



BS"D

To: parsha@groups.io
From: cshulman@gmail.com

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET VAYAKHEL PEKUDEI – Hachodesh 5783

parsha@groups.io / www.parsha.net - in our 28th year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to parsha+subscribe@groups.io Please also copy me at cshulman@gmail.com A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net> It is also fully searchable.

Sponsored in memory of **Chaim Yissachar z"l** ben Yecheiel Zaydel Dov

To sponsor a parsha sheet contact cshulman@parsha.net (proceeds to tzedaka)

<https://yated.com/parshas-hachodesh-our-power-over-nature/>
Parshas Hachodesh: Our Power Over Nature
Rabbi Yaakov Feitman

March 15, 2023

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz used to tearfully relate the story of a survivor who endured six bitter years – 1939-1945 – in the concentration camp.

“The Germans took everything away from me,” he declared poignantly, “my family, my prayers, my parnassah and my humanity.” His tone suddenly changed to strength and faith. “But one thing they couldn’t take from me: the moon. Every month, seventy-two times in a row, we went out and sanctified the new moon. We said, with the utmost feeling, ‘To the moon He said that it should renew itself as a crown of splendor for those borne by Him from the womb, those who are destined to renew themselves like it.’ Imagine the wonder. A Jew looks at the moon and sees that although it has completely disappeared, it returns once again. Each month, this mitzvah and sight gave us hope as we realized that even in the darkness, we can look forward to the new month ahead.”

These extraordinary words speak for themselves. However, there is a deeper context to Parshas Hachodesh and our relationship to the moon which affects us all. The Alter of Kelm used to bemoan the fact that people stopped celebrating Rosh Chodesh with a seudas mitzvah. He explained that Klal Yisroel’s joy in the renewal of the moon and the lunar month can be an important experience in the life of every Jew. The Alter always pointed out that the Hallel of Rosh Chodesh commemorates the future, not the past. It is a monthly reflection upon the fact that despite the current state of Klal Yisroel in the world, we will be uplifted and redeemed in the future.

This is true every month, but when commemorating the month of Nissan, there is a much deeper level as well. Nissan is the only month when we don’t recite Tachanun at all. The poskim write that for the first twelve days, the reason is that we are remembering the chanukas hamizbei’ach – the renewal of the altar – when the nesi’im offered their korbanos. Then, from Erev Pesach until the day after Yom Tov, we don’t recite Tachanun, as with every other holiday. But why don’t we begin saying Tachanun after that? The Bais Yosef answers that since most of the month has already passed, we don’t begin after that. A number of poskim are troubled. What does this halacha have to do with the usual application of majority, rov?

The Chida answers in the name of the Rokei’ach that the novi Yechezkel says that not only will the third Bais Hamikdosh be built during the month of Nissan, it will be on the night of the Seder. It will descend from heaven, but we won’t celebrate on Pesach so that “we don’t mix one gladness with another” (Moed Koton 8b). Then, as did Shlomo Hamelech, we will have a great celebration in honor of this colossal event during the week after Pesach. Hence, we even now don’t recite Tachanun during that week. Now, imagine: Over two thousand years have passed and the Bais Hamikdosh has not descended, but we have not begun saying Tachanun. It is already a Yom Tov because Yidden live and breathe with the thought, hope, belief and prayer for the Bais Hamikdosh. It is as real as all of us laining and learning Sefer Vayikra, poring over Seder Kodshim and following the inner paths of the Bais Hamikdosh through Masechtos Tomid and Middos.

A Yid lives the life of the moon, which is borrowed, reflected light. There is as yet no warmth or much light, but it provides the certain knowledge that there will be a better and brighter future ahead. Jewish history itself attests to this reality. The Zohar (1:34) teaches about the kingdom of Dovid and Shlomo that just as the moon has 15 days of ascendancy, so were there 15 generations from Avrohom Avinu until Shlomo Hamelech (see Sefer Dibros Tzvi, page 138). Then the generations descended until the tragic one of Tzidkiyau, when the Bais Hamikdosh was destroyed (Yirmiyahu 22:30). At that point, it seemed that Malchus Bais Dovid had disappeared as surely as

the moon does every month. However, then, after Yehoyachin was imprisoned and things seemed as bad as the imprisonment of Yosef Hatzaddik, Zerubavel was born miraculously. Rav Yaakov Emden (Sefer Hakesurim L'Yaakov) enumerates from that low point how the 15th generation from Zerubavel resulted in the glory of Rabbon Gamliel. Yes, those who live with the moon know that the darkness always leads to new light.

My rebbi, Rav Yitzchok Hutner (Pachad Yitzchok, Pesach, Kuntrus Reshimos 4:3) taught us that while the unit known as years (shonim) refers to the cyclical aspect of time, the unit known as months (chodoshim) refers to the restorative rejuvenation powers of time. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the very first mitzvah in the Torah (see first Rashi in Bereishis) given to Klal Yisroel was that of Kiddush Hachodesh. Hashem knew that we would have a rough ride until Moshiach and immediately gave us the mitzvah which promised us renewal and even eventual resurrection. As Rav Yonasan David, rosh yeshiva of Yeshivas Pachad Yitzchok, has pointed out (Kuntrus Pesach, Maamar 3:3), "In the very beginning of Yetzias Mitzrayim (Shemos 12:2), Hashem granted us power over time. Later, He granted this same power to Yehoshua (10:2) when He stopped the sun."

We can now understand the incredible chizuk of the survivor who moved Rav Chaim Shmulevitz to tears. It is not only that he felt that things will improve and change. Being mekadeish the levanah puts us all in touch with our own immense potential, not only that of the Creator. Chazal tell us that when the Sanhedrin sanctifies the new moon, even if they have made an error, what is done is done and there is a new month with Yomim Tovim to follow accordingly. Thus, we recite in the Shemoneh Esrei of all Yomim Tovim, "Mekadeish Yisroel vehazemanim," meaning that it is we alone who shape and form the days and month ahead. This power, which was granted to Klal Yisroel in the form of the first mitzvah, gives us the strength and confidence to not only survive, but to hold our heads up knowing that the universe revolves around us.

It is well-known that, indeed, many of our gedolim had power over the physical and natural world. Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein (Sefer Mitzvos B'simcha, page 86) relates an incredible exchange between one of the mekubalim of Yerushalayim, Rav Asher Zelig Margolios, and the Chazon Ish during Churban Europa. He sent the Chazon Ish a letter asking – it seems almost demanding – why, if Rav Shimon Bar Yochai was able to rid Klal Yisroel of demons, couldn't he stop the Nazis from entering Eretz Yisroel? It was clear from the mekubal's question that he felt that the Chazon Ish had this power. We do know that the Nazis never did enter Eretz Yisroel. Interestingly, the Chazon Ish's answer was that the Rashbi was the rov of all of Eretz Yisroel, but these days no one has that title or force. On another occasion, the Chazon Ish confessed that Hashem

had hidden the truth of what was happening in Europe from him and he therefore was unable to stop the tragedy.

For us, it is enough to know that some tzaddikim can even overcome nature after they have passed from this world. Rav Zilberstein goes on to tell the incredible tale of the ship that carried the bier of Rav Amram Gaon. The Seder Hadoros relates that in the year 4606, the Gaon traveled from his home in Magenza to Koloniah to found a yeshiva. Just before his passing, he instructed his talmidim there not to bury him in Koloniah, but to make sure that his body was returned to Magenza, where his family was interred. The talmidim responded that since there was a war raging between these two countries, they could not promise that they would be able to fulfill his wishes. Rav Amram Gaon calmly instructed his talmidim to provide the proper taharah, place him in an aron, and put it on a small ship, which would proceed by itself. They did just that and, lo and behold, the ship reached Magenta on "its own steam." The gentiles who viewed the ship's miraculous arrival declared it to be carrying a holy man. When any of them approached the ship, the boat moved away from them.

When the Magentza community finally obtained access, they discovered the following letter from the Gaon:

"To my dear brethren of the city of Magentza: I have come to you because I passed away and ask that you bury me in my ancestral tomb with my family. May you all be well. Signed, Amram."

The gentiles, however, seized the ship with the tzaddik's body and erected a house of worship above it, refusing the Jews permission to take Rav Amram's holy body back. No amount of money would change their minds. Rav Amram appeared to several of his talmidim in a dream, begging them to bury him properly. Finally, they thought of a plan. In the dead of night, they exchanged their rebbe's body for that of a criminal who had been executed by hanging. Miraculously, no one was the wiser and Rav Amram Gaon, one of the authors of our siddur today, was buried with his family.

As the Sefer Hachinuch writes, Kiddush Hachodesh can only be done by "gedolim and chassidim" because it signifies the power of Klal Yisroel and its leaders over nature itself.

May we all soon see the return of Kiddush Hachodesh with the power of Klal Yisroel's renewal bimeheirah beyomeinu.

from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> to: ravfrand@torah.org date: Mar 16, 2023, 11:14 PM

Parshas Pekudei

You Don't Necessarily Get What You Pay For

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1241 The Case of the Mishloach Manos That Was Delivered to the Wrong Person. Good Shabbos!

You Don't Necessarily Get What You Pay For In Terms of Divine Presence Being Present

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

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

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

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

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

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

humble of spirit and tremble over His Word, then His Shechina will reside in such a shul.

A famous Gemara teaches (Nedarim 81a) "Take heed regarding the children of the poor for from them Torah will emerge for Israel." Poor children will be the future Torah leaders of Israel. The Maharal explains that just as when the Almighty is going to put His Shechina in a building, He does not look at the trappings, but rather, he looks at the inner quality, so too the children of poor people are generally humble. They come from poor backgrounds and they are not haughty and overly proud about things. That is where the Torah resides.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem
DavidATwersky@gmail.com Edited by Dovid Hoffman;
Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah. 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 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 © 2022 by Torah.org. support Do you have a question or comment? Feel free to contact us on our website. Join the Jewish Learning Revolution! Torah.org: The Judaism Site brings this and a host of other classes to you every week. Visit <http://torah.org> to get your own free copy of this mailing or subscribe to the series of your choice. Need to change or stop your subscription? Please visit our subscription center, <http://torah.org/subscribe/> -- see the links on that page. Permission is granted to redistribute, but please give proper attribution and copyright to the author and Torah.org. Both the author and Torah.org reserve certain rights. Email copyrights@torah.org for full information. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 2833 Smith Ave., Suite 225 Baltimore, MD 21209 <http://www.torah.org/> learn@torah.org (410) 602-1350

from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org> date: Mar 16, 2023, 8:27 PM

Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky

Emotional Spirituality and Concrete Expression

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

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

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

There is a pshat attributed to the Ramban [in Emunah uBitachon- assumed to be a talmid of his], regarding the verse, "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles, and by the hinds of the field, that you not awaken or stir up love until it desires [shetechputz]". The Ramban [or his talmid] explains the passuk in a different sense. He says that the word "techputz" comes from the word "cheifetz" which means "an object". He interprets this verse homiletically as meaning the following: there are, at times, awakenings of deep religious emotions in people; a person is overcome with emotion and feels that "he is connected". Never let those feelings remain as such! It is emptiness unless one turns those feelings into action and concretizes them. Thus, the passuk is describing the profound feelings of love in Shir Hashirim as having to find themselves in deed, never allowing emotion to dissipate into nothingness.

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

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

from: **Rabbi YY Jacobson** <rabiyy@theyeshiva.net> v
reply-to: info@theyeshiva.net date: Mar 16, 2023, 8:05 PM

A Cover-Up of Biblical Proportions

A Tribute to My Dear Student Nadiv

By: Rabbi YY Jacobson

The Truth, the Whole Truth and... Harry gets stopped by a police car. When the police officer gets to his car, Harry says, "What's the problem officer?" Officer: You were going at least 65 in a 50mph zone. Harry: No sir, I was going 50. Wife: Oh Harry, You were going 70. Harry gives his wife a dirty look. Officer: I will also give you a ticket for your broken brake light. Harry: Broken brake light? I didn't know about a broken brake light! Wife: Oh Harry, you've known about that brake light for months. Harry gives his wife a really dirty look. Officer: I am also going to book you for not wearing your seat belt. Harry: Oh, I just took it off when you were walking up to the car. Wife: Oh Harry, you never wear your seat belt. Harry turns to his wife and yells, "Shut your mouth!" The officer turns to the woman and says, "Madam, does your husband talk to you this way all the time?" Wife: "No, only when he's drunk..."

Smooth or Problematic?

In the Torah, the building of the Mishkan (Tabernacle)—culminated in the Torah portion of this week Vayakhel-Pekudei—is presented as a seamless flow of command, collection, and finally, construction. G-d commands Moses, Moses presents the people with the plans, the people respond over-enthusiastically, donating more than necessary (for the first and last time in Jewish history...), and all Moses has to do is tell them when to stop. The construction goes ahead according to plan, and in no time at all—six months in total (compare that with construction nowadays)—the Mishkan is up and ready to function.

However, the student of Midrash—the Talmudic and Midrashic commentary to the Torah, transmitted orally throughout the generations till transcribed—makes aware of the “politics” behind the events. It was anything but smooth. The Midrash[1] tells us, shockingly, that there were those who suspected Moses of pocketing funds and they insolently demanded that Moses make an accounting for every ounce of every item. Moses conceded to their demands and humbly presented a detailed account of every “dollar” collected for the grandiose “building campaign.”

The Midrash[2] also tells us that Moses actually forgot what he did with some of the silver, and the rumors began circulating... The Rabbi is driving a new BMW... Who paid for his cruise to the Bahamas... How did he manage to buy the two-million-dollar home for his daughter? How can he afford such a grandiose wedding?... Did you see his new kitchen?... Till Moses reminded himself that he used them for hooks on the pillars in the Tabernacle, and the Jews calmed down.

There was another obstacle in the process. There were times—the Midrash tells us—when Moses struggled with understanding G-d’s directions, and G-d had to show him a detailed vision of what He wanted.[3] Once, during the formation of the Menorah, the sages relate, that too did not work. Moses completely gave up and G-d had to make the menorah Himself.

Then the Sanctuary was completed much earlier than expected, and it had to remain idle for three months.[4]

When the time came for the actual erection of the Mishkan, they again ran into a glitch: No one could succeed in lifting the walls. Even collectively, it was impossible. Imagine the anticlimax, the fear that all was in vain. At the end, Moses miraculously lifted the beams alone.

Yet here is the astounding part in all of this:

All of these parts of the story are completely ignored in the biblical text itself! There are a few tantalizing hints, but overall, the story presented in the Torah is one of a holistic, pure, and ideal experience. No glitches, no politics, no accusations, no problems; a perfectly smooth ride.

One wonders how do we reconcile the biblical and oral traditions of the narrative? If the Midrashic traditions are presenting what happened, why are these details ignored in the biblical text? Is the Torah trying to brush over the disturbing truths? Is the Torah teaching us to repress uncomfortable facts; to ignore the real story, to make believe everything is “perfect” when in fact it’s far from it? And if so, why did the Rabbis in the Midrash “ruin the party” and “spill the beans”?

Creation Cover-Ups

This is not the only incident with this birthmark. We find this tendency at least twice more.

The opening of Genesis records eloquently but concisely the facts of creation and it sounds like pretty smooth sailing. “In the beginning, G-d created heaven and earth...” Over the next six days, a universe is formed. The Talmud and the Midrash, however, tell us that even G-d ran into some seemingly unexpected delays and had to make some serious alterations. Each of the six days presented another challenge.

For starters, the Midrash relates[5] that the attribute of Truth opposed creation, and G-d had to cast Truth away in order to create our universe. The sages also relate that G-d attempted to create the world with the quality of Judgment and was forced to retract to Mercy when He saw that the world could not handle it.[6]

Then: He created light on the first day, hoping it would serve all of creation, but it was too great and luminescent and He deemed it useless (and had to stow it away as a reward for only the truly meritorious.)[7]

Next: On the second day, he constructed heaven and separated higher waters from lower waters. According to the Midrash, the

lower waters “revolted” and are still weeping about their rejection.[8]

Next: On the third day, G-d designed trees with edible branches, but the trees disobeyed and produced only edible fruit.[9]

Next: On the fourth day, the sun and the moon were created to be equals, the moon complained that “two kings cannot serve with one crown,” and hence the moon was diminished.[10]

Next: On Thursday, G-d created the fish, including the Leviathan. Then, realizing that if the Leviathan would procreate, it would spell the end of the planet, He killed the partner of the Leviathan.[11]

Next: On Friday, when He wished to create man, the angels in heaven complained it would be a fatal mistake.[12] Indeed, shortly after Adam and Eve were created they disobeyed G-d's commandment to refrain from eating the Tree of knowledge.

Can you see a pattern? Not a single day passed without some glitch or crisis. Yet, none of these “glitches” or “issues” are recorded explicitly in the actual biblical text. There it is as smooth a process as can be. How can we make sense of this shocking discrepancy?

Even more perplexing is the fact that following the six days of creation, the Torah sums it all up with these stunning words:

וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי.

And G-d saw all that He made and it was very good.

Very good? Really? Each day brought another headache, another meltdown, and another crisis. What makes it so good?

The Second Cover Up

The Tanach describes glowingly and in minute detail the materials and construction and dedication of the First Temple built in Jerusalem without the hint of a glitch. Yet the Midrash adds the “problematic” information: During construction, they hit an underground spring that threatened to flood the entire world;[13] then, at what was to be the climactic finale, the entering of the Ark to the Holy-of-Holies, the gates refused to open against all efforts.[14]

According to the Midrash,[15] the entire dedication of the First Holy Temple was heavily delayed because the night before King Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh and he slept in! It was his mother, Bat Sheba, who had to enter his bedroom, wake him up, and chastise him for oversleeping on the day the Temple was to be dedicated.

We are left with a striking enigma: The biblical text ignores the disturbing details. Then the rabbis come and share with us “the rest of the story.” Why?

What Is Your Story?

The answer is a crucial and profound lesson in life. It captures a basic perspective of Judaism. The Torah is not trying to hide anything (a general pattern in Torah is that it tolerates no cover-ups, for anybody), and that is why the Sages felt comfortable exposing all of the details. Rather, the Torah is telling us that

when one develops a proper perspective of his or her life, the problems do not always deserve to be mentioned. Not because they don't exist, but because they don't define the story of our lives, and therefore we can decide not to make them part of the narrative.

In each of these three series of events—creation of the universe; construction of the Sanctuary and the Jerusalem Temple—something awesomely cataclysmic and earth-shattering is occurring. The infinite fuses with the finite; the impossible becomes possible, Man meets G-d and G-d meets Man. Out of cosmological emptiness and infinite Divinity, creation develops; something-ness is made out of nothingness. G-d “squeezes” his omnipotence and omnipresence into a Mishkan (sanctuary) of a few square cubits, into a building of stone, into the heart of mortal man.

This, then, is THE story; this is what happened. The bumps on the road, true as they may be, do not constitute the story, not because they didn't happen, but because they are not what really happened; they should not, they cannot, obscure or even dampen the majestic power and beauty of the events.

The Torah is teaching us how to live. Life is tough. The really important things are even tougher. Raising and support a family requires strength and courage. Building a good marriage is often challenging and difficult. To develop a relationship with G-d may be frustrating and lonely. Many things will not work out as we hoped they would. We face adversity, grief, and loss. There are inevitably times of pain and heartbreak. There are quarrels and squabbles, moments of anger and setbacks. We must confront depression, illness, mental challenges, financial stress, and spiritual confusion.

But we have the choice not to make all of these THE story of our lives. Sure, raising children is challenging, but when you gaze into the loving and trusting eyes of your child—that is THE miracle of existence, not the challenges leading toward that moment. When you connect to your spouse in a truly meaningful way, in a moment of real camaraderie and respect—that is the miracle of love playing itself out in your life. A bad day at work, hours of frustration in running your business, all melt away before the power of something so much greater, so much more real—your growth as a human being and your ability to help others with your money and your experience.

We must look at our lives and ask what is the real story happening here? Is my life a story of hardship and struggle, or am I part of something incredible: I am building a home for G-d; I am constructing a fragment of heaven on planet earth; I am building a Jewish family, a loving marriage; I am helping people; I have the privilege of studying Torah, of spreading Torah, of doing a mitzvah, of inspiring others to light up the world. This is my story; this is my life. The other parts are of course also true and deserve to be acknowledged as such, much

as the Midrash acknowledges the other side of the story with creation, the Mishkan and the Temple. I must deal with every challenge and I must attempt to repair it, but I cannot allow it to become THE STORY.

Here we have the origin, thousands of years ago, of what is known today as Narrative Therapy. Each of us has the choice to define and reframe the story of our lives.

When I wake up in the morning, I know that I have fifty things to do today, most of them are not fun; some are difficult and frustrating. But that is not THE story. The real story is captured in the words a Jew says the moment he or she opens his eyes: “Modeh ani lefanecha... shehechezarta bi nishmasi...” I am alive; G-d gave me back my soul for another day. Gevald! How awesome is that? I can now talk to G-d face to face, learn Torah, pray, share my heart and love with another human being, give charity, and become an ambassador for love, light and hope. I can embrace an aching soul, and touch a bleeding heart. Now that’s a life! Yes, I got to pay my bills, I have to deal with headaches, I need to catch the bank, I have to fix my garage, I need to call my son’s principal, I have to pick up the cleaners, I need to go to the dentist, and I need to pay back the loan, and I was just called to do Jury Duty. But do not let that become the story of your life. Stay focused on the real story – that at every moment you can construct a home for G-d in your corner of the world and bring redemption one step closer.[16]

My dear student, Nadiv Kehaty, and his four children My Dear Student

At this time of the year, I remember a dear student who passed on on the 18th of Adar, eight years ago. Nadiv Kehaty was only 30 years old when he died. A loving husband, and the father of four young children, his sudden passing left a family and a community in shock.

Nadiv’s very presence made you feel how much possibility life contained if it was filled with laughter, love, and innocence. For Nadiv, all of life consisted of one story: An opportunity to laugh and make others laugh.

A memory: I was a teacher, sitting at my desk in the lecture hall, presenting a Talmud class to 25 students. I was focused, immersed, and serious. But then, suddenly, one student leaped into the classroom, jumped over the tables, and after listening to a few sentences, exclaimed with his genuine giggle and pure selflessness: “Rabbi, you are awesome; I love you!”

This was Nadiv on a regular day. I’d melt away. It was clear that his soul was sent to this world to teach us how to love and laugh.

I love you too, Nadiv.

[1] Shemos Rabbah 51:6 [2] Ibid. [3] Shemos Rabbah 52:4 [4] Shemos Rabbah 52:2 [5] Bereishis Rabbah 8:5 [6] Bereishis Rabbah 12:15. Rashi Genesis 1:1 [7] Talmud Chagigah 12a [8] Tikunei Zohar Tikun 5 (19b). [9] Rashi Genesis 1:12 [10] Talmud Chulin 60b [11] Rashi Genesis 1:21 [12] Midrash

Tehilim 8:2 [13] Talmud Sukkah 53a [14] Talmud Shabbos 30a [15] Bamidbar Rabbah 10:4 [16] My thanks to Rabbi Avraham David Shlomo for his help in preparing this essay.

Fw From Hamelaket@gmail.com

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Vayakhel-Pekudei

פרשיות ויקהל-פקודי תשפ"ג

Parashas Vayakhel

כל איש ואישה אשר נדב לבם אותם להביא לכל המלאכה ... הביאו בני ישראל נדבה לד'

Every man and woman whose heart motivated them to bring for any of the work... Bnei Yisrael brought a free-willed offering to Hashem. (35:29)

Upon reading the *pasuk*, one is struck by its redundancy. What is the difference between *kol ishv'ishah*, every man and woman, and *Bnei Yisrael*? Are they not one and the same? The *Chida*, *zl* explains this with a pertinent analogy. Often a *shul* has an appeal on *Shabbos* for badly needed funds to support an important project. In the heat of the announcement, people tend to get carried away and, wanting to “keep up with the Joneses,” pledge more than they would normally give. At first, the donor is very proud of himself. After all, everyone else, even the wealthy members, has pledged only one hundred dollars. He, on the other hand, has pledged five hundred dollars. This warm feeling lasts throughout the davening and even on the walk home, when everyone smiles at him and pats him on the back. When he arrives at home, however, and the accolades no longer accompany him, he asks himself, “Am I out of my mind? First of all, I do not even have that kind of money (at least not for *tzedakah*). Why did I pledge so much more than the wealthiest members of the *shul*?” This hindsight, bitter feeling, gnaws at him until he decides, “Done! I will pay this time. However, never again! The next time an appeal occurs, I will think twice, even three times, before I make a pledge.” The *Chida* explains that, concerning the appeal for the *Mishkan*, the people had no regrets. From the “pledge” made by any man or woman, until the moment that they brought the check it was all with an unusual free-will to donate for the building of the Sanctuary. Since contributing to *tzedakah* consists of two stages – the pledge and writing the check – the Torah repeats that everyone was on the same page from start to finish.

Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl, offers a practical explanation which should give us something to consider with regard to our own *avodas ha'kodesh*, service to Hashem. A father goes to perform a *mitzvah*, do his children accompany him to watch, learn, and participate? The father goes to purchase a *lulav* and *esrog*. Where are his children? Why should they not be inspired seeing how many people attend,

how much they spend (regardless of their income), how meticulous and uncompromising they are in looking for an *esrog mehudar*, beautiful *esrog*? A father goes to bake *matzos*. Where are his children? Why should they not develop a love for *mitzvos*? *Tzedakah* often occurs at home, when a solicitor, a *Rav*, *Rosh Yeshivah*, representative of a Torah institution/organization, pays a visit. Should the children not develop a love of sharing with others? I remember my good friend, *Reb Yosef Feigenbaum*, *zl*, sharing with me his father's (Reb Moshe) manner of giving *tzedakah*. I came by one night, past the children's bedtime, to solicit for a local learning project for *rebbeim*. It was then an innovative idea that would require the support of forward-thinking individuals. *Reb Yosef* was optimistic about the idea and prepared to give us a check. Before he wrote the check, however, he asked his wife to call the children downstairs. A few minutes later, their five children came down in their pajamas, and they all took a seat at the table. *Reb Yosef* explained to them that he wanted them to watch and share in the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*. This is how he was raised, and this is how he raised his children. It is, thus, no wonder that each of them has in them their parents' commitment to *harbotzas haTorah* and *ahavas Yisrael*.

Concerning the donating process for the *Mishkan*, it was not only the Jewish man and woman/parents that participated. It was also (all) *Bnei Yisrael*, the children, whom their parents brought to observe and experience the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*.

As an aside, we cannot overstate the impact parental behavior – both positive and negative – has on their children. Making a positive impression grants our children a head start on the road of life. They are equipped for their journey because their parents have taught them by example how one should live. This is the concept of *d'mus d'yukno shel aviv*. *Yosef* saw an image of his father, the Patriarch *Yaakov*. He saw what a Jew should look like and how he should live. This image protected him from the sin. The flipside is a warning to parents: Your children are watching. What message do you want to send to them? How do you want them to remember you?

ויעש בצלאל את הארון עצי שיטים ... ויצפהו זהב טהור מבית ומחוץ
Betzalel made the Aron of Shittim/Acacia wood ... He covered it with gold within and without. (37:1,2)

The *Aron Hakodesh* represents Torah and its disseminators. Torah is the lifeblood of our people. Thus, the *Aron* received special status within the framework of the *Mishkan*. It was a box constructed of wood, which was covered inside and outside with gold. All one saw was the gold. While the Torah scholar receives enormous esteem (or should) from the *ha'mon am*, general community, the wood is a reminder to him not to allow the accolades to make him lose sight of his inner essence. Humility should prevail over external praise.

Rabbeinu Chananel views the arrangement of gold on wood as support of *Chazal's* dictum that a *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar (actually everyone), should be consistent, his inner character conforming to his outward, expressed beliefs. Spiritual hypocrisy does not sit well with the Torah scholar's mission in life. The *Bais HaLevi* derives from the *Aron's* inner-outer plating of gold an important lesson concerning how the Jewish community should treat their spiritual leadership. (I do not use the word leadership arbitrarily. Anyone who devotes himself solely to Torah study is qualified for inclusion under the rubric of spiritual leadership.) The community has a responsibility to provide for the needs of its Torah scholars. This should not be done begrudgingly, with the inane claim that "they" do not need that much. Who is to assert that they do not need a new car, new clothes, nice home? When they will work, they will have "luxuries": as long as they are learning, they should get by with "whatever." How quick we are to notice when the *rav* buys a new car, a new suit, fixes up his home. How is the *rav* able to send his children to the same camp that caters to the wealthier segment of the community? What right do the *rav* and *rebbezin* have to take a trip to *Eretz Yisrael* to visit their children? These spoutings are the expressions of a miserable few who are troubled that someone who, for the most part, is supported by communal funds should maintain a decent lifestyle. It is, likewise, considered to be acting in poor taste when one who truly has less lives above his means, thereby catalyzing such loathsome reactions. The *talmid chacham* should not only be allowed to experience luxuries, but it should be the goal of the community that its spiritual leadership be prosperous inside their home, as well as in their outer service to the needs of the community.

The *Bais HaLevi* extends the concept of esteem with regard to the *tzedakah* we give to one in need. He observes that when one gives *tzedakah*, he is fulfilling a *mitzvah*. As such, an *ani*, poor man, becomes a *cheftza d'mitzvah*, the object of the *mitzvah*. He is no different than the *esrog* or *matzah* which do not retain sanctification after the *mitzvah*, but during the *kiyum*, fulfillment, of the *mitzvah* is the article of the *mitzvah* and, thus, accorded special respect. If the *ani* is a *cheftza d'mitzvah*, how we treat him while we are carrying out the *mitzvah* falls under the purview of *din d'Oraisa*, Torah law. Understandably, this becomes a game changer concerning how we treat the individual who asks for assistance. While we must treat all people with respect, the poor man being a *cheftza d'mitzvah* puts us in the position of playing with fire if we are not careful concerning his feelings.

The concept of *cheftza d'mitzvah* in association with the esteem we must give someone who is already down due to his economic hardship takes on a new perspective, especially among those whose desire to fulfill a *mitzvah* supersedes the

love and respect we must have for all Jews. The following vignette was related by *Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl*.

A Jew in Bnei Brak was very short; in fact, some might have considered him to be a midget. When a certain *Yerushalmi Yid* first saw him, he became overly excited at the *mitzvah* which had just fallen into his lap. When one sees a person with a dark, very red, or albino complexion; or a person who is bent over due to obesity; a midget; a person with many warts; a person with hair that clings to each other, he should recite the *brachah*: *Meshaneh ha'brios*, "Who makes creatures different." [This *brachah* acknowledges the diversity of Hashem's creations, which, in and of itself, demonstrates that we are not all uniform creations, but created by design by Hashem.] Clearly, one does not recite this blessing if it will prove offensive to the subject of the *brachah*. Yet, this unthinking *chassid shoteh*, pious fool (a term used to describe one who is foolish in his acts of piety, rather than balancing his observance and piety by adding a little common sense) applied the *halachah* in *Shulchan Aruch* that, when one makes a blessing, he should hold the article which he is blessing in his right hand. The fellow took hold of the poor midget, raised him a *tefach* (approximately three inches) off the ground, and, with great *kavanah*, intention/devotion, loudly recited the *brachah*.

Anyone with a modicum of common sense and decency understands that this pious Jew destroyed whatever self-esteem this man had. *Rav Galinsky* sums it up: *Chazal* (*Chagigah* 15a) teach that every individual has a *chelek*, portion, in *Gan Eden* and *Gehinnom*. A *tzaddik*, righteous person, merits his portion and that of his fellow in *Gan Eden* (the portion which his fellow lost as a result of his transgressions). A *rasha*, wicked person, receives his share of *Gehinnom* and that of his fellow (who was careful not to warrant his portion of *Gehinnom*). "I have no doubt," *Rav Galinsky* said, "that the midget (who is no longer alive) received his share of *Gan Eden* and also the share that would have otherwise gone to the "pious" Jew.

Parashas Pikudei

אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדות

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

Horav Tzadok, zl, m'Lublin indicates that the name of the structure where the *Shechinah* reposed changed from the wilderness, where it was the *Mishkan*, to *Bais Hamikdash*, the permanent Temple in Yerushalayim. The varied names are indicative of their individual roles *vis-à-vis* the people. The *Mishkan* was a temporary structure, since it accompanied the nation on its journey through the wilderness. It was as temporary as the encampment. When they moved, it moved. The *Mishkan* was referred to as *Mishkan Ha'Eidus*, the Testimony, referring to the Torah. The *Mishkan* was notably

the receptacle that received the Torah, for which it was designated.

The concept of an *Ohel* (*Ohel Moed*), tent, for the Torah has precedence. *Yaakov Avinu* was a *yosehiv ohalim*, dwelled in tents, which *Chazal* teach applies to the tents of Torah. We also find in *Parashas Chukas* (*Bamidbar* 19:14), *Adam ki yamus b'ohel*, "If a man dies in a tent," which is interpreted by *Chazal* (*Berachos* 63b) as alluding to a man's manner of learning Torah. He should learn Torah assiduously in a "tent"/*yeshivah*, to the point that he is dead to the world (so to speak), completely detached from the materialistic world in which we live. Thus, the *Mishkan*, which is the repository of the Torah, beckons *Klal Yisrael* to its Tent to focus solely on Torah study.

Fittingly, when the *Mishkan* was completed, they brought it to *Moshe Rabbeinu* as the nation's quintessential *Rebbe*, to seek his blessing. The edifice that would house and be the symbol of Torah should be tied to its primary expositor.

While everyone lived in tents, *Moshe's* tent had the same name as the *Mishkan*: *Ohel Moed*. It was situated outside of the camp. *Moshe's* tent remained the symbol of what a tent should be, a place for Torah study and spiritual growth. The tent (*Ohalah Shel Torah*) symbolizes the life of he who devotes himself enthusiastically to Torah. He feels no need for the physical accoutrements and stylish materialism that prevail among some of us. His life is not about the house, the car, the trip, the clothes. He is wholly invested in the Torah: *Ki heim chayeinu v'orech yameinu*, "For they are our life and the length of our days."

The *Kesser Torah*, Crown of Torah, is the greatest of all crowns one can achieve. To wear it is an indication of a life divested of the material and wholly submitted to a life of Torah. To achieve this, one must realize that our sojourn in this world is temporary. He who sets up roots as if he were going to live forever is not rational. A well-known vignette that occurred with the *Chafetz Chaim, zl*, encapsulates this idea.

A Jew came to *Radin* to visit the *Chafetz Chaim*. This fellow was taken aback by the austere living quarters of the *gadol hador*, preeminent Torah sage. "Where is his honor's furniture?" he asked. "And where is yours?" was the sage's rejoinder. "I have no need for furniture. I am only passing through" was the man's response. "I, too, am only passing through this world. I, therefore, have no need for material accoutrements. Our lives are but a preparation for the real world, the world of *Olam Habba*. As a visitor who is only passing through, I have more than enough furniture."

Dedicated in memory of ז"ל שמואל ז"ל Krilov Hebrew Academy of Cleveland, ©All rights reserved prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum

from: Torah Musings <newsletter@torahmusings.com> date: Mar 16, 2023, 11:04 AM subject: Torah Musings Daily Digest for 03/16/2023

The Transcendent Mishkan, Run by Ordinary People by R. Gidon Rothstein

Parshat Vayakhel/Pekudei: Welcome to Double Parsha Land! This year is not a leap year, so we will several times read two parashiyyot on a Shabbat, and this week, Vayakhel-Pekudei is our first one. In the name of space, I sought shorter comments than usual, so that the two parashiyyot can be discussed in about the same time as a usual one. In each, there is a comment of Kli Yakar, Chatam Sofer, and Ha'amek Davar, just less intricate and involved than usual. Enjoy!

Parshat Vayakhel: Our Feelings While Donating to the Mishkan

Women Contribute, Leery of the Impact on Their Reputation
The Torah tells us the men came with the women, all those of generous heart, to bring the gold and other materials for the Mishkan. Kli Yakar sees extra praise for their decision to come; the men had to bring gold as part of their atonement for the Golden Calf. The women, whom tradition thought had not willingly joined that incident, could have exempted themselves from these donations. Their love of sanctity pushed them to give anyway.

But they worried Moshe would think they had participated equally with the men, if they gave in the same exact way. The verse says kol nediv lev hevi'u, all the generous of heart brought, because the women did not bring materials, they donated them and left others to do the bringing.

Slightly differently, but along the same lines, he suggests the verse says the men came al ha-nashim, literally on the women (usually rendered 'with,' as he had said in the first interpretation we saw), because the men in fact forced the women to give all their gold. The women again feared such a large donation would imply a guilty conscience, wanted to give some but not all, and the men forced the issue. That's why it's the men who are described as having brought it.

In sharp contrast, for the weaving of materials, where there were no Golden Calf overtones, Kli Yakar points out the verse focuses more on women's involvement than on men's, because they joined fully and enthusiastically, with no worry about what it implied.

Wanting to Give

The Jews respond to the call for materials generously enough to lead to Moshe sending word to stop; 36:6 tells us va-yikalei ha-am me-havi, the people were restrained (or, perhaps more exactly, imprisoned) from bringing (more). Chatam Sofer thinks the Torah is telling us the obeying and refraining, done only because Moshe said so, counted as as much of a mitzvah as the hearing and giving.

Then he adds that they weren't happy the needs had been fulfilled and they could stop, were it not for Moshe's command, they would gladly have brought more. They were dedicated to giving, to doing whatever they could for the Mishkan, not just to making sure there was enough.

Chatam Sofer is saying the Jews treated the Mishkan the second way, wanted to give as a matter of what they wanted to do, not to be sure it had what it needed. When Moshe told them not to, it was truly only because of his command that they stopped, making it a mitzvah of equal religious value to the giving.

Breaking the Pairings

35:21 led Ha'amek Davar to consider the Jews' attitude when giving as well. The verse speaks of those whom nesa'o libo, their hearts lifted them, and/or nadeva rucho, their spirits led them to be generous. He says the first group gave to not lag behind their peers, keeping up with the Jones's in a spiritual vein. It's still giving, but not nadeva rucho, the independent personal recognition of value.

Verse 29 speaks only of nadeva rucho, leading Ha'amek Davar to understand the original givers came around to see the inherent worth of giving. He does not say it this way, but it becomes a case of mi-tokh she-lo lishma, ba lishma, performing a mitzvah for a lesser (but not bad) reason helps the person grow to do it for the best reasons.

Kli Yakar thought the women gave carefully, to avoid the impression they had been part of the Egel, the Golden Calf. Chatam Sofer thought they gave devotedly, excited about the chance to give, and only stopped because they were so commanded. Ha'amek Davar saw growth in the idealism of the giving, with those who originally gave to avoid the embarrassment of not giving coming around to giving just because.

Parshat Pekudei: The Transcendent Mishkan, Run by Ordinary People

The Protective Cloud

After the Mishkan is dedicated, a Cloud covers Ohel Mo'ed, the Tent of Meeting (now a synonym for the Mishkan), and the kevod Hashem, the Glory of God, fills it, 40:34. Kli Yakar first notes the verse reveals that the cloud and the Glory are not the same, because the Cloud covers the Mishkan (from the outside, he assumes), and the Glory fills it. The Glory takes the form of fire and light, he is sure, with the Cloud there to allow people to be able to see the Glory without any untoward events.

Back in Mishpatim, the Cloud covered the mountain to let the people see more than they could otherwise and Moshe was able to enter it because of the protection it provided. When the Cloud stayed outside the Mishkan, the verse tells us Moshe was unable to enter, because it was filled with God's Glory.

He seems to be saying that when Moshe entered the Cloud back in Mishpatim, to spend his forty days learning Torah, he

always remained within the Cloud, because otherwise he would have had too close an experience of the Glory of God. He also does not address how it was that Aharon was able to enter the Mishkan on Yom Kippur, although I assume he would say the Yom Kippur service in some way mitigated the Presence such that the High Priest involved would not be hurt.

But underlying it all, he is saying the Presence in the Mishkan was more fully revealed than at Sinai, where the Cloud let the people “see” as much as they could. Here, ensconced in a structure that kept it away from prying eyes, the Presence was freer to appear in a fuller form, be “among” the people more openly, the Cloud outside protecting the people.

Sinai or Mishkan?

When the Mishkan is finally put together permanently, 40:17, the Torah says it was on the first of the month, and that Moshe did it. Curious about the redundancy (the Torah could have said “on the first of the month, Moshe put up the Mishkan”), Chatam Sofer relates it to what he thinks was a continuing question for the people, whether this Mishkan was a step up or down from Sinai, in closeness with God.

Chatam Sofer argues the answer should have been obvious, because we have a principle of ma’alin ba-kodesh, we go up in sanctity, not down.

He pulls out Rashi to Megillah 26a, who saw the source for ma’alin in Betzalel’s having made the Mishkan, then Moshe constructing it. Our verse’s comment that the Mishkan was set up on the first of the month, and that Moshe did it, showed the principle and thus also showed that in fact the Mishkan was a higher stage of God’s Presence.

The Accountants of the Mishkan

The first verse of the parsha, 38:21, introduces the list of materials for the Mishkan, for what items, then says it was avodat ha-Levi’im, the work of the Levi’im. Ha’amek Davar says there were many materials left over from past donations, and once the Mishkan was made, there were donations for upkeep of the structure and all its support items.

Keeping track of all of that was the job of the Levi’im, he said, similar to what we see later in Tanakh, when Ezra sets aside some kohanim to oversee the finances, the moneys coming in, where they were going, to what uses they were being put. Here, it was the Levi’im’s job, to weigh and count what came in, to measure it out carefully to those who were going to use it, and to be sure it reached its intended goal.

Someone has to keep track of a large operation; Ha’amek Davar thinks the Torah brings up the work of the Levi’im here because this was their work, too, knowing what came in, what went out, where it went, and what for.

From the most transcendent to the most mundane. Kli Yakar helped us consider where and how the Presence appeared in the Mishkan, Chatam Sofer showed how the Jews would know it was an advance over what they experienced at Sinai, and

Ha’amek Davar reminded us of the procedures needed to keep track of it all.

Rabbi Yisroel Reisman – Parshas Vayakhel – Pekudai – Parshas Hachodesh 5783 1 – Topic – A Thought on Parshas Vayakhel - Pekudai

As we prepare for Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel – Pekudai which is also Parshas Hachodesh. We Bentch Rosh Chodesh Nissan and it is a very exciting time for Klal Yisrael as we march from Geula to Geula, from Purim to Pesach.

Let’s start with Vayakhel – Pekudai. As you all know, Vayakhel – Pekudai is primarily about the building of the Mishkan and here in Vayakhel – Pekudai Betzalel is sort of the star. The fact that Betzalel is in charge takes precedence here, and in effect we can say that Terumah and Tetzaveh is the image of Moshe Rabbeinu’s Beis Hamikdash, the Beis Hamikdash that was commanded, and Vayakhel – Pekudai is Betzalel’s Beis Hamikdash, the Beis Hamikdash that was now actually being built.

The question I would like to address is why it was that there had to be a Moshe’s Beis Hamikdash and Betzalel’s Beis Hamikdash? Moshe Rabbeinu Boruch Hashem was a Kol Yachol, everything that took place in the Midbar was Moshe Rabbeinu. Moshe Rabbeinu was the teacher for Klal Yisrael. Moshe Rabbeinu was the leader for Klal Yisrael. Moshe Rabbeinu was the one who made the water come from the stone. He is the one who told Klal Yisrael about the Mann. Everything in the Midbar that took place for Klal Yisrael. Punkt when it comes to building the Mishkan, Moshe Rabbeinu can’t do it, he can’t do it himself? There were workers there. Why did there have to be another head person besides for Moshe Rabbeinu when it came to building the Mishkan?

Another question. In the first Perek of Pirkei Avos, we are told that there were Zugos. That the Chachamim that are listed there are listed in Zugos, listed in pairs. What does that mean in pairs? It means that each Zug, each pair that is listed together is the Nasi and the Av Beis Din. In Eretz Yisrael in the time of the Tannaim they had a Nasi and an Av Beis Din. Not only in the time of the Tannaim, but before the Tannaim they had a Nasi, somebody who was the so to speak president or the leader of Klal Yisrael, and an Av Beis Din, someone who was the head of the Beis Din. Nasi V’av Beis Din.

The question is why is it important to tell us that there was a Nasi and an Av Beis Din? The style of Mishnayos is to say Ploni said this and Ploni said that. We have it all over in Shas. We have different Tannaim listed by name. We are not told about the generation, who lived with who and who didn’t live with who. We have Machloksim in Mishnayos between one Tanna who lived earlier and one who lived later. There is no historical reference for it. Punkt here, Pirkei Avos starts with

Zugos, it starts with pairs, it starts with a Nasi and an Av Beis Din. Why?

Rav Yaakov in a few places, in his Pirush on Nach and he mentions it as well in his Pirush Al Hatorah, says that the way the Tzibbur of Klal Yisrael worked throughout Tanach was that the Melech was the leader and every Melech had a Navi. So that we find for example, that Nosson Hanavi was the Navi would always come to Dovid Hamelech. Every Melech had a Navi that was the one that spoke to him. Ai Dovid was a Navi, Hashem could have come with a Nevuah straight to Dovid Hamelech. Why do we need Nosson Hanavi?

The answer is Zagt Rav Yaakov that that was part of the checks and balances of a Tzibbur by Klal Yisrael. The Tzibbur of Klal Yisrael was Melech and a separate person who is a Navi and comes to give him over the Nevuah. So that, there is a certain amount of dual leadership. There is one leader, there has to be one leader, but there is a dual leadership in that the leadership is coming from two people, from Dovid Hamelech and Nosson Hanavi, and so on with every Melech and Navi.

That is why we are taught that the leadership of Klal Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael during that Tekufah, during the Bayis Sheini when there was no Melech, was Nasi V'av Beis Din. One person was the Nasi and another person was the Av Beis Din. As it says (יהודה בן טובאי ושמעון בן שטח) or (שמעיה ואבטליון), one was a Nasi and one was the Av Beis Din. Leadership of Klal Yisrael came from a pair.

Klal Gadol – anytime you want to be successful in doing something, it is good to have two. You have to have one person who takes responsibility for everything, but the advice should come from two places. Why?

It is like the Chasam Sofer says in Parshas Chaya Sara on the Posuk by Lavan that is found in 24:50 (לֹא גִבַּל דָּבָר אֶלֶיךָ, רַע אֵין). When it comes to a Shidduch, Lavan said I can't tell you bad and I can't tell you good. The Chasam Sofer says why not? If it is a good Shidduch say good and if it is a bad Shidduch say bad.

Enfert the Chasam Sofer, because when it comes to a Shidduch, when it comes to two people, people think that if they are identical then this is a Shidduch. Two people who are similar. The truth is that it is not that way. There are two people who are different bring much more to a home. So HKB"Y creates a veil. When it is a Shidduch, it is a joke that they think they are similar to each other. They are not similar to each other. It is not quite so. People are not similar. Hashem makes a joke out of it. The Chosson and Kallah get engaged and everyone says they are similar. They are not similar at all. But Zagt the Chasam Sofer, something good comes when people with different Hashkafos, it has to be within the same ballpark, but they have differences and they are able to work together and something positive comes from it.

The same thing the Nasi and the Av Beis Din. Hillel Hanasi and Shammai was the Av Beis Din. Hillel and Shammai were very different one from the other. But they looked to work together for the furtherance of Klal Yisrael.

That started with the building of the Mishkan. It was the first Tzibbur'dika public project so to speak that the Tzibbur did. The rest of the time in the Midbar they traveled. This was the one Tzibbur'dika thing. So here, the Ribbono Shel Olam started right away with Moshe Rabbeinu and Betzalel and from the two of them it will come out. How did it come out? You see Betzalel told Moshe Rabbeinu, he corrected him on the order of the building. You see, that is the idea that from the combination of two people it comes out something positive.

That is an important lesson because very often there is some friction between two people and two people have different opinions and they don't realize that it is really for the best. The same thing with a husband and wife, when they have different opinions the whole idea is to bring different opinions to the table, talk it out and be grown up enough to come to a conclusion that takes into account both viewpoints.

So this is an important Yesod in the leadership of Klal Yisrael, although at the end of the day you need that one person should have the authority to make the decision. The Nasi made the decision for Tzorchei Tzibbur and the Av Beis Din made the decision for Halachos as it says in the Gemara Chagigah 16b that that is how they split it. But in discussing, in building, in coming to conclusions, there were two people. That is the healthy way that things should be and that is why we find it here in the Chumash. The only time we find that Moshe Rabbeinu was corrected by another person (maybe we find one other place), however, generally we don't find, but here we find it to teach us that if you want to come to a good conclusion in Tzorchei Tzibbur you get two people to work together.

Many years ago, I approached Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel in something Noge'a to our Yeshiva, they were talking about making a Vaad to lead the Yeshiva and I asked him what he held about it. Rav Nosson Tzvi told me it is good for there to be more than one person chipping in, but there needs to be one person. Rav Nosson Tzvi said when he became Rosh Yeshiva (his aunt) the Almana of the previous Rosh Yeshiva told him, one person has to have his finger on everything. Rav Nosson Tzvi said, and I do. I have my finger on everything. There needs to be one person taking responsibility but it is not a Stira that that one person has to have people with whom he works. And so, that is a thought for Parshas Vayakhel – Pekudai.

This past Wednesday was the 25th Yahrtzeit of Rav Shaul Kagan ZT"Y

This is from the Internet Parsha Sheet at that time.

From: hamaayan@torah.org Subject: Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by Shlomo Katz Shemini
Date: April 23, 1998

... **R' Shaul Kagan z"l** ... passing ... [on 22 Adar 5758], founder of the Kollel of Pittsburgh. R' Kagan was 62 years old. He was born in Europe. After his family fled to the U.S., his father became rosh yeshiva of Yeshiva Rabbenu Yaakov Yosef (RJJ). R' Shaul studied there and later enrolled in the fledgling yeshiva in Lakewood under R' Aharon Kotler. Almost 20 years ago, R' Kagan established a kollel (institute for advanced study by married men) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He began with ten men who studied and taught classes (for free) to the community. An appreciation of the Kiddush Hashem that he and his kollel made on the city of Pittsburgh may be gleaned from a comment made once by the non Jewish, then Pittsburgh Mayor Richard Caliguiri, "What those ten men are doing day and night in that study hall on Bartlett Street is giving hope and strength for Russian Jews far across the globe." Asked later why he would make such a comment, the Mayor said, "Rabbi Kagan told me a little bit about the Torah. Then he explained what you rabbis do. Then he took me to the kollel. I saw from the way that he talked about your Torah and by seeing you study that whatever the Torah does, it must impact much farther than Pittsburgh." (based on Yated Ne'eman, March 2, 1998)

Chazal say that you do not erect memorials for Tzadikim - Their words are their memorials. In that spirit I am reprinting an article that Rav Kagan was very proud of - a biography of Reb Aharon Kotler ZT"L whose 60th Yahrzeit was several months ago.

Reb Aharon Kotler zt"l - 10 Years After His Passing By Rabbi Shaul Kagan

Jewish Observer May 1973

<https://agudah.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/JO1973-V9-N03.pdf>

Rav Aharon Kotler ZT"L was born in Sislovitz, White Russia, in 5652 (1891) and passed away in New York City, on 2 Kislev, 5723 (1962). During his years in Europe – as Rosh Yeshiva in Kletzk, and his later years in America – as Rosh Yeshiva of Bais Medrash Govoha, in Lakewood, New Jersey, he was a dominant Torah personality.

A moment in time, and an eternity. To those who knew the Rosh Yeshiva he seems at once to have been with us but yesterday, and to have been gone for an immeasurable span. His words remain our constant companions: "Rosh Yeshiva said -," "The Rosh Yeshiva held -." The freshness of his memory does not diminish with the passage of years. Transcending the immediacy of his teachings and of the photograph carried in his talmidim's pockets, the picture of spiritual greatness remains vivid in our minds. True, gadlus

cannot be quantified. In fact, it can barely be defined. But over the years we may have grown into a more mature appreciation of Reb Aharon's greatness.

We knew Reb Aharon as the adam gadol, the great man – as the Rosh HaYeshiva – and as the Manhig Hador, the generation's pre-eminent leader of our people, a people whose genius it has always been that its leaders were both sages and saints. But the facets of Reb Aharon's personality are not divisible. He was all three at once. And as all three he illuminated his age and dominated the renaissance of Torah in America.

The Rosh Yeshiva

During the waning days of the year 5700 – as Torah Jewry was emitting its last dying breath on the European Continent, the undisputed leader of his age, Hagaon Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, found solace, as he told Reb Elchonon Wasserman: "Reb Aharon will build Torah in America." Reb Aharon was first and foremost the Rosh Yeshiva. He was known to the world as "the Rosh Yeshiva," and it was as such that he addressed himself to the problems of the Klal. From his conviction that the purpose of Yisrael is the study of Torah, he saw the yeshivas as the consummation of the Divine will and the salvation of Klal Yisrael.

In the words of a leading contemporary, wherever Reb Aharon would have been there would have been a yeshiva. For Reb Aharon was not a Rosh Yeshiva by choice, certainly not by profession, but out of simple existential condition. Thus, Reb Aharon went about the spiritual wastelands of America with the Torah – not unlike the Holy One, Blessed be He, Who went from nation to nation before Sinai – facing rejection after rejection: "Rabbi, please don't bother us," "Rabbi, you're wasting your time," till the force of his convictions and the urgency of his message finally prevailed – many of his detractors becoming his staunchest supporters.

Reb Aharon transcended the walls of his own yeshiva and was the Rosh Yeshiva of all yeshivos: In the early days of the war he was a leading spirit in the hatzalah (rescue) effort to save the fleeing remnants of the European yeshivos, who were later to breathe life into the American and Israeli yeshivos. In 1948, during and after the fighting in Eretz Yisrael, the yeshivos there were on the verge of financial collapse. In spite of the severe financial condition of his own yeshiva, Reb Aharon was a primary force in raising the then-astronomical sum of over \$100,000 for them in several weeks. He was the founder and pillar of Chinuch Atzmai... a major power in Tashbar... chairman of the Rabbinical Council of Torah Umesorah – chairman of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah, Presidium member of the Agudas Harabbanim – and the list goes on. If a Rosh Yeshiva is by definition one who perpetuates and disseminates Torah, then Reb Aharon was indeed the Rosh Yeshiva of Klal Yisrael. And in the broadest

sense, in that Reb Aharon was a final arbiter of daas Torah, all of Yisrael may be said to have sat at his feet, with Reb Aharon as its Rosh Yeshivah.

That Special Energy

In his efforts for Torah, Reb Aharon knew no fatigue, as he knew no fatigue in his efforts to breathe.

We remember Reb Aharon in continuing motion from early morning till late in the night – without food, without respite. He was in fact frail – but powered by a special spiritual grace: rallying support for the yeshivah, for Chinuch Atzmai, for Agudath Israel, meeting the demands of whatever crisis faced Torah Jewry. Reb Aharon was the Yissachar and the Zevulun – source of both material needs and spiritual sustenance.

We remember Reb Aharon saying the shiur (lecture) despite a high fever; and an older student recalls Reb Aharon delivering a shiur in his yeshivah in Kletsk – a presentation of several hours' duration – coughing blood, but proceeding with the same sparkle, concentration, and verve as ever. The Torah energized Reb Aharon, replenishing his vigor, “the Ark carrying its bearer.” And we remember Reb Aharon in his final illness – semi-conscious – words of Torah pouring from his lips. Torah was the breath of his life; and so long as he breathed, he breathed Torah.

The yeshivah gave him his strength and his stamina. He would arrive at the yeshivah after a week of exertion on behalf of Torah and Klal, radiating joy at his return to the wellspring of his existence, never failing to express the hope that the next week he would be able to return earlier.

The Nature of Torah shape of the Yeshivah

Reb Aharon would tell ba'alei battim (lay leaders): “The purpose of the yeshivah is not the Roshei Yeshivos or Rabbanim or educators that it produces, but simply the development of true bnei Torah, versed not only in the fundamentals of Torah but in the fundamental nature of Torah, to whom Torah is the throb and pulse of life. The yeshivah is the repository of the mesorah, securing the future of Torah and of Klal Yisroel.”

In truth, Reb Aharon's every activity, on both the personal and communal level, pulsed with his total identification with Torah, but it was as Rosh Yeshivah that he consciously taught Torah, the nature of Torah and the approach to Torah.

Thus Reb Aharon in his role as Rosh Yeshivah comes clearly into focus through an understanding of his concept of the nature of Torah itself – as he sensed it, embodied it, and conveyed it.

Torah, Reb Aharon used to say, is above time and space, and if the American context is not cause for undermining Torah's integrity, neither does it give reason to alter the character of the yeshivah. Form follows function and both must be as unalterable as the Torah itself. And he cast the yeshivah in its classic mold.

Torah, Reb Aharon taught, is the purpose and goal of Creation, the destiny of the Jew – the highest form of worship and the consummation of the Divine Will; both the means and the ends of human fulfillment. Through Torah alone man unites with his Creator – for G-d and His word are one. Through Torah, man rises above the ordinary to the sublime, the mundane to the spiritual, the profane to the Holy, and finally, mortality to immortality.

Torah is greater than the sum of mitzvos – its commandments. It is the source from where the kedushah of the mitzvos flows; the mitzvos being the essential means whereby man sanctifies his body and soul to absorb the Torah itself; the purifying effect of Torah in turn expands the dimensions of his mitzvos, increasing his absorptive capacity for Torah, ad infinitum.

Reb Aharon once expressed himself to this writer, with a laugh, that there are those who consider the study of Torah as a mere mitzvah, comparable to other mitzvos!

Torah is as infinite as its Creator and no man can claim to have completed it. Torah study merits the greatest rewards in this world and in the World to Come – the greater the diligence the greater the reward. And those who engage in Torah – the b'nei Torah – dwell at the pinnacle of the World to Come.

Torah is the source of all that is meritorious. Time wasted from Torah is the source of all evil, the gravest of sins, for it subverts the nature and purpose of Creation.

To Reb Aharon it was inconceivable that any Jew could find permanent satisfaction other than in Torah itself. “The Holy One, Blessed be He, say Chazal has naught in this world but the Four Ells of Halachah. How can man aspire to gain more from this world than G-d Himself!”

At the close of a Yom Tov, the Yeshivah was engaged in its usual “Simchas Yom Tov” in the dining room. Reb Aharon had spoken on a relevant topic and was in an elevated mood. At the termination of his talk, the talmidim generally sang a tune to the words from Psalms “Were it not for Thy Torah being my delight, I would succumb to my poverty.

Reb Aharon interrupted the singing: “Imagine! David the King was the wealthiest man in history. Verses in Tanach list a fortune of incalculable magnitude, Yet King David felt himself drowning in a sea of poverty, but for the Torah, his only enduring, transcending possession!”

The vision of Reb Aharon exclaiming those words conveyed more than any conceivable lecture on the ultimate fulfillment and happiness to be found in Torah. With Torah as his possession, Reb Aharon lacked nothing.

His Phenomenal Love

Reb Aharon's own love for Torah study was phenomenal. As he studied, his face strained with concentration – smiling – even laughing – out of rapture. This love was extended to whoever was engaged in Torah and expressed itself in the boundless pleasure he drew from seeing others learn.

His legendary hasmadah (diligence) must be credited not so much to intellectual pleasure or a sense of duty as to his recognition of the value of Torah and the inestimable fulfillment that it gave him. To Reb Aharon, every word of Torah that he learned added a fresh dimension to his life – a point that he stresses in his writings – conceiving it, as it were, out of his own experience. One could witness in Reb Aharon the liberating identity-creating force of Torah, following the dictum of Chazal that there are none who are free save those that are engaged in the study of Torah.

An American Rosh Yeshivah remarked that in every conversation with Reb Aharon he would prompt him to pronounce the word “Torah” to see his reaction. For when Reb Aharon spoke about Torah, he took on a new life, a quickening and agitation pervading all his faculties.

It did not require much to bring Reb Aharon to talk about Torah. The word was ever on his lips. In virtually every conversation, regardless of the topic – in every public speech, no matter what the occasion – he eventually turned to Torah, urging and pleading with everyone to join him in his own involvement.

His speech was often unclear. He alone fully grasped the significance of his message – but there could be no mistaking the urgency of his appeal: Torah is not for the chosen few. Torah is the soul of every Jew and every Jew has the capability and obligation to achieve – to a greater or lesser degree – its end. If a Jew believes that he does not love the Torah, it is because this love has not been cultivated. Learning itself is the most select instrument for developing receptivity to Torah. He even succeeded in instilling this belief and this feeling among wide circles outside of the yeshivos.

Reb Aharon strongly opposed yeshivah students pursuing secular studies, as a limitless waste – exchanging for even a moment the infinite fulfillment of the Divine Torah for mere temporal knowledge.

In the same vein, Reb Aharon saw involvement in secular studies as the ultimate indignity to the word of G-d, implying a rejection of Torah for its relative inadequacy in meeting man’s need for absolute fulfillment.

Reb Aharon persistently stressed the integrity of the Torah. He agonized over attempts – particularly by those presumably in the Orthodox camp – to distort Torah. “Torah, Divine in origin, in essence above human comprehension, must remain free of human content and distortion. It must retain that purity of form and shape as when it was given at Sinai – to maintain its viability and its truth. One cannot synthesize or integrate Torah with any foreign element – it is a perversion of Torah and an undermining of the very existence of the Torah nation.” Reb Aharon points out in a published essay that wherever the integrity of the Torah was violated, the Jews as a national group eventually disappeared before the tide of assimilation.

“To preserve the integrity of Torah” – continues Reb Aharon – “demands of Torah disciples the concentration of every resource of volition and intellect, and requires the undisputed authenticity of the transmission of Torah – the mesorah – in an unbroken chain from Moshe to the present day.”

Reb Aharon would repeatedly emphasize two words: omol baTorah” (laboring in Torah) and “ohl Torah” (the yoke of Torah). Torah is infinite in its depth and breadth, and only through extreme exertion could man hope for some acquisition in small measure.” Reb Aharon, for all his intellectual genius, presented a picture of extreme effort in Torah study. More than a mere search for knowledge, this was an extension of his total self-negation and subjugation to Torah. For Reb Aharon never attempted to impose his own concept of what was logical or his own preconceptions on the Torah he studied, but would accept relationships as delineated in the Torah as axiomatic. He would repeatedly review the passages of Talmud and commentaries, relate it with others until the logic behind it impressed itself upon him, and then followed its reasoning to its conclusion. This self-negation allowed the Torah to be his complete intellectual master. One might say that his lectures were not Reb Aharon talking, as much as Torah talking through him. “It is imperative,” Reb Aharon was wont to say, “to avoid reducing the Torah to human level, but to raise man’s logic to that of the Torah.”

As the neshamah (soul) permeates the entire body, so must the Torah – the soul of Creation and of Israel, to use Reb Aharon’s words – permeate the whole man. Torah must be accepted on its own terms.

His “Derech”

This writer is hardly equipped to present an exposition of Reb Aharon’s methodology – his derech halimud His incisive analysis, lucid exposition, profound reasoning, grace and elegance of thought – they are all fairly well known.

Fundamentally, his concept of Torah was an extension of his search for unadorned truth (an attitude that extended to such minutiae as rejecting a proposed receipt-book because it featured a touched-up picture of the yeshivah). The Patriarchs, Reb Aharon once explained, achieved their faith through their trait of truth and their uncompromising search for truth. He would search out proof not just for his conclusions, but for every turn of his reasoning.

His particular forte in learning was “hefker”- integrating all sources and passages pertaining to the topic, and the ramifications of all conclusions. If a particular conclusion could not harmonize with all the pertinent passages – with “Shas,” one might say – then it was false, beauty of thought notwithstanding.

His Mission

Reb Aharon also taught the nature of the Gadol. “The Rav must be comparable to an angel.” An angel can accomplish but one

mission; that is, it only exists for that mission which encompasses the frame of his entire existence. Reb Aharon was comparable to an angel, for he seemed to exist not for himself or his family or even his own spiritual advancement, but solely for his mission of propagating Torah.

A Rosh Yeshivah's success is measured by his ability to instill his concepts into his talmidim. To Reb Aharon's credit, he attracted and inspired an entire generation of American youth. Lacking the idiom of the land, not a remarkable orator in the popular sense, his eloquence lay in the content of his words and the passion with which he spoke them.

Reb Aharon's strength as a teacher was the living example he provided of Torah rooted in his every fiber. Perhaps the best instance was witnessing the Rosh Yeshivah saying the shiur. His face earnest and strained in almost unbearable intensity. The fires, burning in his soul, mirrored in his eyes – those brilliant, piercing blue eyes that were a study in themselves – glowing like embers, The movements of his hands following the flow of his words – his words like hammer blows, racing after each other from his mouth in furious haste – his voice rising and falling, crashing in an impatient surge against the increasing tension in the room – questioning, explaining, expounding in a mounting crescendo . . . finally reaching the climax, his face suffused with light, radiating joy, smiling, even laughing – out of almost sensual pleasure – the spark of eternity shining through his eyes. His entire mien, crying, exclaiming, exulting in the eternal fulfillment of Torah, proclaiming its beauty and truth – its beauty being its truth – overwhelming everyone with his own soaring spirit, drawing all to come join and rejoice in the delight of G-d and man! “Fortunate was the eye that beheld all these, for to hear with our ears our hearts mourn” (Machzor Yom Kippur).

His “Children” – the Talmidim

It is characteristic of Gedolim that they can bridge the chasm between the years, and despite their advanced age, bind the youth to themselves; for the truth and purity of their convictions strikes a responsive chord in the idealism of youth.

Beyond doubt, the Rosh Yeshivah's ability to instill his lessons in his students also rested in his ability to relate to them. His heart held love for all creation, all of Yisrael, all b'nei Torah, but “Disciples are like sons” if not more. In fact, his widow, the much-revered Rebbetzin, once remarked, “He loves his grandchildren almost as much as his talmidim.”

Reb Aharon, undergoing surgery, attributed his suffering for failing to have had sufficient sympathy for a suffering talmid. . . . Reb Aharon, giving away a pair of his shoes to a student whose own were torn. . . . Reb Aharon using personal funds to pay a talmid's carfare home, to permit him to stay a few days longer in the yeshivah.

While Reb Aharon could be scathingly sharp when circumstances warranted it, he was virtually never angry on a

personal level. Striving for perfection in himself and his students, he chastised with gentleness, not scorn, pleading with his talmidim to improve – like a child, pleading for what is most precious to its heart.

His mussar, like his shiurim, was all-embracing: on Torah, prayer, teshuvah and especially on ethical values.

He once spent a considerable portion of his shmuess – ethical talk – on the inconsiderateness of raising one's voice in conversation; on neat appearance, on punctuality – all seemingly trivial, but significant when viewed as a mark of respect towards fellow man.

In one lecture, he chided the students for discussing trivialities rather than Torah – not so much because of time taken from Torah, but for the lack of consideration in filling another's mind and time with trivialities.

But more: he opened our minds with the personal portrait of ethical perfection that he presented.

On the highway he would divert the driver away from the automatic toll booth to a manned one: “it's not k'vod habriyos (respectful of humanity) to pass up a man for a machine – as though man were redundant.”

One of Reb Aharon's greatest contributions was, without doubt, the raising of the K'vod HaTorah (the esteem for the Torah): the acceptance of the class of b'nei Torah, especially Kollel men who devote themselves to intensive Torah learning; and above all, the creation of a standard of excellence in the American setting.

After the Holocaust, Judaism was in trauma. Reb Aharon's success in transplanting Torah from one set of conditions to another infinitely more difficult one, was an achievement that transcends greatness, for he became a living link in the chain of mesorah, stretching from Moshe to the Moshiach, achieving immortality within his own lifetime.

Manhig Hador – Leader of Klal Yisrael

When Reb Aharon was a young boy studying in Slobodka, he met with the sage of the generation HaGaon Reb Chaim of Brisk. Reb Chaim subsequently said, “Someday half of the world will rest on this boy's shoulders.”

The sequel took place in 1945. The Brisker Rav, son of Reb Chaim, surveyed the enormity of the disaster that had befallen Yisrael and sighed, “At least Hashem has done us one grace; He has left us Reb Aharon.”

Reb Aharon the Manhig Hador was in large measure the extension of Reb Aharon, the Rosh Yeshivah – the fate of the two, Yeshivah and Klal, essentially indivisible. Reb Aharon had two overriding concerns: the centrality of Torah, and its authority as sole guide and arbiter over the communal and individual affairs of the nation; and the preservation of the Jewish People in their spiritual and physical integrity. Reb Aharon saw in the People the repository of the Torah, and in the Torah the guarantor of the nation's continued existence.

For the attainment of both ends, Reb Aharon's first step in coming to this country as a penniless war refugee was (as mentioned) in hatzalah. The Jewish secular establishment, in general, was lethargic. He found but a small group of dedicated individuals actively involved in this effort. He was instrumental in broadening the base of the rescue effort, crying like Reb Yochanan of old, "Give me Yavneh and its scholars." Priority was given to the remnants of the yeshivos in Siberia, Shanghai, and whatever other temporary haven they had found – but the hatzalah efforts were extended to whoever could be grasped from the clutches of Nazi terror.

Reb Aharon's personal needs were non-existent in face of the monumental task at hand. On the very next day after his arrival at Pennsylvania Station he was on the phone asking those who had met him what had been done since. A colleague recalls Reb Aharon borrowing train fare home after a Vaad Hatzalah meeting.

Typically, he confronted then-Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau Jr., fist banging on the table: "The Secretary's position is not worth a single Jewish life!"

Reb Aharon's interests were universal, the orbit of his activities world-wide.

His Klal activities increased and broadened after the war, for the time was ripe for an infusion of more Yiddishkeit and more Torah on the American scene. The emergence of the Zionist State sharpened the Kulturkampf on both sides of the world. There was virtually no crisis the world over, affecting Torah or Klal that Reb Aharon did not confront, taking the lead in defense against attacks from within and without. As a leader who carried ultimate responsibility, Reb Aharon never waited to be asked; nor did he seek public approval. And those who would challenge the integrity of Torah feared him. In the words of Gadol after Gadol "When Reb Aharon was alive, they would not have had the audacity"...How many times have we heard the refrain "If only Reb Aharon was still here!"

He would have preferred to devote himself fully to Torah studies. Which talmid does not remember the Rosh Yeshivah trying to write, to learn, between phone calls – sighing once to a bachur, "See? You must learn when you're young."

This writer recalls a wedding Reb Aharon attended. At every turn, he was involved in klal affairs. With one Rabbi discussing influences that could be brought to bear on a meeting (then in session) of European Rabbis; – with another, how to insure the selection of the most desirable principal in a Long Island day school; – with yet another, a complex halachic question of broad ramifications – Reb Aharon rendering a decision, clearly, quickly, concisely; – during the wedding celebration, in another room at the same hotel, Reb Aharon addressing the formative meeting of a new rabbinical organization he himself had initiated; – and so it went the entire evening.

Reb Aharon would reject compromise not only in fear of its peril, but because of its essential invalidity. Characteristic was his statement on the eve of his death that it was preferable to close Jewish high schools than allow them to be co-educational. He led the war and issued the ban against rabbinic organizations of "mixed" composition (Orthodox-Conservative-Reform). Reb Aharon directed the battle against conscription of women into the Israeli army, climaxing in the memorable demonstration on 73rd Street in Manhattan, to which he sent his entire Yeshivah. – As for the threats against continued support to the Yeshivah, he was quoted as replying, "They may close the Yeshivah, but I will not retreat from my daas Torah." (The late Brisker Rav remarked that as long as Reb Aharon was in America, there would be no compulsory conscription of woman in Israel.) Reb Aharon fought the establishment of a so-called "Sanhedrin" or world spiritual center (climaxing with his famous defense of the Brisker Rav) for what he termed the usurping of Torah authority. The list goes on endlessly – against the Conservative "Kesubah," defending the integrity of shechitah and the sanctity of the synagogue, secret efforts for Jewry behind the Iron Curtain, the absurd question of Mihu Yehudi (suggesting non-halachic basis for Jewishness), the sanctity of Yerushalayim, and countless more – often in the background, but always the decisive and authoritative force. The Organized Expression of Klal Yisrael

In pursuit of his objectives – recognizing no legitimacy in Klal Yisrael other than the Torah and its authoritative spokesmen – Reb Aharon postulated an independent Orthodoxy, self-reliant, uncompromising and non-subservient to the secular and Zionist establishment. The major vehicle of this independence was, of course, the Agudath Israel movement, conceived not as a political party – he viewed partisan politics with repugnance – but as the organizational arm of united Orthodoxy – the instrument of implementing the policies and decisions of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah (Council of Torah Sages); the decisions, if you will, of the Torah itself.

Among his statements on the topic:

The Gedolei Torah (Torah leaders) of the previous generation underscored the urgency of Agudath Israel. During recent years in general, and particularly since the establishment of Medinas Yisrael, it has been confirmed for us to what extent we need Agudath Israel. (Fourth Knessiah Gedolah – Sivan, 5714)

The purpose of Agudath Israel is to be Mekadesh Shem Shomayim and to elevate esteem for Torah in all times and circumstances. When a Jew joins the Agudah, he reaffirms his belief in the Jewish people as a sacred nation, and that Klal Yisrael must conduct itself with loyalty to Torah...for Agudath Israel provides that central force that proclaims that Klal Yisrael must be subservient to Torah. (Thirty-fifth National Convention of Agudath Israel of America – 1958)

There are many who claim that they subscribe to personal Judaism (yechidim Yiddishkeit). – They do not consent to an organized band. But individuals can accomplish nothing. (Thirty-seventh National Convention of Agudath Israel of America – 1960)

Yet the Agudah could never be an end unto itself, and if a specific goal was best realized through an outside agency, the interests of the Agudah as such were secondary. When once asked why the yeshivah bachurim are not more actively involved in the Agudah, he reputedly answered that the very purpose of Agudah was that the yeshivah bachurim should be able to devote themselves exclusively to Torah, and not the reverse.

As chairman of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah, Reb Aharon was both theorist and activist, making the decisions and then proceeding to implement them.

The Dimensions of “Klal” Work

His day consisted of crisis following crisis, one crucial decision on the heels of another, a burden that would have broken ten lesser men operating in concert. Through it all, Reb Aharon was radiant, always in good spirits. He virtually belonged to Klal Yisrael – his door, like his mind and heart, ever open – unsheltered by organization or secretariat. His home was a reshus horabbim (public domain) where everyone felt at home. It was not possible to impose upon Reb Aharon, for he recognized no imposition.

He was a most prodigious fund raiser on behalf of the Klal, soliciting money for Tashbar, Chinuch Atzmai, Agudath Israel – often approaching supporters of his own Yeshivah. When a group of admirers sent him a truckload of furniture to replace the cast-offs he was using, he returned it, commenting: “It’s a crime to squander Jewish money.”...He often paid out of his own meager salary as Rosh Yeshivah – his only income – for expenses incurred in the process of serving the yeshivah itself. To Reb Aharon the needs of the individual were almost equal to those of the collective, and incredibly he found time for hundreds, thousands of individual acts of kindness and charity. It is said that in the World-to-Come, time itself will be of a different character and Reb Aharon almost seemed to live in that different sphere. Perhaps anyone who so completely cares for his fellows finds the time and the energies.

The Approach: From Unity of Torah to Unity of a Nation
In the words of one of his eulogizers, Reb Aharon was the “mevaror hasefeikos” – the resolver of doubts. In life as in his learning, he stripped away the non-essentials, cut to the heart of a problem, and with his massive intellect, and the authority and decisiveness of the Gadol Hador, he would establish the position of the Torah.

Reb Chaim of Volozhin wrote that in a dilemma one should first study Torah and then, through the Torah, arrive at the

correct solution. Reb Aharon, forever immersed in Torah, always arrived at a daas Torah solution to the problem at hand. How, Reb Aharon was once asked, is a true Gadol identified? Gadlus (greatness), is, after all, an elusive quality not measured by erudition and scholarship alone. Klal Yisrael, replied Reb Aharon, recognizes its Gedolim. Using his own words from a different context, Reb Aharon was never nominated, never ran, was never elected to his position of pre-eminence. He was the Gadol Hador by common consent, by unspoken recognition – his soul perhaps in communion with the individual and collective soul of Yisrael, which recognized him and responded to him: “If they are not prophets, they are the sons of prophets.” Indeed, when Reb Aharon passed away, people who had never met him, people who had not witnessed his funeral to be moved by that massive spectacle, were equally seized by a sudden fear for the future, a disconsolate awareness of something irretrievably lost.

One can perceive the divinity of the Torah, that “Torah (is) min Hashomayim,” Reb Aharon used to say in the name of the Vilna Gaon, through the Torah’s cohesion. His own most singular trait in learning was the cohesion and unity of his chiddushei Torah (his novellae); his perception and his skill in unifying the divergent elements into a unified whole. And as leader of the Klal, he bespoke the unity of the nation. When Reb Aharon came to the U.S.A., he was met by a tiny delegation from the Agudath Israel and the Agudas Harabbanim – hardly anyone in America had heard of him. Barely twenty years later, a tempest tore at the world at his last illness and his passing. Tens of thousands came to bid farewell, joined in mourning and sorrow by hundreds of thousands more. That final demonstration of K’vod HaTorah, to which Reb Aharon had dedicated his life, was the most forceful commentary on the magnitude of the revolution he had wrought and the position he had achieved in the hearts of his people.

The Man

Reb Aharon as Rosh Yeshivah and as Manhig Hador can, to some extent, be characterized by his achievements. But the essence of the man is beyond our grasp. Reb Aharon was comparable to an elemental force of nature whose properties can be described, but whose substance remains beyond human understanding.

The spontaneous awe Reb Aharon aroused in us might be described as an awareness of the Shechina (Divine presence) resting on him – like the reaction of the non-observant Jew who, by his own testimony, became Shomer Shabbos purely from seeing Reb Aharon – reminiscent of Reb Aharon’s oft-repeated statement that whoever saw the Gaon of Vilna could never have been an apikorus. Indeed a prominent American Rosh Yeshivah once remarked that one who saw Reb Aharon had some idea of how the Vilna Gaon might have appeared. A student, newly arrived at the Yeshivah, complained to his

former Rosh Yeshivah, himself a talmid of Reb Aharon, that he could not understand Reb Aharon's speech. "Well, then simply sit and look at his face," was the reply... This writer recalls his first Yom Kippur in the Yeshivah, Reb Aharon after Kol Nidrei, circling the Beis Hamidrash with the Sefer Torah; his cheeks, always red when under strong emotion, were burning; his eyes smoldering; the intensity on his face virtually unendurable – as one might imagine an angel.

Reb Aharon himself was a lesson in self-negation toward Gedolim. He could spend hours, his eyes flashing, recounting the incidents of their greatness – answering one critic with the terse comment that he was not simply telling tales, but presenting vivid lessons.

"Gadlus" at an Early Age

Reb Aharon's greatness was apparent at an early age. We know little of those early years, for as the Rebbetzin once remarked, in fifty years of marriage he never once spoke about himself. What we do know is from contemporaries or an occasional word he dropped apropos of a given occasion:... When he was nine, he knew the entire tractate Kiddushin. At eleven, he was tested by his father on all of Kesuvos (one of the largest and most difficult tractates) with all Tosafos and, in his own words, "knew it well."

In his youth, he was – in the words of Reb Meier Simcha of Dvinsk – the greatest illui (prodigy) to be born in forty years. To Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, he was the "Reb Akiva Eiger" of the generation. To the devastatingly critical "Ragotchover Gaon" – in what is perhaps the greatest tribute of all – "He knew how to learn well." Both the Chofetz Chaim and Reb Chaim Ozer, in so many words, saw in him the future Gadol Hador – the Chofetz Chaim devoting more time to him than to any other single individual, and treating him with signal honor.

Torah – a Source of Greatness

"Torah," Reb Aharon used to say, "creates fresh faculties in man." Which of his own remarkable faculties were inborn, which were developed by sheer effort, and which emerged by grace of the Torah can only be guessed.

His absorptive capacity and the fleetness of his mind were phenomenal. He grasped the most intricate topics in moments – even in matters of which he had no previous experience. We have seen him race through an extremely complex page of the Talmud as quickly as his fingers flew across the words. He would become deeply involved in several topics at once, as anyone who spent any amount of time with him could testify. His diligence was legendary. In his youth in Slobodka, there were periods when he would learn till he fell asleep at the shtender (desk) – wake up refreshed, and continue his studies, changing his clothes but once a week, for Shabbos. As a young man in Slutsk and during his middle years in Kletsk – already bearing the heavy burdens of the Yeshivah and Klal – many

were the times he stayed awake throughout the night engrossed in his studies. In his advanced age, absorbed in the affairs of Klal, he always held a sefer in his hands, turning to it every unoccupied moment, never really diverted from his Torah, ever studying with utmost intensity and zeal.

One of the Yeshivah bachurim recalls a typical day in New York with Reb Aharon. It was his turn that day to be the Rosh Yeshivah's driver. Reb Aharon left his apartment in Boro Park immediately after breakfast. The entire day was spent without any let-up – traveling, meetings, the Yeshivah office, visiting people to solicit funds – a day full of strain and its usual share of heartache.

During the day, Reb Aharon ate one apple – in the car, holding the core, the peel, and the pits in his hand until the next stop, so as not to litter the road.

The day continued beyond exhaustion, finally returning home close to midnight. The moment Reb Aharon walked in, he stopped. "Oh" he exclaimed, a look of pain on his face, and the sound of anguish in his voice, like a man who had been starving for a month – "I have not yet learned today!" – despite the fact that he had held a sefer in his hands throughout the day, glancing into it every spare moment, and that he had been "talking in learning" with his driver.

He immediately seized a Gemara and sat down to learn with extreme zeal. When the Rebbetzin brought in a bowl of soup, he refused it. "Give it to him," he said pointing to the exhausted and hungry driver. He himself had no time to eat.

Days of this sort were the rule rather than the exception.

Powers of Concentration

Under the severest pressure, he not only continued his learning, but continued in his creativity, writing his chiddushim. While still in Poland, Reb Aharon and his group were following the military situation by radio, planning their escape. Between broadcasts Reb Aharon would return to his Gemara as if nothing were amiss. Traveling across war-torn Soviet Russia, under constant threat of Communist treachery... arriving in a Moscow hotel room, finding no table or chairs. A talmid went to fetch these, and returned to find him sitting on the bed, writing his notes. – In the words of his father-in-law, Hagaon Reb Isser Zalman Meltzer, Reb Aharon could learn sitting on the blade of a knife.

A Balance

Perhaps the single most valid criterion of Gadlus is the balance of the various talents and parts of the man. No one could say of Reb Aharon that he was more clever than pious, more pious than learned. That his erudition was not in proportion to his depth, or his scholarship not commensurate with his ethics. It seemed to us that all of Reb Aharon's spiritual and intellectual resources were equally beyond measure. Certainly they were beyond our conception.

The opposites in his character were staggering. He hated evil with his every fiber, yet loved his fellow men despite their foibles. A dominating personality, yet self-effacing. Creative and original – no thought or word or deed was not rooted in the Torah, the Talmud, and the Commentaries. Indeed, he saw in the Torah what few others could see. Single minded, yet versatile; quickest of men and the most deliberate; practical and visionary; he was approachable yet distant; he lived, it seemed, in a different sphere than ordinary men, yet knew how to deal with us in the context of ourselves.

A leader of men, yet he shunned publicity; his name virtually never appeared in the press. A Yiddish paper once ran a series of articles on living Torah leaders. Reb Aharon categorically refused to allow any articles about himself. Yet he attained world-wide fame – in keeping with the maxim: “He who flees fame will be pursued by fame.” Reb Aharon,” in the words of a contemporary, “did not know the meaning of kavod – except to give it to others.”

He was mildest of men and most forceful of men. I have seen Reb Aharon change in a moment from lamb to lion: seated at his dining table, his face expressing utter mildness and benevolence. I questioned him regarding a projected Hebrew Teachers’ Union, amalgamating with a large trade union. Within seconds his expression changed to fierce determination and intensity. Quietly, in a voice laced with steel, he tersely stated his position: This proposal is a threat to the independence of the teachers and as such a danger to Torah education, and he was adamantly opposed. Soft and yielding in his personal relationships – a child could sway him, he was tenacious and fiery when it came to a question of Torah – to affairs of Klal

Reb Aharon was extremely patient. Yet he never walked, he ran – time was limited, the immensity of his self-imposed task undiminished. He often lectured about the precious gift of time. To be with Reb Aharon was always exciting. He was like a boiling cauldron, and something was usually happening. But more to the point, he ignited others with his excitement for learning. Yet for all of his intensity (at least in this writer’s experience), he never failed to relieve the tensions and anxieties to which youth is prone.

Despite the immense awe that Reb Aharon struck in us, such was the quality of the man that he was beloved by us all. In the words of an observer, “One thing about Reb Aharon, all his talmidim loved him.” Indeed to love Reb Aharon was to love life itself.

For all his seriousness, Reb Aharon had a remarkable wit, peeking through at odd moments... At the conclusion of a meeting, one of the assembled suggested to Reb Aharon that he tell the bachur who was his driver for the day not to divulge what had been discussed. “But, nothing of consequence had

been said,” remarked another. “Exactly,” replied Reb Aharon “That’s what he shouldn’t reveal.”

In contrast to Reb Aharon’s sense of mission was an appealing, almost childlike innocence. He could not be devious and it was hard for him to suspect it in others. He could cry easily, without self-consciousness and without affectation.

We have seen the tears well up easily when exhorting us to teshuvah before “Ne’ilah”: Quick, quick, there is still time! The Gates are open. The Holy One, Blessed is He, Himself is begging you to enter. It is easy if you but wish it... At a talk before Tishah b’Av, he suddenly cried out, “Imagine the kedushah that has been lost because of the Destruction!” – at the mention of the word “kedushah” he burst into tears.

Reb Aharon was old when we knew him, yet more youthful than his students. He was austere in his personal life, often speaking out sharply against the American materialism, yet unfailingly generous to others, seeking not only their well-being but their comfort. Money, he once said, has no value to him other than to give it to a yeshivah bachur. His personal charities were totally out of proportion to his income, more than once donating large sums in order to encourage others to follow his example.

Walking one day in Yerushalayim, he suddenly turned, ran after a beggar and gave him some coins. Several years previously, he later explained, that same beggar had approached him for alms, and he had had no money left on his person. Spotting that beggar now, he hastened to make up for it, giving him a double amount.

He once gave alms twice to the same beggar, once upon entering and again upon leaving the shul. Someone noticing him pass the second time without giving might assume that he had a reason not to give to this particular beggar.

Reb Aharon used the full measure of his genius to anticipate and secure the wants of his fellow man... The incidents could go on without end.

That he could harmonize the conflicting elements of his personality is one of the largest measures of his greatness. This unity of life, the integration and pattern that exists through the total direction of Torah, the whole being infinitely greater than the sum of the parts, epitomized Reb Aharon.

Without Distinctions

Reb Aharon was deferential to the greatest and the smallest. On one well-known occasion, he reversed a publicly stated position when faced with the opposition of a Gadol whose competence on the matter he felt greater than his own, subsequently pursuing his colleague’s decision with the same force and dedication as he would his own. This involved no element of false modesty. When he knew his own competency to be superior, he retreated before no one.

Reb Aharon venerated every student of the Torah, seeing in them the elite of Klal Yisrael. To request a personal favor from

a student even when necessary was almost traumatic for him, especially if he felt that it would disturb him from his studies. He categorically refused – except under the most extreme circumstances – to allow a bachur to perform a menial task for him. One of the bachurim once offered to draw his bath for Shabbos. Under no circumstances, said Reb Aharon. It is not fit for a ben Torah – allowing only the janitor of the Yeshivah to do this, who incidentally recognized it as a privilege.

In Reb Aharon the distinction between the material and the spiritual was blurred. The luminosity on Reb Aharon's face was an observable physical phenomenon.

The angel in Reb Aharon was discernible – but more to the point, ‘the man could be seen in the angel – the heights that man could ascend to by virtue of the Torah. “Thus said Rabbi Meir: He who is diligent in Torah for its own sake, ascends to many great things.”

Did you ever see his photograph? Do not accept it; for neither artist nor camera could capture the fire in his eyes, the radiance on the face, the exhilaration of his presence – the zrizus, the quickness of his movements, the vital and elemental life force that flowed from the man.

The image engraved in one's memory is more accurate than any photographic or artistic rendition.

The impact of his presence can somewhat be felt by the pain of recalling his taking leave.

Remember the moment the news came that the worst had indeed happened? Remember the sounds in the Beis Hamidrash? One could have sworn that the walls themselves were screaming . . . Traveling to New York that Thursday afternoon to bring back the aron, the sound of the automobile motor rose in a wail, a dirge. We couldn't get the sound out of our ears. Wasn't the whole world crying? Didn't a scream and a silence at the same time seem to engulf the entire universe? The sun couldn't really be shining, could it?

The shock was too great to absorb. Our minds refused to accept. For days, no one really had anything to say. “Sit on the ground and be silent, elders of the daughter of Zion. “It took time for the enormity of the loss to penetrate, to be absorbed and accepted – weeks for our lives to be restructured on a new and diminished level, It was as if an immense sadness had settled over the world.

It was as if we thought he would live forever, so inconceivable was life without him; or, as a number of his talmidim said; “Who could have imagined greeting the Moshiach without the Rosh Yeshivah?!”

Reb Aharon left a great legacy. Whoever was touched by him, or simply caught sight of him became moved by his life-force and caught sight of his goals. This force nurtured within us can bring us closer to emulating him and to realizing that for which he strove.