

The Narrow Bridge

גשר צר מאוד

PARSHA PERSPECTIVES

Short Divrei Torah on Parshas Vayakhel

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רפואה שלמה פעסל בת גאלדא / לזכות חילינו

GATHERING IN UNITY

Sifrei Tzaddikim / Yid HaKadosh

“And Moshe assembled the entire congregation of the Children of Israel and said to them, ‘These are the words that Hashem has commanded that you to follow...’” (35:1)

An alternative rendering of this passage is: “These are the things (devarim may mean either ‘words’ or ‘things’) that G-d has commanded that you should do them.”

These were the things that G-d commanded the Jewish people to do: to assemble, to gather together and always be united in heart and mind. Such is G-d's will.

BUILT WITH UNITY

Reb Noson of Breslov

“And Moshe assembled the entire congregation of the Children of Israel...” (35:1)

The main building of the Tabernacle comes about through unity, when the tzaddik draws everyone together. (Likutey Halakhot I, p. 502)

GLORIFYING FORGIVENESS

Rebbe Nachman

“And Moshe assembled the entire congregation of the Children of Israel...” (35:1)

Moshe assembled the people on the day after Yom Kippur. (Rashi)

On Yom Kippur, Moshe had attained forgiveness for the Jews' sins. He did so by praying that G-d forgive them for the sake of His Name, which is inclusive of our name.

Had G-d punished the Jews, He Himself would have suffered, because G-d and the Jews are one. Then, because G-d forgave the Jewish people, they glorified and sanctified His Name. This is why the day after Yom Kippur is known as “G-d's Name” (Gott's Namen in Yiddish). The forgiveness of sins causes G-d's Name to be glorified and revealed. (See Likutey Moharan II, 66:3)

BOUND TO ALL

Rebbe Nachman

“And Moshe assembled the entire congregation of the Children of Israel...” (35:1)

Moshe was so great that he was able to bind himself to every Jew, no matter how lowly. (See Likutey Moharan II, 82)

UNITED REDEMPTION

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

“And Moshe assembled the entire congregation of the Children of Israel...” (35:1)

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky explains that when the Jewish People sinned with the Golden Calf, they acted in the exact opposite way to their behavior at Sinai. Whereas at Sinai the Jewish People were “like one man with one heart” (see Rashi, Shemos 19:2) - serving Hashem with total unity and a shared will, the Golden Calf showed utter disunity. So much so, that the Yerushalmi (Sanhedrin 10:2) explains that there were actually twelve calves because the tribes could not even agree on which calf to serve, so each tribe had to create their own (except for the tribe of Levi).

Therefore, when Moshe came to warn everyone about working on the Mishkan, which in some sense repaired the damage done by their previous actions, the first necessary step was to “gather the entire assembly” - “to unite them once again in one place and with one vision.”

Rav Kamenetsky himself was very concerned with the lack of unity among the Jewish People in his generation. In 1980, in the last few years of his life, despite being very ill, he travelled to Eretz Yisrael. While there, his condition worsened and he decided to remain until his health improved. Due to his frailty, he refrained from delivering shiurim to those who asked, except for one place, Yeshivas Kol Yaakov.

As he approached the microphone, Rav Yaakov had tears in his eyes as he declared:

“My entire life I wanted to greet Moshiach. I now feel that I won't have this merit; I don't feel that I'll live much longer. But, if I can't greet Moshiach, at least I want to have been among a group of people that I know for sure, will be among those who greet Moshiach. I know that this Yeshiva will be among those that will greet him.” (Related by Rav Yissocher Frand)

What was unique about this Yeshiva? The Yeshiva was famous for hosting Jews from Ashkenazi descent, namely Europe and Russia, as well as Sefardi boys from Spain, Turkey and North Africa. Despite their cultural differences and customs, a sense of unity permeated the Yeshiva and no one was made to feel beneath anyone else. In this atmosphere, each student worked hard to accept their brothers from around the world as if they were literally from the same family. It was this unity that Rav Yaakov felt would bring Moshiach, and once and for all rectify the tragedy of the Golden Calf.

ACTIVE UNITY

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“And Moshe gathered the entire assembly of the Children of Israel.” (35:1)

A group that gathers together can also move apart, and even while together, their union may not be complete. However, a kahal (an assembly) represents an eternal entity that unites individuals, as is stated in the Talmud: “A collective can never die” (Temurah 15b).

The fact that the Sanctuary was constructed by the Jewish people in a spirit of unity caused the finished product to be permeated by oneness. This is noted in the fact that its various components are considered one mitzvah (Mishnah Torah, Rambam, Mitzvah 20).

The Jews are “one nation on earth” (II Samuel 7:23). The implication is that we are bound through an internal connection enabling us to spread G-d's oneness throughout the world. The unity of the Jewish people is an active force rather than a passive one. Establishing oneness among our people spurs the manifestation of G-d's unity in all existence.

HOLY WORK

Reb Noson of Breslov

“Moshe assembled the entire Israelite community and said to them, ‘These are the words that G-d has commanded you to follow...’” (35:1)

“These are the words” - these are the Thirty-Nine Acts of Labor. (Shabbos 97b)

Designed to be a sanctuary for G-d's Presence to “rest upon,” the Tabernacle was built through the Thirty-Nine Acts of Labor. Similarly, anyone who toils in this world using the Thirty-Nine Acts of Labor can also build a Tabernacle for G-d! For the main effect of a person's work is to draw spirituality into his physical life.

Thirty-Nine Acts of Labor, encompassing all the types of work, were necessary in order to build the Tabernacle. Work became a necessity when Adam ate from the Tree, causing the sparks of holiness to fall to the Other Side. All our work, regardless of its spiritual or material purpose, serves to rebuild those Shattered Vessels. One who conducts his work or business honorably is considered as though he builds the Tabernacle. (Likutey Halakhot I, p. 392-197a)

Thirty-Nine Acts of Labor were involved in the construction of the Tabernacle. These Thirty-Nine Acts correspond to all the types of work that can be performed. One who conducts himself properly in his business dealings or occupation merits to build his own mini-Tabernacle. Conducting oneself properly includes believing that it is G-d Who provides, that one must be scrupulously honest, and that every facet of one's business or occupation is invested with the intent of giving something to charity for G-d's sake.

Abiding by these principles, even the simplest person who does not know anything about the rectifications that he causes will merit to build his own Tabernacle. (Likutey Halakhot I, p. 251a)

HOLY ENJOYMENT

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

“Work may be done for six days, but the seventh day must be holy for you.” (35:2)

This verse can be explained on the basis of what the Talmud says in connection to the Regalim (Festivals): “Half for G-d and half for you” (Pesachim 68b).

[Regarding Pesach, the Torah says, “The seventh day will be an assembly for Hashem, your G-d...” (Devarim 16:8). Regarding Shemini Atzeres, the Torah says, “On the eighth day there will be an assembly for you...” (Bamidbar 29:35) Since these are both Regalim, the same laws apply to each, yet one verse implies that the Regalim are to be devoted to the service of G-d, while the other implies that they are to be devoted to personal enjoyment. According to the Talmudic Sage R' Yehoshua, the Torah's use of both expressions means that on Regalim we are to divide our time between personal enjoyment (eating and drinking) and the study of the Torah.]

The half that is “for you” - that is, for the Jewish people - is devoted to G-d on Shabbos. This is the meaning of the words “The seventh day shall be holy for you.” They imply that the portion normally allotted for one's own personal enjoyment is also sanctified.

[Whereas on Regalim, half the day is “ours” - devoted to eating and drinking, on Shabbos, this same half is in effect also “for G-d,” because enjoying the Shabbos meals is itself a holy duty. Thus, the phrase now reads, “but [on] the seventh [day], the 'for you' shall be holy.”]

MAKING SHABBOS HOLY

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“Work may be done for six days, but the seventh day must be holy for you.” (35:2)

Our weekday work is important - especially if we perform it in a manner that helps refine the world, transforming it into G-d's home. Nonetheless, we must not allow work to overwhelm us, claiming the exclusive attention of our minds and hearts. Work must not be allowed to encroach on our set times for prayer, Torah study, charitable deeds, educating our children, and so forth.

Devoting all our energies to work during the week can make it difficult to disengage from it on Shabbos - thoughts and worries of work will continue to haunt us. But if we preserve a sense of balance throughout the week, we will be able to focus properly on the holiness of Shabbos when it comes.

This is why weekday work is described in this verse in the passive voice (“work may be done”), as if we are allowing it to happen by itself, so to speak. We can then read the above-quoted verse as follows: “If, during the six-day workweek, you let your work ‘happen by itself,’ you will then be able to experience the seventh day as a day of pure, undistracted holiness.” (Likutei Sichot, vol. 1, p. 187-190) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

REVEALING HIS PRESENCE

Reb Noson of Breslov

“Work may be done for six days, but the seventh day must be holy for you.” (35:2)

Even the building of the Tabernacle does not take priority over the observance of Shabbat. (Rashi)

Why would we think that building the Tabernacle would take priority over Shabbat? The purpose of the Tabernacle was to provide a Sanctuary for G-d, to reveal His Presence in this world. Logically, nothing should take precedence over that lofty goal. However, the Torah teaches us that G-d's Presence is felt mainly through the sanctity of Shabbat. Precisely on that day, when we cannot build or perform creative acts, yet the world continues to run, do we see G-d's Presence manifest. (Likutey Halakhot IV, p. 242)

CHARITABLE BLESSINGS

Rebbe Nachman

“Work may be done for six days, but the seventh day must be holy for you.” (35:2)

All the work that a person must engage in to earn a livelihood is included in the Thirty-Nine Acts of Labor. This work can be obviated, at least to a degree, by giving charity, since that act arouses Divine kindness and results in a continuous flow of bounty. (See Likutey Moharan II, 4:3)

ANGER-FREE SHABBOS

Skoyler Rebbe

“You shall not kindle fire throughout your abode on the Shabbos day.” (35:3)

Based on the Zohar, the Sefas Emes said that one is not permitted to get angry on Shabbos even if it involves a mitzvah.

One should not light the fire of anger in his dwelling. On Shabbos, when we are enveloped in its holy light and inner sanctity, we are not permitted to show anger.

FIERY GOSSIP

Shelah HaKadosh

“You shall not kindle fire throughout your abode on the Shabbos day.” (35:3)

Shabbos is a day of rest on which people have leisure to discuss communal affairs, to talk about their rabbis, cantors, butchers and gabbaim and offer their comments on the way their institutions such as the yeshivah and the mikvah are run.

This is why we are explicitly admonished: “You shall not kindle fire throughout your abode on the Shabbos day.” Don't mar your Shabbos rest by kindling fires of evil gossip and contention. This is not the purpose for which the Shabbos was given you. The Shabbos is not only a day of rest, but also a day of moral sanctity.

ASCENDING BARRIERS

Rabbi Chaim Kramer

“Take contributions for G-d from among yourselves...” (35:5)

At the time of the Revelation at Sinai, the Jews attained awesome levels of prophecy and were able to see G-d “face to face.” How could they subsequently make a golden calf?

Rebbe Nachman teaches that each time a person is ready to ascend to a higher level, the kelipot on that level are aroused to confront him and prevent him from rising to greater spiritual heights.

When the person conquers those kelipot, he ascends to the next level. But when he prepares to ascend to an even higher level, the kelipot of that next level are aroused to prevent his ascent. These kelipot are a person's powers of imagination. To subdue them, he must give charity (Likutey Moharan I, 25).

Reb Noson adds that when someone does not vanquish the kelipot of the higher level, they can overpower him and force him into a deep descent. This is what happened to the Jewish people, resulting in the making of the golden calf. Their rectification lay in building the Tabernacle, which represents giving charity (Likutey Halakhot VII, p. 130).

DEDICATING OUR DESIRES

Yaroslover Rebbe

“Take contributions for G-d from among yourselves. Let every generous-hearted person bring the contribution for G-d...” (35:5)

One should take from one's inner self all his desires and use them for Hashem's advantage.

GIVING DAY AND NIGHT

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

“Take contributions for G-d from among yourselves. Let every generous-hearted person bring the contribution for G-d...” (35:5)

Mashal: One evening, a guest came to daven Maariv at the old synagogue located at 17 Rue des Rosiers, in the Parisian suburb known as the Pletzel. While there, he put a few francs into a charity box in order to perform a mitzvah prior to prayer. Just then, another man came over to him with a complaint. “Don't you know that charity is not meant to be given at night?” The man thought about this and, being a scholar, he remembered that indeed in the writings of the Arizal it says that after nightfall is not the time for giving charity. This is even brought down in Talmud Yerushalmi (Maseches Pe'ah 8:8).

At the time, the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rav Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson zt'l, was visiting Paris, and the man decided to ask his opinion. He told him what happened, and mentioned that perhaps this Jew was indeed correct, based upon the writings of the Arizal and the Yerushalmi.

The rebbe listened to the story and then shook his head in obvious disagreement. “Most probably,” he responded sagely, “the individual who questioned your giving to charity at night doesn't give during the day either!”

Nimshal: One must study and plumb the depths of the holy writings of the Arizal to understand the deeper meanings. However, one thing is undeniable: A person who wants to give will give at any and all times; a person who has no interest in giving will not give even when he is supposed to give. To be considered a nediv lev, one who has a generous heart, a person should always look to help others, whether monetarily or physically. This is what Hashem looks for in the heart of a Jew

LEVELS OF CHARITY

Reb Baruch of Mezhibuz

“...gold, silver, and copper.” (35:5)

There are three levels in the giving of charity. The highest level is when one gives while one is able-bodied - that is gold. The next level is when charity is given at critical points in one's life - that is silver. The lowest level is when, during a lifetime, charity is never given. However, when a person leaves money for charity in his will, that is copper.

POWER OF ENTHUSIASM

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“Take contributions for G-d from among yourselves. Let every generous-hearted person bring the contribution for G-d: gold, silver, and copper.” (35:5)

The Giving of the Torah at Har Sinai was an act of G-d's initiative. The Divine revelation was therefore not limited by our capacity to receive it. However, for that very reason, we had no way of retaining the revelation we received, and therefore its effect was only temporary.

In contrast, we participated in the construction of the Tabernacle. Therefore, the Divine revelation and holiness that was revealed in it became part and parcel of our very selves.

Moreover, the enthusiasm with which we donated materials toward the Tabernacle's construction expressed our willingness to have G-d dwell among us permanently and infused the Tabernacle with this permanence.

Similarly, the Divine revelation that we experience in the performance of any of G-d's commandments is commensurate with the enthusiasm that we invest in performing them. - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Pardes Yosef / Yid HaKadosh

“And let every wise-hearted person among you come and make all that Hashem has commanded.” (35:10)

The best wisdom is not to be too wise, but to obey G-d's commands without much speculation or sophistication.

QUICK TO ACTION

HaDerash VeHalyun

“And let every wise-hearted person among you come and make all that Hashem has commanded.” (35:10)

If you want to perform a commandment, do it immediately. Wasting time on ingenious discussions may impede action. Hence, the pasuk tells us: Let one who is truly wise and anxious to fulfill G-d's commandments not waste too much time discussing them, but set about at once to translate one's resolve into action.

DON'T DELAY

Rabbi Moshe Schochet

“And the entire congregation of Bnei Yisrael left Moshe's presence.” (35:20)

After Moshe concluded his instructions, the Torah informs us that Bnei Yisrael left his presence.

Rav Moshe Feinstein (Darash Moshe) asks why the Torah, here specifically, mentions that Bnei Yisrael left Moshe's presence. There are many times in the Torah when Bnei

Yisrael departed from speaking with Moshe and it is not specifically stated. (Additionally, the following pasuk informs us that the Jewish people brought all of the materials that they were prepared to donate, which clearly signifies that they left Moshe's presence. Why does the Torah need to include this seemingly unnecessary pasuk?)

Rav Moshe answers that the Torah includes this extra pasuk, which describes the departure of Klal Yisrael, to teach us that the moment Moshe concluded his directives the Jewish people left immediately to perform the commandment without delay. The Torah is teaching us, through this example, the importance of fulfilling the will of Hashem with alacrity and excitement.

Rav Moshe is highlighting that we need to ensure that we fulfill the mitzvos with energy and enthusiasm. If we want our children to take the observance of Torah seriously, then we need to model those behaviors by being proactive and ambitious in our service of Hashem. With this approach in mind, we will no doubt facilitate an environment that will guarantee that we and our families continue to have strong and meaningful relationships with Hashem.

HEARTFELT CONTRIBUTIONS

Rabbi Shmuel Rozovsky

“And every man whose heart inspired him came; and everyone whose spirit motivated him brought the donation of Hashem...” (35:21)

When the Jews brought the materials for the Mishkan, they brought with them their נדיבות הלב - “gifts of their hearts.” For the main donation that was used to build the Mishkan, was not so much the material items, but rather their overflowing good will and intentions - they gave their hearts!

MAN OF KINDNESS

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

“And every man whose heart inspired him came; and everyone whose spirit motivated him brought the donation of Hashem...” (35:21)

From this verse, the Ohr HaChaim understands that there were two types of donors who contributed toward the expenses of the Tent of Meeting. There were those who gave because their “spirit motivated them,” and due to their motivation at the time, they donated according to their ability. However, the verse describes another donor: the “man whose heart inspired him.” This refers to one who was so inspired to give, that he pushed himself to donate more than he was naturally comfortable with. The Ohr HaChaim explains that this is considered a much greater level of giving since the Torah refers to this person as a “man” - a sign of importance throughout the Torah (see for instance, Rashi on Bamidbar 13:3).

To understand the difference between these two givers, take an analogy of a friend and a brother. While a friend is often motivated to help those he is close to, all too often his level of giving ends at the edge of his comfort zone. However, when someone is called to do something for his brother, he will go to great means and difficulty to provide all the help he can.

Our goal should be to recognize that we are all brothers and thus try to motivate ourselves to push beyond our comfort zone to help every Jew in need. For, as “Children of Hashem” (Devarim 14:1), the Jewish People are one family who are “responsible for one another” (Shavuot 39a; although this concept is primarily relevant to the fulfillment of mitzvos, the responsibility that each of us has to one another nevertheless demonstrates our unique bond).

One “man” who truly personified this higher level of generosity was Rav Dessler, as we see clearly from the following story.

After the Holocaust, Rav Chalmish came to England with only one shilling to his name in search of a rabbinical position. A few days after his arrival, he received a letter from a stranger by the name of “Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler” with a request to visit him and a few pounds to pay for the journey and provisions for the way.

When Rav Chalmish arrived, Rav Dessler greeted him warmly and immediately offered Rav Chalmish his own position as Rav! Rav Dessler reasoned, “I say a shiur in shul and receive two pounds a week, and I teach students from which I am able to support myself. Therefore, I am giving you my position as Rav which will entitle you to eight pounds a week until you find a suitable position.” Indeed, this is precisely what happened!

USING OUR TALENTS

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

“And every man whose heart inspired him came...” (35:21)

The Ramban relates that these words specifically refer to those who volunteered their time and energy to build everything needed for the Mishkan - tasks requiring immense skill. (Shemos 35:11-19 details everything that this entailed. The Gemara notes the high degree of skill required for some of these tasks, including the fact that the upper curtains were spun while the hair was still attached to the live goat.) One must wonder where these volunteers honed their talents. After all, they had just left Egypt and the slave-labor that accompanied it; no one had trained as an artisan or specialized in the crafts needed to create what had been instructed. For this reason, explains the Ramban, the verse tells us that these volunteers were not experienced craftsmen, rather, they were those whose “heart inspired him” - those who looked within themselves and felt that perhaps they could be suitable for the task. Their “skill set” was simply that they saw a need and wanted to do what they could to help.

Someone who embodied this message of digging out one's hidden talents to serve Hashem was Rav Meir Schuster, who was single-handedly responsible for thousands of young Jews finding their way back to Judaism.

Described by those who knew him from his early years, Rav Meir was painfully shy, had little charisma, and was very reserved - basically the antithesis of what one would expect from someone who would win the hearts of young Jewish backpackers who had found their way to the Kosel, where Rav Meir dedicated his life, convincing them with nothing more than his sincerity to seek more from their heritage. This started one day when he was standing by the Kosel and saw a backpacker have an emotional experience as he touched the stones. Realizing that this person was seeking something more but clearly had nowhere to find it, he approached his first "customer," offering to teach him about Judaism. Rav Meir had no training or previous experience, but when faced with the opportunity to serve Hashem, his heart was inspired, and this encounter began a revolution.

We are all born with a myriad of natural talents and unique capabilities. We must recognize that these gifts were given to us with one purpose - to serve Hashem and increase His Presence in the world. Even if we are lacking a refined skill or any practical experience, we must seek to discover our G-d-given talents that lie within us and bring them out to serve Hashem. All we need to begin is a spark of inspiration, and with that we can light up the world.

RECOGNIZING INDIVIDUALITY

Reb Noson of Breslov

"The leaders brought the shoham stones and precious stones for the Ephod and the Breastplate." (35:27)

Every stone was a different color, teaching that every person is unique.

The leaders of each tribe contributed the stones - for the tzaddikim are the ones who raise the consciousness of each person to recognize his uniqueness and develop his individual qualities. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 76a-152)

SEEING AND PRECEIVING

Rebbe Nachman

"See, Hashem has declared by name Betzalel the son of Uri, the son of Chur, from the tribe of Yehudah." (35:30)

When the name of Betzalel - who represents the tzaddik - is elevated in everyone's eyes, then people can "see" and understand what is taking place around them. [Then they can perceive G-d's Providence and the beauty of the Torah and the tzaddikim, and recognize the One Who supervises the world.] (See Likutey Moharan II, 67)

ATTAINING WISDOM

Meshech Chochmah

"See, Hashem has declared by name Betzalel the son of Uri, the son of Chur, from the tribe of Yehudah." (35:30)

One can attain the level of selfless devotion only if one puts away all petty sophistry. This, too, is the reason why true self-sacrifice helps one attain wisdom and understanding. The wisdom is given to one to compensate for the pseudo-intelligence one has cast aside.

Betzalel was endowed with wisdom and understanding because of his ancestors' spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice. His grandfather Chur had allowed himself to be killed rather than help the Jews set up the Golden Calf, and the tribe of Yehudah, of which he was a member, had been the first to dash into the waves of the Yam Suf at G-d's command.

WILLING TO SACRIFICE

Rabbi Moshe Schochet

"See, Hashem has declared by name Betzalel the son of Uri, the son of Chur, from the tribe of Yehudah." (35:30)

The Torah reviews the instructions of how to construct the Mishkan. The Torah reminds us that Betzalel will be the one primarily responsible to lead the efforts in building the Mishkan.

The Meshech Chochmah points out that the reason the Torah highlights the ancestry of Betzalel is to teach us that Hashem imbued within Betzalel the wisdom and understanding necessary to build the Mishkan because of a trait possessed and demonstrated both by his grandfather - Chur, and his shevet - Yehudah. Chur was moser nefesh, literally, when he gave up his life in an attempt to deter the Jewish people from constructing the Golden Calf. The tribe of Yehudah, led by Nachshon ben Aminadav, risked their lives when they entered the Yam Suf and served as the catalyst for it to split. In the merit of these acts of self-sacrifice, Betzalel was given the privilege of building the Mishkan.

The Meshech Chochmah explains that when it comes to giving of oneself, wisdom and understanding have to be put to the side, as self-sacrifice doesn't necessarily make sense logically. Betzalel's ancestry set aside their own desire to understand and were moser nefesh. Therefore, Hashem rewarded their descendant, Betzalel, with the wisdom and understanding to build the Mishkan.

This insight of the Meshech Chochmah is a powerful reminder of the priceless value of giving oneself to Hashem and the Torah. Let us do our part and find ways to be moser nefesh and give of ourselves to Hashem so that in return we can be the beneficiaries of Hashem's incredible kindness.

UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"...to work in gold, silver, and copper." (35:32)

Silver, gold, and copper represent three types of Jews: Silver represents those among us who are not fazed by the spiritual darkness of the mundane world but who, on the contrary, channel Divine consciousness into it. Gold represents those of us who used to be entrenched in the mundane world but have overcome the stranglehold of its materialism. Copper represents those of us who are still struggling to overcome the materialism of the mundane world.

The Torah requires that all three metals be used for the construction of the Tabernacle. This is a lesson both for those who perceive themselves as gold and silver, as well as to those who think of themselves as copper. The "silver" among us must not shy away from involvement in the physical world, preferring instead to occupy themselves with only spiritual matters. Similarly, the "gold" among us, who overcame materialism and therefore might feel immune to its dangers, are still not exempt from elevating the physical world. Finally, the "copper" among us might think that they first have to refine themselves before they can elevate the world, but the Torah tells them otherwise: they, too, must do their part in building G-d's home in this world. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 6, pp. 157-160) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

MAINTAINING HOPE

Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

"[The artisans did] all the work required for the Tabernacle." (36:1)

Parshas Vayakhel tells of the skilled artisans - both men and women - who constructed the Mishkan and its various furnishings. The obvious question arises as to how these craftsmen developed such skills. When did they learn and train to be professional builders and artisans?

The Meshivas Nefesh (cited in Otzar Pela'os HaTorah) offers a remarkable explanation - stating that during the years of slavery in Egypt, there were those who anticipated the nation's redemption, and began preparing for the construction of the Mishkan already then.

Even in the dark period of bondage, these individuals did not lose hope. They maintained their faith and optimism, and trusted that the redemption would arrive. So much so, that they actually began preparing to build the Mishkan by learning the skills needed for this project.

The Tur records the custom that women refrain from work each month on Rosh Chodesh. This quasi holiday, as Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer (45) teaches, was given to the women in reward for their refusal to participate in the sin of the golden calf. In contrast to their enthusiastic donation of jewelry for the construction of the Mishkan, they refused to give their jewelry for the golden calf.

They were rewarded with a special holiday each month, on Rosh Chodesh. Rosh Chodesh is the time when the moon is barely visible. But even then, when the moon can hardly be seen, we know with certainty that it will "recover" and grow large and shine brightly once again. Am Yisrael, like the moon, endures periods of darkness, when our "light" barely shines, but we maintain our hope that brighter days lay ahead.

When Moshe Rabbeinu did not return from the mountaintop when the people expected, the men despaired, and resorted to the worship of a golden calf. The women, however, maintained their faith. They did not panic; they felt hopeful and optimistic that Moshe would yet return. This is why their reward was the holiday of Rosh Chodesh, the day which signifies our nation's hope and optimism in the face of adversity, the confidence we have even in times of hardship that the light will soon shine brightly, and our redemption will unfold.

HEART OF GENEROSITY

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"Moshe called to Betzalel... and to every wise-hearted man whom Hashem had endowed with wisdom in his heart, everyone whose heart moved him." (36:2)

Mashal: The Chazon Ish, R' Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz zt'l, was once learning Torah in his home with a member of his family. They were deeply involved in a halachic topic when suddenly the Chazon Ish looked up. "Someone is knocking at the door," he said. The man sitting with him respectfully shook his head. "Rebbi, I didn't hear a thing."

But the Chazon Ish was adamant. "I am certain that I heard a knock on the door. Please go and check."

The other man got up and went to the door. To his surprise, he found a little old woman standing there. She had knocked so lightly, it was almost impossible to hear.

She came into the house and began pouring out her heart to the Chazon Ish. She was a Holocaust survivor and had no family left. She lived in a small apartment and had no means of support. She spoke for quite some time and made no effort to spare the painful details of her life. The Chazon Ish spoke to her and gave her the encouragement she required. When she left the house, he turned to the other man and said, "I may not have heard the knock at the door, but I felt the beating (knocking) of a broken heart, and it called to me!"

Nimshal: The Torah mentions the "generosity of the heart" as well as the "intelligence of the heart" and the "nobility of the heart" no less than 15 times in various forms. Each term is used to describe the overwhelming generosity and spiritual greatness of the Jewish People, who built a holy sanctuary not with tools and supplies, but with their heart and soul. A Jew thinks with his mind but acts by the dictates of the Torah and the sincerity of his heart, which are constantly in tune to serve the Almighty.

SINCERE JOY

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"The work [of contributing] sufficed for all the work that had to be done, and there was a surplus." (36:7)

The people contributed more than enough material on the very first day of collection to suffice for the entire construction of the Tabernacle, its furnishings, its tools, and for the priestly garments.

They contributed so enthusiastically, joyously, and generously because they knew that when G-d would manifest His presence in the Tabernacle, it would indicate that He had forgiven them for the sin of the Golden Calf.

Similarly, whenever we wish to break from a less-than-optimal past and make a fresh start, we can do so effectively only if we do so sincerely. And our sincerity is measured by our enthusiasm, joy, and generosity - meaning that we put more into the effort than is technically required. When we invest in life with unbounded joy and enthusiasm, the result we reap is unbounded and all-encompassing joy and zest for life. (Hitva'aduyot 5720, vol. 1, p. 42) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HASHEM

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"[The artisans made the tapestries out of] linen, turquoise wool, purple wool, and scarlet wool." (36:8)

These four materials allude to the four bases of our emotional relationship with G-d.

Scarlet wool is red, alluding to fire. The fire within our soul is the fiery love of G-d that results from contemplating His infinity. When we realize the extent to which G-d is beyond creation and that He is the true reality, we are overcome with a passionate desire to escape the limitations of the world in order to know Him and to merge with Him.

Turquoise wool is the color of the sky, alluding to our experience of G-d's majesty. In this experience, we also contemplate G-d's infinity, but focus on our own insignificance in comparison. This fills us with feelings of awe.

Purple wool is a blend of blue and red, of love and awe, alluding to pity, which is compounded of love and anger: love for the ideal, anger over how the ideal goes unfulfilled. Specifically, we pity our Divine soul when we consider its plight, having to live so spiritually distant from its natural home, i.e., in G-d's presence.

Linen is white, alluding to our basic, inherent love of G-d, a feeling that is above and beyond rationality. This love is what makes us capable of self-sacrifice for G-d's honor, as it expresses our invincible bond with G-d. (Sefer HaMa'amarim 5708, pp. 138) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

SKILLFUL CONTRIBUTIONS

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"[The artisan] made panels of goat hair." (36:14)

These women understood that G-d had endowed them with a unique skill in order that they utilize this skill for holy purposes, and this is exactly what they did.

Similarly, those among us who have been blessed with special talents or skills, or who have received some unexpected Divine gift (for example, a disproportionately high return on an investment or transaction) should understand that the purpose of this gift is not that we use it for selfish purposes. Rather, we should use it to construct the "Tabernacle," the home that we all construct for G-d out of our personal lives through the study of the Torah, prayer, and the observance of G-d's commandments. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 16, p. 456) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

PUTTING OTHERS FIRST

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"[The artisan] made panels of goat hair." (36:14)

The normal order would have been to first construct the frame of the Tabernacle, and only then to fashion the coverings. Yet here the artisans did the exact opposite: they first made the roof-coverings and only then proceeded to make the structural beams.

This was because the yarn for the goat-hair coverings was spun out of the goats' hair while it was still attached to them; this lent the yarn exceptional softness and pliability. If the artisans had shorn the goats and waited to weave the yarn into cloth until they had made the beams, the yarn would have lost its softness. But on the other hand, if the artisans had left the yarn on the goats, it would have caused the goats some discomfort in having their freedom of movement restricted. So, in order to avoid causing discomfort to the goats, the artisans made the coverings before the Tabernacle itself.

Similarly, the normal order of life is for us first to tend to our own material and spiritual needs and only then to those of others. But when someone is in discomfort - and certainly if they are in pain - we must reverse our priorities, tending to their needs before ours. When we put others' needs before our own, G-d will then crown our efforts, both with regard to others' needs and our own, with success. - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

A PLACE FOR ALL

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"And Betzalel made the Ark." (37:1)

According to the Talmud (Bava Basra 14a) the Ark contained not only the second set of tablets, which G-d gave the Jewish people to replace the broken first set, but also the broken remains of the first set of tablets.

The first tablets (before they were broken) represent the Jew in his pristine state at Har Sinai, prior to the sin of the Golden Calf.

The second tablets, which G-d gave the Jewish people on Yom Kippur - after He forgave them for this sin - represent the Jew that has strayed and then returned to the Ark of Torah.

There is also a third type of Jew: one who has strayed but has not yet returned to the path of the Torah sufficiently to deserve receiving the second tablets. He, too, is represented in the Ark - in the broken pieces of the first tablets.

This teaches us that even those of us who are shattered and broken are worthy of a place in the Ark. We must never let our awareness of our own or others' imperfections make us think that we or they are unworthy to participate fully in the lifestyle that G-d has prescribed for all of us in the Torah. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 6, p. 156) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

DRAWING INSPIRATION

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“And Betzalel made the Ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits long, one and a half cubits wide, and one and a half cubits high.” (37:1)

Betzalel directed the fashioning of all the Tabernacle's furnishings, but the only time his name is mentioned with regard to a specific item is here, with the Ark. Rashi explains that this is because Betzalel not only directed the other artisans how to fashion the Ark but oversaw the execution down to its most minute detail.

The reason that Betzalel gave such special attention to the Ark was because the Ark was the main channel of revelation of the Divine Presence in the Tabernacle. As such, the Ark - more than any other vessel in the Tabernacle - expressed how the Tabernacle atoned for the sin of the Golden Calf. Betzalel drew the inspiration and power for his selfless devotion to the work of the Ark from the example of his grandfather Chur, who was killed for opposing the making of the Golden Calf.

Similarly, the task of our generation is to bring G-d's presence down to earth, thereby making the world into G-d's true home. Just like Betzalel, we can draw the inspiration and power to accomplish this task with selfless devotion from the example of our grandparents and their generation, who in many cases had to exhibit self-sacrifice in order to study the Torah and observe G-d's commandments. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 11, pp. 166-168) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

SOURCE OF LIGHT

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“[G-d] made the Menorah out of pure gold.” (37:17)

The Menorah, the source of light in the Tabernacle, signified insight and enlightenment. The sudden and elusive flash of insight and illumination in the mind is similar to a bolt of lightning flashing across a dark sky.

Every Divine soul is a source of Divine illumination. It is in this sense that the soul is metaphorically termed “the lamp of G-d.” The seven lamps of the Menorah signify the seven basic types of Jewish souls. Each type has its particular path in revealing Divinity, based on the seven basic emotions: (1) the love of G-d, (2) the awe of G-d, (3) connecting to G-d through studying the Torah, (4) overcoming obstacles opposing G-dliness in the world, (5) appreciating G-d's goodness, (6) the pride in being G-d's emissary in the world, and (7) humility. (Likutei Torah 3:29b) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

EMBRACING THE SINNER

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“He made the sacred anointing oil and the pure incense offering, blended as by a perfumer.” (37:29)

One of the ingredients of the incense was galbanum. This foul-smelling herb alludes to wrongdoers, who, despite their repugnant behavior, are still an indispensable part of the community, just as galbanum was an essential ingredient of the incense. In this vein, our sages teach us that any public prayer or fast that excludes sinners will be ineffectual.

The incense expressed the intrinsic connection between us and G-d, which can be neither severed nor sullied. When repenting, we ask G-d to overlook our sins in response to our efforts to tap into this deep connection with Him, which never loses its purity. By getting in touch with this aspect of our souls, we are able to rise above our past misdeeds and repair the separation that they caused between us and G-d.

Clearly, the same inner connection to G-d belongs to every individual, without exception. Thus, if we exclude sinners as part of our communal process of repentance and atonement, we are being hypocritical; our efforts are doomed to failure.

It is only by recognizing that the very same path of repentance is open to every individual that we can actualize the message of the incense and properly rejuvenate our relationship with G-d. (Hitva'aduyot 5747, vol. 2, pp. 558-559) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

ASSERTIVE HUMILITY

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“[The artisans made the Outer, copper Altar] as a hollow structure.” (38:7)

The Outer Altar is where the process of refining our animal natures took place. The material and form of the Outer Altar allude to the two opposite attitudes we need to cultivate in order to accomplish this:

On the one hand, we must be resolute in our dedication to spiritual advancement. The Jews are called “a stiff-necked people”; this can be a positive quality when it is expressed as determination and obstinacy in realizing spiritual goals. This quality is alluded to by the fact that the Altar was made of copper, since the Hebrew word for “copper” (nechoshet) is related to the Hebrew word for “brazen (nechush) stubbornness.”

On the other hand, the hollow Altar was filled with earth. Similarly, while we must be externally stubborn, internally we must be humble as earth. As we say in our prayers, “and may my soul be as dust to all.” (Reshimot 108) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

OPEN DOOR POLICY

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“The Screen for the entrance to the Courtyard was embroidered out of turquoise, purple, and scarlet [wool], and twined linen. It was twenty cubits in length, and its width was its height of five cubits, like the nettings of the Courtyard.” (38:18)

The literal translation of the word for “like” in this verse is “opposite.” This implies that although the Screen was of similar height to the nettings that constituted the enclosure of the Courtyard, it was “opposite” in purpose.

The purpose of the enclosure was to separate between the holy ground of the Tabernacle and the outside world, whereas the purpose of the Screen was to serve as an opening, an outlet through which the Divine consciousness that characterized the Tabernacle could radiate to the outside world.

In our own lives, our homes and synagogues are our sanctuaries, our private and public realms in which we cultivate Divine consciousness through the study of the Torah and the observance of G-d's commandments.

Following the example of the Tabernacle, we should view the doors to these realms not as means to close out the outside world, but as the means to open them to the outside world, so the Divine consciousness cultivated in them can spread outward, ultimately transforming the whole world into G-ds true home. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 16, pp. 443-448)

COMPLETING THE MISSION

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

“All the stakes of the Mishkan and the surrounding enclosure were made of copper.” (38:20)

Rashi writes at the end of Parshas Tetzaveh that the pegs of the Mishkan that were inserted into the ground to fasten the edges of the curtains, were to ensure that the curtains would not flap around because of the wind, and the ropes were used for binding them. This was the final act of securing the Mishkan in its place.

R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson zt'l, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, writes that a lesson is to be derived from this: Chazal tell us that a meritorious deed is attributed to he who does the last part of it and completes it (Sotah 13). The many generations of great Torah leaders that preceded us can be compared to the builders of the Mishkan itself. Our own generation, on the other hand, can be compared to those who tie the edges of the curtains to the stakes in the ground so they will not flap loosely in the wind. In the overall stature of Klal Yisrael's history, our predecessors are like the brains, heart and “upper” parts of the body. Our task and mission may be seen as the “lowest” task, merely tying down the very edges of the curtains, some rather incidental and external details. Nonetheless, it is this work that completes the whole job, and it is specifically what we do that will fasten the Mishkan so that it may stand firm.

Moreover, the edges of the curtains were to be tied to the pegs that were fixed in the ground, the earth. This alludes to the very purpose of the Sanctuary, namely, to bring about a proper dwelling of the Divine Presence in the Mishkan, which was to be a physical abode established specifically here on earth. This, indeed, is the very task and purpose of our generation. We are here to complete the final task before Mashiach's arrival.

HAFTORAH

PREPARING FOR HELP

Chida

“And he set the pillars at the porch of the Beis HaMikdash, and he set up the right pillar, and called its name Yachin, and he set up the left pillar, and called its name Boaz.” (1 Melachim 7:21)

Yachin is a Hebrew term implying “establishment” or “preparation.” The name Boaz is a compound of the Hebrew words bo, “in him” or “in it,” and oz, “strength.”

These two pillars had profound symbolic significance. The Sages say that “our evil urge is renewed each day, and unless the Holy One, blessed be He, is at our side, we cannot conquer it.” But we will receive help from G-d only if we gird ourselves to wage the good fight. If we make no effort to do so we cannot expect support from Above.

The message conveyed by the two great pillars at the Beis HaMikdash porch is as follows: Only if there is Yachin - if we prepare ourselves and are willing to act to fight off the evil urge - will there be Boaz, sufficient strength in us to be able to carry on the struggle until we have won the final victory.

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