

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"l

Covenant & Conversation

At the beginning of this parsha Moses performs a tikkun, a mending of the past, namely the sin of the Golden Calf. The Torah signals this by using essentially the same word at the beginning of both episodes. It eventually became a key word in Jewish spirituality: k-h-l, "to gather, assemble, congregate." From it we get the words kahal and kehillah, meaning "community." Far from being merely an ancient concern, it remains at the heart of our humanity. As we will see, recent scientific research confirms the extraordinary power of communities and social networks to shape our lives.

First, the biblical story. The episode of the Golden Calf began with these words: "When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered themselves [vayikahel] around Aaron." (Ex. 32:1)

At the beginning of this parsha, having won God's forgiveness and brought down a second set of tablets, Moses began the work of rededicating the people: "Moses assembled [vayakhel] the entire Israelite congregation." (Ex. 35:1)

They had sinned as a community. Now they were about to be reconstituted as a community. Jewish spirituality is first and foremost a communal spirituality.

Note, too, exactly what Moses does in this parsha. He directs their attention to the two great centres of community in Judaism, one in space, the other in time. The one in time is Shabbat. The one in space was the Mishkan, the Tabernacle, that led eventually to the Temple and later to the synagogue. These are where the kehillah lives most powerfully: on Shabbat when we lay aside our private devices and desires and come together as a community; and the synagogue, where community has its home.

Judaism attaches immense significance to the individual. Every life is like a universe. Each one of us, though we are all in God's image, is different, therefore unique and irreplaceable. Yet the first time the words "not good" appear in the Torah are in the verse, "It is not good for man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18). Much of Judaism is about the shape and structure of our togetherness. It values the individual but does not endorse individualism.

Ours is a religion of community. Our holiest prayers can only be said in the presence of a minyan,

the minimum definition of a community. When we pray, we do so as a community. Martin Buber spoke of I-and-Thou, but Judaism is really a matter of We-and-Thou. Hence, to atone for the sin the Israelites committed as a community, Moses sought to consecrate community in time and place.

This has become one of the fundamental differences between tradition and the contemporary culture of the West. We can trace this in the titles of three landmark books about American society. In 1950, David Riesman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denney published an insightful book about the changing character of Americans, called *The Lonely Crowd*. In 2000, Robert Putnam of Harvard published *Bowling Alone*, an account of how more Americans than ever were going ten-pin bowling, but fewer were joining bowling clubs and leagues. In 2011, Sherry Turkle of MIT published a book on the impact of smartphones and social networking software called *Alone Together*.

Listen to those titles. They are each about the advancing tide of loneliness, successive stages in the long, extended breakdown of community in modern life. Robert Bellah put it eloquently when he wrote that "social ecology is damaged not only by war, genocide, and political repression. It is also damaged by the destruction of the subtle ties that bind human beings to one another, leaving them frightened and alone." (Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, 1985, pg 284)

That is why the two themes of parshat Vayakhel -- Shabbat and the Mishkan (today, the synagogue) -- remain powerfully contemporary. They are antidotes to the attenuation of community. They help restore "the subtle ties that bind human beings to one another." They reconnect us to community.

Consider Shabbat. Michael Walzer, the Princeton political philosopher, (*Spheres of Justice*, 1983 pp 190-196), draws attention to the difference between holidays and holy days (or as he puts it, between vacations and Shabbat). The idea of a vacation as a private holiday is relatively recent. Walzer dates it to the 1870s. Its essence is its individualist (or familial) character. "Everyone plans his own vacation, goes where he wants to go, does what he wants to do." Shabbat, by contrast, is essentially collective.

"You, your son and daughter, your male and female servant, your ox, your donkey, your other animals, and the stranger in your gates." (Deut. 5:14)

It is public, shared, the property of us all. A vacation is a commodity. We buy it. Shabbat is not something we buy. It is available to each on the same terms: "enjoyed for everyone, enjoyed by everyone." We take vacations as individuals or families. We celebrate Shabbat as a community.

Something similar is true about the synagogue - the Jewish institution, unique in its day, that was eventually adopted by Christianity and Islam in the form of the church and mosque. We noted above Robert Putnam's argument in *Bowling Alone*, that Americans were becoming more individualistic. There was a loss, he said, of "social capital," that is, the ties that bind us together in shared responsibility for the common good.

A decade later, Putnam revised his thesis. (Robert Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*, 2010.) Social capital, he said, still exists, and you can find it in churches and synagogues. Regular attendees at a place of worship were -- so his research showed -- more likely than others to give money to charity, engage in voluntary work, donate blood, spend time with someone who is depressed, offer a seat to a stranger, help find someone a job, and many other measures of civic, moral, and philanthropic activism. They are, quite simply, more public spirited than others. Regular attendance at a house of worship is the most accurate predictor of altruism, more so than any other factor, including gender, education, income, race, region, marital status, ideology, and age.

Most fascinating of his findings is that the key factor is being part of a religious community. What turned out not to be relevant is what you believe. The research findings suggest that an atheist who goes regularly to a house of worship (perhaps to accompany a spouse or a child) is more likely to volunteer in a soup kitchen than a fervent believer who prays alone. The key factor again is community.

This may well be one of the most important functions of religion in a secular age, namely, keeping community alive. Most of us need community. We are social animals. Evolutionary biologists have suggested recently that the huge increase in brain size represented by *Homo sapiens* was specifically to allow us to form more extended social networks. It is the human capacity to co-operate in large teams -- rather than the power of reason -- that marks us off from other animals. As the Torah says, it is not good to be alone.

Recent research has shown something else as well. Who you associate with has a powerful impact on what you do and become. In 2009 Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler statistically analysed a group of 5,124 subjects and their 53,228 ties to friends, family, and work colleagues. (*Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives*, 2009). They found that if a friend takes up smoking, it makes it significantly more likely (by 36 per cent) that you will. The

same applies to drinking, slenderness, obesity, and many other behavioural patterns. We become like the people we are close to.

A study of students at Dartmouth College in the year 2000 found that if you share a room with someone with good study habits, it will probably raise your own performance. A 2006 Princeton study showed that if your sibling has a child, it makes it 15 per cent more likely that you will too within the next two years. There is such a thing as "social contagion." We are profoundly influenced by our friends -- as indeed Maimonides states in his law code, the *Mishneh Torah* (*Hilchot Deot* 6:1).

Which brings us back to Moses and Vayakhel. By placing community at the heart of the religious life and by giving it a home in space and time -- the synagogue and Shabbat -- Moses was showing the power of community for good, as the episode of the Golden Calf had shown its power for bad. Jewish spirituality is for the most part profoundly communal. Hence my definition of Jewish faith: the redemption of our solitude. *Covenant and Conversation is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl zt"l* ©2016 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks z"l and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

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

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

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

A secondary question relates to the role that Aaron plays in the tragedy of the Golden Calf. He accedes to the people's request to “make us an oracle (elohim) who will walk before us because we do not know what happened to this Moses, the person who brought us out of Egypt”. (Exodus 32:1). He then tells them to remove their earrings, and from them he forms the Gold Calf. When Aaron hears the people cry out, “These are your oracles (Elohekha) Israel who took you out from the

land of Egypt”, he builds an altar, crying out “there will be a festival to the Lord (Y-H-V-H) tomorrow” (ibid 2-5). Why is Aaron not severely punished for building the Golden Calf?

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

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

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

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

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

murder and sexual immorality.

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

To that end, after commanding the Sanctuary, the sanctity of space and place, of object and building, God ordains the Israelites to observe the Sabbath day, the higher and truer sanctity of time, the genuine spiritual meeting place between the hearts and souls of Israel with the Divine. The Sabbath day is a paradigm, a model, of a perfect world of peace and harmony, a world dedicated to ethical and spiritual ennoblement, the very purpose of Israel’s existence and mission in the world. Hence our Sages teach us that the Sanctuary and the construction of its magnificent furnishings could not be worked and developed on the Sabbath day; the Sanctuary, and the sanctity of space-object, is a means, whereas the Sabbath, and the sanctity of time-spirit, is the end and the goal.

And this is what God reveals to Moses in His second Revelation at Sinai, the revelation of God’s Name, God’s glory and God’s ways: the Lord of love, the God of Compassion and Freely-Giving Grace, of Loving-kindness and of Truth (Exodus 34:6,7).

The ultimate place for God is not a Temple but a human heart; the ultimate expression of God is not in gold and silver, but in the internalization of the Divine characteristics, in the performance of actions which are borne of compassion and loving-kindness and truth. Do not confuse the means with the end, the Sanctuary with the Sabbath! Only then will the calendar become transformed into an eternal Sabbath, only then will the true God of love be able to dwell in our midst forever, only then will the cosmos be transformed into a true sanctuary of God and humans together in a Sabbath relationship of love and peace. ©2023 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

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The book of Shemot that began with such high drama just a few months ago ends this week on a rather bland and apparently purely technical note. The Torah once more reviews and recounts for us the details of the construction of the Mishkan and an exact accounting of the material goods that were used.

Through the ages, the commentators have dwelt long and hard on these parshiyot in the holy Torah, where every letter and word is eternal, in an attempt to justify this seemingly superfluous repetition. I will not attempt to review all of the different approaches to

explain this issue. They are all satisfactory and yet somehow short of the mark as well. There is an obvious teaching that all of the commentators agree with that does derive from this review and repetition regarding the construction of the Mishkan.

The Mishkan had the miraculous quality of being built exactly and unwaveringly according to its original plan. Many times in life people and institutions set out to create structures, organizations and policies that will be of great benefit to society upon completion. Rarely if ever does the finished product match exactly the plans and true intentions of those who initiated the project.

All human plans and blueprints are subject to change, alteration and even to cancellation. The plans for the Mishkan, shrouded in the spirituality of God's commandments, were not subject to such changes. Bezalel and Ahaliav and the Jewish people were complimented for their strict adherence to the original plans given to Moshe for the construction of the Mishkan.

Every detail of the construction of the Mishkan is reviewed in the parshiyot of this week. All builders are aware of the importance of detail in their work. A missing screw, nail or hook can lead to later disaster. This is true in the physical mundane life of people and is doubly true regarding the spiritual and moral character of a person and a community. Only in the completion of the details is the whole person or project seen.

The measure of an artist, whether in pictures or music, is always in the nuances - in the details. The avoidance of shortcuts that invariably lead to shabbiness is the true hallmark of the gifted performer. Moshe lovingly records for us every piece of material that came together in the holy Mishkan. In kabbalistic thought, every detail in the construction of the Mishkan is truly an influence on the general world at large.

Though the Mishkan is no longer physically present with us, its lessons and greatness still abide within the Torah we study and in our value systems. By reading the Torah's description of the Mishkan and studying the underlying principles that it represents, it gains life and influence within us individually and collectively. May we be strengthened by this eternal knowledge. ©2023 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

As the Tabernacle is completed, Moses renders an accounting of monies donated to its construction (Exodus 38:21–31). One wonders why this accounting is necessary. After all, the Torah tells us that Moses was the most "trusted in all My [God's] house" (Numbers 12:7).

The Midrash suggests that even Moses was not

above scrutiny. His detractors questioned his integrity. Commenting on the verse that states that when Moses went out, "All the people looked at Moses" (Exodus 33:8), the Midrash proclaims that when the people saw Moses, they said: "What a neck, what legs. Obviously, he eats and drinks what is ours." "What do you expect?" responded another. "Being in charge of the Tabernacle funds, he no doubt pockets much of the money contributed." When Moses heard this, he said – "By your lives, as soon as the Tabernacle is finished, I will render an accounting." Hence the opening sentence of Pekudei, "And these are the accounts" (38:21). Moses wanted to be beyond reproach in his work with the Tabernacle (Midrash Tanchuma).

And yet, the Midrash records that Moses could not account for some of the money contributed. When his honesty was called into question, God helped Moses "balance the books," telling him he forgot to include the monies he spent on vavim, the hooks that brace the curtains (Shemot Rabbah 51:6). The vavim represent the little things we often forget that mean so much; without them everything would collapse. Although relatively inexpensive and seemingly insignificant, the vavim were indispensable; if they could not be accounted for, all would have been lost.

This moment underscores an important message: Leaders involved in financial and communal decisions must be above board. Precisely because money is so enticing and can corrupt, the Torah insists that all leaders – even those seen as the most pious – be careful to leave no impression of impropriety.

The Talmud presents examples showing the need for public servants to always be accountable and avoid any hints of impropriety:

- "The person who went up to take an offering from the shekel chamber did not wear a sleeved garment" (Jerusalem Talmud, Shekalim 8a). This was done so as not to have a pocket that could open up suspicion of robbery.

- "The House of Garmu were expert in the making of showbread...but never was fine bread found in the hands of their children. This, so that people should not say they are eating from the produce of the showbread" (Shekalim 14a).

- "The House of Avtinas were expert in preparing the incense, but no wife of any of them ever went out perfumed...so no one would say, 'They perfumed themselves from the incense'" (Shekalim 14a).

All this, the Talmud concludes, to fulfill the dictum "And you shall be innocent before the Lord and before Israel" (Numbers 32:22).

The names of the weekly portions and even their coupling reveals vital lessons. In the case of Vayakhel–Pekudei, which are often read together, the pekudei (the count) should be open to the whole congregation, represented by vayakhel (and he gathered). When it comes to communal finances, transparency is absolutely

necessary. In the end, accountability and disclosure serve to preserve the most important ingredient of leadership: public trust. ©2023 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

DR. ERICA BROWN

The Torah of Leadership

It seems like everyone today is talking and writing about work: the great resignation, the evolution of office life and the culture of remote meetings. The empty building is the new symbol of American jobs. We're unsure how to get people back into offices or how to retool work life to accommodate the flexibility that has become a right rather than a privilege. The title of Sarah Jaffe's recent book *Work Won't Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted, and Alone* says it all. Jaffe argues that we have overly romanticized our work lives and created all kinds of unrealistic emotional expectations of what it should be: "We want to call work what is work so that eventually we might rediscover what is love."

Organizational leaders often exploit this need by promoting false images of the fun, mission, or sense of familial belonging attached to work, especially to those with little control of their work day: "The compulsion to be happy at work, in other words, is always a demand for emotional work from the worker." Jaffe warns her readers that this premise is mistaken: "Work, after all, has no feelings. Capitalism cannot love." Families, for example, do not fire people. When families relocate, they take you with them.

Jaffe asks that we rethink why we began working in the first place: to pay the bills. Now the dignity of affording one's life has been eclipsed by a notion of work that is an all-consuming identity. The humble brag about overwork has become a cliché: "The ownership class these days does tend to work, and indeed, to make a fetish of its long hours." The tensions she points out are greater with creative work, which is "based in a different kind of self-sacrifice and voluntary commitment that is expected, on some level, to love you back." This, too, is untrue; "... work never, ever loves you back."

This week's double Torah reading Vayakhel/Pekudei has a lot to say about work and about when to stop work: "Moses then convoked the whole Israelite community and said to them: "These are the things that God has commanded you to do: On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a sabbath of complete rest, holy to God..." (Ex. 35:1-2). If we close our eyes, we might be in the early chapters of Genesis, not the closing chapters of Exodus. Our sedra opens by mimicking the language of creation about the purposefulness of work and the necessity of rest. We were to build the Mishkan for six days and rest

on the seventh. What God declared when the world was created reflected the same pattern in building the portable sanctuary to honor him.

The classic commentators make the connection between Shabbat and the Mishkan explicit. Rashi on 35:1, for example, cites the Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael, that God instructed Moses about the Sabbath before discussing the building procedures as if to say no matter how extraordinary the work, we must prioritize the sanctity of the Sabbath. One might easily assume that erecting a sacred space to honor God would trump Sabbath observance. The temptation to keep going -- to place one more board, to smelt one more fixture, or to embroider one more stitch -- would have been overwhelming. Nahmanides highlights the expression "these are the things which the Eternal has commanded" as a reference not only to the building's structures but also to the holy vessels made to service God within its portable walls. Busy yourself as artists for six days, but even this special work must come to an end.

The message could not be more clear. The end of all creation is not building but resting. The pinnacle of creation can only be achieved by the cessation of creation. It is ironically the Sabbath, the "cathedral in time," as Rabbi Abraham J. Heschel called it, that is the acme of the process. "To gain control of the world of space is certainly one of our tasks," reminds Rabbi Heschel. "The danger begins when in gaining power in the realm of space we forfeit all aspirations in the realm of time. There is a realm of time where the goal is not to have but to be, not to own but to give, not to control but to share, not to subdue but to be in accord. Life goes wrong when the control of space, the acquisition of things of space, becomes our sole concern."

Vayakhel makes the case that for the ancient Israelites to achieve true piety as a community, they needed to combine holy space with holy time. That is why in the midst of all of the Mishkan's instructions, God assures Moses of our spiritual priorities. This break in the work also flattened whatever artisanal hierarchies existed in the Mishkan's construction. Everyone had a distinct role in the building project. Some had tasks demanding a high level of skill and expertise that made their work seem superior. But when everyone stops working to observe the Shabbat, the community sheds itself of titles and talents. Work creates status. Rest is status-free. I'm always moved by the view from the pew: people with impressive business cards sit beside those too young to work, those who are retired, or those who have simple jobs. It does not matter. In this space, we are all spiritual citizens in the eyes of God, judged not by our place in society but by our goodness and piety. There must be somewhere in the world where the first question someone asks you is not what you do but who you are.

"Our Shabbat is a religious institution," writes Rabbi Jonathan Sacks in *A Letter in the Scroll*. Shabbat is "a memorial to creation, the day on which God Himself

rested. But it is also and essentially a political institution. Shabbat is the greatest tutorial in liberty ever devised...One day in seven, Jews create a Messianic society...It is the day on which all hierarchies, all relationships of power are suspended."

Shabbat suspends hierarchy and produces the necessary restoration to keep the holiest of building projects going. Rest is not a weakness. It is our greatest strength. Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz, who used to coach Olympic athletes and then began working with corporate leaders, share that one of the most important lessons they learned from extraordinary athletes is the way they build recovery into their routines. In their book, *The Power of Full Engagement*, they write, "We live in a world that celebrates work and activity, ignores renewal and recovery, and fails to recognize that both are necessary for sustained high performance."

As a leader, how do you build rest and recovery into your routine to maintain high performance? How can you integrate more of Shabbat's gifts into your life? ©2023 Dr. E. Brown and Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks-Herstein Center for Values and Leadership

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The Temple Treasurer

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

During Temple times, the Temple's treasury (*Hekdesh*) was allowed to own Canaanite slaves, just as a private individual could. Therefore, we would have expected that just as a slave owned by a private individual could buy his freedom from his master, so too a slave owned by the Temple treasury could pay the treasurer (*gizbar*) and buy his freedom.

However, this is not the case. The treasurer of the Temple may not grant a slave release. Rather, he must sell the slave to a private individual. The slave can then buy his freedom from the new owner (*Gittin* 38b). Why is the treasurer of the Temple empowered to deal with all monetary matters, but not empowered to free a slave?

Rashi explains that the relationship of the Temple to a slave is different from that of a private individual to a slave. The Temple treasury does not actually acquire the body of the slave (*kinyan ha-guf*), but only his monetary value (*kinyan damim*). Since the treasury does not own the slave's body, it cannot free him. The Meiri offers a different explanation. The reason the treasurer cannot free the slave is because only the slave's owner can free him, and he is not the slave's owner. The true owner of *Hekdesh* is the Almighty Himself, while the treasurer is just a functionary.

Tosafot explains that if we give the treasurer the power to sell a slave, some might suspect him of not being sufficiently careful with *Hekdesh* assets. However, this interpretation is a bit surprising, as there is a principle that we trust the treasurers of *Hekdesh* to be acting faithfully. If we trust them with all other monetary

matters, why should freeing slaves be any different? The reason may be as follows. We trust the treasurers implicitly as far as straight monetary matters are concerned. However, when it comes to freeing a slave – granting liberty to a human being – there are emotional and ideological concerns that may come into play. People might suspect that the treasurer's altruistic wish to free a slave would lead him to do something disadvantageous to *Hekdesh*, for example accepting a lower price than he should for the slave. ©2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and *Encyclopedia Talmudit*

RABBI DAVID LEVIN

The Glory

At the end of Sefer Shemot (Exodus), we find an interesting paragraph: "The Cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Glory of Hashem filled the Mishkan. And Moshe was not able to come to the Tent of Meeting, for the Cloud rested upon it, and the Glory of Hashem filled the Mishkan. When the Cloud was raised up from the Mishkan, the Children of Israel would journey on their journeys. If the Cloud did not rise up, they would not journey, until the day it rose up. For the Cloud of Hashem would be on the Mishkan by day, and fire would be on it at night, before the eyes of all the House of Israel in all their journeys." It is clear that the end of this paragraph is an introduction to a much later Sefer in the Torah, Bamidbar (Numbers), in which the procedure for the journeys is discussed in detail. Yet, since the Torah mentioned here the Cloud descending on the Mishkan, the Torah briefly continued to elaborate on this additional aspect of the Cloud.

Our Rabbis point out what appears to be a contradiction within two p'sukim (sentences) in the Torah. Our pasuk here says "Moshe was not able to come to the Tent of Meeting," yet a previous pasuk says, "and when Moshe would come to the Tent of Meeting." When a contradiction like this happens, our Rabbis look for a third pasuk which could reconcile this contradiction. Sefer HaZikaron explains that this follows as the last of the thirteen principles by which the Torah is studied and explained. Each morning in the Shacharit service, the paragraph from the Gemara, "Rabbi Yishmael says," is recited, in which is listed these thirteen principles of elucidation. The last of these thirteen principles states, "And like when two sentences contradict each other, until a third sentence comes to reconcile between them." Here the third sentence is the conclusion of our pasuk, "for the Cloud rested upon it, and the Glory of Hashem filled the Mishkan." The third sentence makes clear that Moshe was not permitted to enter the Mishkan because the Glory filled the entire Mishkan. Sefer HaZikaron explains that normally we would require three separate sentences to qualify for using this principle, whereas here we are dividing one sentence into two parts. The deciding factor here is that we find two separate important ideas in one sentence, so it is possible to

utilize this principle through these three ideas found in two sentences.

The Ramban explains the distinction between "the cloud of Hashem" and "the glory of Hashem." He explains that the Cloud covered the Mishkan completely, and the Glory was found within the Cloud. It appears that Moshe was not able to enter the Mishkan because the Cloud acted like a fence around the Glory. It was only when the Glory would limit itself to within the Kodesh Kedashim, the Holy of Holies, that the Cloud would also limit itself to cover the Glory within the Kodesh Kedashim. Still, we find that Moshe was able to enter the Cloud when he was on Mt. Sinai. The Or HaChaim explains that on Mt. Sinai, Moshe was summoned to enter the Cloud, and he would again be able to enter the Mishkan to speak with Hashem, but only when summoned to do so. The Or HaChaim draws another distinction between Mt. Sinai and the Mishkan. The Mishkan was built to be the House of Hashem on Earth, the place where Hashem would dwell. Chizkuni remarks that the moment that the Mishkan was completed, the Glory of Hashem demonstrated His love of the people by filling the Mishkan completely, leaving no space for Moshe to enter. This was not true at Mt. Sinai even though Hashem was there temporarily. The Rashbam explains that this moment when the Glory filled the entire Mishkan was very temporary as Hashem only wanted to demonstrate that love to thank the people for building His Home, but quickly retreated to His normal resting place within the Holy of Holies.

Several distinctions of the text are discussed by the Rabbis. HaEmek Davar explains that the use of the term "Tent of Meeting" comes to include the entire Mishkan (the Holy and the Holy of Holies which were separated by a special curtain), whereas the term that would be used for the Holy of Holies alone (where Hashem normally rested between the Angels on the Aron (The Ten Commandments) were kept.

Rabeinu Bachya explains that the calling of Moshe from within the Cloud was not a command to enter, but instead a sign that the Glory had retreated to rest between the angels above the Aron Kodesh. As long as the Glory rested only between the angels, Moshe had permission to enter at his will to converse with Hashem. Rabeinu Bachya draws a distinction between the Mishkan and Mt. Sinai. At Mt. Sinai, the Torah connects the two statements, "And He called to Moshe" with "And Moshe entered in the midst of the Cloud." This is an indication that at Mt. Sinai Moshe needed permission to enter as we see by the connection to "And He called Moshe." By the Mishkan, it appears that the only deterrent to entering was knowing whether the Glory had retreated from resting in the entire Mishkan and returned to its place above the Aron in the Holy of Holies.

Ibn Ezra explains that Moshe was granted the privilege of entering the Holy of Holies even when

Aharon HaKohein and his sons did not have permission to enter. Aharon alone entered the Kodesh Kedashim once a year to attain forgiveness for the people's sins. Moshe was able to enter at other times because he was called a ben bayit, a household member. Moshe was granted this privilege because he was the one who had placed the Two Tablets into the Aron, covered the Aron with the covering on which were the two angels facing each other, and he was the one who covered the Aron with the curtain separating the Holy and the Holy of Holies when it was time to travel. Aharon and his sons took down the curtain and Moshe used that to cover the Aron Kodesh immediately so that Aharon and his sons would not see. Even according to the pasuk which indicates that the Kohanim assisted Moshe in covering the Aron, they did not face the Aron when doing so.

We are not Moshe, nor do we have our Temple, nor do we have a Cloud. But we are free to approach Hashem daily in our prayers and our individual conversations. We do not need to wait for Hashem to call us, that we may then enter into this conversation. Moshe spoke to Hashem on behalf of all of the B'nei Yisrael. We can do the same. We cannot speak to Hashem face to face, as did Moshe, but we can initiate contact, and we can expect that Hashem will listen. May we take the opportunity to speak with Hashem regularly.
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RABBI AVI SHAFRAN

Cross-Currents

The kruvim, three-dimensional depictions of two winged childlike beings, a male and female, formed from the gold of the kappores, the cover of the aron, are described as "facing one another" (Shemos 37:9).

The Gemara (Bava Basra, 99a) notes that in Divrei Hayamim II, the pasuk describes them as facing toward the kodoshim (3:13), and explains -- on the presumption that the kruvim represent Hashem and Klal Yisrael -- that the kruvim were animated, facing one another "when the Jewish people do the will of Hashem," and outward when they do not.

Which makes an account of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash particularly strange. In Yoma 54b, the Gemara describes how the enemy entered the Bayis and saw the kruvim (or a depiction of them) entwined "like a man and his beloved." They mocked what they could only see as a pornographic icon in the Jews' holiest place.

The obvious question: Why, at a time when the Jews had apparently not been doing Hashem's will -- after all, the Beis Hamikdash was being razed! -- were the kruvim not only not facing away from one another but embracing?

A moving answer is related in the name of the Maggid of Mezritch. He notes that halacha requires a husband to express his love for his wife before embarking on a long trip. Hashem, thus, was

demonstrating his love for His people when He was about to "leave" them for a long period of exile.

I wonder, though, if there may be another message in the puzzling image of the entwined kruvim: That, just as a truly responsible parent facing a need to punish his child does so with anguish and out of pure love, so was Hashem "pained" and "loving" toward His people when they required punishment.

Yes, when the Jews were not doing His will, the kruvim faced away from one another. But, afterward, at the time of their necessary punishment, there was only pure love. And, if so, wherever they may be today, the kruvim are still in embrace. ©2023 Rabbi A. Shafran and torah.org

SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayan

With this week's Parashah, we conclude the building of the Mishkan / Tabernacle. In next week's Parashah, we will begin to read about the various sacrifices that were offered in the Mishkan and, later, in the Bet Hamikdash.

R' Nachman of Breslov z"l (1772-1810; Ukraine) teaches: The Bet Hamikdash is like a spinning sphere, where top is bottom and bottom is top. How so? On the one hand, top is bottom: through the Bet Hamikdash, Hashem, who is so elevated, descends to dwell in our world. On the other hand, bottom is top: in the Bet Hamikdash, lowly animals are elevated to become offerings to Hashem. This, explains R' Nachman, is the symbolism of the spinning Dreidel, connected to Chanukah--the holiday that commemorates the (re)dedication of the Bet Hamikdash.

R' Nachman continues: This is a lesson for those who think that spiritual truths can be arrived at through philosophical speculation. No amount of logic, says R' Nachman, could ever lead to the conclusion that Hashem can exist in our lowly world, while lowly animals can be sacrifices to Hashem.

R' Nachman concludes: The process of Ge'ulah / redemption is similarly "upside down." [Hashem descends to this lowly world to lift us from the depths to the loftiest spiritual heights.] This explains why Bnei Yisrael sang about the Bet Hamikdash immediately after their redemption (Shmot 15:17): "You will bring them and implant them on the mountain of Your heritage, the foundation of Your dwelling-place that You, Hashem, made--the Sanctuary, my Master, that Your hands established." (Sichot Ha'Ran 40)



"Moshe summoned Betzalel, Ohaliav, and every wise-hearted man whose heart Hashem endowed with wisdom, everyone whose heart inspired (literally, 'uplifted') him, to approach the work, to do it." (36:2)

R' Moshe Alsheich z"l (1508 -- 1593; Tzefat, Eretz Yisrael) explains: The volunteers who built the

Mishkan did not need to possess particular skills. Their yearning to be involved uplifted them to start the work, and then the work miraculously completed itself. (Torat Moshe)

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"Moshe commanded that they proclaim throughout the camp, saying, 'Man and woman shall not do more work toward the gift for the Sanctuary.'" (36:6)

From this verse, the Gemara (Shabbat 96b) derives the prohibition of transferring an object on Shabbat from a Reshut Ha'yachid / private domain to a Reshut Ha'rabim / public domain. Bnei Yisrael's tents were private domains, whereas Moshe sat in the centrally-located Machaneh Leviyah / Camp of the Levi'im, which had the status of a public domain. (The Machaneh Leviyah was where everyone would gather to hear Moshe speak.) Moshe's proclamation, which the Gemara proves was made on Shabbat, said: "Do not bring items from your private domains to the public domain." [Until here from the Gemara, as explained by Rashi z"l]

R' Yaakov Kamenetsky z"l (1891-1986; rabbi in Lithuania, Seattle, and Toronto; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath in Brooklyn, N.Y.) asks: Why was this Shabbat prohibition, unlike all other laws of Shabbat, taught specifically in the context of bringing donations for the Mishkan?

He answers: Our Sages teach that the Mitzvah of Shabbat was given originally--before Bnei Yisrael came to Har Sinai--at a place called "Marah." There, Bnei Yisrael encountered a spring of bitter ("Mar") water, and Hashem miraculously sweetened it (see Shmot 15:23-25). Borrowing from the Talmud (Ta'anit 25a--describing the reaction of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa when his daughter mistakenly lit Shabbat candles using vinegar), we can say about this miracle: "The One who told oil to burn can also tell vinegar to burn." Hashem's ability to alter nature and change the water's taste demonstrated that He is the Creator and Master of the world; therefore, it was an appropriate time to instruct Bnei Yisrael not to perform "creative" labors--reminiscent of Creation--on Shabbat.

R' Kamenetsky continues: Of all the Melachot / labors prohibited on Shabbat, only one is not creative in nature. That is the Melachah of Hotza'ah / transferring an object from one Reshut / domain to another. When an object is moved, it remains the same object, and its form does not change; only its location changes. Thus, Marah, reminiscent of Creation, was not the appropriate place to teach about that Melachah. Rather, in the context of the Mishkan, which teaches us that there are sanctified places, it was appropriate also to speak about the prohibition of transferring an object from one place to another place. (Emet L'Yaakov) ©2023 S. Katz & torah.org

