

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

The fundamental question which is constantly reiterated as we read these two last Biblical portions of the Book of Exodus is the fact of their repetitiousness. We have been told in exquisite detail precisely how G-d commanded every aspect of the Sanctuary - both in terms of the external skins and curtains as well as the internal furnishings - in the two portions of Trumah and Tetzaveh; here again we are being told - in what sometimes seems to be excruciating detail - that the commands were carried out to the most minute detail. Why do we have to hear it again?

I would add to this yet another question. Initially the Bible recorded how the Almighty spoke to Moses saying, "See, I have called my name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur as the architect of the Sanctuary" (Exodus 31:1). Here in our portion of Vayakhel we find a repeat of the architectural appointment from the mouth of Moses: "And Moses said to the children of Israel, 'see (in the plural this time, Heb re'u) the Almighty has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri the son of Hur....'" (Exodus 35: 30). Why the verb "see" and why does it appear the first time in the singular and the second time in the plural?

The answer to both these questions literally screamed out of me, probably because of an inordinate number of scandals of corruption, deception and politically motivated appointments which are embarrassing many Israelis in high offices. I believe we have a great deal to learn from the ways in which our classical Biblical commentaries treat the questions I have just asked. The Sages of the Talmud understand the verb "see" in the plural voice immediately before announcing Bezalel's appointment by explaining (in the name of Rabbi Isaac) that "a public appointment may never be made without first consulting the public" (B.T. Berakhot 55 a.) The Midrash is even more explicit, suggesting that since Bezalel was the son of Miriam and Hur and therefore a nephew of Moses (B.T. Sotah 11b), Moses was open to the charge that he was choosing all of his relatives to serve in high places:

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Aaron his brother is High Priest, Aaron's sons as his priestly aids and now his nephew as the chief architect of the Sanctuary. Hence G-d tells Moses to first bring the appointment of Bezalel before the public - "Re'u"-for their approval, and only then can he be appointed. (Midrash Tanhuma Vayakhel 3)

In an even clearer way, the Sages of the Midrash insist that the painstaking account of the execution of every detail of the construction of the Sanctuary is provided in order to show all subsequent generations that not even Moses was above suspicion; even Moses had to give a clear rendering and accounting to prove that whatever he received was used for its proper purpose in the Sanctuary. "The scorners of his time gossiped regarding Moses... they looked at his back and said one to another, what a heavy neck he has ! What heavy legs he has. He most probably eats of that which belongs to us and drinks of that which belongs to us. Others would reply, fool, a man like Moses who was in charge of the work of the Sanctuary, constantly handling uncounted, unweighed and unnumbered pieces of silver and pieces of gold would most certainly become rich! When Moses heard this, he replied 'by your lives!' As soon as the work of the Sanctuary is finished I shall render an exact accounting" (Midrash Tanhuma Pedudai 7)

Our Sages derive the importance of completely transparent bookkeeping in a manner in which no individual can have any suspicion of embezzlement or wrong doing from the Biblical commandment, "You must stand innocent before the Lord and before the people of Israel" (Numbers 32:22) Indeed, the Talmud teaches us that the priestly family of Garmu, who were expert in the making of the showbread for the Holy Temple, never served bread to their family lest, people say that they took from the Sacred bread ; similarly the priestly house of Avtinas, who were expert in preparing the incense for the Holy Temple never let any of their brides go out perfumed for the same reason. (B.T. Yoma 38a) And those priests who went up to take an offering from the Chamber of Shekalim could not wear a sleeved cloak or shoes or sandals lest they be accused of taking some of the sacred coins for their personal use. (Shekalim 3,2). From all this it is clear that especially the leaders of the people - and even the loftiest and most majestic of the religious leaders, must not only act in an innocent fashion but must prove

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conclusively to their nation that whatever they have done is beyond reproach.

Everyone is familiar with the very first Biblical interpretation of Rashi to the very first verse of Genesis. Rashi asks in the name of Rabbi Isaac (perhaps the very same Rabbi Isaac cited previously in the Talmud Berakhot 55a) why the Bible begins with the creation of the world rather than with the first commandment given to Israel. His response is almost prophetic. He says that the time will come that the nations of the world will condemn us for having stolen the Land of Israel. We will then be able to answer, "the entire earth belongs to the Holy One blessed be He; He created it, and gives it to whomever is righteous in His eyes". These last words are unfortunately often overlooked or translated in an off hand manner, to the effect that G-d can give the land to whomever He wishes to give it. But that is not what the words say. The Land of Israel has very special and unique moral and ethical sensitivity. Only if we are righteous in our ethical conduct will we be able to retain sovereignty over the Holy Land of Israel.

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RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The opening subject in this week's double parsha, which marks the conclusion of the book of Shemot, discusses the Shabat and its centrality in Jewish life and halacha. Rashi points out to us that this parsha regarding Shabat was stated and taught b'hakheil - in a public assembly and gathering - hence the name of the parsha itself - Vayakheil.

I have always felt that there is a great implicit but vital message in this idea of Shabat being taught b'hakheil. Shabat has two distinct aspects to it. There is the private Shabat - the meals and family table, the leisure and serenity of our homes during this holy day, the feeling of dignity and Jewish identity that Shabat automatically engenders in the soul of every Jew. But there is also the requirement that Shabat be taught b'hakheil - in a public fashion and forum. The public Shabat is the sign of the covenant between G-d and Israel and through Israel with all of humankind. It is the public Shabat that reaffirms the communal unity of the Jewish people and determines the direction of our public policies and agendas.

In the absence of a public Shabat the entire community structure of the Jewish people is weakened, our goals and objectives obscured and confusion reigns with regard to our true rights and purpose.. While the absence of a private Shabat for an individual and family eventually proves very costly in relationship to their continuity in Judaism, the absence of a public Shabat is a death knell for the Jewish community.

In recent decades the private Shabat has made a strong come back within many Jewish families. Even those who are not halachically observant attempt to have some sort of Shabat at home, whether it is in lighting the Shabat candles or having a special family meal. The realization of the importance to one's psychological and family well-being of having a private Shabat is slowly dawning on increasing numbers of Jews who otherwise are, in the main, non-observant of halacha and Jewish ritual. However, the public Shabat is slipping away from us, here in Israel and certainly in the Diaspora.

Jewish community centers in much of the United States, transformed basically into health clubs for all, stay open on the Shabat. In Israel, kibbutzim and some shopping malls skirt the official laws and stay open on the Shabat. Jewish airlines devise all sorts of subterfuges to fly on the Shabat with the excuse of customer service necessitating such practices. But again, a Jewish community that does not provide for a public face for the Shabat is dooming itself to Jewish extinction. It has been said often that more than the Jews guarding the Shabat, the Shabat has guarded the Jews.

In the difficult times in which we live, discarding the public Shabat is tantamount to spiritual suicide. Only by securing the public Shabat and treasuring it as the national gift that the Lord has granted us can we at the same time guarantee our continuity and future success as a people. © 2007 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.

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, G-d unleashed an unlimited power on the formation of the universe. However, G-d 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 G-d and redeem the world.

Perhaps the greatest manifestation of human creativity and glorification of G-d 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 G-d'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 G-d 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 G-d.

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), G-d is in ultimate control. (See Mishnah Shabbat 7:2)

In a world where we depend so much on the tools which G-d gives us to create for ourselves, the juxtaposition of Shabbat to the Mishkan teaches us that even a creative initiative dedicated to G-d is prohibited on Shabbat. This teaches us that it is G-d alone who is at the core of all existence. © 2007 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

RABBI BARUCH LEFF

Kol Yaakov

In Israel, religious political parties generally consult spiritual leaders on a wide range of issues. To a modern person, it seems odd that spiritual giants should be able to formulate opinions on matters of state when their primary occupation is Torah study, in their "ivory towers." Yet, Judaism does accept the notion of "Daas Torah," loosely translated as "A Torah Opinion," as a fundamental element of an observant lifestyle.

What exactly is this elusive concept? Why is it considered virtuous to consult Torah leaders on issues

that would appear at first thought to be outside the realm of their concerns?

The solution to these questions will also help elucidate a Rashi in Parshat Pekudei. In Ethics of the Fathers, Chapter 1:6, it states: "One should establish a relationship with a Rabbi and one should acquire a friend." No matter how learned or how great or how mature, an individual can never live a productive life on one's own. A person needs these two relationships with others in order to function in a healthy fashion. One of these relationships is having a Rabbi.

When I establish a relationship with a Rabbi, I learn to subordinate myself. I accept the Rabbi as my superior and nullify my opinion before his. It is obvious that if I am lacking Torah knowledge that I should consult a Rabbi. But I should also ask him concerning matters that do not directly seem to involve knowledge of Torah.

A Rabbi who has studied the Torah in depth has spent many hours and expended great efforts to discover what G-d wants from us in this world. This is because the very definition of the word "Torah" is G-d's Instructions for Living. As a result of the Rabbi and Torah scholar's mastery of the Torah, he trains his mind to think in terms of "What would the Torah demand? What would G-d expect of a person in the given situation which he faces?"

In this way, a decision is based on an attempt at discovering what G-d wants from us and not merely what we desire.

This is the explanation of the concept of Daas Torah and is why religious political parties, and many Torah observant people, always consult Torah leaders before making major decisions.

We now have a better understanding for what Rashi means in Shemot 38:22. Betzalel, the lead architect of the construction of the Tabernacle, had presented his own idea for the order of the different stages of the construction which Moshe had heard directly from G-d.

Moshe then told Betzalel, "Now I know why your name is Betzalel! You must have dwelled in G-d's shadow-B'tzel E-l-which is the meaning of your name!" Betzalel had used his own mind to think of an idea which was exactly the idea G-d had planned as well. Betzalel achieved the level of Daas Torah, figuring out what G-d would want in a particular situation.

The concept and acceptance of Daas Torah is also the key to the Jewish people's repentance in the Purim story. As recorded in Talmud Megillah 12b and Midrash Esther Rabbah 7:18, there was a dispute between Mordechai, the leader, and the rest of the Jewish nation. Achashveirosh, the Persian king, had invited the Jews, among all nations, to his grandiose feast and party celebration. The Jews felt that for political reasons, they had to go for if they did not it would mean disaster and danger facing

Achashveirosh's wrath. They felt that to avoid the party would be an insult to the king. Their logic was compelling. Mordechai told them that the lewdness and immorality that would be present at the party forbids Jews to go.

They told Mordechai that if they followed his advice, they would be lost. Lo and behold, they went to the feast and it indeed brought prosperity to them for a while. They turned to Mordechai and said, "We were right, you were wrong. Thank G-d we didn't listen to you."

Then a Haman, with his plan to exterminate the Jewish nation, came into existence. (The Talmud states that this was due to the sin of attending Achashveirosh's party. Megilah 12a) And Mordechai refuses to bow down to him. They came to Mordechai and said "Murderer! Bow down to him or we will all die because of you!" Lo and behold, they were right. Haman was angered and the genocide decree came.

Who was right? Mordechai, the old and out-of-touch Torah scholar, the ivory tower dweller, the old and impractical man, or the masses of people who knew the ways of the world? By all nature, the Jews should have turned against Mordechai. Everything they said came true. They saw they were right. They should have thrown him out! But instead they come back and say, "Rebbe, tell us what to do" and from that comes the salvation.

What happened? What made them come back to Mordechai? They began to repent and finally realized the significance of Daas Torah. They knew that they needed a deliverance and the only way to achieve that was to turn back to G-d and those righteous individuals who are closest to G-d.

It is only through the logic and direction of Torah and the Torah giant that salvation can come. We think we see but we do not see. The reality was that Haman's decree came as a result of sins and not politics. Our logic which seems so strong is very often influenced by personal bias. The Torah scholar's mind does not have these biases and can access G-d's true will.

This doesn't mean that Rabbis are infallible. It is of course possible for Rabbis to make mistakes. But we also know that even the world's best doctors are human and also make mistakes. That doesn't prevent us from seeking out their medical advice and expertise because following their advice remains the best course of procedure in trying to heal an illness. So too, G-d expects us to try our best to make decisions based upon His will, and asking a Rabbi, a Spiritual Doctor, knowing fully that Rabbis are human and can err, is part of that process.

No, we shouldn't be asking Rabbis what we should make for supper tonight nor should we run to inquire about every little decision in our lives. But when it comes to the truly significant issues that concern us,

we should think in terms of what G-d would want us to do, and asking a knowledgeable Rabbi is the closest we can come to asking G-d Himself. © 2007 Rabbi B. Leff & aish.com

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the honor of G-d filled the Mishkan” (Shemos 40:34). All of the hard work that the Children of Israel put into donating towards and building the Mishkan culminated in G-d resting His presence (as it were) among the nation, in the sanctuary they had built for Him. Where did this "cloud," which hid G-d's divine light/honor within it, come from? "From the day that the Torah was given (6 or 7 Sivan 2448) until the first of the month (of Nisan) when the Mishkan was put together, and until the 20th of Iyar when the cloud arose (to start the nation's first "journey," see Bamidbar 10:11-12), the divine presence did not become removed (from Mt. Sinai)." From this Rashi (Beitzah 5b, d"h "michdi kesiv," as well as other places) it is apparent that this cloud had descended from above onto Mt. Sinai when the "10 Commandments" were publicly said, and remained there until the Mishkan was completed, when it moved to it's new residence.

However, Rashi added a second date, the 20th of Iyar, implying that the cloud was still above Mt. Sinai for more than a month and a half after the Mishkan was built. Although the Rashash explains Rashi to mean "either" the 1st of Nisan "or" the 20th of Iyar (not both), as Rashi was unsure of which date the cloud actually vacated Mt. Sinai, how can there be any doubt when the cloud moved to the Mishkan if our verse (as well as Bamidbar 9:15) says explicitly that the cloud covered the Mishkan on the day that it was first erected?

Elsewhere (Taanis 21b, d"h "el mul hahar hahu"), Rashi tells us "the divine presence did not leave (Mt. Sinai) until the latter (2nd) set of "luchos" (tablets with the "10 Commandments" engraved in them), which were given on Yom Kippur (i.e. the 10th of Tishray), and also all of that winter when they were busy with the building of the Mishkan the divine presence remained on the mountain and from there all of the commandments were given with voices and flames like on the day the "10 Commandments" were received until the first of Nisan when the Mishkan was built [when] the divine presence journeyed and moved from the mountain and dwelled on the cover of the ark, and there, in the Tent of Meeting, the Torah-including its concepts and details-were repeated (to Moshe)." Rashi reaffirms that the cloud within which the divine presence dwelled moved from Mt. Sinai to the Mishkan upon the latter's completion, adding that until then G-d taught Moshe the Torah's commandment while still dwelling on Mt. Sinai and then taught it to him again in the Mishkan.

While not mentioning the 20th of Iyar, an additional problem arises from this Rashi. In last week's Parasha we were told that Moshe moved his tent away from the nation (Shemos 33:7), and G-d went with him as His "cloud pillar" descended there and spoke with him (33:9). Rashi tells us (33:11) that this arrangement took place from Yom Kippur until the Mishkan was completed (as until Yom Kippur Moshe spent the 3x40 days on Mt. Sinai). How could G-d's presence have traveled to Moshe's tent from Yom Kippur until the Mishkan was built if it remained atop Mt. Sinai until then?

Previously (www.aishdas.org/ta/5766/bahaalosecha.pdf), I discussed an apparent contradiction between Rashi's explanations of Moshe's saying "stand, Hashem" ("kumah Hashem," Bamidbar 10:35). On that verse, Rashi explains it to mean, "stay there, don't go any farther," because the divine presence had started traveling and was already 3 days ahead of the nation. Yet, earlier (9:18) Rashi had explained it to mean, "get up and go," as G-d's presence wouldn't start to travel until Moshe said those words. In order to explain how the cloud containing the divine presence could still be over the Mishkan until Moshe said "kumah Hashem" while, at the same time, already be 3 days ahead, I suggested (and tried to prove) that the cloud containing G-d's presence stretched over a large area (see Rabbeinu Chananel, quoted by Rabbeinu Bachye on Shemos 12:2), including over individuals when they left the camp's boundaries (see Sifray Zuta, Behaalosecha 33). It is therefore possible that it stretched from the Mishkan and extended "like a beam" (see Tanchuma, Bamidbar 12) all the way to where the traveling ark was (i.e. 3 days ahead). As a result, saying "kumah Hashem" can mean both "stop" and "go" at the same time, as the Mishkan couldn't be taken down until the divine presence left ("go") while Moshe was afraid that the part that was way in front would get too far ahead ("stop").

Based on this, we can answer our two above questions as well. The cloud was still over Mt. Sinai at least until the 1st of Nisan, but extended itself to Moshe's tent in order to communicate with him there. And even though "the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting" when the Mishkan was completed, that doesn't necessarily mean that it had to vacate Mt. Sinai at that time; it could have extended itself from the mountain until the Mishkan and covered both simultaneously. Therefore, Rashi was unsure of when exactly the cloud left Mt. Sinai. It could have been immediately when it covered the Mishkan, or it could have been later. But it certainly was no later than the 20th of Iyar, when the entire nation left the area.

Boruch Hashem, after having applied what I wrote about nine months ago to try to answer these questions, I found a similar approach (not to explain "kumah Hashem," but to explain Rashi in Beitzah). The

Chuchmas Manoach (one of the commentaries in the back of Beitzah) says, "Rashi was unsure of when the divine presence left [Mt. Sinai], whether it was immediately when the Mishkan was put up on Rosh Chodesh Nisan because it then rested only on the Mishkan or if it also rested on Mt. Sinai until the cloud rose from being on the Mishkan and the nation traveled from there, [when] it obviously moved off of Mt. Sinai as well." Also, see the Menachem Maishiv Nefesh (Beitzah 5b) who extends this (pardon the pun) to reconcile Rashi in Taanis (21b) with Rashi in Ki Sisa (Shemos 33:11). Boruch shekivanti. © 2007 Rabbi D. Kramer

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

In the beginning of this week's Torah portion, Moshe turns to the nation and repeats the general commands that he was given in the beginning of the portion of Teruma, asking Bnei Yisrael to donate for the construction of the Tabernacle. "Take a contribution from you for G-d, let everybody with a willing heart bring G-d's donation, gold and silver and copper... and onyx stones and additional stones for the Ephod and the Choshen" [Shemot 35:5-9]. But then, after the passage about the contributions, Moshe adds something that was not mentioned earlier: "And let every wise person among you come and make everything that G-d commanded" [35:10]. Thus, Moshe asks not only for raw materials for the Tabernacle but he also asks people who have the proper skills to actually donate the work itself.

However, this new request by Moshe was not fulfilled at first. The Torah describes at length how generous Bnei Yisrael were in donating their precious materials to the Tabernacle. This includes a general heading: "And every man whose heart led him and everybody who wanted to donate brought the contribution of G-d for the work of the Tent of Meeting and for all its labors, and for the holy garments" [35:21], and also the specific details of what was donated by every different group, "everybody with a generous heart ... every man who had in his possession blue and purple cloth... everybody who contributed silver and copper..." [35:22-25]. But we are not told that anybody came to do the work!

Evidently for this reason Moshe turned a second time to the people, in order to specifically emphasize actually doing the work of construction. In last week's portion, G-d said to Moshe, "See that I have called out in the name of Betzalel Ben Uri Ben Chur, of the Tribe of Yehuda. And I will fill him with the spirit of G-d, with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge of all the work... And behold I have given to him Oholiov Ben Achisamach from the Tribe of Dan" [31:2-6]. Now, in his words to the nation Moshe repeats this request word

for word: "See how G-d has called out in the name of Betzalel Ben Uri Ben Chur, of the Tribe of Yehuda. And He filled him with the spirit of G-d, with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge of all the work... And He gave him the wisdom to teach, he together with Oholiov Ben Achisamach from the Tribe of Dan" [35:30-34]. Note that Moshe added a new phrase about teaching his skills, which is evidently meant to rectify the situation. Moshe understood that his call for wise men to do the work had not been answered, for the simple reason that nobody felt worthy of taking on the great task of the labors required to build the Tabernacle. The fact that Betzalel was picked by G-d and his own wisdom was not sufficient, and it was therefore necessary for Moshe to emphasize another important trait of the great artist: "He gave him the wisdom to teach."

Now, after the skilled workmen heard that they would perform the work after being inspired by the Divine teaching skills of the great artist and that they themselves would be infused with Divine wisdom, they could respond to Moshe's request: "And Moshe called out to Betzalel and to Oholiev and to every wise man who was given Divine wisdom by G-d, everybody whose heart was inspired to approach the labor of construction" [36:2].

RABBI DOVID SIEGEL

Haftorah

This week's haftorah which we read in conjunction with Parshas Hachodesh portrays the upcoming month of Nissan in a brilliant light. It begins with an elaborate description of the special sacrifices which will introduce the Messianic era. The prophet Yechezkel focuses on the dedication of the third Bais Hamikdash and says, "On the first day of the first month (Nissan) take a perfect bullock and purify the Bais Hamikdash." (45:18) The Radak (ad loc.) notes that the Jewish nation will return to Eretz Yisroel long before this. During that time most of the construction of the Bais Hamikdash will be completed leaving only final stages for the month of Nissan. Radak suggests that the inaugural services will begin seven days prior to the month of Nissan and will conclude on Rosh Chodesh itself. He offers with this an interpretation to the classic saying of Chazal "In Nissan we were redeemed and in Nissan we are destined to be redeemed." These words, in his opinion, refer to the events of our Haftorah wherein we are informed that the service in the Bais Hamikdash will begin in the month of Nissan.

As we follow these dates closely, we discover a striking similarity between the dedication of the final Bais Hamikdash and of the Mishkan. Historically speaking, each of them revolves around the month of Nissan. In fact, as we have discovered, they are both completed on the exact same date, Rosh Chodesh Nissan. But this specific date reveals a more

meaningful dimension to these dedications. The month of Nissan, as we know, has special significance to the Jewish people; it marks our redemption from Egyptian bondage. In truth, this redemption process began on the first day of Nissan. Because, as we discover in this week's Maftir reading, Hashem began preparing the Jewish people for their redemption on Rosh Chodesh Nissan. All of this indicates a direct corollary between the Jewish people's redemption and the erection of the Sanctuary and the final Bais Hamikdash. Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the date which introduced our redemption and afterwards our service in the Mishkan will ultimately introduce the service of the final Bais Hamikdash.

In search for an understanding of this, we refer to Nachmanides' insightful overview to Sefer Shmos. In essence, the Sefer of Shmos spans the Jewish people's exile and redemption. It begins with the descent of Yaakov and his household to Egypt and concludes with the exodus of our entire nation. Yet, almost half of the sefer is devoted to the intricacies of the Sanctuary, something seemingly unrelated to redemption! Nachmanides explains that the Jewish redemption extended far beyond the physical boundaries of Egypt. Before they left the land of Israel, Yaakov and his sons enjoyed a close relationship with Hashem. The devotion of the Patriarchs had produced such an intense level of sanctity that Hashem's presence was commonplace amongst them. However with their descent to Egypt, this experience faded away and, to some degree, distance developed between themselves and Hashem. Over the hundreds of years in Egypt, this distance grew and they eventually lost all association with Him. Nachmanides explains that even after their liberation from Egyptian bondage, scars of exile remained deeply imprinted on them. Having left Egypt, they began rebuilding their relationship with Hashem and prepared for a long journey homeward to Him. Finally, with the erection of the Sanctuary, they reached their ultimate destiny and reunited with Hashem. The Sanctuary created a tangible experience of Hashem's presence amongst them, the clearest indication of His reunification with them. With this final development, the Jewish people's redemption was complete. They now returned to the status of the Patriarchs, and were totally bound to their Creator. All scars of their exile disappeared and they could now, enjoy the closest relationship with their beloved, Hashem.

This perspective is best reflected in the words of Chazal in P'sikta Rabsi. Our Chazal inform us that, in reality, all the segments of the Sanctuary were already completed in the month of Kislev. However, Hashem waited until Nissan which is called "the month of the Patriarchs", for the erection and inauguration of the Mishkan. With the insight of Nachmanides we can appreciate the message of this P'sikta. As stated, the

erection of the Sanctuary represented the completion of our Jewish redemption, their reunification with Hashem. In fact, this unification was so intense that it was tantamount to the glorious relationship of the Patriarchs and Hashem. In essence this present Jewish status reflected that of the Patriarchs in whose merit this relationship had been reinstated. It was therefore only proper to wait until Nissan for the dedication of the Sanctuary. Nissan which was the month of the Patriarchs was reserved for this dedication, because it reflected the Jewish people's parallel level to the Patriarchs themselves.

In this week's Haftorah, we discover that this concept will continue into the Messianic era and the inauguration of the final Bais Hamikdash. Our ultimate redemption, as in our previous ones, will not be considered complete until we merit the Divine Presence in our midst. Even after our return to Eretz Yisroel, which will transpire long before Nissan, we will continue to bear the scar tissue of thousands of years of exile. Only after Hashem returns to us resting His presence amongst us will we truly be redeemed. This magnificent revelation will, quite obviously, occur in the month of Nissan. Our final redemption which reflects Hashem's return to His people will join the ranks of our redemptions and be introduced on that glorious day, Rosh Chodesh Nissan.

May we learn from them to totally subjugate ourselves to our Creator, thereby meriting the final and total destruction of Amalek and his followers. © 2007 Rabbi D. Siegel & torah.org

RABBI ADAM LIEBERMAN

A Life Lesson

Moses asked the Jewish people to donate gold, silver and copper for the construction of the Tabernacle. Seemingly, the most valuable and precious of these metals was gold, second was silver, and most plentiful and least valuable was copper. But each of these three metals were used for completely different purposes in the construction of the Tabernacle.

"Gold... was used... for... the holy work... silver to cast the sockets of the Sanctuary... the copper... the sockets of the courtyard..." (Exodus, 38:24-31)

Gold, silver, and copper all served different purposes in the construction of the Tabernacle. In fact each metal was actually dependent upon the other metals in order for their own purpose to be realized. For example, the gold was used to construct the ark that housed the Torah, but the ark needed to have a courtyard around it in order to protect itself-which needed the silver and copper in order for it to be made.

Each and every one of us, on some level, all want to change the world. But sometimes we feel that compared to others our contributions are not as significant. But the exact opposite is true. This is

because for in order for someone else to help, they almost always depend upon other people doing their part. We all must contribute in the way that G-d enabled and empowered us to do so. If we don't, it literally prevents others from doing their part.

Sometimes we doubt if we really have what it takes to make a difference, and we further question this if we compare our talent and resources to other people we see making a difference. But this is only half the story.

Every project or cause that was ever completed had many people who made it happen other than those who were "front and center" upon its completion. It might be the one's who envisioned the project, those who labored in its every detail, or maybe it was the one who rescued the project after the initial excitement faded. The bottom line is that all of these people are why the project succeeded. But again, they were all individually dependent upon someone else to do their part or there literally would be no place for their contribution.

Think about it. Who could a philanthropist give his or her money to if no one came up with new and exciting ideas?

Don't make the mistake of thinking that your contribution isn't going to make a difference. Just like in the days of the tabernacle you have the responsibility to contribute in relation to your ability. Whether G-d gave you gold, silver, or copper you're obligated to give what you can. And remember, the one who donates gold can only do so if the one who has copper gives as well. So, no matter what metal you have to give -- whether it's your money, time, or assistance--take much happiness in knowing that not only are you giving in the exact measure G-d wants you to but you also lay the foundation for allowing so many others to give as well.

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Daf HaShavua

by Rabbi Boruch Yitzchok Schochet, Mill Hill Synagogue

With the portion of Pekudei we conclude the book of Shemot. Reflecting on the many episodes since their exodus it is evident the Israelites were a difficult people-labelled by G-d Himself as a stubborn nation. Time and again they seem to be having problems and the burden of their troubles rested firmly on Moses' shoulders.

In life, we often struggle with problems of different sorts. But how many of the problems we face are really insurmountable and deserve the excessive time, energy and worry spent on them? Human nature has a peculiar way of making every little molehill look like a mountain.

Perhaps this is the significance of a peculiar passage we find at the conclusion of the portion: "And

Moses was unable to come into the sanctuary for the cloud hovered above it."

The commentators observe that Moses was like a household member in G-d's home. Nevertheless the cloud of glory determined his entry into the sanctuary. If it was hovering overhead, he was unable to enter. When it was lifted he could then go in. How come Moses had restricted passage? Surely a household member has constant access enabling him to come and go as he pleases?

What is quite apparent from the whole book of Shemot and beyond is how Moses turns to G-d every time he is confronted with a problem. Each time he is faced with an awkward people in emotional turmoil he seeks G-d's guidance. He never seems to try and resolve the difficulties on his own. The Jewish people, by extension, experiencing this, were typically always turning to him with their problems, without ever trying to work out the issues on their own.

But G-d has no problems, only plans. Thus Moses, much like the rest of us, had to learn that not every problem is really as difficult as it may at first appear. By restricting Moses' access, G-d is in effect teaching him how to look at the broader picture, reflect upon the predicament in context and deal with it himself. In so doing, he could demonstrate the same to the Jewish people as well.

The truth is that every problem is really a possibility in disguise, and that our problems should make us better, not bitter. Sometimes we even have to be thankful for our problems. If they would be less difficult, someone with less ability would have our job.

The problems we are to solve depend on our diligence, faith and conviction. To heave an anxious sigh of concern and shrug our shoulders in despair is to terminate the search for solution and to abandon the hidden opportunities, which may well lie hidden beneath. © 2005 Produced by the Rabbinical Council of the United Synagogue - London (O) Editor Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, emailed by Rafael Salasnik

RABBI ABBA WAGENSBERG

Between the Lines

This week's Torah portion concludes the Book of Exodus by describing the construction of the Tabernacle, its vessels, and the priestly garments. The Midrash (Tanchuma 11) states two opinions regarding the seven-day inauguration of the Tabernacle. According to Rebbe Chiya ben Yosef, Moses dissembled and reassembled the Tabernacle twice a day during the inauguration. This is deduced from the repetition of the word "to erect," which appears in the forms "takim" (Exodus 40:2) and "hukam" (Exodus 40:17). How could the Tabernacle be erected again once it was already built? According to Rebbe Chiya, the repetition of this word implies that Moses took the Tabernacle apart and then rebuilt it.

Rebbe Chanina adds to Rebbe Chiya's opinion by noting the word "vayakem" (Exodus 40:18), which is from the same root word "to erect." Rebbe Chanina therefore claims that Moses dissembled and reassembled the Tabernacle three times a day! By now, the question is obvious: why was it necessary for Moses to continually take apart and rebuild the Tabernacle?

The Slonimer Rebbe uses this Midrash to teach us a vital lesson. Although we spend our lives toiling and struggling to build ourselves into sanctuaries-vessels worthy for the Divine Presence to rest within-there still may be times that we stumble and fall. Despite these low periods, however, we must never give up hope. Rather, we must rouse ourselves immediately and continue to strengthen and build ourselves, because it is forbidden for a Jew to fall into despair.

We see this lesson expressed in Rebbe Chiya ben Yosef's opinion that Moses dismantled and rebuilt the Tabernacle twice a day. These two times correspond to morning and evening: the bright time and the dark time of the day. We could suggest that the message being conveyed here is to move forward not only during the bright, easy times of life, but also when circumstances are dark and difficult. No matter what the situation, our task is to build ourselves and continue to grow.

Rebbe Chanina's opinion-that Moses rebuilt the Tabernacle three times a day-also hints to this idea. If the Tabernacle was dismantled three times a day for all seven days of the inauguration, then it was taken apart and put back together a total of 21 times. Twenty-one is the numerical value of the word "ehyeh," which means, "I will be." When G-d revealed Himself to Moses at the Burning Bush, this is the Name that He asked Moses to tell the Jewish people.

G-d's description of Himself as "Ehyeh asher ehyeh"-literally, "I will be what I will be" (Exodus 3:14) -- can be interpreted to mean, "I will be with a person who says I will be." Even after we stumble and fall, G-d is with us when we choose to continue on the path of growth rather than sinking into hopelessness.

The statement "Ehyeh asher ehyeh" also hints to the value of the word "ehyeh" (21) multiplied by itself, resulting in 441. This is the same numerical value as the word "emet," which means "truth." We can suggest that a person who cultivates an attitude of continual growth, even during difficult times, will eventually come to truth.

May we be blessed to never give up, even after falling two or three or 21 times, by having confidence in ourselves and realizing that the fall is part of the climb. By doing so, may we build ourselves into a sanctuary, and merit to witness the rebuilding of the ultimate sanctuary, our Holy Temple in Jerusalem. © 2007 Rabbi A. Wagensberg & aish.com