

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS Z"L

Covenant & Conversation

Rabbi Sacks zt"l had prepared a full year of Covenant & Conversation for 5781, based on his book Lessons in Leadership. The Office of Rabbi Sacks will continue to distribute these weekly essays, so that people all around the world can keep on learning and finding inspiration in his Torah.

The sequence of parashot that begins with Terumah, and continues Tetzaveh, Ki Tissa, Vayakhel and Pekudei, is puzzling in many ways. First, it outlines the construction of the Tabernacle (Mishkan), the portable House of Worship the Israelites built and carried with them through the desert, in exhaustive and exhausting detail. The narrative takes almost the whole of the last third of the book of Exodus. Why so long? Why such detail? The Tabernacle was, after all, only a temporary home for the Divine Presence, eventually superseded by the Temple in Jerusalem.

Besides which, why is the making of the Mishkan in the book of Exodus at all? Its natural place seems to be in the book of Vayikra, which is overwhelmingly devoted to an account of the service of the Mishkan and the sacrifices that were offered there. The book of Exodus, by contrast, could be subtitled, "the birth of a nation". It is about the transition of the Israelites from a family to a people and their journey from slavery to freedom. It rises to a climax with the covenant made between God and the people at Mount Sinai. What has the Tabernacle to do with this? It seems an odd way to end the book.

The answer, it seems to me, is profound. First, recall the history of the Israelites until now. It has been a long series of complaints. They complained when the first intervention by Moses made their situation worse. Then, at the Red Sea, they said to Moses: "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!" (Ex. 14:11-12).

After crossing the sea they continued to complain, first about the lack of water, then that the water was bitter, then at the lack of food, then again about the lack of water. Then, within weeks of the

revelation at Sinai -- the only time in history God appeared to an entire nation -- they made a Golden Calf. If an unprecedented sequence of miracles cannot bring about a mature response on the part of the people, what will?

It is then that God said: Let them build something together. This simple command transformed the Israelites. During the whole construction of the Tabernacle there were no complaints. The entire people contributed -- some gold, silver, or bronze, some brought skins and drapes, others gave their time and skill. They gave so much that Moses had to order them to stop. A remarkable proposition is being framed here: It is not what God does for us that transforms us. It is what we do for God.

So long as every crisis was dealt with by Moses and miracles, the Israelites remained in a state of dependency. Their default response was to complain. In order for them to reach adulthood and responsibility, there had to be a transition from passive recipients of God's blessings to active creators. The people had to become God's "partners in the work of creation" (Shabbat 10a). That, I believe, is what the Sages meant when they said, "Call them not 'your children' but 'your builders'" (Brachot 64a). People have to become builders if they are to grow from childhood to adulthood.

Judaism is God's call to responsibility. He does not want us to rely on miracles. He does not want us to be dependent on others. He wants us to become His partners, recognising that what we have, we have from Him, but what we make of what we have is up to us, our choices and our effort. This is not an easy balance to achieve. It is easy to live a life of dependency. It is equally easy in the opposite direction to slip into the mistake of saying "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me" (Deut. 8:17). The Jewish view of the human condition is that everything we achieve is due to our own efforts, but equally and essentially the result of God's blessing.

The building of the Tabernacle was the first great project the Israelites undertook together. It involved their generosity and skill. It gave them the chance to give back to God a little of what He had given them. It conferred on them the dignity of labour and creative endeavour. It brought to closure their birth as a nation and it symbolised the challenge of the future. The society they were summoned to create in the land of Israel would be one in which everyone would play

their part. It was to become -- in the phrase I have used as the title of one of my books -- "the home we build together." (Jonathan Sacks, *The Home We Build Together: Recreating Society* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2009).

From this we see that one of the greatest challenges of leadership is to give people the chance to give, to contribute, to participate. That requires self-restraint, *tzimtzum*, on the part of the leader, creating the space for others to lead. As the saying goes (attributed to Lao-Tsu): A leader is best when people barely need to acknowledge him. When his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: 'we did it ourselves.'

This brings us to the fundamental distinction in politics between State and Society. The state represents what is done for us by the machinery of government, through the instrumentality of laws, courts, taxation and public spending. Society is what we do for one another through communities, voluntary associations, charities and welfare organisations. Judaism, I believe, has a marked preference for society rather than state, precisely because it recognises -- and this is the central theme of the book of Exodus -- that it is what we do for others, not what others or God does for us, that transforms us. The Jewish formula, I believe, is: small state, big society.

The person who had the deepest insight into the nature of democratic society was Alexis de Tocqueville. Visiting America in the 1830s, he saw that its strength lay in what he called the "art of association", the tendency of Americans to come together in communities and voluntary groups to help one another, rather than leaving the task to a centralised government. Were it ever to be otherwise, were individuals to depend wholly on the state, then democratic freedom would be at risk.

In one of the most haunting passages of his masterwork, *Democracy in America*, he says that democracies are at risk of a completely new form of oppression for which there is no precedent in the past. It will happen, he says, when people exist solely in and for themselves, leaving the pursuit of the common good to the government. This would then be what life would be like: "Above this race of men stands an immense and tutelary power, which takes upon itself alone to secure their gratifications and to watch over their fate. That power is absolute, minute, regular, provident and mild. It would be like the authority of a parent if, like that authority, its object was to prepare men for manhood; but it seeks, on the contrary, to keep them in perpetual childhood: it is well content that the people should rejoice, provided they think of nothing but rejoicing. For their happiness such a government willingly labours, but it chooses to be the sole agent and the only arbiter of that happiness; it provides for their security, foresees and supplies their necessities, facilitates their pleasures, manages their principal concerns, directs

their industry, regulates the descent of property, and subdivides their inheritances: what remains, but to spare them all the care of thinking and all the trouble of living?" (Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*)

Tocqueville wrote these words almost 200 years ago, and there is a risk that this is happening to some European societies today: all state, no society; all government, little or no community.

(This is not to imply that there is no role for governments; that all should be left to voluntary associations. Far from it. There are things -- from the rule of law to the defence of the realm to the enforcement of ethical standards and the creation of an equitable distribution of the goods necessary for a dignified existence -- that only governments can achieve. The issue is balance.)

Tocqueville was not a religious writer. He makes no reference to the Hebrew Bible. But the fear he has is precisely what the book of Exodus documents. When a central power -- even when this is God Himself -- does everything on behalf of the people, they remain in a state of arrested development. They complain instead of acting. They give way easily to despair. When the leader, in this case Moses, is missing, they do foolish things, none more so than making a Golden Calf.

There is only one solution: to make the people co-architects of their own destiny, to get them to build something together, to shape them into a team and show them that they are not helpless, that they are responsible and capable of collaborative action. Genesis begins with God creating the universe as a home for human beings. Exodus ends with human beings creating the Mishkan, as a 'home' for God.

Hence the basic principle of Judaism, that we are called on to become co-creators with God. And hence, too, the corollary: that leaders do not do the work on behalf of the people. They teach people how to do the work themselves.

It is not what God does for us but what we do for God that allows us to reach dignity and responsibility. *Covenant and Conversation 5780* is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l © 2021 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks z"l and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"They shall make an ark of acacia trees. Overlay it with pure gold— outside and inside—and you shall make upon it a gold crown all around. Cast for it four gold rings and place them on its four corners, two rings on one side and two rings on the other. Into these rings you must insert the [two] poles of acacia trees which you are to overlay with gold, and with which you are to carry the ark. The staves shall remain in the rings of the ark; they may not be removed

from it. You shall place into the ark the Testimonial Tablets which I will give you" (Ex. 25:10-16) The first of the Sanctuary's accoutrements is the Ark of the Covenant, into which the Tablets of the Ten Commandments are to be deposited. These Tablets are the written record of the Revelation at Sinai, under whose rubric God transmitted the 613 Commandments of the Torah.

Herein lay the Constitution of this newly formed nation, the message by which a holy nation was to be fashioned and the mission with which blessing was to be brought to all the families on earth. Hence, the production of this ark must contain many symbolic and instructive teachings; its very architecture is therefore divinely commanded.

The wood of the sacred ark came from acacia trees (atzei shittim), a rare type of tree which grows even in a desert wilderness; it is therefore an early forerunner of the freshness and vitality of the cedars of Lebanon which, in the days of our redemptive Messiah, will spread its force throughout Israel and transform arid deserts into fountains of water: "I will open up streams on the bare hills and fountains amid the valleys; I will turn the desert into ponds, the arid land into springs of water. I will plant cedars in the desert, acacia and myrtle and the oil tree... that people may see and know, consider and comprehend, that the Lord's hand has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it" (Isa. 41:18-20).

The fact that the Sacred Ark, receptacle for the Torah, the Tablets of Testimony, was fashioned from the acacia tree emphasizes the fact that the Revelation was given to Israel not in the Land of Israel, not from Mount Moriah, but rather from the open-spaced nomad's land of the Sinai desert wilderness. This, our Sages teach us, is because "had the Torah been given in the Land of Israel, the Israelites could have demanded it only for themselves, arguing that the nations of the world have no share in it; now, anyone who wishes to accept it, may come and accept it" (Mekhilta de R. Yishmael, BaHodesh 1, Lauterbach ed. p. 198).

Moreover, many botanists and researchers claim that the miraculous "burning bush" seen by Moses at the very beginning of his ministry was actually a semi-parasitic plant which covers acacia trees, the *Loranthus acaciae*, whose fire-red blossoms seemed to Moses to be a fiery flame which was burning, but which did not consume the tree it surrounded (Tree and Shrub in our Biblical Heritage, Nogah Hareuveni, p. 39).

The message and mission of the wood from the acacia tree is indubitably clear; God entrusted us, inflamed us, with His "fiery law of love" (esh dat) to become a holy nation of priest-teachers to humanity, to transform the wilderness wasteland of a corrupt world into a blooming Garden of Eden of fruits and flowers, piety and productivity, during the Time of Redemption.

The rest of the symbolism of our Sacred Ark is easy to interpret. The wooden ark was placed within a larger, outer box made of pure gold, and it itself enclosed a smaller, inner box of pure gold so that the wooden ark which encased the Tablet of Testimony was formed from the outside as well as from the inside with pure gold. Gold symbolizes eternity—it never decays; it is critical that the golden preciousness of God's Torah must be expressed to the outside in human words and deeds and must emanate from an inner purity of heart, soul and mind.

The essential, central ark was made of wood, as we have seen, because a tree, unlike sterile gold, grows, develops branches, and often gives forth new fruit. Two staves, likewise made of wood, were inserted into gold rings on the sides of the ark, so that the ark—the Torah—would move, progress and travel along with the People of Israel.

Ours must be a living Torah. Our Torah must be found wherever human beings happen to be. Remember that in the Messianic Age the Gentiles will accept at least the ethical laws of our Torah (Micah 4). Our eternal Torah must respond with commanding vision to every new era, to every fresh possibility. Our Torah must apply eternal truths to changing conditions, maintaining deep roots which dig deeply into the depths of ancient nutrients but equipped with the necessary wings to fly into hitherto uncharted heights; it must bring us close to the One who revealed His Will in the wilderness and endowed us with the wisdom and wherewithal to perfect his world. Herein lies the secret of the cherubs, in human form with wings poised heavenwards, ultimate guardians of an eternal people with an eternal Torah. "They shall make for Me a Sanctuary so that I may dwell in their midst," in My Sanctuary, which must transform the world into a house of communion and communication with Me for all the nations of the world. ©2021 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

I think that we can all agree that it is difficult and challenging to part with one's wealth on behalf of an altruistic cause that will bring to the donor no immediate discernible physical profit or gain. Human beings are very possessive when it comes to money. Money and territorial rights are two main issues that have existed throughout the ages regarding disputes between individuals and even nations.

Heaven therefore placed a great burden on our teacher Moshe when it required him to ask the Jewish people to part with their wealth in large sums, to build a holy Tabernacle, the benefits of which the people could and would be measurable only in spiritual and eternal terms. In fact, the verse in the Torah regarding the necessity to contribute to the building of that

Tabernacle can be understood as requiring that the donor, to fulfill that commandment, must donate part of one's own heart to this cause.

For too many people, material wealth is really the heart of life and one does not part with it easily or joyfully. Though society generally disrespects and even abhors stinginess and miserly behavior in others, truth be said, within all of us lies the seeds of such behavior. Instinctively, humans want to retain what they think they already have, and they want to possess more of the world than they currently own or control.

We come into this world with clenched fists ready to grab everything that we can. Only at the very end, are our fists open, and our fingers fully extended to indicate that we really possess nothing of this physical world in which we have devoted so much of our time and efforts.

There are many reasons advanced as to why the building of the Tabernacle should occupy such an important part in the biblical narrative of the Torah. One such idea is that the inherent difficulty to give away what one has personally achieved is of such a nature that the Torah recorded for us the building of the Tabernacle in a long, detailed fashion. It is as though the Torah is emphasizing to us the difficulty involved in having to donate towards the construction of even the most glorious and noble of causes.

And, if it is difficult, as it certainly is, to give of one's own wealth towards a charitable cause, it is even more difficult to ask others to do so. The Talmud told us that the one that causes charitable causes to be financed and advanced by others through their donations, is greater even than the donor. We are all reluctant to ask others to part with their wealth no matter how noble the cause that we are representing. Therefore, the Torah reading of this week really speaks to us and to our continuing challenges as individuals and as a society. ©2021 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

Bearing in mind that prayer is not confined to any place, why are there designated places – like synagogues – for tefillah?

To answer this question, let us consider the first time the Israelites entered a holy place – when God revealed the Torah at Sinai. One might ask, why was it necessary for God to reveal the Torah in a specific location with thunder and lightning and the sound of the shofar? (Exodus 19:16) Couldn't He have transmitted the Torah into the hearts and minds of the Jewish People without addressing them at Mt. Sinai?

Here, it is important to recognize the challenge

for the finite, limited human being to dialogue with the infinite, unlimited God. The chasm is just too great. As a consequence, God reveals the Torah at Sinai. Sinai was necessary as a medium through which the people could experience revelation.

When leaving Sinai, Am Yisrael felt forlorn, bereft of the physical place that had inspired them to feel God's presence. As a consequence, God commands them to construct the Mishkan, a transportable sanctuary. The Mishkan becomes, as Umberto Cassuto points out, a "walking Sinai."

As long as they were encamped at Sinai, they [Am Yisrael] felt God's presence. Once they left Sinai, it seemed to them as though they were separated from their source [God], unless a tangible symbol of God could be established in their midst. The Tabernacle was established to be this symbol.

Sefer Ha-Chinuch (mitzvah 95) extends the reasoning for building the Mishkan to later places of worship. He writes: [The reason why God commands us] to build a sanctuary...wherein we can pray...was to prepare our hearts to worship Him.... God wishes what is best for humankind.... Therefore He mandated that we establish a place which is pure...to purify the thoughts of people and to direct their hearts to Him.

So conducive is the synagogue to tefilla that one is encouraged to pray there, even when praying alone. This is referred to as tefilla be'makom tzibbur (tefilla in the place where the community normally prays, i.e., the synagogue). As Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein writes in his essay "Imperatives and Advantages of Communal Prayer Studied in Depth":

Beit haknesset (the synagogue) is a mikdash me'at (miniature Temple) and there is a particular kiyum (fulfillment) of tefilla in relation to mikdash. There is a certain presence of Shechina (the Omnipresence) in there. In some sense, we do feel that Shechina is more of an indwelling presence in certain times and in certain places than in others, and mikdash has this element.

And the first synagogue which helped Am Yisrael feel the Shechina was the Mishkan whose very term could be interpreted to mean "the place which helps us feel the presence of God." ©2021 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

ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

Making the Ark

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

G-d commanded: "They shall make an Ark" (Shemot 25:10). Neither the Rambam nor the Sefer HaChinuch count making the Ark (Aron) as one of the 613 mitzvot. In contrast, Ramban does. Some believe that the reason Ramban and Sefer

HaChinuch omit this is because they feel that this is included in the general mitzva of building the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) and the *Beit HaMikdash* (Temple). Others explain that the mitzva is not counted because it was relevant only for a limited period of time. For we will never need to build a second Ark. The Ark which Moshe constructed was hidden away, and will eventually be found and used in the Third Temple. Even Shlomo, who crafted new items for the Second Temple, did not make a new Ark.

The Ramban, who counts the mitzva of making the Ark as one of the 613 *mitzvot*, does not count making other items for the Tabernacle as separate *mitzvot*. This may be because the other items – the Menorah, the *Shulchan* (Table), and the *Mizbe'ach* (Altar) – merely enable different types of divine worship. The Menorah is lit, the showbread is placed upon the *Shulchan*, and the sacrifices are offered on the *Mizbe'ach*. Thus, crafting these items only enables an act of service and is not a mitzva in its own right. In contrast, the Ark does not play a secondary role in divine service, but rather is holy in its own right. Thus, constructing it is its own mitzva.

The language used in relation to making the Ark is also different from the language used when describing the crafting of the other items. When speaking of the Ark, the Torah states “*ve-asu aron*” – you (plural) should make it, while when referring to the crafting of the other items, the Torah states “*ve-asita*” – you (singular) should make them. Rambam could explain that the singular “*ve-asita*” is meant to convey that each and every individual is obligated to ensure that these items are crafted. In contrast, the plural “*ve-asu*” is a general directive, which is not incumbent on each individual. Therefore, it is not included in the 613 *mitzvot*. Ramban, on the other hand, could say that the use of “*ve-asu*” expresses the obligation for the Jewish people for all generations to craft the Ark, while the use of “*ve-asita*” expresses the personal obligation of Moshe alone to craft these items. Thus, only the making of the Ark is counted as a mitzva.

Though the Rambam did not count the making of the Ark as a mitzva, he did include the mitzva of the Levites to carry the Ark on their shoulders (and not in a wagon). However, he did not count as separate *mitzvot* the prohibitions on touching or gazing upon the Ark. In contrast, Rav Saadia Gaon, Rav Shlomo Ibn Gabirol, and the *Sefer Yere'im* do include these among the 613 *mitzvot*. © 2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and *Encyclopedia Talmudit*

RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

"And G-d spoke to Moshe saying: Speak to the Children of Israel and they shall take for Me a tribute ..." (Exodus 25:1-2) There is a famous question asked here regarding the donations to the Mishkan. The words used to command the Jews to

bring forth contributions to build the new “home for Hashem” in their midst are quite strong. However, then we are told that the gifts are to be taken from those whose hearts uplift them to give.

If the donations are voluntary, how can Hashem command that people “want” to give? He could command Moshe to talk to the people, perhaps, but the words used here convey a firm directive that they should donate. Can Hashem mandate emotions?

Chazal tell us, “*Hakol b'yday Shomayim, chutz m'yiras Shomayim,*” everything is in the hand of Heaven except for fear of Heaven. That is to say, Hashem gives us the ability to control our emotions and choose how we feel about Him. Those who are G-d-fearing are very precious to Hashem because they are choosing to love and revere Him. Therefore, it would seem that even if He can, Hashem will not control people’s emotions. In that case, what sort of command is it that we find here, that everyone was to contribute? What if they didn’t feel like it?

The answer is that though Hashem will not command you to feel something, He WILL command you to behave in a way that is conducive to serving Him. We have promises of reward and punishment which are intended to motivate people to act properly. Those who take them to heart will likely act correctly, and those who do not will likely not serve Hashem in a proper way, because though they might be motivated one moment, they can just as easily be fickle and turn away from Hashem when the mood strikes.

However, if one puts himself in a situation where he is likely to move in the right direction, he can then ensure that he will continue to want to serve Hashem. By choosing the proper environment, by surrounding one’s self with Torah scholars and pious Jews, and by eschewing the influences that interfere with a true connection with Hashem, one can direct himself to the right path.

This is what Hashem was commanding Moshe. Speak to the Children of Israel and drive home the point that they need to want to donate. They can do that by clinging to people like Moshe and the elders. They can do that by focusing on the kindness Hashem showers upon them every day. When they do that, then their hearts will lift them up and they will truly desire to do whatever they can to foster closeness between themselves and Hashem.

As the Torah continues, “They shall make a Mikdash for Me and I shall dwell in their midst,” which can be translated as “they shall BECOME a Mikdash for Me.” By aligning ourselves with those who are close to Hashem and learning from their example, we can become close to Him and become the essence of the Mikdash - so He can dwell within us.

A twelve-year old boy decided that he would grow long payos, sidelocks, which are a fulfillment of the mitzvah not to ‘destroy’ the hair of the head at the

temples. Though he came from a Chasidic background, this was still highly unusual at the time he did it, back in the 1950's. It wasn't common then for Jews to be so "noticeably" Jewish.

He explained his reasoning. He loved Westerns but felt that the movies were a distraction from his studies and what he wanted to become. He knew that if he wore long payos he would be too embarrassed to go into a theater. At the end, this young man grew to be a great Talmid Chacham - because he knew how to force his own hand. © 2021 Rabbi J. Gewirtz and Migdal Ohr

RABBI DAVID LEVIN

Messages of Temple Gifts

Parashat Terumah discusses the donations brought for the building of the Mishkan, the portable Temple. No set amount was assigned to any one person nor were the gifts coordinated in advance. Everyone was to give freely from that which he owned. Each gift was symbolic in its nature and must be understood in the context of the whole. The Torah identifies these donations: "And this is the donation (terumah) that you will receive from them: gold, silver, and copper. Sky-blue wool, purple and scarlet wool, fine linen and goats' hair. And rams' skin dyed red, tachashim-skin and cedar wood. Oil for lights, spices for anointing oil and for the spicy incense. Shoham stones and stones for settings, for the ephod and the breast-pocket. And they shall make a Sanctuary for Me, then I will dwell in their midst."

There are several different approaches that the Rabbis take towards the objects that were to be donated. The Ramban focused primarily on the glory of Hashem through the building of the Mishkan. "The main purpose of the Tabernacle (Mishkan) was to contain a place in which the Divine Glory rests, this being the ark (Aron Kodesh)" The Ramban explains that it is through these donations that the B'nei Yisrael have purchased the Torah and Hashem. The Ramban quotes a Midrash in which Hashem says, "I have sold you my Torah; and I, as it were, was sold with it."

HaRav Shmshon Raphael Hirsch presents a different approach. He maintains that the Mishkan is focused on the community and that community's relation to Hashem. "Nothing is to be given directly to Hashem, but the gifts of each individual are given to the community, for the Divine purposes. This implies that it is not the individual but the community who has to erect the institutions for Hashem's purposes, and it is not for single givers but for the community that these arrangements have to be established." The Temple was established by Hashem to demonstrate to the people that Hashem was with them constantly. The Temple is symbolic of the truth, it is an "expression of all that is required of us to bring about the promised Shechina-Presence in Israel." It is man's responsibility to understand the tasks which we must do for Hashem

and the promises He has made to us when we fulfill the laws of the Torah.

Hirsch analyzes these gifts into several general qualities which act as messages to us. The first category is metals which "are used to designate the various degrees of moral purity and truth." Copper was the lowest level of metal used in the Mishkan. It is ignoble, one not yet refined. Silver is at a higher level because it still requires purification but that refinement is possible. "Gold, which is usually found pure and unmixed and also resists the strongest tests, is the picture of purest, most sterling, moral nobility and of true, real permanence and constancy." Metals have the greatest amount of adaptiveness, yet they are also firm and stable. They can be molded into a particular shape but then resist changing that shape once they have been formed. Each person must be flexible to change his life and adapt it to the Will of Hashem, yet once that has been accomplished, he must resist any change which could diminish his acceptance and adherence to the Will of Hashem. Each person begins as Copper, but with education and experience will transform himself to Silver and allow himself to grow and become like Gold.

Hirsch explains that wool and flax comprised the human clothing that was donated. Wool represented the animal side of human beings and flax represented the vegetative side. These cloths were further specified by their colors: white, blue, and two shades of red. Linen from flax was white, the color of purity. "Moral purity in the Torah refers principally to the powers of our vegetative life. Degeneration in sexual life and in the matter of food is the deepest stain on the purity of a human being." The wool is dyed with colors (blue, purple, and scarlet) that also come from an animal. The two reds are shani, which compares to the lower animal life, while argaman represents the nobler quality of human beings. T'cheilet which is a sky-blue, represents the limit of the horizon and "points to a realm beyond human sight, the godliness which is revealed to us, the color of Hashem's bond with Man, the sign of spirituality, of godliness, which permeates and direct the whole life of a pure human being."

The last category for Hirsch was the material used for the Mishkan's coverings. Goats' hair is normally used for mourning and penitence. It offers protection and defense. The cedar adds to the general characteristic of wood the idea of strength and size. The cedar used for the Tabernacle and its contents is "the symbol of a strong, enduring ever-fresh progressive development." The anointing oil, while not actually a part of the materials needed for construction, was essential to raise the finished product into a level of holiness.

HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin also discusses the nature of the donations. The gold that was brought comes in two qualities: (1) pure gold, and (2) regular

gold. Many of the items in the Mishkan needed to be pure gold but the people donated regular gold. It was necessary to separate the pure gold and then use the plain gold for purchases. HaRav Sorotzkin draws a comparison between the donation of the plain gold and the Golden Calf where only plain gold was donated. According to Rabbi Akiva it is clear that gold was only donated by a person who was well, silver, by a person who was in fear of danger, and copper, by someone who was already ill. The people at the Golden Calf only donated plain gold because they had no fear of danger or illness until after their sin.

HaRav Sorotzkin explains that the colors of the Mishkan were to represent the complete world. The sky blue was the blue of the heavens. For this reason, the cover of the Mishkan was sky blue. When Man would see this covering, he was reminded not to go after the desires of his own heart but to follow the ways of Hashem. The paler red represented the sin of spilling blood, which would give the people enough strength to withstand the evil of the world. He explains from the Midrash two possible reasons for the trees from which the wood was taken: (1) Avraham planted the cedar trees by the oasis in the desert so that they could be cut down several generations later, or (2) Ya'akov brought the wood with him when he went down to Egypt with his whole family and insisted that it be taken with the Jews when they would leave.

We see that each item donated to the Temple was a symbol of an important message to the people. These messages were also part of the Temple as a whole. May we each learn from these messages to understand our relationship with Hashem and our fellowman. © 2021 Rabbi D. Levin

RABBI AVROHOM LEVENTHAL

Build Your Portfolio

Like others, my organization receives donations of varying sizes from a diverse audience. One day, my secretary informed me of a larger than usual contribution from a new donor, named Gavriel. I took the man's contact in order to call and thank him.

After the pleasantries, Gavriel asked me if he could come visit our office on the following Sunday. As he lives about an hour and a half from Bet Shemesh, we found a mutually convenient time to meet and set the appointment.

After a short tour, Gavriel and I sat down to talk. I told him that I was impressed that he wished to visit and made the 3 hour round trip, after having already donated to the cause.

Gavriel told me that he is an investment strategist and that he had received a "good tip" that we were a very sound organization. After donating, he now wanted to see first-hand how we operated, as this was his practice with all the companies in which he invested.

Before I could remind him that we were non-profit, not NASDAQ, he explained that in life, just as one has a financial portfolio, so too they must build a "spiritual" one. That portfolio contains his charitable "investments", such as acts of kindness and socially beneficial projects as well as the good deeds that occupy his time.

As he was planning a long-term "investor" relationship, he had no choice but to do his research on us as well.

The "man of the world" had just taught the rabbi a lesson in charting a full spiritual life within the material world.

After giving it much thought, I firmly believe that this idea comes from Parshat Teruma.

Teruma begins with the command to launch a major project. Moshe is tasked to enjoin the new nation to contribute a wide array of materials. These materials, including precious gems and metals, wood and cloth, were to be communal property. Some for the construction of the Mishkan, the mobile House of G-d, while the rest for other vital needs.

The Jewish people, who after years of slavery had only recently acquired these material possessions, gave with a warm heart and an open hand. Each person donated the item that "spoke to them". For some it was the precious metals while others found fulfillment in giving the raw building materials. Each person, as the commentators relate, gave with the best intentions from the best place in their heart.

The response to the appeal resulted in the greatest fundraising campaign in the history of the world.

So much so that Moshe had to say at one point, "enough, we don't need anymore".

I would surmise that this was the first and last time in history that a "fundraiser" uttered such words.

This group, who suffered the affliction of slavery and then the joy of freedom, realized that there is a formula to live a wonderful life and create the perfect society.

Although their windfall came in the blink of an eye, they were prepared to share of it for the greater good. Be it building a Mishkan, the ultimate House of God or for helping those less fortunate.

Our ancestors in the desert paved the way for us to living a balanced life.

Most of us have been blessed with the basic resources to cover our expenses and feed our families. Others have been fortunate to realize amazing success in their financial endeavors.

Our existence is based on parallel tracks as the human being is made of the physical as well as the spiritual. No matter how you relate or whether you call it soul, karma, conscience, etc. both sides do exist.

Do we pay enough attention to our spiritual/conscience/karmic well-being and development

as we to the material?

A seasoned investor would be thrilled to answer a call from his stockbroker after hours with a new opportunity in a foreign market. Would that same person relish a call from me offering the opportunity to help someone in crisis or to fund a new school or youth program?

Financial achievements can make a person live great. What they choose to do with that success can make them a great person.

A person's entire life will be summed up in a newspaper obituary or short speech at their funeral.

What do we want written as our life's summary?

Is it the number of homes, cars and boats that we might have amassed? Or would we rather wish to be extolled as a loving parent or grandparent or friend and model citizen? Those are the things that build your investment in making this world a better place.

The "Nidivei lev" (generous of heart) in Teruma understood that we are given wealth in order to enrich. We must "enrich" the lives of those around us as well as taking care of ourselves.

They say "you can't take your money with you". That's true. There is no Amazon or Walmart in the hereafter. Your financial portfolio can't help you any longer.

What you created with that money, time or talent, however, will be a "portfolio" whose value is everlasting. © 2021 Rabbi A. Leventhal. Rabbi Leventhal is the Executive Director of Lema'an Achai lemaanachai.org

DONIEL TZVI TRENK

The Lightness of Purim

Life can be hard. But what would you say is the hardest part, the times when you've altogether run out of steam?

The answer is probably not when work was stressful, family life challenging, or when money was tight. These are all external events. It's our internal state of mind that can cause the most damage. When we feel depressed and hopeless, everything loses meaning, even the good parts of life.

As opposed to the sun's warm light, which animates all living things, depression is cold, dark, and a taste of death. Emotional coldness in life is perhaps the worst possible condition of existence. Corpses are heavy and cold, where humans are meant to be warm-blooded both physically and emotionally (maybe this is why mankind's earliest invention was fire).

The above gives us insight into the particular destructive nature of Amalek. In Parshas Zachor, Hashem tells us that Amalek must be erased from existence because they were "*Karcha Ba'Derech- they made you cold on the path.*" Their attack came at a moment of otherwise joyful liberation when the nation was fully alive, hot with passion, dancing and singing,

and a lightness of being described as flying on "*Kanfei Nesharim.*"

Amalek's deliberate infliction of dark heavy coldness in place of joy, its puncturing of hope, meaning, and the possibilities of redemption, is perhaps the greatest evil one can perpetrate against G-d who created the world with the abundant warmth and lightness of "*Vayehi Ohr.*"

How can humanity be victorious over the Amalek spirit that deviously seeks to eradicate the boundless Divine soul with a cold blast of emptiness and heavy depression?

Redemption comes by turning Amalek's intentions on its head, "*V'Nehapoch Hu,*" by reversing despair to joy, heaviness to a lightness of being where the soul can fly to spiritual heights unencumbered by the body's weight which keeps it grounded and immobile.

Isn't this, after all, what Purim is about? It's the antidote to the cold, cruel destruction wreaked by Amalek, one which continues to this very day. On Purim, we become "hot," passionate about life. We drink, dance and sing. We are generous with our neighbors and increase the degree of warmth in our families and communities.

In the season of Purim, we quite literally banish the dark winter and welcome the imminent rays of the springtime sun. This is a cause for great joy: "*La'Yehudim Haysa Ora v'Simcha.*"

While there is a time and place for everything- "*L'Kol Zman v'Eis*"- there is one exception. There is no time nor place for coldness while walking on the path of life, no tolerance for those who intentionally and brazenly are "*Karcha Ba'Derech.*" For everything there is a place but this, and so it is G-d's eternal "*Milchama L'Dor Dor.*"

Where humanity faces such toxic fatal danger, anything can and should be used to defeat it. Even man's most treasured possession, his Da'as, must be sacrificed to conquer the cold dark forces of Amalek. Although the wine we drink on Purim turns us into happy fools - "shotim"- seemingly contrary to everything the Torah stands for, it is nevertheless the mitzva obligation of the day. This is meant to show that if there is no joy- any kind of joy, even one of drunkenness- there can be no Torah.

Purim is the time when Am Yisroel accepted the Torah anew- "*Kiyumu mah she'Kiblu Kvar.*" Perhaps though, this wasn't an "acceptance" as much as a *realization*: the Torah and its people could only survive the coming millennia of harsh exile by clinging to an impenetrable joy and an indestructible simcha. The Jews had accepted the Torah long ago at Sinai. But on Purim, it was firmly established with a mentality of joy to last forever, through this very day, and beyond. "*V'y'mei Ha'Purim Einam B'teilim L'Olam.*" Midrash Mishlei 9:1. © 2021 D. Trenk