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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET  
ON VAYAKHEL PEKUDEI - HACHODESH - 5773

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Vayakhel-Pekudei 5770

**Where does the Divine Presence live?**

Finally the long narrative of the construction of the Tabernacle - to which the Torah devotes more space than any other single subject - is at an end. The building, its frame, drapes and sacred furniture, were complete. Moses inspects the finished project. We then read:

The Israelites had done all the work just as the Lord had commanded Moses. Moses saw all the work, and behold - they had done it just as the Lord had commanded. So Moses blessed them. (Ex. 39: 43)

Like many other passages in the description of the making of the Tabernacle, this echoes a line from the creation narrative: "G-d saw all that He had made, and behold - it was very good" (Gen. 1: 31 - the words in common are Vayar, "he saw", et kol, "all" and ve-hineh, "and behold").

The literary parallels between the Divine creation of the universe and the Israelites' construction of the Tabernacle are intentional and consequential. The Tabernacle was a micro-cosmos, a universe-in-miniature. In creating the universe, G-d made a home for humanity. In building the sanctuary, humanity made a home for G-d. And just as, at the beginning of time, G-d had blessed creation, so Moses blessed those who had a share in its human counterpart.

What, though, was the blessing Moses gave? The Torah itself is silent on this point, but the sages supplied the missing information.

With what blessing did Moses bless them? He said to them: "May it be G-d's will that His presence rests in the work of your hands." They responded: "May the pleasantness of the Lord our G-d be upon us. Establish for us the work of our hands, O establish the work of our hands" (Psalm 90: 17). (Sifre to Bamidbar, 143)

The midrash is based on the following stream of thought. One, and only one, psalm is attributed to Moses: Psalm 90, which bears the superscription, "A prayer of Moses, the man of G-d." It ends with the verse cited above, "May the pleasantness (noam) of the Lord our G-d be upon us". The reference in the verse to "the work of our hands" must surely refer to the Tabernacle - the only "work", in the sense of constructive achievement, the Israelites performed in Moses' day. Hence the phrase "a prayer of Moses" must be understood as the prayer/blessing he pronounced on the completion of the Tabernacle.

The question then arises as to the meaning of the words "the pleasantness of the Lord". Another Psalm (27: 4) uses an almost identical phrase: "One thing I ask of the Lord, only this do I seek: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the pleasantness (noam) of the Lord and worship in His temple." This suggests that both psalms are a reference to the sanctuary (in the wilderness, the tabernacle; in a later era, the temple), and that "the pleasantness of the Lord" is a poetic way of describing the cloud of glory that filled the Tabernacle ("Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle", Ex. 40: 34) - in other words, the Divine presence. Thus when Moses said, "May the pleasantness of the Lord our G-d be upon us", he meant: "May it be G-d's will that His presence rests in the work of your hands."

It is a beautiful idea. Is it, though, something more? There is a hint here of a principle that has immense implications for the entire structure of Judaism. We can summarize it simply: It is not objects that are holy. It is human action and intention in accordance with the will of G-d that creates holiness.

Consider the following ruling of the sages (see Gittin 45b; Mishneh Torah, Yesodei ha-Torah 6: 8; Tefillin 1: 13): A Torah scroll, or tefillin, or a mezuzah, written by a heretic, is to be burned. Normally, to destroy a document containing G-d's name is absolutely forbidden. However, in this case, as Maimonides explains: "Since the person who wrote it does not believe in the sanctity of the name of G-d, and therefore did not write it with the requisite intent but merely as any other [secular] text, the [document containing] G-d's name is not sanctified [and may be destroyed]. Indeed it is a mitzvah to burn it so as to leave no record of heretics and their works."

Imagine two Torah scrolls, one written with the requisite intention and sanctity, the other written by an atheist. Physically, they may be indistinguishable. One cannot imagine any scientific test that - by examining the scrolls themselves - would establish which was holy and which not. Yet one is to be held in the highest possible sanctity, and the other to be burned. Holiness is not a property of objects. It is a property of human acts and intentions.

It is this idea that lies behind the very precise formula we use when we recite a blessing over the performance of a command: "Blessed are You . . . who has sanctified us by His commandments, and has commanded us to . . ." It is the commandments that make us holy: nothing else. When G-d said to the Israelites, before the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai,

"You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19: 6), He meant that the Israelites would become holy through their performance of the commands he was about to reveal to them, not that there was anything intrinsically holy about them, prior to and independent of the commands. As Issi ben Judah said (Mekhilta, Massechta de-Kaspa, 20): "When G-d enjoins a new mitzvah on Israel, He endows them with new holiness."

The great commentator and halakhist R. Meir Simcha of Dvinsk (1843-1926, often known by the name of one of his commentaries, Ohr Sameakh) was tireless and forceful in stressing the point. Mount Sinai was - as the site of the greatest ever revelation of G-d - momentarily the holiest place on earth, yet as soon as the revelation was over, even animals were permitted to graze on it (Meshekh Chokhmah to Ex. 19: 13). The first tablets Moses brought down the mountain were supremely sacred. They had been hewn and written by G-d himself. Yet Moses broke them to show the Israelites that nothing is holy except in the context of fulfilling G-d's will (Meshekh Chokhmah to Ex. 32: 19). We endow objects and places with holiness, through our intentions, our words and our deeds. There is no such thing as ontological holiness, intrinsic sanctity.

Returning to the sanctuary, the very idea that there can be a "house of G-d" - that we can create, in finite space, a home for the Infinite - seems a contradiction in terms. Indeed, Israel's wisest king, Solomon, and one of the greatest of its prophets, Isaiah, said so explicitly. On dedicating the Temple, Solomon said: "But will G-d really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain You. How much less this temple I have built." (I Kings 8: 27). Likewise Isaiah said, "This is what the Lord says: Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where is the house you will build for Me? Where will My resting place be? (Isaiah 66: 1).

The answer was given by G-d to Moses at the very outset, before the construction of the Tabernacle was begun: "Let them make a sanctuary for Me, and I will dwell in them" - not "in it" but "in them" -- not in the building but its builders, not in wood and metal, bricks or stone, but in those who build and those who worship. It is not objects, buildings, or places that are holy-in-themselves. Only acts of heart and mind can endow them with holiness.

That is the deep meaning of Moses' blessing to the Israelites: "May it be G-d's will that His presence rests in the work of your hands." G-d does not inhere in things - not in Mount Sinai, not in the tablets, not in the Tabernacle. His presence (the word Shekhinah, Divine presence, comes from the same root as Mishkan, sanctuary or tabernacle) lives in "the work of our hands" - whatever we do in accordance with His will. There was nothing grand about the tabernacle. It was small, fragile, portable. What made it holy was one thing only, that the Israelites "had made it just as the Lord had commanded". The simplest human act, if done for the sake of G-d, has more sanctity than the holiest of holy objects. That, to me, is a remarkable principle of faith.

### **Why the Ancient Greeks were wrong about morality Credo, The Times – February 2010**

Do you have to be religious to be moral? Was Dostoevsky right when he said, If God does not exist, all is permitted? Clearly the answer is No. You don't have to be religious to fight for justice, practise compassion, care about the poor and homeless or jump into the sea to save a drowning child. My doctoral supervisor, the late Sir Bernard Williams, was a committed atheist. He was also one of the most reflective writers on morality in our time.

Yet there were great minds who were less sure. Voltaire did not believe in God but he wanted his butler to do so because he thought he would then be robbed less. Rousseau, hardly a saint, thought that a nation needed a religion if it was to accept laws and policies directed at the long term future. Without it, people would insist on immediate gain, to their

eventual cost. George Washington in his Farewell Address said "Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion . . . Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

Were they wrong? Yes in one sense, no in another. Individuals don't need to believe in God to be moral. But morality is more than individual choices. Like language it is the result of social practice, honed and refined over many centuries. The West was shaped by what nowadays we call the Judeo-Christian tradition. Lose that and we will not cease to be moral, but we will be moral in a different way.

Consider what moves people today: the environment, hunger and disease in third world countries, and the growing gap between rich and poor. These are noble causes: nothing should be allowed to detract from that. They speak to our altruism. They move us to make sacrifices for the sake of others. That is one of the distinguishing features of our age. Our moral horizons have widened. Our conscience has gone global. All this is worthy of admiration and respect.

But they have in common the fact that they are political. They are the kind of issues that can only ultimately be solved by governments and international agreements. They have little to do with the kind of behaviour that was once the primary concern of morality: the way we relate to others, how we form bonds of loyalty and love, how we consecrate marriage and the family, and how we fulfil our responsibilities as parents, employees, neighbours and citizens. Morality was about private life. It said that without personal virtue, we cannot create a society of grace.

Nowadays the very concept of personal ethics has become problematic in one domain after another. Why shouldn't a businessman or banker pay himself the highest salary he can get away with? Why shouldn't teenagers treat sex as a game so long as they take proper precautions? Why shouldn't the media be sensationalist if it sells papers, programmes and films? Why should we treat life as sacred if abortion and euthanasia are what people want? Even Bernard Williams came to call morality a "peculiar institution." Things that once made sense – duty, obligation, self-restraint, the distinction between what we desire to do and what we ought to do – to many people now make no sense at all.

This does not mean that people are less ethical than they were, but it does mean that we have adopted an entirely different ethical system from the one people used to have. What we have today is not the religious ethic of Judaism and Christianity but the civic ethic of the ancient Greeks. For the Greeks, the political was all. What you did in your private life was up to you. Sexual life was the pursuit of desire. Abortion and euthanasia were freely practised. The Greeks produced much of the greatest art and architecture, philosophy and drama, the world has ever known. What they did not produce was a society capable of surviving.

The Athens of Socrates and Plato was glorious, but extraordinarily short-lived. By now, by contrast, Christianity has survived for two millennia, Judaism for four. The Judeo-Christian ethic is not the only way of being moral; but it is the only system that has endured. If we lose the Judeo-Christian ethic, we will lose the greatest system ever devised for building a society on personal virtue and covenantal responsibility, on righteousness and humility, forgiveness and love.

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from: Ateres Hashavua <atereshavua@gmail.com>

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subject: Ateres Hashavua Parshas Vayakhel Pekudei

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**HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky Yahrtzeit Edition**

This week's edition of the Ateres Hashavua is sponsored by Rabbi & Mrs. Baruch Rabinowitz in honor of the birth of their grandson Akiva, son of Yosef and Sima Wechsler

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**Ateres HaShavua Teachings of Rav Yaakov zt"l As related by: Rav Yehoshua Balkany shlit"ra**

The Gemara in Masseches Shaabos says that Rav Yehuda was once sitting in front of his rebbe, Shmuel. They were learning together and suddenly the door flew open and a lady ran in and started screaming and wailing, that she needed help. The Gemara says that Shmuel continued his conversation with his talmid, Rav Yehuda as if the woman was not there. So Rav Yehuda said to his rebbe "there's a woman distraught, anguished, why aren't you responding to her?" Shmuel answered and said "I am not in charge, Mar Ukva is, he's the av beis din, I can't do anything."

The Gemara concludes with this statement, not providing any other details. However, HaRav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l points out that some illumination can be found from the Gemara in Bava Basra (10) which says that one of the Amorayim ascended to heaven and when he came back down, the people wanted to know what he saw in heaven. He answered that he saw the people who in this world were seated up front and given all the respect were sitting in the back row, and the simpletons who never got any type of respect were sitting up front in the Yeshiva Shel Mayeila. Tosefos on this Gemara brings in the name of Rabbeinu Chananel in the name of the Geonim that this account was referring to the aforementioned story in Masseches Shabos about Shmuel and Rav Yehudah. So the Geonim said that Rav Yehuda was sitting in the "rebbe's seat" and Shmuel who was the rebbe in olam hazeh was delegated to sit in the talmid's seat. The Geonim say that this was in response to Shmuel's reaction to the woman.

Rav Yaakov wonders: Shmuel was the rebbe of Rav Yehuda for eight years, imagine how much Torah Shmuel must have taught Rav Yehuda, and yet because of one account, Shmuel- the rebbe was delegated to the talmid's seat for eternity? This is most troubling for certainly one solitary action should not have over weighed such an abundance of Torah learning!?!

Therefore, suggests Rav Yaakov that Chazal are attempting to relay an extremely important lesson. Certainly OLWK DGNK HRWT DWMLT, the mitzvah of Torah learning especially of the level and quality of Shmuel and Rav Yehudah is of the highest caliber, beyond comparison. Yet, still it doesn't approach the importance and stature of one individual mitzvah- bein adom l'chaveiro. However, a singular faulty approach to a bein adom l'chaveiro, outweighs multiple mitzvos of bein adom l'Makom of the greatest and most exalted nature.

Another telling example of this was when Rav Yaakov would send Rav Balkany to get a bochur from the Bais Medrash. One such bochur subsequently told Rav Balkany what transpired during his meeting with

Rav Yaakov. The bochur related that he was at a chasuna five weeks before and Rav Yaakov had noticed that he was sitting and that there was somebody elderly standing near him and that he did not offer his seat to the elderly man. Rav Yaakov in his usual calm fashion had called him over five weeks later to ask him "is that the proper way of handling the situation?" Such was the unbelievable bein adom l'chaveiro that Rav Yaakov epitomized.

May we all be zoche to learn from the ways and lessons of Rav Yaakov, in particular we should focus on our bein adom l'chaveiro, so that all that we do including bein adom l'Makom is favorable in the eyes of Hashem.

EMES L' YAAKOV By Chezkie Glatt, Alumni

"And Moshe gathered the entire congregation of the Bnei Yisroel..." (A:H)L

By the Chait HaEgel, the Sin of the Golden Calf, the way the people acted differed from during the time of Matan Torah, when we received the Torah on Har Sinai. The pasuk says by Matan Torah that "And there Bnei Yisroel camped..." using the word "camped" in singular form. This was to show us that we were on such a high level of brotherhood, part of such a close fraternity, that we were as if but one person, instead of an entire nation. However, just a few days later, by the Chait HaEgel, we were separated and lowered from this lofty height. As the Gemara in the Yerushalmi says (although Rav Yaakov points out some say it was the Bavli), there were twelve separate Egalim.

HaRav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l asks a question on this. We find by all the other nations of the world at that time, that they each had other gods besides Hashem, true, but each still had only one! For example, the pasuk might mention "the god of the Pelishtim," but it never says the gods of the Pelishtim! So why in the world would the Bnei Yisroel make 12 different gods?! Why not copy their gentile neighbors and create a false god, and only one false god?! Rav Yaakov answers beautifully with a brilliant answer. Each shevet had its own idol! Why? Because originally, they were all fighting which god they should claim as their own. So in the end, they decided that each shevet could have its own deity to serve. (Alternatively, Rabbi Kamenetsky says that it could also be that they first chose twelve gods, and then would have some sort of contest to see which one they should choose). That is also why the pasuk changes the Bnei Yisroel's togetherness from Matan Torah until this sin. At first, by the giving of our Torah, they acted like one man, with one heart. Here, however, they fought and bickered as to which god to choose, so that was why Moshe had to "re-gather" the Bnei Yisroel together, to unify them as brothers once again which will unify them back to the one true G-d, Hashem.

HaRav Yaakov Kamenetsky gives another p'shat and explanation on this pasuk. He starts off by quoting the explanation of Rashi on this pasuk. Rashi says that: "This was on the day that was after Yom Kippur, which was when Moshe came down from upon the mountain..."

Rav Yaakov continues by stating a Gemara in Masseches Sanhedrin which says that there were three mitzvos given to the Bnei Yisroel in regards to the conquering of Eretz Yisroel: 1. they should appoint a king 2. they should conquer Amalek 3. they should build the Bais HaMikdash/ Mishkan. When the Jews actually entered Eretz Yisroel, we see that they did indeed do these three in order. However, after the sin of the Golden Calf, we see that they built the Mishkan. Why would they not follow in the exact order that they were commanded to follow in?

Therefore, Rabbi Kamenetsky says that there was an important reason that made this difference needed. This was that right after the Chait HaEgel, the Bnei Yisroel desperately needed something that would raise them somewhat to their previous lofty level of kedusha. The building of the Mishkan now was this necessary antidote. Regardless that they would be fulfilling these three commandments out of order, it was imperative and vital that they get a yeshuah, and fast! Therefore, they were given permission to construct the Mishkan before establishing a king and wiping out Amalek.

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**Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting the following items:**

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**From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein  
<info@jewishdestiny.com>  
Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein**

**In My Opinion :: Rabbi Berel Wein**  
***The Torah Is For All***

There are numerous instances in the Talmud when the rabbis state that if a certain behavior is permissible to some Jews then why is it not permissible to all? The Talmud and the Torah itself recognizes exceptional circumstances, unusual pressures, and differing opinions that need be taken into account, but the Talmud never advocates differing standards of halachic behavior.

It does recognize that there are different personality needs and differing societal mores. But the Torah was always the same Torah for all Jews. What was expressly forbidden in the Torah was forbidden to all and what was permitted was also permitted to all. Much of the problems that exist in the Jewish world today have less to do with halacha and more do with political and societal norms.

Elevating these societal and political issues to the realm of Torah law and halacha, only sharpens our differences and creates unnecessary friction - which eventually casts a very negative light upon all religious Jews and the Torah generally.

In the haftorah from Yirmiyahu that was read for parshiot Matot–Maasei the prophet strikingly says “that those who hold the Torah tightly knew Me not.” Those who hold the Torah tightly unto themselves, who see no one else but themselves and their society, and who are completely separated from the rest of the Jewish people, truly “know Me not.” The Torah is for everyone and not merely the self-anointed few. Everyone has the right to create their own grouping and society but no one has the right to create a halachic basis that does not truly exist and to claim the Torah exclusively for themselves.

Over the ages of Jewish history there have always been differences over rabbinic power and identity, differing societal norms and customs and general attitudes towards the outside non-Jewish world and culture. The societal norms of the Jews in the Middle Ages in Spain were not those of the Jews in Germany and Central Europe, and the norms of Jewish society in Renaissance Italy certainly did not resemble those of the Eastern European shtetel.

Torah and halacha, with all of its allowances for differing nuances, unified all of the diverse parts of Jewry while preserving the basic whole of traditional Jewish law and life. With the advent of Chasidus in the eighteenth century, new and differing societal norms were introduced into Eastern European Jewish life. But again, these new mores were, in the main, restricted to societal behavior. And since groups of Jews lived far removed from one another in the Exile, these societal differences were tolerated and rarely were they the cause of continuing friction amongst the different societies of Jews.

Currently, this luxury of being able to be separate has been seriously reduced here in the Land of Israel. Here we are all thrown together so that the societal mores of one group clash daily and regularly with those of other groups. The only way to justify one’s societal mores over those of others is to elevate them to the status of halacha. This is a terribly damaging process for all concerned.

The struggle for turf, political and economic power, influence and direction of the Jewish world has been the hallmark of internal Jewish life for the past two centuries. The erroneous hopes and unfulfilled expectations of secularism, the Enlightenment, nationalism, Marxism, humanism, etc. all of which captured much Jewish support over the past centuries have, as a result, created a climate of separatism, an us-against-them-attitude, in much of the observant religious society.

Feeling threatened and constantly on the defensive, much of religious society has wrapped the Torah about itself, unwilling and unable to share it intelligently with others. Walling out the outside world to the best of its ability, this grouping allows its societal norms not to be seen as that but rather as halacha from Moshe on Sinai.

This only serves to further the frictions and deepen the differences between Jews. Thinking that one’s societal norms are those that are best

for everyone smacks of arrogance and weakness at one and the same time. A system of education that teaches that one’s societal norms are paramount even to halacha, only reinforces the difficulties that our religious society already faces in a world of instant communication and multiculturalism.

Once we agree that the Torah is for everyone and that it operates very effectively in different places and in differing societies, we will be on the way to the balanced view of life that the Torah truly demands from us. Shabat shalom

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**From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein**

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**Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein**

**Weekly Parsha :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

***Vayakhel – Pekudei***

The book of Shemot that began with such high drama just a few months ago ends this week on a rather bland and apparently purely technical note. The Torah once more reviews and recounts for us the details of the construction of the Mishkan and an exact accounting of the material goods that were used in its construction.

Through the ages, the commentators have dwelt long and hard on these parshiyot in the holy Torah, where every letter and word is eternal, in an attempt to justify this seemingly superfluous repetition. I will not attempt to review all of the different approaches to explain this issue. They are all satisfactory and yet all are somehow short of the mark as well.

I certainly have no great or brilliant insight into the matter myself. But, there is an obvious teaching that all of the commentators agree with that does derive from this review and repetition regarding the construction of the Mishkan.

The Mishkan had the miraculous quality of being built exactly and unwaveringly according to its original plan. Many times in life people and institutions set out to create structures, organizations and policies that will be of great benefit to society upon completion. Rarely if ever does the finished product match exactly the plans and true intentions of those who planned and initiated the project.

All human plans and blueprints are subject to change, alterations and even to cancellation. The plans for the Mishkan, shrouded in the spirituality of God’s commandments, were not subject to such changes. Therefore Bezalel and Ahaliav and the Jewish people were complimented for their strict adherence to the original plans given to Moshe for the construction of the Mishkan.

Every detail of the construction of the Mishkan is reviewed in the parshiyot of this week. All builders are aware of the importance of detail in their work. A missing screw or nail or hook can lead to later disaster. This is true in the physical mundane life of people. It is doubly true regarding the spiritual and moral character of a person and a community. Only in the completion of the details is the whole person or project seen. The measure of an artist, whether in pictures or music, is always in the nuances - in the details. The avoidance of shortcuts that invariably lead to shabbiness is the true hallmark of the gifted performer. Moshe lovingly records for us every piece of material goods that came together as the holy Mishkan. In kabbalistic thought, every nuance of the construction of the Mishkan is truly an influence on the general world at large.

This only serves to reemphasize the importance of detail in dealing with the Mishkan. The Mishkan is no longer physically present with us but its lessons and greatness still abide within the Torah we study and in the value systems of the Jewish people. By reading the Torah’s description of it and studying the underlying principles that it represents, the Mishkan gains life and influence within us individually and collectively. May we be strengthened by this eternal knowledge.

Chazak chazak v’nitchazek

**From** Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>  
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**Subject** Torah Weekly  
**Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Vayakhel - Pekudei**  
*For the week ending 9 March 2013 / 26 Adar I 5773*  
**by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com**  
**Insights**

***The Ultimate Labor Saver***

***“Six days shall labor be done, and the seventh day will be for you holy...” (35:2)***

For as long as I can remember, one of society’s most cherished dreams has been a robot that gets all your work done for you.

In the late fifties we were regaled with fanciful concoctions of tin cans that looked like Tin-Man-rejects from “The Wizard of Oz”, complete with the apron and a happy mechanical smile. In the sixties, wacky inventors produced little motorized “home-puppies” that scooted around cleaning the carpet and swept the floors. Nowadays robotics has reached amazing levels. Watching a car being assembled today is an eerie experience with nary a human in sight. (Except of course to execute the mandatory strike for shorter hours and better working conditions.)

I want to let you into a secret. The “Ultimate Labor Saver” has been in existence for over three thousand years. The trouble is that many people don’t know how to operate it.

“Six days shall labor be done, and the seventh day will be for you holy...”

The grammar of this verse is unusual. The Torah doesn’t say you can do labor for six days, rather it expresses itself in the passive, “labor shall be done.”

When we keep Shabbat, G-d’s blessings rest on all our workday efforts. If you’re a creative writer for an ad agency, suddenly you’ll find a brilliant new concept that just wafts into your consciousness from out of nowhere on Tuesday morning. If you’re a cabinetmaker, all the mortises that you cut are a perfect fit. If you’re a pilot, you’ll find that there’s a break in the weather allowing you a landing-window at your destination, avoiding a three-hour delay and a few hundred irate passengers. The list is as endless as the activities of man. When we keep Shabbat properly, even if you don’t overly exert ourselves, we will find that things just seem to get done, that little bit quicker and better.

Shabbat is the Ultimate Labor Saver.

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**From** Shema Yisrael Torah Network  
<shemalist@shemayisrael.com>  
**To** Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>  
**Subject** Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum  
**Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum**

***Parshas Vayakhel***

***On six days work may be done, but the seventh shall be holy for you. (35:2)***

The Torah introduces the commandments concerning the Mishkan with an enjoinder to guard/observe the Shabbos. On a simple level, the Torah is intimating that, while the construction of the Mishkan is a lofty endeavor with clearly transcendent significance, it does not supersede Shabbos. In other words, the construction of the Mishkan, regardless of its magnitude, is halted for Shabbos. Veritably, one detects an affinity between Shabbos and the Mishkan. Chazal declare that the Lamed-tes Melachos, Thirty-nine classifications of work prohibited on Shabbos, are

derived from the nature of work involved in the construction of the Mishkan. What is the connection between Shabbos and Mishkan? Horav Aharon Soloveitchik, zl, distinguishes between two forms of Creation: briaah and yetzirah. He quotes Radak who explains that briaah is related to destruction. Although briaah in the total sense of creation is the antithesis of destruction, briaah involves destructive elements as well. Chazal teach that prior to creating the world in which we live, Hashem created many other worlds and destroyed them. Through this perspective, we see that the creation of this world involved the destruction of many others. Hence, the creation of this world entailed the process of briaah.

Yetzirah is a process of creation which does not involve any element of destruction. It is the process through which Hashem continually recreates this world and governs it. We now may understand how Shabbos fits into the equation. We may wonder: What is so special about our world that it, too, was not destroyed like its many predecessors? The Rosh Yeshivah explains that the principle of causation distinguishes our world from the rest. This world, unlike the others, survives because its operation is based on causation, the principle which ensures harmony and order, "the principle of rest," the principle of Shabbos Kodesh. The other worlds did not survive, because they did not contain the element of Shabbos.

When the Torah writes that Hashem rested on the seventh day, it implies that until Shabbos there had been no causality, there had been no order. True, there was creation, but it was a process whereby worlds were created, rearranged, destroyed - and then new ones created. So much energy was expended via creation and destruction, but there had been no cause and effect. On the seventh day, Hashem completed the process of briaah. The process had been in effect for the six days of Creation. On Shabbos, the principle of rest was introduced and, with it, harmony and causality. The yetzirah mode now began. Thus, Shabbos is the day on which man is to dedicate himself to the pursuit of yetzirah, creation without destruction.

In the construction of the Mishkan, all forms of work involved the principle of briaah in one way or another. All thirty-nine melachos, even that of boneh, building, involved some sort of destructive effort, even if only to rearrange the elements of nature. Rearranging nature means altering an object, which is like destroying its original form. Hotzaah, carrying, is one exception; therefore, it is called a melachah geruah, inferior type of work. On Shabbos, the day when one is to dedicate himself almost exclusively to yetzirah, these melachos are prohibited. Shabbos celebrates the point of the culmination of briaah and the initiation of yetzirah. This moment represents the basis of creation. Rav Soloveitchik makes a play on words when he points out that on Shabbos one must focus on his tzurah, image, realizing his individuality and conforming to the image of G-d, the Tzelem Elokim, inherent in him. By studying Torah, he brings himself closer to achieving this goal and elevating the world to a higher spiritual plateau.

During the construction of the Mishkan the categories of work involved the principle of briaah, such that its completion was the place for the Shechinah to repose among the Jewish People, thus transforming the Mishkan into an edifice dedicated to yetzirah. Until Hashem rested His Divine Presence on the Mishkan, until the spirit of His Glory was not manifest, the Sanctuary was not the Sanctuary. It was a body without a soul, an edifice of briaah. Only when the Mishkan was elevated to the realm of yetzirah did it receive its soul. At that point, the Mishkan was complete. The kedushah, holiness, of Shabbos and the kedushah of the Mishkan are of a similar nature, in that they both embody the principle of yetzirah. Until the Mishkan became the place where Hashem would repose His Divine Presence, it was yet another edifice - whose construction did not supersede the kedushah of Shabbos.

The following story is about Shabbos and the deep bond that a Torah giant had with this holy day. A number of years ago, a rabbi visiting

Miami gave a lecture about the life and character of the saintly Chafetz Chaim. He held the group spellbound with vignettes about the Chafetz Chaim's righteousness. He was about to relate one last story, but he hesitated. Apparently, he knew only part of the story. Then he changed his mind, deciding that even an unfinished story about the Chafetz Chaim was worthy of relating.

A young teenager in the Chafetz Chaim's town was caught smoking a cigarette on Shabbos. The sacred day of rest had been marred. The Chafetz Chaim was notified, and the student was called to report to his "office." No one knew what would happen to the student. The Chafetz Chaim took his religion very seriously. The boy entered the office and exited a few minutes later. The rabbi then said that this was all he knew about the incident. He had no idea what had taken place in the office, what the Chafetz Chaim had said to him. He did know one thing: "That boy never desecrated Shabbos again." He concluded his lecture with the addendum that he would give anything to know what had transpired in the office of the Chafetz Chaim.

The hall emptied, as everyone except for one elderly man dispersed. This man sat in his seat, deep in thought. He began to tremble, and his eyes became moist and began to tear. The rabbi approached him and asked, "Is anything wrong?"

"Where did you hear that story?" the man asked.

The rabbi replied, "I really do not remember. On one of my trips, someone related the incident to me."

The man looked up at the rabbi and said, "I was that boy." He then continued with the rest of the story.

"The incident took place in the 1920's, when the Chafetz Chaim was already in his eighties. I trembled to go in to face him, but I had no alternative. I was wrong, and now I would have to face the music. The office was in the Chafetz Chaim's house - if you could even call it a house. It was nothing more than a ramshackle hut with broken furniture. The poverty was evident throughout. Yet, here was the gadol ha'dor, the Torah leader of the generation, the pulse of the Jewish People.

"I entered the room, and there he was. He was a tiny man. He hardly reached up to my shoulders. He said nothing, but took my hand and clasped it tenderly in both of his hands. He then brought my hand up to his face. His eyes were closed. When he opened them, they were filled with tears - burning, hot tears. He looked at me. In a hushed voice filled with pain and disbelief, he cried out, "Shabbos, Shabbos, the holy Shabbos." That was it. He looked deep into my eyes, as his hot tears rolled down his cheeks, landing on my hand. I thought the tears would burn a hole through my hand. Indeed, I can still feel the heat. That was his rebuke. I felt that he was not angry, just sad and disappointed. I never forgot that moment. I have observed Shabbos ever since."

Imagine - no rebuke, no discourse - just sincere pain over another Jew's error. Here was a man who loved each Jew as much as he loved each mitzvah. When he heard that a brother had desecrated Shabbos, he did not call him names. He cried. Can we say that?

***And the work (of bringing materials for the building) was just enough, to make all the works (of the Mishkan), and there was left over. (36:7)***

When we read this pasuk we are struck with an anomaly in its interpretation. The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh asks: Are these two expressions - dayom, "just enough;" and v'hoseir, "left over" - actually exclusive of one another? If there was "just enough," then there could not have been anything "left over"; and if there is something "left over," then clearly there was more than "just enough." The Sfas Emes approaches this from a number of perspectives. We will select one which teaches a valuable lesson in avodas Hashem, service to the Almighty. In the Midrash Tanchuma, Chazal state that the building of the Mishkan paralleled Brias Ha'Olam, the Creation of the world. Vayar Moshe es kol ha'melachah, "And Moshe saw all of the work." The pasuk does not say that Moshe saw, "all of the meleches ha'Mishkan, all of the work

(associated with the building) of the Mishkan," but rather, "all of the work." (Apparently, this is a reference to another "work" that was completed.) For everything was (exactly) like the work of creation. In short, Chazal teach that the creation of the Mishkan corresponded with the creation of the world.

The Sfas Emes notes that when Klal Yisrael sinned with the Golden Calf, their infraction impacted not only themselves and their relationship with Hashem. They also damaged the spiritual structure of the entire world. Hence, the Mishkan, which served as a kaparah, atonement, for their sin was meant to repair the spiritual breach which they engendered. Thus, every step of the Mishkan's construction had to parallel the original creation of the world.

Let us compare the "endings" of these two "constructions." At the culmination of Maaseh Bereishis, the Act of Creating the World, the Torah writes, Vayar Elokim es kol asher asah v'hinei tov me'od, "And G-d saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good..."; V'yechal Elokim...melachto asher asah, "And G-d completed His work which He had done"; Vayivarech Elokim, "And Hashem blessed." (1:31, 2:1, 6) Concerning the completion of the Mishkan, the Torah writes, Vayar Moshe es kol ha'melachah... va'yevarech osam Moshe, "And Moshe saw all the work... and Moshe blessed them" (Shemos 39:43).

Hashem created the world with the power of Torah. The tzaddikim, righteous, of every ensuing generation maintain the world via the Torah, which they so diligently study. Moshe sensed this awesome reality. He understood that the Mishkan was much more than a temporal structure, an edifice made for the Jews traveling in the wilderness. He understood that, with the creation of the Mishkan, Maasei Bereishis had reached its completion as well.

There is yet another similarity between the creation of the world and the construction of the Mishkan. The Sfas Emes quotes the Talmud Chagigah 12a, where Chazal state that, at the beginning of Creation, the Heavens and the earth expanded and continued to burgeon until Hashem said, Dai! "Enough!" The Midrash states that by dusk at the end of the sixth day (in other words, Erev Shabbos), the physical forms for certain spirits had not yet been created; thus, they have remained spiritual entities without corporeal bodies. Certainly, Hashem knew that Shabbos was coming; yet, even so, He did not complete all of His work. This was on purpose. There was "left over." As the Maharal m'Prague writes, "This world was made with a lack of perfection." The only way to achieve perfection, the Sfas Emes explains, is by drawing Hashem into this world by means of our Torah study and mitzvah observance. Let us return to the original question presented by the Ohr HaChaim. Klal Yisrael wanted to give more and more for the construction of the Mishkan, but were forcibly stopped. Hashem said "no more". The imperfection of the Mishkan and this world itself, tells us that, despite our efforts and with all our work, we still depend on Hashem to achieve final completion. Man's contribution is dai, his input "just enough." The hoseir, "extra flow" of blessing that completes the Mishkan, is derived from a supernatural source. Indeed, the Sfas Emes adds that this is quite like the neshamah yeseirah, extra soul, that enters the world on Shabbos and elevates the entire creation.

#### ***Parashas Pekudei***

***These are the reckonings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony. (38:21)***

Rashi notes the juxtaposition of Mishkan/Mishkan, which he explains refers to the two Temples which were taken from us. In a play on words, the word Mishkan is pronounced Mashkon, which is a pledge, collateral, security. This suggests that the two Temples/Mishkanos were taken as collateral for Klal Yisrael's sins. At the time in which we will sincerely repent, they will be returned to their former glory. It seems strange that the destruction of the Batei Mikdash is alluded to specifically at the juncture that the Torah addresses the completion of the Mishkan's

construction. Surely, there could be another, more appropriate, place to make note of the destruction of the Batei Mikdash.

Horav Aizik Ausband, zl, derives from here that the hashroas ha'Shechinah, the fact that the Divine Presence rests among us, was a complete and irrevocable gift to the Jewish People. Thus, even when they sin and warrant an end to this glorious relationship, Hashem does not "rip up" the contract and leave us hanging. No, it is very much like a mashkon, whereby Hashem takes the Mishkan as collateral until that time that we reverse ourselves and repent. A mashkon can be seized only by the lender from the individual who rightfully owns it. He does not take a mashkon from just anyone, only from its owner.

The Torah is teaching us that, as the Mishkan is completed and Hashem is about to rest His Divine Presence among us, the Mishkan becomes our possession unilaterally. When Hashem destroyed it, He was only using it as collateral. When we repay our "debt," we will get it back. One frightening lesson can be derived from this concept. After all the years of misery, bloodshed, pogroms and holocausts; after we have soaked the soil of Europe with our blood and our tears have created a river, it seems that we have not yet repaid the debt.

He erected up the courtyard all around the Mishkan and the Mizbayach... And Moshe completed the work. The cloud covered the Ohel Moed, and the glory of Hashem filled the Mishkan. (40:33, 34) Ramban addresses the reason Sefer Shemos concludes with the subject of the Mishkan, when, in fact, it is addressed earlier in Parshios Terumah and Tetzaveh. He explains that Sefer Shemos is referred to as the Sefer HaGeulah, Book of Redemption. It is the book that relates how Hashem came to His close nation and redeemed them from the pain and misery of the Egyptian bondage. Although they were no longer under the thumbscrews of their Egyptian masters, they were still in exile, in the sense that, until they would return to their place and come back to the level of their ancestors, their redemption would not be complete. When they left Egypt, they were still exiles, because they had not entered into their Promised Land. Wandering in the wilderness, not knowing what tomorrow would bring, hardly engendered a sense of freedom. When the nation arrived at Har Sinai and made the Mishkan, thereby setting the stage for the Shechinah, Divine Presence, to reside among them, they had returned to the level of their forefathers. Then, they were considered geulim, redeemed. Thus, Sefer Shemos concludes, "The glory of Hashem filled the Mishkan."

Let us attempt to grapple with the above statement. Following their release from Egypt, Klal Yisrael were wandering in the harsh wilderness - without a stable home, source of livelihood and sustenance, lacking everything that is part of a settled life. They lived from day to day, sustained by the Heavenly manna. Yet, it was specifically this set of circumstances which defined their freedom. How are we to understand this?

Horav Arye Leib Bakst, zl, explains that the underlying purpose of the bria, the creation of this world, is that Klal Yisrael achieves perfection. Hashem chose us as His emissaries to the world, as His nation. We must be worthy of this distinction. This can only come about through commitment, obedience, devotion, and self-sacrifice. Then, after reaching this pinnacle, we have arrived. We are free! This is the ultimate geulah, liberation. We derive from the Ramban that this plateau can be achieved when Klal Yisrael lives with the Shechinah, as it was when Hashem's glory filled the Mishkan. This is the perfection which connotes true freedom. The only way Klal Yisrael can replicate this perfection, which is the result of Hashem's glory being among us, is through the medium of limud haTorah, Torah study. Everything else mundane is merely vacuous and foolish. We either have it - or we do not. When Hashem reposes among us, we are not in exile - regardless of the physical conditions in which we find ourselves. One can be in a ghetto or a concentration camp and be free; alternatively, one can be outfitted from head to toe in luxury, his days and nights filled with honor and power,

but still remain a slave in exile. It all depends on his degree of perfection, his relationship with Hashem.

*Sponsored by Yaakov and Karen Nisenbaum and Family in memory of our Father and Grandfather Martin Nisenbaum R' Mordechai ben R' Ephraim z"l niftar Rosh Chodesh Nissan 5753*

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**Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb**

**Orthodox Union / www.ou.org**

**Rabbi Weinreb's Parsha Column, Parshat VaYakhel-Pekudei**

**"Words of Fire"**

"Words, words, words!", he shouted at me. He was a young man, raised as an observant Jew, but now in rebellion against his traditional upbringing. His parents had asked me to meet with him for several sessions to see if I could at least temper his rebellious spirit, and perhaps even convince him to return to the path they desired him to follow.

To put it mildly, he was reluctant to meet with me. But he agreed to do so, and in fact was a bit more cooperative than other youngsters, of a similar mind, with whom I have had such discussions. He spoke, argued, debated, questioned, and expressed himself quite articulately. Occasionally, he even listened.

I well recall his major concern with traditional Judaism. He felt that our religion insisted that we limit our experience of the world to the verbal modality. "There is so much to see and hear, to touch and feel, to taste and smell, in this world. But all our religion tells us to do is to use words. Read, study, pray. Words, words, words. I want a richer life, a more robust experience!" he exclaimed.

The attitude expressed by my young friend is not at all limited to rebellious youth. Many of our adult coreligionists have similar objections, although they are often too ashamed to articulate them. But, when they let their guard down, many Jews, including some who are regular participants in synagogue services, admit to finding our religion overly focused upon thought and language.

It is interesting to note in this regard that one of the most profound Jewish thinkers of the 20th century characterized our religion as one of "shmia", listening and hearing, and not as a religion of "riyah", seeing. I refer to Rabbi Dovid HaCohen, a close disciple of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of the Land of Israel.

Rabbi HaCohen's personal lifestyle was an extremely ascetic one, having committed himself to the role of a Nazirite and thus renouncing the pleasures of the products of the vine. It is thus no surprise that he wrote a book called "The Voice of Prophecy", in which he maintained that our religion relies upon the ear, and not the eye, the auditory sense to the exclusion of the visual sense. Hence, the single most popular phrase in the Jewish religious language is "Shema Yisrael", "Hear O Israel".

As for me, I am quite confident that neither my young friend, nor those adults who find our religion excessively verbal, nor even the pious and philosophical Rabbi HaCohen, are correct. For me the Jewish religion is much more full-bodied, and allows for the entire panoply of the human senses: visual, certainly, but also our senses of touch, taste, and smell. Historically, in the days of the ancient Temple, there were many glorious examples of ceremonies and rituals which employed a wide range of activities besides the mere recitation of words. Granted, nowadays such examples are fewer, but they are readily and regularly accessible to every Jew.

The most powerful of these rituals has its source in this week's Torah portion, VaYakhel-Pekudei (Exodus 35:1-40:38). I refer to the verse near the beginning of the Parsha which reads:

"You shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day." (Exodus 35:3)

It is instructive that although we are forbidden to kindle a fire during the Sabbath, it is fire which symbolically ushers in the Sabbath and it is fire which accompanies it at its conclusion. Sabbath begins when, traditionally, the woman of the house lights the Sabbath candles. It ends when the family, and sometimes the entire congregation, gathers around a torch of fire and participates in the Havdalah service.

The use of fire to bracket the Sabbath experience is a dramatic example of a nonverbal experience which involves the sense of touch, with the experience of heat and warmth, as well as the visual experience, of seeing.

The view of the modest candles heralding the approach of the Sabbath is what sets the tone of tranquility and serenity which defines that holy day. The fiery image of the Havdalah candle, which halachically must be torch like, symbolizes the return to the activity and productivity of the coming week.

But Havdalah does not only incorporate the senses of vision and touch; it also includes the sense of smell--the spices--and, of course, the sense of taste--the cup of wine. A multi-sensory experience if there ever was one. The fire of Havdalah is its dominant image (see accompanying photo of Havdalah at an Israeli Air Force base) and which contains such rich symbolic meaning. This meaning is best conveyed by the following passage in the Midrash, which describes Adam's emotions at the conclusion of the first Sabbath of creation:

"The sun set at the conclusion of the first Sabbath. Darkness began to descend. Adam was terrified... What did the Holy One Blessed Be He do? He prepared for him two flint stones. Adam rubbed them together. A fire was ignited, and all was illuminated. Adam blessed the fire, and thus it is written 'and the night will be light for me' (Psalms 139:11). What blessing did he recite? 'Blessed are You, Lord our God... Who creates the lights of fire.'" (Bereshit Rabba 11:2)

The message here is clear. Fire was given to man. Man is to use it to continue the work of God's creation. Just as God worked during the first six days of creation, so too must man be productive during the six days of his work week. The Almighty gave Adam fire so that after his restful Sabbath, he could return to the world of action.

How different is this Midrash from the Greek myth of Prometheus. Prometheus stole fire from the gods of Mount Olympus, from Zeus. In contrast to the Greek tradition, in which the gods are protective of fire and wish to keep it from man, the Torah insists that it was God who enabled man to create fire so that he could continue the process of creation using his own resources.

We can readily conclude, then, that there is much more to our religion than words. There is a place, and a prominent one, for visual imagery, for delicious tastes, and for fragrant scents. And above all, there is a demand that we move from our essentially passive Sabbath stance to one of creative and constructive action.

Our faith contains much more than "words, words, words".

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Subject Rabbi Frand on Parsha

### **Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Vayakhel and Pekudei**

#### ***Why Did Moshe Save His Blessing For Parshas Pekudei?***

Parshas Pekudei is the last of 5 Parshiyos in the second half of Sefer Shmos that contains the details of how the Mishkan was built. If we feel a sense of accomplishment at having learned these 5 parshas, we can imagine the joy the people experienced at the momentous occasion in Parshas Pekudei, when the Mishkan was finally assembled for the first

time. We read in the parsha that "Moshe saw all the work, and behold! -- They had done it as Hashem had commanded; so had they done; and Moshe blessed them. [Shmos 39:43]"

Rashi quotes Chazal that the blessing Moshe gave them was "May the Divine Presence of G-d rest in the work of your hands". Now that all is said and done, the blessing was that the L-rd should rest His Presence on the people and on the building.

Rav Simcha Schepps, who was a Rosh Yeshiva in Torah VoDaas, shared an interesting insight. Rav Schepps says that a more logical place to have given the Jewish people this Bracha [blessing] would have been at the outset of the building of the Mishkan. The pasuk near the beginning of Parshas Terumah says: "They shall make Me a Sanctuary so that I may dwell among them" [Shmos 25:8]. This Bracha of "May the Divine Presence of G--d rest in the work of your hands" would have been a very appropriate blessing to say at that moment. Why does Moshe save it for the end of the process?

Rav Schepps answers based on a pasuk in Tehillim, with which most of us are familiar: "Who will go up upon the Mountain of Hashem and who will rise up to His holy place?" [Tehillim 24:3]. All the commentaries say that this pasuk alludes to the fact that there are two different challenges in life. There is the "Who will go up upon the Mountain of Hashem?" This means who has the strength of character and the drive to go up to the Mountain of G-d? This is one challenge. But there is an even greater challenge than getting up there. The greater challenge is once you are already at the top of the mountain, to be able to stay up there.

In fact, it is easier to climb to the top of the Mountain of Hashem than it is to remain there. Repetition and boredom set in. The day in, day out, monotony sets in. Remaining on the Mountain of the L-rd is a much more difficult task than going up there in the first place.

In August / September, during Elul Zeman in Yeshivos -- everyone is enthusiastic. By the time we reach the end of Adar, only the elite are still standing at the peak of the Mountain of Hashem. It is like that in many areas of life.

When we were Bar Mitzvah boys and we started putting on Tefillin, the ritual involved great excitement. When one has been putting on Tefillin for 40 or 50 years, some of that enthusiasm is lost. The truth of the matter is that this is the way it is in most marriages as well. "The first year" is great. It is the honeymoon period. But when one has been married 10, 20, or 30 years, the excitement of that first year does not seem to persist.

We cannot let that happen. The challenge is not only "Who will climb up the Mountain of G-d?" to reach the peak of the mountain. The challenge is even more so, "who will remain standing on His holy place?"

So, at the beginning of the building of the Mishkan, everyone was enthused. Remember the context. They had committed the sin of the Golden Calf. The Almighty threatened to wipe them out. Moshe Rabbeinu prayed on their behalf and finally on Yom Kippur, he descended again from Mt. Sinai with the second Luchos. They started building the Mishkan on the day after Yom Kippur. Everyone participated with adrenalin and emotion. That is the phase of "Who will climb up the Mountain of G-d?"

However, now that the Mishkan is built, the excitement dissipates. Now starts the day in, day out, repetitive routine. Morning, evening, morning, evening... We bring the same Korban Tamid, day in and day out.

Therefore, Moshe Rabbeinu's Bracha to them is "May it be His will that His Divine Presence abide in the handicraft of your hands." In other words, may the initial enthusiasm be maintained throughout the ongoing phase of the Mishkan's daily operation.

#### ***Using the Term "House of Israel" Instead of the Term "Children of Israel"***

I heard the following thought in the name of Rav Nochum Lansky, one of the Roshei Yeshiva in Yeshivas Ner Yisroel.

Parshas Pekudei marks the end of the Book of Shmos. The last pasuk in the Book of Shmos reads as follows: "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." [Shmos 40:38]

Let us contrast the use of the wording "House of Israel" with the last pasuk at the end of the Book of Vayikra: "These are the commandments that Hashem commanded Moshe to the Children of Israel on Mount Sinai." [Vayikra 27:34] Similarly, the last pasuk at the end of the book of Bamidbar says: "These are the commandments and the ordinances that Hashem commanded through Moshe to the Children of Israel in the Plains of Moav, at the Jordan, by Jericho." [Bamidbar 36:13]

Both the book of Vayikra and the book of Bamidbar end with the more commonly used expression Children of Israel (Bnei Yisrael), while the book of Shmos ends with the less commonly used designation "House of Israel" (Beis Yisrael). What is the nuance here? What is the Torah hinting at?

Rav Lansky suggests that there is a tremendous symmetry here. How does the Book of Shmos begin? The opening pasuk reads: "And these are the names of the Children of Israel who came to Egypt with Yaakov, each man AND HIS HOUSEHOLD (u'beiso) came." [Shmos 1:1] This book is about the genesis of the Jewish people. This is where we became a nation. But a nation is not a conglomeration of millions of people. A nation – at least the Jewish nation – is a nation of families. That is what makes us into an "am" [nation]. It is the BAYIS [household] that makes us into a nation. If we think back to the narrative of the Book of Shmos, we will see this emphasis on the BAYIS over and over again. "They should take a lamb for the HOUSEHOLDS of the fathers; a lamb per HOUSEHOLD" [Shmos 12:3]. The Korban Pessach was brought together with one's family. "Thus shall you say to the HOUSE (beis) of Yaakov..." [Shmos 19:3]. The formation of the Jewish nation is family by family. This is our strength.

We hear so much about the dissolution of American society and how we are losing the structure of our society because the nuclear family is breaking up. Just as a chain is only as strong as its links, so too a nation is only as strong as its families. That is why the book of Shmos places such an emphasis on the building of 'Bayis' – faithful households.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch notes that the halacha exempts a groom from going off to war during the first year of marriage. The rule of thumb is that whenever there is a clash between a mitzvah incumbent on the public (mitzvah d'rabim) and a private mitzvah (mitzvah d'yachid), the public mitzvah takes precedence. In light of this principle, Rav Hirsch asks why the personal mitzvah to rejoice with one's wife the first year of marriage trumps the public mitzvah to go out to battle with the nation. Rav Hirsch answers that building and cementing the relationship that is the foundation of a Jewish household IS a mitzvah d'rabbim (a mitzvah affecting the nation). This is a contribution to the entire community. We are only a nation by virtue of the fact that we are a nation of strong families.

For this reason, the book of Shmos begins with the pasuk that emphasizes that the Jewish people came down to Egypt – "each man with his HOUSEHOLD" and ends with the pasuk which emphasizes "the entire HOUSE of Israel."

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD RavFrاند, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org.

**The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and holy sites.**

***Judaism does not ask man "How can you overcome life? but "How can you live correctly?"***

In the detailed description in this week's parsha, Yayakhel, of the building of the mishkan (tabernacle) and its ritual objects, a unique object is described: a coating for the sink meant for washing the hands and feet of the kohanim (priests) before their service. This cover was made of copper mirrors that the Jewish women had donated. These mirrors, our sages note, served an important purpose when the Jews were slaves in Egypt.

The depressed and oppressed men, tortured through heavy labor, busy morning to night just trying to survive, lost the sense of enjoyment related to family life. They lived only to survive and get through one more day of suffering. In these harsh conditions and this gloomy atmosphere, the women's job was to take care of continuity and the following generations. This mirrors helped them to do this, as Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (Rashi), the great commentator on the Torah, describes: "The Jewish women had mirrors in their possession that they used to beautify themselves, and they were prepared to part even with them for the sake of contributing toward the building of the mishkan. Moshe wanted to reject such a donation, for the mirrors were instruments of the Evil Inclination. G-d, however, told him: 'Accept them, they are more precious to Me than anything else, for by them the women brought forth multitudes of offspring in Egypt.' When their husbands went out to the fields to perform their backbreaking toil, the women would bring them food and drink and feed them.

They, with their husbands would look in their mirrors, and arouse their husbands with loving words in order to make their husbands feel passion and need, and they would get pregnant and give birth there" (Rashi Exodus 38:8).

With this description, our sages give us two approaches to looking at man's enjoyment.

Moses looked at the mirrors donated for coating the sink and rejected them. He saw them as having been made for disgraceful, repulsive needs. But God taught him that the approach of Judaism to enjoyment is not negative at all. On the contrary, enjoyment and fulfillment of man's needs can serve as a way to actualize lofty values, such as the survival and continuity of the Jewish nation during its time of slavery in Egypt. This idea is one of the values unique to Judaism as distinct from other religions. In Catholicism, for example, it is forbidden for a man of religion to live a family life and he must take an oath of abstinence and spend his life without a partner.

As opposed to this, in Judaism, the High Priest who works in the Temple – he whose job was the most important and most sacred – is not allowed to be a bachelor. He must be married and have a healthy, natural family life.

What does this idea reveal? When a religion commands its religious leaders to be monastic and abstemious, it is actually expressing that there is a conflict between life and religion. It is saying that religion is not a part of life, but is opposed to it. Based on this claim, various religions instruct their religious leaders not to marry.

Judaism, however, sees the picture differently.

A religious life is the best and most enjoyable way to live. "Live, and live well," it says to its believers. Judaism does not present a conflict between religion and life, but rather a harmonious, wondrous integration of life through thought – a moral life, life with purpose, goals, and significance. The goal is not to abstain from life; on the contrary, life itself is the goal.

Judaism does not ask man "How can you overcome life? but "How can you live correctly?" The description of the mirrors that coated the sink in

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<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-EdContributors/Article.aspx?id=305675>  
**Parshat Yayakhel: O The good life**  
By [Rabbi] Shmuel Rabinowitz

the courtyard of the mishkan expresses exactly what the Jewish perspective is on life in general and on life's enjoyments in particular. Enjoyment is a blessed thing when it is directed at a worthy goal. All rights reserved © 1995 - 2012 The Jerusalem Post.

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**Rav Kook List**  
**Rav Kook on the Torah Portion**  
*Vayakheil: Technology and the Sabbath*

"Do not ignite fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath." (Ex. 35:3)  
The Torah forbids 39 different categories of activity on the Sabbath. Yet only one - lighting fire - is explicitly prohibited in the Torah. Why? Why does the Torah qualify the prohibition of lighting fire with the phrase, "in any of your dwellings"? Is it not forbidden to start a fire in any location?  
The control and use of fire is unique to humanity. It is the basis for our advances in science and innovations in technology. Even now, fuel sources for burning, coal and oil, are what power modern societies. In short, fire is a metaphor for our power and control over nature, the fruit of our God-given intelligence.  
What is the central message of the Sabbath? When we refrain from working on the seventh day, we acknowledge that God is the Creator of the world.  
One might think that only the pristine natural world is truly the work of God. Human technology, on the other hand, is artificial and perhaps alien to the true purpose of the universe. Therefore, the Torah specifically prohibits lighting fire on the Sabbath, emphasizing that our progress in science and technology is also part of creation. Everything is included in the ultimate design of the universe. Our advances and inventions contribute towards the goal of creation in accordance with God's sublime wisdom.  
Along with the recognition that all of our accomplishments are in essence the work of God, we must also be aware that we have tremendous power to change and improve the world. This change will be for a blessing if we are wise enough to utilize our technology within the guidelines of integrity and holiness.

**Fire in the Temple**

This caveat leads to the second question we asked: why does the Torah limit the prohibition of lighting fire on the Sabbath to "your dwellings"? The Talmud (Shabbat 20a) explains that lighting fire is only forbidden in private dwellings, but in the Temple, it is permitted to burn offerings on the Sabbath. Why should fire be permitted in the Temple?

The holy Temple was a focal point of prophecy and Divine revelation. It was the ultimate source of enlightenment, for both the individual and the nation. The fire used in the Temple is a metaphor for our mission to improve the world through advances in science and technology. We need to internalize the message that it is up to us to develop and advance the world, until the entire universe is renewed with a new heart and soul, with understanding and harmony. Permitting the technological innovation of fire in Temple on the Sabbath indicates that God wants us to utilize our intellectual gifts to innovate and improve, in a fashion similar to God's own creative acts.

We need to be constantly aware of our extraordinary potential when we follow the path that our Maker designated for us. At this spiritual level, we should not think that we are incapable of accomplishing new things. As the Talmud declares, 'If they desire, the righteous can create worlds' (Sanhedrin 65b). When humanity attains ethical perfection, justice will then guide all of our actions, and scientific advances and inventions will draw their inspiration from the source of Divine morality, the holy Temple.

(Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 164-165. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. III, p. 53)  
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Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit

**Weekly Halacha**  
**by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt**

**Shabbos Dancing**

Question: Why did the Rabbis restrict clapping and dancing on Shabbos and Yom Tov?

Discussion: The Talmud 1 records that the Rabbis prohibited playing musical instruments on Shabbos and Yom Tov because musical instruments often need to be tuned, a potential violation of the Shabbos Labor of Makeh b'patish.<sup>2</sup> Not only did they prohibit all different types of musical instruments, but they also included all other noise-making objects, such as bells, whistles and rattles.<sup>3</sup>

The Rabbis of the Talmud 4 went even further. They decreed that certain actions which could lead to the playing of musical instruments should also be restricted, even if at the moment there are no musical instruments present or even available. Apparently, they were concerned that such an atmosphere could lead a creative individual to forget that it is Shabbos, and fashion a makeshift musical instrument on the spot.<sup>5</sup> Thus they banned clapping and dancing as well, since these are activities which generate an atmosphere in which music is played.

Question: Nowadays, does the Rabbinic injunction against clapping and dancing on Shabbos and Yom Tov still apply?

Discussion: While all authorities agree that the original edict against playing any kind of instrument remains in effect nowadays,<sup>6</sup> there are conflicting opinions whether or not the additional decree against clapping and dancing is also in effect. Some argue that nowadays we no longer have the ability or talent to fashion a musical instrument on the spot, so we should not prohibit activities that could lead to the fashioning of musical instruments.<sup>7</sup> Others hold that the original Rabbinic decree applied only to dance movements which required musical accompaniment, not to the unstructured and informal circle dancing popular today.<sup>8</sup> For whatever reason, the fact remains that it became customary for people to clap and dance on Shabbos and Yom Tov, and the poskim did not strenuously object to this behavior.<sup>9</sup> While it behooves a ba'al nefesh (a person who is especially meticulous in his mitzvah observance) to refrain from clapping and dancing<sup>10</sup> on Shabbos and Yom Tov (except on Simchas Torah 11) ? especially for non-mitzvah purposes<sup>12</sup> ? and many people are careful about it,<sup>13</sup> the basic halachah follows the opinion of the poskim who hold that nowadays, the Rabbinic decree against clapping and dancing<sup>14</sup> is no longer applicable.<sup>15</sup>

Question: When the Rabbis restricted clapping on Shabbos and Yom Tov, was applauding also included?

Discussion: No, it was not. The original injunction against clapping only included clapping to a specific rhythm or beat, since that type of clapping may lead to the fashioning of musical instruments. Applause, clapping to wake someone from his sleep or any other type of clapping not done to a specific rhythm, is permitted.<sup>16</sup>

The same halachah applies to banging on a table top with one's fist or fingers. If it is done in order to silence a crowd or catch someone's attention, it is permitted, since it is not a rhythmic beat. Beating on the table top to a specific beat, however, is included in the Rabbinic injunction against clapping and dancing, and should be avoided by those who do not clap and dance on Shabbos even nowadays.

Tapping a bottle or a glass with a spoon or a fork to a specific rhythm or beat should be avoided by everyone, since this is similar to using non-musical instruments (such as a rattle) to produce a musical sound, and may have been included in the original injunction against playing musical instruments which applies nowadays as well.<sup>17</sup>

- 1 Eiruvim 104a.
- 2 As explained by Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 23:4.
- 3 Rama, O.C. 338:1.
- 4 Beitzah 30a.
- 5 As explained by Sha'ar Efrayim, O.C. 36, quoted in Minchas Elazar 1:29.
- 6 Be'ur Halachah 339:3, s.v. le'hakeil.
- 7 Tosafos, Beitzah 30a. See also Ritva, Shabbos 148b.
- 8 Aruch ha-Shulchan 339:9; Lev Avraham 42.
- 9 Rama, O.C. 338:2, 339:3.
- 10 Clapping with a shinui is permitted according to all opinions; O.C. 339:3; Mishnah Berurah 338:1.
- 11 Mishnah Berurah 339:8.
- 12 Mishnah Berurah 339:10.
- 13 Kaf ha-Chayim 339:13-14 and Yechaveh Da'as 2:58.

14 Certainly merely walking around in a circle while singing is permissible according to all views; Devar Yehoshua 2:42-4; Yechaveh Da'as 2:58 (footnote).

15 Minchas Elazar 1:29; Igros Moshe, O.C. 2:100. Even those who do not dance on Shabbos are permitted to do so during bein ha-shemashos; Eishel Avraham, Tanina, O.C. 299:10.

16 Mishnah Berurah 338:1, 339:9; Shemiras Shabbos k'Hilchasah 28:36.

17 Based on Beiur Halachah 339:3, s.v. lehakel.

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By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

### Double Parshiyos

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

*Since this week is the first of the "double parshiyos" we will be reading this year, I thought it appropriate to discuss:*

When is it a good idea to have doubles?

Most doctors and other health professionals agree with the Rambam's assessment that taking a double portion is not good for our health. Nevertheless, in most calendar years, our policy is to have several weeks when we read a double parsha so that we are able to complete the Torah every year and make a Siyum HaTorah on Simchas Torah.

There are a total of seven potential "double parshiyos," meaning parshiyos that can sometimes be read as one reading on a Shabbos. We rarely double them all in the same year. The reason for the doubling of most parshiyos is to accommodate the extra Shabbosos that are missing in a common year. The doubled parshiyos of the common year, are at the end of Sefer Shemos or in Sefer Vayikra (Vayakheil/Pekudei; Tazria/Metzora; Acharei/Kedoshim and Behar/Bechukosei) -- all of them falling between Adar, the extra month added because of a leap year, and Shavuos.

Why do we want to "catch up" in time for Shavuos? This is so that we can fulfill a decree of Ezra, as presented in the Gemara:

Ezra decreed that the Jews read the curses of the Tochacha in Vayikra before Shavuos and those of Devarim before Rosh Hashanah. [The Gemara then queries:] Why? In order to end the year together with its curses! [The Gemara then comments:] We well understand why we read the Tochacha of Devarim before Rosh Hashanah because the year is ending, but why is that of Vayikra read before Shavuos? Is Shavuos the beginning of a year? Yes, Shavuos is the beginning of a new year, as the Mishnah explains that the world is judged on Shavuos for its fruit." Tosafos (ad loc.) explains the Gemara to mean that the tochacha should be completed two weeks before each "New Year" to allow a week as a buffer between the tochacha and the beginning of the year.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the parsha of Bechukosei, which includes the tochacha, should be read at least two weeks before Shavuos, thus necessitating combining the parshiyos in a way that we complete them and are able to read Bamidbar before Shavuos. While it is ideal that there should be one Shabbos, Bamidbar, between the tochacha of Bechukosei and Shavuos, in some leap years, there are two such Shabbosos, and Naso is also read before Shavuos. However, there are three other "double parshiyos" that do not fall during this part of the year, each pair having its own specific reason, unrelated to the leap year, for being combined.

The "Double Parsha of the Exile"

Chukas-Balak is a double parsha that exists only outside Eretz Yisrael. I once heard it jokingly referred to as "Parsha Sheniya shel Galiyus," The Double Parsha of the Exile, a takeoff on the halachic term "Yom Tov Sheini shel Galiyus," the second day of Yom Tov that is observed outside Eretz Yisrael. Indeed, this second day is the reason for combining Chukas and Balak into one parsha: when Shavuos falls on a Friday, its second day falls on a Shabbos, and therefore the communities of the exile read Aseir te'aseir in Parshas Re'eih, because it discusses the Yom Tov, whereas in Eretz Yisrael the next week's parsha, Naso, is read, since it is no longer Shavuos. When this phenomenon occurs, the Jewish communities of Eretz Yisrael and of the Golah are reading different parshiyos for four weeks, from Parshas Naso through Parshas Chukas, with Eretz Yisrael always reading the parsha a week earlier. The Golah "catches up" on the Shabbos that falls on the 12th of Tamuz by

reading both Chukas and Balak on one Shabbos, while in Eretz Yisrael, they read only Parshas Balak. Thus, the following week, both communities read Parshas Pinchas.

There are two other parshiyos, Matos and Masei, which are almost always read together, and are separated only when the year requires an extra Shabbos reading. Although we treat Matos and Masei as separate parshiyos, we should really view them as one long parsha (making the combination the largest parsha in the Torah) that occasionally needs to be divided to accommodate the need for an extra Torah reading.

On the occasional years when Matos and Masei are read separately, Parshas Pinchas falls before the Three Weeks -- and we actually read the haftarah that is printed in the chumashim for Parshas Pinchas, Ve'yad Hashem, from the book of Melachim. In all other years, Parshas Pinchas is the first Shabbos of the Three Weeks, and the haftarah read is Divrei Yirmiyahu, the opening words of the book of Yirmiyahu, which is appropriate to the season.

The printers of chumashim usually elect to print Divrei Yirmiyahu as if it is the haftarah for Parshas Matos, and then instruct you to read it on most years as the haftarah for Pinchas. It would be more logical to label the haftarah Divrei Yirmiyahu as the one appropriate for the first of the Three Weeks, and to print [0]two haftaros after Parshas Pinchas: one (Ve'yad Hashem) for the occasional year when Pinchas falls before the 17th of Tamuz, and the other (Divrei Yirmiyahu) for the far more frequent occurrence of a year in which Pinchas falls after the 17th of Tammuz. Readers should be instructed that when Parshas Matos and Parshas Masei are read on separate weeks, that the haftarah for Parshas Matos is the second haftarah printed after Parshas Pinchas. But, alas, the printers do not usually consult with me, but simply look at what other printers have done. In what years are Matos and Masei separated? Only in leap years and only when there are no parshiyos doubled together from Simchas Torah until the week before Rosh Hashanah. (I will explain shortly why Parshas Netzavim is treated differently.) There are two types of leap years that require Matos and Masei to be separated:

(1) A leap year that begins on a Thursday.

A leap year adds an extra month, which is thirty days, not 28. Thus, a leap year sometimes adds five extra Shabbosos, not just four, and there is a need to add an extra reading. This occurs when a leap year begins on a Thursday -- in calendar jargon, the years ??? and ???,3 which both mean that Rosh Hashanah falls on a Thursday. In these years, to accommodate the extra Shabbos, the parshiyos of Matos and Masei are separated.

(2) There is one other situation in Eretz Yisrael in which the parshiyos of Matos and Masei are read on separate weeks, without which, there would simply not be enough readings for every Shabbos of the year. When Rosh Hashanah of a leap year falls on Tuesday, or in some leap years even when it falls on Monday, Eretz Yisrael has to read every possible separate parsha from Rosh Hashanah until the next Rosh Hashanah to accommodate all the Shabbosos of the year. In these years, in Eretz Yisrael there are no doubled parshiyos, and therefore Matos and Masei are separated.

Why is this dependent on being in Eretz Yisrael? The year is the same length no matter where you are, and there seem to be just as many Shabbosos in Eretz Yisrael as there are outside.

The difference is that, in these years, the Eighth Day of Pesach, Acharon shel Pesach, falls on Shabbos. On this Yom Tov day, observed only outside Eretz Yisrael, the special Yom Tov reading in Chutz LaAretz is Aseir te'aseir, whereas in Eretz Yisrael this Shabbos is after Pesach (although the house is still chometz-free!) and the reading is Parshas Acharei Mos. Thus, in Chutz LaAretz there is a need to double a parsha, and, according to what is today common practice, that parsha is Matos and Masei.

The practice I just mentioned, however, creates a very unusual phenomenon: On the subsequent Shabbos (i.e., one week after Pesach ends), the Jews of Eretz Yisrael are already reading Parshas Kedoshim, whereas outside Eretz Yisrael the reading is Parshas Acharei Mos. The communities outside Eretz Yisrael ignore the opportunity of doubling up parshiyos Acharei/Kedoshim, Behar/Bechukosei and Chukas/Balak, all of which are doubled together on other occasions, and wait until the very last parsha of Bamidbar to combine Matos with Masei. Thus, the disparity between Eretz Yisrael and Chutz LaAretz lasts for over three months. By the way, this phenomenon is fast approaching. Hebrew year 5776, three years from now, follows this pattern, so that those who return to Chutz LaAretz after spending Pesach in Eretz Yisrael will find that they have missed a parsha. Unless, of course, they decide to stay in Eretz Yisrael until the Nine Days.

This leads to a very interesting question: Why is the disparity between Eretz Yisrael and Chutz LaAretz allowed to last for such a long period of time? There are three potential doubled parshiyos that are passed before one gets to Parshas Matos -- all

weeks in which those in Chutz LaAretz could combine two parshiyos in order to catch up.

As you can imagine, we are not the first to raise this question, which is indeed raised by one of the great sixteenth century poskim, the Maharit (Shu"t Volume II Number 4). He answers that Shavuot should ideally fall between Bamidbar and Naso, and that combining either Acharei Mos with Kedoshim, or Behar with Bechukosai would push Shavuot until after Parshas Naso.

However, the Maharit points out that this does not explain why the parshiyos of Chukas and Balak are not combined, although he notes that the Syrian communities, indeed, follow this practice — that is, in a leap year when Acharon shel Pesach falls on Shabbos, the Syrian community combines parshiyos Chukas and Balak together, but reads Matos and Masei on separate weeks, as is done in Eretz Yisrael.

To explain why the parshiyos of Chukas and Balak are not combined, the Maharit concludes that once most of the summer has passed and the difference is only what to read on the three Shabbosos that end the reading of Sefer Bamidbar, we combine Matos with Masei, which are usually combined, rather than Chukas and Balak, which are usually separate.

#### Netzavim – Vayeilech

We have now explained the reason for every instance in which we read a double parsha, with one important and anomalous exception – the two tiny parshiyos of Netzavim and Vayeilech. Tosafos already asks why we often combine together the two huge parshiyos of Matos and Masei, and in the very same year we read the two tiny parshiyos of Netzavim and Vayeilech on separate weeks. His answer is based on his explanation to the Gemara that we quoted earlier: Ezra decreed that the Jews read the curses of the Tochacha in Vayikra before Shavuot and those of Devarim before Rosh Hashanah. [The Gemara then queries:] Why? In order to end the year together with its curses, which Tosafos understood to mean that the tochacha should be completed two weeks before Rosh Hashanah, to allow a week as a buffer between the tochacha and the beginning of the year. That buffer parsha is Netzavim, which must always be read on the last Shabbos of the year, but ultimately means that only a small part of the Torah is left to be read between Rosh Hashanah and Simchas HaTorah. This small part left is divided into three small parshiyos, Vayeilech, Haazinu, and Vezos Haberacha. Vezos Haberacha is, of course, read on Simchas HaTorah, and Haazinu on the last Shabbos of the cycle, which is either Shabbos Shuva or the Shabbos between Yom Kippur and Sukkos, if there is one. Thus, whether Vayeilech merits its own Shabbos or is combined with Netzavim depends on one and only one factor: Is there more than one Shabbos between Rosh Hashanah and Sukkos? When there are two such Shabbosos, then Vayeilech is read on Shabbos Shuva, and Haazinu the week afterwards. When there is only one Shabbos that does not fall on a Yom Tov between Rosh Hashanah and Sukkos, Vayeilech is combined with Netzavim on the week before Rosh Hashanah and Haazinu is read the week of Shabbos Shuva.

#### Conclusion

From all of the above, we see the importance that Chazal placed on the public reading of the Torah and of completing its cycle annually. It goes without saying that we should be concerned with being attentive to the words of the Torah as they are being read, and that the baal keriah should make every effort to read them accurately.

1 Megillah 31b; Rambam, Hilchos Tefillah 13:2

2 The Levush explains that, without the week as a buffer, Satan could use the tochacha as a means of prosecuting against us on the judgment day.

3 Any given year can be scheduled in fourteen different ways, and each of these years is identified by this three-letter system. The first letter corresponds to the day of the week on which Rosh Hashanah falls in that year; the third letter corresponds to the day of the week of the first day of Pesach. The second letter identifies whether the year is chaseirah, lacking or defective; kesidrah, expected or regular; or sheleimah full or excessive. In a different article, entitled The Creation of the "Permanent" Calendar, I explained exactly what this means and why and how it happens.