The Narrow Bridge

גשר צר מאוד

PARSHA PERSPECTIVES

Short Divrei Torah on Parshas Pekudei

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לע'נ פעסל בת ישראל מנחם / לזכות חילינו

DRAWING NEAR

Rebbe Nachman

"These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony, which were counted at the word of Moshe. The work of the Leviim was under the direction of Itamar son of Aharon the Kohen." (38:21)

Mishkan (משכן, Tabernacle) is related to *Mashkon* (משכן, 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 I, 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 Wisnefsky

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 (Taanis 8b), "Blessing is only possible in things hidden from sight." 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 counted at the word of Moshe. The work of the Leviim was under the direction of Itamar son of Aharon the Kohen." (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. (Likutey Halakhot III, p. 380)

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 (Yeshayahu 61:8), "I am the Lord... Who hates robbery in a burnt-offering."

QUALIFIED FOR THE TASK

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony, which were counted at the word of Moshe. The work of the Leviim was under the direction of Itamar 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)

SEEKING 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.

QUALITY OF CHARITY

Rabbi Jeremy Finn

"These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony, which were counted at the word of Moshe. The work of the Leviim was under the direction of Itamar son of Aharon the Kohen." (38:21)

The Kli Yakar asks why Moshe Rabbeinu made an accounting of all the gold and silver and materials that were used in the construction of the *Mishkan* before that construction was complete.

After the accounting, the *parashah* tells us of the *bigdei kehunah* and how they were made. Why did Moshe Rabbeinu not wait until everything, including the *bigdei kehunah*, was finished, and then make a reckoning or accounting?

Rabbi Menachem Chaim Merel suggests that sometimes people contribute sums of money to specific causes or institutions, and then for some reason that institution folds, and the person who donated comes to feel that his money would have been better spent elsewhere.

The quality of the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, however, is not affected by the end result of where the money ends up or how it is put to use; that is left for Hashem to judge. What is important regarding *tzedakah* is that the donation was made with the correct intention.

To teach us this message, Moshe Rabbeinu stops and gives an accounting before the *Mishkan* is completed to show that it is not important what happens to the money at the end of the project, but the intention and act of giving that took place at the beginning are what counts.

This explains why Moshe Rabbeinu blesses the people once the *Mishkan* is completed but before it is erected (Shemos 39:43). Moshe Rabbeinu wanted to show the people that they deserved a *berachah* for the work and effort that went into the *Mishkan*, which is independent of whether or not their work and effort bore the fruit of seeing the *Mishkan* assembled and working.

Our obligation is to perform the task. The success or failure of that task is in the hands of Hashem. (Minchas Chayeinu, vol. 1, p. 193)

CONSTANT RECKONING

Chernobyl Rebbe

"These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony, which were counted at the word of Moshe. The work of the Leviim was under the direction of Itamar son of Aharon the Kohen." (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.

BREAKING THE CYCLE

Rabbi Ari Ciment

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

He also saw a skull (גלגלת) floating upon the water. He said to it: Because you drowned others, you were drowned; and those who drowned you, will themselves be drowned. (Avos 2:6)

The message of this cryptic ethic is that what goes around, comes around. There is a circle of life, a connectivity of events, cause and effect, which inevitability have rhyme and reason, despite not being clearly understood or foreshadowed. There could have been a million ways to show this message; why did Hillel choose a גלגלת - skull to portray this?

The answer may be from our *parashah*. The *pasuk* states, בקע לגלגלת מחצית השקל - "A *beka* a head, that is, half a shekel." Rashi says that a בקע is the name given for a half a shekel, and the *pasuk* tells us that 603,550 adults from twenty years and older brought these coins that funded the *Mishkan*.

We know the word גלגלת means skull. Isn't it unusual to use such a word to relay the head count? Why is that same word used to teach us the lesson of "cause and effect" in the ethic above by Hillel? Why specifically did G-d choose the בקע as the name of the coin; is there perhaps a hidden message? Why not say חצי השקל, as opposed to the more unusual wording of מחצית השקל; it sounds as if the shekel is actively doing something?

There is a famous story (Shabbos 156b) about Rabbi Akiva who knew from astrologists that his daughter would be killed by a snake on her wedding day. He was distressed but nevertheless attended the wedding. After the wedding ceremony, the daughter placed a needle from her dress through the opening of her wall and unknowingly pierced a snake in the eye. When she discovered the dead snake the next morning, Rabbi Akiva inquired about what she may have done to grant her this great fortune. She then recalled that a poor man had come to the banquet hall during the preparations, and since everyone was preoccupied, she herself gave the man one of her wedding gifts. To that Rabbi Akiva exclaimed: צדקה תציל ממות - "Charity saves from death!"

A point of this story is that there is a cycle of events that is really supposed to happen naturally, but charity enables us to alter the chain of events. The cycle can be broken.

The Chiddushei HaRim beautifully points out that the gematria of שקל (330) is the same as נפש (330) again highlights the inherent connection between charity and life. This may be why the word מחצית is used instead of חצי - to highlight a more proactive, action type of word. It almost sounds as if the shekel is being actively halved, as opposed to just stating a half a shekel. The life of a person is directly acted upon by the action of a giver!

Ozer Alport similarly points out that the word מחצית has a צ in the middle that represents *tzedakah*; it is close to the inner letters ח and י, which spells חי (life!), and is distanced from the outer letters of מ and ת, which spell מת (death)! If you give *tzedakah*, you bring life closer and you can stave away death!

What about the word בקע, which is a half-shekel coin? In Hebrew, the word also means "split" (i.e., ויבקע עצי עלה). A גלגלת, which means "skull," has within it the word גלגל, which is a "wheel" or "cycle." Homiletically, בקע לגלגלת - the way to break or split the cycle (of natural events), is by bringing the מחצית השקל; by bringing *tzedakah*, we can change the natural course of events. When Hillel saw the גלגלת floating in the river, he undoubtedly was contemplating how G-d weaves a neatly fitting cycle/wheel of life, but he was simultaneously conjuring up this *pasuk* of בקע לגלגלת to remind us of the one thing that can defy nature and break this cycle/wheel for the good: *tzedakah*!

Takeaway Messages: בקע לגלגלת מחצית השקל teaches us how powerful *tzedakah* is: It can break a natural cycle (בקע לגלגלת); it is an active, impactful action that is not passive (מחצית and not חצי); it impacts our life and saves from death (Chiddushei HaRim on מחצית השקל). Hillel hinted that the cycle of life can be broken by *tzedakah* (גלגלת-גלגלת connection) and Rabbi Akiva showed us the example of how צדקה תציל ממות. The צ (representing *tzedakah*) of מחצית is closest to the letters ח and י of חי (life) and distances us from the outer letters of מ and ת, which spell מת (death)!

Charity, *beka*, and a skull? Charity "splits the circle" of life and is a game changer.

STAYING GROUNDED

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"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!

GIVING IT OUR ALL

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"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." (38:22-23)

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

CREATED FOR SANCTITY

Tiferes Yonasan

"All the gold that was used for the work - for all the labor 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."

FIERY ENTHUSIASM

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"The silver of the accounting of the assembly..." (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 Wisnefsky

CROWNING HASHEM

Chiddushei HaRim

"The hundred talents of silver were to pour 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 to pour the sockets of the Sanctuary and the sockets for the Curtain; a hundred sockets for a hundred talents, a talent per socket." (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 *Kodesh 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 to pour 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 UNITY

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"And he made the Ephod out of gold, blue wool, dark red wool... They made shoulder straps for it, attached to its two ends." (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*.

SUPPORT SYSTEM

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

"They made attached shoulder straps for it, attached to its two ends." (39:4)

The *ephod* was an apron-like garment that the *Kohen Gadol* wore above his robe, with two straps in the back that went over the shoulders toward the front, holding the *choshen* in place. The Torah describes the straps attached to the breastplate using the word קצוותו instead of קצותיו. Why was the word seemingly misspelled?

Using Rav Hirsch's analysis on a similarly misspelled word, we can explain that the Torah uses an extra *vav* to symbolize the unity of two items. In this case, the straps holding and supporting the *choshen* (generally accepted as the most significant part of the *Kohen Gadol's* garb) are just as significant and important as the *choshen* itself.

To guide our future, we need to look no further than our own personal past: when we feel supported, we are much more likely to succeed, a concept worth contemplating and pursuing.

BLESSED UNITY

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"They made shoham stones, surrounded by golden settings, engraved like the engraving of a signet, with the names of the sons of Israel." (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 Yosef 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 Wisnefsky

FILLING IN FOR OTHERS

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"He made the Breastplate, the work of a artist, 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

"They made the Robe of the Ephod, the work of a weaver, entirely of turquoise wool." (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 Wisnefsky

HOLY STUBBORNNESS

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"They made the Tzitz, the holy crown, of pure gold, and they inscribed on it with script like the engraving of a signet, 'Holy to Hashem.'" (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 Golias in the forehead, for Golias 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 Wisnefsky

CREDITED FOR THE WORK

Rabbeinu Moshe Alshich

"All the work of the Mishkan, the Tent of Meeting, was completed, and the Children of Israel 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.

COMPLETE PARTICIPATION REQUIRED

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

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

A man once came to the holy Admor 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!"

ONE THING AT A TIME

Imrei Shefer

"All the work of the Mishkan, the Tent of Meeting, was completed, and the Children of Israel 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."

BUILDING MOMENTUM

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

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

The fixtures and garments are finally completed, and the *pasuk* tells us that the work of the *Mishkan* of the *Ohel Moed* was completed, and the children of Israel had done as they were commanded (39:32). The way that it is worded suggests that the work of the *Mishkan* would be complete only after the people did according to all that the Lord had commanded Moshe. Why does the *pasuk* tell us that the work was completed before telling us that the people had performed the work?

Oznayim LaTorah examines why the *pasuk* seems to be out of order. After the sin of the Golden Calf, the Jews felt discouraged and distant from G-d. Oznayim LaTorah suggests that once the work of the *Mishkan* was complete, the people felt a sense of accomplishment, and only then were they able to perform all of their duties. The Torah reveals to us that sometimes all we need is a victory to help us find ourselves and build confidence in our ability to forge ahead.

SPIRITUAL COMPARTMENTALIZATION

Rabbi Aryeh Dachs

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

Compartmentalizing our emotions is an important psychological tool. It allows us to set aside emotional distress so that we can conduct our lives and deal with our feelings and emotions when the time is right for us. Spiritual compartmentalization is a different sort of tool. It is nuanced but critical to our spiritual well-being.

To this point, we find that in the final *parashah* in Sefer Shemos, the Jewish People complete the construction and dedication of the *Mishkan*. Man had reached an apex that would allow the *Shechinah*, the Divine Presence, to reside in the world. Significantly, this resting of the *Shechinah* was to be done in a tabernacle constructed by man.

The Midrash teaches that the Jewish People began constructing the *Mishkan* the day after Yom Kippur. The Midrash continues and explains that the process of building the *Mishkan* took three months, which would put the time of completion around the time of Chanukah. According to the Midrash, they waited until Nissan, close to another three months, to erect and consecrate the *Mishkan*. The Midrash explains that Hashem pushed off the consecration to Nissan because it is the birth month of our forefather Yitzchak.

Although the Jewish People had rushed to build the *Mishkan* as soon as they had the ability to do so, in hindsight, their *zerizus*, their swiftness, seems to have been unnecessary. They would have to wait until Nissan regardless.

Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch points out in his sefer Taam VaDaas that there is a lesson to be gleaned from this process. We often blur *mitzvos* with their results. Many *mitzvos* have a clear goal in mind, but that goal doesn't necessarily define the totality of the *mitzvah*. For example, one generally performs the *mitzvah* of giving charity with a clear goal in mind: to help a poor person. In truth, the act of giving is distinct from its benefit to the poor.

It is important for each individual to view the act of giving the charity as a *mitzvah* in its own right. We are expected to do the *mitzvah* of giving with eagerness, ardor, and *simchah*, regardless of whether our intentions actually make a difference in helping the poor man.

It was important for the Jewish People to recognize that their work to build the *Mishkan* was a *mitzvah* from Hashem in its own right, and therefore demanded alacrity. Although their eagerness to do the *mitzvah* did not actually enable the project to be completed any earlier, in reality, their eagerness and determination was still warranted simply because they had a *mitzvah* to do.

The Chovos HaLevavos touches on the importance of this sort of compartmentalization. He writes that when it comes to our responsibilities to our families and our friends, it is spiritually healthiest to focus less on the personal benefits or the outcomes we expect from successfully providing for them. Instead, we should focus on how providing for our families affects our spiritual mission.

Hashem obligates us to care for our families; it is a *mitzvah* that we must do our best to fulfill. The Chovos HaLevavos explains that when people concentrate on the spiritual aspects of providing for their families, they will benefit.

When we focus on the spiritual component, the usual frustration in our familial duties won't matter as much. Often it is painful when the hard work we put in to help and support our loved ones is underappreciated. However, if we can compartmentalize our duties and adjust our perspective, we can take comfort knowing that, most importantly, we have fulfilled a *mitzvah* of Hashem.

COMPLETING THE MISSION

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"All the work of the Mishkan, the Tent of Meeting, was completed, and Children of Israel 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. - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

POWER OF ATTRACTION

Rebbe Nachman

"They brought the Tabernacle to Moshe with the Tent and all its implements..." (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.

THE NEED FOR A MENTOR

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"They brought the Tabernacle to Moshe with the Tent and all its implements..." (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. - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

PUTTING IN THE EFFORT

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld

"They brought the Tabernacle to Moshe with the Tent and all its implements..." (39:33)

In this week's *parshah* we find a very interesting thing. When the construction of all of the parts of the *Mishkan* was completed, the workers were unable to lift the *Mishkan*. Although Moshe Rabbeinu was not involved in the physical construction of the *Mishkan*, Hashem instructed him to lift up the *Mishkan* to give him the honor of its completion. Understandably, it was impossible for Moshe to lift up the *Mishkan* alone, but Hashem wanted him to make the effort in order to give the appearance to onlookers as though he was actually lifting it, when in fact it was obviously a miracle. All of the workers were rewarded for the work they put into the *Mishkan*, and Moshe Rabbeinu was rewarded for the entirety of its construction.

The question is obvious. Why was Moshe rewarded for something that he did not do?

The answer provides us with a fundamental lesson that can be applied to our lives: Moshe was rewarded for doing what was expected of him - putting forth the effort.

The *Mishkan* is a metaphor for every one of our own lives. All Hashem asks of us is to do our bit, put in the effort, and then the rest will be taken care of by Hashem. When Hashem sees that we are genuinely trying to do His will, we are granted with *siyata di'Shmaya*.

We often find ourselves facing challenges that seem insurmountable, and we are unsure as to how we will get through them. We learn from this week's *parshah* that all that is expected of us is to put forth effort, and Hashem will see to it that we have everything we need and are granted Divine assistance in ways we could never have imagined.

PREPARED AND READY

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"The Ark of the Testimony and its staves, and the lid." (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 of the arrangement - all its implements, 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 - 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

PERSISTENT PRAYERS

Rabbi Jeremy Finn

"Moshe saw the entire work, and behold! They had done it as Hashem commanded, so had they done; and Moshe blessed them." (39:43)

Rashi comments that the blessing that Moshe Rabbeinu gave the people when they completed the building of the *Mishkan* was: יהי רצון שתשרה שכינה במעשה ידיכם - "May it be the will of the Almighty that the Divine presence should rest on your work."

Rabbi David Hofstedter notes that at the end of the ימי המילואים - the inauguration of the *Mishkan*, Moshe gave the people the identical blessing of יהי רצון שתשרה שכינה במעשה ידיכם (Vayikra 9:23). Why did the Jews need this blessing after Hashem had promised them ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם - "Build a *Mishkan* and then I will dwell in [it]" (Shemos 25:8)?

Once they had completed the structure, it was inevitable that Hashem would dwell in it, so why did Moshe have to give them a blessing to that effect?

Second, why did Moshe repeat the blessing after the seven days of inauguration?

Rav Hostedter suggests that we need to observe the state of mind of the Jewish People at each of these two events - the completion of the *Mishkan* and the end of the inaugural days. When the Jews collected materials and then fashioned them into the vessels and structure of the *Mishkan*, there was a general feeling of joy and elation. They had succeeded in fulfilling all of Hashem's instructions and had created a place where the *Shechinah* could reside. By contrast, after seven days of inauguration during which Moshe had erected the *Mishkan*, but the *Shechinah* had not come down and rested in it, the people were sad and discouraged.

On both of these occasions, Moshe Rabbeinu blessed the people with the same blessing to teach us a valuable lesson.

First, even when success has been promised, and we are assured of reaping the rewards of our endeavors, we still need to pray for Divine assistance. The Ramchal (Derech Hashem 4:5:1) writes that even when Hashem has prepared bounty to rain on *Klal Yisrael*, they first need to act, to draw near to Him and request it, for if they do not pray that Hashem shower them with His glory, they will not receive it. So, Moshe Rabbeinu blesses the people that even though Hashem had assured them that once they build a *Mishkan* He will reside in it, nonetheless יהי רצון שתשרה שכינה במעשה ידיכם - only when you pray and draw close to Him will it happen.

The first lesson learned from Moshe Rabbeinu's blessing is the need to pray to Hashem, even when He has assured us of success.

The second occasion when Moshe Rabbeinu blessed the people was after the seven days of inauguration, and this time the mood of the people was not a happy one. They had just witnessed Moshe putting up and taking down the *Mishkan* for seven days, and there was no sign of the *Shechinah*. It seemed that Hashem was not attentive to and accepting of their prayers for success.

For this reason, Moshe repeats his prayer of יהי רצון שתשרה שכינה במעשה ידיכם to teach them that even when it seems that Hashem is not responding to our requests and that He is not listening to us, we must not give up and become despondent. When the chips seem to be down, that is precisely the time to renew our efforts to move closer to Him. It is precisely at that moment that a prayer of יהי רצון שתשרה שכינה במעשה ידיכם is most relevant.

Nowhere more than in regard to prayer is the saying, "If at first you don't succeed, try and try again" more relevant. Hashem always listens and always answers; we just may not always like the answer.

So, from the repeated blessing of Moshe Rabbeinu, we learn two lessons in the realm of prayer:

• First, do not take success, even guaranteed success, for granted. Pray to Hashem so that He will deliver that success.

• Second, even when it seems that He is not listening, He is! Prayer is the key even in the darkest moments.

CONSTRUCTIVE WORK

Reb Noson of Breslov

"Moshe saw the entire work, and behold! They had done it as Hashem commanded, so had they done; and 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)

BLESSED EFFORTS

Imrei Shefer

"Moshe saw the entire work, and behold! They had done it as Hashem commanded, so had they done; and 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.

IT STARTS TODAY

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

"On the day of the first month, on the first of the month, you shall erect the Mishkan, the Tent of Meeting." (40:2)

G-d instructs Moshe to erect the *Mishkan* "on the day of the first month [Nissan], on the first day..." (40:2). Why does the Torah mention the day twice in a single sentence?

Rav Hirsch proposes that while Nissan was the month that marked the birth of a nation and revival of an oppressed people, the first day of the month represented the people's decisive role in their future.

The people's ability to determine the first of the month spotlights the power we have over our present and future.

Empowering ourselves to a better future starts with living today, in the moment. As the saying goes, today is the first day of the rest of your life.

JOINING THE RANKS

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"You shall bring Aharon and his sons near the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and immerse them in water." (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

SHARING THEIR JOY

Meshech Chochmah

"Anoint them as you had 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

"It was in the first month of the second year on the first of the month that the Mishkan 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. (Likutey Halakhot III, p. 3a)

SENSE OF PRIDE

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

"It was in the first month of the second year on the first of the month that the Mishkan was erected. Moshe erected the Mishkan; he put down its sockets and placed its beams and inserted its bars, and erected its pillars." (40:17-18)

After detailed instructions on how to build the *Mishkan* and an accounting of the completed garments and parts of the *Mishkan*, Moshe is finally ready to put it all together.

The *pasuk* tells us that the *Mishkan* was set up on the first day of the first month in the second year (40:17). The very next *pasuk* reiterates that Moshe indeed assembled the *Mishkan*, and subsequent *pesukim* detail exactly what Moshe did.

Why do we need to be told three times in a span of eleven *pesukim* (two in summary and one in detail) that the *Mishkan* was assembled?

ArtScroll suggests that the process of designing, crafting, and assembling the *Mishkan* culminated in the most singular event in human history: the glory of G-d rested among people, in full view of all.

This extraordinary Tabernacle was built with the people's gifts and their hands, directed by their prophets, and made possible by their repentance.

This recipe of care, effort, and thoughtfulness warranted repeated affirmations that our *Mishkan* was at last complete.

When we pour our hearts and souls into something we value and succeed, we deserve to feel proud, and G-d is just as proud of us.

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

"He burned an incense offering on it..." (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. - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

OUR INNER MOSHE

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"He erected the Courtyard all around the Mishkan… Moshe completed the work." (40:33)

Although the people fashioned the components of the Tabernacle, it was Moshe 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 Moshe that actually erects it. Our inner Moshe 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

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.

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.

JOURNEYING WITH HASHEM

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

"For the cloud of Hashem would be on the Mishkan by day, and fire would be on it at night, before the eyes of all the House of Israel in all their journeys." (40:38)

The last *pasuk* of Pekudei tells us that "a cloud rested over the *Mishkan* by day, fire would appear in it at night, in the view of all of the house of Israel throughout their journeys" (40:38). What does "throughout their journeys" add, especially considering the fact that they didn't travel at night, so roughly half the time they weren't even traveling at all? Further, why is fire the only object described in the future tense?

One possible answer to these questions is that "journeys" refers not to their travels but to everyday life - that G-d is with us day and night, helping us with our struggles. Knowing that G-d will be with us during future challenges comforts us now and prepares us for whatever the future holds. Perhaps that is also why the flame isn't separate from the cloud, but burns within it. Our perpetual support system originates from within, strengthened internally by our relationship with G-d Himself and supported by our family and friends in our external environment.

STATIONS IN THE JOURNEY

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"For the cloud of Hashem would be on the Mishkan by day, and fire would be on it at night, before the eyes of all the House of Israel in 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 Wisnefsky

HAFTORAH

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.)