

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The book of Shemot is reaching its conclusion in this week's double parsha. The final review of all of the artifacts, construction and costs of the mishkan is detailed before us. The transparency that we all claim to long for in governmental spending and budgets is realized in the Torah's exquisite detail in accounting for all income and spending on the mishkan.

This is an example of the soul of public trust and accountability as it should be practiced. The fact that this occurs in relation to holy purposes- the construction of the mishkan and its artifacts-only intensifies the lesson that impeccable integrity is necessary in such matters. Too many times people think that for holy projects and Torah welfare somehow corners can be cut and that the responsibility for funds donated and used can be juggled.

The torah itself clearly does not tolerate such ideas and behavior. The Torah many times over warns us of the danger of corruption, even so-called "holy" corruption. It blinds us and distorts all of our achievements and accomplishments. Even the great Moshe whose face shines with the radiance of heaven itself must be publicly held accountable.

I think that is why after so many millennia after the disappearance of the mishkan from the midst of Israel these parshiyot are still read publicly in our synagogues. The message of accountability and transparency in public monetary matters is the keystone to holiness. The holiness of the mishkan is dependent upon these principles and values.

Another idea present here is the importance of repetitiveness in these matters. The Torah recounts in detail what it has already told us earlier regarding the construction of the mishkan and its artifacts. Since reading a budget or studying a data sheet is not necessarily the most fascinating reading in the world, the Torah's insistence upon recounting these matters is at first glance most puzzling. But it is the repetition as

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much as the content itself that is the Torah's message to us.

Repeating the accounting of the construction of the mishkan-its expenses and labor and talent-emphasizes to us that the holy mishkan was crafted efficiently and honestly. There is no longer any question regarding its probity when the Torah lists for us the materials and work once more.

The second accounting must coincide exactly with the first description of the materials and work involved. And repetition is the soul of honesty. One must train one's self to be honest, to resist temptation and shoddiness. Goodness and truthfulness are conditioned by habitual behavior more so than by inspired sermons and learned treatises.

In Yiddish there was a folk saying that "truth is the best lie." A lie requires many other lies to cover its tracks. Truth stands pristine and strong always. Therefore it is not only the first accounting that is important in public and holy matters but the later accounting is also of equal if not even more importance. This week's double parsha certainly drives this point home. © 2010 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

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA HARAV BARUCH GIGI SHLIT" A

Translated by Kaeren Fish

“Moshe assembled all of the congregation of Benei Yisrael and said to them: These are the things which G-d has commanded to perform them. Six days shall work be done, and on the seventh day there shall be for you a holy day, a Shabbat of rest to G-d....” (Shemot 35:1-2)

Both in parashat Ki Tisa and in parashat Vayakhel, the laws of Shabbat are juxtaposed to the labor involved in the Mishkan. This juxtaposition gives rise to a number of halakhic discussions and practical halakhic conclusions- such as the 39 types of labor forbidden on Shabbat, which are the labors involved in the Mishkan and their derivatives, as well as the very definition of the labor forbidden on Shabbat as "melekheth machshevet" (artisan labor- i.e., labor that is

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positive, creative, intentional). However, beyond the halakic level, it would seem that there is another connection between Shabbat and the Mishkan, a connection with profound significance.

The relationship between the Mishkan and the dimension of space has as its parallel the relationship between Shabbat and the dimension of time. Just as the Mishkan is a "Sanctuary in space," so Shabbat is a "Sanctuary in time." And just as Shabbat is the completion and ultimate end-purpose of Creation, so the Mishkan is the end-purpose of Creation, as reflected in Ramban's words in his introduction to Sefer Shemot: "Then the Divine transcendence would come back again to rest over them, and then they would return to their redeemed state."

So much for the two dimensions of time and space. However, the world comprises more than just these two dimensions, and to these is added a third dimension- man. The dimension of man, too, has its sanctuary, and it is the heart: "In my heart I shall build a Sanctuary." A person who wishes to attain sanctity and to grow in sanctity, must work first and foremost on his heart. "Purify our hearts to serve You in truth," we ask; "Create me a pure heart, O G-d."

In our parasha we find an expression that repeats itself several times: "wise of heart" (chakham lev). This is not a term that is readily understood: it is not usually the heart that we speak of as the seat of wisdom, but rather the head, the brain. The heart is regarded, instead, as the seat of our emotions. However, the verses speak of "wisdom of the heart"-because the heart is the sanctuary within the dimension of man.

The Gemara (Berakhot 61b), describing the qualities of various organs, states: "The heart understands" (lev mevin). Understanding is deeper than wisdom. A person who is wise comprehends what he is taught; a person with understanding is able to "understand one thing from within another"; he is able to read between the lines and to gain insight that goes beyond the information given. This is a most profound concept: Although wisdom may be attained through the intellect, a person who aspires to reach a higher level of sanctity and connection with G-d will not be able to create this connection through the intellect alone; he will need the understanding of the heart. To be a person whose heart is in the right place, a heart that is pure

and also a heart that is warm-this is "understanding of the heart."

Man's sanctuary is indeed in his heart. Without detracting from the importance and status of knowledge and intellect, we must not forget: "G-d seeks the intention of the heart" (Sanhedrin 106b).

RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND

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Transcribed by David Twersky;

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Parshas Vayakhel marks the fruition of the instructions provided in Parshas Terumah and Tezaveh. On a theoretical level, the earlier parshios spell out the structure of the Mishkan [Tabernacle], its various utensils, and the uniform of those who use those utensils and serve in the Mishkan. In this week's Parsha, it is finally time to "pay up". This is the intent of the section introduced with the words: "Moshe said to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel, saying: 'This is the word that Hashem commanded, saying: 'Take from yourselves a portion for Hashem, everyone who is generous of heart shall bring it, as the gift for Hashem: gold and silver and copper...'" [Shmos 35:4-10]

Our parsha should logically begin with these words, asking for donations to the Mishkan building fund. However, our parsha begins (after an introductory pasuk [verse] stating that Moshe gathered the people to tell them the things Hashem commanded) with a two sentence section which is almost entirely off topic from the subject matter at hand: "Six days work shall 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. You shall light no fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day." [Shmos 35:2-3]

The Shabbos laws were already mentioned in greater detail in last week's parsha [31:12-17]. The repetition this week, at the beginning of Vayakhel, seems totally redundant. Why is it necessary to begin the section dealing with donating money to the Mishkan with this brief preamble telling us about Shabbos?

Many commentaries deal with this question. Rav Naiman notes in his sefer Darkei Mussar a peculiarity in the expression "sheshes yamim tay-a-seh melacha" which literally means "six days WORK SHALL BE DONE". A more common expression (as we indeed find elsewhere in the Torah) is "shashes yamim ta-a-seh melachtecha" (six days YOU SHALL DO YOUR WORK). It is peculiar to use the passive form of the verb for doing work. The Darkei Mussar suggests that by use of this expression, the Torah is teaching us a fundamental rule for anyone who is engaged in earning a livelihood: The amount of money a person makes is NOT commensurate with the amount of effort he puts into his job. A person is indeed required to make an effort to earn a living and support a family. One who

does not make that effort and expects "mann" from heaven will be disappointed! However it is flawed to mentally make the equation that "the more work I do the more money I will make." It does not work like that.

The Almighty decides what each of us should earn. We can exhaust ourselves in our professions and either we will not succeed in earning as much as we feel we should earn or we perhaps will earn all that money and then lose it due to unforeseen expenses or poor investments, or a variety of other "unforeseen" circumstances. On the other hand, we can exert the normal amount of effort and the Almighty may bless the actions of our hands and we may earn large sums of money, far greater than what others who work much harder than we do earn.

This is a fundamental belief in our religion and it really is what Sabbath observance is all about. Common wisdom is that "Of course if one works seven days a week, he will make more money than if he works six days a week." And yet, the Torah commands us to work only six days. If the Almighty wants to bestow upon us a certain degree of financial success, he will bestow it to us whether we expend six days of effort to earn it or we expend seven days of effort to earn it.

On a macro scale, this is what the mitzvah of Shmitah (in Parshas Behar) is all about. It may not be such a big deal to take off one day a week, but it is a big deal to take off one year in every seven. What will happen to the farmer if he does not labor in the field during that seventh year? The fundamental reason behind the mitzvah to observe the Sabbatical year of the agricultural cycle is to recognize that one's livelihood (parnassah) comes from the Almighty. He gives us His Promise that He will take care of us!

This is why the Torah here states "For six days work SHALL BE DONE". The work must be done, but one should not think "you shall do work". The "you" is not what gets the job done, it is the "He" that gets the job done and allows "you" to earn a living.

This is the necessary preamble to asking the people to donate funds for the construction of the Mishkan and its associated vessels. Whenever people are approached for giving charity-whether for institutions or for individuals- it is hard for them to write the check. It is always challenging because "where is the money going to come from?"

It was in order to address this perennial question that Moshe prefaced the chapter asking the Children of Israel to contribute to the Mishkan building fund with the mitzvah to observe Shabbos and specifically with the expression: Six days work SHALL BE DONE. This expression teaches that money is earned based on what G-d wills. After establishing the principle that in six days a person can earn the same amount that he would earn in seven days (because everything he earns comes from the Almighty), Moshe can proceed to ask for donations of gold, silver, copper, and so on.

It was first necessary to remove the people's anxiety and assure them that in the final analysis their donations would not cost them anything. As the Rambam writes in Mishneh Torah, "no one becomes poor from giving charity." Only then did Moshe ask for contributions to the Mishkan. © 2010 Rabbi Y. Frand & torah.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“Six days shall your creative activity be done, and the seventh day shall be for you sacred, a Sabbath of Sabbaths to G-d...” (Exodus 35:2)

What is the point of repeating the command to observe the Sabbath, when we previously received this law as the fourth of the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:8-11)? Moreover, barely five chapters ago, we heard G-d exhorting Moses: "But you must observe My Sabbaths as a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever..." (Ex 31:12-17). Why this repetition?

Also, the last five Biblical portions of the Book of Exodus seem to have a rather peculiar order: the Biblical text begins with the command to build a Sanctuary. (Ex 25:8), continues with the exhortation to keep the Sabbath (31:12-17), proceeds to delineate the transgression of the Golden Calf and its aftermath (32-34), returns to the Sabbath (35:1-3) and then goes back to the theme of the Sanctuary (ibid 35:4-40). So the arrangement of these five portions is: Sanctuary - Shabbat - Golden Calf - Shabbat - Sanctuary. Why such a seemingly convoluted order?

A secondary question relates to the role that Aaron plays in the tragedy of the Golden Calf. He accedes to the people's request to "make us an oracle [elohim] who will walk before us because we do not know what happened to this Moses the person who brought us out of Egypt" (Ex 32:1). He then tells them to remove their earrings, and from them he forms the Gold Calf. When Aaron hears the people cry out, "These are your oracles [Elohekha] Israel who took you out from the land of Egypt", he builds an altar, crying out "there will be a festival to the Lord [Y-H-V-H] tomorrow" (ibid 2-5). Why is Aaron not severely punished for building the Golden Calf?

Let me try to piece together what I believe the text is teaching us. Rashi, based upon the Midrash, tells us that the initial commandment to erect a Sanctuary was given by G-d on the day after Yom Kippur, as part of the forgiveness (kapparah) of Israel for their worship of the Golden Calf. The Divine ideal was not for a magnificently fancy Temple as a specific place of worship for the Israelites. After the Divine Revelation of the Decalogue, the Almighty commands, "You shall not make oracles (elohei) of silver and oracles of gold... An altar of earth shall you make for Me, and sacrifice upon it your whole burnt offerings and your peace offerings..." (Ex 20:20, 21).

The true Lord of Israel and the world did not want or need a place of gold and silver for sacrifice and worship; after all, even the heaven of heavens cannot contain the Lord who is omnipresent. The Lord wishes to be contained in the human heart and spirit, which must be transformed and ennobled by the Divine ways and characteristics, words and commandments. After all, G-d reveals Himself to the Jewish people by means of a spiritual experience, which culminates in words to be internalized rather than via a vision of objects and material things, to be built and ornamented.

However, when the Israelites fear that Moses has left them, they panic and reach back to their Egyptian psyche in search of a substitute, not necessarily for G-d, but rather for Moses. They desperately require someone or something that can serve as a ladder, a kind of pogo stick, to inspire them and help them traverse the distance between a material world and a spiritual deity.

The Ramban explains and archeology confirms that the gold calf of Egypt was not in itself a god, but rather the seat of the sun god Ra, whom they worshipped. This is what Aaron was willing to make for them. It was not a G-d substitute, but a Moses substitute. After all, Aaron cries out, after producing the Golden Calf, "There will be a festival for the Lord [Y-H-V-H] tomorrow." And Aaron knows that by the morrow, Moses will return.

Tragically, the Israelites take the material Moses substitute, meant to be merely a means to G-d, and make it their end-goal and the ultimate purpose of their existence. Aaron tries to prevent this by making an altar for the calf to express the fact that the gold is to be a sacrifice for the true G-d whom they will worship the next day. But the people exchange the means for the end, get up early the next morning before Moses' arrival, and bring animal offerings to the calf itself, and not to G-d. "They got up to revel, to orgy - [le'tzahek - which is the very word the Bible uses in describing the actions of Yishmael, antithesis of Yitzhak, rejected son of Abraham, which the Midrash interprets as idolatry, murder and sexual immorality]."

G-d understands the human need for some material object of inspiration to help bring the Israelites to an exalted level of spirituality. He therefore commands, "They shall make a Sanctuary for Me," but for the express purpose that "through it I may dwell in their midst," - in their hearts, minds and spirits, and not in a material Sanctuary or Temple. The Sanctuary must be a means, the gold and silver may serve as the pogo stick, but they dare not become a god alongside of Me.

To that end, after commanding the Sanctuary, the sanctity of space and place, of object and building, G-d ordains the Israelites to observe the Sabbath day, the higher and truer sanctity of time, the genuine spiritual meeting place between the hearts and souls of Israel with the Divine. The Sabbath day is a paradigm, a model, of a perfect world of peace and harmony, a

world dedicated to ethical and spiritual ennoblement, the very purpose of Israel's existence and mission in the world. Hence our Sages teach us that the Sanctuary and the construction of its magnificent furnishings could not be worked and developed on the Sabbath day; the Sanctuary, and the sanctity of space-object, is a means, whereas the Sabbath, and the sanctity of time-spirit, is the end and the goal.

And this is what G-d reveals to Moses in His second Revelation at Sinai, the revelation of G-d's Name, G-d's glory and G-d's ways: the Lord of love, the G-d of Compassion and Freely-Giving Grace, of Loving-kindness and of Truth (Ex 34:6,7). The ultimate place for G-d is not a Temple but a human heart; the ultimate expression of G-d is not in gold and silver, but in the internalization of the Divine characteristics, in the performance of actions which are borne of compassion and loving-kindness and truth. Do not confuse the means with the end, the Sanctuary with the Sabbath! Only then will the calendar become transformed into an eternal Sabbath, only then will the true G-d of love be able to dwell in our midst forever, only then will the cosmos be transformed into a true sanctuary of G-d and humans together in a Sabbath relationship of love and peace. © 2010 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI SIR JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

Finally the long narrative of the construction of the Tabernacle- to which the Torah devotes more space than any other single subject- is at an end. The building, its frame, drapes and sacred furniture, were complete. Moses inspects the finished project. We then read: "The Israelites had done all the work just as the Lord had commanded Moses. Moses saw all the work, and behold-they had done it just as the Lord had commanded. So Moses blessed them." (Ex. 39:43)

Like many other passages in the description of the making of the Tabernacle, this echoes a line from the creation narrative: "G-d saw all that He had made, and behold-it was very good" (Gen. 1:31 -- the words in common are Vayar, "he saw", et kol, "all" and ve-hineh, "and behold").

The literary parallels between the Divine creation of the universe and the Israelites' construction of the Tabernacle are intentional and consequential. The Tabernacle was a micro-cosmos, a universe-in-miniature. In creating the universe, G-d made a home for humanity. In building the sanctuary, humanity made a home for G-d. And just as, at the beginning of time, G-d had blessed creation, so Moses blessed those who had a share in its human counterpart.

What, though, was the blessing Moses gave? The Torah itself is silent on this point, but the sages supplied the missing information.

"With what blessing did Moses bless them? He said to them: "May it be G-d's will that His presence

rests in the work of your hands." They responded: "May the pleasantness of the Lord our G-d be upon us. Establish for us the work of our hands, O establish the work of our hands" (Psalm 90:17)." (Sifre to Bamidbar, 143)

The midrash is based on the following stream of thought. One, and only one, psalm is attributed to Moses: Psalm 90, which bears the superscription, "A prayer of Moses, the man of G-d." It ends with the verse cited above, "May the pleasantness (noam) of the Lord our G-d be upon us". The reference in the verse to "the work of our hands" must surely refer to the Tabernacle—the only "work", in the sense of constructive achievement, the Israelites performed in Moses' day. Hence the phrase "a prayer of Moses" must be understood as the prayer/blessing he pronounced on the completion of the Tabernacle.

The question then arises as to the meaning of the words "the pleasantness of the Lord". Another Psalm (27:4) uses an almost identical phrase: "One thing I ask of the Lord, only this do I seek: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the pleasantness (noam) of the Lord and worship in His temple." This suggests that both psalms are a reference to the sanctuary (in the wilderness, the tabernacle; in a later era, the temple), and that "the pleasantness of the Lord" is a poetic way of describing the cloud of glory that filled the Tabernacle ("Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle", Ex. 40:34) — in other words, the Divine presence. Thus when Moses said, "May the pleasantness of the Lord our G-d be upon us", he meant: "May it be G-d's will that His presence rests in the work of your hands."

It is a beautiful idea. Is it, though, something more? There is a hint here of a principle that has immense implications for the entire structure of Judaism. We can summarize it simply: It is not objects that are holy. It is human action and intention in accordance with the will of G-d that creates holiness.

Consider the following ruling of the sages (see Gittin 45b; Mishneh Torah, Yesodei ha-Torah 6:8; Tefillin 1:13): A Torah scroll, or tefillin, or a mezuzah, written by a heretic, is to be burned. Normally, to destroy a document containing G-d's name is absolutely forbidden. However, in this case, as Maimonides explains: "Since the person who wrote it does not believe in the sanctity of the name of G-d, and therefore did not write it with the requisite intent but merely as any other [secular] text, the [document containing] G-d's name is not sanctified [and may be destroyed]. Indeed it is a mitzvah to burn it so as to leave no record of heretics and their works."

Imagine two Torah scrolls, one written with the requisite intention and sanctity, the other written by an atheist. Physically, they may be indistinguishable. One cannot imagine any scientific test that—by examining the scrolls themselves—would establish which was holy and

which not. Yet one is to be held in the highest possible sanctity, and the other to be burned. Holiness is not a property of objects. It is a property of human acts and intentions.

It is this idea that lies behind the very precise formula we use when we recite a blessing over the performance of a command: "Blessed are You... who has sanctified us by His commandments, and has commanded us to..." It is the commandments that make us holy: nothing else. When G-d said to the Israelites, before the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, "You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6), He meant that the Israelites would become holy through their performance of the commands he was about to reveal to them, not that there was anything intrinsically holy about them, prior to and independent of the commands. As Issi ben Judah said (Mekhilta, Massechta de-Kaspa, 20): "When G-d enjoins a new mitzvah on Israel, He endows them with new holiness."

The great commentator and halakhist R. Meir Simcha of Dvinsk (1843-1926, often known by the name of one of his commentaries, Ohr Sameakh) was tireless and forceful in stressing the point. Mount Sinai was—as the site of the greatest ever revelation of G-d—momentarily the holiest place on earth, yet as soon as the revelation was over, even animals were permitted to graze on it (Meshekh Chokhmah to Ex. 19:13). The first tablets Moses brought down the mountain were supremely sacred. They had been hewn and written by G-d himself. Yet Moses broke them to show the Israelites that nothing is holy except in the context of fulfilling G-d's will (Meshekh Chokhmah to Ex. 32:19). We endow objects and places with holiness, through our intentions, our words and our deeds. There is no such thing as ontological holiness, intrinsic sanctity.

Returning to the sanctuary, the very idea that there can be a "house of G-d"—that we can create, in finite space, a home for the Infinite—seems a contradiction in terms. Indeed, Israel's wisest king, Solomon, and one of the greatest of its prophets, Isaiah, said so explicitly. On dedicating the Temple, Solomon said: "But will G-d really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain You. How much less this temple I have built." (I Kings 8:27). Likewise Isaiah said, "This is what the Lord says: Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where is the house you will build for Me? Where will My resting place be? (Isaiah 66:1).

The answer was given by G-d to Moses at the very outset, before the construction of the Tabernacle was begun: "Let them make a sanctuary for Me, and I will dwell in them"—not "in it" but "in them"—not in the building but its builders, not in wood and metal, bricks or stone, but in those who build and those who worship. It is not objects, buildings, or places that are holy-in-themselves. Only acts of heart and mind can endow them with holiness.

That is the deep meaning of Moses' blessing to the Israelites: "May it be G-d's will that His presence rests in the work of your hands." G-d does not inhere in things-not in Mount Sinai, not in the tablets, not in the Tabernacle. His presence (the word Shekhinah, Divine presence, comes from the same root as Mishkan, sanctuary or tabernacle) lives in "the work of our hands"- whatever we do in accordance with His will. There was nothing grand about the tabernacle. It was small, fragile, portable. What made it holy was one thing only, that the Israelites "had made it just as the Lord had commanded". The simplest human act, if done for the sake of G-d, has more sanctity than the holiest of holy objects. That, to me, is a remarkable principle of faith. © 2010 Rabbi Sir J. Sacks and torah.org

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

In the portion of Pekudei a reckoning of the work done in the Tabernacle is recorded. Interesting, is the Hebrew word for reckoning-pekudei. (Exodus 38:21) As I have often pointed out in these weekly Torah discussions, one key to understanding the meaning of a word in the Torah is by analyzing the first time it is found.

In the story of Avraham (Abraham) and Sarah we first come across the term p-k-d. The Torah tells us that for many years, Avraham and Sarah could not have children. Finally Sarah does give birth. In the words of the Torah, "and the Lord remembered Sarah as He had spoken...and Sarah conceived and bore a son to Avraham." (Genesis 21:1) The word "remembered" is pakad. Somehow then pekudei is interwoven with birth as the text indicates that G-d had remembered Sarah.

It follows therefore, that pekudei, the accounting of the Tabernacle, is associated with birth. Perhaps it can be suggested that just as a mother plays the crucial role in the development of the fetus and the nurturing of its well being, so too does G-d serve as a Mother in His protection of the Tabernacle. The Hebrew word for mercy is rachum, from the word rechem that means womb. G-d's love is the love of the womb. It is a mother's love that is infinite and unconditional, much like the love displayed by G-d in protecting the Tabernacle.

Another parallel comes to mind. By definition birth involves a sense of history. When a child is born there is recognition of historic continuity, of the infant being part of a continuum of the family's past history. So too, the Mishkan. In many ways, the building of the Tabernacle was the crescendo of Israel's past, the culmination of a dream that Israel as a nation would have a place in which to worship G-d.

Although the birth of a child is often the end of a time of feelings of joy and anticipation, it is also a beginning. It is the start of hopes and wishes that the child grow to full maturity and impact powerfully on the

Jewish people and all humankind. This is also the case with the Mishkan. In many cases of buildings, many involved see the beauty of the actual structure to be an end in itself. But buildings are not ends, they are rather the means to reach higher, to feel more powerfully the deeper presence of G-d. The Mishkan is associated with birth for it reminds us that even as a tabernacle or any synagogue is dedicated, our responsibility is to go beyond the bricks and mortar to make sure that the space is infused with spirituality.

The birth of a child is a time to re-evaluate our priorities and look ahead toward the dream of years of growth. The Mishkan, and in the same way our individual structures of worship, should, in the same way, make us reflect on our values and aspire to higher spiritual levels of holiness. © 2010 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 SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

Parshat Vayakhel explains that the frame of the Tabernacle was constructed of "shittim wood, standing." The talmud offers several explanations of this phrase. The first and simplest is that it refers to the orientation of the planks used in the construction; they should be vertical rather than horizontal. Another interpretation is that "standing" means that they are standing to this very day-the Tabernacle has been hidden away, but has not been destroyed. R' Baruch Simon cites a number of sources who contrast this to the Temple, which was burned to the ground. Why will the Tabernacle stand forever while the Temple has been destroyed?

R' Baruch Simon explains that the Temple was largely constructed by the hired labor of Tyrean craftsmen who were working for money, not for the sake of the task itself. Their hearts weren't truly in it. However, the Tabernacle was built by Jews themselves, out of commitment and love of G-d. Our accomplishments are most likely to endure when they are done in this fashion, with dedication and for their own sake. © 2010 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Yitzchak Ben Yosef, Lieutenant Colonel, Chaplain of the IDF Land Forces

Many passages in the Torah are devoted to the details of the construction of the Tabernacle. There are some people who compared the building of the Tabernacle to the creation of the world. G-d created the world for the benefit of man, while the Tabernacle was built by man for the Creator.

However, this is not the only point of comparison between the Tabernacle and the creation of the world. Betzalel and Oholiav were given the roles of architects of the edifice. It is indeed quite surprising that within a nation that had just been freed from a house of slavery it was possible to find great artists who were experts in such varied fields as working with gold and silver in addition to weaving and embroidery. Until a short time before this their expertise was limited to clay and bricks! The answer is that G-d instilled a spirit of wisdom in them so that they would be able to accomplish their task.

The Midrash enlightens us by telling us that the appointment of Betzalel was suggested to Moshe as a question. G-d asks Moshe, "Is Betzalel a suitable choice?" And Moshe replies, "Master of the world: If he satisfies You, he certainly must be satisfactory for me!" But in the end Moshe also asked Bnei Yisrael if he was acceptable to them.

Just as at the time of creation G-d said "Let us create mankind" [Bereishit 1:26] in the plural, so when the people who were to construct the Tabernacle were chosen G-d asked for approval by Moshe and the people, and He did not give them a command. The reason was to teach mankind that leadership must be based on modesty and a desire for cooperation.

This is not the only thing that we can learn about proper leadership. There is another element here that is important for those who would lead the people? that they should justify their practices both to Yisrael and to the Almighty. When Moshe told the people that G-d had commanded them to make the Tabernacle out of beams, an Altar, and the various utensils, they asked him, "Who will do all of this?" He said to them, "Betzalel." They came to the conclusion that Moshe had decided this on his own, and that he wanted to appoint his relative Betzalel, son of Uri. But Moshe told them, "See how G-d has called out the name of Betzalel" [Shemot 35:30]. He gave them a reasonable explanation for the choice, that it was according to G-d's will, in order to comply with the verse, "Let it be favorable and appear wise in the eyes of G-d and mankind" [Mishlei 3:4]. Moshe was not satisfied to just obey G-d's command, he tried to convince Bnei Yisrael that the Almighty had chosen Betzalel for a logical reason. Why did he do this?

Mankind - the flock of the Almighty - is in constant danger of becoming trapped into such traits as pettiness, suspicion, and slander. Moshe teaches us that a true leader must spend time and energy in an effort to clear the atmosphere, in uprooting suspicions, and in preventing false rumors. In addition, this week's portion lists in detail all the income and the expenses in the labors of the Tabernacle, so that it was possible to struggle against other suspicions and other slanders, when people said: "Look at Moshe - his food comes from us, from the contributions we gave him for building the Tabernacle." Who was suspected of such action?

Who was the subject of these rumors? It was the man who was described by the verse as "my slave Moshe, who is a trusted visitor throughout my house" [Bamidbar 12:7]. And for this reason, the detailed accounting of the materials in the Tabernacle is given.

Moshe teaches us that being pure before G-d is not sufficient, we must also be pure in the eyes of Yisrael, so that the suspicions will not bring forth dark sides of man's nature and poison the atmosphere.

In a similar way, the Talmud tells us that the family of Garmu, who baked the "lechem hapanim," the weekly bread that was displayed in the Temple, never allowed their children to have fresh bread, so that they would not be suspected of eating from the lechem hapanim (Yoma 38a). Similarly, the brides of the family of Avtinus, who knew how to make the incense in the Temple, did not go around with perfume, so that they would not be accused of taking the incense for their personal use.

Moshe teaches us an important lesson in leadership - both in showing the people that the choice of Betzalel was a direct command by G-d and not a preference for his own relative and in the detailed accounting of the donations and expenses in the Tabernacle. As is written, "You shall be pure from the point of view of both G-d and Yisrael" [Bamidbar 32:22].

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd He (G-d) filled him (Betzalel) with the spirit of G-d" (Shemos 35:31). As the one put in charge of the construction of the Mishkan and its vessels, G-d bestowed upon Betzalel His divine spirit in order to help him complete the task for which he was chosen. This verse, written in the past tense ("filled") parallels the verse describing what happened when Betzalel was first chosen to oversee the construction of the Mishkan: "And I (G-d) will fill him (Betzalel) with the spirit of G-d" (Shemos 31:3), with the words being exactly the same except for the verb being in the future tense ("will fill") and the narrative switching from first person ("I") to third person ("He").

Both of these changes are fully explainable, as the first verse was said by G-d (hence the first person) before the materials were solicited/donated (hence the future tense), while the second verse was said by Moshe (hence the third person) after the materials had been collected, when the construction was about to start and Betzalel had already been filled with G-d's spirit (hence the past tense). We would therefore expect the two verses (besides these differences) to be translated exactly the same way. Yet, the Targum Yonasan does not. For the first verse, "the spirit of G-d" ("ruach Elokim") is translated as "ruach kudsha min kudum Hashem" while in the second verse it is translated as "ruach nevuah min kudum Hashem." Why did the "holy spirit" (ruach kudsha) that G-d told Moshe

would fill Betzalel become a "spirit of prophecy" ("ruach nevuah") when it actually did? Both verses should either be translated as "holy spirit" or as "G-d's spirit of prophecy;" why are they translated differently?

The Talmud (Nedarim 22b) tells us that had Israel not sinned, only the Five Books of the Torah and the Book of Yehoshua would have been given to them, but none of the other books of Tanach. This seems strange, as aside from the lessons learned from the storyline of Sefer Shoftim, Sefer Shemuel, Sefer Melachim and the rest of the Sifray Nevi'im, there are many valuable lessons about how to serve G-d that Chazal (our Sages, of blessed memory) deduce and expound upon from the wording used in the Nevi'im and Kesuvim. What would our davening be like if we didn't have Sefer Tehillim (Psalms)? Could we discuss theodicy anywhere near as deeply without Sefer Iyov (Job)? Imagine if there were no Sefer Mishlay (Proverbs) to be used in sermons or to teach mussar! The Netziv, in the introduction of his commentary on the She'iltos (2:5), references the Talmud (Taanis 9a) and Bamidbar Rabbah (Naso 10:6), which say that everything written in Nevi'im and Kesuvim is hinted about in the Torah. He explains how before the sin of the golden calf the Nation of Israel was on such a high spiritual level that they could learn every lesson that needed to be learned from the rest of Tanach from the verses of the Chumash and Sefer Yehoshua. It was only after they sinned, when they could no longer figure out all of these lessons from the Torah itself, that it had to be spelled out a bit more clearly for them in the rest of Tanach.

In "Minchas Eliyahu," R' Eli Steinberg uses this Netziv to explain why the Targum Yonasan switches from Betzalel being filled with G-d's "holy spirit" to being filled with His "spirit of prophecy." "Ruach Hakodesh," while referring to a high level of divine inspiration that signifies G-d helping a person understand the divine will, is not as high a level as that of prophecy (see Soteh 48b). Just as the nation had been on a high enough level to learn all of Tanach's lessons from the Chumash and Sefer Yehoshua, Betzalel would have been able to comprehend exactly how G-d wanted the Mishkan and its vessels to be using only Ruach Hakodesh. After the sin of the golden calf, however, Betzalel needed more than Ruach Hakodesh; he needed full-fledged prophecy in order to comprehend things as well as he would have using only Ruach Hakodesh before the sin. Therefore, when the Mishkan was commanded (which came before the sin of the golden calf), "ruach Elokim" is translated as "G-d's holy spirit," but afterwards, it was translated as "G-d's spirit of prophecy."

As R' Steinberg himself points out, this only works if the commandment to build the Mishkan was made before the sin of the golden calf (see www.aishdas.org/ta/5766/terumah.pdf). If this Targum were of the opinion that it came afterwards, it wouldn't work. Additionally, since the nation as a whole was on a

higher level before the sin than afterwards, we would have expected Betzalel to also be on a higher level beforehand than afterwards. It seems a bit awkward that before the sin he only attained Ruach Hakodesh while afterwards he reached Nevuah. Nevertheless, he may have only needed Ruach Hakodesh before, and the implication is not that he himself was a prophet but that G-d gave him the understanding as if he were, a level (somewhat) artificially given to him so that he could properly complete the task, an external spiritual boost that wasn't necessary before the sin.

When the nation brought the materials to Moshe (35:21), Targum Yonasan translates the words "asher nudvuh rucho," which literally means "that had a spirit that was one of donating," as "d'ashlaimis ruchay b'nevuasa d'imay." The word "ashlaim" (from "shalaim," complete) is also used by the Targumim when translating the word "vayimalay," (and He filled) when Betzalel was filled with the spirit of G-d (35:31), making this expression "whose spirit was filled with the prophecy that was with him." It wasn't only Betzalel that had attained a prophetic level, but all who donated materials and talents to the Mishkan attained it (to some degree). Rav Yechiel Michel Feinstein, z"l, quotes the Rambam (Hilchos Yesoday Hatorah 7:7), who tells us that prophecy is not only a means for G-d to communicate with his people (through the prophet). There is also "personal prophecy," which is a vehicle for the individual that experiences it to better understand G-d, the world He created, and his (or her) role in it. It is this type of prophecy, Rav Yechiel Michel writes, that the nation experienced when they contributed towards the Mishkan so that they each one could better appreciate what they were trying to accomplish.

It is therefore possible that Betzalel only needed Ruach Hakodesh in order to figure out how G-d wanted the Mishkan. However, once G-d bestowed a level of prophecy on everybody (so that they could better appreciate it), Betzalel was granted that higher level as well. (After all, how could the people get it but not the one in charge.) Therefore, when G-d told Moshe that He was choosing Betzalel to oversee the construction of the Mishkan, all that had to be included in his "spirit of G-d" was to have Ruach Hakodesh. After the nation donated towards the Mishkan and experienced prophecy, however, since Betzalel was also given prophecy (even if he didn't need it to get the details of the Mishkan right), we are told that the "spirit of G-d" he actually attained was one of prophecy. © 2010 Rabbi D. Kramer



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