

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

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

The key word here is *vayakhel*, "Moses gathered." *Kehillah* means community. A *kehillah* or *kahal* is a group of people assembled for a given purpose. That purpose can be positive or negative, constructive or destructive. The same word that appears at the beginning of this week's parsha as the beginning of the solution, appeared in last week's parsha as the start of the problem: "When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered [*vayikahel*] around Aaron and said, 'Make us a god to lead us. As for this man Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.'"

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

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

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

¹ Vayakhel is Moses' response to the wild abandon of the crowd that gathered around Aaron and made the golden calf. He does something fascinating. He does not oppose the people, as he did initially when he saw the golden calf. Instead, he uses the same motivation that drove them in the first place. They wanted to create something that would be a sign that G-d was among them: not on the heights of a mountain but in the midst of the camp. He appeals to the same sense of generosity that made them offer up their gold ornaments. The difference is that they are now acting in accordance with G-d's command, not their own spontaneous feelings.

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

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

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

Then, for four days they were introduced to one another through a series of competitions. There were trophies, medals and prizes for the winners, and nothing for the losers. Almost immediately there was tension

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

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NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTED VIA EMAIL
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between them: name-calling, teasing, and derogatory songs. It got worse. Each burned the other's flag and raided their cabins. They objected to eating together with the others in the same dining hall.

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

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

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

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

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

I suggest that the passage is not a joke but a precisely calibrated truth. To understand it we must read the continuation: "Scholars increase peace in the world as it is said, 'All your children shall be learned of the Lord and great will be the peace of your children' (Isaiah 54: 13). Read not 'your children' but 'your builders.'" When scholars become builders they create

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

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

That is what Moses understood and did. He knew that if you want to build a team, create a team that builds. ©2014 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"[Bezalel] made two golden cherubs, hammering them out from the two ends of the cover ("kapporet")... The cherubs had their wings outstretched upward so as to shield the ark-cover with their wings; they faced one another..." (Exodus 37:8-9)

So important and beloved was the sacred desert tabernacle that the Bible records both its construction and completion. For the Ramban (Nahmanides), the most important of the tabernacle furnishings was the Holy Ark repository of the Two Stone Tablets containing the Ten Commandments. The Ramban maintains that the prescription to build the tabernacle came immediately following the Revelation at Sinai; G-d's voice continued to be transmitted between the two cherubs at the two ends of the ark-cover.

From this perspective, the symbolism of the "cherubs" is exquisite in its simple sensitivity. The Midrash (cited by Rashi on Ex. 25:18) explains that each cherub had the face of a babe with a body reminiscent of a soaring angel. If we are to accept the premise that G-d spoke through them, these figures who caringly directed their gaze towards each other are now represented by the greatest Torah scholars of each generation, whose wings transport G-d's words from heaven to earth and whose whole-hearted purity is expressed in the purity of their faces. They transmit, interpret and "make relevant" the Divine words for every situation and generation. Responsa in each generation continue our opportunity to hear the voice of the living G-d.

But there remains one problem. The first time that the Bible mentions the word "cherubs" is soon after the creation of the world, when Adam and Eve were barred from the Garden of Eden: "(G-d) drove out the human being, and stationed the cherubs at the east of the Garden Eden, along with the fire of the ever-turning sword, to guard the path to the tree of life..." (Genesis 3:24)

Here the cherubs appear to be negative creatures, holding the fire of the revolving swords in their hands, preventing the possibility of eternal life. Indeed Rashi (ad loc.) refers to them as "angels of destruction". Why does the Bible use such destructive imagery for "cherubs" of the ark-cover guarding the holy Tablets?

Many years ago, when I was still a rabbi in Manhattan, I gave a sermon about the cherubic face of a young child; I suggested that children can either rise to exalted heights or descend to destructive depths, depending upon where they are stationed. Place them outside of the Garden of Eden with the fire of a revolving sword in their hands and you have messengers of destruction; place them next to the sacred ark and you have the cherubs between whom is heard the living words of the Divine!

Nevertheless, the problem of the usage of the term "cherubs" must be explained. How can the same term be so spiritually charged in the Book of Exodus when its initial usage in the Book of Genesis expressed destructiveness?

When I came on aliya, I saw Israeli soldiers stationed at every checkpoint and army base, and as the years went by my children and grandchildren were called up to serve. These young people often have the pure facial features of children (indeed, they seem to look younger and younger as I am getting older), and with Uzis in their hands, they too are protecting the Torah "tree of life" of our Jewish future. In our generation, the Torah must be protected in two ways: by scholars who guarantee its continuity by teaching and interpreting it and by those who protect it in war from our enemies who seeking to destroy it (and us). Both of these "cherubs" are sacred, deserving of our deepest gratitude.

This is the most blessed period for the Jewish people in the last 2,000 years: we have returned to our homeland after being "scattered to the ends of the heavens," the Jewish exiles from across the world have miraculously returned home to Israel and the dry bones of Ezekiel have been granted skin, bones and flesh. Our "startup" nation is succeeding on all fronts despite the constant strains and ravages of war.

However, as George Santayana taught, the only thing we learn from history is that we don't learn from history. The propaganda spewed forth from the sick mind of Goebbels and his henchmen has morphed into the apartheid charges of the Arab and European nations, as the dysfunctional United Nations ceaselessly condemns Israel.

There is, however, one major difference between the 1930's and the year 2014: by grace of the Almighty, we now have a nation-state with military power. Lord Acton taught that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely, but nothing corrupts more than powerlessness.

Powerlessness gives the victory to the forces of

evil and darkness, to Amalek who targets civilians, who aims at the weak and the infirm, the women and the children. And we Jews came into the world to see to it that compassionate righteousness and moral justice will trump brute force and jihadist strength. In our generation, we require the sacred cherubs with the fire of revolving sword in their hands to pave the way for the cherubs of the sacred ark in the Sanctuary of the Divine. ©2014 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

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

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

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

The Lord, gave Israel detailed instructions how this Tabernacle and its artifacts should be constructed and designed. Even though holiness of space, location and of actual structure is necessary for human service

of G-d, it must be done solely under G-d's conditions. There can be many designs to build a golden calf. To build a Tabernacle to G-d there can only be one ordained and holy design and plan. Even when building a Tabernacle according to G-d's plan, the Jewish people were instructed and inspired to remember that holiness of time is always greater than holiness of place and of structure.

The Sabbath, which has accompanied us from the time of creation, takes precedence over all else except for human life itself. The Tabernacle and its succeeding Temples were all temporary and subject to the events of time. Even the holy Land of Israel disappeared from Jewish history for millennia. But the Sabbath never stopped accompanying the Jews wherever they lived and whatever their circumstances were. And this is why this lesson is drummed into us over and over again in the narrative of the Torah. How pertinent this lesson is in our time and in our environment. ©2014 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

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

When listing the vessels that G-d commanded the nation to make for the Mishkan, the Shulchan (table, upon which the "showbread" was kept) is mentioned along with "all of its vessels" (Sh'mos 35:13). The outer altar, and "all of its vessels," are also mentioned (35:16). However, for the Menorah (35:14), rather than "all of its vessels," it is just "its vessels" that are mentioned. The most obvious reason for this difference is that some of the Menorah's vessels ("its lamps") were explicitly mentioned in the same verse, so "all" of its vessels need not be referenced. (The same is true after the Mishkan was finished, see 39:36-39.) However, this is not always the case. Earlier (30:27), the Menorah's lamps are not mentioned separately, yet only "its vessels" need to be anointed, not "all of its vessels." ["All" of the Shulchan's vessels must be anointed (30:27), as well as "all" of the vessels of the outer altar (30:28).] To confuse things even more, when listing the vessels that Betzalel and his helpers are to make for the Mishkan (31:8-9), included are "all" of the vessels of the Menorah and "all" of the vessels of the outer altar, but not "all" of the vessels of the Shulchan. Why is the word "all" sometimes used and sometimes left off?

Meshech Chuchma addresses most of these issues. When discussing which parts of the Menorah were made from the "talent of pure gold" (25:39; his discussion is on 25:31), his concluding thought is that whenever "its lamps" are mentioned separately, and therefore not included with its other vessels in the word "vessels," the term "all of its vessels" can no longer be

used. Regarding anointing (30:27), he points out (see also Netziv) that many of the "vessels" of the Menorah (such as its "cups, knobs and flowers") are built into the Menorah (see 25:31), so need not be anointed separately (as anointing the Menorah covers them). Therefore, in the instructions for anointing it only says "and all its vessels" for the Shulchan (and the outer altar). For the Menorah, on the other hand, it only says "its vessels" since not all of its vessels need to be anointed.

As far as why, when Betzalel is chosen to lead the project (31:8-9), the word "all" is used for the Menorah (and the outer altar) but not for the Shulchan, Meshech Chuchma (30:27 and 35:10) suggests that overall there were more vessels for the Menorah than there were for the Shulchan. Therefore, unless some of the vessels of the Menorah are being excluded (such as when its lamps are mentioned separately or for the anointing, thereby making "its vessels" less abundant) the word "all" is used regarding the Menorah's vessels. Since all the vessels of the Shulchan were anointed, there were more vessels of the Shulchan that were anointed than vessels of the Menorah, and the word "all" is therefore used for the Shulchan and not for the Menorah.

Meshech Chuchma does not discuss why the word "all" is always used regarding the outer altar's vessels. Were there also more vessels for this altar than for the Shulchan, and more than those of the Menorah that needed to be anointed, but less (or the same amount) as the total number of the Menorah's vessels? Does the inclusion of the word "all" only depend on the contrast with whatever else is mentioned in the same verse, so only the number of the vessels of the Menorah and the Shulchan affect whether the word "all" is used, with the relative amount of vessels of the outer altar irrelevant since they are mentioned in a different verse?

The Menorah and its vessels were all made out of pure gold (25:36-39). All of the vessels of the outer altar were made out of copper (27:3). What about the vessels of the Shulchan? The Torah lists four kinds of vessels for the Shulchan -- its "forms" (in which the "showbread" was kept to maintain its shape), its "bowls" (to hold frankincense), its "support tubes" (which formed shelving for the multiple layers of bread) and its "dividers/covers" -- all of which were made out of pure gold (25:29 and 37:16). The vessels necessary to bake the bread are not mentioned (although Meshech Chuchma includes them in the "numerous" vessels of the Shulchan), and were not made out of gold. Rather, like all the other vessels of the Mishkan where it is not specified otherwise (see Netziv on 27:19), they were made out of copper. It is therefore possible that the word "all" is left out (in 31:8) in order to indicate that not all of the Shulchan's vessels are to be made out of the same material, even though all of the vessels of the Menorah and all of the vessels of the outer altar are.

To sum up, the starting point is that the word "all" is always used, unless there is a reason not to. Since not all of the Menorah's vessels need to be anointed separately, the word "all" is omitted in 30:27. Since there are more vessels for the Menorah (including those that didn't need to be anointed), or since not all of the vessels of the Shulchan were made out of gold, the word "all" is omitted in 31:8. And since the Menorah's lamps are mentioned separately from its other vessels (35:14), the word "all" could not be used there. However, this still leaves us with the question of why "its lamps" were mentioned separately, and not implicitly included by just saying "and all its vessels" (as is done elsewhere).

There is a discussion in the Talmud (Menachos 88b) whether the lamps of the Menorah are included in the "talent of pure gold" (25:39). Meshech Chochma (25:31) suggests that the reason "its lamps" are mentioned explicitly (and therefore not included in "its vessels" by saying "all of its vessels"), and are specifically mentioned after the other vessels are referenced, is to teach us that just as those other vessels do not come from the "talent of gold," neither do the lamps. [Although this contradicts Meshech Chochma's subsequent contention that the Menorah's "cups, knobs and flowers" are considered separate vessels, and would therefore be included in the other "vessels" despite certainly coming from the "talent of gold," Netziv (30:27) says that the lamps do not need to be anointed separately even if they did not come from the "talent of gold," which not only explains why not "all" of the Menorah's vessels were anointed, but can also theoretically be the difference between there being more vessels of the Shulchan being anointed than those of the Menorah.] However, even if this can explain why the Menorah's lamps are mentioned separately according to the opinion that the lamps were not part of the body of the Menorah, it would not explain why they are mentioned separately according to the opinion that the lamps were also from the "talent of gold," and therefore "built in" to the Menorah.

When explaining this dispute, the Talmud attributes the difference of opinion to how the words "all of these vessels" (25:39) are to be understood. Do these words teach us that the lamps were part of the "talent of pure gold," or that even the lips of the lamps, which become blackened from the burning wicks, must nevertheless be made of pure gold? In other words according to the opinion that the lamps did not come from the "talent of gold," this verse teaches us that every part of the Menorah, even the lips of the lamps, must be made of pure gold, and the verse that mentions "its lamps" separately teaches us that they are not made from the "talent of gold." On the other hand, according to the opinion that the lamps do come from the "talent of gold" this is learned from this verse (25:39). However, where would we learn that the lips of the lamps must also be made of pure gold from?

Perhaps this is why, according to this opinion, the lamps were mentioned separately (in 35:14), teaching us that even the lamps, including the lips of the lamps, must be made of the same material as the Menorah and the rest of its vessels. © 2014 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI BENJAMIN YUDIN

TorahWeb

At the beginning of Parshas Vayakhel Hashem enjoins the Jewish nation to observe the Shabbos. It is interesting to note how Anshei Knesses Hagedolah (Men of the Great Assembly) and our Mesorah unbroken tradition, teaches that we read the verse (Shemos 35:2), "sheishes yomim tai-a-se melacha -- six days work is to be done", and not six days "ta-aseh melacha -- you shall do work." The latter form is clearly the active form with man being the one charged to do and accomplish. The former however is the passive reflexive form, with the emphasis being on the result, i.e. the work will be done. The tai-a-se usage reminds man that his involvement and energy is crucial, but ultimately it is not he who is effecting and producing but rather a higher source is, namely Hashem.

With this understanding and orientation, it is much easier to accept and comply with the mitzvah of Shabbos. If man is ta-a-se -- the producer, then the Divine edict to desist on the Shabbos from work is a major demand and imposition. It is asking much of man who is productive all week long to forgo some of his productivity in emulation of and submission to G-d. If however, man recognizes that all his successes are due to the help and assistance of Hashem and that Hashem, as we understand from tai-a-se (see Devarim 8:18 with Targum Unkelos), provides us with the intuition, ideas and notions to invest in a particular endeavor, then we can be confident that just as He provides all week long, so too will He provide for the Shabbos.

What emerges is an incredible display of sensitivity that Hashem affords man. There is a basic human condition called na-amah d'kisufah, literally bread of embarrassment (Ramchal, Daas Tevunos 1:18). If one is constantly receiving without working or earning his keep, in short time most individuals will experience a sense of shame, worthlessness and depression. Thus, it is a kindness of Hashem that He allows us to participate in our earning a living, letting us feel that we are major players in earning our keep in this world.

I believe this idea might well be included in the introductory bracha to every Shmoneh Esrei, "gomail chasadim tovim" which literally means He performs and bestows good kindnesses. Why describe the kindness as "tovim -- good"? Isn't kindness by nature good? The answer is based upon the above idea. That He sustains us is a kindness, and that He extends dignity to us at the same time is the fulfillment of tovim.

The 611th mitzvah is to emulate Hashem -- "V'halachta b'drachav" (Devarim 28:9). The Talmud (Mishna Demai 4:7) uses the term gomlin as one of reciprocity, as in a situation that we are concerned regarding two individuals that each will perform a service for the next one, thereby each benefiting themselves. Ideally, this is the way we are to be gomeled to someone. Rather than perform an act of kindness in a fashion that the recipient feels put upon and feels indebted for the service, as they now "owe you one", ideally, one is to perform the kindness in a way that the one performing it communicates that he is actually receiving by giving and thanks the recipient for the opportunity to give. Through tai-a-se Hashem allows us to feel good while receiving, and we must strive in our personal and communal chassadim to do the same.
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RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

No less than seven portions are dedicated to the building of the Tabernacle and the sacrificial service offered there. One wonders why so much detail? This is especially troublesome when compared to the dearth of Biblical verses dealing with arguably, more relevant subjects such as Jewish ritual and Jewish ethical principles.

My dear friend, Rabbi Saul Berman suggests that one must first understand the Torah regulations of the Kohen (Jewish Priest), who ministers in the Tabernacle, in order to answer our question.

We are constantly reminded of the limits set for the Kohen. The Torah curtails their ownership rights, prohibits their contact with the dead and prescribes constant bowing to G-d during prayer by the highest priest, the Kohen Gadol.

The Kohen could not own land. Note that Joseph never acquires land belonging to the Egyptian Priests as he prepares for the years of famine. (Genesis 47:22) Their title to real estate was inviolate. In contrast, Jewish Priests were always to remain landless - marking boundaries over their material power.

The Kohen had no contact with the dead. Ancient Priests often took money for intervening on behalf of deceased souls. In contrast, Jewish law insists that the Kohen never be in a position to take advantage of those who are most vulnerable - the surviving relatives. Hence, the Torah declares the dead to be off limits to the Kohen. (Leviticus 21:1-9)

The Kohen Gadol (High Priest) bowed at the conclusion of every one of the Amidah's nineteen blessings. This is in contrast to everyone else who bows only four times during this silent devotion. The highest of priests, the Kohen Gadol, who could easily be caught up with his lofty spiritual position, is reminded that he is not all mighty-he must constantly give homage to the Almighty. (Berakhot 34a-b)

These kinds of limits built into the function of the Kohen help answer why the text dealing with the Tabernacle and sacrifices is so elaborate. Precise detail in these sections forces the Kohen to be accountable to the people. If the Jewish Priests deviated in any way from the norm, the common folk, basing themselves on the text explicitly spelled out in the Torah, could challenge them. The Jewish Priest could not claim to have special hidden knowledge of how to reach G-d. It was all laid out in the text.

Hence, Rabbi Berman concludes, Jewish law stands in stark opposition to the ancient codes and even many contemporary forms of law, which give advantage to the powerful. Often built into these systems are distinctions between the haves and the have-nots.

The Torah declares no! All human beings are created in the image of G-d. All have equal access to the Divine. All are holy. ©2008 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 YISSOCHER FRAND

RavFrاند

There is an interesting Medrash on the pasuk "See G-d has called by name Betzalel son of Uri son of Chur of the tribe of Yehudah" [Shmos 35:30]. The Medrash references the pasuk in Koheles "A good name is better than good oil" [Koheles 7:1]. The Medrash elaborates that the scent of good oil may precede the oil by a mile or two at most, even if the oil has a very powerful aroma. However, a good name can precede a person even across continents.

The Medrash then asks how far a person must remove himself from contact with the prohibition of Shatnez [the forbidden mixture of wool and linen]. The Medrash answers that even if a person is wearing 99 layers of clothing and none of them are Shatnez, he still may not wear a garment containing Shatnez as the one hundredth layer of clothing.

What is the connection between distancing oneself from Shatnez and the pasuk that says, "A good name is better than good oil"?

Rav Nissan Alpert gives the following interpretation of this Medrash (in his sefer Limudei Nissan):

Every time the Torah introduces Betzalel, it uses the following unique expression: "Look, I've called him by this name..." Why does the Torah give Betzalel such an introduction? The Medrash explains that the reason why Betzalel merited to be the master builder of the Mishkan was not because he had master architectural talents or special artistic ability. Betzalel's uniqueness was that he -- for some reason -- merited having a 'good name'. The Medrash then emphasizes how wonderful it is to have a good reputation (shem

tov). G-d, in choosing someone to construct his dwelling place on earth (the Mishkan), did not want to be associated with anyone who had anything less than an impeccable reputation.

How does one obtain a good reputation? The Medrash answers this question by introducing the matter of Shatnez. The Medrash is teaching that the way a person acquires a good name is not by merely avoiding evil or sin, but by avoiding even the slightest hint of impropriety. It is not sufficient to merely 'play it by the book'. A person must distance himself to the ultimate extent from anything that even smacks of impropriety.

Shatnez is a peculiar prohibition, in that the two substances involved (wool and linen) are completely permitted when taken individually. Only a combination of the two is prohibited. The Torah is teaching us that a person merits a good name by staying away from Shatnez. Avoiding Shatnez represents staying away from anything that has even a minute mixture of something improper.

Those people in our communities who have achieved a good name are people who are above reproach. They have removed themselves from any taint of scandal or impropriety. Impeccable reputations are not achieved by playing it on the edge or bending the rules.

We all know that certain people's handshakes are more reliable than other people's signed contracts. The reason why is because the first group of people stay away from 'forbidden mixtures'. They stay away from the slightest hint of 'non-Kosher' business practices. Ultimately, this is what pays off for them in the long run. When G-d builds a Mishkan, He does not want it built by a person regarding whom people may have suspicions. He wants a Betzalel -- a person above reproach, who possesses a good name, which is superior to good oil. ©2014 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and torah.org

RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

Moses commanded the Jewish people regarding the materials for the Tabernacle: "Whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring an offering of the Almighty" (Exodus 35:5).

What lesson do we learn from the command being directed to those who have a "willing heart"?

Rabbi Simcha Zissel of Kelm explains that those who brought the offerings for the Tabernacle should bring their hearts with their offering. It is not sufficient just to give a monetary donation. The Almighty wants our hearts, that is our thoughts and our emotions.

When you just give money to a charity or worthy institution, you help the cause for which you are giving. However, when you give with your heart, you are changing and elevating yourself as a person. Each

donation makes you into a more giving person. Whenever you give, reflect before you give and then give with a full heart! *Based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin. ©2014 Rabbi Y. Ciner & torah.org*

DR. ALAN FRIEDMAN

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The Parasha states, "And Moshe assembled the entire congregation of B'nei Yisrael." (Sh. 35:1). Moshe convened this assembly to impart to the people the laws of Shabbat and the details of building the Mishkan. Yet many of these laws and details had already been communicated to B'nei Yisrael in the preceding three Parshiot. Upon completion of Moshe's oration, the Torah first informs us that, "the entire congregation of B'nei Yisrael departed from before Moshe." (Sh. 35:20), and then recounts how the people began fulfilling the command to donate to the building of the Mishkan. Men and women offered their precious metals and jewelry to the cause.

What distinguished this occasion from occasions in the preceding Parshiot that required the specific language of "Hakhel," mass convention? Furthermore, why did the Torah explicitly state "the entire congregation;" Hadn't Moshe been addressing the entire people all along?

Rashi informs us that this occurred on the day after Yom Kippur, the day on which Moshe descended from Mt. Sinai. The Siftei Chakhamim explains that Moshe assembled the entire nation immediately upon his return, so that their donations to the Mishkan would serve as atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf.

Ramban notes that the phrase "kol adat," - the entire congregation - implies that this time, the women and children attended as well as the men.

Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin, known as the Oznam L' Torah, describes how the "Hakhel" experience served as atonement: Despite the fact that only 3000 people worshipped the Calf, as many as 603,550 men presented the Half-Shekel for the Mishkan. (see Sh. 38:26). Adding the women and children increases the number to well over 3 million people who participated in Moshe's gathering. This figure amounts to more than one thousand times the number of those who worshipped the Golden Calf.

This figure also corresponds to an reference in Kohelet: "One man in a thousand have I found, and a woman amongst all these I have not found." (Kohel.. 7:28). Rabbeinu Bachya interprets this verse as an allusion to the Golden Calf. According to his reading, only one man in one thousand, and no women worshipped the Calf. Moshe killed the idolaters, and the rest of B'nei Yisrael were innocent. This assembly stood as testimony to their collective innocence.

The problem then arises, if the women were

innocent, why did they participate in the "Hakhel" event, as the Ramban claims they did? Furthermore, what atonement did they require that they needed to dedicate their jewelry to the building of the Mishkan?

The Maggid of Dubno explains that here, the phrase "the entire congregation of B'nei Yisrael" carries particular significance. Ordinarily, Moshe relayed messages via the Elders; but here, the Torah went out of its way to praise B'nei Yisrael. When Aharon asked for people's most valued jewelry with which to build the Golden Calf, he instructed the men to take the jewels from the women, (Sh. 32:2), hoping that the women would delay them with protestations until Moshe returned. With regard to the Mishkan, however, even without explicitly being instructed to donate, the women gave freely of their most prized possessions. This enthusiasm proves that their reluctance to donate for the Calf stemmed not from selfishness, but from loyalty to G-d.

In fact, the K'li Yakar points out that the women didn't even want to be associated with the golden vessels for the Mishkan, lest they appear to be acting with the ulterior motive, achieving atonement. For this reason, only the men gave the "Gold Offerings."

The unusual circumstance of "Hakhel," underscores a more important point. Before B'nei Yisrael could fulfill completely the Mitzvot of Shabbat and building the Mishkan, they needed to show (as the women had already done), that they put all residue of the Sin of the Golden Calf behind them and that they remained fully committed to G-d. By bringing more than was needed, (Sh. 36:5), B'nei Yisrael proved that they had indeed repented. © 1993 Dr. A. Friedman

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Goinkg the Extra Smile

Building a sanctuary is difficult enough. Getting people to donate has been, historically, even more difficult. That, however, was not the case concerning the Mishkan. The Torah in this week's portion tells us that everyone contributed to the cause. Men and women brought gold and silver. They brought personal items and family items. Copper mirrors were donated as well as bracelets, bangles and baubles. Those who had wool and linen came and those who had dyes donated.

Before the pledges began arriving, the Nesseim (the heads of the tribes) were so confident that the goals would not be met, that they pledged to fill the gap of any missing funds. They were shocked to learn that there was almost nothing for them to contribute! So much of every item was donated that an announcement was made, ordering the entire nation to halt their generosity. (It may have been the first and last of its kind!)

But what interests me is one other group of people that the Torah mentions as contributors. "And all

those who Hashem inspired with wisdom to do the work. They took in front of Moshe the donations that the Jews brought for the work of the Mishkan, and the brought an additional offering each morning" (Exodus 36:2-4).

Why did the Torah single out that these people brought something to the Mishkan? Didn't everybody?

The daughter of Rabbi Zusia of Anipol's was engaged. As poor as he was, Reb Zusia and his wife scraped together enough money for a seamstress to sew a beautiful gown for the bride-to-be. After a month the gown was ready, and Reb Zusia's wife went with her bundle of rubles to the home of the seamstress to get the finished gown.

She came home empty-handed. "Where is the gown?" asked both the Rebbe and his daughter, almost in unison.

"Well," said his wife, "I did a mitzvah. When I came to pick up the gown, I saw tears in the eyes of the seamstress. I asked her why she was crying and she told me that her daughter, too, was getting married. Then she looked at the beautiful gown that she had sewn for me and sighed, "if only we could afford such beautiful material for a gown."

Reb Zusia's wife continued. "At that moment I decided to let the seamstress have our gown as a gift!"

Reb Zusia was delighted. The mitzvah of helping a poor bride was dear to him and he longed for the opportunity to fulfill it. But he added one question to his wife. "Did you pay her for the work she did for us?"

"Pay her?" asked the wife, "I gave her the gown!"

"I'm sorry," said the Rebbe. "You told me the gown was a gift. We still owe her for the weeks of work she spent for us." The rebbitzen agreed and, in addition to the gift of the gown she compensated the seamstress for her work.

The men and women who toiled laboriously could have said that they had done their share. After all, they crafted and wove the beautiful utensils and tapestries of the Mishkan. Yet that was not enough for them. In addition to the work they did, Rabbi Shlomo Kluger (1786-1829) explains, they contributed too! They did not stop their commitment with their work for the Mishkan. The Torah tells us that they, too, gave each morning. The efforts of individuals were crowned by their relentless generosity. In addition to their time and their skills, they gave their possessions. In a generation that looks to abdicate responsibility and commitment, it is wonderful to read

about men and women who searched for more ways to give-and found them! © 2003 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky & torah.org

