

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"L

Covenant & Conversation

There is a verse so familiar that we don't often stop to reflect on what it means. It is the line from the first paragraph of the Shema, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your me'od." (Deut. 6:5)

That last word is usually translated as "strength" or "might". But Rashi, following the Midrash and Targum, translates it as with all your "wealth".

If so, the verse seems unintelligible, at least in the order in which it is written. "With all your soul" was understood by the Sages to mean, "with your life" if need be. There are times, thankfully very rare indeed, when we are commanded to give up life itself rather than commit a sin or a crime. If that is the case then it should go without saying that we should love God with all our wealth, meaning even if it demands great financial sacrifice. Yet Rashi and the Sages say that this phrase applies to those "to whom wealth means more than life itself."

Of course, life is more important than wealth. Yet the Sages also knew that, in their words, Adam bahul al mammono, meaning: people do strange, hasty, ill-considered and irrational things when money is at stake (Shabbat 117b). Financial gain can be a huge temptation, leading us to acts that harm others and ultimately ourselves. So when it comes to financial matters, especially when public funds are involved, there must be no room for temptation, no space for doubt as to whether it has been used for the purpose for which it was donated. There must be scrupulous auditing and transparency. Without this there is moral hazard: the maximum of temptation combined with the maximum of opportunity.

Hence the parsha of Pekudei, with its detailed account of how the donations to the building of the Mishkan were used: "These are the amounts of the materials used for the Tabernacle, the Tabernacle of the Testimony, which were recorded at Moses' command by the Levites under the direction of Ithamar

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son of Aaron, the Priest." (Ex. 38:21)

The passage goes on to list the exact amounts of gold, silver, and bronze collected, and the purposes to which it was put. Why did Moses do this? A Midrash suggests an answer: "They gazed after Moses' (Ex. 33:8) - People criticised Moses. They used to say to one another, 'Look at that neck. Look at those legs. Moses is eating and drinking what belongs to us. All that he has belongs to us.' The other would reply: 'A man who is in charge of the work of the Sanctuary - what do you expect? That he should not get rich?' As soon as he heard this, Moses replied, 'By your life, as soon as the Sanctuary is complete, I will make a full reckoning with you.'" (Tanchuma, Buber, Pekudei, 4)

Moses issued a detailed reckoning to avoid coming under suspicion that he had personally appropriated some of the donated money. Note the emphasis that the accounting was undertaken not by Moses himself but "by the Levites under the direction of Ithamar," in other words, by independent auditors.

There is no hint of these accusations in the text itself, but the Midrash may be based on the remark Moses made during the Korach rebellion: "I have not taken so much as a donkey from them, nor have I wronged any of them." (Num. 16:15)

Accusations of corruption and personal enrichment have often been levelled against leaders, with or without justification. We might think that since God sees all we do, this is enough to safeguard against wrongdoing. Yet Judaism does not say this. The Talmud records a scene at the deathbed of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai, as the master lay surrounded by his disciples: "They said to him, 'Our master, bless us.'

"He said to them, 'May it be God's will that the fear of heaven shall be as much upon you as the fear of flesh and blood.'

"His disciples asked, 'Is that all?'

"He replied, 'Would that you obtained no less than such fear! You can see for yourselves the truth of what I say: when a man is about to commit a transgression, he says, 'I hope no man will see me.'" (Brachot 28b)

When humans commit a sin they worry that other people might see them. They forget that God certainly sees them. Temptation befuddles the brain, and no one should believe they are immune to it.

A later passage in Tanach seems to indicate that Moses' account was not strictly necessary. The

Book of Kings relates an episode in which, during the reign of King Yehoash, money was raised for the restoration of the Temple: "They did not require an accounting from those to whom they gave the money to pay the workers, because they acted with complete honesty." (II Kings 12:16)

Moses, a man of complete honesty, may thus have acted "beyond the strict requirement of the law." (A key concept in Jewish law (see, e.g., Brachot 7a, Brachot 45b, Bava Kamma 99b) of supererogation, meaning doing more, in a positive sense, than the law requires.)

It is precisely the fact that Moses did not need to do what he did that gives the passage its force. There must be transparency and accountability when it comes to public funds even if the people involved have impeccable reputations. People in positions of trust must be, and be seen to be, individuals of moral integrity. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had already said this when he told Moses to appoint subordinates to help him in the task of leading the people. They should be, he said, "Men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain." (Ex. 18:21)

Without a reputation for honesty and incorruptibility, judges cannot ensure that justice is seen to be done. This general principle was derived by the Sages from the episode in the Book of Numbers when the Reubenites and Gadites expressed their wish to settle on the far side of the Jordan where the land provided good grazing ground for their cattle (Numbers 32:1-33). Moses told them that if they did so, they would demoralise the rest of the nation. They would give the impression that they were unwilling to cross the Jordan and fight with their brothers in their battles to conquer the land.

The Reubenites and Gadites made it clear that they were willing to be in the front line of the troops, and would not return to the far side of the Jordan until the land had been fully conquered. Moses accepted the proposal, saying that if they kept their word, they would be "clear [veheyitem neki'im] before the Lord and before Israel" (Num. 32:22). This phrase entered Jewish law as the principle that "one must acquit oneself before one's fellow human beings as well as before God." (Mishnah, Shekalim 3:2) It is not enough to do right. We must be seen to do right, especially when there is room for rumour and suspicion.

There are several instances in the early rabbinic literature of applications of this rule. So, for example, when people came to take coins for sacrifices from the Shekel Chamber in the Temple, where the money was kept: "They did not enter the chamber wearing either a bordered cloak or shoes or sandals or tefillin or an amulet, lest if he became poor people might say that he became poor because of an iniquity committed in the chamber, or if he became rich people might say that he became rich from the appropriation in

the chamber. For it is a person's duty to be free of blame before men as before God, as it is said: 'and be clear before the Lord and before Israel,' (Num. 32:22), and it also says: 'So shall thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man' (Prov. 3:4)." (Mishnah, Shekalim 3:2)

Those who entered the chamber were forbidden to wear any item of clothing in which they could hide and steal coins. Similarly, when charity overseers had funds left over, they were not permitted to change copper for silver coins of their own money: they had to make the exchange with a third party. Overseers in charge of a soup kitchen were not allowed to purchase surplus food when there were no poor people to whom to distribute it. Surpluses had to be sold to others so as not to arouse suspicion that the charity overseers were profiting from public funds. (Pesachim 13a)

The Shulchan Aruch rules that charity collection must always be done by a minimum of two individuals so that each can see what the other is doing. (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 257:1) There is a difference of opinion between Rabbi Yosef Karo and Rabbi Moshe Isserles on the need to provide detailed accounts. Rabbi Yosef Karo rules on the basis on the passage in II Kings - "They did not require an accounting from those to whom they gave the money to pay the workers, because they acted with complete honesty" (II Kings 12:16) - that no formal accounting is required from people of unimpeachable honesty. Rabbi Moshe Isserles however says that it is right to do so because of the principle, "Be clear before the Lord and before Israel." (Ibid., 257:2)

Trust is of the essence in public life. A nation that suspects its leaders of corruption cannot function effectively as a free, just, and open society. It is the mark of a good society that public leadership is seen as a form of service rather than a means to power, which is all too easily abused. Tanach is a sustained tutorial in the importance of high standards in public life. The Prophets were the world's first social critics, mandated by God to speak truth to power and to challenge corrupt leaders. Elijah's challenge to King Ahab, and the protests of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah against the unethical practices of their day, are classic texts in this tradition, establishing for all time the ideals of equity, justice, honesty and integrity.

A free society is built on moral foundations, and those must be unshakeable. Moses' personal example, in giving an accounting of the funds that had been collected for the first collective project of the Jewish people, set a vital precedent for all time. *Covenant and Conversation 5775 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l ©2015 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks z"l and rabbisacks.org*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of God filled the Tabernacle... When the cloud was raised up from the Tabernacle, the Children of Israel would embark on all their journeys... For the cloud of God was on the Tabernacle by days and fire would be on it by night, before the eyes of all of the children of Israel throughout their journeys" (Exodus 40:34-38) Apparently, the cloud (ha'anán) and the "glory of God" come together as the ultimate symbol of God's protective presence. With reference to Mount Sinai, the mountain of the two Revelations surrounding the twice-gifted Tablets of the Covenant, the Bible similarly records, "Moses ascended the mountain and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of God rested upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for a six-day period. [God] called to Moses on the seventh day from the midst of the cloud... And Moses arrived into the midst of the cloud and ascended the mountain; Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights [receiving God's Torah]" (Exodus 24:15-18).

God's "glory," the Presence of God in this world (as explained by Maimonides in his Guide for the Perplexed), is what Moses is desperately seeking to understand and to effectuate when Moses says, "Show me now Your Glory" (Exodus 33:19).

Whatever that "glory" is, it is somehow to be found in our two Revelations from the mountain. The cloud as the symbol of God's presence seems to hark back to the Divine admonition to Moses, "You will not see My face, for no human can see My face and live." For as long as we are limited mortals in this physical world of temporariness and imperfection, our glimpse of God, and His Presence, can only be nebulous, ambiguous, "through a cloud darkly."

Herein lies the tremendous tension within the portion of Ki Tisa, and the dialogue therein between God and Moses. Moses desperately wants the nation of Israel and God to come together (as it were) as one, with God's ineffable Presence to be palpably felt within Israel and within the world.

If that were to happen, presumably Israel would not sin and Jewish history could assume its natural course towards redemption.

God informs Moses: "I will send an angel [messenger] ahead of you... but I shall not ascend into your midst; you are a stiff-necked people, and I may be forced to annihilate you on the way" (Exodus 33:3-5).

God is explaining to the Israelites that His presence within their midst in a palpable and apparent way would very likely be to their detriment; if the God of Truth and Judgment were too close, He might have to destroy Israel completely before they had a chance to properly repent! His distance from them and the world may be seen as an advantage.

After the second Revelation, however, of the God of unconditional love and forgiveness (Exodus 34:6,7), Moses repeats his earlier requests; Moses now feels empowered to ask God to enter into the midst of Israel: "And Moses said, If I have now found favor in your eyes, let my Lord walk in our midst, [precisely because Israel] is a stiff-necked nation, for You will forgive our iniquity and error and make us Your heritage" (ibid. 9). After all, that is exactly how You, God, defined Yourself to us in the Second Revelation.

This is indeed the message that God gives Moses. Israel is the nation of Covenant and permanence within a world of flux and change (Exodus 34:10); God will always dwell within His people and guarantee their survival no matter what, to the amazement (and jealousy) of all the nations. Israel will bear witness to the world about the evils of idolatry and the glories of our festivals, our Sabbaths and our righteous laws until we are ready for the ultimate redemption. In effect, God is "incarnate" within the Jewish nation (see the writings of Michael Wyschogrod).

This too, is the message at the conclusion of the Book of Exodus. In the immortal words of the Ramban (Nachmanides) in his introduction to the Book of Exodus: Behold the exile has not ended until [Israel] returns to their place and to the exalted status of their ancestors... only when they came to Mount Sinai and constructed the Sanctuary, only when the Holy one Blessed be He returned and rested His Divine Presence amongst them... so that they rose to the status of the chariot [merkava], could they be considered redeemed. Therefore, this Book concludes with the Sanctuary filled with the glory of the Divine in the midst of Israel.

The Sanctuary is the ultimate symbol of God's presence in Israel and the world, our promise of ultimate redemption. From this perspective, the sukkah which we build five days after the Yom Kippur of the Second Revelation represents the clouds of glory, the ultimate Sukkah-Sanctuary of world redemption. And the sukkot which likewise remind us of the huts in which we survived during our desert wanderings teach us that God remains in our midst – albeit as through a cloud darkly – even as we wander towards redemption, always forgiving and always protecting. ©2022 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

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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 BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The basic lesson in this week's Torah reading is accountability. God demands from Moshe and the others who formulated and created the Tabernacle in the desert, to account for all the material that was donated by the Jewish people for that purpose. The last piece of silver that was donated had to be accounted for, but Moshe was distressed that he could not account for 1000 measures of the silver. He finally remembered that this donation of silver was used for constructing hooks that bound the tapestries of the Tabernacle together.

The hooks must "shout" to remind us of their presence, and to make Moshe's accounting complete and accurate. Accounting is a very painstaking project. Most people view it as bordering on boring. Nevertheless, there is no commercial enterprise that

can successfully exist without good and accurate accounting practices.

The financial accounting in our Parsha regarding the materials that were used in the construction of the Tabernacle is a template for proper human behavior concerning the use of resources in all areas of life. This is especially true in matters that border on religious institutions that are held to the highest of all standards and are to be above any suspicion of corruption. The Priest of the Temple wore garments that had no pockets and could not conceal any hidden items of value that might be removed from the Temple.

This overriding meticulous standard and value of accountability is not limited to financial matters. Judaism teaches us that we are all accountable for our actions -- behavior, speech, attitudes and even thoughts. We were created as being responsible creatures -- responsible to the creator and to the other creatures that exist with us on this planet. We are given talents that are unique to each one of us. The challenge that is put before us is how those talents and abilities can be used for good and noble causes.

There are many who think that the gifts that they have been given are for their exclusive use, and that there is no need or obligation to share them with others. They are sadly mistaken in this view. People are accountable for what they have, as they were for the supposedly insignificant amount of silver that was used to construct hooks that kept the tapestries together.

King Solomon states in *Kohelet* that one should realize that all actions and behavior will eventually be weighed on the scales of heavenly justice. We live in a time when accountability, to a great extent, has been replaced by excuses, social engineering, economic and psychological theories. All of these are used only to avoid the issue of accountability. To be human is to be responsible, and that is the message not only of this week's Parsha, but of everything in Judaism. ©2022 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

A central biblical term that records the final review of the work done to finish the Tabernacle and priestly garments – is the word *pekudei* (Exodus 38:21). A key to understanding a word in the Torah is analyzing the first time it is found.

In the story of Abraham and Sarah, we first come across the term *p-k-d*. The Torah tells us that for many years, Abraham and Sarah could not have children. Finally, Sarah does give birth. In the words of the Torah, "and the Lord remembered [*pakad*] Sarah as

He had spoken...and Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham" (Genesis 21:1).

Thus, the meaning of pekudei is interwoven with birth. How so?

- As a mother plays a crucial role in carrying and birthing her young, so, too, does God, in bringing the Tabernacle to fruition.

- When a child is born, there is a sense of historic continuity; the infant is part of a continuum of family history. So too the building of the Tabernacle was the pinnacle of Israel's past, going back to Sarah and Abraham. Indeed, the Tabernacle was the culmination of a dream that Israel as a nation would have a central place of worship.

- The birth of a child links us not only to the past but to the future. It is a time of hope that the child grow physically and spiritually, contributing significantly to society. The Tabernacle, too, is a dream: the dream of a glorious future, with its space infused with constant, ongoing spiritual striving.

Perhaps for this reason, the command to build the Tabernacle's vessels is mentioned before the guidelines to build the Tabernacle's outer walls and roof. The vessels represent the inner meaning, the pekudei of the Tabernacle. It is mentioned first to infuse the outer structure with the symbolism and mission that these vessels represent. Note that in the implementation, the sequence is reversed, as one first builds a structure and then prepares the "furniture" (Berachot 55a).

Pekudei reminds us of the broader mission of houses of worship, spelled out poetically in this parashah's last sentence: "So the cloud of the Lord was over the Tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the Israelites during all their travels" (Exodus 40:38). ©2022 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 LEVIN

The Portable Temple

Parashat Pekudei marks the end of Sefer Shemot and acts as a prelude to the opening parashiot of Sefer Vayikra. Here we find the making of the bigdei Kahunah, the Kohein's clothing, as commanded earlier to Moshe and then commanded by him to the B'nei Yisrael. Here we find the final preparations for the establishment of the Kohanim as the Priests of Yisrael who will serve in the Mishkan, the completion of all the work necessary to build the Mishkan, and the conclusion of the seven days of the miluim, a week-long series of sacrifices and various anointings of the different utensils of the Mishkan and the Kohanim (which will only be discussed in the third parasha of Sefer Vayikra, Parashat Shemini). The Midrash

informs us that Moshe also constructed and deconstructed the Mishkan each of these seven days of the miluim and only permanently constructed it an eighth time at the end of this week of preparation. From that time, it was only dismantled and reconstructed when the people travel.

The Torah tells us, "And Hashem spoke to Moshe saying. On the day of the first New Moon, on the first of the month, you shall erect the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting." The importance of these two p'sukim is evident by the number of commentaries that deal with them. This section of the Torah marks the eighth day of the miluim at which time the Kohanim were to take upon themselves the responsibilities of the Priesthood. Ha'Emek Davar explains that there were three things which occurred at this time: (1) This was the New Moon of the first month of the year, Chodesh Nisan. This is significant because declaring the New Moon of Nisan the year before had been the first mitzvah that was given to the B'nei Yisrael in the Torah. This was the month of their Freedom and this is the first celebration of that Rosh Chodesh as free men. (2) This was also the time of the dedication of the Kohanim to serve in the Mishkan. (3) This was the dedication of the Mishkan as the place where all sacrifices would be brought and as the place where Hashem caused Himself to dwell among the people. Our Rabbis tell us that the Mishkan was actually completed on Rosh Chodesh Kislev, but that the Mishkan was not dedicated until Rosh Chodesh Nisan. The ibn Ezra believes that Rosh Chodesh Nisan was the first day of the iluim, and that the final day was on the eighth of Nisan. The Ramban points out that Rabbi Akiva presents the opinion which is quoted by the ibn Ezra, but that Rabbi Akiva's students rescinded his arguments and declared that Rosh Chodesh Nisan was the end of the miluim.

HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin explains this machloket by first explaining that our forefather Yitzchak was born on Rosh Chodesh Nisan and for that reason the Mishkan was dedicated on his birthday. This might be connected to the idea that Hashem promised Avraham that, "your children will be strangers in a land that is not their own." Hashem promised at that time to take them out of the land of Egypt and bring them to Eretz Canaan which they would inherit. The fulfillment of the first part of this promise was now evident to the people, and they could believe that the second part would also be fulfilled. The Mishkan is the place where Hashem would dwell among the people, so it was appropriate to connect this place to the fulfillment of the promise made to Avraham concerning his descendants, the first of which was Yitzchak.

HaRav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch reminds us of the significance of the New Moon. It "lies in that we do not celebrate them with reference to the astronomical cosmic occurrence, but that, in that

phenomenon of Nature we have the model and the exhortation and incentive for the foundation and celebration of human-social 'new moons', renewals and revivals in our own lives." This renewal must take place at the time of the renewal and rebirth of the Jewish People, namely at the same time as the birth of Yitzchak. "The new moon of the arising of the nation, of the national-birth is to be also the new-moon of the entry of the Shechinah, the fulfillment of the 'v'shachanti b'tocham (and I will dwell in their midst),' in which the national redemption first finds its completion." The emphasis that Hirsch places on the lessons of the New Moon also help in explaining the meaning of the b'yom at the beginning of the pasuk. It is not the New Moon which determines the month but the testimony of witnesses before the Sanhedrin which declares the month. "Not because there is an astronomical new-moon on this day, but because as a result of this new-moon, Israel reckons its first-day of the month, was it chosen for the erection of the Sanctuary." It is not the blind forces of Nature which determine the beginning of the month, but man's acknowledgment of his conscious free-will which begins the month.

HaRav Sorotzkin also deals with the unusual structure of the beginning of this section. The Torah states, "On the day of the first New Moon, on the first of the month, you shall erect the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting." HaRav Sorotzkin informs us that the usual way of stating the beginning of this sentence should be, "In the first month on the first day of the month." He explains that this is a hint to the ten crowns which would be commemorated on that day. The Gemara in Shabbos (87b) speaks of ten firsts that occurred on that day and for that reason the day itself was special. The Ramban also gives this reason as a suggestion for why Hashem gave us the conclusion of all the preparations and the dedication of the Mishkan on Rosh Chodesh Nisan, namely to give this day one of the crowns of the Torah.

The Ramban explains that Moshe erected and then took apart the Mishkan each of the seven days prior to the final erection of the Mishkan because it was not yet the day on which it was to be permanently established. Moshe did not wish to appear as if he were dictating the day on which the dedication was to occur. Still the Levi'im and Kohanim were able to observe his actions so that they too would understand exactly what Hashem expected of them. The Torah required of Aharon and his sons that they remain at the opening of the Mishkan throughout the days and nights of the miluim. This placed them in the perfect position to observe exactly what Moshe did with each aspect of the offerings. They were able to observe the slaughtering of the animals, and they were able to see how the blood was gathered in a bowl, carried to the Altar, and sprinkled on the sides of the Altar. They were also able to see which parts of the animals were

burned on the Altar and what was done with the ashes of those burnt offerings. Each day made them more confident that they would be able to assume their responsibilities.

There are several lessons that we can learn from the dedication of the Mishkan. We have seen the connection between the Mishkan and Rosh Chodesh. We have noticed the concept of renewal which can come when focusing on the Temple and Hashem. We have seen the connection between the Forefathers and the Temple. May we each have the opportunity to be renewed that is afforded us by our shul and hopefully soon by the Third Bet Hamikdash. © 2022 Rabbi D. Levin

RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

"**A**nd Moshe erected the Mishkan and he placed its sockets, set up its planks, inserted its bars and erected its posts. (Shmos 40:18) The Midrash Tanchuma famously tells us that when all the work was completed, the people were unable to put up the Mishkan. They asked Betzalel and Ohaliav but none could do it. They therefore came to Moshe.

Moshe asked Hashem how the large planks, the Krashim, could be lifted and Hashem told him to begin to lift them and they would stand on their own. Until now, Moshe had not had a share in building the Mishkan other than conveying Hashem's command that it be done, and therefore Hashem saved this final step for Moshe. Interestingly, this posuk does not say that Moshe "stood" the planks, but rather that he placed them, indicating it was Hashem Who made them actually stand.

However, before the planks, the Torah tells us that Moshe placed the sockets which would interlock the planks and help them stand. Then, once the krashim were standing, he inserted the bars and fitted everything together.

This posuk seems to give us a paradigm for how we are to work as partners with Hashem in the ongoing creation of the world. Yes, there are things that we simply cannot do. However, instead of despairing, we can trust in Hashem that He will take care of them. But we need to lay the groundwork for those miracles.

One who only calls out to Hashem when he needs something may, in fact, be answered and saved, but perhaps he won't merit the miracle. However, if, like Moshe, one sets the stage for Hashem's involvement, by building the structure and taking things as far as he can with the abilities he has been given, then he will more readily find the miracles happening for him. Not only that, he will be given the credit, as it says, "Moshe erected the Mishkan."

Then, once Hashem has helped you overcome the immediate obstacle and given you superhuman abilities, it's up to you not to praise yourself and rest on your laurels, but to take steps to secure what has been

accomplished for the future.

This is what we see from Moshe. He knew he could not raise the krashim, so he turned to Hashem. Hashem told him that this was a task He had been saving especially for Moshe, and that it was his time to do something no one else could do.

The Jews brought Moshe the physical components of the Mishkan, but he breathed life into it and infused it with Hashem's spirit. That is the goal we are each given: to find the unique ways and opportunities we can uplift the world around us and make sure the spirit of Hashem is connected and secured to everything we touch.

The melamed was surprised to be called to the Rov's study for a meeting with the prestigious traveling Maggid, but not overly so. As the only Rebbi of the small Russian village's children for almost 30 years, he could understand he had some measure of importance for his holy work.

When he arrived at the Rov's home, he was left alone with the Maggid. "Do you remember," asked the preacher "when you had a boy, Leib, in your class many years ago?" "Of course," replied the melamed, somewhat unsure of where this was going, "he was a wild child. A terror in the classroom. He constantly disturbed the other boys. I had no choice but to throw him out."

"You had a choice" the sage replied sternly, "but you chose wrong. You took the easy way out. Had you only sought to help him, love him and teach him right from wrong, he would not have grown up to be Communist leader Leon Trotsky!" ©2022 Rabbi J. Gewirtz and Migdal Ohr

RABBI AVROHOM LEVENTHAL

Do You Know Where You're Going To?

Have you ever heard about Dr. Ben Carson, one of the world's most famous neurosurgeons and former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development?

A bit from his biography: "For a time, the likelihood of Benjamin S. Carson, Sr., M.D. fulfilling his childhood dream of becoming a physician seemed unlikely. Growing up in a single parent home with dire poverty, poor grades, a horrible temper, and low self-esteem appeared to preclude the realization of that dream until his mother, with only a third-grade education, challenged her sons to strive for excellence. She observed successful people and encouraged her sons to emulate their behaviors, including reading. This led to behavior changes which had a profound effect on their education. In 1973, Ben Carson graduated from Yale University. He went on to receive his M.D. from the University of Michigan Medical School." (carsonscholars.org)

Despite the challenges of his youth and surroundings, Ben Carson went on to make an indelible impact on the world of medicine.

Perhaps, in addition to his mother, Dr. Carson took inspiration from our parsha.

The Mishkan (Tabernacle) was a simple, yet elegant structure containing ornate holy vessels used for serving G-d.

As we know, Moshe was concerned about how to execute the construction of this edifice and all of its contents. To this, HaShem told Moshe that the construction would be performed by Bezalel and Ohaliav, 2 masters of design.

While there is much written and spoken in regard to Bezalel, his origins and talent, we find less about Ohaliav.

What we do know is that he came from the tribe of Dan and was an equal partner with Bezalel in crafting the vessels and structure of the Mishkan.

The Midrash points out specifically the contrast between Bezalel, who descended from Yehuda, the "highest" of the tribes to Ohaliav, coming from Dan, considered to be the "lowliest".

The Midrash (Shmot Rabba 40:4) says: אמר רבי חנינא בן פזי: אין לך גדול משבט יהודה ואין לך ירוד משבט דן שהיה מן הלחינות ומה כתיב בו (בראשית, מ"ו, כ"ג) - 'וּבְנֵי דָן חֲשִׁים' אמר הקב"ה יבא ויזדווג לו שלא יהו מבזין אותו ושלא יהא אדם רוחו גסה עליו לפי שהגדול והקטן שוין לפני המקום. בצלאל משל יהודה ואהליאב מן דן והוא מזדווג לו

Rabbi Chanina Ben Pazi said: There was no tribe greater than Yehuda and no tribe lower than Dan...HKBH said I will come and pair (Bezalel and Ohaliav) so that they won't disparage him and that no one should be haughty because the great and the small are equal before G-d. Bezalel is from Yehuda and Ohaliav from Dan and he was paired with him.

When Shlomo built the Beit HaMikdash, he too chose someone descended from the tribe of Dan, Chiram from Tzur.

The lesson should be obvious. In the Eyes of G-d, ALL of the tribes are equal. HaShem wanted the home for His Shechina to be built by people from "across the spectrum" of the Jewish people.

One's origin makes no difference when it comes to realizing their potential.

Bezalel descended from Miriam, Kalev and Chur, "giants" of the nation all known for their self-sacrifice. One might think that Bezalel had "in his blood". Chazal, however, point out that Bezalel was great on his own without regard to his illustrious ancestors. On the flip side, Ohaliav came from a tribe not considered to be the "cream of the nation". This did not stop him from achieving monumental things for his people.

How often do we concentrate on "yichus" (ancestry) rather than the person themselves? Some of history's most infamous were fathered by those of

noble character while many heroes have humble beginnings.

Ben Azzai teaches us in Pirkei Avot (4:3): הוּא הִיָּה אוֹמֵר, אֵל תְּהִי בִז לְכָל אָדָם, וְאֵל תְּהִי מִפְּלִיג לְכָל דָּבָר, שְׂאִין לָךְ אָדָם שְׂאִין לוֹ שְׂעָה וְאִין לָךְ דָּבָר שְׂאִין לוֹ מְקוֹם:

He used to say: do not despise any person, and do not discriminate against anything, for there is no man that has not his hour, and there is no thing that has not its place.

We see from Ohaliav, Dr. Ben Carson and so many others, it doesn't matter where you came from as lone as you know where you are going to. ©2022 Rabbi A. Leventhal, noted educator and speaker, is the Executive Director at Lema'an Achai lemaanachai.org

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Parshas Pikudei concludes the construction of the Mishkan. After the construction of all the individual components of the Mishkan, the parts were brought to Moshe. Rashi quotes the Medrash Tanchuma which explains that the reason why the Mishkan was brought to Moshe was because everyone else was unable to assemble it. The Mishkan was simply too heavy for anyone to lift. Since Moshe had not been personally involved in any part of the construction of the Mishkan, HaShem [G-d] reserved the privilege of final assembly for him.

When HaShem told Moshe to assemble the Mishkan, Moshe protested that it was too heavy for him to lift as well. HaShem told Moshe to make the effort. "Make it look like you are trying to erect it." Moshe made the effort and miraculously, it was assembled by itself. Since Moshe made the effort, he received the credit for having put it up.

Rav Meir Rubman explains that we can learn a very important insight regarding spirituality from this Medrash. The Medrash teaches us that regardless of the difficulty of the task, we must make the effort. In other areas of endeavor, a person is only given credit for producing. However, when it comes to Judaism, HaShem is not necessarily interested in results; He is interested in the effort.

The concept that a person receives an "A" for effort is usually a backhanded compliment. In actuality, you received a "D", a near failing grade, but at least you received an "A" for effort. That is the way it is in other areas of life. But regarding Mitzvos, Hashem merely asks that we make the effort. Whether the task is actually accomplished or not is often out of our control and up to Hashem.

When we conclude a Mesechta (tractate of the Talmud), we say the prayer "We toil and they toil. We toil and receive reward and they toil and do not receive reward." What does it mean "they toil and do not

receive reward"? This does not seem to be a true statement. People do not work without receiving payment!

The answer is that when we work (at religious tasks), we are paid for the effort, regardless of whether or not we produce. But 'they' are only paid for the bottom line. In all other areas of endeavor, toil that does not produce results does not receive reward.

Not long ago (1992), I was in Atlanta for a Torah retreat. Atlanta is an amazing community. Thirty years ago, they did not have a minyan of Sabbath observers. Not so many years later, over 300 people were coming to shul on Shabbos -- all of them are in some stage of having intensified, and intensifying, their observance of mitzvos.

I asked Rabbi Emanuel Feldman (Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Beth Jacob in Atlanta), "What is the key to your success?" Rabbi Feldman told me that the key is to try to plant seeds. That is all a Rabbi can do. He can try to nurture and water the seeds, but really all he can do is try. He never knows for sure whether or not it will work.

For example, one individual who recently returned to intensive Jewish involvement and observance told Rabbi Feldman that he made his decision because of a Yom Kippur sermon that Rabbi Feldman delivered fifteen years earlier. A comment in that sermon had struck home. He did not act upon it then, but fifteen years later he decided to become religious.

Success is not what it's all about. Kiruv Rechokim is about effort. Whether or not the Mishkan is actually erected is HaShem's worry. We toil and we receive reward -- for the effort. ©2022 Rabbi Y. Frand and torah.org



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