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from: YUTorah <office@yutorah.org>
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Rav Soloveitchik on Pekudei: Hosting the Holy One
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider (Excerpted from Torah United,
Teachings on The Weekly Parashah From Rav Avraham
Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, and
The Chassidic Masters (Ktav, 2023)

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik was once asked to speak at an intimate sheva berachot, the postnuptial celebrations. He began as follows: "How should a religious couple furnish their new home? And I don't mean the physical space or the furniture. I refer to the spiritual makeup of the house." He went on to propose that the simplest model to follow is that of the Mishkan, the house of God.

Three of its holiest components are mentioned together in Parashat Terumah—the ark, the table, and the menorah—while a fourth, the golden incense altar, is left for Parashat Tetzaveh. The first grouping indicates some commonality, and Ibn Ezra suggests that these three are the basic elements of a home: a place to rest (the ark),¹ a table for eating (the showbread table), and a source of light (the menorah).² The Mishkan, therefore, is not only a place to offer sacrifices, but a location in our midst in which God can reside, where we can feel His proximity.

If "the Tabernacle can transform into a house," the Rav reasoned, "the private house of the Jew can transform into a Tabernacle." The Rav now turned to the bride and groom: How do we accomplish this and host God in our home? "We welcome God into our homes through establishing... the bed, the table, the chair and the lamp. Homilectically, the bed represents family purity, the table represents keeping kosher as well as the mitzvah of welcoming guests, while the menorah represents the study of Torah.... And in such a spiritually furnished home, one can hear the voice of God as in the Mishkan: "I will arrange My meetings with you there, and I will speak with you from atop the ark cover" (Exodus 25:22). In such a sanctuary, the Shechinah indeed finds a place to dwell."³

The many facets and features of the Mishkan are meant to inspire a Jew to bring holiness and God's presence into our own lives.⁴

The Rav's eminent forebear, Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin, stated that the well-known verse, "they shall make Me a midst Temple so that I might dwell in their midst. (Exodus 25:8), indicates that the divine presence (שְׁכִינָה) is intended to be manifest within (בְּתוֹךְ) each Jew. The verse does not say He will dwell within the Temple but "in their midst," or, more literally, "within them." He continued:

The main purpose of the sacred and the Temple and the resting of the divine presence is man. For if he sanctifies himself properly by fulfilling all of the commandments...then he himself becomes the actual Temple, and within him is God. As it says, "The Temple (בֵּית) of God, the Temple of God, are these" (Jeremiah 7:4).⁵

This interpretation of the verse also features in the writings of the Malbim. In a lengthy treatment of the Mishkan's symbolism, he noted that the verse following "they shall make Me a Temple" ends with "and so shall you make" (Exodus 25:9). He explained:

He commanded "and so shall you make," that everyone should build a Temple in the chambers of their heart, preparing themselves to be a Temple for God and an abode for His mighty presence. [...] This should also be followed for generations to come: everyone should build a Temple in the chambers of their heart and prepare an altar to offer up all the parts of their soul to God, to the extent that they sacrifice their soul for His glory at all times.⁶

Rabbi Elazar Azikri, the kabbalist best known for his liturgical poem "Yedid Nefesh," composed a poem that includes the line, "Inside my heart I will build a Mishkan for His splendor, my only soul shall offer Him a sacrifice." Based on this line, the famous rosh yeshiva of Chaim Berlin and original thinker Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner (1906–1980) composed the beautiful song known as Bilvavi. This song eloquently and figuratively expresses the Temple of divine service located within the heart:

In my heart I will build a mishkan, for the beauty of His honor.
In the mishkan I will place an altar for the rays of His
splendor. For an eternal light, I will take for myself the fire of
the Akedah.

YUTORAH IN PRINT Pekudei 5784

from: Ira Zlotowitz <Iraz@klalgovoah.org>

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subject: **Tidbits • Parashas Pekudei Klal Gavoah in
memory of Rav Meir Zlotowitz zt"l**

Parashas Pekudei • March 15th • 5 Adar II 5784

Reminders – [Candle lighting NYC 6:45pm] The final
opportunity for Kiddush Levana is at 10:14 PM EDT on March
24th. | As the precarious situation in Eretz Yisrael continues,
each person should increase reciting tehillim or performing
other mitzvot as a zechus for the many Acheinu Beis Yisrael
'in travail and captivity'. } Daf Yomi - Friday: Bavli: Bava
Metzia 16. • Yerushalmi: Terumos 73 • Mishnah Yomis:
Nedarim 7:4-5 • Oraysa: Next week is Yoma 74a-76a. | Make
sure to call your parents, in-laws, grandparents and Rebbe to
wish them a good Shabbos. If you didn't speak to your kids
today, make sure to connect with them as well!

Next on the Calendar: Parashas Zachor, is next Shabbos,
Parashas Vayikra.

Taanis Esther is observed this Thursday, March 21st (it is
observed earlier due to Shabbos). | Purim begins Motzaei
Shabbos, March 23rd. Shushan Purim is on Monday, March
25th.

Parsha in a Paragraph: PEKUDEI: An accounting of the
precious metals and materials collected for the Mishkan • The
Bigdei Kehunah are fashioned • Everything is completed as
Hashem commanded • Moshe blesses the workers • Hashem
commands Moshe to erect the Mishkan • On Rosh Chodesh
Nissan, Moshe erects the Mishkan and anoints the Keilim •
Moshe dresses Aharon and Aharon's sons in the Bigdei
Kehunah and anoints them • The Ananei HaKavod rest on the
Mishkan • Hashem's Glory fills the Mishkan and Moshe
cannot enter • The Bnei Yisrael travel based on the movement
of the Ananei HaKavod • Chazak Chazak V'nis'chazeik!
Haftarah: The haftarah of "Vatishlam" (Melachim I, 7:51) is
leined. It describes the chanukas habayis of the First Beis
Hamikdash conducted by Shlomo Hamelech. (Sefardim lein
the haftarah of "Vaya'as Chiram" - Melachim I, 7:40-50).

For the Shabbos Table "אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדות" "These
are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of the
testimony" (Shemos 38:22)

The Midrash on this pasuk explains that the repetition of the
words "HaMishkan, Mishkan" is an allusion to the two Batei
Mikdash, that were tragically destroyed due to sin. Why at this
juncture of the inauguration of the Mishkan does the Torah
seek to allude to the destruction of the Batei Mikdash?

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l explains: in our parashah, Moshe
Rabbeinu made a public accounting of all the materials
donated to the Mishkan, and detailed the way in which they
were used. This public accounting served a dual purpose:
firstly, that no one should suspect him of misappropriating the
materials, and secondly, that he personally should not be
tempted to do so! Surprisingly, Moshe Rabbeinu, the greatest
of our prophets and a G-dly man, felt it appropriate to place
safeguards to ensure he would not succumb to petty thievery.
Rav Moshe zt"l explains that the generation of the Churban
was lax in instituting safeguards from sin; this was the polar
opposite of the zehirus and vigilance demonstrated by Moshe
Rabbeinu in our parashah. Tragically, by placing too much
faith in their ability to resist temptation, they neglected to
establish adequate protections against transgressions that they
eventually succumbed to. Ultimately, this led to the destruction
of the Batei Mikdash, that the Midrash says our pasuk is
alluding to. One must be careful to never 'let his guard down'
as these gedarim are a primary component of Avodas Hashem.
Through proper zerizus and zehirus, we will bez"H be zocheh
to the rebuilding of the Bais HaMikdash speedily in our days.
Thirty days before the chag: MATANOS L'EVYONIM: "It is
preferable to spend more money on gifts to the poor than on
one's seudah and mishloach manos, as there is no greater joy
than making the poor and less fortunate happy" (Rambam -
Hilchos Purim 2:17). On Purim day, each man and woman
must give to two needy people the monetary equivalent of a
small meal. An 'individual in need' is classified as someone
who is struggling to cover his day-to-day expenses. Maaser
funds may not be used for the obligatory amount. One should
ensure that his wife and bar/bas mitzvah children fulfill this
mitzvah (one can simply ask the gabbai tzedakah to acquire the
monies on behalf of his wife or child and provide it to a needy
recipient on their behalf). It is proper to train one's chinuch
age children in this mitzvah, although the obligation regarding
minors is a matter of dispute. Throughout the day, one should
give freely to any needy individual who solicits without
examining their legitimacy, just as Hashem performed the
miracle of Purim without over examining our merits and
deeds.

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Four Testimonies

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

The mishkan was an ambitious project designed to craft a
house of Hashem on Earth. The mishkan hosted daily
korbanot, was the scene of national assembly, and was the
epicenter for the devar Hashem (Word of God) and divine

communication. It also voiced a testimony. The Torah designates the mishkan as a mishkan ha'eidut, or a house of testimony. Beyond enabling religious rites, it testified to truths which, previously, had been unclear or under dispute.

We were selected by Hashem to represent Him in a dark and confused world. After two centuries of brutal slavery and merciless persecution, we were liberated through supernatural miracles. A few weeks later, we stood beneath a blazing mountain, receiving His word, and pledged to live by His will. Shockingly, just a few weeks later, we betrayed our faith and fashioned an egel (golden calf). After months of tefillah and teshuva, Hashem forgave us and requisitioned the construction of His house. The mishkan testified to the possibility of forgiveness. We take this concept for granted, but ancient man could not imagine divine forgiveness. The sanctuary confirmed that Hashem desired penitence and accepted human apology. It testified to Mankind that Hashem would forgive their failures. Furthermore, the mishkan produced testimony about Jewish history. It announced that Hashem had not forsaken His people and that we were still chosen, despite our horrible misconduct. The mishkan testified that Jewish selection is enduring and capable of outlasting our moral betrayals.

Historical Testimony

Often, epic events reshape the arc of history, irreversibly affecting the human condition. Some events, however, aren't just dramatic and historically impactful but are also testimonial. These moments don't just re-landscape history but also message humanity and message history. They aren't merely historical shifts but are historical testimonies which discredit popular perspectives and introduce new paradigms. Legal testimony is registered in court and alters our prior perceptions of innocence or guilt. Historical testimony is registered in the human imagination and refutes faulty historical assumptions. At several crucial junctures, events in Jewish history testified against preconceived ideas. The sanctuary was the first historical testimony and it signaled that even after moral collapse we were still chosen.

The Second Testimony

Nine hundred and fifty years later, the Purim episode provided a second historical testimony. A student of history, Haman understood that we were chosen by Hashem and had been privileged to extraordinary divine providence. He took a brave gamble, though, wagering that, after our first exile, we had forfeited that chosen status and were now similar to other nations. As he described it: [The Jews are] a nation "scattered and divided," living amongst other nations. His genocidal plan fed off the popular conception that the Jews had surrendered their chosen status and had abandoned their destiny.

Yerushalayim had been ransacked, the Mikdash had been incinerated, and we had been exiled from the land. Haman assumed that, at his stage of history, we had been discarded by Hashem and had become just as vulnerable as any other nation.

With enough hatred and enough money, we could be erased from the map of humanity.

The Purim miracle debunked his malicious assumptions. Not only were we once chosen but we were still chosen. Despite our severe moral breakdowns and despite the trauma of being evicted from our homeland, Jewish destiny was still intact. Our chosen status could not only outlast sin, but could also survive exile.

The Third Testimony

Twenty-five hundred years later, a third testimony became necessary. The Holocaust was the most horrific atrocity in history. Never before had genocide been launched against an entire nation. Tragically, wars and natural disasters often devastated local populations, but never before was there a concerted and wholesale attempt to eradicate an entire race of people living in different countries and of vastly different ideological opinions. By launching his genocide, Hitler declared that the Jewish people didn't have the right to inhabit this Earth. Two millennia of Jewish suffering coupled with contemporary social and racial theories, appeared to support his murderous claim.

In the dismal aftermath of the Holocaust, the Jewish future seemed bleak. The Holocaust accredited the contention that we were a forsaken people condemned to slowly disappear or to gradually become assimilated into the general population. The Holocaust raised severe existential questions for which many people had no answers. After a lengthy exile and unspeakable suffering during the Holocaust, it appeared that Jewish history was cursed.

A few years later, these gloomy predictions were rebutted. Our return to Israel and to Jewish sovereignty repudiated any notions that Jewish history had ended. Despite the confusion of exile and the chaos of the Holocaust, it was obvious that Hashem still cared for us, and that His ancient promises hadn't expired. In 1965, the Church officially reconciled with Judaism, recognizing us as the people of God and condemning any form of antisemitism. After thousands of years of persecution and after the disaster of the Holocaust, our return to Israel testified to our fiercest enemies that our people had an enduring role in the fate of Mankind. Not only would Jews survive, but they would continue to shape civilization.

The Fourth Testimony

Seventy-five years after the third testimony, we are listening to the sound of the gradually-emerging fourth testimony. It is obvious that this war is much more than a local geopolitical skirmish. It is also painfully obvious that the war isn't just being waged with a terrorist group or with a seething Arab world. A broad coalition of Israel haters lines up to protest our just and moral war. Many of these fuming protesters are just antisemitic opportunists using the current conflict as an excuse to spew hatred and death threats at us. Many are even explicit

about their desire to rid the world of our people. They still haven't "received the message" of previous testimonies. Many of the anti-Israel protestors, though, do not contest our rights as a people, but are staunchly opposed to our rights to our land. To them this country never belonged to us, and we are nothing more than exploitative colonial invaders. The current cultural environment which has broadly condemned colonialism and has championed the rights of the oppressed appears to lend credibility to Israel haters. They naively and simplistically apply policies and viewpoints to our struggle to live peacefully in our homeland.

This is the first time since the formation of Israel that its right to exist is being broadly challenged. The phrase "from the River to the Sea" explicitly denies us any rights to our ancient homeland. Of course, the claim that Jews have the right to exist, but the state of Israel does not, is disingenuous. History has proven that without a Jewish homeland Jewish survival is tenuous, at best. However, Israel has the right to exist independent of its role in preserving Jewish survival. This is our ancient homeland which Hashem delivered to us. We are not exploitative colonizers but a peaceful nation returning home, seeking goodwill, and aspiring to share prosperity with our neighbors.

This outcome of this struggle will provide the fourth testimony of history. The mishkan testimony reaffirmed Jewish selection even after our national sin. The Purim testimony reinforced Jewish selection even after exile. The State of Israel testimony verified Jewish destiny even after it had appeared to have faded through time and violently wrecked during the Holocaust. The fourth testimony will affirm that not only are we Hashem's chosen, and not only is our destiny eternal, but that we have the right to live in our ancient homeland awarded to us by Hashem. The fourth testimony, like previous testimonies, will be entered into the annals of history. Like previous testimonies, it will be violently opposed until its opponents fade away and it enters collective human consciousness.

The writer is a rabbi at Yeshivat Har Etzion/Gush, a hesder yeshiva. He has smicha and a BA in computer science from Yeshiva University as well as a masters degree in English literature from the City University of New York.

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subject: Rabbi Frand on Parsha

Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Pekudei

Parshas Pekudei's Positive Pride Preempts Previous Pernicious Pride

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the

weekly portion: #1285 "It's A Siman Min HaShamayim" – Is There Such A Thing?

The following thought on Parshas Pekudei comes from the sefer Nachalas Eliezer, written by Rav Eliezer Cohen, who was a Mashgiach in the Gateshead Yeshiva in England.

The Medrash says as follows on the words "Eleh pekudei haMishkan" (These are the reckonings of the Tabernacle) (Shemos 38:21). "At the time you made the Golden Calf and danced around it, you angered Me with the words "Eleh Elohecha Yisrael (This is your god O Israel) that brought you up from the Land of Egypt" (Shemos 32:4). Now that you made the Mishkan with the word eleh, my anger has been appeased, as this eleh atones for the earlier eleh."

This is a Medrash that obviously requires some kind of an explanation. First of all, was the aveira (sin) of the Eigel HaZahav (Golden Calf) based on the fact that they used the word "Eleh"? The aveira was the fact that they made an Eigel HaZahav altogether, a pseudo avodah zarah. The expression "I was angered with the word eleh" seems a bit imprecise, to say the least. Also, what kind of atonement is it that they used the same word when building the Mishkan? Is this some type of gezeirah shavah? eleh-eleh?

The truth of the matter is that the Peirush Marzu on the bottom of the Medrash interprets this Medrash: The word eleh has a certain connotation. It has the connotation of "I am proud of this!" How do we know that? The Marzu writes that another Medrash says: Rav Yitzchak said, at the time of Creation, it is written "Eleh toldos hashamayim v'ha'aretz (These are the products of the heaven and the earth) when they were created on the day that Hashem, G-d made earth and heaven."

(Bereshis 2:4). The Creator praises them. He says, as it were, "Look! Look at My world. Look at what I have created." The Creator praises the work of His Hands. This is the connotation of using the word eleh – Look at my accomplishment!

Now we can begin to understand the above-cited Medrash. Of course, it is horrible that they built an Eigel HaZahav. But it added insult to injury when they proclaimed "Eleh Elohecha Yisrael asher he'e'lucha m'Eretz Mitzrayim" as if they were proud of what they did. The Gemara (Berochos 19a) says "If someone sees a Torah scholar commit an aveira at night, don't suspect him the next day – for he has certainly already done teshuva for his aveira of the previous night."

We all slip up. If someone sees a talmid chochom who did an aveira at night, he clearly feels bad about it. Without a doubt, by the next morning, he has already done teshuva. A talmid chochom may have been momentarily grasped by his Yetzer HaRah, but he immediately makes amends and goes on with his life. On the other hand, the pasuk says "(Why do You stand aloof) when the wicked man glories in his personal desire and the robber praises himself that he has blasphemed Hashem?" (Tehillim 10:3). The rasha is proud of what he did. He regrets it not, but rather he brags about his wicked deeds.

This is the difference. Of course, the Egel haZahav was wrong, but dancing around the Egel and proudly saying “Eleh Elohecha Yisrael” really angered the Ribono shel Olam. They were desperate. They thought they lost their leader and they did not know who would lead them. Fine. They made an Egel haZahav. Very Bad. But at least there would have been some extenuating circumstances to find some justification for their succumbing to their sense of desperation. But when they danced around it and pointed to it (eleh) with glee – that showed that there was no regret whatsoever. That is what angered the Almighty.

Eleh pekudei haMishkan shows that they were proud of having built the Mishkan. The money contributed, and the effort put into all the work of construction was something about which they felt very good, and they wanted to brag about it. That was the atonement for the aveira of the Egel.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem

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This week’s write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A listing of the halachic portions for Parshas Vayakeil/Pikudei is provided below: ... A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Rav Frand © 2024 by Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 2833 Smith Ave., Suite 225 Baltimore, MD 21209 <http://www.torah.org/> learn@torah.org

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date: Mar 14, 2024, 4:19 PM

subject: The Bliss of Ego-Death — New Essay by Rabbi YY
Our Relationship with Money

The Day Moses Became a Bookkeeper

By: Rabbi YY Jacobson

Who Tells Me Anything?

A woman called a local hospital. "Hello," she said. "I'd like to talk with the person who gives the information regarding your patients. I'd like to find out if the patient is getting better, doing as expected or getting worse."

The voice on the other end of the line said, "What is the patient's name and room number?"

"Sarah Cohen in Room 302," the woman answered.

"I will connect you with the nursing station."

"3-A Nursing Station. How can I help you?"

"I would like to know the condition of Sarah Cohen in Room 302."

"Just a moment, let me look at her records. Oh, yes. Mrs. Cohen is doing very well. In fact, she's had two full meals,

her blood pressure is fine, her blood work just came back as normal, she's going to be taken off the heart monitor in a couple of hours and, if she continues this improvement, Dr. Weiss is going to send her home Tuesday at noon."

"Thank G-d!" the woman said. "That's wonderful! Oh! That's fantastic, what wonderful news!"

The nurse said, "From your enthusiasm, I take it you must be a family member or a very close friend!"

"Not exactly," the woman said. "I'm actually the patient herself; I'm Sarah Cohen in 302! Nobody here tells me anything."

The Long Journey

The drama was almost complete. The people exiled in a foreign country for more than two centuries, and for much of that time in unbearable conditions, experienced a miraculous liberation through direct and manifested intervention by the Creator. At Mt. Sinai, G-d and Israel enter into a mutual covenant to become partners in “tikkun olam:” repairing a world estranged from its essence. Never again in history would G-d completely part the veils that conceal Him, communicating His presence to an entire nation.

Forty days later, in a moment of collective insanity, the people deny G-d. They substitute the moral sovereign of the universe with a golden calf. G-d now views His attempt to mold a people into a "kingdom of princes and a sacred nation" as a colossal failure. He sees no value anymore in the Jewish experience. Moses stands up to G-d, eliciting from Him a deeper chord in His relationship with Israel. G-d re-embraces the people and instructs them to build a home in their midst for His elusive presence. In this sanctuary, the all-pervading truth of G-d would be more manifest and accessible. The Jewish people en masse present to Moses large amounts of gold, silver, copper and many other materials required for the construction of an exquisite tabernacle. Moses appoints brilliant architects, sculptors, and designers to build the home, design the vessels, carve out the furniture and craft the items that would make up the new Divine home.

At the opening of the Torah portion of Pekudei[1], the work is complete. Soon, the sanctuary would be erected and the Divine presence would reside therein. This is a charged moment, a dramatic peak in a long and turbulent journey of a people.

After all of the ups and downs, G-d is about to "move in" with the Jewish people.

The hero of the story is, no doubt, Moses. With courageous selflessness, he triumphed, over G-d, as it were. He is the man responsible for bringing the people—and G-d—to this extraordinary moment, when humanity would reintroduce G-d to a world that banished Him.

Time for Bookkeeping

But wait. Right at this moment, the Torah interrupts the narrative, shifting the story from creating a space for G-d in this world, to the realm of bookkeeping. Moses, at this point,

presents a detailed account of all the wealth contributed to him for the construction of the tabernacle. He reports to the people how many pounds of gold, silver, and copper he received, and how exactly it was used in the structure. He gives an account for every last piece of jewelry and metal that came into his hands.

Why? The Midrash[2] relates that some Jews murmured about Moses stealing some of the money, using charity funds for his own purposes. Thus, Moses gave a detailed account of the destination of every "dollar" collected in the grandiose "building campaign."

This is a simple but very telling scene. Moses, let us recall, is the spiritual giant of history, whom Maimonides defined as the greatest human being to ever walk the earth[3]. "G-d would speak to Moses face to face, as a man would speak with his friend," the Bible says[4]. "Not so my servant Moses," G-d thunders on Aaron and Miriam after they had gossiped about him. "In My entire house he is the trusted one. Mouth to mouth do I speak to him, in a clear vision and not in riddles; he gazes at the image of G-d. Why do you not fear to speak against My servant, Moses[5]?"

Does a man who speaks to G-d face to face really need to prove that he is not using money for a cruise in the Caribbean, for a new BMW or to build his portfolio? The Jews, observing Moses' unparalleled devotion and love to them in the most trying of circumstances, knew full well that Moses was no charlatan. If G-d trusts him, they could trust him too. Even if some Jewish rabble-rousers murmured about Moses stealing some of the money, we would expect Moses to ignore them. "Who do they think they are to question my integrity," we would expect Moses to think to himself. "I gave my life for these rebels when G-d wanted to destroy them. After all, it was G-d Himself who appointed me to my present position, against my will[6]. How dare they challenge my honesty?"

These feelings would be understandable. Yet, astonishingly, without even being asked or instructed to do so, Moses, in total humility, stands up and gives an accounting for every last penny that came into his hands.

One of the great Halachik authorities, Rabbi Joel Sirkish (1561-1640), known as the "Bach," derives a law from this episode[7]: Even the most beloved and believable collectors of charity are obliged to give a detailed account to the community of the destination of every cent they collected for charity. Nobody, writes the Bach, could be trusted more than Moses, the man whom G-d Himself trusted. Yet even he felt compelled to give an accounting of all the contributions. An interesting historical note: The Bach was extremely wealthy. He was the Rabbi of Cracow and he lent the community enormous sums of money. He fed and supported many of his students, distributing enormous sums for charity. This is one of the great moral messages of Judaism: When it comes to somebody else's money, be accountable for every

dollar. Don't cover up, don't lie, and don't deceive. You can't lie to people and then be honest with G-d, with your wife, with your children, with your friends.

If only Bernie Madoff would have internalized this story...

We all need and thus appreciate money. Some of us love money. Even spiritual leaders need money and often cherish it deeply. Rabbis are also only human beings. That is not evil. The story turns ugly when we become dishonest with our money. We must learn from Moses: to always be able to give an account for every dollar that came into our hand.

Respecting Another Person

There is yet something deeper. Moses truly believes in the dignity of the people and in their right to know what has transpired with their contributions. Moses does not allow his spiritual greatness and extraordinary authority to implant in his psyche a sense of superiority over the masses, in which it is beyond his ego to give them a detailed account of his spending. On the contrary, he views his G-d-given power as a means to confer dignity and greatness upon all of the people. Moses set an example for all the generations to come. The great Jewish leaders always understood that what qualified them as leaders and teachers and what bestowed upon them the right to power was not their charisma, brilliance, skills, or even the fact that the Almighty Himself appointed them to their position. It was, rather, the fact that deep down in their hearts they really viewed their "subjects" as equals. They possessed a sincere belief that dignity was the property of all.

Insecure leaders must resort to fear and tyranny in order to ensure loyalty and secure their position. They must speak in the name of authority rather than in the name of integrity. They must remain aloof and superior and never allow the simple folk too much access to the truth. Vulnerability is too dangerous. At best, they create followers. Genuine leaders, on the other hand, gain the trust, appreciation, and affection of their people, because of their trust in the people and their unyielding faith in the majesty of every individual human being molded in the image of the Divine. They create leaders. This is true about all of our relationships in life. If you wish to inspire genuine loyalty, in a marriage, in the workplace, or in friendships, you must learn to genuinely accept the other person as an equal, conferring upon him or her the dignity you hold dear for yourself[8].

[1] Exodus 38:21. [2] Shmos Rabah 51:6. [3] Rambam, commentary on Mishnah, introduction to Sanhedrin chapter 11. [4] Exodus 33:11. [5] Numbers 12 7:8. [6] Exodus chapter 3. [7] Yoreh Daah section 257. Cf. an interesting story related by his son-in-law, Rabbi David Segal, known as the "Taz," in his "derashos" for Parshas Pekudei. [8] This essay is based on a talk delivered by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Shabbas Pekudei 5744, March 3, 1984, and on other sources.

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Rabbi Wein

The end of the book of Shemot describes the culmination of the events of the exodus from Egypt, the revelation at Sinai and the construction of the Mishkan/Tabernacle. All of these events are certainly on the positive side of the historical ledger. On the other side that the book of Shemot represents there is the sin of the Golden Calf and the constant carping and complaining of the Jewish people against Moshe and against the God of Israel.

In effect, this sets the template for all further Jewish history. There are always ups and downs, plus and minuses in the national behavior of the Jewish people. The book of Shemot ends on a triumphant note – the spirit of God, so to speak, invests and dwells within the Jewish people, and the Mishkan/Tabernacle that they so lovingly built –promising an eternal relationship.

Jewish tradition teaches us that this is the ultimate result of the long story of our existence. It will end triumphantly but there will be many serious bumps on the road before we arrive at our ultimate destination. It seems especially appropriate that at the conclusion of this holy book, the entire congregation rises to proclaim that we will be strengthened in our lives and experiences. We will attempt to strengthen the positive side of our ledger and minimize the entries on the other side. The Torah expended much detail and space to the construction of the Mishkan/Tabernacle. Part of the reason for the need to adhere to the laws in this regard is that the devil lies in the details. All of history instructs us that seemingly unimportant details shape great events, with unexpected results.

The ineptness of Archduke Ferdinand's chauffeur, who drove the car back into the teeth of the assassins' ambush after first escaping from it, helped bring about the cataclysmic events that are called World War I. The Jewish people questioned why Moshe was late on retuning from his ascent on Mount Sinai and thus the conditions for the construction of the Golden Calf somehow presented themselves. All of Jewish law and halachi decisions are built upon recognizing and analyzing the details of the issues involved. It is the small detail that builds the general rule, not the other way around. We are all aware how in architecture, manufacturing and construction for example, it is the smallest detail that is the difference between success and failure, achievement or disaster.

This is in line with the details regarding the Mishkan/Tabernacle, which in turn reflect the Torah itself, which represents all human life. Today's parsha teaches us the requirement of accountability in all aspects of our lives. All of these ideas are taught to us to help us form a proper ledger

book on the basis of whose entries we will be eventually judged. This book of Shemot stands as the book of human judgment and understanding.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

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COVENANT & CONVERSATION
Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

On Jewish Character = PEKUDEI
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Pekudei has sometimes been called "The Accountant's Parsha", because that is how it begins, with the audited accounts of the money and materials donated to the Sanctuary. It is the Torah's way of teaching us the need for financial transparency. But beneath the sometimes-dry surface lie two extraordinary stories, one told in last week's parsha, the other the week before, teaching us something deep about Jewish nature that is still true today.

The first has to do with the Sanctuary itself. God told Moses to ask people to make contributions. Some brought gold, some silver, some copper. Some gave wool or linen or animal skins. Others contributed acacia wood, oil, spices, or incense. Some gave precious stones for the High Priest's breastplate. What was remarkable was the willingness with which they gave: The people continued bringing [Moses] additional gifts every morning. So all the skilled workers who were doing all the work on the Sanctuary left what they were doing, and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for the work God has commanded us to do."

Moses ordered an announcement to be made throughout the camp:

"Let no man or woman make anything more as an offering for the Sanctuary."

And so the people brought no more, because what they already had was more than enough to for all the work that was to be done.

Ex. 36:3-7

They brought too much. Moses had to tell them to stop. That is not the Israelites as we have become accustomed to seeing them, argumentative, quarrelsome, ungrateful. This is a people that longs to give.

One parsha earlier we read a very different story. The people were anxious. Moses had been up the mountain for a long time. Was he still alive? Had some accident happened to him? If so, how would they receive the Divine word telling them what to do and where to go? Hence their demand for a Calf – essentially an oracle, an object through which Divine instruction could be heard.

Aaron, according to the most favoured explanation, realised that he could not stop the people directly by refusing their request, so he adopted a stalling manoeuvre. He did something with the intention of slowing them down, trusting that if the work could be delayed, Moses would reappear. This is what Aaron said:

“Take off the gold rings from the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.”

Ex. 32:2

According to the Midrash, he thought this would create arguments within families, there would be resistance to the requests for jewellery, and the project would be delayed. Instead, immediately thereafter without a pause, we read: So all the people took the gold rings from their ears and brought them to Aaron.

Ex. 32:3

Again the same generosity. Now, these two projects could not be less alike. One, the Tabernacle, was holy. The other, the Calf, was close to being an idol. Building the Tabernacle was a supreme mitzvah; making the Calf was a terrible sin. Yet their response was the same in both cases. Hence this comment of the Sages:

One cannot understand the nature of this people. If they are appealed to for a Calf, they give. If appealed to for the Tabernacle, they give.

Yerushalmi Shekalim 1, 45

The common factor was generosity. Jews may not always make the right choices in what they give to, but they give. In the twelfth century, Moses Maimonides twice interrupts his customary calm legal prose in his law code, the Mishneh Torah, to make the same point. Speaking about tzedakah, charity, he says:

“We have never seen or heard about a Jewish community which does not have a charity fund.”

Laws of Gifts to the poor, 9:3

The idea that a Jewish community could exist without a network of charitable provisions was almost inconceivable. Later in the same book, Maimonides says:

We are obligated to be more scrupulous in fulfilling the commandment of tzedakah than any other positive commandment because tzedakah is the sign of the righteous person, a descendant of Abraham our father, as it is said, “For I know him, that he will command his children . . . to do tzedakah” . . . If someone is cruel and does not show mercy, there are sufficient grounds to suspect his lineage, since cruelty is found only among the other nations . . . Whoever refuses to give charity is called Belial, the same term which is applied to idol worshippers.

Laws of Gifts to the poor, 10:1-3

Maimonides is here saying more than that Jews give charity. He is saying that a charitable disposition is written into Jewish genes, part of our inherited DNA. It is one of the signs of being

a child of Abraham, so much so that if someone does not give charity there are “grounds to suspect his lineage.” Whether this is nature or nurture or both, to be Jewish is to give.

There is a fascinating feature of the geography of the land of Israel. It contains two seas: the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee is full of life. The Dead Sea, as its name implies, is not. Yet they are fed by the same river, the Jordan. The difference – and this is key – is that the Sea of Galilee receives water and gives water. The Dead Sea receives but does not give. To receive but not to give is, in Jewish geography as well as Jewish psychology, simply not life. So it was in the time of Moses. So it is today. In virtually every country in which Jews live, their charitable giving is out of all proportion to their numbers. In Judaism, to live is to give.

Questions from the Front Lines with Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein by Tzvi Yaakovson

Yated Ne'eman 28 Adar I 5784 I March 8, 2024

I have once again received a copy of Vovei Ha'Amudim, the monthly publication of Kehillas Bais Dovid in Cholon. which is under the leadership of Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein. You may recall an observation that I often make about the material in this kuntres. Vavei Ha'Amudim contains several sections featuring material drawn from Rav Zilberstein's teachings, including his responses to various shailos that were presented to him, and I have often observed that the questions themselves tend to evoke admiration. These shailos illustrate the degree to which the questioners are meticulous about their observance of the mitzvos bein adam lechaveiro, the depth of their concern about maintaining their monetary integrity or avoiding loshon bora, and the care and attention that they invest in performing mitzvos.

For instance, in the section titled Maaseh Choshev, we find that a man who was spending Shabbos in the hospital with his son asked Rav Zilberstein if he was permitted to leave his child alone to go to daven, with the knowledge that the hospital staff would call him if he was needed. In Eretz Yisroel, the standard practice is for the companion of a hospital patient to leave his telephone number with the nurses in the ward. This allows the companion to move freely around the grounds of the hospital, while the staff will be able to contact him if his presence is needed. The questioner wished to know whether he was permitted to leave his son's room on Shabbos, knowing that it might cause a nurse to desecrate Shabbos by calling him, or he was required to remain there to avoid that possibility. The shailah was further complicated by the fact that he would have to carry his phone with him if he left the room. Even under those harrowing circumstances, the beleaguered father was focused on how best to balance the halachos of Shabbos with the value of davening with a minyan. ..

One of the chapters in this month's kuntres featured a series of short questions and answers, all of which were both fascinating and edifying. I found one question especially interesting: If a man is ill and does not have the strength to daven, is his wife permitted to recite the bracha of shelo asani isha for him? This is a very interesting shailah that has never occurred to me in the past. Rav Zilberstein responded that the wife should recite the brocha of sheosani kirtzono. Another question, which is probably one that affects many of us, is whether a person is permitted to adjust his tefillin shel yad during the Shemoneh Esrei. A third questioner asked if he was permitted to attend the wedding of his nephew, who was marrying a non-Jewish woman who had undergone a Reform conversion. Rav Zilberstein's answer to this question was an emphatic no.

This edition of the kuntres also included a new section consisting of shailos that the Rav had received pertaining to the war.

Rescuing the Captives --The first question was a shailah of incomparable gravity: Would the halacha permit staging a rescue operation to forcibly secure the freedom of hostages in Gaza, when this may create further danger or pressure for the captives remaining in captivity? While this question was not presented to Rav Zilberstein for practical purposes, there are important principles to be derived from the theoretical discussion. "The people of Israel were informed about the rescue of two hostages," the questioner wrote. "We would like to ask the following: If there were a Sanhedrin in Eretz Yisroel today, would they have approved this operation? The Gemara states (Gittin 45a) that one may not rescue captives due to the consideration of tikkun ha'olam, and according to Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, for the benefit of other captives. Rashi explains that the Tanna Kamma maintains that even if there is no one else in captivity at the time, a successful rescue might cause the captors to imprison future prisoners under harsher conditions, whereas Rabi Shimon's concern was only that if there are other prisoners in captivity, the captors might torture them. According to Rabi Shimon, then, it is permitted to rescue captives if there is no one else remaining in captivity. "The Shulchan Aruch rules (Yorch Dei'ah 252:5) in accordance with the Tanna Kamma's view, meaning that even if there are no other captives at the moment, it is forbidden to rescue prisoners due to the possibility that future captives may suffer more as a result. That being the case, it is certainly prohibited to rescue captives when others are being held in captivity at the time. Sure enough, after the rescue of the two hostages, I read the following report: 'It is believed that after the successful rescue of two hostages, the Hamas terror organization will increase its security measures for the remaining captives. It is projected that Hamas will increase the number of guards and possibly will transfer more of them to subterranean tunnels, where it

will be more difficult for a rescue operation to be carried out. This gave rise to our question: Would the Sanhedrin have ruled against mounting a rescue operation of this nature, due to the danger in the remaining hostages?"

Rav Zilberstein replied, "It is permitted to rescue hostages, and it is even a mitzvah to do so. The prohibition to rescue captives applies only when there is a concern that their captors will intensify the harsh conditions under which the others are being held. In this case, however, such a concern cannot be a factor, since the terrorists are cruel people who are tormenting their captives as much as they can. Moreover, Chazal prohibited only smuggling the captives out of their confinement without a direct confrontation with their captors, but if the rescuers can kill the captors, then it is permitted."

This psak, like many others in these kuntresim, is accompanied by extensive explanatory notes. On this particular topic, Rav Zilberstein quotes his father-in-law, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, who was once consulted about a similar situation. "We are dealing with lowly, beastlike creatures, the descendants of Yishmoel, who was born as a pure odom," Rav Zilberslein explains. "This means that Yishmoel is a wild beast by nature, and he merely has the appearance of a human being who walks on two legs. The (the terrorists] already impose the harshest conditions possible on their captives, and it is unlikely that they could worsen their conditions further. Therefore, it is proper to rescue them as quickly as possible. Similarly, my father-in-law and teacher, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, was once asked about the Mishnah's statement that one may not ransom captives for more than a reasonable price, lest the captors decide to take more prisoners. He explained that this does not apply to terrorists, since the (they) will always do anything in their power regardless of the reactions of others. In this case, as well, the terrorists are already subjecting their captives to the greatest abuse the (they) can inflict, and we do not need to be concerned that they may worsen the conditions further."

Davning for Rain -- The next question, which came from a soldier on the front lines, was one that I found incredibly painful to read. "I am one of a group of thirty soldiers who are stationed in Gaza," the questioner wrote. "We recently entered a building in Gaza and searched the entire building. When we saw that there were no terrorists or booby traps anywhere in the building, we positioned ourselves on the second floor. One of our group, the deputy commander of the battalion, went upstairs to use the facilities, and then we suddenly heard a volley of gunshots from that direction, alerting us to the presence of terrorists. We quickly began shooting toward the upper floor, and two of our men were injured; one of them was miraculously saved when two bullets were halted by his bulletproof vest but a third bullet hit him in the leg. Meanwhile, the terrorists upstairs threw a grenade at us, which miraculously exploded only on the side that was facing away from us. We could have fired a single missile to

wipe out all the terrorists upstairs, but we did not know what had happened to our fellow soldier who was there. Had the terrorists discovered him? Was he still alive? The battle therefore took a long time; we weren't able to use the stairs due to the danger, and we had to call for reinforcements and medical aid. Boruch Hashem, after forty minutes, the incident was brought to an end. with one fatality and two casualties in our ranks. After an investigation, it became clear that the building had indeed been empty when we entered it, but it was very close to another building, and the terrorists were able to leap from the adjacent building into the upper story. The first volley of bullets killed the officer who was upstairs, but the gunfire alerted us to the terrorists' presence and we were able to kill them. If they had come downstairs quietly, without our realizing that they were present, they could easily have thrown a grenade into the room where we were sitting, chas v'shalom, and they might have killed all of us. "We recognize that such a situation would present a serious shailah. If there are terrorists in a place such as the upper floor of a building and one of our men is there as well, but we do not know if he is still alive and hiding or if he has been killed, would we be permitted to throw an explosive into that area to save ourselves? In that case, the soldier upstairs would certainly be killed if he was still alive. Are we required to continue fighting while taking precautions to ensure that he isn't accidentally killed, even though our other men would be endangered as a result? In other words, when a person is pursued by a rodef, we know that it is a mitzvah to eliminate him. However, if that may also result in the death of a person who is not a rodef, is it necessary to endanger our entire unit to avoid actively killing someone who isn't a threat to us? Or is a person permitted to do anything that he would ordinarily do to save his own life without taking the collateral damage into account, regardless of how great it is?" Rav Zilberstein replied, "It is permitted to fire the explosive since that is not considered an act of killing the soldier; it is merely an act of killing the terrorists. It is permitted to kill a rodef even if one thereby endangers the life of another Jew. Furthermore, the soldiers on the lower floor were facing certain danger, while it was not certain that the soldier who had gone upstairs was still alive. In such a case, it is correct to save those who are in certain danger rather than endangering them further for a person who might no longer be alive." The explanatory footnotes on this psak contain a fascinating but extremely lengthy discussion. While I won't quote the entire discussion. I will make note of one interesting detail that the rov mentions. The Chazon Ish discusses the case of a person who sees an arrow that is about to be shot and will kill many people, and who is able to divert the arrow- so that it is aimed in a different direction and kills only one person, who would not otherwise have been among its victims. In that case, the Chazon Ish debates whether it would be permissible to redirect the arrow to save the lives of the larger number of

victims. Rav Zilberstein explains various lines of reasoning about that issue and explores whether it has any bearing on the question that was presented to him. Of course, these are issues of the utmost gravity.

Another question about the war came from a kollel: "In the month of Teves and at the beginning of Shevat, there was no rain. We have now begun to receive heavy rain, and we have given thanks in our kollel for the rainfall and are dawning for it to continue. However, one of the yungeleit said, 'How can we be dawning for more rain? Don't you know that there are many soldiers in Gaza and Lebanon right now who are being greatly disturbed by the rain? They are out in the open, and the rain and cold are affecting them heavily. Perhaps this isn't the right time to be dawning for rain.' This led to a fierce debate over whether it is appropriate to daven for rain under the circumstances. On the one hand, we know that the rain is very beneficial for agriculture. On the other hand, it may create great hardships for the soldiers. One of the yungelitz pointed out that the kohen gadol used to daven on Yom Kippur for rain even if it would interfere with others, as we find that he davened for Hashem to disregard the tefillos of the travelers to be spared from rain at the time when the world needed precipitation. Even though there were many people on the roads, the world's need for rain was more important. Perhaps the same is true of our case. The world's need for rain may be more important than the needs of those people who will be harmed by it. Since we entertained various arguments about this topic, we decided to ask the rov to pasken on it for us. Rav Zilberstein replied, "Hashem is capable of bringing rain in one place while withholding it in another. Therefore, one should daven for the rain to be a bracha to fall in the places where it is needed. In the explanatory notes, Rav Zilberstein discusses the tefillah of the kohen gadol on Yom Kippur, as well as developing an extensive interpretation of the Gemara's discussion about rainfall (Rosh Hashanah 17b).

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Wanted Dead or Alive

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Getting Rid of those Bugs!

"May I trap or kill mosquitoes, bees, or wasps on Shabbos?"

Question #2: Hanging from the Lowest Tree

"I forgot to hang the flypaper before Shabbos. May I do it on Shabbos?"

Question #3: A Charming Shabbos

"May a snake charmer work on Shabbos?"

Answer: Catching or dispatching

We have all been in the following uncomfortable situation:

Sometime during Shabbos, a mosquito appears in our vicinity seeking to earn its living. Although we realize that this creature

requires its sustenance, we are not eager that we, our children or our guests should become mosquito fodder, even just as a minor donor. Are we permitted to trap or kill the mosquito? Trapping living things, tzad, was an action necessary for acquiring some of the materials used to build the Mishkan, and is one of the 39 melachos, categories of prohibited activity on Shabbos (Mishnah Shabbos 73a and Rashi ad loc.). Killing living things also violates the melachos of Shabbos, a topic that we discussed last week. Here, we discuss many pertinent principles of Shabbos and some details of the melachah of tzad.

Shabbos nomenclature

When discussing what one may or may not do on Shabbos, the Mishnah and Gemara use three terms: (1) chayov, punishable, when a particular act constitutes melachah, meaning that it desecrates Shabbos by violating a Torah law; (2) patur, exempt, meaning it does not violate a Torah law, and (3) mutar, permitted, when an act may be performed on Shabbos. We will discuss the middle term, patur, which states that a particular forbidden act does not violate Torah law. This term usually indicates that the act is prohibited due to rabbinic sanction, but sometimes the Sages permitted such acts. But first we will explain what makes performing a forbidden activity patur?

Melech machsheves

The Gemara (Chagigah 10b; Bava Kama 26b; Kerisus 19b) teaches that the Torah prohibited only something that can be categorized as meleches machsheves, which can perhaps be translated as premeditated melachah. An obvious example of meleches machsheves would be trapping an animal to obtain its hide or meat. Similarly, someone who digs a hole to plant the base of a tree violates the meleches machsheves of choreish, plowing, and one who picks a fruit performs a meleches machsheves of kotzeir, harvesting.

Melech machsheves is often explained by what it is not. Following that approach, I will provide three categories of labor that are exempt from being defined as desecrating Shabbos min haTorah, because they do not qualify as meleches machsheves, at least according to some opinions.

Mekalkeil

In general, an act constitutes meleches machsheves only when its direct result is beneficial. This means that an action that is inherently destructive does not violate Shabbos min haTorah, even when one needs the result. For example, digging a hole in the ground when one needs the earth but not the hole is defined as a destructive activity and prohibited only midrabbanan. The dug hole itself is a negative development, rendering the burrowing to be mekalkeil, not prohibited min haTorah, but only because of rabbinic injunction. However, digging a hole to plant or to create a posthole results in a positive benefit and is indeed prohibited min haTorah, since one wants the hole in the ground.

Bemino nitzad

Here is a second example of meleches machsheves that is particular to the melachah that we are discussing, tzad. The tanna'im (Shabbos 107b) dispute whether it is prohibited min haTorah to ensnare a creature that mankind does not typically use, such as a scorpion or a flea, which is called ein bemino nitzad, literally, a species that is not trapped. The halachic conclusion follows the lenient opinion, ruling that tzad applies only to a species that is bemino nitzad, commonly trapped, so that mankind can benefit from it. For example, a species that is eaten, from whose body a medicine is extracted, or whose hide is used as leather qualifies as bemino nitzad. The halachic authorities discuss whether trapping an animal for scientific research or so that one can have it as a pet makes the animal bemino nitzad (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 10:21; Chazon Ish, Orach Chayim 50:4 at end).

However, a species that is caught only because it is an annoyance has the status of ein bemino nitzad.

Why is this true? The purpose of trapping is to harness a living creature so that mankind can use it. Thus, tzad is a type of acquisition (see Shu"t Avnei Neizer, Orach Chayim 189:7; Biur Halachah, 316:2 s.v. Oh Choleh). However, trapping a creature that mankind does not generally use is not acquiring these creatures, but distancing them from potential victims. Therefore, most opinions conclude that trapping a species that is ein bemino nitzad does not violate the melachah of tzad, and is prohibited only because of rabbinic injunction. Thus, since flies are ein bemino nitzad, catching them would not violate a Torah prohibition. Hanging flypaper on Shabbos would still involve a rabbinic prohibition and it is similarly prohibited to set up a mousetrap on Shabbos (Magen Avraham 316:9; see Piskei Tosafos, Shabbos 17b #62).

By the way, many authorities consider mice to be bemino nitzad, since there are places in the world where their hide is used (Chaye Odom 30:7). There is also a dispute whether a non-kosher species harvested only as food is considered bemino nitzad (Ritva, Shabbos 106b; Nimla Tal, Melech Tzad #37).

Melachah she'einah tzerichah legufah

Many authorities rule that another category of activity -- Melachah she'einah tzerichah legufah, literally, an act not needed for its purpose -- is not prohibited min haTorah because it is not considered meleches machsheves. In fact, there is a dispute among tanna'im whether a Melachah she'einah tzerichah legufah is prohibited min haTorah or only midrabbanan. Whereas Rabbi Yehudah contends that Melachah she'einah tzerichah legufah is prohibited min haTorah, according to Rabbi Shimon, these acts are prohibited only by virtue of rabbinic injunction.

What is a Melachah she'einah tzerichah legufah? Among the rishonim, we find differing opinions as to exactly how to define this term, and there are many instances where a dispute

in halachah results. Since this complicated question is a bit tangential to our topic, I am going to present only one approach. According to Tosafos (Shabbos 94a s.v. Rabbi Shimon) and the Rivash (Shu"t Harivash #394), Rabbi Shimon contends that the 39 melachos are prohibited min haTorah only when performed for a goal or purpose similar to the reason why this melachah was done when constructing the Mishkan. However, performing a melachah to accomplish a purpose other than that for which this melachah was performed in the Mishkan qualifies as a Melachah she'einah tzerichah legufah. This means that it is prohibited only miderabbanan, according to Rabbi Shimon and those who rule like him.

Here is an example: Removing an item that has a bad odor from a reshus hayachid, an enclosed area, into a reshus harabim, an open area meant for public use, is a classic case of Melachah she'einah tzerichah legufah. Although moving something from a reshus hayachid into a reshus harabim constitutes the melachah of carrying, moving the foul-smelling item from a house to a reshus harabim does not constitute a melachah min haTorah, according to Rabbi Shimon, because the purpose of the carrying when building the Mishkan was to relocate the item to a new place. However, when removing a foul-smelling item, there is no significance attached to the place to which the item is moved; one's goal is only to distance it from its current location. The public area does not constitute the goal of one's act; rather, it is merely a convenient place to deposit unwanted material. For this reason, Rabbi Shimon contends that this act was not prohibited by the Torah, but only by the Sages. On the other hand, Rabbi Yehudah considers Melachah she'einah tzerichah legufah as conforming to the definition of meleches machsheves and prohibited min haTorah.

Although most rishonim conclude that the halachah follows Rabbi Shimon that Melachah she'einah tzerichah legufah is prohibited only because of rabbinic injunction, the Rambam and others rule, according to Rabbi Yehudah, that Melachah she'einah tzerichah legufah is prohibited min haTorah.

When exempt is permitted

There is a passage of Gemara that reflects both on our opening question and on a different aspect of the melachah of tzad.

"Shemuel said: Whenever the Mishnah states that something is patur when performed on Shabbos, the activity is prohibited [because of a rabbinic injunction], with the exception of the following three instances, when patur means that the activity is permitted. The first case discusses catching a deer, the second is catching a snake and the third is lancing a boil" (Shabbos 3a; 107a, as explained by Tosafos, Shabbos 3a s.v. Bar). Shemuel proves from Mishnayos that, in these three instances, the acts are permitted (Shabbos 107a). The first two of these cases educate us to understand what constitutes the melachah of trapping. (The case of lancing a boil involves a different topic that we will leave for a different article.)

What are the first two cases presented by Shemuel? The first situation is when a deer entered a building, and someone sat in the doorway of the building, thereby preventing the deer's escape. When that person sat down, he trapped the deer and therefore performed the melachah of tzad. This is true, even if he was not involved in coaxing the deer into the building. The Mishnah (Shabbos 106b) then states that if a second person sits alongside the first in a way that the deer's escape is still blocked, even when the first person gets up, the second person has not desecrated Shabbos. This is because the second person did not trap the deer but merely guaranteed that a captured animal remains in captivity. Although the Mishnah says that the second person is patur, Shemuel explains that one may lechatchilah sit down alongside the first person, even if one's intention is to keep the deer trapped when the first person gets up. This explains a different aspect of tzad -- the melachah is making the animal available for human use, but once it is already trapped, there is no further violation in keeping it under human control.

The second case is based on two different mishnayos. One Mishnah (Shabbos 107a) permits catching a scorpion, so that it doesn't bite, and another states that catching a snake to prevent it from biting does not violate Shabbos min haTorah, whereas catching it for medicinal uses does (Eduyos 2:5). Tosafos proves that both Mishnayos that permit tzad to protect someone are discussing creatures whose bite is painful, but not life-threatening, pikuach nefesh (Tosafos, Shabbos 3a s.v. Bar). Were the Mishnah discussing a creature whose bite is life-threatening, it would be obvious that one may kill it, because of the general rule that actions necessary to protect life supersede Shabbos and almost all other mitzvos.

Shemuel ruled that although catching non-dangerous creatures is ordinarily prohibited on Shabbos, since this involves only a rabbinic injunction the Sages permitted it under extenuating circumstances.

Why is the act of trapping non-dangerous creatures considered only a rabbinic injunction? We have already presented two possible reasons. The first is because of the principle of Melachah she'einah tzerichah legufah, since one has no interest in capturing a snake or a scorpion (Tosafos op. cit.).

The second reason is that one is not catching these species to make them available for human use, which is an essential component of the melachah of tzad (Avnei Neizer, Orach Chayim 189:7; Biur Halachah, 316:2 s.v. Oh Choleh).

Mosquitoes versus snakes

Although we have discovered that one may catch snakes and scorpions that are not life-threatening, this does not tell us whether one may trap mosquitoes, bees or wasps. Although the sting or bite of these species is indeed painful, it is not usually as painful as a snake or scorpion bite. Thus, it might be that Chazal did not permit catching mosquitoes, bees or wasps.

We can presumably derive the answer from the following passage of Gemara:

“Someone who trapped a flea on Shabbos, Rabbi Eliezer rules him liable for desecrating Shabbos min haTorah, whereas Rabbi Yehoshua rules that his desecration of Shabbos was only of a rabbinic ordinance” (Shabbos 107b). The Gemara explains that this dispute is dependent on an issue that we discussed earlier. Does one desecrate Shabbos min haTorah if he traps a species that is not usually trapped? Rabbi Eliezer rules that he does, whereas Rabbi Yehoshua rules that he does not. Thus, it appears from this Gemara that although Shemuel proved that it is permitted to trap a scorpion, even of the non-deadly variety, one cannot trap a flea, which is considered only as causing discomfort.

Three types of varmints

We can, therefore, divide the different types of unpleasant biters and stingers into three categories:

1. Those that are potentially life-threatening to people. In this instance, if there is even the slightest possibility of danger, one may kill or catch them on Shabbos.
2. Those whose bite will be very painful, but there is no life-threatening danger. These may be trapped on Shabbos, provided that one's intent is only to save people from harm (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 10:25). However, it is forbidden to trap if one intends to use the insect, reptile or arachnid. (Modern biology categorizes spiders and scorpions as arachnids, because they have eight legs, are carnivorous and are wingless. If we want to categorize insects and arachnids together, we should use the word arthropods, but that still excludes snakes and other reptiles. So, for most of this article, I have simply used the word creatures. My apologies to the scientists who are reading this.)
3. Those whose bite will be unpleasant, but not highly painful. In this instance, there is a dispute among the rishonim. Tosafos and the Rosh quote from an earlier baal Tosafos named Rav Poras that, if one sees that an insect may bite him, he is permitted to remove the insect. When the insect is not so close to him, he may brush the insect off, but he may not trap it. Not all authorities accepted Rav Poras' approach. The Mordechai (#402) quotes Rav Yehudah Gaon that he noticed that the “elder rabbis” did not trap fleas, even when they were on their skin. The Beis Yosef, however, contends that even Rav Yehudah Gaon accepts the ruling of Rav Poras, but that he himself practiced this as a personal chumrah, not as the required halachah that he would rule for others. There are other rishonim, however, who certainly disagree with Rav Poras and prohibit trapping mosquitoes, even when they are on your skin, since they are only a discomfort (Meiri, Shabbos 107b).

Consensus

The consensus of halachic authorities follows Rav Poras, although there is a dispute among them whether it is permitted to catch the insect only when it is actually biting (Shulchan

Aruch, Orach Chayim 316:9; Bach) or whether one may remove the insects even when they are in close proximity (Taz 316:8; Magen Avraham 316:18; Elyah Rabbah). The Mishnah Berurah (316:37) concludes that when one can brush off the insect, he should not rely on the heter of trapping it, but he implies that one may trap the insect if brushing it off will not suffice.

Answers

At this point, let us take a fresh look at our original questions: “May I trap mosquitoes, bees, or wasps on Shabbos?”

The answer is that if the insect is about to attack someone, one may trap it. One may also trap it if its sting or bite is very painful, and certainly if it is potentially dangerous.

May one hang flypaper on Shabbos? The answer is that one may not.

“May a snake charmer work on Shabbos?” If one is not intending to use the snake, it is permitted. This is all the more so if the snake is dangerous.

In conclusion

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (Shemos 20:10) notes that people mistakenly think that work is prohibited on Shabbos, to ensure that Shabbos is a day of rest. He points out that the Torah does not prohibit doing avodah, which connotes hard work, but melachah, which implies purpose and accomplishment. We certainly see this idea borne out by the ideas of meleches machsheves, which denote the purpose of the action, and have no correlation at all to the amount of energy expended. The goal of Shabbos is to allow Hashem's rule to be the focus of creation by our refraining from our own creative acts (Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch Commentary to Shemos 20:11). [Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff is a Rav in Neve Yaakov, Jerusalem (formerly Rabbi of Young Israel of Greater Buffalo, Congregation Darchei Tzedek and dayan Beis Din of Baltimore)]

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subject: Rabbi Riskin on the Weekly Torah Portion

Parshat Pekudei: The Importance of Function

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin is the Founder and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone

“And Moses erected the sanctuary, and he fastened its sockets, and he placed its boards, and he inserted its bars, and he installed its pillars.” (Exodus 40:18)

We have often queried the significance of the five Torah portions which conclude the book of Exodus, and especially the repetitions which we find in the detailed descriptions of the accoutrements of the Sanctuary. Even if we concede the very profound theological message of Ki Tisa and the unique prescription of the priestly garments in Tetzave, we are still left with the initial delineation of the furnishings of the

Sanctuary in Teruma and the seeming repetitions thereof in Vayakhel and Pekudei. Why not a general statement to the effect that “And Moses did as he was instructed in the construction of the Sanctuary”!?

Rabbi Elhanan Samet, in his groundbreaking study of the portions of the Bible from a structural-narrative perspective, explains as follows: The commandment to make the various furnishings of the Sanctuary is given by God in the Torah portion of Teruma. The precise performance of the Israelites of every detail of the divine command is detailed in the Torah portion of Vayakhel; this is perhaps to emphasize the fact that we must serve the Almighty in precisely the manner which He commands, no more and no less, in order to protect Judaism from religious fanaticism and zealotry. The actual completion, the final hammer blow of the construction of each sacred object, is presented in the Torah portion of Pekudei.

From an Israeli perspective, I might explain the importance of emphasizing the finish in a separate Torah portion by bringing to your attention a typical phenomenon of Israeli construction: Ninety percent of the work generally gets done efficiently and even almost miraculously, but the last ten percent requires cajoling, entreating and sometimes (even usually) never gets done at all. And it goes without saying that the last ten percent is quite critical, especially during a rainy winter season!

But in a more serious vein, let us investigate the construction of the sanctuary table (shulḥan) in order to understand the true reason for the order of description. The divine command to make a sanctuary table is presented in the portion of Teruma in eight verses (Ex. 25:23–30), beginning with “You shall make a Table of acacia wood, two hand-breadths long, a hand-breadth wide, and a hand-breadth and one-half in height,” and the description of the actual execution or making of the Table is detailed in the portion of Vayakhel almost precisely paralleling the command in Teruma, in only seven verses (Ex. 37:10–16). What is missing in the execution? In the portion of Teruma, the last verse of the commandment regarding the construction of the Table tells us: “And you shall place upon the Table the shewbread before Me always” (Ex. 25:30); and then, towards the end of the portion of Teruma, we find: “And you shall situate the Table outside the curtain on the northern side of the Sanctuary” (Ex. 26:35). These two features, the function of the Table (for the shewbread), and the placement of the Table, while commanded in Teruma, are not included in the actual construction of the Table in the portion of Vayakhel; but these two features are specifically mentioned in the portion of Pekudei: “And he [Moses] placed the Table in the Tent of Meeting on the side of the Sanctuary northwards just outside the curtain, and he arranged the arrangement of the bread before the Lord as the Lord had commanded Moses” (Ex. 40:22, 23).

Why do we need the separate portion of Pekudei to tell us that the function and placement of the sacred Table of the

Sanctuary were carried out? One might suggest a logical, technical reason: The specific placement of the Table as well as its function as repository of the shew-bread could only be effectuated once the entire Sanctuary had been completed. Placement is a matter of relative space, each sacred object placed in relationship to the other sacred objects, and the various Sanctuary placement and functions could not take place unless the Sanctuary had reached its final stage of construction. This final completion occurs only in Pekudei, and therefore it is only in this Torah portion that we find the phrase “just as the Lord commanded Moses” (Ex. 40:17–32) appearing, not only once but actually seven times.

I would like to suggest another reason for the significance of Pekudei as the portion of the “finish,” the portion which emphasizes the placement and function of the sacred object. Each of us must see ourselves as sacred vessels, placed upon this world-Sanctuary in order to fulfill a specific task which is crucial if human society is to be perfected under the kingship of the divine. Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year, ushers in the introspective period known as the Ten Days of Repentance. It also is called the Day of Remembrance. One of the most stirring prayers on this Day of Remembrance begins: “You [God] remember the deeds of the historic world, and are po- ked all the creatures from the earliest time.” The Hebrew word “po-ked” is usually translated as “taking notice of,” a synonym for remembering. However, the late Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, zt”l, Dean of Yeshiva Torah Vadaas maintained that the verb comes from the noun “tafkid,” or function, and therefore the phrase ought to be translated, “You give a specific function to every creature from the earliest time.” The most proper and penetrating question of repentance that an individual ought to ask him or herself is, “Am I in the right country, doing the right thing? In the one chance at life which God grants me, am I pursuing the proper path in the proper locality?”

The Hebrew word “pekudei” can also be translated as the plural “functions,” for each vessel – whether a sacred physical object or a sacred human subject – completes its reason for being only when its unique function is actually performed. Only then can a vessel be considered as fully formed, can a life be assessed as having been truly lived. We can only pray that we are utilizing the unique gifts which the Almighty has imbued within us to perform the right function in the proper place; only then will the divine orchestra play its completed symphony, and only then will the perfected world-Sanctuary provide a home for God to dwell in our midst. Shabbat Shalom

From: **Alan Fisher** <afisherads@yahoo.com>

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Potomac Torah Study Center: Devrei Torah for Shabbat Pekudei 5784 ...

Two years ago, as we approached the end of Sefer Shemot, Russia attacked Ukraine, and our most immediate focus was on the impact of the war on the many Jews caught up in the fighting. At that time, 200 Chabad families were serving an estimated 350,000 Jewish families in Ukraine, as well as assisting numerous non-Jewish victims in the area. While help from the United States helped Ukraine enormously early in the fighting, this support has been lagging more recently. Meanwhile, for the past five plus months, Israel has been coping with Hamas and the results of a vicious invasion, attack, and kidnapping of our people. While the United States early supported Israel strongly, the U.S. government has turned increasingly away from Israel and now impedes Israel's goal of removing the ability of Hamas and Gaza to repeat this attack. Other anti-Semitic attacks, especially from Iran and Lebanon, threaten Israel every day, and anti-Semitic attacks against our people have exploded in number and violence. As we face challenges both within and outside the Jewish community, in Israel and in the Diaspora, Pekudei's message guides us in many ways. Rabbi Yehoshua Singer observes that honesty and integrity are Moshe's critical values in enabling B'Nai Yisrael to construct the Mishkan, God's special place within our midst. Rabbanit Yaffah Arnoff observes that the builders of the Mishkan bring the various components to Moshe but are unable to assemble them into the Mishkan. God sends His Divine spirit to Moshe, and the Mishkan assembles itself in his presence. Rabbanit Arnoff observes that success in difficult tasks, such as the war with Hamas and anti-Semitism in the world, requires that we maintain a deep sense of the higher purpose of what we are doing. We must earn Hashem's bracha to bring His glory to reside within our midst. Rabbi Marc Angel adds that we must strengthen ourselves, and then God will give us additional strength – the fortitude to fulfill our goals.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, z"l, observes that the Torah's description of the Mishkan process parallels the story of creation. God creates our world by making order out of chaos. Almost immediately, humans descend into chaos, and before long, God decides to undo creation and start over with Noach. Rabbi Sacks observes that Moshe descends from Har Sinai and finds that many of the people have descended into chaos. The Mishkan is a tikkun for chaos – precise instructions for creating the Mishkan to create a place of order for Hashem's presence. The Mishkan is a tikkun for the chaos of Sefer Bereishis as well as for Egel Zahav. If we want God in our midst, we must honor Hashem's order in both space and time (Shabbat and Yom Tov).

Rabbi Yehoshua Gordon z"l, observes that the parsha opens by noting 100 silver talents for the bases of the Mishkan (38:25). This silver corresponds to the 100 brachot that a Jew is to recite each day. The building of the Mishkan notes "as Hashem commanded Moshe" 18 times – corresponding to the

18 brachot of the Amidah. Add the two, and we have 113 – the number of words at the end of each bracha of the Amidah. The number 113 also corresponds to the gematria of "lev" (heart), a word which appears 113 times in the Torah. The Mishkan reminds us that we must keep God's commandments in our hearts every day.

Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander notes a Midrash that the initial inventory of the donations for the Mishkan comes up with 1775 shekels more donated than the cost of the items used for the Mishkan. God then directs Moshe to look up. He notices that there are hooks ("vavim") not included in the costs. When adding the costs of the silver vavim, the total costs come to exactly the amount of the donations. "Vav" is also the symbol for "six" – the day when God creates humans. "Vivim" also means "connectors" and "bridge builders," so the Torah is giving us a message that the ideal for humans is to connect the physical and spiritual aspects of life and to build bridges in the world. Rabbi Brander concludes that an important mission for us is to build bridges among segments of Jewish society both in Israel and across the world. (Rabbi Brander has been expressing his wish that Israelis come together and avoid the many political and religious disputes that have been pulling apart Israelis and Jews in the Diaspora.) Is there anything more boring than reading detailed instructions for building a structure – and then reading exactly how the builders follow the instructions? A person who has this reaction to reading the discussion in the Torah for four of the past five weeks is missing the most important lessons. The Torah does not include senseless detail and duplication. The material on the Mishkan has many layers of insights, and the lessons are both important and exciting. The Devrei Torah below illustrate many of these insights and help us understand more of the treasures of the Torah. May we take to heart the lessons of Pekudei and remove the differences that have been dividing us from fellow Jews as well as from others friends in the world.

My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, took an active role in political protests, such as leading a protest for Soviet Jews by the Russian embassy in the 1980s and working actively for Israel. He also devoted a significant amount of his career as a chaplain in the U.S. Navy. He understood and taught the lessons of the Mishkan, working to come close to Hashem and to work for more unity among various Jewish groups. May we teach these lessons to our children and grandchildren.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah and Alan

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of **Rabbi David Fohrman** and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its

scholarly work during and since the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

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Parshas Pekudei

At The Gravesite of Mother Goose

This week we conclude the Sefer {Book} of Shemos with Parshas Pekudai – the accounting of materials used for the construction of the Mishkan {Tabernacle}.

The Ramban, at the beginning of the Sefer, described Shemos as the Sefer of Galus and Geulah – Exile and Redemption. With this he explains why Shemos began with the names of Bnei Yisroel {the Children of Israel} who went down to Mitzrayim {Egypt}, even though that information had already been given at the end of Breishis. He writes that Shemos, as the Sefer of Galus and Geulah, had to begin with the very beginning of the Galus – that descent to Mitzrayim.

As such, it follows that Shemos will end with the final stage of Geulah – Redemption. There's often a lot of confusion over what constitutes this redemption. Many would describe Geulah as leaving Mitzrayim, but that took place in the middle of Shemos. Others would say that it was receiving the Torah on Har Sinai {Mount Sinai} but that also took place in the middle of Shemos. Still others would maintain that the stage of redemption would only be reached when we'd enter Eretz Yisroel {the Land of Israel} but that doesn't take place until long after Sefer Shemos.

If so, what was the true redemption that was reached at the end of Shemos?

The end of Pekudai tells what happened once the Mishkan had been erected and all the vessels had been positioned in their proper places: "And the cloud covered the Ohel Moed and the Honor of Hashem filled the Mishkan. [40:34]" The redemption was Hashem's presence resting amongst Bnei Yisroel. That tangible presence of Hashem that had been seen and felt so clearly on Sinai was now a constant reality, traveling with them wherever they went.

Nowadays, we too can get a bit confused over what constitutes redemption. This past week I accompanied my highschool students on an overnight trip to Boston. On the way we stopped at the Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island. One sensed the foundation of religious freedom being laid when reading the resonating words written by George Washington in response to a letter sent to him by Moses Seixas, the warden of the congregation.

Washington wrote: The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of

conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of once class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent national gifts. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support. May the children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and figtree, and there shall be none to make him afraid. May the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths, and make us all in our several vocations useful here, and in his own due time and way everlastingly happy. G.

Washington

One felt a historical perspective of the great freedoms that we as Jews have enjoyed in the United States and have enabled us to flourish. At risk of getting a little too carried away with this American spirit, we continued on to Boston, contemplated the Holocaust Memorial and visited the colonial cemetery; home to many great people and also to the author of Mother Goose. At that point I began to reflect on the visits to cemeteries I had made during my years in Israel . . . Praying at the grave of Rav Yosef Karo, the author of Shulchan Aruch, for a clarity in halacha {Jewish Law}. Praying at the grave of the Arizal for a deeper understanding of Torah. Praying at the grave of Rabi Akiva to have the strength and exuberance to be willing to start again, no matter what one's age might be. To be willing to see the good in even the darkest of moments. Those were the thoughts that were running through my mind as I stood at the grave site of Mother Goose . . .

We dare not confuse freedom with redemption. We dare not compare any place in the world to the Land of Israel. And I thank you, Mother Goose, for driving that point home in a very clear way.

Good Shabbos, Yisroel Ciner

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subject: S P E C I A L S - Taamei Hamitzvos - The Menorah

Reasons Behind the Mitzvos: The Menorah

By Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

“Study improves the quality of the act and completes it, and a mitzvah is more beautiful when it emerges from someone who understands its significance.” (Meiri, Bava Kama 17a)

Mitzvah #98 in Sefer HaChinuch

THE MITZVAH

After commanding us to construct a Shulchan (golden table) for the show-bread in the north side of the Mishkan, Hashem commands us to construct the Menorah and to place it in the south side. The Menorah is sculptured from a solid gold piece weighing one kikar (120 manah), with a central “trunk” from which emerge an additional three “branches” on each side, totaling seven lamps. It is decorated symmetrically with twenty-two long and narrow cups, eleven spheres shaped like a certain species of apple, and nine flowerlike designs. The Sages have a tradition that its height is eighteen handbreadths (approx. 1.5-1.7 meters). The wicks of the six branches on the side were turned to face toward its center (Shemos 25:31-40; Bamidbar 1-4; Menachos 28b). The Menorah alludes to many deep ideas and esoteric secrets, a selection of which will be presented here. This mitzvah has practical relevance even today, for the Kabbalists teach that the Shabbos and Chanukah lights present the Menorah in the Jewish home. Some have a custom to light seven Shabbos candles for this reason.

A ROYAL CANDELABRUM

On a simple level of understanding, Hashem commanded us to erect the Menorah next to the Shulchan in the same way a king would place a magnificent candelabrum next to his table. Light gladdens the mind because the soul is made of Divine Light, and it expands and experiences delight when exposed to light. Seven is a standard number of branches for an elegant candelabrum (Rabbeinu Bachaye).

THE CELESTIAL BODIES

On a deeper level of understanding, the Menorah symbolizes that Hashem provides illumination for His world. Its seven lamps allude to the seven significant celestial bodies (kochavei leches), namely, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the sun, Venus, Mercury, and the moon (Tanchuma 7). The central, main lamp represents the sun (Avodas HaMenorah). The Menorah is placed on the south side of the Mishkan, just as the sun runs along the equator to the south of Eretz Yisrael (Chizkuni). Its golden material resembles light. The requirement for all its parts to be made of a single piece of gold, which weighed a single kikar, the way its branches stem out from a single trunk, the way its lights turned toward the center of the Menorah — all suggests there is a single source for all light: Hashem. Since the most basic form of idol-worship in olden times was that of the celestial bodies, and of the sun in particular, it is especially significant that Menorah proclaims Hashem’s unity with regard to them.

HOLINESS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

In addition, the Menorah alludes to the holiness that shines down into our world during the holy days of the year. The seven lamps correspond to the seven days of the week. The one in the center corresponds to Shabbos; the other six lamps turn toward it, for it is the focus of six days of the week. The twenty-two cups correspond to the twenty-two days of the festivals in the year (in the Diaspora), the eleven spheres

correspond to eleven Roshei Chodesh (not including Rosh Hashanah, which is a festival), and the nine flowers correspond to eight days of Chanukah and one day of Purim (Rav Yosef Masas, cited in Mayim Chaim §277).

SYMBOL OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE

The ner maaravi (western lamp) never went out, so long as the Jewish people were worthy of this miracle. This was a constant testimony that Hashem’s Divine Presence rested amongst the Jewish people (Menachos 86b). The seven branches correspond to the seven Sefiros, all emerging from one central branch, which symbolizes Hashem’s absolute unity (Rabbeinu Bachaye).

THE WISDOM OF THE TORAH

The Menorah symbolizes that Hashem provides illumination for His world in the spiritual sense as well, that is, through the Divine wisdom of the Torah. As opposed to the Aron, which symbolizes the actual Torah that was received by prophecy, the Menorah symbolizes the wisdom of the Torah as it is attained by the study of the Jewish people (Rav Hirsch). The central branch represents the Written Torah, and the six protruding branches represent the six orders of the Oral Torah (Arizal, cited in Be’er Basadeh). The 7 branches, 22 cups, 11 spheres, and 9 flowers add up to 49 components, corresponding to the 49 days in which the Torah was given. Accordingly, there is a custom to recite Tehillim §67, which has 49 words, written out in the shape of a Menorah, during the 49 days of the Omer that lead up to Giving of the Torah. The Menorah weighed 120 manah, corresponding to the three times forty days that Moshe spent on Mount Sinai in order to receive the Torah (Maaseh Rokeach). The Menorah is positioned in the south of the Mishkan, which is called its “right side,” since the heart of the wise man is on his right (Koheles 10:2; Midrash Tadsheh §11).

The Midrash expounds that the verse, The beginning of Your words shall illuminate (Tehillim 119:130), alludes to the Menorah. Arizal, Rama (Toras HaOlah §16), and the Vilna Gaon explain this to mean that the opening verses of the Torah’s five Books allude to the various components of the Menorah. The opening verse of Bereishis has seven words, alluding to the number of branches; the opening verse of Shemos has eleven words, alluding to the number of spheres; the opening verse of Vayikra has nine words, alluding to the number of flowers; the opening verse of Bamidbar has seventeen words, alluding to its height. [Although its height is eighteen handbreadths, the Commentators explain that the eighteenth is alluded to by the kollel, or the eighteenth handbreadth is a part of a handbreadth and is not counted, or it corresponds to the base of the Menorah, or it is alluded to by the beis of Bereishis, or a combination of the above.] The opening verse of Devarim has twenty-two words, alluding to the number of cups.

We may suggest that these five components correspond precisely to the contents of those Books, as follows: Bereishis is the Book of Creation, which is described in a verse as, He formed seven pillars for it (Mishlei 9:1), meaning, Hashem created the world in seven days (Rashi); so too, the Menorah has seven lamps that correspond to the seven days of Creation (Tanchuma), set on seven pillars. Shemos begins with tribes descending to Egypt, and they are represented by eleven stars; hence, eleven spheres. Vayikra speaks about the mitzvos that pertain to a tribe that is not counted amongst the rest: Levi. Levi is comprised of eight families (Livni, Shimi, Amram, Yitzhar, Chevron, Uziel, Machli, and Mushi), plus Aharon's Kohanite family, and so too, there are eight flowers along the branches of the Menorah, plus a ninth by its base. The flowers are associated with the Tribe of Levi, as we find that Aharon's staff sprouted blossoms (VaOlech Eschem Komemiyus). Bamidbar describes the Jewish people travelling through the Wilderness in a camp of eighteen elements: the Mishkan in the center; surrounded by four family groups (Gershon to west, Kehas to south, Merari to the north, and the families of Moshe and Aharon to the east); surrounded by four groups of three tribes; and the encampment as a whole (the kollel). This finds expression in the Menorah's height of eighteen handbreadths, which alluded to in the seventeen words of the opening verse of Bamidbar, along with the kollel. In Devarim, Moshe teaches the Torah to the Jewish people, and the Torah is symbolized by its twenty-two letters; hence the number of cups.

THE TORAH SCHOLAR

A Torah scholar is compared to a tree, and so too, the Menorah has a trunk, branches, flowers, cups similar to the ovary of a flower, and spheres shaped like fruit (Rav Hirsch; see there). The height of the Menorah is that of an average man (Alshich). It measures eighteen handbreadths, the numerical value of the word chai (life), because the Torah is the Tree of Life (Toras HaOlah). The cups, which contain spheres, from which blossom forth flowers, allude to the three stages of a Torah scholar's development. First, he must focus solely on receiving Torah from his teachers, like a cup; then he must focus on retaining his studies, like sealed-off sphere; and then he becomes capable of blossoming and producing novel Torah thoughts in accordance with Torah's truth (Dvar Mikra, by Rabbi Immanuel Bernstein). The seven lamps correspond to the seven gateways to the soul): two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and the mouth (Midrash Tadsheh §11). Every Jew is capable of radiating with Divine glory by acquiring Hashem's wisdom that is contained in the Torah, our national heritage.

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