

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI MORDECHAI WEISS**

### Lessons

As I write these words I am sitting in my office in the beautiful city of Efrat trying to digest what is happening in our city as well as the entire world. The streets are empty. There are no schools in sessions; even pre-schools are closed. The daily Minyanim have been curtailed to such a degree that only Minyanim of ten people are permitted, and the davening has been truncated in that a short loud Shmoneh Esreh is recited and no one is permitted to be less than a distance of two meters from his/her neighbor. People may not shake hands with their fellow parishioners. Weddings and Smachot have been limited to only ten people. Rav Riskin, the Morah Diasra of the City of Efrat, has announced that people older than a certain age, who are in greater danger of catching this Virus, should stay in their homes and daven there. Rabbi Riskin himself has placed himself in voluntary isolation in his home.

The country seems to be at a total standstill. Literally all businesses of leisure including gyms and pools, movie theatres and the like are closed indefinitely. Only providers of basic services such as medical and food are permitted to be open. The country is 65% closed and people are profoundly worried and concerned.

However there are certain lessons that we could derive from the unfolding of these events that are at once sobering as well as inspirational.

First, we should realize and marvel at the greatness of Almighty G-d. Before this emergency we all felt so complacent and secure. Life continued almost automatically. Suddenly we are faced with a simple microscopic virus as the Coronavirus and our entire world has been turned upside down. We feel so fragile and minute as the entire world is sent into literally a total state of panic and frenzy. To me, this beckons the notion of the greatness of our Creator and the insignificance of the human being. We are not in control of our destiny; only Hashem controls the world.

There is something else amidst this confusion however, that is very inspiring to me.

Before the Jewish people left Egypt, the night of Makat Bechorot, Almighty G-d instructed the Jewish people to gather in their homes and there to have the first recorded Seder. At a time of death and confusion,

G-d directed us to focus on our family and assemble in our homes; to literally separate from the everyday comingling and realize that the center and the crucial aspect of our existence as Jews is our family.

Additionally before Almighty G-d gave us the Torah He said: "Ko Tomar Lebeit Yaakov", "Thus you should say to the house of Jacob".

Before G-d was prepared to bestow upon the Jewish people His greatest gift, the Torah, He wanted to be sure that the most crucial aspect that would insure the continuity of the Jewish people - the family - was intact. The focus of the Jewish people when receiving of the Torah was the "Bayit" the home; for without the home we could not survive as a nation.

As we approach the holiday of Pesach, with the background of the frightening Coronavirus Pandemic, we are forced to spotlight on our homes; our families. As the Jews living in Egypt were commanded to be with their families before the final plague of the killing of the first born and the great exodus from Egypt, we today, as a result of this Pandemic Virus, are forced as well to focus on our homes and families.

Before the great exodus from Egypt the family was crucial as a means towards Jewish independence.

As we await the coming of Moshiach today we are once again reminded by G-d during this frightening time that the key to our redemption will be our interactions and relationship with our family.

May that time come speedily, amen. ©2020 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit. Rabbi Mordechai Weiss is the former Principal of the Bess and Paul Sigal Hebrew Academy of Greater Hartford and the Hebrew Academy of Atlantic County where together he served for over forty years. He and his wife D'vorah live in Efrat. All comments are welcome at [rvmordechai@aol.com](mailto:rvmordechai@aol.com)

**RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ**

### Migdal Ohr

"And to give guidance (teach) was placed in his heart, he and Ohaliav ben Achisamach of the tribe of Dan..." (Shmos 35:34) After several sentences of praise about Betzalel, whom Hashem had infused with all sorts of wisdom and knowledge, the Torah seemingly slips Ohaliav in as an afterthought. Why didn't Moshe say, "Behold, Hashem has chosen Betzalel and Ohaliav and filled them with wisdom and insight to do all sorts of craftwork and the understanding to allocate the donations"? Why only

elaborate on one and barely mention the other?

Rashi gives us a clue. The Tribe of Dan was from the lowliest of the twelve shvatim. (They carried an idol with them when they left Egypt and were not the most highly-thought of.) Dan was son of one of the maidservants as well. However, Hashem does not play favorites as it says in Iyov (34:19): "He does not prefer the noble to the impoverished for they are all the work of His hands."

When Moshe was speaking to the people, he wanted their buy-in to Hashem's choice. It would make them better partners and more able to devote themselves to the project of building a home for Hashem in their midst. But Moshe knew his crowd. He therefore began by mentioning Betzalel, from a noteworthy family in an aristocratic tribe. He proceeded to speak of all the positive attributes Hashem had given him so that he was the perfect one for the job. As he spoke, the people undoubtedly nodded their heads in agreement, understanding what a good choice Betzalel was.

Once they were convinced of the appropriateness and "wise choice" Hashem had made in Betzalel as the builder of the Mishkan, Moshe was able to slip in Ohaliav. Once Hashem was imbuing great qualities in one, He could do it to another, though he came from humble origins. That clinched it.

Human beings are judgmental. We tend to decide who is worthy and who is not, yet we are frequently wrong. We don't have a full picture and often have trouble seeing the best in people. But we are all put here on Earth for a reason and only Hashem knows what it is.

While the Jews may not have imagined it possible that someone from the Tribe of Dan could be so integral to the building and imbued with such lofty traits, Hashem knows the vessels He's made and of what they are capable.

When it comes to building the Mishkan or the Bais HaMikdash, or anyplace we want Hashem to reside with us, everyone needs to be included. We cannot say someone doesn't fit in because we'll be missing pieces of the puzzle. When we come to recount the building of the Mishkan, we need to hear and understand that every little bit not only helps, but that without it we'd be incomplete.

*Everything in the world belongs to Hashem. Whatever we take or use is a loan we will need to pay back. The more we indulge, the more debt we incur. Over a lifetime we will accrue massive amounts of debt that will need to repay. How will we manage?*

*Rav Mordechai Elefant answered with a Mashal. When you go to a hotel everything you take is marked down and upon your departure you are hit with a bill. The only one who doesn't pay is a hotel employee. The waiter takes food from the kitchen when he is hungry and no one cares. The concierge drinks a*

*bottle of water at no charge. It is all free since they are helping others.*

*The trappings of our lives are very expensive and one day we will need to pay for them. However, if others are welcome in our home, our car is a Chesed on wheels, and our food and money are shared with the less fortunate, then we will not be sent a bill for our use of Hashem's property because we are working for Him - helping Him provide for His children. ©2020 Rabbi J. Gewirtz and Migdal Ohr*

#### **RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

## **Covenant & Conversation**

**M**elanie Reid is a journalist who writes a regular column for The (London) Times. A quadriplegic with a wry lack of self-pity, she calls her weekly essay Spinal Column. On 4 January 2020, she told the story of how she, her husband, and others in their Scottish village bought an ancient inn to convert it into a pub and community centre, a shared asset for the neighbourhood.

Something extraordinary then happened. A large number of locals volunteered their services to help open and run it. "We've got well-known classical musicians cleaning the toilets and sanding down tables. Behind the bar there are sculptors, building workers, humanist ministers, Merchant Navy officers, grandmothers, HR executives and estate agents... Retired CEOs chop wood for the fires; septuagenarians ... wait at tables; surveyors eye up internal walls to be knocked down and can-doers fix blocked gutters."

It has not only become a community centre; it has dramatically energised the locality. People of all ages come there to play games, drink, eat, and attend special events. A rich variety of communal facilities and activities have grown up around it. She speaks of "the alchemy of what can be achieved in a village when everyone comes together for a common aim."

In her column describing this, Melanie was kind enough to quote me on the magic of "I" becoming "we": "When you build a home together ... you create something far greater than anything anyone could do alone or be paid to do." The book I wrote on this subject, *The Home We Build Together*, was inspired by this week's parsha and its name: Vayakhel. It is the Torah's primer on how to build community.

It does so in a subtle way. It uses a single verb, k-h-l, to describe two very different activities. The first appears in last week's parsha at the beginning of the story of the Golden Calf. "When the people saw that Moshe was long delayed in coming down the mountain, they gathered (vayikahel) around Aharon and said to him: get up, make us gods to go before us. This man Moshe who brought us out of Egypt – we have no idea what has become of him" (Ex. 32:1). The second is the opening verse of this week's parsha: "Moshe assembled (vayakhel) all the community of Israel and

said to them: these are the things the Lord has commanded you to do" (Ex. 35:1).

These sound similar. Both verbs could be translated as "gathered" or "assembled." But there is a fundamental difference between them. The first gathering was leaderless; the second had a leader, Moshe. The first was a crowd, the second a community.

In a crowd, individuals lose their individuality. A kind of collective mentality takes over, and people find themselves doing what they would never consider doing on their own. Charles Mackay famously spoke of the madness of crowds. People, he said, "go mad in herds, while they only recover their senses slowly, one by one." Together, they act in a frenzy. Normal deliberative processes break down. Sometimes this expresses itself in violence, at other times in impulsive economic behaviour giving rise to unsustainable booms and subsequent crashes. Crowds lack the inhibitions and restraints that form our inner controls as individuals.

Elias Cannetti, whose book *Crowds and Power* is a classic on the subject, writes that "The crowd is the same everywhere, in all periods and cultures; it remains essentially the same among men of the most diverse origin, education and language. Once in being, it spreads with the utmost violence. Few can resist its contagion; it always wants to go on growing and there are no inherent limits to its growth. It can arise wherever people are together, and its spontaneity and suddenness are uncanny."

The crowd that gathered around Aharon was in the grip of panic. Moshe was their one contact with God, and thus with instruction, guidance, miracle and power. Now he was no longer there and they did not know what had happened to him. Their request for "gods to go before us" was ill-considered and regressive. Their behaviour once the Calf was made – "the people sat down to eat and drink and then stood up to engage in revelry" – was undisciplined and dissolute. When Moshe came down the mountain at God's command, he "saw that the people were running wild for Aharon had let them run beyond control and become a laughing stock to their enemies." What Moshe saw exemplified Carl Jung's description: "The psychology of a large crowd inevitably sinks to the level of mob psychology." Moshe saw a crowd.

The Vayakhel of this week's parsha was quite different. Moshe sought to create community by getting the people to make personal contributions to a collective project, the Mishkan, the Sanctuary. In a community, individuals remain individuals. Their participation is essentially voluntary: "Let everyone whose heart moves them bring an offering." Their differences are valued because they mean that each has something distinctive to contribute. Some gave gold, other silver, others bronze. Some brought wool or animal skins. Others gave precious stones. Yet others

gave their labour and skills.

What united them was not the dynamic of the crowd in which we are caught up in a collective frenzy but rather a sense of common purpose, of helping to bring something into being that was greater than anyone could achieve alone. Communities build; they do not destroy. They bring out the best in us, not the worst. They speak not to our baser emotions such as fear but to higher aspirations like building a symbolic home for the Divine Presence in their midst.

By its subtle use of the verb *k-h-l*, the Torah focuses our attention not only on the product but also the process; not only on what the people made but on what they became through making it. This is how I put it in *The Home We Build Together*: "A nation – at least, the kind of nation the Israelites were called on to become – is created through the act of creation itself. Not all the miracles of Exodus combined, not the plagues, the division of the sea, manna from heaven or water from a rock, not even the revelation at Sinai itself, turned the Israelites into a nation. In commanding Moshe to get the people to make the Tabernacle, God was in effect saying: To turn a group of individuals into a covenantal nation, they must build something together.

"Freedom cannot be conferred by an outside force, not even by God Himself. It can be achieved only by collective, collaborative effort on the part of the people themselves. Hence the construction of the Tabernacle. A people is made by making. A nation is built by building."

This distinction between community and crowd has become ever more significant in the 21st century. The classic example is the Arab Spring of 2011. Massive protests took place throughout much of the Arab world, in Tunisia, Algeria, Jordan, Oman, Egypt, Yemen, Sudan, Iraq, Bahrain, Libya, Kuwait, Syria and elsewhere. Yet it turned rapidly into what has been called the Arab Winter. The protests still continue in a number of these countries, yet only in Tunisia has it led to constitutional democracy. Protests, in and of themselves, are never enough to generate free societies. They belong to the logic of crowd, not community.

The same is true of social media even in free societies. They are great enhancements of existing communities, but they do not in and of themselves create communities. That takes face-to-face interaction and a willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of the group. Without this, however, as Mark Zuckerberg said in 2017, "social media can contribute to divisiveness and isolation." Indeed, when used for virtue signalling, shaming or aggressive confrontation, they can create a new form of crowd behaviour, the electronic herd.

In his new book *A Time to Build*, Yuval Levin argues that social media have undermined our social lives. "They plainly encourage the vices most

dangerous to a free society. They drive us to speak without listening, to approach others confrontationally rather than graciously, to spread conspiracies and rumours, to dismiss and ignore what we would rather not hear, to make the private public, to oversimplify a complex world, to react to one another much too quickly and curtly. They eat away at our capacity for patient toleration, our decorum, our forbearance, our restraint." These are crowd behaviours, not community ones.

The downsides of crowds are still with us. So too are the upsides of community, as Melanie Reid's Scottish pub demonstrates. I believe that creating community takes hard work, and that few things in life are more worthwhile. Building something with others, I discover the joy of becoming part of something greater than I could ever achieve alone. *Covenant and Conversation 5780 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l* ©2020 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

#### **RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## **Shabbat Shalom**

**"Y**ou shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day" (Exodus 35:3) The Sages of the Talmud query the significance of this verse; after all, the Bible commands us in several places not to do "any manner of creative, physical activities on the Sabbath day" (Exodus 20:10, for example). In fact, the verse preceding this command not to light a fire on Shabbat says, "whoever does an act of physical creativity on [the Sabbath day] shall be put to death."

These are generic prohibitions, which include the 39 acts of physical creativity that according to our Oral Tradition are forbidden on Shabbat (Mishna Shabbat 7:2). "Kindling a fire" is one of those 39, so why is it singled out again in this week's biblical portion? Philo Judaeus (c. 20 BCE-c. 50 CE), a great Alexandrian rabbi, exegete and philosopher, explains and provides a fascinating spin on this prohibition, taking it to mean: "Do not kindle the fire of anger in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath." The Oral Tradition forbids kindling a fire Philo interprets our biblical verse to be adding "the fire of anger" against any individual or familial member!

Allow me to record two anecdotes that will provide an interesting postscript to Philo's masterful interpretation. There was a young man studying in the famed Yeshiva of Volozhin, bright and especially gifted of mind and pen, who began to go "off the derech" (lose his way religiously). He was discovered smoking a cigarette on the holy Shabbat. The head of the yeshiva, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, asked to see the errant student, urging him to mend his ways. The young man audaciously responded that he was merely exercising

his gift of free will.

The yeshiva head, who had given his life and finances to the institution – and who continued the difficult task of teaching and fund-raising to maintain his yeshiva even in his later years – was overcome with anger. He slapped the "student" on the cheek.

The mortified young man left the yeshiva and made his way to America, where he became a well-known author and editor of Yiddish newspaper The Jewish Daily Forward. He was for many years bitterly anti-religious, and under his watch, the famous (or infamous) "Yom Kippur Eve parties" were held in the Forward's building on the Lower East Side.

In the early 1970s, my family and I would vacation in Miami Beach, Florida, where on Shabbat afternoons I would give shiurim (Torah classes) at the Caribbean Hotel. On one particular Shabbat, I was speaking about the Mussar (Ethicist) Movement and specifically about the famed Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, known as the Hafetz Haim after his book against slander, I invoked a passage in the Talmud (B.T. Arachin 16b), in which Rabbi Tarfon maintains that "no one knows how to properly rebuke in our times; if one person says to another, 'remove the flint from between your teeth,' the other will respond, 'remove the beam from between your eyes.'"

However, I added, apparently the Hafetz Haim, who lived 2,000 years after Rabbi Tarfon, did know how to rebuke, and how to bring an errant Jew back to God. It is told that a student in the Yeshiva in Radin (the city of the Hafetz Haim) was caught smoking on Shabbat. The Hafetz Haim spoke to him for two minutes, and the student not only repented, but even received rabbinical ordination from the Hafetz Haim.

As I concluded my lecture, an elderly gentleman, who had been visibly agitated as I spoke, grabbed my arm and urgently whispered, "Where did you hear that story?" I told him I didn't remember, and I didn't even know if it was true. "It is true," he said. "I was that boy; I was smoking on Shabbat and I have semicha from the Hafetz Haim. The great rabbi spoke to me briefly, after which I willingly and even gladly returned to the Yeshiva and would not leave until I received his ordination!"

We were both overcome with emotion. We left the hotel and silently walked along the beach. Finally, I couldn't restrain myself. "What did the Hafetz Haim tell you that changed your life in two minutes?" Here is what the elderly man responded, and his words remain inscribed on my soul.

"I was standing in front of the yeshiva with my belongings, ready to leave for home. Standing in front of me was the Hafetz Haim, who took my hand in his and politely asked if I would come to his house. I felt I couldn't refuse. We walked the two blocks in silence, hand-in-hand, until we reached his home. I entered a very small, dilapidated but spotlessly clean two-room

hovel, in which not one piece of furniture was whole.

The Hafetz Haim, who was quite short, looked up at me and said only one word: 'Shabbes.' "He gently squeezed my hand as an embrace, and there were tears in his eyes. He repeated again, 'Shabbes,' and if I live to be 120 I will never stop feeling the scalding heat of his tears as they fell on my hand. He then guided me to the door, embraced me and blessed me. At that moment, I felt in my soul that there was nothing more important than the Shabbat, and that – despite my transgression – this rabbinical giant loved me. I took an oath not to leave the yeshiva without rabbinical ordination from the Hafetz Haim." ©2020 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

### **RABBI BEREL WEIN**

## **Wein Online**

**M**oshe gathers all of the people of Israel into the courtyard of the Tabernacle to instruct them about the observance of the sanctity of Shabbat, That is the content of the lead verse of this week's Torah reading, The obvious question raised by all of the Torah commentators is whether there was insufficient physical space outside the Tabernacle to hold the entire population of the Jewish people. Talmud and Midrash, therefore, resort to a miraculous supernatural understanding of the event.

They state that here we are taught the concept that the small and few can somehow contain and hold the large and many. We naturally consider this to be miraculous. But in the realm of the Almighty, where space and time do not really exist, there is no problem in having millions occupy a limited area of space. And since the Tabernacle, and later the Jerusalem Temples, were miraculous in their very nature and essence, even in their construction, it is obvious that such a supernatural phenomenon existed to gather all the Jewish people within a limited area.

The Talmud asserts that the Jewish people in that generation were accustomed to miracles and to the supernatural events. With regular exposure to the supernatural, it eventually makes it natural and easily accepted. The Torah also assumes that those that study Torah will never discount the presence of the supernatural in the Jewish narrative. In Jewish thought and experience, the dividing line between natural and supernatural is blurred. The Tabernacle is proof if this axiom.

The Talmud instructs us that this miracle of the limited containing unlimited also existed in the times of the Temple in Jerusalem. Pirke Avot teaches that the Jews in the Temple courtyard stood pressed against one another. However, during the Temple service, when the moment arrived for everyone to kneel and prostrate themselves before the Holy Presence, there was sufficient space for all to do so comfortably. The great moral and practical lesson derived from this

phenomenon is obvious and telling. When people insist on standing erect, in protecting their own perceived interests and turf, the world is very crowded and there is always hostility to neighbors and companions. However, if we are willing to bow down, certainly to God - but even towards the needs and dignity of other human beings, there will always be enough space and room for all.

The Lord has so fashioned human society in a way that successful living – be it in the milieu of family or community or economic well-being -- is always dependent on accommodating others. The customer is always right is the key to successful commercial enterprise. It is not within our nature to bow down easily. The Torah emphasizes, time and again, our individual responsibility to society as a whole. The tabernacle and Jerusalem Temples came to represent this basic concept of flexibility over rigidity and humility over selfish arrogance. Even though the Temple is not yet in our midst physically, its spiritual message certainly is with us. ©2020 *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](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)*

### **RABBI AVI WEISS**

## **Shabbat Forshpeis**

**T**he last two portions of the Book of Exodus apply and repeat information found in previous portions 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 Pekudei, 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 God 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 God 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 felt for God.

Both these rationales are significant when considering that the Mishkan was built after the Golden Calf incident. Notwithstanding the fall, the Jewish people, led by Moshe, rose up and embraced God's command to build the Mishkan with meticulous love.

But for me, the answer to our question may lie

in considering the sequence of events as found in the Torah: The portion of Terumah deals with the command to construct the Tabernacle. Tetzaveh follows with the command of the priestly garments. Immediately following these portions, Shabbat is mentioned.

But our portion, Vayakhel, begins with the Shabbat. The building of the Tabernacle and the making of the garments follow. Whereas the command was followed by Shabbat, in the actual implementation, Shabbat comes first.

In Judaism, there is sanctity of place and sanctity of time. In the “commanding” portions, holiness of place precedes holiness of time. In the “implementing” portions, the order is reversed.

Note again, that the incident that falls between the command and its 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 saw as replacing the keruvim –was a defiling of place.

Precisely because of this perversion of sanctity of space, the Torah deems it important to repeat the whole sequence, but to place Shabbat first so that the Shabbat spirit be infused into every detail of the construction of the Tabernacle and the making of the priestly garments.

As important as place may be, time is of even greater importance. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, in his book “The Sabbath,” points out that while acquisition of “space,” is an appropriate human quest, life goes wrong when one spends all of his/her time to amass “things.” “For to have more, does not mean to be more.”

Ultimately, we are people who place a greater emphasis on empires in time than empires in space. © 2020 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**

## The Temple Comes First

It is common to think of the four recent parshiot, Terumah, Tetzaveh, Vayakhel, and Pekudei as a single unit which is separated only by parashat Ki Tisa, which we read last week. Parashat Terumah and parashat Vayakhel deal with the Mishkan, the portable Temple of the desert, and its Holy Objects. Parashat Tetzaveh and parashat Pekudei deal with the clothes of the Kohanim, the Priests, and a few Holy Objects that were not mentioned in the other parshiot. The Rabbis explain that the earlier parshiot (Terumah and Tetzaveh) were the commandment to Moshe concerning these areas, and the latter parshiot (Vayakhel and Pekudei) are Moshe’s command to the people and the actual making of the Mishkan, the objects, and the Kohanim’s clothes as per Moshe’s command.

Interestingly, these four parshiot are not an exact parallel of each other. The most striking difference comes at the end of Tetzaveh and Pekudei, after the description of the clothes worn by the Kohein Gadol (chief Priest, Aharon) and the regular Kohein. In Tetzaveh, the Torah continues with a description of the inauguration ceremony for the Priests. This was an eight-day period in which certain sacrifices were brought and the Priests were anointed with an olive-oil mixture prepared for this occasion. In contrast, the end of Pekudei does not discuss the implementation of this ceremony for the Priests but instead tells of the assembling of the Mishkan in preparation for its dedication. Though these were the same seven days of preparation followed by the eighth day on which both the Temple was established and the Kohanim were invested in their positions, we find here only a discussion of the assembling and disassembling of the Mishkan with no mention of the Kohanim. Since the pattern of command is broken from the first set of parshiot to the second set of parshiot and the building of the Mishkan and the making of the clothes and objects, it is appropriate for us to seek an explanation for this break.

If we examine the order of the first of our parshiot, we find that the first discussion involves the building of the objects that would be placed inside the Mishkan. The only object discussed that was outside of the Mishkan, but still in its courtyard, was the altar. Since the altar was the major service of the Mishkan, it was included as one of the vital objects to be constructed, but for practical purposes, had to be placed outside of the Tent. Only after these objects were discussed does the Torah then turn to a discussion of the structure of the Mishkan and the placement of these objects in their assigned places. It is not until the second of the parshiot that the Torah begins its discussion of the clothes for the Kohanim (Priests).

The Malbim understood the Holy garments to symbolize inner vestments. “The priests were to invest themselves with noble qualities which are the vestments of the soul.” Professor Nechama Leibovits quotes Benno Jacob saying, “The fact that the Lord Himself gave Adam and Eve garments and clothed them indicates that clothing is not just a social convention but an extension of the work of Creation...” We find this concept of “creation” also in describing the Mishkan. Nechama Leibovits provides a scriptural parallel between the words of the Creation and the words used to command the building of the Mishkan. Hashem’s desire for a World, which brought about the Creation, is compared with His desire to dwell among the people whom He created. According to the Ramban, there is also a parallel between the experience of Har Sinai and the Mishkan. The Glory which appeared before the people at Har Sinai openly

would now accompany the people inside the Mishkan in a concealed manner. "Thus, Israel always had with them in the Mishkan the Glory which appeared to them on Har Sinai."

HaRav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch gives us insight into the order of the discussions and the question of the "pattern break" in the parshiot which we noticed earlier. Our focal point is from the pasuk, "They shall make for Me a Holy place (Sanctuary), and I shall dwell in their midst." Hirsch explains that these two terms are essential: Mikdash (Sanctuary) and Mishkan, from V'Shachanti (I will dwell). Mikdash is "the whole of the task we have to do for Hashem," and Mishkan, the promises Hashem has given us if we do it." The making of the Mikdash "consists of our giving up the whole of our private and public life to the fulfillment of the Torah." The promise from Hashem of "dwelling in their midst" consists of "the protecting and blessing-giving presence of Hashem in our midst, manifesting itself in the Home of Consecration, and Mishkan the Home of Hashem's Proximity to us." It is no surprise then that the first object to be built was the Aron Kodesh, the Holy Ark, the place where Hashem said He would dwell and from where He would speak to Moshe and Aharon. Typically, Hashem provides the reward before the task is performed so the Mishkan and His promise must precede our service to Him.

Our pattern is established as follows: (1) the objects of the Mishkan and courtyard, (2) the Mishkan which would hold these objects, (3) the clothes of the Kohein. The objects of service to Hashem must precede the place where these objects are to be placed. The objects and the place must precede the Kohanim, as the priests can only serve by using these objects and within the place where they were sanctioned to be used. The Kohanim were also prohibited from performing their service without the proper dress which was designed to instill values and qualities within their souls.

It follows from this that the dedication of the Mishkan must precede the dedication of the Kohanim. Even though the ceremony for the dedication of the Kohanim appeared in the end of the first set of parshiot, the actual dedication of the Kohanim is not fully described until the Book of Vayikra (Leviticus). The end of the latter set of parshiot is used to describe the dedication of the Mishkan. It is appropriate that this dedication ends the Book of Shemot (Exodus). The comparison of the Creation and the Mishkan is emphasized by this conclusion.

The Book of Bereishit (Genesis) begins with the Creation of the World. Our philosophers explain that Hashem had to constrict Himself in order to have a space in which to create the World. This separation of Hashem and His Creation was necessary even though not ideal. Man's task then became a process to reintroduce Hashem into this separated World. The

process began with those few who understood the part that Hashem plays in the World and spread that understanding to others. Avraham led his family in producing men of understanding. His sons went into exile where they grew into a nation. Upon their freedom from bondage, they followed Hashem to Har Sinai where they renewed their understanding of Hashem. Now at the conclusion of Shemot, they built a structure wherein Hashem could "reenter" the World and rejoin that part that was separated. May we soon have the opportunity to build the Third Temple where Hashem may dwell in our midst forever. ©2020 Rabbi D.S. Levin

**RABBI YITZCHAK ZWEIG**

## Shabbat Shalom Weekly

**W**e are certainly living in extraordinary times. The world is currently under siege by a dangerous and implacable enemy; the likes of which have not been seen in over one hundred years. What this enemy has managed to accomplish in a few short months is nothing short of remarkable: spreading pain and suffering across the globe, bringing entire countries to their knees, and sowing panic and dread the world over for what is yet to come. The enemy I am speaking of is of course the coronavirus.

The resulting fallout from the virus to the international financial markets has been devastating and, unfortunately, we have not yet begun to see the bottom of this free fall. Even more frightening, the potential long term impacts are entirely unknown; we can merely speculate how this carnage will affect different industries and the ripple effect on large and small businesses and the very livelihoods we all depend on to live. These are very, very challenging times.

As many of you know, our beloved friend and mentor, Rabbi Kalman Packouz of blessed memory, used to meet with me once a week for over twenty seven years. Naturally, when you spend that much time with someone you end up sharing the many ups and downs that life throws at you.

During these conversations the one question that the good rabbi ALWAYS asked was, "What is the Almighty trying to teach me?"

Let me explain his line of reasoning. Since we believe that the world came into being through "intelligent design" (i.e. God created a world that has a purpose -- a purpose which gives our lives meaning) any event that transpires in our life has to be directly related to a message that God is trying to relay to us.

In other words, the universe is constantly speaking to us, however, by the very nature of creation there is also an overwhelming (and often very distracting) static that clouds the voice. Therefore, we must tune our antennas to get a proper reception and use our minds to clarify the message of the lesson that

God wants us to learn. We begin this process of clarification by asking, "What is the Almighty trying to teach me?"

John Lennon, in his famous 1971 solo hit "Imagine," makes mention of a "brotherhood of man." There are elements of this famous song that are quite controversial -- either he sorely missed the mark or some of these lyrics are simply misunderstood. But the song certainly has an unquestionable attractive ethereal quality to it -- especially in the closing line, "and the world will be as one."

Every natural disaster movie -- those impending events that threaten to extinguish life on Earth as we know it -- have a common theme. Whether it's a threat from extraterrestrials, a wayward comet or some uncontrollable life threatening disease, the entirety of the world's people band together to combat the existential threat.

The reason for this is not merely, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." The true reason for this phenomenon is that we begin to see within ourselves a shared commonality that compels us to focus on what makes us the same, as opposed to what makes us different. Furthermore, once we internalize this recognition, we are forced to acknowledge that we all share the same source and thus we really are a "brotherhood of man."

Of course, this week's Torah reading gives us a remarkable example of this: "Moses assembled the entire community and said to them, these are the words that God has commanded you to do..." (Exodus 35:1-20).

Moses goes on to delve into the laws of keeping the Sabbath (Shabbat) holy and explains what type of creative acts are forbidden to be done on Shabbat. These creative acts were used to build the Tabernacle, and form the basis of the 39 acts that are forbidden to be done on Shabbat.

There are very few occasions when Moses gathered the entirety of the Jewish people, and this is the only time in the entire Torah (that I can recall) when Moses gathered the people as a "community" to teach them a specific law. What is unique about the laws pertaining to the holy Shabbat, and how does this relate to the concept of community?

The Torah is teaching us a remarkable aspect of the holy Shabbat; one that we are all responsible to see fulfilled. If one drives down the street early on a Sunday morning or on a national holiday like Thanksgiving, it is readily apparent that it is not a typical weekday. The normal hustle and bustle of everyday life is missing and the day actually feels different. If a convoy of honking trucks suddenly converged onto the street it would quite literally shatter the tranquil atmosphere.

This is what the Torah is teaching

us: Each and every one of us has a responsibility to our community to create an environment of Shabbos. For six days a week, we are enjoined to do creative acts (35:2). Yet, on the seventh day, we are prohibited from doing those very same acts. By abstaining from these Shabbat-shattering acts we are actually differentiating Shabbat from every other day of the week and we are actually accomplishing something much greater -- we are creating a feeling of Shabbat in our community.

This also explains a difficult passage in the Talmud; we find that a bull that only gores on Shabbat isn't considered dangerous on weekdays (Bava Kama 37A). The commentaries (ad loc) wonder why this is true -- obviously an animal doesn't know what day of the week it is! Perhaps the answer is that the bull recognizes that it's a different day because the entire atmosphere feels different; the tranquility of the day enables the bull to feel that it can do whatever it desires.

The message we have to take from this week's Torah reading is that each and every one of us is responsible for the tranquility of our community, particularly on the holy Shabbat. We must put aside our petty differences and work together to contribute to a greater whole. Perhaps we can apply this lesson to the calamitous events that have gripped this world.

It is, of course, no coincidence that perhaps the largest and most controlling state entity in the world, China, has been the both the source and the one most stricken by this disease. The Chinese government, as is their way, did all they could to obfuscate and control the situation. In many ways their egregious early response to the devastation that was ravaging their population caused it to spread over their borders and wreak havoc elsewhere. Of course, the next one to be hardest hit was Iran and in particular the ruling clans of the country. Need I say more?

Unfortunately, as with any disease in the body, otherwise healthy tissue gets affected and must be treated; sometimes in the most draconian of methods. But we must recognize that in reality we are all one. We are all just separate cells of the corporate body known as humanity. We all need each other to both survive and thrive. We must recognize that we are all connected and therefore we have responsibilities to one another. It's time to set our petty differences aside and find our commonalities.

According to my brilliant father, Harav Yochanan Zweig, the source of all this pain comes from baseless hatred. We must focus on eliminating the disease of baseless hatred toward one another that we all harbor within us. It is only then that our "Father who is in the heavens" will be satisfied that His children are finally beginning to reconcile and that we are internalizing what He is trying to teach us. May it be His will that we learn our lesson quickly and vanquish this implacable foe once and for all. ©2020 Rabbi Y. Zweig

