

Likutei Divrei Torah

Gleanings of Divrei Torah on Parashat Hashavuah
via the Internet

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in memory of her mother, Marion Pianko, z"l,
whose yahrzeit is on 28 Adar,
and her maternal grandparents, Jack and Anna Burstein, z"l,
whose yahrzeits are on 23 Adar

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Shabbat Parashat Vayakhel-Pekudei - HaChodesh

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Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

Three Types of Community

A long drama had taken place. Moses had led the people from slavery to the beginning of the road to freedom. The people themselves had witnessed God at Mount Sinai, the only time in all history when an entire people became the recipients of revelation. Then came the disappearance of Moses for his long sojourn at the top of the mountain, an absence which led to the Israelites' greatest collective sin, the making of the Golden Calf. Moses returned to the mountain to plead for forgiveness, which was granted.

Its symbol was the second set of Tablets. Now life must begin again. A shattered people must be rebuilt. How does Moses proceed? The verse with which the sedra begins contains the clue: Moses assembled all the community of Israel and said to them: "These are the things God has commanded you to do." Shemot 35:1

The verb *vayakhel* – which gives the sedra its name – is crucial to an understanding of the task in which Moses is engaged. At its simplest level it serves as a motiv-word, recalling a previous verse. In this case the verse is obvious: When the people saw that Moses was long delayed in coming down the mountain, they assembled around Aaron and said to him, "Get up, make us gods to go before us." Shemot 32:1

Moses' act is what the kabbalists called a *tikkun*: a restoration, a making-good-again, the redemption of a past misdemeanour. Just as the sin was committed by the people acting as a *kahal* or *kehillah*, so atonement was to be achieved by their again acting as a *kehillah*, this time by making a home for the Divine presence as they earlier sought to make a substitute for it. Moses orchestrates the people for good, as they had once been assembled for bad (The difference lies not only in the purpose but in the form of the verb, from passive in the case of the Calf to active in the case of Moses. Passivity allows bad things to happen – "Wherever it says 'and it came to pass' it is a sign of impending tragedy". (Megillah 10b) Proactivity is the defeat of tragedy: "Wherever it says, 'And there will be' is a sign of impending joy." Bamidbar Rabbah 13

At a deeper level, though, the opening verse of the sedra alerts us to the nature of community in Judaism.

In classical Hebrew there are three different words for community: *edah*, *tzibbur*, and *kehillah*, and they signify different kinds of association.

Edah comes from the word *ed*, meaning "witness." The verb *ya'ad* carries the meaning of "to appoint, fix, assign, destine, set apart, designate or determine." The modern Hebrew noun *te'udah* means "certificate, document, attestation, aim, object, purpose, or mission." The people who constitute an *edah* have a strong sense of collective identity. They have witnessed the same things. They are bent on the same purpose. The Jewish people become an *edah* – a community of shared faith – only on receiving the first command: "Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household". Shemot 12:3

An *edah* can be a gathering for bad as well as good. The Israelites, on hearing the report of the spies, lose heart and say they want to return to Egypt. Throughout, they are referred to as the *edah* (as in "How long will this wicked community grumble against Me?" Bamidbar 14:27). The people agitated by Korach in his rebellion against Moses and Aaron's authority is likewise called an *edah* ("If one man sins, will You be angry with the whole community? Bamidbar 16:22). Nowadays the word is generally used for an ethnic or religious subgroup. An *edah* is a community of the like-minded. The word emphasises strong identity. It is a group whose members have much in common.

By contrast the word *tzibbur* – it belongs to Mishnaic rather than biblical Hebrew – comes from the root *tz-b-r* meaning "to heap" or "pile up". (Bereishit 41:49) To understand the concept of *tzibbur*, think of a group of people praying at the Kotel. They may not know each other. They may never meet again. But for the moment, they happen to be ten people in the same place at the same time, and thus constitute a quorum for prayer. A *tzibbur* is a community in the minimalist sense, a mere aggregate, formed by numbers rather than any sense of identity. A *tzibbur* is a group whose members may have nothing in common except that, at a certain point, they find themselves together and thus constitute a "public" for prayer or any other command which requires a *minyan*.

A *kehillah* is different from the other two kinds of community. Its members are different from one another. In that sense it is like a *tzibbur*. But they are orchestrated together for a collective undertaking – one that involves making a distinctive contribution. The danger of a *kehillah* is that it can become a mass, a rabble, a crowd.

That is the meaning of the phrase in which Moses, descending the mountain, sees the people dancing around the Calf: Moses saw that the people were running wild, for Aaron had let them run out of control and become a laughingstock to their enemies. Shemot 32:25

The beauty of a *kehillah*, however, is that when it is driven by constructive purpose, it gathers together the distinct and separate contributions of many individuals, so that each can say, "I helped to make this." That is why, assembling the people on this occasion, Moses emphasises that each has something different to give:

Bring of what is yours an offering to the Lord. Let everyone who is willing bring an offering to the Lord: gold, silver, and bronze . . . And let all among you who are skilled come and make the things that the Lord has commanded. Shemot 35:5, Shemot 35:10

Moses was able to turn the *kehillah* with its diversity into an *edah* with its singleness of purpose, while preserving the diversity of the gifts they brought to God:

So all the community of Israel left Moses' presence. And they came, everyone whose heart inspired him and whose spirit moved him, and brought an offering for the Lord, to be used for the Tent of Meeting and all its service, and for the sacred vestments. All whose hearts moved them – the men with the women – brought brooches, earrings, signet rings and pendants, all kinds of gold ornaments . . . Everyone who had sky-blue, purple, or scarlet wool . . . Whoever could make an offering of silver or bronze brought it . . . Every skilled woman spun with her own

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hands, and brought what she had spun . . . All the women whose hearts inspired them used their skill . . . The leaders brought rock crystal stones and other precious stones . . . So the Israelites – all the men and women whose hearts moved them to bring anything for the work that the Lord, through Moses, had commanded – brought it as a freewill offering to the Lord. Shemot 35:20-29

The greatness of the Tabernacle was that it was a collective achievement – one in which not everyone did the same thing. Each gave a different thing. Each contribution was valued – and therefore each participant felt valued. Vayakhel – Moses’ ability to forge out of the dissolution of the people a new and genuine kehillah – was one of his greatest achievements.

Many years later, Moses, according to the Sages, returned to the theme. Knowing that his career as a leader was drawing to an end, he prayed to God to appoint a successor: “May God, Lord of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a person over the community.” (Bamidbar 27:16) Rashi, following the Sages, explains the unusual phrase “Lord of the spirits of all flesh” as follows:

He said to Him: Lord of the universe, the character of each person is revealed and known to You – and You know that each is different. Therefore appoint for them a leader who is able to bear with each person as his or her temperament requires. Rashi on Bamidbar 27:16

To preserve the diversity of a tzibbur with the unity of purpose of an edah – that is the challenge of kehillah-formation, community-building, itself the greatest task of a great leader.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin
The End of Exodus and the Four Parashot

“And he set up the courtyard around the sanctuary and the altar, and he placed the screen gate of the courtyard, and Moses completed the work.” (Exodus 40:33)

Why repeat all the details of the construction of the Sanctuary after we have already heard them when they were initially commanded? For example, with regard to one of the priestly garments, the Bible commands:

“And they shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, and purple, scarlet and fine twined linen, the work of the skillful workman.” (Exodus 28:6)

And then, telling us of the command of the execution, the same words are repeated, practically word for word:

“And he made the ephod of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. And they beat the gold into thin plates...” (Exodus 39:2)

If there is a difference, it’s that the first time around the Israelites are given the command, and the second time the Torah records that the command was indeed performed. Would it not have been simpler to deal with the entire execution of external building, furnishings and priestly garb with the single verse: “And the Israelites built the Sanctuary exactly as God commanded”?

In order to understand the significance of the repetition, it is important to remember that the Almighty desires an intimate relationship between Himself and the people of Israel. That is why they are commanded to build a Sanctuary in the first place: “in order that He may dwell among us.” However, worshipping the golden calf – whoring after strange gods – was a betrayal of the ideals given at Sinai. In effect, the Israelites committed adultery, scarring the love and intimacy God had just bestowed upon them. Were God only a God of justice, this would be the end of the Jewish people, their sin mandating a punishment which would have meant the end of Jewish history before it really began.

But since God is also a God of compassion, He forgives. But can we legitimately expect forgiveness for as heinous a crime as idolatry? Will the Almighty take Israel back even after they have committed adultery? Herein lies the true significance of the repetition of each and every painstaking instruction regarding the Sanctuary. God places his nuptial “home” with Israel before they sin with the golden calf, and God accepts their construction of the nuptial home after they have sinned with the golden calf. The repetition is a confirmation that the intimacy between God and Israel has been restored, that the relationship between God and His bride, Israel, has returned to its original state of mutual commitment and faith. The repetition of the exact details is essentially God’s gift of repentance.

It is interesting to note that during the weeks when we read the concluding portions of Exodus, the calendar is usually host to another sequence of special readings, wherein a second Torah scroll is removed from the ark for an additional reading as well as a special haftarah reading from the prophets.

The first special reading is Shekalim, which speaks of the obligation of every Jew to give a half-shekel to the Sanctuary. This represents an act of commitment: a pledge of a covenantal relationship between God and Israel that is four thousand years strong, demonstrated in our daily lives by the giving of our “half-shekels” to build our sanctuaries – yeshivas and synagogues, day schools and outreach centers – thus bringing God within our midst. Financial commitment is also the traditional halakhic form of betrothal (symbolized in the wedding ring).

Likutei Divrei Torah

The second special Sabbath – right before Purim – is Shabbat Zachor. Zachor means “remember”: Remember to destroy the evil Amalek. Amalek is not only the power that would destroy us from without, but is also the force threatening to destroy us from within. Amalek may also be seen as the winds of assimilation and self-destruction! When the Torah at the end of the portion of Ki Tetzeh (Deut. 25) records how Amalek attacked the tired and the weak straggling from Egypt, those who did not fear God, this does not refer only to those who were physically weak, but also to the spiritually weak, those whose link to the chain of Israel had become inadequate and indifferent. Amalek enters when Israel ceases to fear God! This Sabbath always precedes Purim because back in Shushan there were two threats, Haman/Amalek from without and a nation deep in the amnesia of assimilation from within, seduced by the (hardly kosher) invitations to the palace of Ahashverosh, with all the non-kosher wine and shrimp one could enjoy. Israel, betrothed by the shekel to God, had now succumbed to the temptation of Amalek, substituting the temptations of gold and licentiousness for their God-groom.

Israel having been defiled by the lure of assimilation, Para, the next special Sabbath portion, encapsulates the process of purification. We should know that even if our impurity stems from death, the highest degree of impurity, we have the red heifer to cleanse us.

Finally, the Sabbath of HaChodesh brings us towards a new beginning. “Chodesh,” the Hebrew word for month, is also bound up with “Chadash,” new, and “Chidush,” renewal. In effect, the moon is the messenger of change and renewal, the ability to emerge from total darkness to a state of fullness, totality, and the perfection that awaits us on the fourteenth of Nisan when Passover begins.

Thus Shekalim, Zachor, Para and HaChodesh parallel the portions of Terumah, Tetzaveh, Ki Tissa and Vayakhel-Pekudei. The journey begins with commitment and love, stumbles through failure and sin, but finally ends with the possibility of purification and renewal, individual and national freedom as symbolized in the festival of freedom, Passover, which always falls two weeks after the Sabbath of HaChodesh.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand
You Don’t Necessarily Get What You Pay For In Terms of Divine Presence Being Present

The pasuk in Parshas Pekudei says, “All the gold that was used for the work – for all the holy work – the offered-up gold was twenty-nine talents and seven hundred thirty shekels, in the sacred shekel.” (Shemos 38:24). Parshas Pekudei provides an accounting of all that was donated and all that was used in the construction of the Mishkan. The Torah

documents exactly how much gold was used in this holy work.

The Seforno on this pasuk notes that the Torah specifies the exact value of the gold and other precious materials that were used to construct the Mishkan because the amounts were relatively small compared to the gold and other precious materials that were used to construct the first Beis HaMikdash.

The Mishkan, in comparison with the Beis HaMikdash, was the equivalent of a motor home compared to a mansion. The Seforno adds that certainly, compared to the rebuilt Second Beis HaMikdash as redone by Herod, the Mishkan was miniscule.

Nevertheless, as basic and as Spartan as the Mishkan was, the Shechina (Divine Presence) was evermore present in Moshe Rabbeinu's Mishkan than in Shlomo Hamelech's Beis HaMikdash, and certainly more so than in the "Temple of Herod," which lacked the Shechina's presence to a very large extent. So here we have this very basic temporary dwelling called the Mishkan that was built on a shoestring budget relative to the Batei Mikdash, and yet there was a constant hashra'as haShechina (Divine Presence dwelling among us). Even the Beis HaMikdash built by Shlomo HaMelech, with all of its cedars and gold and silver – literally one of the man-made wonders of the ancient world – lacked the level of spiritual dimension that the Mishkan possessed.

The Seforno draws a fundamental moral lesson from this: It is not wealth and luxury that cause hashra'as haShechina. The Shechina cannot be bought by money. The most fancy and elaborate building does not cause hashra'as haShechina, but rather "Hashem desires those who fear Him." Hashem will place His Shechina among those who dedicate themselves selflessly to His Service.

This idea is brought home by two pesukim in Yeshaya (66:1-2) "Thus said Hashem: The Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool; what house could you build for Me, and what place could be My resting place? My hand created all these things, and thus all these things came into being – the word of Hashem – but it is to this that I look: to the poor and broken-spirited person who is zealous regarding My word." HaKadosh Baruch Hu does not care about the thickness of the padding of the theater seats in a shul. Hard wooden benches are fine for Him. He does not care about the benches. He cares about the people sitting on those benches. If the people sitting there are humble of spirit and tremble over His Word, then His Shechina will reside in such a shul.

A famous Gemara teaches (Nedarim 81a) "Take heed regarding the children of the poor for from them Torah will emerge for Israel." Poor children will be the future Torah leaders

of Israel. The Maharal explains that just as when the Almighty is going to put His Shechina in a building, He does not look at the trappings, but rather, he looks at the inner quality, so too the children of poor people are generally humble. They come from poor backgrounds and they are not haughty and overly proud about things. That is where the Torah resides.

Rav Aharon Soloveitchik zt"l used to say over the following story: The progenitor of the famous "Brisker Dynasty" was named Rav Moshe Soloveitchik. His son, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, was the Beis HaLevi, the Rav in Brisk who had a son named Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, who needs no introduction and whose pedagogic and biologic descendants are a major force throughout the Yeshiva world across multiple continents to this very day. This major Torah dynasty all descended from Rav Moshe Soloveitchik, father of the Beis HaLevi.

Rav Moshe Soloveitchik was a businessman. He was in the lumber business and he was very successful. His fortune turned and he lost all of his money. It was such a shocking thing that this wealthy patron of so many charitable causes lost all his money. It had such an impact on the community, that the Beis Din of his town convened to try to figure out what he was doing wrong to cause him to lose his money.

The Beis Din did a thorough investigation and they could not find anything wrong in Moshe Soloveitchik's religious behavior. The only thing they could find was that he gave more charity than a person is supposed to give. The Talmud legislates (Kesuvos 50a) that a person should not give out more than 20% of his income to charity. They found that Moshe Soloveitchik exceeded this limit. That is the only thing he did wrong.

When this finding was presented to Rav Chaim Volozhiner, he rejected that reason. He insisted that it cannot be that he lost his money because he gave too much tzedaka. Such a thing does not happen, he claimed.

What did Moshe Soloveitchik do when he lost all his money? He learned in the Beis HaMedrash and became an adam gadol. Obviously, he was a bright man. And from him came the Beis HaLevi and Rav Chaim Brisker and the Brisker Rav and the entire Soloveitchik dynasty.

In hindsight, Rav Chaim Volozhiner said that he understood why Moshe Soloveitchik lost his money. He lost his money so that his children would fall into the category of "the children of the poor" and therefore the Torah would emerge from the great Soloveitchik dynasty.

I saw in a sefer that Rav Meir Shapiro, the innovator of the Daf haYomi, once gave another explanation to the Talmudic advice

Likutei Divrei Torah

"Take heed of the children of the poor, for from them the Torah will emerge in Israel." He explained that the children of the poor see how their parents struggle to pay tuition. The sacrifice the parents make to afford "schar limud" inspires the children and gives them an appreciation for the sacrifice their parents make to allow them to learn. That motivates them to become talmidei chachomim.

Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

The Spirit and the Heart of Vayakhel Rabbanit Bili Rebenstein (Pizam)

The portion of Vayakhel and Pekudei represent the stage of implementation and realization of the vision articulated earlier in the portions of Terumah and Tetzaveh. In those earlier portions, the Mishkan and its vessels were described in detail, along with the priestly garments and all that accompanied them. Now, in Vayakhel-Pekudei, those carefully delineated instructions are translated into concrete action.

At the center of this endeavor stand two principal figures: Betzalel ben Uri and Oholiav ben Achisamach. They are joined by "every wise-hearted person in whom God had placed wisdom" (Shemot 36:2). It is striking that for a mission which appears, at first glance, entirely practical and materially oriented, the Torah emphasizes the heart. One might have expected the focus to rest upon the hands, symbols of craftsmanship, or upon the intellect, emblem of skill and technical knowledge. Instead, the Torah insists upon the heart. In doing so, it teaches that at the foundation of God's Mishkan there can be no separation between deed, wisdom, and emotion. These three forces must operate in concert, each finding full expression. This idea is reinforced through the key terms that shape the passage describing the appointment of Betzalel and Oholiav. The verbs "to do" [la'asot] and to devise [lachshov] recur, and alongside them appears the repeated noun: heart.

Another significant term associated with Betzalel is ruach—spirit. Although not a recurring keyword in the passage, appearing only once, it carries profound weight: "And He filled him with the spirit of God..." (Shemot 35:31). This expression echoes the description of Creation itself: "And the spirit of God hovered over the face of the water" (Bereshit 1:2). The Torah thereby forges a link between the Holy One as Creator of the world and the human being as builder of the Mishkan. Of course, this does not suggest, heaven forbid, any divinization of the human or anthropomorphizing of the Divine. Rather, the textual resonance highlights the extraordinary power and wonder embedded in human creativity—the capacity to create, to bring forth something new.

The word ruach serves as a guiding term in another parsha, distant in both context and tone, and seemingly unrelated. Yet we may

attempt to discern the connection between them.

In the portion of Beha'alotecha, the people complain about the lack of meat. In response, Moshe cries out, "I cannot bear this entire people alone..." (Bamidbar 11:14). Hashem's answer is twofold: the people will indeed receive the meat they demand, as flocks of quail descend around the camp; and Moshe is instructed to appoint seventy elders, upon whom He will bestow a portion of Moshe's spirit, thereby providing assistance in leadership so that Moshe will no longer carry the burden alone. In this context, the word ruach recurs several times, assuming a central and meaningful role.

Thus, ruach is a key term in the account of the elders' appointment, and a term of great significance in the appointment of Betzalel. The image of seventy elders gathering to receive from Moshe's spirit also resonates with the image of skilled, wise-hearted artisans assembling around Betzalel and Oholiav to assist in the construction of the Mishkan.

An additional linguistic connection links these distinct portions. In the narrative of the Mishkan's construction, the people rally to contribute precious materials. The Torah testifies that the donations exceed all expectation, to the point that the people must be restrained from further giving. The unusual expression – vayikale – is employed: "And the people were restrained from bringing" (Shemot 36:6). The rare verb vayikale conveys how difficult it was to halt the people, how they had to struggle against themselves to cease the flow of generosity that surged from within.

The same rare root נ.ל.כ—to restrain or confine—appears again in the episode of "the complainers" [hamit'onenim] and the bestowal of Moshe's spirit in the portion Beha'alotecha. After Moshe and the seventy elders go outside the camp and receive from his spirit, two elders—Eldad and Meidad—remain within the camp and begin to prophesy independently. Their prophecy occurs apart from Moshe's direct presence, disconnected from his authority. It is a strikingly autonomous stance—perhaps too autonomous. Yehoshua, Moshe's devoted attendant, cannot accept it and exclaims, "My master Moshe, restrain them!" He perceives Eldad and Meidad as a threat to Moshe's leadership. Yet Moshe is untroubled: "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all God's people were prophets!"

The shared, unusual verb—to restrain—draws attention. It conveys an attempt to forcibly contain an overflowing abundance: whether a spirit of generosity and contribution, or the spirit of God manifest in prophecy. In both cases, an inner elevation surges forth from the human being, touching deeply upon the bond with the Divine—and in both cases, there arises a call to curb or confine that outpouring.

From a linguistic standpoint, then, several connections bind the two portions. As noted, the parallel images are equally striking: artisans gathering around Betzalel and Oholiav in our parsha, and the elders gathering around Moshe in Beha'alotecha. What then is the significance of this affinity?

To answer, one must attend to the profound differences between the two narratives. In terms of the people's inner posture, a vast chasm separates them. The portion of Vayakhel is marked by generosity of heart and boundless devotion. The people's actions are motivated by a consciousness of abundance and an urge to channel that abundance toward the Mishkan. In the portion of Beha'alotecha, by contrast, the prevailing mood is complaint. Dissatisfaction stems from a sense of lack and from a jaundiced perception of reality.

The linguistic contrast is equally sharp. As noted, one of the guiding words of Vayakhel is "heart". In the episode of the complainers, the prominent term is "meat". For the Mishkan, the people offer their hearts; in Beha'alotecha, they demand flesh.

In both cases, the subject matter concerns the material—building materials in one, food in the other. Yet how vast the gulf between them. When placing these narratives side by side, one may perceive that the Torah articulates a profound Jewish thesis regarding the relationship between matter and spirit.

Matter can become holy of holies when spirit lifts it upon its wings. Yet matter can also descend into Kivrot HaTa'avah—graves of craving—into unbridled animalism, when severed from spirit.

This is the ancient Jewish symbol expressed by the Tablets, Luchot HaBrit—material tablets bearing spirit. The Midrash teaches that after the Sin of the Golden Calf, the letters left the Tablets and flew heavenward; the spirit departed, and the Tablets shattered upon the ground. Without spirit to uphold it, the material could not endure.

Confronting the challenge of a material life connected to and nourished by spirit, the Torah presents two stories: the ideal vision of Vayakhel, and the painful account of the complainers in Beha'alotcha.

The narrative of the complainers reminds us how easily we may sink into materialism, yet assures us that the possibility of recovery—the restoration of spirit—always remains.

The narrative of Vayakhel recalls what we so often forget. It reminds us of our most elemental identity as a people. The outpouring of generosity in Vayakhel highlights that beyond years of wandering, beyond the pain of destruction, and beyond layers of cold cynicism, we remain a nation whose very soul

Likutei Divrei Torah

is rooted in nidvat halev—generosity of heart. From that place we began our journey, and to that place we return time and again, even when it seems we have strayed far from it.

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky

Emotional Spirituality and Concrete Expression

In these parshios of Vayakhel and Pikudei, we have the summation of all of the items that were made for the mishkan, including both the furnishings as well as the garments of the kohanim. The repetition of the items in such detail after they have already been specified in Terumah and Tetzaveh deserves an explanation of its own, but there is another question that is even more bothersome. In Pikudei we have the listing of how much gold, silver, and copper was brought to the mishkan. The Torah itemizes the weight of each material and exactly how much was used for every item, with the amounts balancing out. True, it does show something about the integrity of the enterprise, in that every single bit of gold and silver, etc. that was donated was put to use. But is it really so necessary to itemize every single item and the exact amount of gold that went into it and so on?

While it is true that in the previous parshios of Terumah and Tetzaveh we have the exact measurements of all of these vessels and garments in painstaking detail, those details are significant because they are the halachic requirements of constructing the various items. Some of the items would be used later in the temple and would have to be made in the exact same way if the need arose to make a new one. Even for those items that would later change, there is still great significance in knowing all these measurements because all of these measurements include some sort of religious and mystical significance. The dimensions, the composition, and the way in which they were made reference deep ideas behind them. The itemization in Pikudei, however, seems to be merely an accounting summary: how much gold was brought, how much was used piece by piece and item by item, how much silver was brought etc. Why do we need to have that in the Torah? What is the Torah telling us?

Another noteworthy event reported in Terumah is that it was brought to Moshe Rabbeinu's attention that more than enough material had been collected for the mishkan. Moshe immediately issued a proclamation declaring that Klal Yisroel should henceforth stop bringing more gold etc. It does make sense that they should stop collecting if they don't need it, but from the solemnity of the proclamation, it feels as if there was something inherently wrong with bringing more goods.

There is a pshat attributed to the Ramban [in Emunah uBitachon- assumed to be a talmid of his], regarding the verse, "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles, and by the hinds of the field, that you not awaken or

stir up love until it desires [shetechputz]". The Ramban [or his talmid] explains the passuk in a different sense. He says that the word "techputz" comes from the word "cheifetz" which means "an object". He interprets this verse homiletically as meaning the following: there are, at times, awakenings of deep religious emotions in people; a person is overcome with emotion and feels that "he is connected". Never let those feelings remain as such! It is emptiness unless one turns those feelings into action and concretizes them. Thus, the passuk is describing the profound feelings of love in Shir Hashirim as having to find themselves in deed, never allowing emotion to dissipate into nothingness.

The donations to the mishkan stemmed from an incredible awakening of Klal Yisroel's love for Hashem. There was no clear obligation of how much to give; it was all *nidvas halev*. Klal Yisroel's religious emotions were at their height. To keep pouring out more and more affection even when it could not turn into something concrete was a travesty. Therefore, Moshe had to stop the collection immediately.

This, then, is what Pikudei is stating. There was an incredible outpouring of Klal Yisroel's love for Hashem, but none of it remained "in the air", dissipating into nothingness. Every bit of this *ruchniyus* was used to the fullest!

Yeshivat Har Etzion: Virtual Bet Midrash

The Mishkan and the Golden Calf

By Rav Meir Spiegelman

"And Moshe gathered all of the congregation of Bnei Yisrael and he said to them, These are the things that God has commanded to do: Six days shall labor be performed, and on the seventh day you shall have a holy day, a Shabbat of rest to God; anyone who performs labor that day shall be put to death..."

"And Moshe said to all of the congregation of Bnei Yisrael, saying, This is the thing that God commands, saying: Take from among yourselves a contribution to God; anyone whose heart is willing shall bring it, an offering to God – gold and silver and brass..." (Shemot 35:1-5)

Moshe assembles the entire nation in order to teach them two mitzvot: Shabbat, and contributing to the Mishkan. The gathering of all of Bnei Yisrael is not a common occurrence in the Torah, and therefore right at the start of the parasha we already face a question: why is the entire nation assembled specifically for the purposes of conveying these two commandments?

Moreover, the mitzva of Shabbat is given here neither for the first time nor for the last. Why does the Torah repeat here, once again, the prohibition of performing labor on Shabbat? Chazal answer this question quite simply: the Torah wants to create a connection between the types of labor forbidden on Shabbat and the labor involved in the Mishkan. In other words, all types of labor that were performed in the Mishkan are forbidden on Shabbat. But Chazal may also be alluding to another level of connection, as we shall see below.

Command and Performance - At the beginning of parashat Ki Tisa, after the conclusion of the command to build the Mishkan, God commands Moshe concerning Shabbat (Shemot 31:12-17). A number of key-words here are echoed in our parasha: holiness, a Shabbat of rest to God, six days of performing labor, etc.

In my previous shiurim about the Mishkan, my approach followed the opinion that the command to build the Mishkan preceded the sin of the golden calf. We may therefore explain here that the Torah repeats the command about Shabbat in order to complete the parenthetical "frame" and then bring us back to the natural course of events that was halted as a result of the golden calf. There are many instances where the Torah repeats a verse or reference to a certain subject in order to create this type of "frame" around a deviation from the main subject at hand. It is possible that in our parasha, too, the Torah repeats the mitzva of Shabbat in order to turn the episode of the golden calf into a parenthetical aside, while connecting the command to build the Mishkan and the description of its execution.

If we compare the commands concerning Shabbat and the contribution to the Mishkan in our parasha to the corresponding commands in the parashot of Teruma and Ki Tisa, we can understand why these two subjects, specifically, were raised at an assembly of all of Bnei Yisrael. In parashat Teruma, when God commands Moshe concerning donations for the Mishkan, He tells him explicitly, "SPEAK TO BNEI YISRAEL and let them take a contribution to Me..." (Shemot 25:2). Similarly, in parashat Ki Tisa, in the command concerning Shabbat, God explicitly tells Moshe, "And you – SPEAK TO BNEI YISRAEL SAYING – but My Shabbats you shall observe" (Shemot 31:13). Obviously, Moshe taught Bnei Yisrael all of the Torah; hence the explicit command, "Speak to Bnei Yisrael" represents an instruction to gather all of the nation and to address them all together. Hence, at the beginning of our parasha, Moshe gathers the entire nation and teaches them the mitzva of Shabbat and the obligation of donating towards the Mishkan.

Location of the Golden Altar - Last week we discussed the consequences of the sin of the golden calf: the "external" consequences (inscription on the Tablets by Moshe instead of by God Himself), as well as the "internal" consequences (inter alia, a change in the form of God's guidance of the nation). If God indeed commanded Bnei Yisrael to build the Mishkan before the sin of the golden calf, it is quite reasonable to assume that the sin left an impression on the Mishkan endeavor.

In order to understand the influence of the golden calf on the construction of the Mishkan, we must compare the commands concerning the Mishkan that preceded the sin with the actual construction that followed it. If we discover discrepancies, then we must ascertain whether they result from the sin.

The most obvious (and perhaps most important) difference between the command concerning the Mishkan and its actual execution is, without doubt, to be found in the incense altar. The commentators address the strange location of this

Likutei Divrei Torah

command – at the end of parashat Tetzaveh (Shemot 30:1-10), after the commands concerning the garments of the kohanim, their sanctification and the daily sacrifice, rather than in what would seem a more appropriate place: among the commands relating to the various Mishkan vessels. Most commentators agree that the incense altar was not an integral part of the Mishkan (indeed, Halakha reflects this reality) and therefore its construction is commanded only at the end of all the other commands related to the Mishkan.

However, we could adopt a slightly different approach: perhaps God commanded the construction of the incense altar only after the sin of the golden calf. In the description of the actual building of the Mishkan, the construction of the incense altar is recorded in the appropriate place (Shemot 37:25-28). Thus we may postulate that the Torah mentions the command of the incense altar at the end of parashat Tetzaveh as an appendix to the commands related to the Mishkan, in order to complete them; however, the incense altar is distinguished from the other vessels in that it was commanded only after the sin of the golden calf. As we shall see further on, we can provide proof for this view.

In parashat Ki Tisa, when the Torah commands the blending of incense (30:34-38), there is no mention of Aharon or his sons; it is offered only by Moshe. In keeping with the view I am proposing, the reason is clear: in the beginning, before the golden calf, there was never any intention of having an incense altar, and so Aharon and his sons were not meant to offer any incense. Hence, at the beginning of parashat Ki Tisa, before the sin of the golden calf, there is no mention of them doing so.

Moreover, the purpose of the incense is to serve as a barrier in front of the revelation of the Divine Presence. Therefore, the Kohen Gadol offers incense on Yom Kippur ("I shall appear in a cloud above the covering"), and for the same reason it is specifically incense that serves as the barrier halting the destruction that begins to spread amongst the nation following the rebellion of Korach and his cohorts. When Moshe comes to speak with God, he must offer incense, for he enters the Kodesh ha-Kodashim (Holy of Holies), behind the curtain, and he must produce a screen of incense that will separate between himself and the Ark. There is no real need to offer incense when entering only the Kodesh (the Sanctuary, as opposed to the Kodesh ha-Kodashim), for the curtain serves as a partition between the Kodesh and the Ark.

However, this situation changed following the sin of the golden calf. The Torah once again repeats the fact that Aharon is – at least partially – responsible for the sin: upon Moshe's descent from the mountain he sees that "the nation was in disorder, for AHARON HAD MADE THEM DISORDERLY to the scandal of their enemies." The Torah itself testifies that "God plagued the nation FOR THEIR HAVING MADE THE CALF THAT AHARON MADE." His partial responsibility for the sin leads to a fundamental change in Aharon's status. While at first God wanted Aharon to be the Kohen Gadol, there was now a difficult problem involved in awarding that

position to the person who had played a part in causing such a grave sin. Therefore, following the golden calf, Aharon was required to offer incense every time he came to the Ohel Mo'ed, in order to create an additional barrier between himself and the Ark. The need for the golden incense altar, then, was a direct result of the sin of the golden calf.

The Days of Inauguration - Indeed, the need for atonement for the golden calf is a most obvious motif in the process of Aharon's training and preparation. On the eighth day, the Torah narrates, Aharon brought a calf as a sin offering (Vayikra 9:2). In all of the Torah, nowhere do we find another instance of a calf brought as a sin offering. It appears, therefore, that this calf was brought by Aharon in order to atone for the sin of the calf, for which he was partially to blame.

Having come this far, we can now point to another process that came about, apparently, only in the wake of the golden calf: the first seven days of inauguration of the Mishkan. As we know, during these seven days Moshe served as the kohen in the Ohel Mo'ed. But why was it specifically Moshe who was chosen to perform the Divine service during these days? Why could Aharon not have begun his service during these seven days? After all, Moshe had no advantage of prior training.

In order to answer this question, we must remember that the Torah makes no mention of sin offerings at all until the sin of the golden calf. It seems that the whole category of sin offerings is firmly bound up with the fact that God foregoes punishment for the sin of the calf, decreeing instead: "On the day when I punish, I shall visit their sin upon them" (Shemot 32:34). As Rashi (ad loc.) comments:

"Always, always, when I visit their transgressions upon them, I shall visit a little of this sin, too, together with the other transgressions. There is no suffering that comes to Israel that does not contain a little of the punishment for the sin of the golden calf."

Following the sin of the calf, Bnei Yisrael were commanded to bring sin offerings for all generations, in order to atone each time for the same sin. Similarly, the command concerning the sin offerings that were brought during the seven days of inauguration was also a result of the sin of the calf. Were it not for that sin, Moshe would not have needed to function as a kohen.

This last assertion, too, has support in the text. In the command concerning the basin, we read: "And Aharon and his sons shall wash their hands and feet from it" (Shemot 30:19). In contrast, when the basin is actually made, we read: "And MOSHE and Aharon and his sons washed their hands and their feet" (40:31). In the beginning, Moshe was not supposed to serve in the Ohel Mo'ed at all, and therefore he was not required to sanctify his hands and feet. In the wake of the golden calf, after Aharon's sin, it became necessary for Aharon to atone for his sin during the seven days of inauguration during which Moshe served as the kohen. Therefore, when it came to making the basin – at the end of Sefer Shemot – we are told that Moshe, too, would sanctify his hands and feet when he came to serve in the Mishkan.

The Command Concerning the Half-Shekel - At the beginning of the parasha of Teruma, the Torah teaches that Bnei Yisrael were required to contribute towards the Mishkan – each person in accordance with his ability. The Torah does not stipulate that each person must give a half-shekel: "From every person whose heart prompts him shall you take My offering." Only in parashat Ki Tisa, after the command about the Mishkan, do we find the first mention of the requirement to raise a half-shekel from each individual. Why, then, does the Torah not mention this contribution in parashat Teruma?

This question joins two other questions that arise in the wake of the command to collect the half-shekel donations. Firstly, the Torah asserts that the half-shekel serves as atonement for Bnei Yisrael when they are counted, "So that there will not be a plague amongst them when they are counted." But why is there any need for this atonement? Moreover, the money collected from the half-shekel donations was enough for Betzalel to fashion the sockets and the pillars of the courtyard (38:25-28), which were the only two vessels in the Mishkan that were made of silver. Why, then, were Bnei Yisrael required to donate "gold and silver and brass"? What did they do with the silver that was collected?

To all the questions posed here, we may present a single all-inclusive answer: the parasha of the half-shekel, like those of the incense altar and the days of inauguration, came after the sin of the golden calf. As atonement for Bnei Yisrael's readiness to donate towards the calf, there was a need for voluntarism for the opposite cause – to build the Mishkan. Moreover, every time Bnei Yisrael got together and mobilized for some specific purpose, there was a need to collect a half-shekel from each one, as atonement for having mobilized to create the golden calf.

But this law, of collecting a half-shekel in order to atone for the mobilization to create the calf, is given for all generations. In that generation, Bnei Yisrael were required to donate the half-shekel even though there was no real need to count them (for nowhere do we find the results of such a census; we discover only the sum total of the half-shekels, in parashat Pekudei). God required of that generation that sinned in creating the calf to declare that they gave their allegiance to the Mishkan, and not to a calf. For this reason, they were required to contribute a half-shekel – as atonement for their contribution towards the calf.

Betzalel used the silver that was collected from all the half-shekels to build the sockets and the pillars of the Mishkan courtyard. Indeed, nothing could be more fitting than for Bnei Yisrael to contribute specifically these parts of the Mishkan – for the courtyard is the only area of the Mishkan where Bnei Yisrael are permitted to enter. Hence it is specifically there that they can atone, for all generations, for their sin.

Who Built the Mishkan - We may add one further fundamental change concerning the Mishkan that came about as a result of the golden calf. When God commands that the Mishkan is to be built, there is no mention of who is to build it. We would probably guess that Aharon should build it: his job is to be responsible for the Mishkan, and therefore it would seem logical that

Likutei Divrei Torah

he should be in charge of its construction. Obviously, Aharon could entrust the actual, technical building job to the relevant professionals (such as Betzalel), but it would seem appropriate that he oversee the construction. But in practice, the Torah places Betzalel and Oholiav in charge of the building, as representatives of the nation as a whole. Betzalel is from the tribe of Yehuda, representing the first triad of tribes, while Oholiav is from the tribe of Dan, representing the last triad. Thus, the Torah transfers responsibility for building the Mishkan from Aharon to all of Am Yisrael.

This situation has dual significance. Firstly, Aharon cannot build the Mishkan because of his part in the sin of the golden calf. Secondly, Am Yisrael must build the Mishkan as atonement for that same sin.

The Status of the Pillars for the Screen - In conclusion, let us note another discrepancy between command and execution concerning the Mishkan – this time, one that is not necessarily related to the sin of the golden calf.

In parashat Teruma we are told that the pillars for the screen are to be covered with gold, while in parashat Vayakhel we read that they are "ringed" with gold – i.e., not completely covered but rather decorated with gold rings (like the pillars of the courtyard, which are ringed with silver). This change may indicate a change in the status of the courtyard screen. If the pillars are considered part of the Mishkan, it is appropriate that they be covered with gold, like the pillars of the Mishkan. But if these pillars are only ringed with gold, then apparently they belong to the courtyard – where the pillars are ringed.

It is possible that, along with this change, the location of the screen was also changed. In the command concerning the Mishkan, the screen is to be placed outside of the pillars; therefore the pillars are within the Mishkan – i.e., inwards of the screen. In parashat Vayakhel, it seems, the screen hangs on the inner part of the pillars, such that the pillars stand at its outer part: i.e., in the courtyard. This may represent a distancing of the screen from the people, for upon the screen is a depiction of the keruvim, symbolizing the Divine Presence. Hence, this distancing, too, may be a result of the sin of the golden calf.

We may summarize as follows: there are two different approaches among the Rishonim, and both are the "words of the living God." The nation was commanded to build the Mishkan prior to the golden calf, but was commanded again thereafter. The Mishkan as projected before the sin is not the same Mishkan that was built in reality: it differs in the identity of the builders, in those who serve within it and their contribution, and even in its parts. Like the spiritual status of the nation, the Mishkan – the place where God meets with Moshe to convey the Torah to Bnei Yisrael – is severely affected by the sin of the golden calf. (Translated by Kaeren Fish)