

# The Narrow Bridge

## גשר צר מאוד

### PARSHA PERSPECTIVES

#### Short Divrei Torah on Parshas Vayakhel

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לע'נ פּעסל בת ישראל מנחם / לזכות חילינו

#### **GATHERING IN UNITY**

##### 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, to do them...'" (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.

#### **ACTIVE UNITY**

##### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*"And Moshe assembled the entire congregation of the Children of Israel and said to them, 'These are the words that Hashem has commanded, to do them...'" (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 Shmuel 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.

#### **BOUND TO ALL**

##### Rebbe Nachman

*"And Moshe assembled the entire congregation of the Children of Israel and said to them, 'These are the words that Hashem has commanded, to do them...'" (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)

#### **BUILT WITH UNITY**

##### Reb Noson of Breslov

*"And Moshe assembled the entire congregation of the Children of Israel and said to them, 'These are the words that Hashem has commanded, to do them...'" (35:1)*

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

#### **GLORIFIED FORGIVENESS**

##### Rebbe Nachman

*"And Moshe assembled the entire congregation of the Children of Israel and said to them, 'These are the words that Hashem has commanded, to do them...'" (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 Numen* in Yiddish). The forgiveness of sins causes G-d's Name to be glorified and revealed. (See Likutey Moharan II, 66:3)

## **HOLY WORK**

### **Reb Noson of Breslov**

*“And Moshe assembled the entire congregation of the Children of Israel and said to them, ‘These are the words that Hashem has commanded, to do them...’” (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.

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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 Halachot I, p. 392-197a)

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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 Halachot I, p. 251a)

## **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.

## **HOLY ENJOYMENT**

### **Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev**

*“For a period of six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy to you, a day of complete rest for Hashem...” (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 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**

*“For a period of six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy to you, a day of complete rest for Hashem...” (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 Wisniewsky

## **REVEALING HIS PRESENCE**

### **Reb Noson of Breslov**

*“For a period of six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy to you, a day of complete rest for Hashem...” (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.

## **CHARITABLE BLESSINGS**

### **Rebbe Nachman**

*“For a period of six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy to you, a day of complete rest for Hashem...” (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)

## **THINKING OF OTHERS**

### **Rabbi Shlomo Ressler**

*“You shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings on the Shabbos day.” (35:3)*

Parashas Vayakhel tells of Moshe gathering the entire Jewish community and begins with instructions for not working on Shabbos (35:1-2). The very next *pasuk* strangely specifies that fire should not be kindled in dwellings on Shabbos and proceeds to the next topic (35:3). Why would the Torah single out only one type of work?

World events provide an interesting perspective that could help us understand this *pasuk*. When a virus spreads, sometimes the carriers themselves may not be symptomatic, yet they unwittingly spread the virus to others that may suffer. The same is true of fire - while it may not do damage to our property, there is a chance that it could spread beyond our control and hurt others. The Torah’s instructions specifically include the words “community” and “in dwellings,” possibly highlighting that our concern should be for our community just as much as it should be for ourselves.

This example isn’t just an extension of the commandment to keep Shabbos; it’s what the Torah uses to highlight the need to think of each other in every way.

## **FIERY GOSSIP**

### **Shelah HaKadosh**

*“You shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings 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.

## **ANGER-FREE SHABBOS**

### **Skoyler Rebbe**

*"You shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings 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.

## **LEVELS OF CHARITY**

### **Reb Baruch of Mezhibuz**

*"Take from yourselves a portion for Hashem, everyone who is generous of heart shall bring it, as the gift for Hashem: gold, and 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.

## **LASTING ENTHUSIASM**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"Take from yourselves a portion for Hashem, everyone who is generous of heart shall bring it, as the gift for Hashem: gold, and silver, and copper." (35:5)*

The Giving of the Torah at Mount 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 (Likutei Sichot, vol. 26, pp. 265-266) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

## **ASCENDING BARRIERS**

### **Rabbi Chaim Kramer**

*"Take from yourselves a portion for Hashem, everyone who is generous of heart shall bring it, as the gift for Hashem: gold, and silver, and copper." (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 Halachot VII, p. 130).

## **POWER OF ENTHUSIASM**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

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## **GIVING DAY AND NIGHT**

### **Rabbi Dovid Hoffman**

*“Take from yourselves a portion for Hashem, everyone who is generous of heart shall bring it, as the gift for Hashem: gold, and silver, and copper.” (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

## **GAINING GRACE**

### **Rabbi Aryeh Dachs**

*“Take from yourselves a portion for Hashem, everyone who is generous of heart shall bring it, as the gift for Hashem: gold, and silver, and copper.” (35:5)*

With credit to my good friend, Rabbi Yisrael Kahn, I had the good fortune to read a beautiful excerpt from Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch’s commentary on Chumash. Rabbi Hirsch notes that Parashas Vayakhel begins with the instruction to build the *Mishkan*. The placement of this instruction is not incidental.

We find this instruction at the heels of the drama of the Golden Calf. Israel had egregiously sinned against G-d and experienced the tumultuous repercussions that followed. They felt the pain of being banished and completely rejected by G-d. They also experienced the joy of being forgiven and reinstated to their former glory.

In the words of Rav Hirsch, “They had tasted every taste of our relation to G-d.” Rav Hirsch explains that precisely now was when they were instructed to begin building the *Mishkan*. The placement imparts the ideal of the *Mishkan*. The *Mishkan* is a place for sinners to rebound. It represents the resounding principle at the core of our faith: “G-d’s grace can always be regained.”

Rav Hirsch notes one more lesson. The grace of G-d was reached after the greatest national crime; and this “grace” was reached without a Temple and without sacrifices. The *Mishkan* represents the return of Israel to their glory and underscores the view that the grace of G-d is not garnered by Temple rituals.

The core of our service is our inner commitment and desire. The Temple and the offerings serve as a means to facilitate those desires, but our internal service can never be replaced by the Temple. As the prophet Yeshayah relayed (Yeshayah 1:11), Hashem told the Jewish People, “*Lamah li rov zivchachem* - Of what use are your many sacrifices to Me?” For without a real connection, the offerings were useless.

## **DEDICATING OUR DESIRES**

### **Yaroslover Rebbe**

*“Take from yourselves a portion for Hashem, everyone who is generous of heart shall bring it, as the gift for Hashem: gold, and silver, and copper.” (35:5)*

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

## **COMPELLED TO CONNECT**

### **Rabbi Aryeh Dachs**

*“Take from yourselves a portion for Hashem, everyone who is generous of heart shall bring it, as the gift for Hashem: gold, and silver, and copper.” (35:5)*

The Ramban explains that although the nation of Israel was commanded earlier in Parashas Terumah to build the *Mishkan*, the sin of the *eigel*, the Golden Calf, caused the Divine Presence to leave the Jewish People.

The great leader Moshe Rabbeinu ascended on high to plead on behalf of the Jewish People, and with *teshuvah* and prayer the Jewish People were eventually pardoned. On Yom Kippur, Moshe Rabbeinu descended from his mission on Sinai and was met by a renewed nation, restored once again to their glory. The very next day he wasted no time and gathered the entire nation of Israel to reissue the command to build the *Mishkan*.

The extraordinary command symbolized the great unbreakable bond between G-d and His nation. The nation of Israel had regained the right to host the *Shechinah* - the presence of the Divine. This is the scene that opens the *parshiyos* of Vayakhel and Pekudei.

Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, the Steipler Gaon, in his sefer *Birkas Peretz*, notes an interesting *halachic* idea brought to light by this command to build the *Mishkan*. The verse (Shemos 35:5) states, “Those with generous hearts (*kol nediv libo*) shall bring their dedications [for the *Mishkan*]...” This verse implies that the command to bring dedications was limited to those with generous hearts, i.e. those who wanted to bring gifts.

*Halachically* speaking, if one did not feel compelled to bring a dedication for the *Mishkan*, there would be no *mitzvah* or obligation to donate. On the flipside, if one felt compelled to donate, they would then be Biblically obligated to give. Their *halachic* obligation stemmed from the feeling in their heart.

The Steipler Gaon brings other examples of this *halachic* anomaly as well (including the laws of *nazir* and *Korban Nedavah*). The question posed by the Steipler is: if giving a gift for the *Mishkan* is a necessary component in our religious experience, why not have a blanket command for all Jews, whether they feel like giving, or not? If it is not necessary, why have the command and the obligation altogether? Surely the Jews could raise the material for the *Mishkan* without a specific *halachic* imperative.

He answers that this obligation reveals a fundamental aspect in our *avodas Hashem*, in our spiritual pursuit to connect to G-d.

We are taught by this law that an essential component in our *avodas Hashem* is to feel compelled to connect with Hashem. To illustrate, we can envy *baalei teshuvah* and converts, who on their own felt a deep and real desire to connect to Hashem and acted on that commitment. This attitude is more than just admirable; it is essential to a robust religious experience.

Perhaps, this lesson brought to light by the Steipler Gaon can inspire us to commit to connecting to Hashem without the external stimuli. We can learn to allow our own hearts to drive us to connect. We can begin fulfilling this necessary component in our *avodas Hashem*. Maybe this inner drive is what we collectively need to bring the Divine Presence back to the nation of Israel.

## QUICK TO ACTION

### HaDerash VeHalyun

*“Every wise-hearted person among you shall 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.

## KEEP IT SIMPLE

### Pardes Yosef / Yid HaKadosh

*“Every wise-hearted person among you shall 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.

## OUTSIDE THE BOX

### Rabbi Ari Ciment

*“The copper Altar, and its grating of copper, its staves, and all its vessels, the laver and its pedestal.” (35:16)*

Do not scorn any man, and do not discount anything (ואל דבר תהי מפליג לכל דבר), for there is no man who has not his hour, and no thing that has not its place. (Avos 4:3)

מפליג is an unusual word to use in this sentence, but it really connotes separation (e.g., דור הפלגה). The meaning is thus: Do not separate out or “אֶבֶן” things in a corner, as even things deemed obsolete or inappropriate can become valuable elsewhere.

Where in our *parashah* do we learn this lesson?

Perhaps a key *pasuk* that teaches this enormous lesson is: “The copper Altar, and its grating of copper, its staves, and all its vessels, the laver and its base.” (Shemos 35:16)

We learn in this week’s *parashah* that the Laver was built of copper במראת הצבאת אשר צבאו - from the mirrors of the women. Meanwhile, the Copper Altar was partially adorned by fire-pans of the evil Korach sympathizers, which they used to bring an incense-offering.

Let’s analyze. Rashi explains that Moshe was hesitant to use the mirrors at first because they inherently represented the *yetzer hara*, lust and desire. But G-d explained that it was that very lust that ensured Jewish procreation and survival and so the mirrors “had their place” within the makeup of the Laver.

Conversely, the Korach rebels’ pans were inherently holy, but the intention was impure. G-d requested that those holy pans, although associated with evil-doers, remain holy and be an essential part of the Altar. To summarize, sometimes something inherently of dubious spirituality (e.g., the mirrors) can metamorphasize into something holy and great, while something inherently holy (e.g., the fire pans), if degraded by wrong intent or use, can nevertheless retain (or revert to) their holy potential.

It may not be a coincidence that both the Copper Altar and Laver are both made from copper (as opposed to gold and silver), because copper is essential to all living organisms as a trace dietary mineral; we need it to survive! An element inculcated in each of us is this lesson that everything and anything can be rehabilitated. This is an essential lesson of our survival.

Takeaway Messages: Don't be a מפליג and think that things are intractably useless, because even a used mirror or an evil-doer's fire-pan can make it into the holiest of places! This copper lesson applies to inanimate objects but is an element that must be inculcated or "digested" as an essential lesson in all of us humans. The lesson of the Copper Altar and the Laver is that we must view everything as essential and mutable - don't box things in a corner: ואל תהי מפליג לכל דבר!

## EAGER TO PLEASE

### Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

*"And the entire congregation of Children of Israel left Moshe's presence." (35:20)*

This is the only place where the Torah makes a point of saying that the people left Moshe's presence after being given the commandment of donating materials for the *Mishkan*. If so, we may presume that there is some special reason why the Torah relates this fact here and may legitimately ask what it is.

We submit, therefore, that the Torah intends to teach us a lesson about the proper attitude in performing mitzvos: Just as the people went immediately to fulfill the *mitzvah* they had just been given without waiting to see if Moshe planned to teach them anything further, we too should hasten to perform any *mitzvah* that presents itself to us.

Furthermore, it is apparent that there was no great reason for haste at that point, since the work on the *Mishkan* was completed by the twenty-fifth of Kislev and lay unassembled for three months until the week before Rosh Chodesh Nissan. But this was irrelevant from the point of view of the people at that time; they had a *mitzvah* to do, and their responsibility was simply to do it as quickly as possible. How much more so must we hurry to do the many mitzvos we are given in which time is a factor.

## CLEARLY IMPACTED

### Rav Elya Lopian

*"And the entire congregation of Children of Israel left Moshe's presence." (35:20)*

When someone seriously studies Torah in a yeshiva, it should be noticeable from the way he behaves that he has been studying Torah.

This is learned from the *pasuk* stating, "The entire congregation of *Bnei Yisrael* went out from the presence of Moshe" - it was clear and obvious from the elevated manner in which the people behaved, that they had just come from Moshe.

It should be noticeable from one's deeds and traits when he has just been in a spiritual environment.

## DON'T DELAY

### Rabbi Moshe Schochet

*"And the entire congregation of Children of Israel 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.

## 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 for the work of the Tent of Meeting, for all its labor and for the garments of the holy." (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” (Shavuos 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; and everyone whose spirit motivated him brought the donation of Hashem for the work of the Tent of Meeting, for all its labor and for the garments of the holy.” (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 homed 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.

## **DOING OUR PART**

### **Rabbi Aryeh Dachs**

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

The 18th-century English poet, William Wordsworth (real name!) is quoted as saying, “To begin, begin.” New beginnings are daunting. We can feel insufficiently prepared or incapable and cannot imagine that our new venture will be met with success. The Ramban beautifully highlights the courage and faith of the Jewish People in Parashas Vayakhel, as they proclaimed, “I am ready!” when called to the task to construct the *Mishkan*.

When the verse (Shemos 35:21) refers to the craftsmen of the *Mishkan*, it refers to them as “*kol ish asher nesa’o libo* - each man who has lifted his heart.” This particular description applies exclusively to the craftsmen.



## **MAN OF KINDNESS**

### **Rabbi Moshe Kormornick**

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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.

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In contrast, the term used for those who donated the material for the *Mishkan* are referred to as those with a “*nediv lev*” (Shemos 35:5), a magnanimous heart.

Having a magnanimous heart is certainly a virtue, yet why does the Torah seem to imply that those who worked on the *Mishkan* and volunteered their skills possess a unique status?

The Ramban explains that the *Mishkan* required the most sophisticated craftsmanship, which could only be done with the delicate hands of skilled artists. The Jews, at the time of the building of the *Mishkan*, had been recently freed, after being enslaved for generations. In Egypt, they had been forced to do backbreaking work. They had had no training or time to develop the skills needed to create the intricate crocheting and metallurgy necessary to build the *Mishkan*. However, explains the Ramban, when the Jews heard the call for craftsmen to build the *Mishkan*, those with latent creative talents rose to the occasion and volunteered their services.

In spite of the fact that these people had no formal training or experience, they understood the pressing need and volunteered their efforts. In fact, according to the Ramban, the lifting of the hearts mentioned in the verse refers to the “raising of their heart in the service of G-d” (Divrei Hayamim II 17:6).

Perhaps the craftsmen were justifiably hesitant about the outcome of their efforts, yet they were ready to come before Moshe and declare, “I will do whatever you say.”

The Chovos HaLevavos likens man’s spiritual quest to planting. One puts a seed in the ground, tends to it, waters it, and makes sure it is in an environment where it can grow. Ultimately the growth and the transformation of the solid seed into a nourishing plant comes from G-d. After everything is set up for success, the farmer can only wait for the seed to sprout forth.

There is a supernatural element specific to our Divine work, our *avodas Hashem*. Although we may recognize that we have the ability to spiritually perform in our unique way, using our exclusive gifts and talents, we might have concerns as to the practicality of it.

One may desire to study Torah but does not know how to go about it or feels threatened by the sheer scope of the endeavor. One may desire to pray; he knows he can, but he cannot imagine how he can pray seriously. Like the seed in the ground, we do what we can, and the growth comes from above.

The craftsmen in the *Mishkan* were aware of their artistic ability, and they understood that there was a job that needed to be done. They showed up and said, “We are ready.” Subsequently, they were blessed with supernatural Divine assistance. This forged the path for all time. As we commit ourselves to improve in our Divine service, we too will be blessed with supernatural success.

## HEARTFELT CONTRIBUTIONS

### Rabbi Shmuel Rozovsky

*“And every man whose heart inspired him came; and everyone whose spirit motivated him brought the donation of Hashem for the work of the Tent of Meeting, for all its labor and for the garments of the holy.” (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!

## PRECIOUS PRESENTS

### Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

*“The men came along with the women; everyone who is generous of heart brought armband, and nose-ring, and finger-ring, and kumaz - all sorts of gold ornaments - every man who raised up an offering of gold to Hashem.” (35:22)*

Literally this verse says, “The men came *on* the women,” which Onkelos translates as, “The men brought [the donations] on the women,” suggesting that the men brought the women to the collection point adorned with their jewelry, which they removed there to donate to the *Mishkan*. But Rashi comments that the men came *with* the women.

We may say that they followed this procedure to emphasize that they were not giving something of little value to them. To the contrary, the gold and silver they gave was indeed dear to them, but the *Mishkan* was so much more precious that they were eager to give up their valuables for its sake.

This is why the women wore their jewelry until they finally had to part with it, in order to show that even though it was precious to them, they took even more pleasure in making a place for Hashem’s Presence to dwell among them.

Rashi offers another insight concerning the donation of the women’s jewelry. Lest we think that the women gave their jewelry only under coercion from their husbands, Rashi explains that the men came alongside the women. Thus, the donations came from the men and women equally, as the Torah relates below (verse 29), “Every man and woman whose heart motivated them to bring for all the work that Hashem had commanded to do, through Moshe - the Children of Israel brought a free-willed offering to Hashem.” It is highly unlikely that this verse is speaking only about widows, who would not have required their husbands’ consent to give their possessions; indeed, there may have been no widows among them at all. Instead, it must be referring to all the married women who donated jewelry with willing hearts, where the consent of both the husband and the wife was required for such a gift.

## SHARING OUR TALENTS

### Rabbi Jeremy Finn

*“And all the women whose hearts inspired them with wisdom spun the goat hair.” (35:26)*

When the Torah describes the preparations for the *Mishkan*, it emphasizes the wisdom of the women who spun the goat hair.

Rashi explains that the women did not spin the wool once it had been sheared off the goats’ backs but rather while it was still growing on the goat, which required great skill and wisdom. Only once it was spun on the goats’ backs was it cut and brought for use in the *Mishkan*.

Also, they prepared the *yerios*, the coverings for the *Mishkan*, even before they completed the poles that would be used to hold up these coverings.

Why did the women behave in this way?

Why did they spin the wool when it was still attached to the animal?

Why did they complete the coverings even though there were no poles finished on which to suspend them?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that there were different levels of sacrifices brought in the Temple, and a “live” sacrifice was higher than one brought from something that grew from the ground. (We see an early example of this when Hashem accepted the sacrifice of Hevel, which was livestock, but rejected the produce that Kayin offered.)

Therefore, the *yerios* that were spun while still attached to the animal were of a higher level than those spun after the wool had been sheared off the animals’ backs, because they were in essence coming from a live animal.

The women wanted to donate to the *Mishkan* something on the highest level, and so they spun the wool while it was still attached.

The Rebbe writes that from the actions of the women, we can learn two valuable lessons. First, when Hashem gives a person a particular skill or talent, he must know that it has been given to him to share with others and to use *l’shem shamayim* - in the service of Heaven to perfect himself and the entire world. Hashem did not instruct the women to spin the wool while it was still on the animals’ backs, something that would require of them a high degree of skill and wisdom. The women, who possessed this talent, understood without being told that they needed to use these skills to fashion something for the *Mishkan*. Whatever the skill, talent, or ability with which Hashem has blessed a person, it needs to be used to further a relationship with Him and to benefit others.

The second lesson is that we must avoid causing distress to others. Usually, when building a structure, the walls are constructed first, followed by the roof. With regard to the *Mishkan*, the roof, i.e., the *yerios*, was completed, and only then the poles that held up the coverings, i.e., the walls, were made.

This deviation from standard practice was intended to minimize the suffering of the animals. To have their wool spun while still attached was probably uncomfortable for them, and it no doubt caused them a certain amount of distress. Therefore, once the wool had been spun, it was immediately removed to spare the animals any unnecessary pain.

The message is that to avoid pain, we can suspend the standard order of doing things. What is primary is our concern for the welfare of others, not continuing as usual. (Shulchan Shabbos with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, p. 101)

## NEED FOR SPEED

### Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

*“The leaders brought the shoham stones and filling stones for the Ephod and the Choshen.” (35:27)*

As the nation transforms into a giving people, the materials needed to complete the *Mishkan* are so generously donated that Moshe must tell the people to stop contributing (36:6). The *Nesiim* (tribal leaders) commit to supplying whatever materials are not supplied by the children of Israel, but once everything has been donated for the *Mishkan*, the leaders have not contributed a thing. This subsequently prompts the *Nesiim* to contribute the *shoham* stones for the *ephod* and *choshen* before anyone else is given the opportunity (35:27). Generally, והנשיאים is the word used in the Torah to denote leaders, but here, when referenced, their name seems to be missing a *yud*, והנשאם. Is there a plausible explanation for this?

The offer of the *Nesiim* to supply all that was missing from the donations could have amounted to a more generous donation than that of anyone else. Rav Chaim Shmulevitz highlights Rashi’s assertion that however generous their proposal may have been, their underlying motivation for that offer stemmed from laziness. Their seemingly magnanimous offer to cover the balance of what was needed was simply a way to excuse them from donating initially.

Our mind has an uncanny ability to justify and rationalize our actions, to the point where we can sometimes fool ourselves into believing the justification. This inclination to rationalize poor decisions is the reason why we are urged to be *zerizim*, jumping at opportunities when they present themselves.

## RECOGNIZING INDIVIDUALITY

### Reb Noson of Breslov

*“The leaders brought the shoham stones and filling stones for the Ephod and the Choshen.” (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.

## ATTAINING WISDOM

### Meshech Chochmah

*“Moshe said to the Children of Israel, ‘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.

## 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)

## PROPER USAGE

### Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

*"Moshe said to the Children of Israel, 'See, Hashem has declared by name Betzalel the son of Uri, the son of Chur, from the tribe of Yehudah. He has filled him with G-dly spirit, with wisdom, with insight, and with knowledge, and with every craft.'" (35:30-31)*

Why did Moshe think the people would be able to see that Hashem had chosen Bezalel; and why should his appointment be any more visible than that of Aharon, concerning which there is no mention of seeing?

To understand this, we must be aware that anyone who has special talents, such as Bezalel's artistry, has to realize that Hashem gave him these talents only to use them to do His will, either on behalf of the Jewish people or directly to increase His honor in the world. The fact that the Torah does not explicitly obligate him to use them in this way is only because Hashem wishes him to have free will, but this is still the reason he was created with these gifts. If he fails to do what is expected of him, Heaven forbid, eventually he will be called to account for misusing his talents.

With this in mind, our verse becomes simple to understand. Moshe knew that the people could see with their eyes that Hashem had called upon Bezalel to construct the Mishkan from the very fact that he had been given all the talents and gifts necessary to do so - G-dly spirit, with wisdom, insight, and knowledge, and with every craft.

From this we learn that anyone to whom Hashem has granted gifts - be they in the realm of wisdom, strength, riches or possessions - has them only in order to do Hashem's will. Although we may see people who fail to use their assets for their intended purposes, this is only because the workings of free will allow them to misuse their gifts: Eventually the wealthy man will have to account to Hashem for how he used his wealth, whether for tzedakah and Torah institutions or for the increasingly technically advanced frivolities the world has to offer, and the person with intellectual talents will have to explain whether he fulfilled his potential for learning Torah and disseminating it or squandered it on diversions, however sophisticated and stimulating, and secular pursuits, or simply frittered it away through laziness.

## UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*"...to make artistic designs, to work with the gold, with the silver, and with the 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

*"Bezalel shall do - with Oholiav and every wise-hearted man within whom Hashem has put wisdom and understanding, to know, to do all the work for the labor of the Sanctuary - of all that Hashem had commanded." (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 for Bezalel and for Oholiav, and for every wise-hearted man within whose heart Hashem had put wisdom, everyone whose heart inspired him, to approach the work, to do it." (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.

## HOLINESS EVERYWHERE

### Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

*"Moshe commanded, and they proclaimed in the camp, saying, 'Man and woman shall not do more work toward the portion of the Sanctuary!' And the nation was held back from bringing." (36:6)*

On the surface there seems to be no reason why Moshe should have stopped the people from bringing donations for the *Mishkan*; although enough materials had been gathered for its construction, it is still a *mitzvah* to contribute to the upkeep of holy institutions even where there is no immediate need (cf. Beitza 36b).

We suggest, however, that Moshe's decree was in the nature of an ad hoc ruling in response to the needs of the moment, since there is a prohibition against giving away all of one's possessions for holy purposes (cf. Arachin 28a), and in fact more than enough materials had already been received for the *Mishkan*.

Furthermore, Moshe knew that even the property the people kept over for themselves could be used in Hashem's service; indeed, even material pleasures we experience can be a means of serving Hashem, as long as we keep in mind that all pleasures He gives us are meant not just for our enjoyment but also to help us adorn ourselves to perform His mitzvos in a way that does honor to His Name.

Thus, the wise Shlomo HaMelech wrote (Mishlei 16:4), "Hashem has done everything for His sake" - everything in the world can be used to do Hashem's will, not just by building institutions or engaging in other activities that serve Him directly, but also by directing all of our everyday activities and consecrating even every day and commonplace objects to His service.

## JOYOUS GENEROSITY

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*"The work was sufficient 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 Wisnefsky

## **SINCERE JOY**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"The work was sufficient for all the work that had to be done, and there was a surplus." (36:7)*

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## **ESSENTIAL ENTHUSIASM**

### **Rabbi Shlomo Ressler**

*"The work was sufficient for all the work that had to be done, and there was a surplus." (36:7)*

After the disappointing event of the Golden Calf, Parashas Vayakhel recounts some of the Jews' positive traits, including their eagerness to contribute materials needed to erect the *Mishkan*.

The *pasuk* states that "the work was enough for the work that was needed, and there was extra" (36:7). Rashi explains that the first "work" refers to the act of bringing the materials to the craftsmen, but if that's what the Torah meant, why not be clear about it? Also, if they were asked to stop bringing what was needed, why would there also be extra?

The Ohr HaChaim answers both questions by suggesting that G-d was so pleased with the people's eagerness to contribute that He found a way to make use of the excess donated, such that no one's contributions were wasted. G-d appreciated the effort of the people's delivery of the materials as much as the donation of the materials themselves.

This could be why the *pasuk* uses the same word to convey that the effort and eagerness of the people's bringing the material was as important as the material itself.

What's clear is that we don't need to be experts in what we do - energy and enthusiasm is fundamental in how we interact with G-d as well as with each other.

## **INHERENT LOVE**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"The wise-hearted among those doing the work made the Tabernacle-spread: ten panels of twisted linen, and turquoise wool, and purple wool, and scarlet wool; they made them, the work of an artist - cherubim." (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 Wisnefsky

## **UNIQUELY UNITED**

### **Rabbi Shlomo Ressler**

*"And he made fifty golden hooks, and attached the panels to one another with the hooks; so the Mishkan became one." (36:13)*

The Torah meticulously describes the building of the *Mishkan* ceiling: It is crafted from ten individual curtains, the curtains are assembled into two sets of five curtains, corresponding blue woolen loops are made along the edges of the sets, and the sets are fastened together by fifty golden clasps (36:8-11). The *pasuk* details how one curtain is attached to one another: "And he made fifty golden clasps, and he fastened the curtains to one another with the clasps; so the *Mishkan* became one" (36:13). In the span of six *pesukim*, the Torah uses the word "one" fourteen times to describe distinct parts that form one whole structure. Why is there such a focus on each element, particularly when they will ultimately be combined into one unit?

Rabbi Dr. Yoni Grossman highlights the fact that while the two segments of the five-panel ceiling were joined by golden clasps, the drapes hanging down from the clasps created a separation between the section that housed the utensils and the *Kodesh HaKodashim* (Holy of Holies) that housed the *Aron*. While the *Mishkan* was made up of individual curtains, and its sections were separated from one another, each with its distinct uses, the overall structure emerged with one overarching purpose.

Just like the *Mishkan* doesn't function without each individual piece, and just like each curtain and each room is different, we function at our best when we come together as one people, each with unique goals and timelines, but all with that same unity of purpose.

## **PUTTING OTHERS FIRST**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"He made the 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

## **SKILLFUL CONTRIBUTIONS**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"He made the 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

## **INSPIRING LINEAGE**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"And Betzalel made the Ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits its length, one and a half cubits its width, and one and a half cubits its height." (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 Wisniewsky

## **A PLACE FOR ALL**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"And Betzalel made the Ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits its length, one and a half cubits its width, and one and a half cubits its height." (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 Wisniewsky

## **NEED FOR UNITY**

### **Rabbi Shlomo Ressler**

*"One cherub from this end and one cherub from this end; from the lid did he make the cherubim, from its two ends." (37:8)*

The Torah describes the two *Keruvim* on either end of the *Aron* cover as being made from one piece of gold facing each other (37:8). The word used to characterize each end, קצוות, is spelled with an extra *vav* that is not typically there. What is the significance of adding a letter to the word קצוות?

Rav Hirsch explains that the extra *vav* symbolizes the plurality of the *Keruvim*. Just like the *Luchos* serve as one cohesive list of commandments, the two *Keruvim* also unite to form one entity. The *Keruvim* illustrate that although they seem different and on opposing ends, they are formed from just one piece of gold and join together toward their common goal. Perhaps it's no coincidence that the duality of its ends is what unites the *Keruvim*, as they symbolically reach for each other.

So, too, are we as a people: our differences should unite us, and just as G-d and others see the Jewish people as one indivisible unit, we, too, should unify as a people and act as one.

## **SOURCE OF LIGHT**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"He made the Menorah of pure gold, beaten out did he make the Menorah..." (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 Wisniewsky

## **SUPPORTING OTHERS**

### **Rabbi Shlomo Ressler**

*"Their knobs and branches were of it; all of it a single beaten-out piece of pure gold." (37:22)*

The Torah tells us that the knobs and the branches of the *Menorah* should all be made from one piece of gold (37:22). However, Rav Hirsch points out that the word "וקנתם" (and their stems) makes it sound as if the stems belong to the knobs (one would expect the non-possessive word "קניה" here) when the stems should belong to the *Menorah* itself. Why does the description of the crafting of the *Menorah* seem to contain this anomaly?

Rav Hirsch suggests that the *Menorah* has two broader branches, each with its own stems. The knobs were supported by stems, which were held together by a broader branch; there was a sound structure to help them stay in place.

The *Menorah* is symbolic of an emotional support system in which the branches support the stems, which literally support the knobs. This serves as a model for making everyone in our lives feel supported, literally and figuratively, so that they can shine their light onto the world.

## **EMBRACING THE SINNER**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"He made the anointing oil, holy; and the incense spices, pure; the work of a spice-blender." (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**

*"He inserted the staves into the rings on the sides of the Mizbeach with which to carry it; hollow of panels, did he make it." (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 Wisnefsky

### **OPEN DOOR POLICY**

#### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"The screen of the gate of the Courtyard, the work of an embroiderer, of turquoise wool, and purple wool, and scarlet wool, and twisted linen; twenty amos long and the height, in width, five amos, like the curtains 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-d's true home. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 16, pp. 443-448)

### **COMPLETING THE MISSION**

#### **Rabbi Dovid Hoffman**

*"All the pegs of the Mishkan and of the Courtyard all around, 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.” (I 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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