

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

The behavioural economist Dan Ariely did a series of experiments on what is known as the IKEA effect, or "why we overvalue what we make." The name comes, of course, from the store that sells self-assembly furniture. For practically-challenged people like me, putting an item of furniture together is usually like doing a giant jigsaw puzzle in which various pieces are missing, and others are in the wrong place. But in the end, even if the item is amateurish, we tend to feel a certain pride in it. We can say, "I made this," even if someone else designed it, produced the pieces, and wrote the instructions. There is, about something in which we have invested our labour, a feeling like that expressed in Psalm 128: "When you eat the fruit of the labour of your hands, you will be happy, and it will go well with you."

Ariely wanted to test the reality and extent of this added value. So he got volunteers to make origami models by elaborate folding of paper. He then asked them how much they were prepared to pay to keep their own model. The average answer was 25 cents. He asked other people in the vicinity what they would be prepared to pay. The average answer was five cents. In other words, people were prepared to pay five times as much for something they had made themselves. His conclusions were: the effort that we put into something does not just change the object. It changes us and the way we evaluate that object. And the greater the labour, the greater the love for what we have made.

This is part of what is happening in the long sequence about the building of the Sanctuary that begins in our parsha and continues, with few interruptions, to the end of the book. There is no comparison whatsoever between the Mishkan -- the holy and the Holy of Holies -- and something as secular as self-assembly furniture. But at a human level, there are psychological parallels.

The Mishkan was the first thing the Israelites made in the wilderness, and it marks a turning point in

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a refuah shelaima for
Frank Sinatra, עמו"ש
Can't wait to hear you sing again!
And I mean that...from the bottom!



the Exodus narrative. Until now God had done all the work. He had struck Egypt with plagues. He had taken the people out to freedom. He had divided the sea and brought them across on dry land. He had given them food from heaven and water from a rock. And, with the exception of the Song at the Sea, the people had not appreciated it. They were ungrateful. They complained.

Now God instructed Moses to take the people through a role reversal. Instead of His doing things for them, He commanded them to make something for Him. This was not about God. God does not need a Sanctuary, a home on earth, for God is at home everywhere. As Isaiah said in His name: "Heaven is My throne and the earth My footstool. What house, then, can you will build for Me?" (Is. 66:1). This was about humans and their dignity, their self-respect.

With an extraordinary act of tzimtzum, self-limitation, God gave the Israelites the chance to make something with their own hands, something they would value because, collectively, they had made it. Everyone who was willing could contribute, from whatever they had: "gold, silver or bronze, blue, purple or crimson yarns, fine linen, goat hair, red-dyed ram skins, fine leather, acacia wood, oil for the lamp, balsam oils for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense," jewels for the breastplate and so on. Some gave their labour and skills. Everyone had the opportunity to take part: women as well as men, the people as a whole, not just an elite.

For the first time God was asking them not just to follow His pillar of cloud and fire through the wilderness, or obey His laws, but to be active: to become builders and creators. And because it involved their work, energy and time, they invested something of themselves, individually and collectively, in it. To repeat Ariely's point: We value what we create. The effort that we put into something does not just change the object. It changes us.

Few places in the Torah more powerfully embody Rabbi Yohanan saying that "Wherever you find God's greatness, there you find His humility." (Megilla



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31a) God was giving the Israelites the dignity of being able to say, "I helped build a house for God." The Creator of the universe was giving His people the chance to become creators also -- not just of something physical and secular, but of something profoundly spiritual and sacred.

Hence the unusual Hebrew word for contribution, Terumah, which means not just something we give but something we lift up. The builders of the sanctuary lifted up their gift to God, and in the process of lifting, discovered that they themselves were lifted. God was giving them the chance to become "His partners in the work of creation," (Shabbat 10a, 119b) the highest characterisation ever given of the human condition.

This is a life-changing idea. The greatest gift we can give people is to give them the chance to create. This is the one gift that turns the recipient into a giver. It gives them dignity. It shows that we trust them, have faith in them, and believe they are capable of great things.

We no longer have a Sanctuary in space, but we do have Shabbat, the "sanctuary in time." Recently, a senior figure in the Church of England spent Shabbat with us in the Marble Arch Synagogue. He was with us for the full 25 hours, from Kabbalat Shabbat to Havdallah. He prayed with us, learned with us, ate with us, and sang with us. "Why are you doing this?" I asked him. He replied, "One of the greatest gifts you Jews gave us Christians was the Sabbath. We are losing it. You are keeping it. I want to learn from you how you do it."

The answer is simple. To be sure, it was God who at the dawn of time made the seventh day holy. But it was the sages who, making "a fence around the law," added many laws, customs and regulations to protect and preserve its spirit. Almost every generation contributed something to the heritage of Shabbat, if only a new song, or even a new tune for old words. Not by accident do we speak of "making Shabbat." The Jewish people did not create the day's holiness but they did co-create its hadrat kodesh, its sacred beauty. Ariely's point applies here as well: the greater the effort we put into something, the greater the love for what we have made.

Hence the life-changing lesson: if you want people to value something, get them to participate in creating it. Give them a challenge and give them responsibility. The effort we put into something does not just change the object: it changes us. The greater the labour, the greater the love for what we have made. *Covenant and Conversation 5778 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l ©2018 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"**A**nd the cherubs shall spread their wings on high, spreading over the kapporet, as they face one another; towards the Kapporet shall they face" [Ex. 25:20]. Concerning the construction of the Holy Ark and the cherubs, two technical textual questions are raised by the Midrash and many Biblical commentaries. First of all, throughout our Torah portion, Terumah, the various parts of the Sanctuary are commanded to be built by Moses: "You [second person singular, ve-asita] shall make." The one glaring exception is the Holy Ark, "And they shall make an ark out of shittim wood..." which is written in the third-person plural (ve-asu), referring to the entire nation of Israel [ibid., v. 10]. Why the distinction?

Second, there appears to be a superfluous wording in the verse. In the first instance, the Torah records: "And you shall place in the Ark the Testimony that I shall give you" [ibid., v. 16]. And then, after the command of the construction of the cherubs and only five verses after the verse just cited, we find once again: "And into the Ark shall you place the Testimony that I shall give you". Why repeat the instruction to place the tablets of Testimony into the Holy Ark?

Siftei Hakhamim (Rabbi Shabtai ben Yosef Bass, 17th-18th Century Poland and Prague) draws our attention to a detailed grammatical difference that answers our question. The form of the verb used the first time is past tense (natata), albeit changed to the future in meaning by the prefix vav but nevertheless a past-tense form: literally, "and you have placed the tablets" [ibid., v. 16]. The form used the second time is pure future tense (titein), literally, "you shall place the tablets" [ibid., v. 21].

Thus, the second verse is alluding to the second tablets that will be placed in the Holy Ark after the first tablets will be broken by Moses when he sees the Israelite worship of the Golden Calf. The midrash [Shemot Rabbah] explains that the Second Tablets will be hewn out by Moses (not by God Himself), and that the Second Tables contained the Oral Law of all the generations, the "Halakhot, midrashim and Aggadot," the human input of the great rabbis of all the Jewish periods who interpreted Torah for all times.

Along these lines there is another apparent

difference of opinion, concerning the gender of the cherubs, which certainly impacts on the particular symbolism they are meant to convey. Our Sages cite a tradition that the cherubs were in the form of two winged children, one male and the other female, locked in an embrace. The imagery of this tradition is one of familial purity, innocent love, physical and emotional attachment devoid of erotic lust and defilement [BT Yoma 54], explaining that Torah may best be conveyed within the familial context.

But Rashi and Ibn Ezra [ad loc.] seem to have another tradition: while they accept the representation of winged children, they do not include the male-female aspect of the description. For Rashi, there are two faces of young children; for Ibn Ezra, there are two male youths (“ne’arim”). Here the symbolism is not at all familial or sexual in nature, it is rather the protection and continuity of Torah through the commitment of succeeding generations, human angels taking responsibility for the eternal Torah.

And the Oral Torah is the development of those seeds into the magnificent fruit that will provide the necessary spiritual sustenance and divine nourishment for every generation. Indeed, “every spiritual truth and religio-legal decision that a devoted student will ultimately expound in a novel fashion was originally given at Sinai” [JT, Megillah 4:1] – if not directly at least in potential.

Hence, Rabbenu Yaakov Ba’al Haturim (13th-14th Century Germany and Spain) explains that the individual called to the Torah recites one blessing over the Written Torah and a second blessing over the Oral Torah, the force of the Oral Torah being expressed in the words, “and an eternal Torah has He planted in our midst.”

It is the task of the Torah scholars of every generation – symbolized by the two winged youths, reminiscent of a dedicated havruta (Torah study partnership) or by the wholehearted Torah leaders who retain a youthful purity – to nurture the seeds of the Written Torah into a dynamic and ever-increasing fount of Torah nourishment for every period and its perplexities, every era and its exigencies.

Now our original questions can all be answered. The Holy Ark that houses the sacred Torah must be constructed not by Moses alone, but rather by the entire nation of Israel, indeed, by the most committed Israelites of every future generation. The Torah is protected by those who study it, interpret it and expound its message for all subsequent times.

The cherubs symbolize the human partners in the expansion of Torah, largely to be found in the Oral Law, primarily developed by the great Torah interpreters of each generation, individuals who soar Heavenward by virtue of their ability to extract from the Divinely-planted seeds the fruit in order to make the Torah meaningful and accessible to every Jew for

every place and every time. ©2018 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

It seems that building campaigns are built into the DNA of the Jewish people from time immemorial. Beginning with this week's Torah reading and continuing for the next number of weeks we will be informed of the contributions of the Jewish people to the construction of the Mishkan/Tabernacle and to the exquisite details regarding the construction of that building and of its holy artifacts.

Throughout Jewish history a central building of prayer, worship and devotion has always been at the center of Jewish society and thought. Both the first and second Temples were the center of Jewish life during their centuries of existence. And throughout the long exile of the Jewish people, after the destruction of the Second Temple, the longing to restore the temple and have it built once again has never wavered.

Yet, it must be admitted and recognized that most of Jewish history, over the past millennia, has taken place without such a Temple and its physical representations present in the actuality of Jewish living. The Jewish people substituted synagogues and houses of worship large and small, study of Torah and community organizations for the lack of the central building of the Temple in Jerusalem.

We created miniature sanctuaries that carried us through very dark times and enormous challenges. This remarkable accomplishment of substitution for what seemed to be the central base of Judaism and the Jewish people is a prime example of the resiliency of the Jewish people and of the benevolent hand of God, so to speak, to help guide and preserve us against all odds.

The landscape of the world will reveal that in almost every corner of the globe there were or still are active synagogues built by the Jewish people. Their styles of architecture certainly differ as do the materials from which they were or are built. Nevertheless, they are all bound together in facing Jerusalem and preserving the holy traditions of prayer and services to God and humans. All attempts to change the form and nature of these synagogues were only temporary and fleeting.

The rhythm of centuries and of the mysterious but omnipresent ethos of holiness that these synagogues still contain, have remained the rock of the civilization of Judaism and the Jewish people. All of these buildings were built by love and sacrifice, vision and hope, sweat and tears. The commandment that appears in this week's Torah reading to “make for Me a dedicated sanctuary” was not limited to the generation of Moshe and those who wandered in the wilderness of the desert of Sinai.

That call has echoed throughout Jewish history in every time and place where Jews settled or even visited. From the grandeur of the synagogues of Amsterdam to the small huts of the Ukraine and Lithuania, even to the basements of homes in the suburbs of the major cities of the United States, Jews have always constructed and dedicated their houses of worship and made them centerpieces of their personal and communal life. This is one of the many miraculous events that mark the Jewish story throughout history. ©2018 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

This week's portion talks about the first synagogue of all time-the Mishkan. Because the chasm between the finite human being and the infinite God is great, the Mishkan, was established so that there be a tangible place where people can feel more intensely, more powerfully, the presence of God. Synagogues have followed the model of the Mishkan with this goal of spiritual connection in mind. The holiness of these places is contingent upon human input.

There is one exception to this rule. The Holy Temple, and for that matter all of Jerusalem, is endowed with a unique holiness that is called kedushat shehinah-the holiness of the indwelling, the holiness of God. While the holiness of most places emerges from human energy, the holiness of Jerusalem does not emerge from us, it comes from an external force-from God himself.

Maimonides concludes that just as God is above any boundary of time, so too the holiness that emerges from God is equally eternal. It follows, therefore, that Jerusalem's holiness is endless and infinite. It is a holiness that lasts forever. (Rambam, Laws of the Temple 6:16)

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik points out that when we first entered Israel in the time of Joshua, Jerusalem was conquered last. The movement of liberating the land was from the periphery to the center. Hundreds of years passed by between the conquest of Jericho by Joshua, and the building of the Temple by Solomon. Precisely because Israel was conquered prior to Jerusalem, Israel remained holy for only as long as we were in control of the land. Once the land was conquered by the Babylonians, the holiness departed.

But, when we re-entered the land in the time of Ezra, said Rabbi Soloveitchik, Jerusalem was settled first. It follows, therefore, that whatever lands were liberated afterwards, were imbued with the spirit of Jerusalem. Just as the holiness of Jerusalem is

eternal, so too is the holiness of the whole land of Israel. No wonder Maimonides believes that even after the Roman conquest of Israel, the land retained its holiness.

The Temple Mount and Jerusalem are the soul of the Jewish people and the soul of the Jewish land. It is above and beyond any boundary of time, and reminds us of our proud past and of our hope and faith in a promising future. ©2018 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 DAVID S. LEVIN

Message of the Mishkan

Parashat Terumah begins with the list of donations for the first "Temple" of the Jewish People. We find that Avraham and his children had built separate altars wherever they chose to pray and sacrifice to Hashem. This was to change now with the erection of a centralized Temple among the people and a promise of the Temple in Jerusalem as the place of sacrifices in the land they would inherit. This Temple in the desert was to be mobile, which could be put together quickly and equally quickly taken down and carried to the next dwelling place. This mobile "Temple" was to be the first thing established in a new area and the first to be taken down when leaving that area.

Hashem said to Moshe, "v'asu li mikdash v'shachanti b'tocham, make a Sanctuary for Me, so that I may dwell among them." We see here two different names for this Temple, Mikdash and Mishkan. HaRav Shmshon Raphael Hirsch tells us, "The one, Mikdash, the whole of the task we have to do for Hashem, and the other, Mishkan, the promises Hashem has given us if we do it." Our task "consists of giving up the whole of our private and public life to the fulfillment of Torah." HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin, the Aznayim L'Torah, explains that Hashem blessed the B'nei Yisrael with the ability to "m'kadeish, make holy" everything that Hashem commanded to them. Once the people had made the Temple and the objects which would be used in it, it had the additional effect of welcoming Hashem to dwell there. It is interesting that the Temple which was portable in the desert was called the Mishkan, the dwelling place, and the Temple that was built in the Land of Israel was called the Mikdash, the holy place. The Temple could not be designated as Mikdash, a holy place, until it rested in the Holy Land.

The Torah begins with the instructions for the keilim, the holy objects, before we are instructed about the Mishkan. The first of the keilim described is the Aron Kodesh, the Holy Ark. Hirsch emphasizes that the Aron Kodesh is the only one of the keilim for which the command is in the plural, "and you (p) shall make an Ark." This demonstrates that the command to make the

Aron was directed to each person. The Ark is a vessel which receives the Torah for the B'nei Yisrael to become a seed of life. Sforno explains that the cover of the Aron represented the human soul which is in the image of Hashem and is therefore made of solid gold. It was separated from the Aron just as the human soul at death is detached from the body with which it is temporarily united. The Aron was placed in the Kodesh K'dashim, the Holy of Holies, the inner chamber.

The second of the keilim to be built was the Shulchan, the Table, upon which were placed weekly the twelve loaves of the Lechem HaPanim, the Show-breads, one for each tribe, in two columns of six each, representing the days of the Creation. The Ramban explains that the Creation of the World was a unique event in that it was creatio ex nihilo, creation from nothing. Later when Hashem wished to create, He fashioned it from a pre-created item. Bread is the symbol of that process where a new creation utilizes pre-existing items which are combined to create life and livelihood. The show-breads symbolized the means by which Hashem blessed the people with prosperity. The Shulchan was placed along the Northern wall of the Mishkan, as the North served both as a means of prosperity and the place from which the destruction would come. Thus the prosperity of the Jewish People was in direct relationship to their observance of the Torah. The Shulchan was in the Kodesh, the Holy, the outer chamber of the Mishkan.

The third of the keilim to be discussed is the Menorah. The Menorah was placed in the outer chamber, the Kodesh, so that it could be visible to everyone. It was separated by a thick curtain (Parochet) from the Aron in the inner chamber. The Menorah symbolizes the illumination of the intellect. Sforno indicates that the six cups on the branches of the Menorah all were to face the central (seventh) branch which informs us that all areas of life, all intellectual achievements must be directed to the central authority of the Torah. The Menorah also symbolizes the six volumes of the Oral Law, the Mishnah. The Oral Law sheds light on the written law of the Torah. It is Man's responsibility to use his intellect for the betterment of the world with new ideas and new creations but all of these must be tempered by the laws and principles of the Torah.

The next of the keilim which is found in the Chatzeir, the Outer Courtyard of the Mishkan, is the Mizbei'ach, the Altar. It is also called the Mizbach HaOlah, the altar of the elevation-offering, and the Mizbach HaN'choshech, the Copper Altar. The essential part of every animal offering to Hashem was the sprinkling of the blood from that sacrifice on the Mizbe'ach which both atoned for sins and recognized gifts of thanks from the people.

The final item of the keilim which was in the outer chamber of the Mishkan, the Kodesh, was the

Mizbei'ach for incense. It was called the Mizbach HaKitorot, the Incense altar, or the Mizbach HaZahav, the Golden altar. The Ramban explains that this Mizbei'ach is not mentioned together with the other keilim that were found in the outer chamber because its function was different than the function of the other keilim. The Mishkan brought Hashem's Presence among the people but this also proved to be a danger for the people for this opened up the Attribute of Justice which could punish them for any infraction of the rules of the Temple. The Incense acted to assuage Hashem's anger with the people and protect them from any potential danger.

The keilim of the Temple send us a message. Hashem created a place in which we can observe His presence through the functioning of each of the keilim. We are shown the source of our lives and the way in which we should direct our lives through our observance of Hashem's laws. Through the laws, we can improve our lives and be forgiven for our indiscretions. We no longer have the Mishkan or the Mikdash from which we can learn these lessons while we experience Hashem among us. Though we can still learn the message of the Mikdash even though it has been destroyed, we still lack the warmth of Hashem's presence. May we be worthy of seeing the Temple rebuilt in our lifetime, and may we again experience Hashem among us. ©2018 Rabbi D.S. Levin

RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

The Torah states regarding the portable Sanctuary that traveled with the Israelites during the 40 years in the desert: "You shall place the Table outside the Partition, and the Menorah opposite the Table on the south side of the Tabernacle, and the Table you shall place on the north side" (Exodus 26:35).

It would have been much more concise to say, "Place the Table outside the partition on the north side." What lesson for life is the Torah coming to teach us from the placement of these furnishings?

The Table and the Menorah represent two aspects of life. The Table and the Showbread (which rested on it) represent the physical aspect of life, the food we need for survival; the Menorah represents the spiritual aspect.

When life begins, the infant knows only his physical needs and their gratification. The juvenile mind cannot conceptualize or understand spirituality. We thus begin life with our physical and material drives being dominant. When one reaches the age of reason, the spiritual aspects of life sets in, and should achieve primacy. The physical needs should eventually become subordinate to the spiritual. Inasmuch as one cannot achieve spiritual goals unless one is physically healthy, one must provide the body with all its essential needs. However, this should not be as in childhood, when

satisfying one's hunger or resting to overcome weariness were dominant.

This is why the Torah goes out of its way to describe the placement of the Table and the Menorah. The beginning of life is indeed with the Table, but at some later date, the Menorah must be given primacy. After that, the Table is still very much a part of life, but is now subordinate to the Menorah. Maturity is not limited to intellectual progress, but requires that spirituality becomes the goal of life while the physical requirements are only the means. *Dvar Torah from Twerski on Chumash by Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D. © 2018 Rabbi K. Packouz and aish.com*

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Aron Hakodesh

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

When one refers to the "Holy Ark" (*Aron Hakodesh*) we generally are speaking about the Ark that houses the Torah in the front of every Synagogue. Ostensibly this Ark can only be used for this lofty purpose and must be treated with dignity. Thus, one is not permitted to house other items there.

Are we allowed to house in an *Aron Kodesh*, *Chumashim* (bibles) or *Siddurim* (prayer books) or a scroll of the *Haftorot* or Torahs that have become unusable? It would seem that since these have less holiness than the Torah itself, it should be forbidden.

However, there are arguments which would permit this.

1. Since the *Siddurim* and *Chumashim* etc. are in the Aron with the Torah, they do not diminish its holiness. (this explanation would come into question when we customarily remove all the Torah on *Simchat Torah* and *Hoshannah Raabah*)

2. The leaders of the community who originally built the Aron had this use of storing holy objects and books in mind as well.

3. Since Today we also decorate the Torahs with additional ornaments and cloths, the Aron Kodesh has become a lesser utensil (*Tashmish Detashmish*) and therefore it would be permitted.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the above three reasons, there are still those who only allow the Torahs to be stored in the *Aron Kodesh* and nothing else.
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RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND

RavFrand

Transcribed by David Twersky

Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman

The Chumash commentaries are bothered by a word in this week's parsha. The second pasuk of Parshas Terumah says, "Speak to the Children of Israel, and they shall take to Me (v'yikchu Li) a portion, from every man whose heart will motivate him shall you take My portion." [Shemos 25:2] The question is that,

given the fact that people are being asked to give a portion rather than take a portion, the pasuk should say "v'yitnu Li terumah" rather than "v'yikchu Li terumah."

There are many different answers given to this question. Some commentators base their answer on the Rabbinic advice regarding the mitzvah of tithing, about which the Torah commands "aser, t'aser..." [Devorim 12:22]. The Rabbis homiletically expound on this "double language," and interpret "aser" [give 10 percent] "bishvil she'tisasher" [in order that you should become wealthy] [Shabbos 119a]. The idea is that if a person gives charity -- in particular "ma'aser" [a tithe] -- he will not become poor from that; on the contrary he will become wealthy as a result. So too, here, when a person contributes to the mishkan fund, he will not be on the short end of matters (as if he had "given"), but he will profit from the matter (as if he had "taken").

Other commentaries explain that when a person gives to a poor person, he is giving him something physical and material (*gashmiyus*). However, by giving the poor person money, the donor performs a mitzvah, which is spirital (*ruchniyus*). In the "real world," *ruchniyus* is eternal; material things are transient. Thus, the donor receives a better deal than the recipient. He took the mitzvah, while the poor person only received a few dollars, which will be quickly spent. Therefore, every time a person gives tzedaka, it is not a matter of giving, it is a matter of taking.

Rav Simcha Scheps, in his sefer *Simchas HaTorah*, suggests a third interpretation. Rav Scheps also explains that when one gives tzedaka, he is actually taking, but he explains it as follows: By giving tzedaka a person is elevating himself. As a result of giving money to a poor person or to a charity fund, a person becomes a "Giver". There is no greater goal in life than to become a "Giver." When a person becomes a Giver, he resembles the Shechina [Divine Presence of G-d]. This is the life mission of every person in this world. We enter this world as "takers", but when we learn to give, we become G-d-like, and the more we give, the more G-d-like we become. The pasuk in Mishlei says, "Charity elevates the nation..." [14:34]. Therefore, someone who gives is, in fact, taking something much greater.

The *Simchas HaTorah* references the Rambam in his Mishna commentary to Tractate Avos. The Rambam writes that if a person has \$1,000 to distribute to charitable causes, it is preferable to give one thousand people \$1 each, than to give \$1,000 to a single person. Although in accounting terms the outlay is identical, the Rambam writes that when someone gives a single large donation to just one person, he does not thereby become a Giver. He may well remain the same "stingy person" he always was, just a "stingy person" who happened to give one large donation. However, if someone gives and gives, over and over again, his personality changes. Someone who has

given one thousand times becomes a different type of person. He is now a "Giver."

I would just like to add a fourth interpretation of my own. This is perhaps a particularly appropriate interpretation, given the situation we find ourselves in, in the year 2009 (when this shiur was delivered), in which we are in the midst of what everyone is calling "the worst economic crises" since the depression.

There was once a very wealthy major real estate owner named Mr. Schiff. He lived in New York City in the 1920s. At that time, Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein, the Chevron Rosh Yeshiva, came to the United States and solicited funds from this wealthy American Jew. Mr. Schiff gave the Rosh Yeshiva \$25,000 for the Slabodaka-Chevron Yeshiva. \$25,000 in the 1920s was a very generous donation. Then this Mr. Schiff lost everything during the financial crisis of 1929, to the extent that he was living in the basement of one of his New York City buildings.

The next year, there was another parlor meeting in New York City on behalf of the Slabodka-Chevron Yeshiva, and Mr. Schiff came to the parlor meeting. The emissary for the Yeshiva (who was not Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein this time) heard what happened to Mr. Schiff, and offered him that the Slabodka-Chevron Yeshiva would loan him \$5,000. Mr. Schiff got up at the meeting and said, "I am not going to take it, and I cannot understand how you can offer it to me. I lost everything. I lost my entire portfolio; my entire fortune. The only thing that I still have left is the merit of the \$25,000 that I gave to the Slabodka Yeshiva. And now you want to take part of that merit away from me? Under no circumstances will I agree to that."

Perhaps this is also an interpretation of our expression "v'yikchu Li terumah". My friends, people unfortunately lost their jobs; we have seen our 401Ks reduced to 201Ks, and people are suffering. People have literally lost their fortunes. But, there is one thing that can never be taken away. People can never lose the charity they have given. When a person "gives," he is in fact giving something that he can "take with him."

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RABBI PINCHAS WINSTON

Perceptions

“**S**peak to the Children of Israel, and have them take for Me an offering; from every person whose heart inspires him to generosity, you shall take My offering...” (Shemos 25:2) We are now in the Purim mode. Last week was Parashas Shekalim, the first of the four special Maftirs read at this time of year, two before Purim and two after. I don't know about you, but I'm already thinking about Pesach cleaning. I'm older and my kids have moved out. I work slower and things seem to take a lot longer to do than they used to. I'm ALREADY strategizing.

This week's parsha sets the tone. As the name

itself explains, it is about giving. And not just giving, but giving from the heart, OF the heart. Is there anything ELSE to give? Is there any other WAY to give?

The funny thing about giving is that it can look like a giving and yet, end up being a taking. The moment the giving benefits the giver more than the recipient, it is a taking, not a giving.

That's not necessarily bad. It depends upon the arrangement. I have no problem receiving something that benefits my benefactor more than me as long as I receive what I need or want. I especially have no problem with it if the benefit my giver has gained is purely spiritual.

We also have no problem with being a vehicle for a benefactor's gain if it is sincere. If a giver acts as if they are making a sacrifice to help out when in fact they are not, or at least not to the extent that they say they are, then it tarnishes the chesed somewhat. It attaches an element of falsehood to the act of giving.

Why is this even important, if the receiver got what they needed in the end? The answer has to do with the entire purpose of giving, which has to do with the entire purpose of living. Oddly enough, this is something that is not so well known. Purim shows us that this often comes back to haunt us.

The Talmud says: "Rav Avdimi bar Chama bar Chasa said: This teaches that the Holy One, Blessed is He, overturned the mountain upon them like an [inverted] cask, and said to them, 'If you accept the Torah, it is well; if not, there shall be your burial.'" (Shabbos 88a)

This, of course, is problematic. It means that the Jewish people did not FREELY accept the Torah of their own volition, but were coerced into acceptance. They said they were giving themselves to God and Torah, but their giving lacked sincerity. This came back to haunt them 957 years later: "Rava said: They reaccepted it in the days of Achashveros." (Shabbos 88a)

They reaccepted it because Haman almost pushed them to the point of extinction. That pushed them to the point of teshuvah, and a VERY sincere acceptance of Torah on ALL levels. By that time Torah was no longer new, and their dependence on God became clear. They were finally in position to accept ALL of Torah for ALL of the right reasons.

It is more than interesting that so much of Purim is about giving. There is a mitzvah to give, not just to people who need to receive, but even those who do not. Matanos L'Evyonim is for the poor, but Mishloach Manos is usually given to those who have. It has even become a central part of the day's celebrations, and so many people go over the top with their gifts.

The question is, why is giving such an integral part of Purim only? Pesach is also about the redemption of a downtrodden people, so why not make

gift giving a part of the holiday as well? What is unique about Purim that ties it to heart-giving more than any other Jewish holiday? Why is Purim, more than any other holiday, about sincerity?

"Rebi Shimon bar Yochai was asked by his students, 'Why were the 'enemies of the Jewish people' in that generation deserving of extermination?'

"He told them: 'You answer.'

"They said, 'Because they partook of the feast of that wicked one.'

"[He said to them]: 'If so, those in Shushan should have been killed, but not those in other parts!'

"They then said, 'Then you answer.'

"He told them: 'It was because they bowed down to the image.'

"They said to him, 'Did God then show them mercy?'

"He replied: 'They only PRETENDED to worship, so He also only PRETENDED to exterminate them, as it says, 'For he afflicted not from his heart' (Eichah 3:33)." (Megillah 12a)

So, then, they weren't REALLY deserving of extermination. It just LOOKED that way, and it appeared that Haman COULD have carried out a Holocaust in his time. But really, God had just been pulling their collective leg, taking things down to the wire so that they would...

Would WHAT?

Become SINCERE?

Well, think about it for a moment. Mordechai certainly didn't buy into it, the whole idea of faking their worship of Haman while secretly staying with God. On the contrary, he went out of his WAY to show just how sincerely he DIDN'T give in to Haman and his demands. According to the Talmud, it wasn't HIS sincerity that almost led to Haman's decree to wipe out the Jews, but the lack of sincerity on behalf of his fellow Jews.

That's why the miracle, in the end, comes through Mordechai. In spite of the potential dangers of remaining true to his heart, he stuck with it anyhow. In the end, he not only survived all the dangers, but was elevated to a high position of power.

This is why costumes and drinking are such an important part of the celebration. The costumes mock our ability to create facades in life, and the drinking is



supposed to help a person take them down. As the Talmud states, a person is known by three things, one of which is his "cup."

The interesting thing about insincerity is that it can be so subtle that a person can even be insincere with

himself. At some point, people can stop knowing themselves and can find themselves in relationships they do not like or doing things they do not enjoy. But, it can take them years of misery before they finally wake up, realize it, and change it.

It is particularly easy to be insincere with God, at least during times of Hester Panim, when God hides His face. That is when people can go to minyan and pray as if they mean it, when in fact they don't at all. Or they can perform mitzvos half-heartedly, if even that. They think it is "enough," which is why they can't understand when it seems as if God is not on their side.

Until, of course, they can recall what it means to be sincere. That's what happened to the Jews in Esther's time. No one prays or fasts more sincerely than someone who believes their life is on the line. It made them worthy, worthy of a great miracle. But they wouldn't have needed it in the first place had they learned the lesson from this week's parsha, that is the HEART of a person that God wants. The "gift" is just the means to give it. ©2018 Rabbi P. Winston & torah.org

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

Parshat Terumah is the beginning of the building of the Mishkan, where G-d would dwell among the Jews as they traveled in the desert. To build the Mishkan materials had to be collected, and G-d commanded the Jews to collect several types. After listing the need for metals, wools, hairs, skins, and wood, the Torah tells us that they collected "oil for illumination" and "spices for the anointment oil and incense". Why does the Torah suddenly need to tell us what the materials were to be used for, when it hadn't discussed it thus far?

One possible answer is that there are two differences between the characteristics of the other materials and those of the oil and spices. Firstly, while the other materials were important, they required little effort to produce, while the oil and spices had to be manufactured and maintained. Those people that didn't have the precious stones to donate to the building of the Mishkan still had the opportunity to contribute with their efforts instead. Secondly, both the oil and the spices are of the most 'giving' materials used in the Mishkan; The oil was used to light the Menorah, which gives off light to everything around it, and the spices give off a beautiful smell to its surroundings. The message it clear... The most beautiful and giving things in life are those that require our active effort. Spices smell and oil illuminates because someone took the time and effort to make them. The same can be said today...Being a good person and a good Jew is beautiful and rewarding to ourselves and to others, but only because we take the time and effort to understand and cultivate it. ©2018 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.