

The Narrow Bridge

גשר צר מאוד

PARSHA PERSPECTIVES

Short Divrei Torah on Parshas Pekudei

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רפואה שלמה פעסל בת גאלדא / לזכות חילינו

DRAWING US NEAR

Rebbe Nachman

"These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony, which were accounted at Moshe's bidding. The work of the Leviim was under the direction of Isamar son of Aharon HaKohen." (38:21)

Mishkan (משכן, Tabernacle) is related to Mashkon (משכון, guarantee). G-d gave us the Tabernacle as a guarantee that He will always be with us. (Shemos Rabbah 31:10)

Mishkan (משכן) is also similar to Mashkheini (משכני, draw me) (cf. Shir HaShirim 1:4; see Rashi), for it draws us to G-d and G-d to us. (See Likutey Moharan 1, 70)

REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony..." (38:21)

The Torah refers to the Tabernacle as a "testimony" because it testified that G-d forgave the Jewish people for the sin of the Golden Calf.

Moreover, the Hebrew word for "testimony" (eidut) is related to the word that the Torah uses for the "jewelry" (edi) - i.e., the spiritual crowns - that the people received at the Giving of the Torah and had to remove after the incident of the Golden Calf.

Thus, the Tabernacle is also called "the Tabernacle of the jewelry." This indicates that the Tabernacle was also the means by which G-d enabled the Jewish people to regain the spiritual heights and Divine consciousness that they attained when G-d first gave them the Torah - before the sin of the Golden Calf.

Similarly, by constructing our inner, personal spiritual Tabernacle, we too, can overcome any spiritual handicaps we may have accrued during our lives, thereby attaining something of the pristine Divine consciousness G-d bestowed upon us when the Torah was first given. (Ohr HaTorah, Shemos, vol. 6, p. 2233) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

ELEVATING THE MOMENT

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

"These are the accountings of the Mishkan..." (38:21)

The Sforno notes that despite having the same function as the Beis HaMikdash, only the Mishkan was spared from its enemies and completely unaffected by wear and tear. One of the reasons for this, explains the Sforno, is due to the unparalleled stature of those who were involved in its creation (most notably, Moshe, Betzalel, Itamar, and the Leviim; see Shemos 36:21). Without a doubt, the hopes, prayers and spiritual dedication infused into every act of planning and building the Mishkan were the elements that ensured its everlasting survival. The first and second Beis HaMikdash, on the other hand, were built with the assistance of outside nations who were hired to help and who would not have had the same lofty dedication and spiritual connection to their work as their predecessors.

We see from here that despite being built for the same purpose as the Beis HaMikdash, the Mishkan's eternal survival came as a result of being built through loftier objectives and purer motives.

So too, we each have the ability to imbue a higher motive into everything we do. We can turn our job into a means of helping others; our relationships into bonds of support and kindness; and with the right mindset, we can even turn our most mundane daily tasks into precious mitzvos.

One example of this was related by Rav Elyah Lopian after arriving at yeshivah one day. Walking to yeshivah, he encountered workers resetting the road. As was his way, he stopped to talk with them and complemented them on their hard work. During his conversation with one worker, he asked him what he was doing. "Earning money," was the man's simple response. When Rav Elyah met another worker, he asked the same question, "I am fixing the path so that no one hurts themselves, and I am also building up Eretz Yisrael." With that, Rav Elyah came to yeshivah telling all present the vital lesson he had learned: that even though two people can be doing exactly the same task, one can be simply "earning money" in this world while the other can also be earning eternal reward in the next.

HUMBLE BLESSINGS

Sochatchover Rebbe

“These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony...” (38:21)

It states in the Talmud, “Blessing is only possible in things hidden from sight” (Taanis 8b). A blessing has an inner strength of holiness, which prefers modesty and secrecy, while the obvious is generally ruled by evil outwardness.

Therefore, when the accounting was done through Moshe, whom the Torah described as the most trusted and humble one, outward evilness could not affect the blessing: Evil manifestations can only occur where falsehood is found.

CONTROLLED BY KINDNESS

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

“These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony, which were accounted at Moshe’s bidding. The work of the Leviim was under the direction of Isamar son of Aharon HaKohen.” (38:21)

As a rule, G-d continuously bestows loving-kindness and mercy on His nation, the Jewish people. If occasionally, G-d forbid, something bad happens to the Jewish people, it is only so that ultimately something good can emerge. If, G-d forbid, nothing good were to come out of this bad event, G-d would not have allowed it to befall the Jewish people, since the whole purpose of G-d sending something harmful to the Jewish people is so that afterward something beneficial can emerge from it.

This is alluded to in the verse above. The Levi represents the attribute of judgment (Zohar 3:179b), whereas the Kohen represents the attribute of loving-kindness (Zohar 1:256b). The “work of the Leviim,” then, refers to the attribute of judgment. The verse goes on to say that this work, this attribute, was “under the direction of Isamar, the son of Aharon HaKohen,” who represented the attribute of loving-kindness.

In other words, the activation of judgment depends upon - is “under the direction of” - loving-kindness. If loving-kindness will emerge from the execution of judgment, then the attribute of judgment will execute justice. But if loving-kindness will not emerge as a result, then the attribute of judgment will not be activated in order to execute justice.

This, then, is the deeper meaning of the words “These are the accountings of the Mishkan.” The Mishkan symbolizes the sweetening of judgments. Thus, the sweetening of harsh judgments intended for the Jewish people, i.e., the Mishkan, is “the work of the Leviim under the direction of Isamar son of Aharon HaKohen,” meaning that it is accomplished when the Divine attribute of judgment is controlled by the attribute of loving-kindness. Contemplate and analyze this well.

TESTIMONIAL REPENTANCE

Reb Yaakov Yitzchak Shapiro

“These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony...” (38:21)

Whenever the word “these” is stated in the Torah, it refers to the present and not what has occurred in the past. Therefore, in this pasuk the word “these” refers to the person who has sinned and has repented. This person has chiseled away his earlier behavior and has now sanctified and purified his being.

Mishkan can also mean a dwelling within oneself. Therefore, the repentant sinner can become a “Mishkan of Testimony,” one of the righteous individuals who give testimony to the ways of Hashem.

We learn from this that though Bnei Yisrael sinned with the golden calf, nevertheless because they repented, they were permitted to build the Tabernacle.

ACCOMPANIED BY SANCTITY

Reb Noson of Breslov

“These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony...” (38:21)

Mishkan (משכן, Tabernacle) shares the same root as Shakhein (שכן, neighbor). For the purpose of the Tabernacle, like the Temple that succeeded it, was to draw people together to serve G-d.

The word Mishkan (Tabernacle) is mentioned twice in this verse, because whether it is erected or destroyed, it always remains with us.

The Tabernacle was dismantled every time Bnei Yisrael journeyed, and rebuilt every time they encamped, to teach us that it accompanies us always.

The Jews were able to travel through the desert - a place of serpents, poisonous snakes and scorpions, a place devoid of faith and serenity, a place filled with confusion and doubts - because the Tabernacle always remained with them. (Likutey Halakhot I, p. 260)

The repetition of the word Mishkan (Tabernacle) alludes to the two Temples that were eventually destroyed. (Rashi)

Mishkan (משכן, Tabernacle) connotes hamshakhah (המשכה, drawing close to G-d). The Tabernacle radiated G-dliness in the desert. The Temples illuminated holiness to the Diaspora.

Nowadays, sanctity is drawn wherever people gather in synagogues. By building the Tabernacle in the desert, Moshe prepared for the eventuality that the Jews could invoke G-dliness even in a place devoid of G-dliness and be able to sanctify a synagogue.

PROOF OF PROPER USAGE

Malbim

“These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony...” (38:21)

By its very existence the Mishkan itself rendered testimony that the accounting had been honest and that there had been no embezzlement of funds. For had there been even the slightest misuse of funds, the Holy Presence certainly would not have revealed itself there. As it says, “I am the Lord... Who hates robbery in a burnt-offering” (Yeshayahu 61:8).

QUALIFIED FOR THE TASK

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

“These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony, that were drawn up by Moshe’s orders; for the work of the Leviim, under the direction of Isamar, son of Aharon the kohen.” (38:21)

Mashal: A man was rock climbing with his friends. Suited up, he took hold of the rope, and started up the face of the rock.

Soon, he reached a ledge and stopped to rest. As he hung on there, the safety rope snapped against his eye and knocked out his contact lens. He felt all around, hoping that the lens had landed on the ledge, but he couldn’t find it. Anxious and desperate to get to the top with his friends, he decided to forge ahead as best he could with blurry eyesight. As he climbed, he mouthed a prayer to Hashem that he recover the lens so he could descend the mountain safely.

Eventually, he reached the top. A friend examined his eye and his clothing for the lens but could not find it. Despondent, he waited for the rest of the group to summit. Then they walked together down a short trail to the landing. There was a new group of climbers preparing to start up the rock face. One climber was bent over, adjusting his gear when he suddenly shouted, “Hey! Check this out!”

They all gathered around to see an astonishing sight: An ant was moving slowly across the face of the rock, carrying a contact lens that was double its size! All the climbers came over to look, including the grateful young man who had lost the lens.

Nimshal: Rashi says: “The task of the Mishkan and its vessels was given over to the Leviim in the desert, to carry, to dismantle, and to erect - each man according to the task appointed for him.”

We, too, have jobs from Hashem, and we must fulfill them. Like that little ant, we don’t always understand why Hashem has given us a heavy load. But we realize that although we don’t necessarily understand it, Hashem has set it up for good reason. Hashem doesn’t only appoint the qualified; He also qualifies the ones He appoints!

HOLY WORK

Rebbe Nachman

“These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony...” (38:21)

Thirty-Nine Acts of Labor were involved in building the Tabernacle. (Shabbos 73a)

Whenever a person works for the sake of G-d, even if he is engaged in mundane tasks, his actions are considered to be analogous to building the Tabernacle. Such activity is beneficial for everyone, because it draws down the “dew of blessing” - i.e., bounty. Tal (טל, dew) has the numerical value of thirty-nine.

Conversely, if a person works solely for material benefit, his Thirty-Nine Acts correspond to the thirty-nine lashes meted out by a Jewish court for certain offenses (Devarim 25:3), and to the thirty-nine curses that Adam, Chavah, the Serpent and the earth incurred after Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge (Tikkuney Zohar # 48, p. 85a).

Therefore, the word Mishkan (Tabernacle) is mentioned twice in this verse - once representing the Thirty-Nine Acts when they are properly carried out and lead to blessing and the building of the Tabernacle, and once representing the Thirty-Nine Acts when they are improperly carried out and lead to suffering and the destruction of the Tabernacle. (See Likutey Moharan I, 11:4)

FOR THE SAKE OF ATTACHMENT

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

“These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony...” (38:21)

A person might perform G-d’s commandments, but his consciousness might not yet be on the level at which he attaches himself to G-d through his performance of the commandments, which would bring the Creator delight from the Jewish people. Nevertheless, the truth is that this latter level is the level on which a person should serve G-d.

This idea is alluded to in the phrase “These are the accountings of the Mishkan.” The word for “accountings” [פקודי] connotes “attachment.” This implies that a person must perform the mitzvos in order to attach himself to the Shechinah, the Divine Presence, for the word “Mishkan” [משכן] is related to the word Shechinah [שכינה]. (Both words convey the idea of “dwelling”: The Mishkan is the locale in which the Divine Presence dwells; the Shechinah is the “indwelling” of the Divine Presence itself.)

The word “testimony” [עדות] in the phrase “the Mishkan HaEidus [of Testimony]” denotes “pleasure,” as in the verse (Yechezkel 16:7), “You came to have great charm [עדי עדיים],” as the Divine Presence is delighted when the Jewish people perform the commandments in this manner.

CONSTANT RECKONING

Chernobyl Rebbe

"These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony..." (38:21)

Hashem has an accounting of Man since the beginning of Creation. However, Man should also give an accounting to himself. There should be continual introspection. Before one speaks, one should remember that there exists a Divinity within oneself.

GIVING IT OUR ALL

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"And Betzalel, son of Uri, son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah, did all that G-d had commanded Moshe. With him was Oholiav son of Achisamach of the tribe of Dan, a craftsman and weaver, and an embroiderer in turquoise, purple, and scarlet [wool], and in linen." (38:22)

We are all called upon to contribute whatever we can to the Divine project of making the world into G-d's true home. We might think that G-d values our contributions on the basis of their quality or quantity, or on the basis of our social standing. In truth, however, G-d measures our contributions by the extent to which they are the best and the maximum that each one of us can contribute. Everyone's maximum is different, but if we all contribute our maximum, we are all contributing equally, and thus, we all have an equal share in the final product - fulfilling the purpose of creation.

This is why the Torah here mentions that Betzalel and Oholiav oversaw the work of the Tabernacle. Betzalel could boast being a descendant of the designated royal tribe of Yehudah (see Bereishis 49:10), whereas Oholiav, a descendant of the simple tribe of Dan, could make no claim to prominence. Nevertheless, they are both equally credited with the construction of the Tabernacle on account of their equal devotion to the task. Similarly, G-d holds dear all our contributions toward making the world into His home, provided that we Him give our all. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 11, p. 358) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

STAYING GROUNDED

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"And Betzalel, son of Uri, son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah, did all that Hashem commanded Moshe." (38:22)

Rashi quotes the Gemara (Berachos 55a) that alludes to the unusual discussion between Moshe Rabbeinu and the chief architect of the Mishkan, Betzalel. Moshe delivered the command from Hashem to first mold and create the vessels, including the Aron, Menorah, etc., and only afterwards, to build the actual structure of the Mishkan. Betzalel, however, challenged this dictate with a logical argument: If the vessels were to be crafted before the walls were erected, where would they be stored?

Instantly, Moshe capitulated and declared, "You must have been in the shadow of the Lord and heard the truth."

A strange argument, indeed, between the great leader of the nation and a thirteen-year-old artisan. Yet in the end, the boy was right, and Moshe conceded that he was wrong!

R' Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi shlit'a delineates their respective ways of thinking:

Moshe Rabbeinu heard the command to build a Mishkan directly from Hashem. In his mind, the Mishkan was not just a building or a structure, but rather an extension of the pure celestial realms. As such, there is no difference if the walls are erect or not; Hashem's preference in the order of the building is not up for negotiation.

Betzalel, on the other hand, claimed a deeper perception of Hashem's command. If the Mishkan is to be built by the hands of man and maintained here on this earth, then it must conform to the dictates and applications of human beings. Thus, a structure must first be built in order to house the holy vessels.

Betzalel's wisdom is timeless. What pertains to mortals must be explained in the context of this world. We must strive for the heavens, but our feet must always touch the ground!

CREATED FOR SANCTITY

Tiferes Yonasan

"All the gold that was used for the work in all the work of the sanctuary..." (38:24)

An alternative reading for this verse is: "All the gold that was made for the work (as assui can be rendered as "made" or "used") in all the holy work."

Understanding assui as "made" implies that all the gold that Hashem created was made only for "the work in all the work of the Sanctuary."

WARMTH AND ENTHUSIASM

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"The tally of silver from those of the community who had been counted was..." (38:25)

The materials that the people donated for the construction and operation of the Tabernacle atoned for their involvement in the incident of the Golden Calf.

Moshe was perplexed by the notion that the soul can be redeemed from such a severe sin by a mere donation of silver. After all, the soul is spiritual, and moreover, its focus and drives are spiritually oriented. Silver, in contrast, besides being itself material, represents our lust for materiality. Since the reason the soul needs to be redeemed is because it has succumbed to materiality, how can too much materiality (i.e., sin) be cured by even more materiality (i.e., donated coins)?

G-d answered Moshe by showing him a coin of fire. Indeed, a “cold” coin, given without feeling, cannot redeem the soul. But a “fiery” coin, given with the Divine soul’s warmth and enthusiasm for Divinity, can atone for even the gravest sin.

This lesson applies to all the commandments we perform. If we perform them with spiritual vitality and enthusiasm, they become coins of fire, atoning for our past misdeeds and binding us to G-d Himself. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 26, pp. 231-237) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

ATTESTING TO HIS KINGSHIP

Chiddushei HaRim

“The hundred talents of silver were for casting the sockets of the sanctuary and the sockets for the curtain.” (38:27)

The number of sockets needed for the Sanctuary was one hundred, the same number as blessings that must be recited daily.

This implies that just as the sockets served as the Sanctuary’s foundation, so the daily blessings represent the foundations for a Jew’s sanctity.

Adon, the Hebrew word for “socket,” is related to adon, the term for “master.” Both the sockets and the blessings attest to the fact that the Holy One, blessed be He, is the Master of all Creation.

IN IT TOGETHER

Rabbi Moshe Schochet

“The hundred talents of silver were for casting the sockets of the sanctuary and the sockets for the curtain.” (38:27)

The Torah tells us that Hashem required that one hundred talents of silver, which were collected for the mitzvah of machatzis ha’shekel from each member of Klal Yisrael, be used for the sockets that would support the walls of the Mishkan and the pillars of the Paroches (the curtain in front of the Kodosh HaKodashim).

The Chofetz Chaim points out that we learn a very important lesson from the fact that the money used for the sockets, which were positioned to support the construction of the Mishkan, had to come from a partnership within the community.

When it comes to ensuring that the Shechinah resides within a community, everyone has to unite in support of the spiritual initiatives, similar to the way Klal Yisrael did with the Mishkan. Each person has the capacity to make their own unique contribution in a host of ways with their individual abilities and talents. It is imperative that every person plays their part in welcoming the presence of Hashem; no one can abdicate responsibility.

Let us make sure that we take this message to heart and realize that when it comes to serving Hashem, we are in this together.

FOUNDATION OF RECOGNITION

Rabbi Moshe Schochet

“The hundred talents of silver were for casting the sockets of the sanctuary and the sockets for the curtain.” (38:27)

The Gemara (Menachos 43b) states that we are obligated to recite 100 berachos daily. Based on this Gemara, the Chiddushei HaRim suggests that this expectation seems to be very similar in concept to the requirement of having 100 sockets as part of the Mishkan. He explains that berachos function in a similar way to the 100 sockets of the Mishkan. Just as the sockets were necessary to serve as the support and foundation of the Mishkan’s structure, so too berachos are fundamental to our very existence and to how we relate to Hashem.

We are responsible to acknowledge that everything comes from Hashem. In fact, the Chiddushei HaRim explains homiletically that the word adon, which means “socket,” also means “master.” The Torah is alluding to the foundational requirement to recognize Hashem as the Master of the world and us as His beneficiaries. We are obligated to recite berachos 100 times a day in order to ensure that we are spiritually sound. In the same manner, we are obligated to have 100 sockets in the Mishkan’s construction to ensure that the Mishkan is structurally sound. Essentially, our 100 daily berachos serve as the sockets and bedrocks of our personal Mishkans.

Each and every day we confront so many different distractions. We find ourselves coming home at the end of the day wondering where the day has gone. Unfortunately, due to the chaos and business of our lives, we often forget about Hashem’s constant intervention. The Chiddushei HaRim is providing us with an important reminder of how to remain focused on the fundamentals. Making berachos throughout the day will guarantee that we keep the main thing as the main thing and ensure that Hashem is always our center focus.

HEARTFELT LOVE FOR ALL

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

“And he made the Ephod out of gold, blue wool, dark red wool... They made shoulder straps attached to it, attached at its two corners.” (39:2, 4)

Among the bigdei kohen gadol were two articles of clothing that had the names of the twelve shevatim inscribed upon them: the stones of the Choshen and the shoulder straps of the Ephod. However, it is noteworthy that while the names on the Choshen were separate and distinct from one another, the names on the straps were placed all together - six on one side and six on the other. What is the significance of this distinction?

Rav Yeshayah Levy shlit’a explains that placement on the shoulders signifies the responsibility of carrying the burden of the community. And, in a community, there must be standards; otherwise, anarchy will reign.

We cannot, and must not, be a community comprised of “every man for himself, as he sees fit.” That is why the names of the shevatim were inscribed together; it served as a reminder that we must collectively be guided and taught by our gedolim and leaders the proper and correct way to attain and maintain our special status of a holy nation.

However, the Torah also teaches the importance of the individual and how a leader should deal with one who is having difficulty living up to a higher standard. He must not be shunned or ostracized, for that is counterproductive. He must be treated as a real and unique individual. This is symbolized by the stones of the Choshen which contained the names of the individual shevatim inscribed separately. Not only that, but these names were kept in a very important place: V'nasa Aharon... al libo - “and Aharon carried it... over his heart” (Shemos 28:30). The name of each shevet was placed directly on the heart of the kohen gadol. A true Torah leader deals and interacts with each individual Jew with his heart - a heart filled with ahavas Yisrael.

BLESSED UNITY

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“[The artisans] made the onyx stones... engraved with the names of Israel’s [i.e., Yaakov’s] sons.” (39:6)

Some of Yaakov’s sons were singled out for leadership roles: Yehudah was the father of the royal line of Dovid, Levi was the father of the priests, and Joseph was selected to lead the family after Yaakov’s death.

Nonetheless, the names of Yaakov’s sons were inscribed on the Ephod’s two shoulder stones in the order of their birth, rather than in the order of their importance or prestige. This underscores their common, unifying factor - the fact that they are all Yaakov’s sons.

Yaakov was the only patriarch whose children all remained faithful to the Divine mission and ideology that Avraham began. All of Yaakov’s sons learned how to channel their individual differences and strengths toward perpetuating Judaism. This unity made their inscribed names a source of merit for us as the high priest entered the Tabernacle to represent us before G-d.

Just as parents are happy to grant their children’s wishes when they all cooperate lovingly, G-d is more ready to shower us with His beneficence when we follow in the footsteps of Yaakov’s sons and unite in our devotion to the ideals of Judaism. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 36, pp. 146-152) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

FILLING IN FOR OTHERS

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

“And he made the Breastplate the work of a craftsman like the work of the Ephod... And they filled them with four rows of stones...” (39:8, 10)

In this pasuk, and previously in Parshas Tetzaveh (28:17), the Torah describes the twelve settings in the Choshen that were filled up by the precious stones known as the Avnei Miluim (Filling Stones). Rashi there explains that they were called that because they served to fill in the empty settings of the Choshen.

Imagine a newly engaged bride who just received her diamond ring. Would she ever describe the ring as a beautiful setting that had a hole in it which was filled up with a diamond? Of course not! The diamond is the most precious and focal part of the ring; hence she might even refer to the whole ring as “her diamond.” Similarly, would it not have been more complimentary to call the Avnei Milim “Precious Stones” or some other more honorable term, rather than just refer to them as “fillers”?

Rav Shmuel Berenbaum zt”l, rosh yeshivah of the Mirrer Yeshivah, answers that one can learn a beautiful lesson from these simple words of the Torah. The ba’alei mussar teach us that one’s greatest achievements are what he accomplishes for someone or something else. That is a true measure of a person’s worth.

The Choshen had twelve holes in it, and it was considered “lacking” without the stones that filled them up. Consequently, the most positive description for these stones, despite their own intrinsic value, was to highlight the fact that they were able to fill up what was missing in the Choshen.

This, of course, should also be our goal in life. We should always strive to see how we can help others and try to “fill in” whatever they may be lacking. By simply being “fillers” and helping to “complete” others, our own self-worth will become immeasurable.

INTRINSIC BOND

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“[The artisan] made the Robe of the Ephod.” (39:22)

Each of the rites that the priests performed in the Tabernacle reflects a particular way in which we maintain our relationship with G-d. This relationship normally depends upon our behavior: the better we behave, the closer we are to G-d and the more we earn His love.

From a deeper perspective, however, we deserve G-d’s love on the simple merit of being His children. This is reflected by the fact that while the high priest performs his priestly duties, he must be wearing three garments - the Ephod, the Breastplate, and the Robe - each of which emphasizes our intrinsic connection to G-d (Shemos 28:35).

The names of the tribes were engraved on the stones affixed to the Ephod and to the Breastplate, expressing our intrinsic merit as descendants of our patriarchs and matriarchs.

The bells and pomegranates of the Robe alluded to how even the least of the Jewish people are full of merits as a pomegranate is full of seeds.

Similarly, whenever we meet other Jews, our first priority should be to remind them of their illustrious heritage and inherent worth.

Once they are aware of their intrinsic relationship with G-d, they will be further inspired to maintain this relationship by living up to His expectations of them. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 21, pp. 184-189) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

CONSTRUCTIVE STUBBORNNESS

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"[The artisans] made the Forehead-plate, and inscribed upon it 'Holy unto G-d.'" (39:30)

The high priest was required to wear the Forehead-plate because the forehead represents stubborn determination. We all naturally wrinkle our forehead muscles whenever we resolve to see something through despite all odds.

Stubbornness can be positive or negative. Brazen nerve or arrogance in showing contempt for G-d's law is negative. It is no coincidence that the stone thrown from Dovid's slingshot hit and killed Goliath in the forehead, for Goliath brazenly and openly defied G-d. We are therefore taught that the high priest's Forehead-plate atoned for the sin of arrogance.

An example of positive stubbornness is the resolve that enables us to stay true throughout the day to the spiritual awakening that we feel during our morning prayers. As we go about our daily business, it may be difficult to maintain the heightened Divine consciousness that we aspire to in prayer. But we can certainly maintain the attitude toward life implicit in this heightened awareness: that our Divine mission is our primary concern and the purpose of our involvement in the material world is to elevate it by using it for G-dly purposes.

Our goal of making everything "Holy unto G-d" was therefore inscribed on the Forehead-plate. (Ohr HaTorah, Shemos, vol. 5, pp. 1713-1715) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

CREDITED FOR THE WORK

Rabbeinu Moshe Alshich

"All the work of the Mishkan, the Tent of Meeting, was completed, and Bnei Yisrael did like all that Hashem had commanded Moshe, so did they do." (39:32)

Shouldn't the pasuk state that they first did what was commanded and then they finished the work?

As we know, many aspects of the work were unknown to the Jews and Hashem had to complete them. And still, He gave them credit for doing it. Thus, "the work was completed" by Hashem, and yet, "they did what was commanded" - they received credit for the work.

ONE THING AT A TIME

Imrei Shefer

"All the work of the Mishkan, the Tent of Meeting, was completed, and Bnei Yisrael did like all that Hashem had commanded Moshe, so did they do." (39:32)

As long as they worked on the Tabernacle, they did not perform any other mitzvah. That is based on the rabbinic dictum that when one is performing one mitzvah, one is exempt from performing another. Therefore, only after they finished the Tabernacle, did they perform the rest "that Hashem commanded Moshe."

COMPLETE PARTICIPATION REQUIRED

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"...and Bnei Yisrael did like all that Hashem had commanded Moshe, so did they do." (39:32)

A man once came to the holy Admo'r of Satmar, R' Yoel Teitelbaum zt'l, for counsel. He had sent his son to Eretz Yisrael to study in a yeshiva, and received reports that his son was very diligent and progressing well in his studies. However, whenever his son would become aware of an impending hafganah - rally, or call to gather in protest against a group that had attempted to institute a policy that was against the law or spirit of the Torah, he would drop his learning and become involved with the protest. The father asked for the Rebbe's opinion about his son's behavior.

R' Yoel asked the man what his own feelings were on the matter. The father responded that he felt that the activities of those who make rulings against the Torah must be countered, but that it was much more appropriate to have this done by wise, elderly Torah statesmen in an orderly fashion, rather than by young, overly impressionable yeshiva bachurim who should rather be busying themselves in the halls of the yeshiva with in-depth Torah study. Such was the opinion of many Gedolei Yisrael, in Eretz Yisrael and abroad.

The Satmar Rebbe though, had an opinion of his own. He took out a Chumash and turned to Parshas Pekudei. "The expression, 'ka'asher tzivah Hashem - just as Hashem commanded [Moshe],' appears eighteen times in the parshah. The Ba'al HaTurim explains that these eighteen statements correspond to the eighteen blessings that we say three times a day in Shemoneh Esrei. However, when the pasuk writes, 'k'chol asher tzivah Hashem es Moshe ken asu - all that Hashem commanded of Moshe, they [Bnei Yisrael] fulfilled,' adding the words 'they fulfilled,' this corresponds to the 'birkas ha'minim,' the blessing in Shemoneh Esrei that begins with the word 'v'lamalshinim' and was instituted to oppose the heretics and those who don't believe in the validity of the Torah."

R' Yoel turned to the man and asked, "Why do you think each blessing corresponds to the words 'ka'asher tzivah Hashem,' while the expression corresponding to the downfall of heretics is 'kein asu' - in the plural?"

“We see from here that for all other needs - the majority of the blessings of Shemoneh Esrei are the middle thirteen ‘needs’ - it is sufficient to involve only Moshe, the leader of the generation. However, when it comes to countering the ‘minim’ - the non-believers and those who wish to oppose the ways of the Torah, we say ‘ken asu,’ all must be involved!”

COMPLETING THE MISSION

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“All the work of the Mishkan, the Tent of Meeting, was completed, and Bnei Yisrael did like all that Hashem had commanded Moshe, so did they do.” (39:32)

Once the work of fashioning all the components of the Tabernacle was completed, the Tabernacle could be assembled and begin fulfilling its function - the revelation of G-d’s presence. This process is indeed the subject of the remainder of this parashah.

Similarly, this verse summarizes the essence of our work during exile - to complete the steps necessary for the rebuilding of the holy Temple in order that G-d’s presence, through it, be revealed in the world. By fulfilling G-d’s commandments, studying His Torah, and refining the world through prayer and good deeds, we complete the work that humanity in general and the Jewish people in particular have been doing since the Temple was destroyed, and on an even more cosmic scale, since the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. (Tanya, chapter 37, 46b)

All of us have a role to play in restoring the world to its original perfection. By utilizing the remaining moments of exile to achieve these goals, we will complete “all the work of the Tabernacle,” and usher in the final and ultimate Redemption. (Sichot Kodesh 5736, vol. 1, pp. 552-553) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

THE NEED FOR A MENTOR

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“They brought the Tabernacle to Moshe with the Tent and all its vessels...” (39:33)

The people knew that Moshe had to erect the Tabernacle, even though they had done all the work of constructing and preparing its components themselves.

The same applies to the inner, spiritual Tabernacle that we are to construct within ourselves. We must do all we can on our own to form and prepare all its parts, but after that we must enlist the aid of our “Moshe” - the mentor who teaches us the Torah and shows us how to live according to it - whose task it is to connect us with G-d. Then we can be assured that all the pieces of our inner Tabernacle will unite seamlessly to perform their function in the fullest way. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 11, p. 172) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

POWER OF ATTRACTION

Rebbe Nachman

“They brought the Tabernacle to Moshe with the Tent and all its vessels...” (39:33)

Mishkan (משכן, Tabernacle) is similar to Moshekh (מושך, draw or attract). The Tabernacle drew people to G-d.

This is similar to the gravitational pull of the earth. One who is like the earth - i.e., a tzaddik such as Moshe, who was extremely humble - has this power of attraction as well. Therefore, only Moshe could erect the Tabernacle. (See Likutey Moharan I, 70)

ALWAYS PREPARED TO HELP

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“[The people presented] the Ark of Testimony and its rods [to Moshe].” (39:35)

The rods had to remain attached to the Ark even after it was placed in the Holy of Holies (Shemos 25:15). One reason for this is because it might be necessary at some point to take the Ark out of the Tabernacle hurriedly. If there were no permanently attached rods, there might not be time to check if the available rods were strong enough to bear the Ark’s weight. Permanently installed rods preclude this concern. (Sefer HaChinuch 96)

The Ark housed the tablets, which represent the Torah. When we immerse ourselves in the study of the Torah, we have figuratively “entered the Ark.” We might think that while we are studying the Torah, we must focus on it entirely, totally detached from any other concerns - particularly the spiritual or material needs of others.

The message of the permanent rods is that an Ark must always be ready to travel. Even when we are in the Holy of Holies, the holiest place in the world, we must always be ready to quickly bring the Torah wherever its inspiration and instruction are needed. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 16, p. 334) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

IGNITING THE SOUL

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“The pure Menorah with its lamps - the lamps in due order - all its utensils, and the oil for illumination.” (39:37)

Although the priests were the ones who usually lit the Menorah, laymen were allowed to light it, as well (see Yoma 24b). This teaches us that it is not only religious leaders who must ignite the human “Menorah’s” - our souls and the souls of others. Each one of us is responsible to seek out people whose souls are not yet aflame with the light of holiness and Divine love, and to ignite them.

Nevertheless, only the priests were allowed to prepare the lamps - to fill them with oil and place the wicks in them. This teaches us that we must indeed look to the religious leaders - those who have dedicated their lives to

studying G-d's Torah and understanding His will (Mishneh Torah, Shemittah v'Yovel 13:13) - to determine the methods that we can use to inspire ourselves and to inspire others. Once the "priest" has given us the tools to inspire ourselves and others, it becomes our privilege and duty to do so. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 2, pp. 314-317) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

CONSTRUCTIVE WORK

Reb Noson of Breslov

"Moshe saw the entire work. Behold! They had done it exactly as G-d had commanded. Moshe blessed them." (39:43)

What blessing did he give them? "Let the Pleasantness of G-d our Lord rest upon us, [let] the works of our hands be established, establish the works of our hands." (Tehillim 90:17). (Rashi)

The double reference to "our hands" indicates a blessing for our work and livelihood, together with a request that the building of the Tabernacle be blessed.

Work and the building of the Tabernacle are synonymous. As long as a person recalls G-d when he works for a living, his labors are tantamount to the work of building the Tabernacle! (Likutey Halakhot VII, p. 44a)

JOINING THE RANKS

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"[G-d told Moshe,] 'You must bring Aharon and his "sons to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.'" (40:12)

In order to install Aharon and his sons as priests, G-d instructed Moshe to draw them to himself, because Moshe had already served as a priest and was therefore able to endow them with that spiritual power.

So too, in every generation, G-d commissions the spiritual leaders of the generation to gather to themselves those who have committed themselves to follow their guidance. The leaders then grant their followers some of their own strengths so these followers can serve the spiritual needs of the rest of humanity.

Although only some of us are members of the priestly family - descendants of Aharon - all of us can choose to become "spiritual priests" by dedicating ourselves to the mission outlined for us by the spiritual leaders of our generation. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 6, pp. 174-177) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

BLESSED EFFORTS

Imrei Shefer

"Moshe saw the entire work. Behold! They had done it exactly as G-d had commanded. Moshe blessed them." (39:43)

Moshe blessed them, saying, "May it be His will that the Divine Presence rests upon the work of your hands." (Rashi)

A blessing cannot rest on an empty vessel. This is true in one's mundane life as well as one's spiritual service. A person is expected to act and not just sit with folded hands, for only then will he merit Divine assistance.

This is what Moshe meant in his benediction: When you expend genuine effort, Hashem's blessing will rest upon your endeavors.

SHARING THEIR JOY

Meshech Chochmah

"And anoint them [Aharon's sons] just as you anointed their father" (40:15)

When Moshe Rabbeinu was told to anoint his brother Aharon, he was able to do it with a complete heart. Moshe, the younger brother, was the leader of the people, and he was happy that his older brother was the kohen gadol.

However, with regard to Aharon's sons, the situation was quite different. Since Moshe's own sons were not destined to succeed him as leaders, when it came to anointing his brother's sons, it was only natural for Moshe to feel a twinge of envy. (According to the Midrash, Moshe asked G-d to pass on his own qualities to his children, but G-d had refused Moshe's request.)

Therefore, the Almighty told Moshe to anoint Aharon's sons "ka'asher mashachta es avihem - just as you anointed their father." Moshe was commanded to anoint them with the same complete joy with which he anointed their father, and he complied fully and wholeheartedly.

G-DLINESS EVERYWHERE

Reb Noson of Breslov

"In the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, the Tabernacle was erected." (40:17)

Wherever the Tabernacle was erected, that place acquired all the sanctity of the Tabernacle itself. But the moment the Tabernacle was dismantled, the place it had occupied possessed no sanctity at all. Where did the sanctity disappear to?

The Tabernacle was the vehicle for revealing G-dliness. G-dliness is everywhere and can be found in every single thing and place. But G-dliness is revealed only when a person looks for it and seeks it out.

The Tabernacle corresponds to the level of "Ayeh? - Where is the place of His glory?" (Mussaf Kedushah). In every place that a person finds G-d, that is where he erects his tabernacle, for there G-dliness is revealed (Likutey Halakhot VII, p. 51a)

The Tabernacle was erected by itself. (Rashi on Shemos 39:33)

Because the people contributed to the Tabernacle of their own free will, they aroused Divine Favor and G-d built the Tabernacle for them. Hence, Rashi says that the Tabernacle was built "by itself."

So too, one who gives generously to charity invokes the special blessing that his work and livelihood will be "done" by G-d Himself. (Likutei Halakhot III, p. 3a)

FEELING THEIR PAIN

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"Moshe erected the Mishkan..." (40:18)

The Medrash Tanchuma tells us that Moshe was greatly troubled over the fact that he had no role in the actual construction of the Mishkan. Hashem saw Moshe's despair and hid the secret of how to build the Mishkan from Klal Yisrael, so that Moshe would have to build it. Bnei Yisrael tried to construct it, and they couldn't. They asked the Zekeinim (the Elders) to try, but they, too, failed. They then turned to Betzalel and Oholiav to put it up, but they were just as unsuccessful. The people became anguished from witnessing all these failures. Seeing that no one was worthy of being able to construct the Mishkan, they turned to Moshe, who completed the construction.

This would seemingly cause him great happiness. Such an honor should elate Moshe, yet the medrash tells us that even Moshe felt anguish. Where was the simchah that should have accompanied the realization of being awarded the distinction of assembling the holy Sanctuary? How could Moshe feel sadness at this time, and what caused his anguish?

R' Henach Leibowitz zt'l answers that Moshe's personal happiness and joy was totally eclipsed by seeing the anguish and frustration of Bnei Yisrael. His nation's feelings were his own. His emotions were in tune with theirs. Such is the selflessness necessary in a leader. A leader must feel completely at one with his people, to the extent that his own gains seem insignificant in the face of their troubles. His happiness must be relinquished for their sadness. Only then can a nation love, respect, and obey such a devoted leader. Klal Yisrael was in pain; not only was it inappropriate, but it was impossible for Moshe to feel happiness for his personal accomplishments.

LEAVE NO MAN BEHIND

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"[Moshe] burned an incense offering on [the Inner Altar], as G-d had commanded him." (40:27)

One of the ingredients of the incense was galbanum. Because of its foul smell, this herb alludes to the wrongdoers of our people. The fact that galbanum was an essential component of the incense teaches us that all

Jews are an essential part of the Jewish nation, even if their behavior is sometimes inappropriate.

We must therefore never exclude one of our fellow Jews from the community, even if there are aspects of their behavior that would seem to justify this. In fact, our sages teach us that any public prayer or fast from which sinners are intentionally excluded will not be effective! This is because, by virtue of their Divine souls, every Jew possesses inestimable worth and is in fact full of good deeds. Each of our unique personalities plays a crucial role in the destiny of the Jewish people and the world in general. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 21, pp. 179) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

OUR INNER MOSHE

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"[Moshe] set up the Courtyard." (40:33)

Although the people fashioned the components of the Tabernacle, it was Moses who actually erected it (Shemos 40:2).

Similarly, with regard to the spiritual Tabernacle that we each build for G-d out of our own lives, it is our inner Moses that actually erects it. Our inner Moses is our innate capacity to know G-d directly, despite the limitations of our human intellect. (Tanya, chapter 42)

It is only by tapping this aspect of our souls and coming to know G-d in this way that we can construct a "sanctuary" for Him - a realm within our consciousness that we can enter whenever we need to renew our awareness of Him and our oneness with Him. (Reshimot 107) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

CHOOSING THE OPTIMAL PATH

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"Moshe was unable to enter the Tent of the Meeting because the cloud rested on it." (40:35)

Rashi comments as follows:

"Moshe was not able to come into the Ohel Moed (Tent of Meeting). A different pasuk, however, states: 'And when Moshe would come to the Ohel Moed' (Bamidbar 7:89). A third pasuk came and resolved (the contradiction) between them: 'For the cloud rested upon it.' Now you can say, as long as the cloud was on it (the Mishkan), Moshe could not enter. When the cloud departed, Moshe could enter and speak with Him."

We find a similar occurrence at Har Sinai, where a dense cloud initially prevented Moshe from approaching the mountain. How was Moshe able to reach Har Sinai? The Gemara (Yoma 4b) cites two differing opinions: Rav Eliezer says that Hashem took Moshe and actually pulled him through the clouds. According to Rav Yishmael, Hashem cleared a path through the cloud and Moshe was able to enter.

HAFTORAH

From this pasuk, observes R' Moshe Feinstein zt'l (Darash Moshe II), one may learn an incredible insight into the manner in which a person confronts adversity.

Often, a person feels that he cannot move forward because a dark cloud hangs over him. He feels paralyzed and unable to get on with his life. One should know, however, that nothing can stop him!

Sometimes one can forge a path through the cloud, navigating through his troubles without becoming embroiled in them. This is the preferable course, for who knows how he will emerge if he gets caught up in a struggle? And even if he cannot clear a path for himself, he need not despair. He should simply look for a path that has no obstacles, just as Moshe waited for the cloud to depart.

However, if he can neither clear a path through the cloud nor find another one, he should still soldier forward with a firm conviction that Hashem will take him by the hand and pull him through, just as He did for Moshe.

STATIONS IN THE JOURNEY

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"For the cloud of G-d was above the Tabernacle by day, and fire would be there by night, visible to the entire House of Israel, at all their journeys." (40:38)

The people never knew in advance how long they were going to stay at any of their stations. Nevertheless, they were required to set up the Tabernacle in its entirety at each encampment, following G-d's instructions to keep the Tabernacle functioning at all times (see Bamidbar 9:15-23). Thus, despite their inherent temporary nature, each station had a "permanent" nature, as well.

Nonetheless, the Torah here calls the stations "journeys" rather than "stations" or "encampments." This is not in order to emphasize the temporary nature of each encampment, but to indicate that the intrinsic value of each encampment was that it constituted a preparation for the journey that would follow - indeed, for all the journeys that would ensue until the people would reach their final destination.

The same applies to all our stations in life - geographical, emotional, and spiritual - as well as those of our people throughout history. Each station is an essential step in a journey. Just as every step in our life is a necessary step in making us who we aspire to become, every step in our exile is a necessary step toward the ultimate Redemption, without which the future revelations of Divinity would not be able to occur. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 6, pp. 235-239) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

THE GREATER DEED

Rabbi Alexander Zusia Friedman

"And Shlomo brought in the things that Dovid, his father, had dedicated, the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, and put them in the treasuries of G-d's house." (Melachim I 7:51)

Dovid had left an enormous amount of silver and gold for the building of the Beis HaMikdash. But Shlomo used only his own gold and silver and had the treasures left by his father put into the Beis HaMikdash's treasuries. Why did he do this?

Because he felt that it would not befitting to use Dovid's gold and silver for the building of the Beis HaMikdash. During Dovid's reign the country had suffered famine for three years, but Dovid - instead of using the gold and silver to bring relief to his hungry people - kept it for the Beis HaMikdash's construction. This is why Shlomo refused to use it but put it aside instead.

This shows that to give food to the hungry is considered more important than to build the Beis HaMikdash.

HASHEM IS WITH US

Rabbi Eliezer Chrysler

"And it was when the Kohanim left the Kodesh... the Cloud covered the House of Hashem and the Kohanim were unable to stand to serve... then Shlomo said, 'G-d said that He would dwell in the thick Cloud.'" (Melachim I 8:10-12)

After Shlomo had concluded the building of the Beis HaMikdash, he saw in a prophecy that the building would be destroyed, a thick cloud would cover the location where it had stood and the Kohanim will be denied access to it.

He took comfort however, in Hashem's promise that He would never forsake His people, and that He would be with them in that thick cloud, to watch over them when times were tough.

A similar hint appears in Parshas Yisro (20:21), where the Torah writes "And Moshe approached the thick Cloud where G-d was." This too, comes to hint that even in the worst times of trouble, G-d is there, because "Hashem will not forsake His people" - come what may! (Adapted from the Ma'ayanah shel Torah, quoting the Lubliner Rav.)

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