

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

Right at the end of the book of Shemot, there is a textual difficulty so slight that it is easy to miss, yet -- as interpreted by Rashi -- it contains one of the great clues as to the nature of Jewish identity: it is a moving testimony to the unique challenge of being a Jew.

First, the background. The Tabernacle is finally complete. Its construction has taken many chapters to relate. No other event in the wilderness years is portrayed in such detail. Now, on the first of Nissan, exactly a year after Moses told the people to begin their preparations for the exodus, he assembles the beams and hangings, and puts the furniture and vessels in place. There is an unmistakable parallelism between the words the Torah uses to describe Moses' completion of the work and those it uses of G-d on the seventh day of creation: "And Moses finished [vayechal] the work [hamelakhah]. And G-d finished [vayechal] on the seventh day the work [melakhto] which He had done."

The next verse states the result: "Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle."

The meaning is both clear and revolutionary. The creation of the Sanctuary by the Israelites is intended to represent a human parallel to the Divine creation of the universe. In making the world, G-d created a home for mankind. In making the Tabernacle, mankind created a home for G-d.

From a human perspective, G-d fills the space we make for His presence. His glory exists where we renounce ours. The immense detail of the construction is there to tell us that throughout, the Israelites were obeying G-d's instructions rather than improvising their own. The specific domain called "the holy" is where we meet G-d on His terms, not ours. Yet this too is G-d's way of conferring dignity on mankind. It is we who build His home so that He may fill what we have made. In the words of a famous film: "If you build it, he will come."

Bereishit begins with G-d making the cosmos. Shemot ends with human beings making a micro-cosmos, a miniature and symbolic universe. Thus the entire narrative of Genesis-Exodus is a single vast span that begins and ends with the concept of G-d-filled space, with this difference: that in the beginning the

work is done by G-d-the-Creator. By the end it is done by man-and-woman-the-creators. The whole intricate history has been a story with one overarching theme: the transfer of the power and responsibility of creation from heaven to earth, from G-d to the image-of-G-d called mankind.

That is the background. However, the final verses of the book go on to tell us about the relationship between the "cloud of glory" and the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle, we recall, was not a fixed structure. It was made in such a way as to be portable. It could quickly be dismantled and its parts carried, as the Israelites made their way to the next stage of their journey. When the time came for the Israelites to move on, the cloud moved from its resting place in the Tent of Meeting to a position outside the camp, signalling the direction they must now take. This is how the Torah describes it:

"When the cloud lifted from above the Tabernacle, the Israelites went onward in all their journeys, but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out until the day it lifted. So the cloud of the Lord was over the Tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel in all their journeys." (Ex. 40:36-38)

There is a small but significant difference between the two instances of the phrase *bechol mas'ehem*, "in all their journeys". In the first instance the words are to be taken literally. When the cloud lifted and moved on ahead, the Israelites knew they were about to travel.

However in the second instance they cannot be taken literally. The cloud was not over the Tabernacle in all their journeys. On the contrary: it was there only when they stopped travelling and instead pitched camp. During the journeys the cloud went on ahead.

Noting this, Rashi makes the following comment: "A place where they encamped is also called *massa*, 'a journey'... Because from the place of encampment they always set out again on a new journey, therefore they are all called 'journeys'".



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The point is linguistic, but the message is anything but. Rashi has encapsulated in a few brief words -- "a place where they encamped is also called a journey" -- the existential truth at the heart of Jewish identity. So long as we have not yet reached our destination, even a place of rest is still called a journey -- because we know we are not here forever. There is a way still to go. In the words of the poet Robert Frost,

"The woods are lovely, dark and deep. / But I have promises to keep, / And miles to go before I sleep." *Covenant and Conversation 5777 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l* ©2017 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"**A**nd he erected the courtyard around the sanctuary and the altar, set up the screen gate of the courtyard; and Moses completed the work." [Ex. 40:33] Why repeat all the details of the construction of the Mishkan after we have already heard them when they were initially commanded? Would it not have been simpler to deal with the entire execution of external building, furnishings and priestly garb with the single verse: "And the People of Israel built the Mishkan exactly as G-d commanded"?

In order to understand the significance of the repetition, it is important to remember that the Almighty desires an intimate relationship between Himself and the People of Israel. That is why they are commanded to build a Mishkan in the first place: "that I may dwell among them" [29:46].

However, worshiping the golden calf was a betrayal of the ideals given at Sinai. In effect, the Israelites committed adultery, scarring the love and intimacy G-d had just bestowed upon them. Were G-d only a G-d of justice, this would have been the demise of the Jewish people, their sin mandating a punishment that would have meant the end of the Abrahamic mission.

But since G-d is also a G-d of compassion, He forgives. However, can we legitimately expect forgiveness for as heinous a crime as idolatry? Will the

Almighty take Israel back even after they have committed adultery?

Herein lies the true significance of the repetition of each and every painstaking instruction regarding the Mishkan. G-d places his nuptial "home" with Israel before they sin with the golden calf, and G-d accepts their construction of the nuptial home after they have sinned with the golden calf. The repetition is a confirmation that the intimacy between G-d and Israel has been restored, that the relationship between G-d and His bride, Israel, has returned to its original state of mutual commitment and faith. The repetition of the exact details is essentially G-d's gift of forgiveness.

It is interesting to note that on the weeks when we read the concluding portions of Exodus, the calendar is usually host to another sequence of special readings, wherein a second Torah scroll is removed from the ark for an additional reading as well as a special haftarah reading from the prophets.

The first special reading is Shekalim, which speaks of the obligation of every Jew to give a half-shekel to the Mishkan. This represents an act of commitment: a pledge of a four thousand year-strong covenantal relationship between G-d and Israel, demonstrated in our daily lives by the giving of our "half-shekels" to build our sanctuaries – yeshivas and synagogues, day schools and outreach centers – thus bringing G-d within our midst. Financial commitment is also the traditional halakhic form of betrothal (symbolized in the wedding ring).

The second special Sabbath – immediately preceding Purim – is Shabbat Zachor: "Remember" to destroy the evil Amalek. Shabbat Zachor always precedes Purim because in Shushan there were two threats: externally, from Haman, the descendant of Amalek; while internally, the Jews themselves, who, deep in the amnesia of assimilation, were seduced by the invitations to the parties at the palace of Ahashverosh, with all the non-kosher wine and shrimp one could enjoy.

Israel, betrothed by the shekel to G-d, had succumbed to the temptation of Amalek, substituting the temptations of gold and licentiousness for their G-d-groom.

The third special Sabbath, Parah, symbolizes the process of purification. The People of Israel, having defiled themselves, are reminded by G-d that even when our impurity stems from death, the highest degree of impurity, He has provided the red heifer to spiritually cleanse us.

Finally, the namesake for this Sabbath's special reading, HaHodesh, brings us towards a new beginning. "Hodesh," the Hebrew word for month, is also bound up with "hadash" [new] and "hidush" [renewal]. In effect, the moon is the messenger of change and renewal, the ability to emerge from total darkness to a state of fullness and perfection.

Thus the special portions of Shekalim, Zakhor, Parah and HaHodesh parallel the portions of Terumah, Tetzaveh, Ki Tissa and Vayakhel-Pekudei. The journey begins with commitment and love, stumbles through failure and sin, and concludes with the possibility of purification and renewal. These stages mark the path of individual and national freedom, culminating in the festival of freedom, Passover. ©2017 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The Torah reading of the book of Shemot concludes this week with the reading of the total portion of Vayakhel and Pekudei. These two portions are a fitting conclusion to the long narrative describing the construction of the Tabernacle/Mishkan. Every great project, whether physical or spiritual, is yet incomplete without an accounting being given as to the investment, effort and cost relating to the project.

One of the great principles of the Torah and of Jewish life generally is accountability – for behavior, speech, actions and even thoughts. The Talmud phrased it succinctly: “Human beings are always accountable and liable for their actions.” We have a concept in the Talmud that one can be found not to be liable for actions caused by human negligence or mistakes by an earthly court but still be liable in the heavenly court, which judges all of our behavior.

As human beings we hold ourselves to a far less stringent standard of behavior and liability. But Heavenly judgment, which knows our true capabilities and potential, holds us to its lofty standard of accountability. And we are witness to that in the accounting that Moshe submits to us in this week’s Torah reading, of the wealth accumulated and spent in this great construction project of the Tabernacle/Mishkan.

The project was enormous in scope and in cost. Yet Moshe was aware that one thousand measures of silver were not accounted for. He could not rest until he traced the missing silver - which was actually used for the hooks that held the curtains that constituted the hanging tapestries of the structure.

One of the great demands of current politics that now engulfs us is the issue of transparency. We wish for transparency in government affairs, financial dealings and even in personal relationships. All governments are currently besieged by the leaking of sensitive documents and information and all of this is justified by the idea that the public has a right to know everything about everybody at all times.

In theory, transparency is a good and necessary component of a democratic republic. But the question arises as to whether there are any limits to this right to transparency. From the Torah itself it seems that in monetary matters and in accounting for the use

of public funds, especially charity funds, there is no limit to the necessity for transparency and accountability.

However, in matters of personal behavior and past actions of human beings, the Torah does impose limits on the need for revelation. The laws of evil speech and slander apply even when one speaks the truth about others. Then, the so-called right to know is severely curtailed. Such distinctions do not exist in the culture that currently surrounds us. Private information about people’s lives, which at one time was considered sacrosanct, is today visible to all on social media and through the hackers and leakers that abound in our world. Even transparency has to have its limits of decency and restraint. ©2017 *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 AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

The last two portions of the Book of Exodus apply and repeat information found in previous passages of the Torah. In Parshat VaYakhel, the Tabernacle is constructed in its detail following the prescriptions found in the portion of Terumah. In the portion of Pikudei, the priestly garments are made again following the details laid out earlier in the portion of Tetzaveh.

Why is it that the Torah needs to repeat every detail when describing the making of the Tabernacle and the garments? Wouldn’t it have been enough for the Torah to simply say that the Temple was constructed and the garments were made as G-d had commanded?

Several reasons for repetition can be suggested. First, the Torah may want to make the very point that the commands were followed in great detail. Presenting the details of the law shows that nothing mandated by G-d was overlooked.

Another possibility is that presenting the details again points to a loving involvement in this process. Each step in making the Tabernacle and the garments was an expression of the love that Moshe (Moses) and the people felt towards G-d.

But for me, the answer to our question may lie in considering the sequence of events in the latter part of Exodus. The portion of Terumah deals with the command to make the Tabernacle. Tetzaveh follows with the command of the priestly garments. Immediately following these portions, the importance of Shabbat is mentioned in the portion of Ki Tisa.

Not coincidentally, the portion of Vayakhel, which follows Ki Tisa, mentions Shabbat at its very beginning. The building of the Tabernacle, found in Vayakhel, and the making of the garments, found in Pikudei, then follow. The sequence is truly a mirror

opposite with one notable exception. Whereas the command of Tabernacle and priestly garments was followed by Shabbat, in the actual implementation of the laws, Shabbat comes first.

In Judaism, there are two sanctities, the sanctity of place and the sanctity of time. As important as place may be, time is of even greater importance. Perhaps then, it can be suggested that the reason why the Torah repeats the commandments in details is to point out that Shabbat, the epitome of the sanctity of time, is even more important than the sanctity of space represented by the Tabernacle and the garments.

In his book "The Sabbath," Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel points out that the acquisition of "space," is an appropriate human quest. But life goes wrong when one spends all of his/her time to amass "things." "For to have more, does not mean to be more."

It is interesting to note that the incident that falls between the command and the implementation is the sin of the Golden Calf. The keruvim, the angelic forms atop the Ark were holy objects; the Golden Calf which the Jews may have seen as a replacement was a defiling of place.

Precisely because of this perversion of the sanctity of space, the Torah deems it important to repeat the whole sequence, but to place Shabbat first so that its spirit be infused in every detail of the construction of the Tabernacle and making of the priestly garments. This teaches that ultimately we are people who carve out our empires in time and not in space. ©2017 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

One of this week's Parshiot, Pekudei, relates a very interesting story between Moshe and Betzalel, who built all the utensils for serving G-d in the desert. When Moshe told Betzalel to build the utensils before the actual housing (Mishkan) for them, Betzalel uncharacteristically spoke up, claiming that you couldn't have the tools without first building the house because you'd have nowhere to put them. Moshe thought about it, agreed, and praised Betzalel for his insight. This seems very odd, being that Moshe got his orders from G-d, and there was never a valid reason to deviate until now. Why did Moshe suddenly change the way it was to be done?

As Rashi helps us understand, Betzalel's reasoning had a more global meaning: Jews can't just perform the actions (Mitzvot) that are required without first having a 'home' for them. To some that home is a real home where they can share the learning and performance of Torah with their families. To others that home lies within their hearts, as they struggle to be

Jews in an environment that's not as supportive. But each of us has to perform Mitzvot and store them within our own "Mishkan" (housing). The point is not to just perform G-d's commandments and hope that one day we'll be inspired to grow from them, but to always have in mind that our goal is to realize their value. To appreciate and learn of the beauty of the Torah is to realize that we've always had a home for it in our hearts. ©2017 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.

RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

After being told to anoint his brother Aharon (Aaron), Moshe was told in reference to Aharon's sons: "And you shall anoint them as you anointed their father" (Exodus 40:15). Why did the Almighty give Moses this special instruction?

Rabbi Meir Simcha HaCohen explains in his commentary Meshech Hachmah that when Moses was told to anoint his brother Aaron, he was able to do it with a complete heart. Moses, the younger brother, was the leader of the Israelites and was happy that his brother was the High Priest. However, in reference to Aaron's sons, the situation was different. Moses' own sons were not going to succeed him as leaders. So, when it came to anointing Aaron's sons, Moses might have felt envy. Therefore, the Almighty told Moses to anoint Aaron's sons with the same whole heartedness and joy with which he anointed their father.

Our lesson: If even a person as great as Moses needs to internalize attitudes to avoid envy, all the more so do we! Also, it IS possible to feel joy and enthusiasm for another person's success even if he has something that you do not. *Dvar Torah based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin ©2017 Rabbi K. Packouz and aish.com*

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Up Close and Personal

These final portions in the Book of Exodus summarize the amazing accomplishments of the Children of Israel in building the Mishkan -- the edifice that would house the Divine presence in this temporal world -- while in the desert. It was a mammoth feat, an act that consumed an entire nation. Men and women, young and old each had a share in this great endeavor. The Torah tells us: "Every man whose heart inspired him came; and everyone whose spirit motivated him brought the portion of Hashem for the work of the Tent of Meeting, for all its labor and for the sacred vestments. The men came with the women; everyone whose heart motivated him brought bracelets, nose-rings, rings, body ornaments -- all sorts of gold ornaments -- every man who raised up an offering of gold to Hashem (Exodus 35:21-22). And then there were those who did the work. "Moses summoned Bezalel, Oholiab, and every wise-hearted

man whose heart Hashem endowed with wisdom, everyone whose heart inspired him, to come close to the work, to do it (Exodus 36:2). The wording needs clarification. Why use the term, "whose heart inspired him, to come close to the work, to do it"? Why not just say "whose heart inspired him, to do the work"? What is the meaning of coming close to do the work? Just do the work!

The lines outside of Rav Elozar Menachem Shach's apartment in B'nai Beraq were always long. Visitors came from across the nation and the world to speak to the eldest sage in Israel. Young and old, wealthy and poor waited in the corridor of the tiny apartment in order to gain either wisdom, advice, counsel or blessing from the revered sage. One evening after almost everyone had left, a wealthy North American philanthropist was about to enter the study to speak to Rav Shach concerning an important matter. Before entering the study he noticed a father clutching the hand of a school-aged child no more than eleven years old.

"Please, sir," interrupted the father. "It is difficult for my child to sit still in class. Talmud seems to bore him. Please let me enter before you. I just want a quick blessing from the rabbi that my son should develop an interest in Torah learning." It seemed innocuous enough. The wealthy man had already waited quite a while and he figured that another minute or two for Rav Shach to shake the boy's hand, give him a blessing, and send him on his way could not take that long, and so, he agreed.

It was almost 45 minutes before the child left Rav Shach's apartment. The boy and his father were both beaming enthusiastically. Then they spotted the benevolent man who allowed them to go ahead. He was baffled. "What happened in there?" He asked. "Why did his blessing take so long?"

The father of the young boy began to explain. "We entered the room expecting a brocha and a handshake. But Rav Shach told us that we didn't need his blessing. He asked my son what he is learning. Then he took out that Tractate and sat down with him. He learned a Mishna with my son until he understood it. Then the Rashi. Then the Gemara. Then more Rashi. Then a Tosefos. It was not long before my son and the revered Rosh Yeshiva became entangled in excited Talmudic repertoire!

"The Rosh Yeshiva explained to us that all you need is to get close to the Gemara, draw yourself to it. Then it will grasp you and embrace you! You don't need a blessing to enjoy it. You must draw yourself close to it and then, you will enjoy it!"

Building a Mishkan, like any project that entails difficult work for the sake of Heaven, can be arduous. It can become depressing at times and it is easy to become dispirited and desperate. The key to the success of the building Mishkan lies in the words of the

posuk, "everyone whose heart inspired him, to come close to the work, to do it." In order to do the work, you must draw yourself close to the work. If you take small steps with love and bring a project close to your heart, then rest assured you will complete the work in joy!
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RABBI LABEL LAM

Dvar Torah

From Moshe's presence they took the entire gift that the Children of Israel had brought for the work for the labor of the Sanctuary, to do it. But they continued to bring him free-willed gifts morning after morning. ... They said to Moshe as follows, "The people are bringing more than enough for the labor of the work that HASHEM has commanded to perform." ... And the people were restrained from bringing, but the work had been enough for the labor of all the work to do it, and there was extra. (Shemos 36:1-7)

One might be lead to believe that Moshe was the most successful fund-raiser of all time. It's an odd characterization for our all time spiritual guide. In the end there were more donations than necessary. Imagine that! How often does that happen? Many would love to know his secret. How did Moshe do it?

We should not forget that the task was complicated by the requirement that the materials and the monies to be collected had to given for HASHEM's sake alone and no other ulterior motivation, as the verse states, "And you should take for Me Terumah! (Shemos 25:2)

Rashi comments, for Me: For My sake! That profound caveat should make the fund-raiser's job that much more difficult if not impossible! It's an awful handicap to burden a fundraiser with! However, ultimately not only was it not an impediment and may even have been a help! How can we understand that to be so?

Rebbetzin Sarah Schwartzman of blessed memory told the following story about Rabbi Aaron Kotler ztl. Once at a parlor meeting where a select group of Torah supporters were gathered to raise funds for the Yeshiva, a speaker outlined all the benefits that would accrue to Klal Yisrael from Lakewood Yeshiva in terms of providing teachers of Torah, etc. for future generations. The Rosh HaYeshiva, however was uneasy about what was being spoken. He stood up and said, "Rabosai (gentlemen), I fear I am being guilty of gneivas hadaas (deception). Yes, our Yeshiva will, with G-d's help, produce heads of Yeshivas and Rabbis and teachers, but I want you to know that the main aim of the Yeshiva is the learning of Torah lishma-learning Torah for learning's sake only, without thinking of career or profession, and it is for that purpose that I am asking for your support!"

The Torah writes, "All generous hearts they should bring Terumah/Offerings to HASHEM! (Shemos

35:5) Rabbi Shmuel Rozovsky reads the verse: "They should bring ...their generous hearts with the Terumah for HASHEM. So the main building of the Mishkan was from the generous hearts!" My guess is that Moshe used few gimmicks to raise funds. First he lifted aspirations and that lead to the flow of goods. From the strength of his own clear minded conviction he was not so much a classic fund-raiser as an elevator of spirits. Sanctuary was built from pure intentions. There are no alchemist's tricks needed to make gold from hearts of gold. ©2006 Rabbi L. Lam & torah.org

ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

Treasurer of the Temple

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

The Temple Treasury, besides monies that they control, can also have ownership of Hebrew slaves. Additionally, just as a slave can free himself by buying his freedom back from his master, so also one would expect the same when dealing with those slaves that are owned and in the possession of the Temple. Ostensibly one should be able to approach the treasurer of the Temple and pay the required amount to free himself.

However the law is quite the opposite. The Treasurer of the Temple must first sell the Hebrew slave to another and only then can the slave buy his freedom from the new owner (Tractate Gittin 38b). Why is it that with reference to monies we trust the Treasurer of the Temple but not when dealing with a Jewish slave?

Rashi states that when dealing with Hekdesh (sacred Temple property), the treasurer has financial ownership over the value of the slave (kinyan damim), but not the actual human being (kinyan Haguf). Since he does not own the actual human being then by definition he cannot free him. The Meiri offers an alternative reason and states that the reason the Treasurer cannot sell the slave is because he is not the owner of this slave. The true owner is the Almighty himself, and therefore the treasurer has no right to sell anything that is not his.

Tosafot explains that if we give this power of selling a slave into the hands of the Treasurer, he might find himself in situations where he might take advantage of the possessions of Hekdesh. However, this interpretation is quite difficult to understand for we know that the Treasurers of Hekdesh are reliable and honest when dealing with monies so why shouldn't we trust them with the sale of slaves?

One might explain that when dealing with monies we certainly believe the honesty and forthrightness of the Treasurer, but here we are dealing with emotional and ideological concerns (freeing a slave) and in such a case he might rationalize his feelings, in that he prefers the ideology of liberty and freedom over his loyalty to Hekdesh. ©2017 Rabbi M.

Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit

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 Haftarah, 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

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 it's completion. It might be the one's who envisioned the project, those who labored in it's 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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RABBI YISROEL CINER

Parsha Insights

This week we read the double-parsha of Vayakhel-Pekudai and complete the Sefer {Book of} Shmos.

These two Parshios deal with the actual production of the Mishkan {Tabernacle}, its vessels and the garments of the Kohanim {priests}. Once that had been completed, Shmos concludes with the Shchinah {Hashem's presence} filling the Mishkan. The Ramban explains that Shmos, the Sefer of exile and redemption, ends with Bnei Yisroel {the Children of Israel} being in that ultimate redeemed state of intense closeness to Hashem.

Pekudai begins with an exact accounting of the donations that were given toward the construction of the Mishkan and its vessels. "These are the accounts of the Tabernacle, the Tabernacle of testimony (that Hashem had forgiven the sin of the golden calf by having His Shchinah dwell among them-Rashi), that were accounted through Moshe. [38:21]"

The Ohr HaChaim, based on the Medrash [Shmos Rabbah 30:3], points out that there are times when the Torah states "V'Aileh -- And these" and there are times when it states "Aileh -- these." He explains that "V'Aileh -- And these" comes to add to whatever had been mentioned before. "Aileh -- these" means these and these alone -- no others.

As such, he explains that the Torah is teaching us that this accounting of the donations for the Mishkan is the only true counting that exists! This is a counting that will stand for all eternity -- its merit will never be taken away from those who gave -- as it contributed toward Hashem's presence entering this world.

However, any counting or accounting that a person makes of his alleged acquisitions and property is not a true counting. (I don't think I'll hear any dissent from stockowners...) That, he explains, is contained within the Hebrew word for money "mamone." It is actually a composite of two words: "ma," meaning what, and "mone" meaning count. In other words, what are you counting? It's not really yours!

I once heard a similar idea expressed, pointing out that the Talmudic term for coins is "zuz" which means to move. The wealth moves around -- it never

really belongs to someone. Coins are always round...

It's amazing how our view of the world can be so off as compared to the Torah's view. We feel that when we count what we have, that is ours. What we've given away is gone, goodbye! The Torah here is teaching us the exact opposite. That which is given toward worthwhile causes is ours for eternity. That which we have is just waiting to roll away...

The other day, a similar idea came out in a different way. I was studying Mesilas Yesharim {The Path of the Just by the Ramcha"} with one of my students and the topic was purifying oneself in interpersonal relationships. The Torah forbids taking revenge and even just harboring any ill will in one's heart. If one refused to lend you something and then asks to borrow something from you, it is forbidden to refuse him as revenge for his having refused you. Furthermore, it is even forbidden to lend to him while pointing out the difference between his and your response. The Ramcha"l writes that you need to purify yourself to the point that your actions will bear no reminder or even a tinge of the wrong that was done to you.

This student was bothered by this and presented the following scenario. A boy refuses to lend out some of his CD's to a friend and then, a few days later, he asks to borrow something from that friend. How is it humanly possible to wholeheartedly go ahead and lend to him after he refused you!

We at first explored the possibilities of judging favorably and trying to assume that there is a very good reason why the other person didn't lend. I then realized that perhaps we were totally missing the point. We were looking at things through our eyes and ignoring the Torah viewpoint. "If a friend didn't want to take a million dollars for himself but later offered you a million dollars, would you harbor any ill will against him?" I asked. "Of course not," he answered, wondering what I was getting at. I explained that when a person lends or does any act of kindness, the mitzvah {commandment} he fulfills acquires a 'chunk' of eternity that is worth far more than a million dollars. The other person, by refusing to lend, passed up a million bucks. Now when he asks to borrow, he's offering a million dollar opportunity. Does it make any sense to 'take revenge' by passing up that opportunity?

Once again, our view of a situation was the opposite of the Torah's. That which is given away actually becomes ours for eternity. That which we hold on to is just waiting to roll away...

"Aileh -- these." Only that which was given toward the Mishkan--toward Hashem's Presence being brought into this world--could really be counted. In order for us to once again have that Presence evident, we must use the Torah's viewpoint to see what really counts. © 2015 Rabbi Y. Ciner and torah.org

