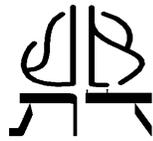


Toras



Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI ZVI MILLER

Parsha Insights

On Yom Kippur Moshe came down from Mount Sinai with the Second Tablets, signifying Hashem's forgiveness for the sin of the golden calf. On the day following Yom Kippur Moshe assembled the entire nation and charged them with the building of the Tabernacle. At the conclusion of Moshe's address-The entire assembly left Moshe's presence (Shemos 35:20).

Since we already knew that Klal Yisrael were standing in Moshe's presence, the Torah should have simply stated that the people returned to their dwellings. What is the import of the words left Moshe's presence?

Even after B'nai Yisrael completed their learning session with Moshe and returned to their homes-the impact of learning with Moshe was etched into their souls. Wherever they went and whatever they did the flame of Moshe's holiness burned in their hearts. That they had learned Torah from the holy mouth of Moshe was apparent in their elevated conduct. So intense was Moshe's influence, that even after they left him-it was as if they were, even now, still before him.

The Talmud (86b) teaches: "And you should love the L-rd, your G-d-that the name of Heaven be beloved because of you. If someone studies Torah and Mishneh, and attends on the Torah scholars, is honest in business, and speaks pleasantly to people, what do people say about him? Happy is his father who taught him Torah, happy is the teacher that taught him Torah; woe unto the people who have not studied Torah; for this man has studied Torah-look how fine are his ways and how righteous are his deeds."

The Torah gives us the wisdom and refinement to bring light into the world. If we keep the good influence of our teachers and the holy words of Torah close to our heart-we will elevate, inspire, and sanctify our lives, as well as, all the souls around us.

Implement: Perform your next task with the holiness as if you just left Moshe's presence. [Darchei

Mussar, Parshas Vayakhel. in the name of the Saba M'Kelm] © 2004 Rabbi Z. Miller & The Salant Foundation

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

We have often queried the significance of the five Torah portions which conclude the Book of Exodus, and especially the repetitions which we find in the detailed descriptions of the accoutrements of the Sanctuary. Even if we concede the very profound theological message of Ki Tisa and the unique prescription of the priestly garments in Tetzaveh, we are still left with the initial delineation of the furnishings of the Sanctuary in Terumah and the seeming repetitions thereof in Vayakhel—Pekudei. Why not a general statement to the effect that "And Moses did as he was instructed in the construction of the Sanctuary"?!

Rav Elhanan Samet, in his ground-breaking study of the portions of the Bible from a structural-narrative perspective, explains that the commandment to make the various furnishings of the Sanctuary is given by G-d in the Torah portion of Terumah, the precise adherence of the Israelites to every detail of the Divine Command in performance is detailed in the Torah portion of Vayakhel—perhaps to emphasize the fact that we must serve the Almighty in precisely the manner which He commands, no more and no less, to protect Judaism from religious fanaticism and zealotry—and the actual completion, the final 'hammer blow' of the construction of each sacred object, is presented in the Torah portion of Pekudei.

From an Israeli perspective, I might explain the importance of emphasizing the "finish" in a separate Torah portion by bringing to your attention a typical phenomenon of Israeli construction: ninety percent of the work generally gets done efficiently and even miraculously, but the last ten percent requires cajoling, entreating and sometimes (even usually) never gets done at all. And it goes without saying that the last ten percent is quite critical—especially during a rainy winter season!

But in a more serious vein, let us investigate the construction of the Sanctuary Table (shulhan) in order to understand the true reason for the order of description. The Divine command to make a Sanctuary Table is presented in the portion of Terumah in eight verses (Exodus 25: 23-30, beginning with "You shall make a Table of acacia wood, 2 ½ hand-breadths

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long, a hand-breadth wide, and a hand-breadth and one-half in height...") and the description of the performance of the making of the Table is detailed in the portion of Vayakhel—precisely (or almost precisely) paralleling the command in Terumah—in only seven verses (Exodus 37:10-16). What is missing in the performance? In the portion of Terumah, the last verse of the commandment regarding the construction of the Table tells us: "And you shall place upon the Table the show-bread before Me always" (Exodus 25:30); and then, towards the end of the portion of Terumah, we find: "And you shall situate the Table outside of the curtain on the northern side of the Sanctuary" (Exodus 26:35). These two features, of the function of the Table (for the show bread), and the placement of the Table, while commanded in Terumah, are not included in the actual construction of the Table in the portion of Vayakhel; but these two features are specifically mentioned in the portion of Pekudei: "And he (Moses of Israel) placed the Table in the Tent of Meeting on the side of the Sanctuary northwards just outside of the curtain, and he arranged the arrangement of the bread before the Lord as the Lord had commanded Moses" (Exodus 40:22,23).

Why do we need the separate portion of Pekudei for the function and placement of the sacred Table of the Sanctuary? One might suggest a logical technical reason: the specific placement of the Table as well as its function as repository of the show-bread could only be effectuated once the entire Sanctuary had been completed. Placement is a matter of relative space—each sacred object placed in relationship to the other sacred objects—and the various Sanctuary functions could not take place unless the Sanctuary had reached its final stage of construction. This final completion occurs only in Pekudei, and therefore it is only in this Torah portion that we find the phrase "just as

the Lord commanded Moses" appearing, not only once but actually seven times (Exodus 40:17-32).

I would like to suggest another reason for the significance of Pekudei as the portion of the "finish", the portion which emphasizes the placement and function of the sacred object. Each of us must see him/herself as sacred vessels, placed upon this world-Sanctuary in order to fulfill a specific task which is crucial if human society is to be perfected under the Kingship of the Divine. Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, ushers in the introspective period known as the Ten Days of Repentance. It also called the Day of Remembrance, and one of the most stirring prayers on this Day of Repentance begins: "You (oh G-d) remember the deeds of historic world, and poked all the creatures from the earliest time." The Hebrew word poked is usually translated as to take notice of, a synonym for remember; however, Rav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, ZTL Dean of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath maintained that the verb comes from the noun tafkid, or function, and therefore the phrase ought to be translated, "You give a specific function to every creature from earliest times."

The most proper—and penetrating—question of repentance that an individual ought ask him/ herself is, "Am I in the right country, doing the right thing?" In the one chance at life which G-d grants me, am I pursuing the proper path in the proper place?"

The Hebrew word "Pekudei" can also be translated as functions for each vessel, -- sacred physical object or sacred human subject—completes its reason for being only when its/his/her unique function is performed. Only then can a vessel be considered as fully formed, can a life be assessed as having been truly lived. We can only pray that we are utilizing the unique gifts which the Almighty has imbued within us to perform the right function in the proper place; only then will the Divine orchestra play its completed symphony, and only then will the perfected Sanctuary-world provide a home for G-d to dwell in our midst. © 2004 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“Rabbi Nasan said, 'what did the Nesiyim (tribal leaders) see that caused them to donate at the consecration of the Mishkan first, [when] by the building of the Mishkan they did not donate right away? It was [because] the Nesiyim had said the following: 'Let the public donate what they can donate, and whatever is lacking we will complete.' Since the public completed (donated) everything, as it says, 'and the work (materials) were enough,' the Nesiyim said 'what is there (left) for us to do?' So 'they brought the shoham stones, etc.' Therefore, when the Mishkan was consecrated, they donated first.'"

These are the words of the Sifrei (Naso 45), quoted by Rashi in our Parsha (Shemos 35:27). But

even though this is where the Sifrei ends, Rashi continues, "and because they procrastinated at first, a letter is missing from their name (i.e. there is no "yud" in "Nesiyim" in this particular verse). This thought can also be found in the Midrashic teachings of our sages (Bamidbar Rabbah 12:19 and Tanchuma, Pekuday 11) although it is not in the Sifrei that Rashi starts with. Which leaves us wondering why Rashi "cut and pasted" from two different Midrashim, rather than quoting just one in it's entirety (the Bamidbar Rabbah has a similar explanation as to why the Nesiyim donated first by the Mishkan's consecration and last by its building).

Another question that can be asked is why the Nesiyim were taken to task for not donating immediately. If anything, it would seem that what they did was commendable; Rather than selfishly donating what they would have preferred to donate, they waited to see what would be missing- so that they could ensure that all the necessary materials were available to build the Mishkan. They put the needs of the public first (having a Mishkan built) and their own desire to contribute second. We see that when it turned out that they couldn't donate for the Mishkan itself (the actual structure), they learned their lesson and made sure to donate first when it was consecrated. So what did they do wrong that warranted the rebuke of losing a letter from their name?

The other Midrashim that deal with this aspect of the Nesiyim actually treat them much harsher than Rashi implies. Midrash Rabbah, for example after asking why they donated first at the consecration and last by the construction, says that "when Moshe said that 'all with a donating heart should bring the offering to G-d for the building of the Mishkan,' and he didn't say it [directly] to the Nesiyim, it was wrong in their eyes that he didn't tell them to bring [the necessary materials]. They said 'let the people bring what they shall bring, and whatever they are missing we will provide.'" This Midrash continues by saying that when they realized that there was nothing left to donate, they were distressed, and gave the stones (etc.). G-d said that "about my sons who gave right away let it be written that they brought and there was extra," and the Nesiyim who procrastinated lost one letter from their name. [Therefore,] (the Midrash concludes) once the Mishkan was finished, they were the first to contribute.

The implication here is that they were either insulted that they weren't consulted first, or weren't given the first chance to donate, or that they were put on the same level as the rest of the nation. As a result they wouldn't give until Moshe realized that he needed them. (See Avos d'Rabbi Nasan 11:1 for a similar take.)

An even harsher implication is made in the Tanchuma (Naso 27; 29 in the Buber edition): "They said, 'didn't Moshe know to tell us to make the Mishkan,' i.e. they wanted to do it all by themselves, with G-d responding "on your lives that I don't need you [to build it]." The Midrash Hagadol (on our Parsha) says

it more explicitly: Rabbi Shmuel said, 'when Moshe came to [the Children of] Israel and relayed G-d's words that 'they build a Mikdash for Me' the Nesiyim said to him 'we will make the Mikdash from our possessions, without any help from [the nation of] Israel.' He (Moshe) responded that 'G-d did not command me to do it that way, but rather 'speak to the Children of Israel and take for me offering[s].' They (the Nesiyim) immediately separated themselves and did not join with the public." In other words, the Nesiyim were willing to build the Mishkan by themselves, but were unwilling to "only" make the same kind of contribution as the rest of the nation. The Netziv, commenting on the Sifrei, says that the reason the Nesiyim wanted to wait to see what was missing is so that they could get credit for "finishing the job," which is considered as having done the whole thing (see Devarim Rabbah 8:5).

It would seem, then, that the Midrashim are criticizing the Nesiyim not (just) for waiting before donating, but for waiting to donate until it would be apparent that it would not have been able to be built without them. (It is ironic, then- or perhaps even midah k'neged midah- that rather than their "name" being honored with a permanent association with the Mishkan, they instead lost a letter from their name because of the way they handled contributing!) This would explain why G-d was displeased with them.

Rabbeinu Bachya says that it is normal that a (political) leader (i.e. a king or a Nasi) would become haughty, and therefore the Nesiyim donated the precious stones that sat on Aharon's heart- in order to atone for any arrogance that might enter their own hearts. It is possible that after the people had donated so much that they didn't need the Nesiyim to donate any material for the Mishkan's structure, that the Nesiyim realized their mistake- and intended their donation of these stones to accomplish this atonement.

But if they already regretted their mistake, why does the Torah still take a letter out of their name? When the Midrashim mention the missing letter, they contrast the zealotness of the nation with the procrastination of the Nesiyim. The cause of the missing letter would therefore seem not to be their attitude towards donating, but merely the fact that they didn't donate right away. As Rabbeinu Bachya concludes: "And from here (the missing letter in "Nesiyim") [we learn] that there is a punishment for anybody that can be among the first to do a mitzvah and does not, and for this reason their names were written missing [a letter]." The circumstances that led to the delay may be important (which is why the Midrashim bring it up), but the point is that they could have donated earlier and didn't. As far as this aspect is concerned, it doesn't matter why they didn't donate immediately; the fact of the matter is that they could have and didn't. Even if there was a valid reason to wait, they still should have jumped at the chance to do a mitzvah. It was the

procrastination itself that they were being taken to task for, and not (just) their attitude towards donating.

This may explain why Rashi chose the Sifrei's version of why the Nesiyim donated first by the consecration and last by the construction, as it was the most "parve." Even though Rabbi Nasan (who the Sifrei, and Rashi, quote) himself says (in Avos d'Rabbi Nasan) that the Nesiyim were waiting until "Moshe needed them," there is no indication of this in his words in the Sifrei- only that they didn't donate right away. And because of their procrastination, Rashi adds, a letter was removed from their names.

This is the lesson that Rashi wants us to learn; even if they had a good reason to wait (as might be understood from the Sifrei), they should have put aside all of their "cheshbonos" (calculations) and rushed at the chance to do the mitzvah. © 2004 Rabbi D. Kramer

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Daf HaShavua

by Rabbi Doniel Golomb, Allerton Hebrew Congregation

I was born with an eye that drifted off-centre. Recently, I went to see a surgeon who told me about a non-surgical treatment using Botulinum Toxin. This is one of the most deadly substances known to mankind. Responsible for Botulism and the high mortality rate that goes with it; this is not a nice bacterium. However, beauticians have been experimenting with "Botox", as it is known, by injecting small amounts into sagging facial muscles. The toxin paralyzes the muscles for a short time and creates that "young" look.

The ophthalmologist injects a minute amount of Botox into the outer muscles of the eye. The theory is that the paralysed muscle will not be able to pull the drifting eye out as much and the inner eye muscle will be able to function optimally without interference.

It's an interesting thought: eliminate the negative force and allow the latent positive force to exercise influence. How similar this is to our worship of G-d.

We are all born with a soul that yearns for the spiritual and the holy. This soul is not moved by the prospect of financial gain because it recognises the transient nature of the physical world and the shallowness of amassing personal effects that are ultimately left behind. Rather it enjoys donning Tefillin each day, it is warmed by the glow of the Friday night candles, and it is allergic to foods that are not Kosher. This soul seeks to pull us straighter, ever closer to the Almighty, and to a truly spiritual existence.

But what is this pulling in the other direction? It is an animal-like instinct that seeks only hedonistic pleasure. It is the hungry one, the inner being that is never satisfied. It looks upon Jewish values with just a touch of disdain, preferring a "more realistic" approach to life. We are constantly pulled aside from following Hashem's Torah by self-serving instincts, like a

misaligned muscle that pulls the eye off-centre. By paralysing the self-serving negative influences, we free the holy soul and allow it to exert its influence positively.

It is then that we become aware of a more refined voice that resonates with the timehonoured values of our parents, a voice that is in harmony with G-d, and strikes a chord with the rich symphony of Jewish life.

At this time of year, we eradicate Chametz, the perception of self-importance, rising high above all others. We destroy this negative trait and eat only the humble Matza.

Interestingly, the Botox injection wears off after a while, and the muscle is once more free to pull against the eye, unless we paralyse it again.

We, too, must keep on top of the negative influences that drag us aside. Only then do we see clearly that G-d and His Torah are the only possessions that we really own in perpetuity in this world and the World to Come. © 2004 Produced by the Rabbinical Council of the United Synagogue - London (O) Editor Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, emailed by Rafael Salasnik

RABBI LABEL LAM

Dvar Torah

Anthing worth saying is worth repeating! (Michael Lam)

Anything worth saying is worth repeating! (Michael Lam)

Again and again the question arises: "Why does the Torah expend so much ink on reviewing the many details of the building of the Tabernacle in the wilderness?"

There are two different factors that lend value to a given entity, writes the Alter from Kelm. 1) Its rarity. 2) Its necessity. For example, a diamond or some other gem increases in price as a consequence of its scarcity. A rare stamp or even a baseball card becomes a collector's item and an expensive commodity only because it's one or two of a kind. If thousands more would flood the market the price would be reduced dramatically.

There are other elements that are valuable because we need them to live. Air, water, and food have intrinsic value. They may not have a big monetary ticket attached to them but that is only because they are, Thank G-d, plentiful. Try holding your breath for two minutes and then we can talk about the inherent value of air. At the conclusion of a fast day we can all begin to sing the praises of food glorious food. The Alter goes on to observe that the world was organized in such a way that in proportion to how much we really need a thing, so it is to be found around us in abundance. Air is everywhere and we need it most urgently. Water is less vital than air and more crucial than food and so two-thirds of the earth's surface is covered with water. Food which is needed less is granted in less large but still sufficient measure. The implied principle is that to the

extent that a certain ingredient of life is abundant so it is important and necessary.

Therefore those things mentioned most often in the Torah are more critical. The exodus from Egypt takes up an enormous space and is associated with many daily, weekly, and yearly Mitzvos. We are commanded not only to speak in depth about the events of leaving Egypt at the Pesach Seder but to remember it each and every day. The Torah uses the expression 50 times "leaving Egypt" in one form or another. We are meant to know that for Jewish survival, remembering what happened in Egypt is like the air that we breathe.

Maybe this idea has a similar application to the subject of the Tabernacle! At an ecumenical gathering of spiritual leaders from the across the globe, they were deciding in which way to unify their minds for some noble purpose. It was proposed that they take some meditative moments together to transcend this world and to reach beyond the mud of daily life and the constant tug of physical desire. In the final instant a new and surprising suggestion was offered by one of the clerics, "Instead of trying to get beyond worldliness, why don't we raise the physical and create a space for G-dliness here on earth?!" The suggestion was immediately dismissed by the moderator of the exercise, "Nah!" he said, "That's the job of Jews!" Observing the quantity of details and the quality of communal effort that went into creating the Tabernacle is an emphatic reminder of the importance our unique mission on this earth and the critical task we have of transforming our own little corner of creation. It remains, after all these years, "The Job of the Jews!" © 2004 Rabbi L. Lam & Project Genesis, Inc.

AISH HATORAH

What's Bothering Rashi?

by R' Dr. Avigdor Bonchek

This month is for you the first of the months; it shall be for you, the first of the months of the year." (Exodus 12:2, parashas HaChodesh)

"This month"—RASHI: He [God] showed him [Moses] the moon in its renewal and said to him 'when the moon renews itself it will be the beginning of the month for you.' But the verse does not depart from its simple meaning (p'shuto) He really spoke to him about the month of Nisan: This [month] shall be the first in the order of the months, so that Iyar is called the second, Sivan, the third."

Why does Rashi need the Drash if he brings the P'shat? What is bothering him that leads him to these interpretations? Can you see what's bothering him in this verse?

The verse has two parts to it, which seem to repeat themselves in different words. The first part says: "This month is for you the first of the months," the second part says: "it shall be for you the first of the

months of the year." This is repetitious. This is what's bothering Rashi. How does his comment deal with this?

The Drash interprets the first part of the sentence in a completely different way than does our translation above. It does not refer to the month of Nisan as being the first month, rather it sees these words as a lesson to Moses in how to determine when a new month (any new month) begins. According to the Drash, the first part of the verse indicates that God showed Moses the new moon in the sky to show him what a new moon looks like as far as when the new month can be declared. (The implications are important because it will effect when the holidays fall out.) The second part of the verse, according to this Drash interpretation, tells us that this particular new month in which Moses is showing this is the first month of the calendar year. In this way there is no repetition, since the two halves of the verse tell us two different things.

But if this answers our difficulty, why does Rashi offer the second interpretation, which he calls P'shat? Can you think of a reason?

Rashi makes this clear when he says a verse never departs from its P'shat meaning. Therefore he must also offer the P'shat meaning of this verse. The simple meaning is that both parts of the verse relate to Nisan; the first part tells us that this month—Nisan—is the first month of the year. The second part repeats this but specifies that each month afterwards follows an orderly pattern. And that when the Torah says "the second month" or "the third month" it refers to what we know as Iyar and Sivan etc. (because the Torah only uses numerical designations for the months. In the Torah itself, there are no individual names for the months. This is a later innovation.) This means that a P'shat interpretation is not so demanding of the linguistic structure; what looks like a repetition may actually be repetition for the sake of emphasizing a point. There is a classic dispute between Rabbis Akiva and Yishmael whether "the Torah speaks in the language of man" or not. That means that since common repetitions of the type in this verse are the way people ordinarily speak, therefore the Torah may also speak the same way. One needn't be so "strict" in interpreting every little nuance. This dispute relates basically to Drash. But when it comes to P'shat we see that Rashi takes it for granted that the Torah speaks as people speak.

Notice that these two interpretations understand the word "chodesh" in different ways. How does the P'shat translate the words "hachodesh hazeh"? And how does the Drash translate them?

The p'shat translates "chodesh" as: "this month." The Drash, "this new moon" or "the beginning of the month": "Rosh Chodesh." Why do think that the second interpretation is considered P'shat more so than the first?

The "chodesh" appears many times in the Torah and is always means "month." For example, in

Exodus 13:4 it says (referring to Pesach) in the "Spring Month" -- "B'chodesh Ha'aviv." So the simple and common meaning of these words is "this month" and not "this new moon." For this reason it is considered P'shat.

However, it should be noted that the word "chodesh" does appear in the Tanach where it has the meaning of "new moon." In the story of David and Jonathan (I Samuel 20:5) the word means "Rosh Chodesh." But this is never its meaning in Chumash.

A closer look at this verse reveals another reason supporting the P'shat. The Drash says "This is what the New Moon looks like." But if that were its basic meaning, the verse should have said "Rosh Chodesh" and not "Roshei Chadashim" in the plural.

The plural makes perfect sense according to the P'shat interpretation. "This month is the first of the months"—as Rashi explained, the beginning of the order of the months of the year. © 2004 Rabbi Dr. A. Bonchek and torah.org

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

When looking at this week's portion, an interesting juxtaposition is presented. The construction of the Mishkan is placed right next to the concept of Shabbat in the beginning of the portion. Why?

During creation, God unleashed an unlimited power on the formation of the universe. However, God purposefully performed this task in an incomplete manner. The last word of the creation story is la'asot, "to do." (Genesis 2:3) La'asot, which we mention in connection with Shabbat, asks that we complete creation in partnership with God and redeem the world.

Perhaps the greatest manifestation of human creativity and glorification of God in the Torah is the building of the Mishkan. It required human mastery over every realm of creation – the inanimate, the vegetative, the animal and the human. For example: gold was required to construct the Ark; plants were used for the dye needed to color parts of the Mishkan; animal skin was used to cover the Mishkan-and, of course, human interaction was essential to coordinate a building venture of this magnitude.

Nehama Leibowitz points out that the same words describing God's completion of creation (va-yekhal, vayar, ve-hinei, va-yevarekh- Genesis 1:31, 2:2-3) are also used to describe the completion of the Mishkan (va-yekhal, vayar, ve-hinei, va-yevarekh-Exodus 39:43, 40:33).

Yet, even in this most amazing endeavor, which was, for that time, the peak of human creativity, there is a danger. Humans can forget that it is God who is the sole source of our creativity. Therefore, the laws of Shabbat which force us to refrain from activities that indicate our mastery over the world are mentioned after

the section on the Mishkan. By following these laws, we assert the centrality of God.

There are 39 categories of work prohibited on Shabbat. Interestingly, they also deal with every aspect of the material world, vegetation (prohibitions of planting, for example), animal life (prohibitions of trapping, for example), inanimate objects (prohibitions of building, for example). The final category, the prohibition against carrying, leads to the understanding that even in the social sphere (carrying is a symbol of human interaction), God is in ultimate control. (See Mishnah Shabbat 7:2)

In a world where we depend so much on the tools which God gives us to create for ourselves, the juxtaposition of Shabbat to the Mishkan teaches us that even a creative initiative dedicated to God is prohibited on Shabbat. This teaches us that it is God alone who is at the core of all existence. © 2002 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The conclusion of the Chumash Shemot is that the Shechina, the Holy Spirit of Hashem rested, so to speak, in the Mishkan that the Jewish people built in the desert. Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, Ramban, in his great commentary to the Chumash, states that the entire process of the Chumash Shemot - the slavery in Egypt, the miraculous deliverance and Exodus from Egypt, the revelation of Torah at Sinai, the construction of the Mishkan - all was necessary in order to return the people of Israel to the level of the homes of Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivkah, Yacov and Rochel and Leah. For in their homes the holy spirit of Hashem resided in a regular and permanent fashion. Now the Holy Spirit of Hashem would reside in a public fashion amidst the Jewish people in the Mishkan. The question is obvious. Why did it require all of the events of Chumash Shemot simply to return to the level that the founders of the Jewish people had already achieved with regularity in their homes? I think that the answer lies in the fact that the Avot and Imahot attained that level of Godliness in a private fashion, in their own homes, sheltered from the hostile winds of the outside world. The attainment of the Godly spirit at the end of Chumash Shemot was however of a different nature. It was a public achievement of the nation as a whole, of a community of different people and different ideas, and therefore of a much more difficult challenge. The Mishkan was public, it was exposed to the outside world, and it swayed in the winds of the desert and the time. In such an environment, it is difficult to house God's spirit and therefore all of the training that the events of Chumash relates to us regarding the Jewish people were necessary in order to bring the Shechinah to Jewish public life.

The Rabbis in Pirkei Avot list ten miracles that were present in the Temple and the Mishkan. One of the miracles was that the pillar of smoke of the altar was never swayed or blown away by the prevailing wind. In public Jewish life there have always been, as there are today, winds and currents that can influence and even diffuse the pillar of smoke that represents God's presence in our camp and society. It must therefore be seen as one of the ever-present miracles in our midst, that the name and cause of Godliness and Torah tradition has somehow been preserved and its influence constantly strengthened and renewed. It is as though we are constantly reliving the end of the Chumash Shemot and making the public house and society of Israel the worthy successors of the holy but private homes of our fathers and mothers. All Torah organizations and projects are dedicated to this public building of a Mishkan in our community and in the Land of Israel. Projects of Torah study and support, of goodness and help to our fellow Jews, are the means by which we construct this Mishkan. Especially in the difficult winds of our current Israeli world, we must strive to preserve that pillar of smoke - our Torah and tradition - from being blown away and to redouble our efforts on behalf of the people of Israel and its holy Mishkan.

The Jewish people have built a Mishkan and two Temples in its long and difficult history. None of those three structures proved permanent. We, in our blessed generation and homeland, have been given the opportunity to begin the process of creating the final and permanent Temple. If we realize that this great opportunity is given to us and we will work to see that the spirit of God will dwell amidst us and all of Israel, then we can truly hope to see the physical reality of the Temple and the complete redemption of Zion realized speedily and in our days. © 2004 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory.

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

The people in charge of building the Tabernacle were Betzalel Ben Uri, Oholiav Ben Achisamach, and "every man with a wise heart, to whom G-d gave wisdom and understanding, in order to know how to perform the holy work" [Shemot 36:1]. However, from the passage itself it is not clear how the work was divided among them.

Chapter 36 describes the construction of the framework of the Tabernacle— the walls, the beams, and the curtain. In the beginning of the work, with respect to the inner cloth, we are told, "and all those with wise hearts among the workers made the Tabernacle, from ten curtains" [36:5]. This then

continues in a more general way: "And he made curtains of goat hair... and he made a cover for the tent... he made the beams... he made the dividing curtain" [36:14,19,20,35]. Evidently, this also refers to everybody "with a wise heart" (see Ramban). Chapter 37 then goes on to the utensils in the Tabernacle, and it begins with the words, "And Betzalel made the Ark" [37:1]. As the passage continues, it once again uses general language: "He made the table... he made the Menorah... He made the altar for incense" [37:10,17,25]. This continues in Chapter 38, "He made the courtyard" [38:9]. According to Ibn Ezra (37:1), the general reference is to Betzalel, who made all of the holy utensils. However, the Ramban insists that Betzalel made only the Ark, while the general verses refer to the "wise men." The Ramban feels that it was not practical considerations that led Betzalel to make the Ark but rather a spiritual reason, "because he was filled with G-d's spirit, with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, so that he could make it with the proper intentions, since no great art was needed for making it."

Perhaps we can suggest another reason why it was Betzalel who made the Ark. It is important to note that this item, specifically credited to Betzalel, is the only utensil which the Torah described in a special way in the portion of Teruma. For all the other items, the command was explicitly given to Moshe:

"You shall make a table... You shall make a Menorah of gold... You shall make curtains of cloth..." [25:23,31,26:1].

However, with respect to the Ark, it is written, "Let them make an Ark" [25:10]. Why is there a difference? Evidently, with respect to the other items, those explicitly assigned to Moshe, there was little room for creativity. As is written, "...just as I show you, the form of the Tabernacle and the form of all the utensils. And this is how you should make them." [25:9]. "See and make in their form, which you were shown on the mountain" [25:40]. On the other hand, Moshe received no direct command with respect to the Ark, and thus there may have been no requirement to stick to exact plans. This leaves room for human creativity, and only Betzalel was able to perform this task. (Note that this might be relevant only for the basic construction of the Ark, as the commands for the Parochet, the rings, and the rods were once again given explicitly to Moshe.)

Why is it most appropriate that this creativity is linked to the Ark? This may be related to the essential roles of the Ark itself. On one hand, the Ark is the place of the Tablets, which are a symbol of the written Torah. On the other hand, the Ark also symbolizes the innovations of the oral Torah. "I will meet you there and I will talk to you, from above the cover" [Shemot 25:22]. Thus, the Ark is what provides an opportunity for human creativity, as a symbolic expression of the participation of the nation of Yisrael in the creation of the oral Torah through the passing generations.

The Choshen, the Ephod, and the Rods of the Ark

by Rabbi Shlomo Shushan

Rosh Kollel and Torah Garin, Giv'at Zeev

In this week's portion, the Torah repeats the command, "the Choshen, the breastplate, shall not move over the Ephod, the apron" [Shemot 39:21], which was already given in the portion of Terumah (28:28). In the Talmud we are taught, "Rabbi Elazar said, one who moves the Choshen over the Ephod and one who removes the rods from the Ark is punished by lashes, as is written, it shall not move, and they shall not be removed" [Yoma 72a]. It is interesting to discuss the reasons for these two prohibitions and whether there is any link between them. With respect to the Ephod, the Chinuch writes as a reason for the mitzva, "there should be nothing lacking in the beauty of the priestly garments" [Mitzva 100]. But he adds, "until we find a better explanation, this will suffice," implying that it is possible to look for other reasons.

The Meshech Chochma explains the unique aspect of the rods of the Ark in a wonderful way, noting that the Ark represents sages involved in Torah, while the rods represent those who support them (Shemot 25:15). The rods may be removed from other holy utensils when the Tabernacle is at rest, and only for the Ark is there a prohibition, "they shall not be removed." This teaches us that there is a permanent obligation of the public to take care of the development and continued existence of Torah study. The Torah is the spiritual source of the nation, it is the Ark which "lifts up those who carry it" [Sotta 35a]. The rods that support it are in effect lifted up by it. If, G-d forbid, they are removed, all will fall down. We will once again begin to dig "shattered cisterns that hold no water" [Yirmiyahu 2:13].

The Choshen is called the "breastplate of judgment" [Shemot 28:15], and it holds the "Urim and the Tumim"—"In the Choshen, you shall place the Urim and the Tumim... And let him carry the judgment of Bnei Yisrael" [28:30]. As Rashi writes, "This refers to the explicit name of G-d that was placed in the folds of the Choshen, which enabled it to explain the words of G-d and make them complete." The task of the Choshen is to reply to the question of whether to do something or not. The answer is expressed by the letters in the names of the tribes and the forefathers that Aharon carried on his heart, by having them displayed prominently (Yoma 73b). The names of the tribes were also inscribed on the two precious stones on the straps that supported the Choshen. The position of the Choshen, over Aharon's heart, symbolizes the objective of the law, as a beating heart which gives guidance, "what to do and what not to do." The shoulder straps are a symbol of the world of action which is shared by all the tribes of Yisrael.

The Torah commands us, "the Choshen shall not move over the Ephod," to indicate the close ties that

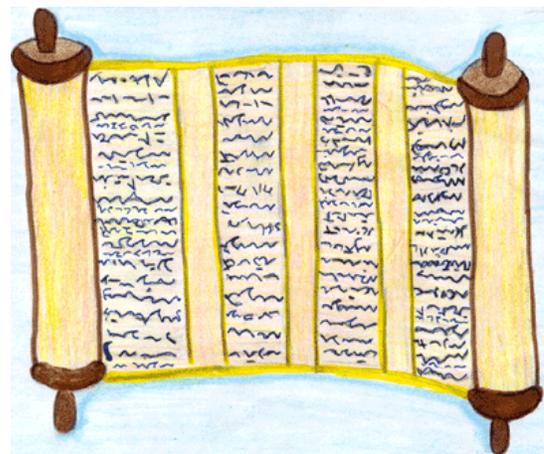
must be maintained between the world of halacha and the world of action. With respect to the Ark, we have been commanded not to remove the rods, indicating that the public at large should continue to support the world of Torah. In this case, the command is, "the Choshen shall not move," and it is aimed specifically at the participants in the world of Torah, warning them not to be light-hearted, and not to separate themselves from the community. Their relatively high status stems from the power of the tribes of Yisrael. It is up to them to make sure that their study will always be linked to the spiritual and practical needs of the entire nation.

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

In Parshat Vayakhel Moshe charges the Jews with the task of building the Mishkan (Tabernacle), as described previously. Then, when Moshe finishes with the final instructions, the Torah tells us that the Jews left Moshe's presence (35:20). Rav Eliyahu Lapyan wondered why the Torah had to tell us this fact, when it seems obvious that they eventually did go home!?

He goes on to explain that when a Jew left Moshe's tent, everyone could tell that they had been with Moshe from their behavior, and from their attitude. Not only did they learn Torah by listening to Moshe, but they also affected others with their demeanor, simply because people knew they'd been in the presence of greatness, and their actions represented the Torah they kept. This is SO true for us, too. When we read, learn, practice, or talk about the Torah, not only are we gaining knowledge that we can personally use to enrich our lives, but our knowledge and actions also affect the people around us. That's why it's so critically important that we present ourselves appropriately. Whether we realize it or not, like it or not, our actions not only present us, but they represent our religion, family and community. The Torah is trying to open our eyes and make us realize that not only do our actions affect us, but our INTERactions affect those around us! © 2004 Rabbi S. Ressler and LeLamed, Inc.



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