* in Heaven corresponded to the one on earth. If the people make their attempt, Hashem will connect the coins. Clearly, a sad change occurred in the nation's spiritual integrity.

Rav Weinberger adds that much more was expected of the nation prior to their sin. Indeed, we find that the *Nesiim*, Princes, were censured (a *yud* was removed from their name), because they were "late" in donating to the *Mishkan*. Veritably, they acted *l'shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven, when they declared, "Let the nation donate, and we will guarantee the balance." They did not expect the extraordinary outpouring of contributions from the people. Thus, they were left with no reason to give. At least they tried; they meant well. Why hold it against them? The commentators explain that at the very root of their offer was a minute tinge of indolence, a sort of laziness unbecoming men of their stature. *Rav* Weinberg posits that this tinge of indolence was evidenced only relative to the nation's spiritual standing prior to the sin of the Golden Calf. It would not have been noticed after the nation's drop in spiritual status.

Alacrity to perform a *mitzvah* is measured on a variant barometer. In other words, the greater one is with regard to his spiritual performance, the greater will be his alacrity to perform *mitzvos* and good deeds. He relates that *Horav Menachem Porush, zl,* was called by the *Brisker Rav, zl,* on *erev Shabbos* to write a letter of support for a Jew in need [*Rav* Porush was a member of the Knesset and a powerful figure in *Eretz Yisrael*]. The *Rav* dictated the letter, and *Rav* Porush signed it. The *Rav* instructed *Rav* Porush to go to the post office immediately to mail it. "Why?" he asked, "No mail is delivered on *Shabbos*. I can mail it tomorrow night." *The Brisker Rav's* response should rouse us from a spiritual slumber. "Who knows if we will be alive *Motzoei Shabbos*?" When one performs a *chesed*, act of kindness, for a Jew, he has no room for any kind of indolence.

ראו קרא ד' בשם בצלאל בן אורי בן חור

See, Hashem has called by name Betzalel, son of Uri, son of Chur. (35:30)

The Torah mentions Chur twice (other than the three places that he is listed as Betzalel's grandfather). Who was Chur, and how important was he as a member of *Klal Yisrael's* spiritual leadership? The first time that Chur is mentioned concerns the war against Amalek. This despicable nation ignored *Klal Yisrael's* special status as Hashem's chosen people and attacked them shortly after their liberation from Egyptian slavery. Moshe *Rabbeinu* sent Yehoshua to lead the Jewish men in battle against Amalek. Our leader stood and prayed with his hands spread out. As long as Moshe's hands remained straight (out), Yehoshua prevailed. When they began to descend, Aharon *HaKohen* and Chur brought a large rock for Moshe to sit upon, while they held his hands up. We see from here, observes *Horav Aryeh Leib Heyman, zl,* that Chur was a member of the nation's spiritual elite – on a level similar to his uncle, Aharon *HaKohen*. Bearing this in mind, *Rav* Heyman posits that the egregious nature of the sin of the Golden Calf notwithstanding – it was not the worse sin committed that day. It was the brutal murder of Chur, who was one of the *gedolei hador*, for which they have remained unforgiven.

We should take into consideration that Chur was not only saintly and virtuous in his own right, he was also the son of Miriam *HaNeviah* and Calev ben Yefuneh. Miriam endangered her life to save the Jewish infants whom Pharaoh wanted murdered. Only a miserable few, the lowest of the low, had the audacity and moral repugnance to blatantly murder Chur, only because he had the "temerity" to stand up for Hashem. It was, however, still a violent act of murder.

Interestingly, the Torah glosses over Chur's murder, making no mention of it. One would think that such a heinous incursion which precipitated an unforgiving Heavenly response would somehow be alluded to in the Torah's narrative. It is not – why? *Rav* Heyman suggests that this act

was excluded in order to protect the esteem of the Jewish people. Such an unspeakable murder committed by a few unwelcome guests (*erev rav,* mixed multitude) casts a pall of shame over the entire nation. Best not to write about it. Indeed, *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh* (commentary to 32:1) writes: "Chur's murder is not mentioned in the Torah, so that a record of this shameful act should not remain in the Torah for posterity, for Hashem preserves the honor of His people."

I write this entire preface to underscore the extraordinary *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, the consummate ability to vanquish whatever feelings – including demand for revenge – that may have entered Betzalel's mind, knowing that the *Mishkan* he would create would atone in part for his grandfather's murder. Chur was following a family tradition of standing up for what is right, regardless of the possible ramifications of taking such a position. His mother, Miriam, stood up and pointed out to her father, Amram, that he was wrong when he divorced her mother, Yocheved, in order to halt the propagation of Jewish children. When the *gadol hador* acts, the rest of the men followed. Miriam was a young girl (six-years-old); yet, she told her father that his decree was (in a way) worse than Pharaoh's. The Egyptian sought to rid the country of Jewish males (who could become the potential Jewish leader). By encouraging them to divorce their wives, Amram's actions were affecting both males and females. In his attempt to support Moshe, Chur's father, Calev ben Yefuneh, stood up to the *meraglim*, spies, exposing their lies. With such parents, it is no wonder that Chur became the person he was. Betzalel followed in his noble heritage, building the *Mishkan* with complete equanimity. This, perhaps, is what gives/adds to the *Mishkan's* power to facilitate atonement.

Mesiras nefesh for *mitzvos*, self-sacrifice in order to maintain or elevate one's spiritual standing, is part of the Jewish DNA. One does not have to be an observant Jew to give up his life for Judaism and the Jewish People. To achieve the level of self-sacrifice, to be able to carry out *mitzvos*, is in a league all of its own. It takes a special person, with unique values and a penetrating understanding of *mitzvos*, to live on such a spiritual plane. The following two stories are connected by the answer to the question that every reader will raise. The answer will illuminate the underlying dominating factor for *mesiras nefesh*. These stories were related by *Horav Bentzion Felman, zl*.

Horav Avraham, zl, brother of the *Gaon, zl, m'Vilna*, was an outstanding *talmid chacham* and *yarei Shomayim*, G-d-fearing Torah scholar (author of *Maalos HaTorah*). He lived some distance from Vilna, which was home to the *Gaon*. The *Gaon* asked his brother to join him in Vilna, so that they could study together. [We have no idea the meaning of studying *b'chavrusa* with the *Gaon*.] *Rav* Avraham replied that, indeed, he would love to join him. His wife, however, was not willing to move. He gave the following reason for her deterrence.

Esrogim were normally very hard to obtain. When a town was able to obtain a few, the price was usually very high. One year, due to an early frost, the *esrogim* were even less available than usual, and the prices were beyond the ability of most people's wallets. The community in which *Rav* Avraham lived had an option of purchasing one beautiful *esrog*. The problem was: the price was through the roof. No one could possibly afford it. *Rav* Avraham's wife had an idea. She said, "We live in a nice house which is presently too big for us. We could sell the house and move into the type of hut used by so many of our community's poor, and the profit would be used for the *esrog*." She was not suggesting or asking; she was stating what, in her mind, was a fait accompli. They sold the house, fulfilled the *mitzvah* of *esrog* and moved into a small ramshackle hut. She explained that, when she passed by their old house every day, she experienced extraordinary pleasure and satisfaction from the realization that she had given all this up for the sake of a *mitzvah*. An incredible story, an awesome lesson in *mesiras nefesh*, but what about the *z'chus*, unimaginable merit, of studying with the *Gaon*? Does her pleasure override this unparalleled experience?

Next story. The *Shaagas Aryeh* attempted to conceal his brilliance and erudition. He would dress in the simple, tattered clothes of a beggar and sleep on the bench of a *shul*, as he went from city to city on a self-imposed exile. This went on for a number of years, as he worked on elevating himself spiritually be rejecting all forms of worldly pleasure. For him, life consisted of Torah and *tefillah*. Thus, the *shul* was his home. When he arrived in Vilna, he was able to beguile everyone but the *Gaon*, who was immediately able to see through his camouflage. He invited him to discuss some *Talmudic* concepts. After a few hours, it was evident that the *Shaagas Aryeh* was an outstanding scholar, sufficient to impress even the *Gaon*. The *Gaon* invited him to continue their Torah discussion at his *Shabbos* table.

Surprisingly, the *Shaagas Aryeh* politely declined. He said, "Since I left my wife alone when I began my exile, I accepted upon myself not to sit at a table with another woman." (Apparently, the *Gaon's Rebbetzin* would be seated with them. Understandably, his conversation would be only with the *Gaon*, but still…) The *Gaon* understood, but countered that he would speak with his wife. The *Rebbetzin*, however, rejected the opportunity to eat alone in the kitchen. She said, "I spend one meal with you a week. I do not see you the entire week, as you are deep in study in your room. I am not willing to be *mevater*, forgo, this pleasure." [We must understand that the *Gaon's* wife was no ordinary woman. When she died, the *Gaon* had etched on her *matzeivah*, monument: *Lo hinichah acharah k'mosah*, "She left no other (woman) like her." In other words, in the eyes of the *Gaon*, she was the greatest woman of her generation. Yet, she felt that the pleasure she derived from sitting with her husband at the meal once a week superseded his learning with the *Shaagas Aryeh*.] How are we to understand her actions?

Two stories – two questions – one answer.

Rav Felman explains that the *oneg* and *nachas ruach*, pleasure and satisfaction that the *Gaon's* sister-in-law experienced from seeing the house that she had given up for a *mitzvah*, and the pleasure the *Gaon's Rebbetzin* had from sitting with him and certainly speaking words of Torah and *mussar* were otherworldly. In other words: This was her *Olam Habba*, World to Come. When they experienced the *mesiras nefesh* for a *mitzvah*, they were in *Gan Eden*!

ויאמר משה אל בני ישראל ראו קרא ד' בשם בצלאל בן אורי... וימלא אותו רוח אלקים בחכמה בתבונה ובדעת... ולחשוב מחשבות... ולהורות נתן בלבו

Moshe said to *Bnei Yisrael*, "See, Hashem has proclaimed by name, Betzalel son of Uri… He filled him with G-dly spirit, with wisdom, insight and knowledge… To weave designs… He gave him the ability to teach." (35:30,31,32,33,34)

Betzalel was filled with a G-dly spirit, with various forms of wisdom and understanding. The Torah goes on to state *v'lachashov machashavos*, which is translated as the ability to put his extraordinary wisdom to practical use. Furthermore, he was granted the ability to teach. Is it not all part of the "wisdom package"? If one is Heavenly endowed with uncanny wisdom and ability, what is added by his ability to weave designs and mentor others? *Targum Onkelos* defines *v'lachashov machshavos* as *u'lalfa u'manin*, to train others in how to carry out the tasks of working with the gold and silver. *U'lehoros nasan* is the ability to convey his wisdom and understanding in such a manner that others can also achieve his level of perception. Thus, they are able to carry on the transmission from generation to generation.

Horav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro, zl (*Rosh Yeshivas Be'er Yaakov*), explains that wisdom to be carried forth requires a special merit. Betzalel was blessed not only with the wisdom, but also, the ability to disseminate and teach others. Being a scholar is valuable, but the ability to teach and share with others is equally important. Effective teaching and mentoring help to pass on expertise and contribute to the growth of others. *L'horos nasan* affords one to become a *moseir HaTorah*, a "giver" of Torah to others.

A *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, who accumulates a wealth of knowledge through his own efforts is a very fortunate individual. If, however, he is unable to disseminate and teach it to others, this knowledge remains limited in its impact. Knowledge should not stay confined to one person. Teaching also creates a legacy, whereby students carry on the lifework of their *Rebbe* – thus keeping his memory alive and his Torah lessons perpetuated.

Alas, not every scholar is equipped with the capacity to teach. It is a skill which requires the ability to communicate effectively what is easily understandable to him, but may pose difficulties for others. Teaching requires patience and empathy, which are not easy to come by when a scholar is brilliant and may unfortunately be unable to empathize with a student who is not as exceptional. Some scholars have unique learning styles which are tailor-made for their abilities, but not geared to everyone else. There are those who are simply not interested, for fear it will detract from the time they have allotted for their own development. In other words, for some it works and, for others, it does not. Hopefully, those who, for whatever reason, are unable to perform the task effectively will allow those who could teach to do so.

From a positive perspective are those scholars who are mentors par-excellence, who – with acumen, charisma, love and patience – transmit their knowledge in such a manner that the students return to one class and to another until they become learned and transform their lives. Indeed, the greater the scholar, the more innovative are his efforts to encourage his students to incorporate his lessons into their lives.

The *gadol* responsible for being *machzir atarah l'yoshnah*, returning the crown of Torah to *Sephardic* Jewry, was none other than *Horav Ovadiah Yosef, zl.* A *talmid chacham* without peer, who was fluent in all areas of *halachah*, he did not settle to say *shiurim*, deliver lectures, only to the top echelon of the *yeshivah* world. He sought out students of all backgrounds and levels of erudition. He would provide gimmicks in order to convince his students to attend. These were simple laborers, who, after a hard day's labor, came to a two-and-one-half-hour *shiur*. How did he achieve this? He came up with an ingenious strategy. In addition to the humor and stories that accompanied the *shiurim*, he related a serial story of which he would tell one part daily. In order for them to hear the entire story, they had to attend the *shiur* daily. The fact that his students were, for the most part, not versed in Jewish law made no difference to him. His true goal was their children. He knew that, in order for parents to send their children to a Torah school, they must value and cherish Torah. When fathers learn – children follow suit. This is not a rule – it is reality.

He convinced the *shiur's* attendees, "Soon, the country will need the talents and knowledge of *Roshei Yeshivah, rabbanim* and *dayanim*. If you send your children to Torah institutions, they will become the future leaders of *Klal Yisrael*."

One participant at *Rav* Ovadiah's *shiur* was prepared to send his children to *yeshivah*. He was not quite ready, however, to make good on his commitment: "My oldest son is presently in eighth grade. I am sending him to a national religious high school. I need to know that at least one of my sons will earn a *parnassah*, livelihood. [He felt that the general studies curriculum and the school's lack of focus on Torah 24/7 would prepare his son for going out into the world and earning a living.]

Today, this man's three younger sons – who attended *yeshivah* – are distinguished *rabbanim* in three different cities. The oldest, who was the one who trained for a *parnassah*, became an electrician. He is a fine, upstanding Jew who works all day and sets aside time daily to study Torah and attend a *shiur*. He is, however, envious of his three younger brothers, who are great Torah scholars and have at least as much *parnassah* as he does.

Va'ani Tefillah

שירו לד' שיר חדש – *Shiru l'Hashem shir chadash*. Sing to Hashem a new song.

Interestingly, throughout Torah literature, song is referred to as *shirah*, in the feminine form. However, here the new song of the future, the song that will be the song in the time of *Moshiach* is *shir* in the masculine form. *Chazal* (*Shemos Rabbah* 23:11) explain that in this world of adversity, where respite from tragedy is often ambiguous at best, every brief period of triumph is just that: brief. It is soon succeeded by further travail, more tragedy. Positivity does not seem to last very long. Since this pattern of ups and downs (with more downs than ups) resembles the female cycle of pregnancy and childbirth, song takes on the feminine form. In the future, with the advent of *Moshiach Tziddkeinu*, the *shir*, song, will be the Messianic song of ultimate, enduring triumph, one not followed by misfortune; there will be no more "cycles." It will be straight song. Thus, it is *shir*, masculine in nature. *Radak* paraphrases the above *Midrash* slightly different. In the past, our victories were shaky and weak, similar to a female (who is considered weak in contrast to a male). Only the final Messianic victory will be sturdy and strong, like a male.

Dedicated in memory of משה בן שמואל ז"ל Krilov

prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum

Ohr Somayach Insights into Halacha

For the week ending 9 March 2024 / 29 Adar Alef 5784

The Seudas Shlishis - Rosh Chodesh Quandary

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

We all know the Gemara's dictum "Mishenichnas Adar Marbin B'Simcha – when the month of Adar arrives, our joy increases."[1] Although in a leap year such as ours there is some debate if this maxim also applies to Adar Rishon,[2] nonetheless, this year, with Rosh Chodesh Adar Sheini falling out on Motza'ei Shabbos, aside from the inherent Simcha it heralds in, it will also generate some confusion. Truthfully, the issue under discussion is not specific to Adar per se, but rather one that occurs at least semi-annually - in fact, any time that Rosh Chodesh falls out on Motza'ei Shabbos.

As is well known, optimally, one should have a bread-based Seudah for Seudas Shlishis ('Shaleshudis' in the vernacular).[3] As generally speaking, many people's Seudas Shlishis extends throughout the Bein Hashmashos (twilight) period until the time for Maariv of Motza'ei Shabbos at Tzeis Hakochavim, by the time one is ready to bentch, he may have unwittingly walked into a full-fledged halachic debate – and quite interestingly, one with no clear consensus as to the proper course of action.

Is It Shabbos or Rosh Chodesh?

The question under discussion is what does our 'Shaleshudis' eater add into his Birkas Hamazon? We know that on Shabbos one must add in 'Retzei,' whereas on Rosh Chodesh 'Yaaleh V'Yavo' is inserted.[4] Moreover, the Shulchan Aruch rules following the opinions of most Rishonim, that if on these days one's seudah extends into the night, 'Retzei,' and / or 'Yaaleh V'Yavo' are still recited in bentching, even though Shabbos and / or Rosh Chodesh already concluded, "d'azlinan basar haschalas haseudah – as we follow the commencement of the seudah."[5]

However, in our quite common scenario, one started his seudah when it was Shabbos, yet concluded it on Rosh Chodesh. That would mean that his seudah bridged two different obligations that halachically speaking did not actually overlap. When it was Shabbos, it was not Rosh Chodesh. And, when it was Rosh Chodesh, it was not Shabbos.[6] Consequently, which of these additions should be inserted into his bentching? Or perhaps both? Neither?

As mentioned previously, there is no clear consensus what to do in this case, but rather we find that the Gedolei Ha'Achronim debate this very issue. Following are the various positions:

1- Magen Avraham and Mishnah Berurah – Only'Yaaleh V'Yavo'

The Magen Avraham discusses various considerations, including that reciting both 'Retzei' and 'Yaaleh V'Yavo' in one's bentching would be considered 'Tarti D'Sasri' – contradictory – as while he was having his Seudas Shlishis, it was never actually both Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh. The Magen Avraham concludes citing the Shlah, that in a case such as this, whichever addition is considered a 'tosefes,' an extra, is not recited.[7] Accordingly, at the time of bentching, Shabbos has already concluded and it is now fully Rosh Chodesh. Therefore, at that time 'Yaaleh V'Yavo' is considered current, whereas 'Retzei' deemed the 'tosefes.'

Hence, following this shittah, unless one ended the bread portion of his 'Shaleshudis' while it was still Shabbos, only 'Yaaleh V'Yavo' would be recited, as the seudah continued into Rosh Chodesh. The Mishnah Berurah cites this as the Magen Avraham's opinion[8] and seemingly rules this way as well.[9] Other poskim who rule similarly include the Eimek Bracha, Derech Hachaim, Chayei Adam, and Elyah Rabba.[10]

2- Sefardic Psak, Bach, and Aruch Hashulchan – Rak 'Retzei'

The Ben Ish Chai and Shulchan Melachim understand the Shulchan Aruch's ruling of adding 'Retzei' and / or 'Yaaleh V'Yavo' when starting one's seudah on Shabbos or Rosh Chodesh even when it extends into the following night, to be a ruling in all circumstances.[11] Meaning, we glean that even in a case such as ours, when bridging two different obligations, the ikar still remains the start of the seudah. Hence, in this case, they maintain that only 'Retzei' would be recited. This is the commonly held Sefardic psak,[12] as well as the Bach, Yosef Ometz, andAruch Hashulchan's conclusions,that practically speaking, even in our case, "d'basar haschalas haseudah azlinan, we follow the commencement of the seudah."[13]

3 – The Taz's Take – Two are Better than One

The Taz, on the other hand, after citing both of the previous opinions, argues that this case is not a true 'Tarti D'Sasri.' He explains that over the course of the Seudas Shlishis one started to eat bread when it was still Shabbos and was continuing to eat when it was now Rosh Chodesh. Hence, he asserts, our 'Shaleshudiser' is obligated to recite both additions – as he ate both on Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh, even though they are technically considered consecutive days. Accordingly, in his Birkas Hamazon, he must recite both 'Retzei' and 'Yaaleh V'Yavo.' Both the Shulchan Aruch Harav and the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch favor this psak.[14]

4 – Kaf Hachaim – No Additions

The Kaf Hachaim takes an alternate approach. He explains that as we are discussing Seudas Shlishis, this may prove an exception to the rule. Generally speaking, as one is mandated in washing and eating bread-based Seudos on Shabbos, one is therefore obligated to repeat the whole bentching upon omitting 'Retzei.'[15] Yet, this may not hold true regarding Seudas Shlishis. As there is a machlokes Rishonim whether it is necessary to have a bread-based meal for Seudas Shlishis, the Tur concludes tzarich iyun whether one must repeat Birkas Hamazon upon forgetting Retzei. Practically, the Shulchan Aruch rules that if one completed bentching of Seudas Shlishis without reciting 'Retzei,' he should not repeat bentching, as lemaaseh, Seudas Shlishis shares the halachic status of Rosh Chodesh, when it is preferential to wash, but not an outright obligation.[16]

Hence, asserts the Kaf Hachaim, as there is no true obligation to for a bread seudah at Seudas Shlishis, it cannot be mandated for us to recite the additions when there are conflicting circumstances, and especially when there is a machlokes what the proper course of action should be. Hence, he concludes, echoing the Talmudic dictum, 'Shev v'al taaseh adif – it is preferable not to take action,' but rather omit any addition.[17]

What to Do?

So, with so many differing, yet, viable options, which should we follow? As noted, there are Rabbinic opinions advocating for each side of this debate.[18] For example, the contemporary sefer V'Zos Habracha asserts that Chassidim generally follow the Taz on this and recite both 'Retzei' and 'Yaaleh V'Yavo' in this instance,[19] whereas Bnei Lita (those of Lithuanian origin) would usually follow the Magen Avraham and Mishnah Berurah here and only recite 'Yaaleh V'Yavo.'[20] And as discussed previously, most Sefardim follow the Ben Ish Chai and only insert 'Retzei.'[21]

Yet, the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch adds a fifth option – not to get involved in this complicated halachic predicament and ensuing debate.

5 – Avoidance is the Best Policy

The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch maintains that at this specific 'Shaleshudis,' it would be preferable not to eat bread when it is night. In this way, one would avoid the whole sheilah to begin with.[22] As stated previously, everyone agrees practically that when commencing one's meal when it is Shabbos, he should still recite 'Retzei' when concluding it after nightfall. So, by making sure to eat a k'zayis of bread before Shkiya, and then abstaining from consuming more bread afterwards, all would agree that when bentching, all he would recite is 'Retzei' – as he did not eat actually bread when it is Rosh Chodesh at all.

Hence, it turns out that the ideal resolution to our complex quandary may very well be not to get entangled in it at all. Not a Daas Yachid, this optimal solution is given as well by Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky in his essential Luach Eretz Yisrael,[23] and is cited as the preferred custom of several luminaries of the 1800s, including the Chasam Sofer, Divrei Chaim, Harei Besamim,andBirkas Habayis,[24] and by many contemporary Rabbanim as well, including Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, the Steipler Gaon, the Klausenberger Rebbe, Rav Chaim Kanievsky, Rav Dovid Feinstein, Rav Mordechai Eliyahu, Rav Moshe Sternbuch, Rav Asher Weiss, and Rav Yaakov Hillel.[25]

This why we find that anytime Shabbos concludes into Rosh Chodesh,[26] many have a minhag to start their Seudas Shlishis somewhat earlier and limit their challah intake, making sure to finish it before nightfall,[27] all to ensure that they do not unwittingly enter into a complex, complicated halachic quandary, with no clear-cut consensus or conclusion.

Yes, Mishenichnas Adar Marbin B'Simcha, but sometimes that simcha is reserved for resolving (or perhaps avoiding) halachic doubt.[28] May this year's Adar herald in Besoros Tovos, Refuah Sheleimah and Shalom for all of Klal Yisroel.

[1]Taanis (29a).

[2]Although the Mishnah (Megillah 6b) declares "Ain bein Adar Rishon l'Adar Sheini ela Mikra Megillah bilvad," the Gemara concludes that all Purim-related observances (including the Arbah Parshiyos) are actually celebrated in Adar Sheini, to ensure that the Geulah (Redemption) from Haman (Purim) and the Geulah from Egypt (on Pesach) should be observed in consecutive months. However, there is some debate whether 'Marbin B'Simcha' applies to Adar Rishon. Although the Yaavetz (Shu"t Sheilas Yaavetz vol. 2:88) and Teshuva Mei'ahava (Shu"t vol. 2:301) held that it only applies to Adar Sheini, nonetheless, in a teshuva (Shu"t Chasam Sofer, Choshen Mishpat 20), we find that the Chasam Sofer dated it 'Alef D'Rosh Chodesh Adar Rishon Shemarbin Bo B'Simcha.' There are those who infer that this is also the Gr"a's opinion. See the Gr"a's Peirush on Megillas Esther (Ch. 9:22) that the 'simcha' is inherently dependent on the month of Adar itself, implying whichever month is deemed 'Adar.' On a more contemporary note, see Shu"t Shevet Halevi (vol. 10:105, 3), Shu"t Az Nidberu (vol. 9:49), Shu"t Rivevos Efraim (vol. 3:464, 3), Halichos Shlomo (Moadim vol. 2, Purim Ch. 18, footnote 35), Chashukei Chemed (Purim 6), and Moadei HaGra"ch (vol. 1:682, pg. 315).

[3]See Tur and Shulchan Aruch and main commentaries to Orach Chaim (291:5).

[4]See Tur and Shulchan Aruch and main commentaries to Orach Chaim (188:5), based on Gemara Brachos (48b).

[5]Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 188:10), following the Orchos Chaim citing Tosafos (although there is some debate as to where this source is located), as well as the Maharil (Shu"t 56), Hagahos Maimoniyos (Megillah Ch. 2:1), and Rashal (Biur on the Tur, Orach Chaim 695:3), and not like the Rosh (Shu"t Klal 22:6) who maintains that one does not recite additions in Birkas Hamazon after the zman if the seudah extends past it. Although there is some discussion as to whether the Shulchan Aruch meant this Klal across the board or not, as he cites two opinions without a clear psak in Orach Chaim 271:6, regarding eating on Erev Shabbos and concluding one's seudah when it was already Shabbos, nonetheless, regarding our case his ruling is deemed conclusive. [See Magen Avraham (271:14-15) and Taz (Orach Chaim 188:7) for differing approaches to understanding the Shulchan Aruch's position.] Of course, if one davened Maariv before bentching, he would then lose the ability to recite 'Retzei' in our case, as by doing so, he technically personally 'took on' the new day. See Magen Avraham (ad loc. 17), Ba'er Heitiv (ad loc. 7), and Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 32).

[6]It is important to note that this sheilah is not referring to when Shabbos is Rosh Chodesh, as in that case since there is a Tosefes Shabbos, 'Yaaleh V'Yavo' is recited along with 'Retzei' when one extends the day and bentches on Motza'ei Shabbos. Moreover, regarding Rosh Chodesh as well, unless there is a potential contradiction (as in the our main topic of discussion here) practically speaking, we follow the beginning of the seudah, which in our case would be both Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh. See Shulchan Aruch (ibid.), Magen Avraham (419:1), and Mishnah Berurah (424:1).

[7]Magen Avraham (188:18) and Shlah (pg. 82, Shaar HaOsiyos, Kedusha, Hagahah). As an aside, the Magen Avraham also cites the minority opinion of the Olas Tamid (ad loc. 5) who maintains that this discussion would depend on Tosefes Shabbos and therefore only if one's seudah extends up until and hour and a quarter past shkiya (roughly Zman Rabbeinu Tam) would one still be able to recite 'Retzei.' After that time, one would only recite 'Yaaleh V'Yavo.' The Magen Avraham strongly argues, stating that the din of Tosefes Shabbos is exclusive to Erev Shabbos, and not relevant to this discussion. See also Pri Megadim (Eishel Avraham ad loc. 18). A somewhat similar view to the Olas Tamid, but from an entirely different perspective and rationale is that of the Halachos Ketanos (Shu"t vol. 2:46; cited by the Ba'er Heitiv ad loc. end 8) who asserts that one may only recite 'Retzei' on Motza'ei Shabbos as long as he did not yet digest the food he ate while still Shabbos [which is estimated practically at around 72 minutes as well – see Mishnah Berurah (184:20)]. However, as Rav Asher Weiss (Zemiros L'Shabbos Minchas Asher, Seudah Shlishis end 7) points out, the Mishnah Berurah cites differing opinions what to do in this case, but leaves out any mention of this one, implying that this qualification is not accepted practically, likely as this din is deemed dependent on actual seudah and not digestion.

[8]Although the Chayei Adam (118:4), Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 33), and other poskim identify this as the Magen Avraham's opinion, on the other hand, the Machatzis Hashekel (ad loc. 18 s.v u'lchein) understood this to actually be the Magen Avraham's elucidation of the Shlah's opinion, whereas the Magen Avraham himself intended to rule akin to the Shulchan Aruch, that we always follow the beginning of the seudah. According to his understanding, in

this case, as Seudas Shlishis commenced while it was still Shabbos, the Magen Avraham would rule that only 'Retzei' would be recited, and not as he is commonly quoted, mandated only 'Yaaleh V'Yavo.'

[9]The Mishnah Berurah (ibid.) first cites this shittah but then concludes with the Taz's shittah as a 'Yeish Omrim,' without actually stating one decisive psak. Based on this, and how he is cited by later authorities, implies he deemed the Magen Avraham's psak as the ikar one.

[10]Eimek Bracha (Dinei Birkas Hamazon, 48, Hagahah; cited by the Taz), Derech Hachaim (117:1), Chayei Adam (ibid.), and Elyah Rabba (Orach Chaim 188:20 s.v. gam; and Elyah Zuta ad loc. 18; following the Shlah).

[11]Ben Ish Chai (Year 1 Chukas 22) and Shulchan Melachim (188:10). This also seems to be the Knesses Hagedolah's (Shiyurei Knesses Hagedolah ad loc. Hagahos on Beis Yosef, 18) opinion as well. The Ben Ish Chai adds that when reciting the addition when it technically is no longer the zman, one should omit the word "hazeh," as it is technically no longer accurate. In this he is paskening like the Halachos Ketanos (Shu"t vol. 2:47), who first raised this differentiation.

[12]See Shu"t Yechaveh Daas (vol. 3:55; footnote at the end of teshuvah), Rav Mordechai Eliyahu's Darchei Halacha glosses to the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (44:21), Yalkut Yosef (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 188:19), and Rav Yaakov Hillel's Ahavat Shalom Luach.

[13]Bach (ad loc. end 12; also cited by the Taz ad loc. 7), Yosef Ometz (Minhagei Frankfurt 679), and Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 188:23).

[14]Taz (ad loc. 7), Shulchan Aruch Harav (ad loc. 17), and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (44:17), as well as the Magen Giborim (Elef Hamagen ad loc. 19), and Bigdei Yesha (ad loc. 19; both cited in Shaar Hatziyun ad loc. 26).

[15]This was discussed in a previous article titled 'Facts and Formulae for the Forgetful,' as well as the postscript to another titled 'More Common Kiddush Questions: Kiddush B'Makom Seudah.'

[16]Tur and Shulchan Aruch (ad loc. 8). Although the Tur himself, as well as the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 291:4 and 5), conclude that one should optimally wash for Seudas Shlishis, due to the three times the Torah states 'Hayom' in the Parashas HaMann.

[17]Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. 44); Gemara Eruvin (100a).

[18]As Rav Asher Weiss (Zemiros L'Shabbos Minchas Asher, Seudah Shlishis 7 s.v. sof davar) puts it "sugya zu murkeves v'ain bah hachra'ah berurah… u'lechorah yeish lomar bazeh d'avid k'mar avid u'd'avid k'mar avid, v'nahara nahara u'pashtei…"

[19]Indeed we find that many Chassidic authorities ruled that the ikar halacha in this case follows the Taz, and recite both 'Retzei' and 'Yaaleh V'Yavo,' including the Shulchan Aruch Harav (ibid.), Lekutei Maharіach (vol. 1, pg. 172b s.v. v'hinei; Seder Birkas Hamazon; who adds that one should specifically eat a k'zayis pas after nightfall to obligate himself in both insertions, citing precedent from sefer Derech Seudah of the Maharam Poppers (printed 1678; pg. 80a s.v. seudah; writing "harotzeh latzaeis yedei Shamayim v'chol ha'dei'os" to specifically do so) referring to this as 'Minhag Ha'olam'), and Shulchan HaTahor (188:16; who adds that this is only while there is still a din of Kedushas Shabbos – which he puts at an hour and a quarter into the night – [roughly Zman Rabbeinu Tam – similar to the Olas Tamid discussed in a previous footnote that the Magen Avraham objected to]; however, after that point, if one's seudah continues, he asserts that only 'Yaaleh V'Yavo' would be recited), as well as the Belz Dvar Yom B'Yomo Luach (5784; pg. 383). The Debreciner Rav (Shu"t Ba'er Moshe, vol. 1, 5:6) advocates for this minhag as well, and cites many Tzaddikim whom he personally viewed over the years reciting both 'Retzei' and 'Yaaleh V'Yavo' in this instance. On the other hand, other noted Chassidic Rabbanim, including Rav Yosef Shaul Nathanson (Shu"t Shoel U'Meishiv, Mahadura Telita'ei, vol. 1:372; adding 'especially during Sefirah'), the Minchas Elazar of Munkacsz (Darchei Chaim V'Shalom 307; adding 'even when the seudah continued long into the night') and the Butchatcher Rav (Eishel Avraham, Orach Chaim 188:10, end s.v. vayeitzei Shabbos), all maintained that in such an eventuality, the ikar is to only recite 'Retzei.' The Butchatcher adds that as an 'eitza tova,' in his opinion, it would be preferable to think 'Yaaleh V'Yavo' in one's mind in this instance, without actually saying it, and this way fulfill all opinions. [He also adds in the next paragraph that if one would follow the Taz and recite both 'Retzei' and 'Yaaleh V'Yavo,' it is not considered a true 'Tarti D'Sasri,' as 'issura leika bazeh' and there is also no potential issue of 'Lo Sisgodedu.']

[20]V'Zos Habracha (Ch. 15, pg. 145:5). See also Piskei Teshuvos (vol. 2, 188:21) and Shaarei Habracha (Ch. 6:48) for similar assessments. Yet, we find that Rav Moshe Feinstein is quoted (Sefer Dinei Birchos Hanehenin; Hoffner, 124:7) as preferring the Taz's shittah, that in this instance both 'Retzei' and 'Yaaleh V'Yavo' should be recited. On the other hand, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Halichos Shlomo, Moadim vol. 2, Rosh Chodesh, Ch. 1:21, footnote 82; V'Sein Bracha, vol. 2, pg. 323; and Maadanei Shlomo on Dalet Chelkei Shulchan Aruch, pg. 49), as well as Rav Moshe Sternbuch (Shu"t Teshuvos V'Hanhagos vol. 2:119; also citing Rav Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky, Raavad of the Badatz Eidah Chareidis), held that in such an eventuality, the ikar follows the Aruch Hashulchan, "d'azlinan basar techillas haseudah," and only 'Retzei' should be recited. Rav Sternbuch explains that as at that time one only ate bread due to it being Seudas Shlishis, which is only mandated due to it being Shabbos and not Rosh Chodesh, proves that one's intent was due to Shabbos. Hence, only should only recite 'Retzei.' He concludes that if one wishes to follow the Taz, it would be preferable to eat more bread and have intent 'l'kavod Rosh Chodesh' as well and then be obligated to insert both 'Retzei' and 'Yaaleh V'Yavo.'

[21]On the other hand, we find that other Sefardic poskim take alternate positions. For example, Rav Ovadia Hadaya (Shu"t Yaskil Avdi, vol. 7, Orach Chaim 27:2) paskens like the Kaf Hachaim, that 'Shev v'al taaseh adif, whereas Rav Chaim Na'eh (Ketzos Hashulchan 47:10) and the Birkas Hashem (vol. 2, pg. 404) follow the Taz, that both 'Retzei' and 'Yaaleh V'Yavo' should be inserted.

[22]Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (44:17).

[23]Luach Eretz Yisrael (5784; end Adar I).

[24]Piskei Chasam Sofer (Orach Chaim, pg. 55:14), Likutei Mahariach (citing the Divrei Chaim), Shu"t Harei Besamim (Tinyana, end 12; from Rav Aryeh Leibish Horowitz; published 1883) and Birkas Habayis (Shaar 17:37; from Rav Avraham Chaim Einhorn; published 1893).

[25]SeeShemiras Shabbos Kehilchasah (vol. 2, Ch. 57:13), Halichos Shlomo (ibid.), V'Sein Bracha (vol. 2, pg. 323; also citing Rav Elyashiv), Maadanei Shlomo (on Dalet Chelkei Shulchan Aruch, pg. 49), V'Zos Habracha (ibid.), Orchos Rabbeinu (new edition; vol. 1, pg. 165-166:12; citing the Steipler Gaon and his son Rav Chaim Kanievsky), Shu"t Yad Dodi (vol. 1, pg. 66:10), Darchei Halacha glosses to the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (ibid.), Shu"t Teshuvos V'Hanhagos (ibid; citing that this is the minhag of the 'medakdekim'), Zemiros L'Shabbos Minchas Asher (ibid.; also citing this as the hanhagah of the Klausenberger Rebbe; concluding "mi she'ein lo minhag kavua al pi beis avosav v'rabbosav,nireh d'ra'ui linhog k'divrei haKitzur Shulchan Aruch"), and Rav Yaakov Hillel's Ahavat Shalom Luach (ibid.).

[26]Although this sheilah would also technically occur when Shabbos concludes into a Yom Tov, this is less likely to occur. This is because there is a separate halacha that one should not start a seudah on Erev Yom Tov within three halachic hours before shkiya. See Rema (Orach Chaim 529:1), Magen Avraham (ad loc. 1), Elyah Rabba (ad loc. 3), Shulchan Aruch Harav (ad loc. 3), Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 5 and 8), Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. 25), and Shu"t Igros Moshe (Orach Chaim vol. 3:68). This is based on a similar din in Hilchos Shabbos regarding Erev Shabbos (Orach Chaim 249:2). If one was not able to do so, then he should still have Seudas Shlishis at its usual time toward the end of the day, making sure to only eat a small amount of Pas (estimated at around a shiur of 'k'beitzah'). Either way, although this sheilah is indeed a distinct possibility regarding Yom Tov occurring on a Motza'ei Shabbos, nonetheless, on a practical level, it comes up less commonly.

[27]The Luach Hahalachos U'Minhagim (5784; pg. 226, footnote 57) makes an interesting diyuk in the lashon of the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch and Tukachinsky Luach Eretz Yisrael – that it is preferable not to eat bread 'balayla' (night), to imply that this issue only occurs when it is considered vaday night. Hence, if one continued eating bread while it is still Bein Hashmashos, one would still only recite 'Retzei.' Piskei Teshuvos (vol. 2:188, footnote 81) makes a similar assessment, Rav Dovid Feinstein is quoted as paskening in the same vein (Shu"t Yad Dodi ibid.; "miyad le'achar haShkiya adayin lo tehiyeh ba'aya"), and V'Zos Habracha (ibid.) cites an analogous ruling from Rav Tzvi Webber, noted talmid of Rav Elyashiv, and Rav of Neve Yaakov, Yerushalayim. This also bears out from the Chasam Sofer's minhag, that it is recorded (Piskei Chasam Sofer ibid.) that in order not to enter into this debate, he would bentch early when Rosh Chodesh was Motza'ei Shabbos – specifically prior to Tzeis Hakochavim (implying it is only an issue regarding nightfall). On the other hand, it is reported (Halichos Shlomo, V'Sein Bracha, and Maadanei Shlomo ibid.) that Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach was makpid to finish his Seudah before Shkiya when Rosh Chodesh was Motza'ei Shabbos, and that his local shul davened Mincha earlier than usual that Shabbos afternoon, to specifically accommodate this hanhagah. Similarly, in Rav Yaakov Hillel's Ahavat Shalom Luach (ibid.) it states that optimally, 'yizaher shelo le'echol k'zayis pas achar Shkiya k'dai shelo li'chaneis l'safek.' See alsoOrchos Rabbeinu (ibid.) citing that both the Steipler Gaon and his son, Rav Chaim Kanievsky were makpid on not only finishing Seudas Shlishis prior to Shkiya in this case, but even bentching before then. [The author, Rav Avraham Halevi Horowitz opines that perhaps this extra chumrah is due to the shittah of the Taz, that one can be medayek in his words that as long as the seudah enters Rosh Chodesh (perhaps even without eating bread then) he would hold one must nevertheless recite both 'Retzei' and 'Yaaleh V'Yavo.' Rav Asher Weiss (Zemiros L'Shabbos Minchas Asher ibid.) writes similarly in his understanding of the Taz. Either way, as discussed previously, this hanhagah is not the halacha pesuka, but rather dependent on the actual achillah of the seudah. Hence, practically speaking, as long as one did not eat bread after shkiyah, he should only recite 'Retzei.']

[28]Metzudas Dovid (Mishlei, Ch. 15:30 s.v. me'ohr einayim) "He'aras einayim b'davar hamesupak yismach lev ki ain b'olam simcha k'hataras hasafeikos."A similar saying is also cited by the Pri Megadim (Orach Chaim beg. 670, Eshel Avraham s.v. nohagin and Orach Chaim 682, Mishbetzos Zahav end 1) regarding why on Chanukah (as we say in Al Hanissim) it is fitting that the 'Zeidim' were given over to the 'Oskei Torasecha.' The Rema (Shu"t HaRema 5) and later, the Bnei Yisaschar (Maamarei Chodesh Sivan, Maamar 5:13; quoting the Rambam, without citing a specific source) make similar statements "Mi shelo Ta'am ta'am hataras hasfeikos (baTorah) lo ta'am simcha miyamav."

For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomos / sources, please email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu.

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

L'iluy Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda.

L'zechus L'Refuah Sheleimah Yehuda Michoel ben Sarah, Michoel ben Avigayil, Sarah Chaya bas Dreiza Liba, and Rina Geulah bas Dreiza Liba!

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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 moed -**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 mizbeiach - 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 moed** 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 ktoret (from misc. above)

Chatzer (chapter 38)
* the mizbeiach
* 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

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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 menora - 'leha'alot 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 menora, 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 **mizbeiach**. [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 'orot 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 (Yetziat 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 Yetziat 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) Yetziat 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.

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 Mitzrayyim (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 Leviyyim 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 Leviyyim, 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 th 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 reneging 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-l 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, LIMNINAL 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

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 it 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 Mahn 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” (Vayyikra 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 Chillul 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).