

Please visit www.puretorah.com for more inspiring lectures

PENINIM ON THE TORAH

PARSHA BOOKLET

Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

PARASHAT VAYAKHEL PEKUDEI

On six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for Hashem. (35:2)

Interestingly, whenever we find the prohibition against labor on Shabbos, there is always some mention of working on six days of the week, i.e., "On six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you." This is also true in the Aseres HaDibros, Ten Commandments, "For (in) six days Hashem made the heavens and the earth...and He rested on the seventh day." (Shemos 20:11) Harav Avraham Schorr, Shlita, explains that kedushas Shabbos, the sanctity of Shabbos, is greatly dependent on the manner in which one acts during the six days of the "work" week.

Harav Schorr supports this statement with a principle from the Rishonim. In the aforementioned pasuk from the Aseres HaDibros, the Torah writes, "For (in) six days Hashem made the heavens and the earth." The way the pasuk is read, Ki sheishas yamim asah, it should be translated as, "For six days Hashem made." In order to coincide with the popular translation of the pasuk, it should have written, Ki b'sheishas yamim asah, "For in six days Hashem made." It almost sounds as if Hashem created "six days." The Teshuvos Ha'Rashba writes that the Torah is telling us just that: the actual entity of time, i.e., "six days," was created by Hashem. The problem with this approach is that it implies that Hashem created only six days-- and not seven. How does Shabbos fit in to this construct? Was it a creation?

Rav Schorr cites the Bris Avraham, who quotes a Rishon that originally the day had been twenty-eight hours long. Hashem created the first six days, and then He took four hours from each day, and those hours combined to constitute Shabbos. The sefarim explain that the "six days" decided among themselves to select a rosh, head, over themselves. They chose Shabbos.

This is why Shabbos is referred to in the tefillas, Shabbos service, as chemdas ha'yamim, the most coveted of days. According to the above approach, this is a reference to Shabbos being created from the "select" hours of each day of the week. The "six times four equals twenty-four," of which Shabbos is comprised, is the chemdas, the most coveted of the days of the week. Alternatively, we can say that the days of the week "chose" as their rosh, head, the Shabbos, which became the symbol of their chemdah, love, for it.

Rav Schorr concludes with an inspiring thought for us to carry through the "work" week. Shabbos is a creation of the six work days. Thus, one's Shabbos is the result and outgrowth of his actions during the weekdays. Every day gives its hours to Shabbos. If we view Shabbos as the rosh of our week, we must make our week worthy of the Shabbos. A yeshivah has a "rosh" yeshivah, who reflects the character of his yeshivah. A community has a Rav or Av Bais Din, rabbi or leader of its judicial court, selected by the community. He is their representative, and thus, a reflection of

themselves. The mafia, l'havdil, also has its don, its rosh who characterizes the activities of his henchmen. Our Shabbos reflects our weekdays. The type of Shabbos we observe is largely based upon the way we act during the week. What a powerful thought to carry around all week.

And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him. (35:21)

The Mishkan was a Divinely inspired architectural masterpiece. The construction of this Sanctuary required individuals who were talented and skilled craftsmen, artisans who were highly proficient in fashioning intricate designs in metal work and wood work. Clearly, the time the Jewish People spent in Egypt was not dedicated to honing their skills in these intricate areas of craftsmanship. Therefore, how were they able to execute the construction of the Mishkan? They really had no experience whatsoever in Egypt. The Ramban understands nesius ha'lev, "one whose heart stirs him," as the key to the Mishkan's exemplary work force. The ish asher nesao libo, "one whose heart stirred him," was an unusually motivated individual who offered his services to Moshe Rabbeinu. Their attitude was characterized by such responses as, "Here, let me do it." "What can I do?"

Although none of these people had received any formal training or guidance in the required skills, they found "within themselves" the inherent capability to perform these tasks. The Ramban concludes, "And because they uplifted their hearts to serve Hashem," i.e., they were spiritually inspired, they therefore volunteered for the job.

Apparently, according to the Ramban, these men did actually possess natural talent, but for some reason they lacked the motivation to come forward and offer their services. What about this mitzvah stirred them to come forward? And how did this motivation overcome whatever had previously impeded them?

Horav Henach Leibowitz, Shlita, explains that just because one is endowed with talent, it does not mean that he is qualified to undertake an important task. One may have all that it takes to succeed at a specific endeavor, yet there still may be something missing. There are two essential ingredients that are requisites for success: talent and experience. Without training under the supervision of an individual who guides from personal experience, one may err in his work and not even be aware of his mistakes. Natural ability is wonderful, but-- without experience-- it is of little value.

Under normal conditions, the craftsmen who constructed the Mishkan should have refrained from undertaking the awesome responsibility of building Hashem's Mishkan. Despite their considerable genius and skill, they still had no teacher to guide them, to mentor them in the do's and don'ts of this task. To err in such a holy undertaking was very dangerous. This is where nesius ha'lev, the stirring of their hearts, played a critical role. It took them beyond their fear of the unknown. It guided them past their lack of experience.

The Rosh Yeshivah cites the Orchos Tzadikim, who defines "uplifting one's heart" to serve Hashem as one's constant quest for spiritual achievement. He is not satisfied with his spiritual status quo - regardless of its exalted status. He wants more! No one else had the experience, but this did not deter them from offering their service. They gathered the courage to understand this enormous responsibility, trusting that Hashem would ultimately guide them.

There is a powerful lesson to be derived from here - and it is not limited to physical craftsmanship. Every endeavor must be approached with caution. Whether it is educational or organizational -- especially when it serves the community--it carries enormous responsibility. A mistake can hurt the community, set back an organization, or worst of all: cause a chillul Hashem, desecration of Hashem's Name. Nonetheless, if we always worry, we would never get anything done.

Therefore, we must first examine our qualifications. Are they sound? Next, do we have a mentor, someone to tell us when we are beginning to err, someone whom we respect and whose opinion

we value? If the answer to these questions is negative, then it would be best that we rethink our initiative. If so, why did the Jewish artisans go forward? They had no experience. They had no idea that Hashem would ultimately guide them.

Their circumstances were different. They had received a direct communication from Hashem to construct the Mishkan. He was asking for volunteers who felt they had it in them to succeed. Thus, their desire to perform the mitzvah justified their volunteering, despite their lack of experience. Do we have a clearly defined mandate to go forward - or is it something that we often convince ourselves to do? There is only one clear way to know: consult our Torah leaders. They will guide us on the right path to follow. They will tell us if it is the correct thing to do - or not. From them we can gain the crucial training and guidance necessary to serve the community properly and with distinction. They will tell us when it is wise to demur, and when we should rise to the occasion.

And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him. (35:21)

Essentially, the Torah is teaching us that after a call went out for those who could give of themselves to construct the Mishkan, a number of individuals, whose heart stirred within them, came forward, and they were the Mishkan's builders. This must have been an incredible undertaking, especially since these artisans had no prior experience. It is not as if building sanctuaries was their favorite pastime in Egypt. These people were used for slave labor and nothing else. They were, however, highly motivated by the opportunity to build Hashem's Mishkan, and this motivation catalyzed them to go forward. When we think about it, this phenomenon is not uncommon. Many people are inspired to move forward, to dedicate themselves to a higher cause, but something happens along the road to success. Well, it is not really "something," but "someone." Whether it is someone whose jealousy is concealed in his skepticism or it is a well-meaning friend who just does not want to see us get hurt, our dreams and aspirations are often pinpricked before the balloon can ascend to great heights. Perhaps the following episode will give us a deeper insight.

The Lubliner Rav, as he was referred to reverently and affectionately, Horav Meir Shapiro, zl, was certainly a great man. He was a distinguished Rosh Yeshivah, a respected diplomat for his people in the halls of the Polish Parliament and a world class Torah leader. His distinction to us and to most Jews at the time was his innovative plan to have the entire Torah world literally on the "same page" of the Talmud: his Daf Yomi, folio a day, plan of Torah study. Rarely has an idea been so universally accepted and mushroomed to such success as the Daf HaYomi learning program.

His work on behalf of Klal Yisrael brought him to many Jewish communities in Europe. This incident took place as he arrived in one of the cities along his route. As he alighted from the train, people lined up to see and greet the distinguished visitor. They introduced themselves and vied for his attention. One of the individuals in the crowd was a young rav who introduced himself as the son-in-law of the Shotzer Rebbe, the town where Rav Meir had grown up.

Rav Meir looked at him and asked, "Is your rebbetzin here with you?"

"In fact, she is," the young rav replied.

"Could I possibly speak with her?" Rav Meir asked.

"Certainly," the rav answered. "I will go and get her."

When the woman came over, Rav Meir addressed her with the following question, "Do you remember that, as a child, I would learn with your father in your home?"

"Yes, I remember," she replied.

This time, when Rav Meir asked the next question, there was a slight tremor in his voice, "Do

you recall my grandiose plans to unite all the Jews in the world in the study of the same daf, page in the Talmud, daily ? This way all of Klal Yisrael would be united through Torah." Then his voice dropped an octave, when he asked, "Do you also remember how all the children would laugh at the idea and mock it, deriving great satisfaction from putting down my idea?"

This time the woman remained still. She did not reply.

Rav Meir continued. "Do you know that I came seriously close to giving up my plan? I was losing confidence in my ability to successfully maneuver through the various obstacles I faced. Those taunts almost pushed me over the edge. This is why I asked to speak to you. I just wanted to share one thought with you: Never laugh at the dream of a child!"

Now that we have read the story, we must ask ourselves: How often have we been the victim of such taunts? How many times have we wanted to move forward with a great idea only to have someone knock it out of the realm of possibility either for selfish or foolish reasons? How often have we been the perpetrators of such an impediment to success? Last, how many of those times have we justified our self-centered actions by asserting that we really were doing the other fellow a favor? Perhaps, we will just leave it with the questions.

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

The parsha commences with a description of the tremendous outpouring of generosity toward the construction of the Mishkan. Anybody who has ever had to make an appeal or address a fundraising effort knows that only a percentage-- and usually a small percentage of those assembled-- will respond favorably - or even at all. Yet, Moshe Rabbeinu's appeal for the thirteen materials to be used for the Mishkan was so successful that he had to ask the people to halt their donations. They were so motivated to give that their response was unprecedented. This is what the pasuk is relating to us. If so, why does the pasuk conclude simply, "Bnei Yisrael brought a free-willed offering to Hashem?"

Horav Avraham Pam, zl, cited by Rabbi Sholom Smith in his book, "Shabbos With Rav Pam," suggests that the very fact that the Mishkan was constructed through the talented craftsmanship of the people, using their money or materials, might lead them to feel a sense of pride or arrogance. After all, it was their donation; it was their ability; it was their nedivus. Those whose donations were significant might allow this notion to elevate their heads into the clouds - a certainly not uncommon phenomenon. It did not, however, and they did not. Nothing of the kind occurred. The people gave and were enthusiastic about it for its own sake. They were giving for the Mishkan. This was all that counted. If they were fortunate enough to be able to participate in this exalted mitzvah, they were ecstatic. The people were motivated by only one concern: How would it lead to greater kavod Shomayim, honor of Heaven? This is why the pasuk emphasized that although each Jew brought his own unique, individual donation to the Mishkan, he viewed it and himself as part of the greater collective Bnei Yisrael, a unified entity - not an individual in his own right. He cared about the focus of his contribution - not about his involvement in it.

The Rosh Yeshivah cites the Malbim, who explains that the purpose of the Mishkan was to create a komah sheleimah, an all-encompassing entity, of a unified Klal Yisrael comprised of: all of the various maalos, attributes/qualities; kochos, individual strengths and talents; and levels of kedushah, sanctity of the different members of the nation. This goal would be achieved via each one's individual contribution for the common goal of creating a sanctuary for the Shechinah. Everyone felt and understood that it was not only his efforts alone that created this holy abode, but the work of everyone together in a cumulative effort that achieved this komah sheleimah.

This can be achieved only when each Jew views himself as part of the large body of Klal

Yisrael. Just as the body is comprised of many organs and limbs, each with its unique function, each with its own individual task that impacts the entire body. True, some organs play a leading role, while others play a supporting role, but they are all part of one body. Thus, if the toe is hurt, the entire body is held captive by the pain. Just as one organ is not envious of another organ, because they are all in this together as components of the body which needs all of them, so, too, should one Jew not be jealous of another Jew who has been endowed with special talents and acumen. Indeed, one's heart should swell with pride in the knowledge that Klal Yisrael possesses such talented people. The healthier the body, the healthier are all of the organs.

Rav Pam cites a powerful thought from Horav Simchah Bunim, zl, m'Peshischa which encapsulates this idea. One should be happy for the collective nation that includes within its ranks individuals who have been endowed with extra special Heavenly blessings. The Rebbe was once asked if he would like to change places with Avraham Avinu, such that Avraham would receive the Rebbe's special talents, and the Rebbe would be bestowed with Avraham's unique capabilities. The Rebbe smiled and said, "I would not want to change places with Avraham because what would Hashem derive from the exchange? There would still be one Avraham and one Bunim."

This is a statement from a person who lived for one purpose: to serve Hashem. Everything that he did reflected this purpose, or else it was not worth doing. If one thinks of the collective Klal Yisrael and its function in this world, does it really matter who it is that is blessed with unique talents?

To live for one purpose: to serve Hashem. One expends every bit of strength in his body to serve the Almighty. In one of the last Eluls of his life, when he was already weakened with illness and advanced age, the legendary Mashgiach, Horav Yechezkel Levinstein, zl, felt a great desire to speak once again to his beloved students, to impart to them the meaning of the month of Elul, the imperative of serving Hashem on an even higher level than usual. He slowly, painstakingly, and with great effort made his way to the front of the study hall and ascended to the lectern. This act of walking across the room was the result of great mesiras nefesh, personal self-sacrifice. Upon reaching the lectern, he no longer had the strength to speak. He was totally spent. So, he slowly returned to his seat. As far as his students were concerned, this was the Elul shmues, ethical discourse, for which they had hoped. They learned that one must continue in one's avodas Hashem, service of the Almighty, to the extreme limits of one's strength.

A wealthy friend of the family of Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zl, urged Rav Yosef Chaim to permit him to build a beautiful, spacious home for the Rav. Rav Yosef Chaim thanked him for the generous offer and led him over to the window of his modest dwelling. "Look out the window, my friend," said Rav Yosef Chaim wistfully. "See how the house of Hashem, our Bais HaMikdash, lies in ruin, occupied by Arabs. Do you really want to build a mansion for me? It is enough for the servant to be like his master. As long as the palace of the King is destroyed, this dwelling will suffice for me."

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

The Torah refers to the Mishkan / Tabernacle using three appellations: Mishkan Ha'Eidus, Tabernacle of Testimony; Mikdash, Sanctuary; Ohel Moed, Tent of Meeting. As the Mishkan Ha'Eidus, the Sanctuary was the harbinger of the Divine Presence to the world. As the Midrash Tanchuma comments, "It was a testimony to all of the nations that Hashem had reconciled with Klal Yisrael after the incident of the Golden Calf." When the Jews became engrossed in the materialism that led to the creation of the Golden Calf, the nations of the world assumed that the Shechinah had rejected them. The Jews had forsaken their responsibility to G-d and fallen into the abyss of materialism by turning their backs on spirituality. When the nations observed the construction of the Mishkan, they realized that Hashem's "absence" was only temporary. Hashem had accepted the Jews' repentance, and He had

returned to His earthly abode. This was the testimony provided by the Mishkan Ha'Eidus.

As reflected by its three names, the Mishkan performed two additional functions. Horav Aharon Soloveitchik, zl, cites the famous Mishnah in Avos 1:2: "On three things does the world stand: on the Torah; on the service (of G-d), and on (acts of) loving kindness." He suggests that these three pillars of the world coincide with the three names of the Mishkan. All three of these pillars, which support the world, functioned in the Mishkan. The term Mishkan Ha'Eidus corresponds to the Torah aspect of the world. The name Mikdash alludes to the avodah, Divine Service, aspect of the world for which the Mikdash served as host. Last, the term Ohel Moed, Tent of Meeting, is an allusion to the Mishkan as a source of loving-kindness.

In its function as a Torah center, the Mishkan housed the Aron HaKodesh, in which the Luchos received by Moshe Rabbeinu on Har Sinai was located. The Mishkan served as a wellspring of Torah wisdom that was dispersed to the nation. It was also a source of spirituality, a place where people could come to energize themselves spiritually, as they were inspired by the kedushah, holiness, that emanated from within its walls. Hence, it was a Mikdash, holy Sanctuary. Last, the Mishkan served as an Ohel Moed, a place where Jews of all walks of life and from all areas of the country came together and united into one large family. It was the focal point of the people, guiding and aiding them, sustaining them in their moment of need.

After the Jews entered Eretz Yisrael, the Bais HaMikdash supplanted the Mishkan by fulfilling all of the same needs as its predecessor. This was a period of glory and peace which lasted until our sins caused Hashem to take the Bais HaMikdash from us. Once again, his own actions compelled the Jew to pack up and wander in exile. While the Mishkan was hidden away and we forfeited the Bais HaMikdash, we still had the mikdash me'at, lesser sanctuary, the shul, the synagogue, the house of study and prayer, to function as our spiritual nucleus, our center for spiritual survival.

Indeed, this is how it used to be. The synagogue of old was the spiritual hub of every community. Whether it was a large, impressive edifice or it was a broken down, old shteibel, the shul was the Jew's mainstay, his island of calm in a world of storm and strife. Here he connected with the Almighty, as he poured out his heart in prayer. It was a place where people could go to hear the word of G-d, because the shul was also a place where the people studied and disseminated Torah. Yes, the synagogue of old was a true sanctuary which exercised a salutary influence over the private life of a Jew.

Times have changed, however, and the contemporary synagogue has become a social hall, a place where people gather to talk and discuss business and other state of affairs. It no longer functions as a spiritual fountain of refreshing waters that enliven and enrich the Jew. It has lost its attraction, its joi d'vivre. It is a synagogue in name; it is almost as if the Shechinah has departed from its confines. What happened?

Rav Soloveitchik cites a fascinating Midrash that relates a meaningful allegory. When Shlomo HaMelech introduced the Aron Hakodesh-- containing within it the Luchos -- into the Bais HaMikdash, all the woodwork within the sanctuary manifested signs of animation. Gradually, a process of germination set in. These very walls sprouted leaves, buds, and twigs, which ultimately bore luscious fruit. This process endured until Menashe placed an idol into the Kodoshei Kodoshim, Holy of Holies, whereupon the Divine Presence departed, and everything dried up, withering away.

The meaning of this allegory is obvious. As long as the Aron containing the Torah is "in" the Bais HaMikdash, as long as we recognize this entity as the vital essence of our lives, then the Bais HaMikdash is alive. It breathes life; it enriches it; it invigorates it; it sustains us. As soon as the Ark is replaced with an idol, however, whether that idol is "talking" about business, lashon hora, slanderous speech, or even talking about Torah during davening, it defames and profanes the sanctity of the Bais

HaMikdash and its successor: the modern-day shul. When the shul no longer carries any significance, when coming to davening is a drag - especially during the week when it conflicts with our schedules-when Starbucks takes precedence over Shacharis, and the entertainment media replace Minchah/Maariv and a shiur, then the shul becomes a valley of dry bones. Torah is the only thing that generates vitality into the mikdash me'at. Otherwise, it is not a mikdash.

How do we correct the problem? How do we restore the Shechinah to the shul? Rav Soloveitchik offers the following antidote, based upon an inspiring exposition into an aphorism expressed by Hillel HaZakein: Im ani kan, hakol kan, v'im ein ani kan, mi kan? "If I am here, then everything is here, and if I am not here, who is here?" The great Tanna was speaking at the Simchas Bais Ha'Shoeivah, which was a seminal experience for the Jewish People, the height of inspiration when all Jews gathered in the Bais HaMikdash to draw inspiration from the Divine Presence, similar to the way in which one draws water from a well.

How was this function realized? One does not become endowed with sanctity just by being present. What does the participant have to do? The Bais HaMikdash imparted kedushah, nobility and righteousness, because the Kohanim and scholars of the Sanhedrin which functioned in its confines were dedicated to revealing the true "I" of every Jew. Every Jew has at his essence a sublime, positive proclivity to do good, to be holy, to be pure, to interact with and to serve the Almighty to the best of his ability. This is the ani, the "I," the essence of every Jew. The spiritual leaders of yesteryear were committed to endeavoring constantly to arouse, awaken and energize the true self inherent in every person, which is essentially his yearning toward kedushah and all of the sublime goals that accompany it.

Hillel said, that if the "I" is present, then everything is present in the Sanctuary. If the "I" is not present, if the spiritual leaders-- those to whom the Bais HaMikdash is entrusted-- are too involved with themselves to awaken the "I", the true self of each Jew, then the Sanctuary loses its meaning.

While it is true that not all spiritual leaders are gifted with the ability to reach out to catalyze the potential of all Jews, they should at least try. By working at increasing attendance at various Torah classes, they will enable the Pintele Yid in each Jew to manifest itself and shine.

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

The Midrash makes the following statement concerning the word eilah (pekudei ha'Mishkan), "these." Hashem Yisborach said to Klal Yisrael, "When you fashioned the Golden Calf, you angered Me with the word eilah, saying, Eilah elohecha Yisrael, 'These are your gods, Yisrael.' Now that you have made the Mishkan and used the word eilah, in its construction, I have been appeased with the word eilah." Clearly, the concern of this Mishnah goes beyond simple word play or semantics. Apparently, both Hashem's displeasure and His eventual appeasement hinged on this small word. What is there about the word eilah which stimulates such extreme reactions?"

In his Nachalas Eliezer, Horav Eliezer Kohn, zl, explains this Midrash, using a comment by Rashi to the opening words of Parashas Mishpatim: V'eilah ha'mishpatim asher tasim lifneihem. "And these are the laws that you shall present before them" (Shemos 21:1). Rashi writes that whenever the word eilah is used, it marks a separation, a new beginning, detached from that which has previously transpired. The word v'eilah, "and these," however, indicates a connection and addition to that which has preceded it. Thus, by beginning with the word eilah, these, our parshah severs its relationship with those preceding it. The Mishkan is isolated from the incident that preceded it.

During the tragedy that was the sin of the Golden Calf, the nation acted in a manner that was reprehensible. When the people took leave of their senses and created a Golden Calf, they descended to such a nadir that they declared, Eilah elohecha Yisrael, "These are your gods, Yisrael." With this

declaration, they severed themselves from the preceding events. What were those events? They were: the liberation from Egypt amidst unprecedented miracles; the wondrous splitting of the Red Sea; the countless miracles that accompanied and sustained them in the wilderness; their yiraas Shomayim, inner fear of Hashem. They isolated themselves from their Father in Heaven. "These" are the new gods. "These" are the new leadership. Out with the old, and in with the new. All the good that had previously benefited them was no longer a part of their lives. They had "these," a new leader, one of molten gold.

When they repented and separated themselves from the Golden Calf and what it represented, when they accepted upon themselves to construct a Mishkan that would be the repository for the Divine Presence, they reconnected with Hashem. A new day was dawning, symbolizing the start of a new chapter in the relationship between Klal Yisrael and Hashem. The evil was purged: out with the old and in with the new. The Mishkan would atone for the sin of the Golden Calf. Once again, eilah indicates a fresh start, a new beginning, a separation from the old, sinful behavior that had previously occurred. With this eilah the nation atoned for the previous sinful eilah.

Horav Mordechai Miller, zl, cites the Zohar Hakadosh that writes: "It is written eilah - not v'eilah. This reckoning (of the Mishkan) overrode any other estimation. Any desires, any wishes, any proclivities were all severed with the construction of the Mishkan. Thus, this project effected atonement for the tumultuous events that preceded it." The people now had their priorities straight. Nothing mattered - only the Mishkan; only kedushah, holiness; only avodas Hashem, serving Hashem. Money was of no value, unless it was used for sanctity. They rededicated themselves to Hashem because now they were focused on what was correct. Until now, they had been focused only on themselves; therefore, their priorities were misplaced. They now understood the importance of everything being Li, to Me, to Hashem.

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

The Yalkut Shemoni makes what appears to be an enigmatic statement concerning this pasuk. The people did as Hashem had commanded. The Yalkut asks: when did He command them? The answer is: "They shall make a Sanctuary for Me - so that I may dwell among them" (Shemos 25:8). The K'sav Sofer is hard-pressed for an explanation of this statement. What does the Yalkut mean by asking, "Where did He command them?" There must have been a number of places in parshios Terumah where Hashem instructs Moshe Rabbeinu to have the people perform certain types of skilled labor, so that the Mishkan would be constructed. What more were they supposed to hear? Veritably, the Yalkut's reply is somewhat questionable. Is the V'asu Li Mikdash, "They shall make for Me a Sanctuary," the only place in which the reason for the creation of the Mishkan is mentioned in the Torah?

The K'sav Sofer explains that Moshe Rabbeinu was impressed, but not by the people's ability to carry out Hashem's command in a letter-perfect fashion. What inspired him was their ability to perform this construction while adhering to the strict spiritual quality control inherent in such a holy project. When Moshe saw the Mishkan, he took note not only of its perfect architectural design and construction, but he also sensed that the kedushah, holiness, and taharah, purity, necessary to make this an edifice worthy of Hashem's repose was also imbued therein. This is why he asked, "Where were you commanded?" This means: What aspect of the command inspired you so to do this with perfection? The response was: V'asu Li. They understood that in order for the Mishkan to be suitable for Hashem's Presence, it had to be made exclusively Li - "for Me" - for Hashem, with no overriding personal interests or embellishments.

One might ask, what is the "big thing"? Hashem instructed the people to make a Mishkan for Him - and they did. Regrettably, this is not always the case. We often commence a project with idealistic goals, each and every one officially l'sheim Shomayim, but, for some reason, it just does not

achieve fruition on that same level of l'sheim Shomayim. Whether it is our personal vested interests or our egos, something changes along the way and taints the purity of the project. The Mishkan was perfect in all ways: from its leadership, Moshe, who was selfless, concerned only about the Mishkan being the perfect sanctuary for Hashem; to the people, whose intentions paralleled those of Moshe. Since the raison d'etre of the project was l'sheim Shomayim, it is no wonder that the Mishkan achieved perfection.

Indeed, this idea may be gleaned from the commentary of the Ohr Ha'Chaim Ha'Kadosh to the opening statement of our parsha, Eilah pikudei ha'Mishkan, "These are the reckonings of the Mishkan (ibid 38:21)." The word "these" suggests homiletically that "these," that the only meaningful reckoning is the manner in which one utilizes the resources devoted solely to building Hashem's sanctuaries and otherwise devoted to be used for the sake of Heaven. Only such investments are eternal; only such investments have a value worth counting. Other projects are transitory in nature and, thus, not qualified for eternal reckoning. This gives us a new approach to defining one's accomplishments. The great philanthropist that has shared his wherewithal with others for the purpose of self-aggrandizement-- or as a power play to feed an overactive ego-- actually has very little in his account. Yes, he has helped, and he will certainly be rewarded, but when it comes to the reckonings that are perpetrated eternally, it is only those that are l'sheim Shomayim that make the grade.

Moshe looked upon all the work... Then Moshe blessed them. (39:43)

What brachah, blessing, did Moshe Rabbeinu give them? Rashi relates that Moshe told them, Yehi ratzon, "May it be the will that the Divine Presence rests among the works of your hands." We find that Moshe expressed a similar blessing when the Mishkan was inaugurated with the korbanos (Vayikra 9:23). We must endeavor to understand exactly what Moshe's blessing was. They built the Mishkan for the specific purpose of providing a place for the Divine Presence to repose. The blessing that he gave them was that it should be the will that the Divine Presence should rest there. Was that not the purpose of the Mishkan? Imagine, someone goes to the store to purchase a suit and, then, when he leaves with the suit, he is told, "It should be the will that you should wear it." What kind of blessing is this? This is why he bought the suit. Had Moshe blessed them with good health, longevity, wealth, it would be understandable. To bless them with the Divine Presence reposing in the Mishkan, however, is exactly why they had built it!

This teaches us, explains Horav Dovid Shneur, Shlita, that a bircas tzaddik, the blessing of a righteous person, plays a crucial role in every undertaking. Regardless of what one is about to do, whether it is to enter into a business venture, a marriage, building an edifice - anything - if the endeavor is to have a siman brachah, sign of blessing, one should seek the added protection of brachah from a pious Jew. It seals the venture and renders it complete.

A tzaddik is imbued with great powers, but, in order for them to be effective, the individual seeking the blessing must possess emunas chachamim, faith in the power of the tzaddik. In Chassidic lore, the story is told of two women, both not yet blessed with motherhood, who went to a great tzaddik and asked to be blessed with a child. He blessed both of them that, before the following year passed, each would be hugging her child. Regrettably, the blessing was effective for only one of them. Obviously, the one whose blessing "did not work" returned to the tzaddik and asked, "What happened? Why did the other woman have a child and I did not?"

The tzaddik looked at her and said, "She believed in the blessing."

"So did I," countered the woman.

"Did you go to the store and purchase the necessary garments and baby things for the new arrival?" the tzaddik asked.

"No, I did not. I am not going to buy anything until I am sure that the blessing will occur," she replied.

"That is why your friend's blessing achieved a positive result. Your friend went out and purchased all that was allowed in preparation for the joyous occasion. She believed in the blessing. You did not."

When a person believes in the tzaddik he connects with him, and the Divine blessing can pass through the tzaddik into the one he blesses. This is only possible if one believes. Without belief, there is no connection.

Interestingly, the text of Moshe's blessing was: "May it be the will." He did not say: "May it be the will of Hashem." This implies that it should be either G-d's will, or their, Klal Yisrael's, will. This is enigmatic. If they are asking for a blessing, then it certainly must be their will that the Divine Presence be a part of their lives. I once heard that it is Hashem's desire to be a part of our lives. We, however, have to invite Him in through our positive actions and behavior. Moshe was blessing the people that we should make the world a suitable holy place befitting His Presence. He wants to be here. Are we ready to have him?

All the wise-hearted among you shall come and do all that Hashem commanded. (35:10)

The foundation-stone upon which Judaism rests is obedience. It is the principle which defines the individual's true commitment to Torah and mitzvos. This does not preclude the importance of using one's intelligence to understand the profundities of the Torah. In the final analysis, however, the Jew should be committed as a consequence of a sense of obedience and faith, not rationalization and scrutiny. "All the wise-hearted among you": How does one identify the truly "wise-hearted"? [those who] "do all that Hashem commanded." Hashem gave us mitzvos for our own benefit. We do not necessarily understand the inherent good in everything that He has told us to do. Nonetheless, we accept and do, executing Hashem's command obediently and without question. That is the definition of an observant Jew.

The first Jew to respond to Hashem with obedience was our Patriarch Avraham Avinu. Hashem called to him, and Avraham replied: Hineni, "Here I am, ready and prepared to do whatever You ask of me." This was the highest expression of obedience, of commitment and dedication to the Almighty. Yet, some individuals have had the audacity to refer to the method of observance displayed by the observant as nothing more than "doglike obedience." They have taken this greatest example of obedience, love and faith and transformed it into a mindless act. In the end Avraham was "supposedly" rejected, happy and finally at peace when the angel instructed him to halt the proceedings. These people grab at the opportunity to paint Avraham as the first reformer, rejecting human sacrifice, when Hashem asked him to sacrifice Yitzchok.

In his commentary to Bereishis 22:11, Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, takes the individual who was one of the founders of secular Judaism to task for his mindless and blasphemous exegesis of the Akeidas Yitzchak. Clearly, one who studies our Chazal has a broader picture of the dialogue between Hashem and Avraham. Our Patriarch was acutely aware of what he was doing. Hashem commanded, and Avraham listened, responding immediately.

In a lecture to parents, Rav Hirsch searches for the primary reason why, at times, children sway to the left of their parents' teachings. He hypothesizes that children, who are very perceptive, can tell when their parents' own commitment is, at best, complacent. When these parents instruct their children to serve Hashem, they act only as compliant messengers, speaking in His Name, but not actually

conveying the echo of the pulse of their own hearts. Children perceive when their parents do not consider the fulfillment of Hashem's will as the very foundation of their own happiness. Regrettably, parents often feel that it is enough to just ask that their children observe, demanding nothing else of them. They are wrong. Children who gravitate away sense a distinction between the manner in which their parents ask them to do their personal bidding and the manner in which that they ask them to obey Hashem.

Chazal teach us, Asei retzono k'retzonecha, "Make His will your own." In other words, do His will as you would your own. Indeed, your will should be His will. Your hopes and wishes should coincide with those of Hashem.

When we stood at Har Sinai and proclaimed, Naase v'Nishma, "We will do and we will listen," we were elevated to become Hashem's nation. It was precisely this obedience that has established our position as the eternal nation. It raises us to the level of the ministering angels who do Hashem's bidding without question and without seeking reason. Through these words we became servants of the Supreme Master. Is that so bad? True human dignity is reflected in the ability to obey unconditionally and to maintain a sense of duty to a Higher Authority. Those who view Orthodoxy as a form of self-degradation rob themselves and others of the greatest moral freedom: the ability to serve the Almighty unequivocally and without question.

He (Hashem) filled him with G-dly spirit... To weave designs... (35:31,21)

V'lachashov machashavos is interpreted as the ability to weave designs. Machashavah is the ability to think, to contemplate, to deliberate. It is the process through which the mind grasps information and processes it in the many ways that the brain is capable of converting knowledge into concept. To use the idea of machashavah in connection with the construction of the Mishkan seems inaccurate, especially in the context of "weaving designs," as it is used here. It does not seem to "belong" in the description of the various work and craftsmanship involved in constructing the Mishkan.

The Koheles Yitzchak cites the famous exegesis of Horav Chaim Volizhiner, zl, regarding this question. The story is well-known, but certainly worth repeating. Yeshivas Volozhin would annually dispatch a meshulach, fund-raiser/collector to go from town to village to farm, to any place that was home to a Jew, in order to raise badly-needed funds for the yeshivah. In one city lived a fairly well-to-do Jew, who was himself erudite and respectful of those who studied Torah. Every year he would contribute a handsome sum to the yeshivah. The meshulach noted that he had not given a donation the previous year. What was there about the previous year that might have generated a distaste for the yeshivah? Rav Chaim then remembered that it was in the previous year that the meshulach had requested a horse and wagon, so that it would be easier for him to get around. Also, he felt he needed a new suit of clothes and shoes, so that he would appear more presentable. Why would these necessities affect the man's charitable attitude towards the yeshivah?

Rav Chaim decided that, at his earliest convenience, he would personally visit the donor to clarify the situation. The opportunity arose, and Rav Chaim visited the man. Understandably, it was a tremendous honor that the celebrated Rosh Yeshivah visited him in his home. During the conversation, Rav Chaim asked the man why he had stopped supporting the yeshivah. The man replied, "I am prepared to sustain the yeshivah. I am not interested, however, in supporting the meshulach's horse, or buying him a new wagon and a set of clothes."

Rav Chaim explained to the man that "Betzelel, the master architect of the Mishkan, was an individual who, besides being a righteous Torah scholar, was also Divinely imbued with an uncanny ability to oversee each and every one of the craftsmen who were involved in constructing the Mishkan. When the Torah presents Betzelel's curricula vitae, it only states that Hashem filled him with a G-dly

spirit, with wisdom, insight and knowledge. Chazal tell us that Betzalel's wisdom was of an esoteric nature. He even knew how to combine the letters that Hashem used to create the world. The Torah, however, does not relate that Betzalel was a master craftsman who was proficient in every craft and handiwork. In which area did Betzalel manifest his great depth of knowledge?

The answer is that the Mishkan was comprised of many different levels of kedushah, holiness. Every area had its own unique level of kedushah, which was superseded by an inner sanctum until one arrived at the Kodosh HaKodoshim, Holy of Holies, which manifested the greatest level of sanctity. When Klal Yisrael was asked to contribute towards the Mishkan, not all of the Jews had the same attitude concerning their contributions. Certainly, some Jews had a greater sense of "free-will" than others. Betzalel's Heavenly-inspired brilliance illuminated these contributions to the point that he was able to discern each one and attribute to it the appropriate degree of holiness it deserved. Therefore, the resources of the people who were totally devoted were used to maintain the Holy of Holies, while the contribution of the others were used for a mission with a lower degree of holiness. Betzalel's ability to lachashov machashavos, was that he was able to perceive the source of and intention behind every donation in order to place it in its correct corresponding place.

"My friend," Rav Chaim concluded, "people contribute to the yeshivah for various reasons. Some seek acclaim, while others sincerely want to assist the dissemination of Torah study. Hashem sees to it that every individual's money is directed to its proper place. The funds of those who are sincere will support Torah study. The contributions of others will support the horse who pulls the meshulach. Every dollar finds its corresponding place."

Horav Eliyahu Schlesinger, Shlita, applies a similar idea to Shabbos. Rashi explains that the prohibition of certain work on Shabbos precedes the detailing of the construction of the Mishkan to teach us that the construction of the Mishkan does not supersede Shabbos. One may not build the Mishkan on Shabbos. Perhaps there is another reason for this juxtaposition. Rather than add prohibition to Shabbos, the relationship between Shabbos and Mishkan teaches us a positive concept concerning Shabbos. We sing in the Friday night Zemiro, Kol mekadash shevii karaiu lo, kol shomer Shabbos kadas meichallelo, secharo harbei me'od al pi paolo ish al mechaneihu v'ish al diglo, "Whoever sanctifies Shabbos as it is fitting for it; whoever observes Shabbos according to the law, being careful not to desecrate it, his reward is great in accordance with his endeavor, each man on his camp, each man on his banner."

Shemiras Shabbos is also dependent upon the person's machashavos, intentions and inner thoughts. His total demeanor on this holy day indicates his relationship to Shabbos and his appreciation of the sanctity of this day. One type of Jew "rests" on Shabbos, wasting away the entire day in sleep and reading secular material. To another, rest and rejuvenation are important, but with a limit. The primary focus of the day should be directed towards Torah study, Tefillah - serving Hashem amidst a sense of calm and joy - and singing festive Zemiro Shabbos. Through both approaches, the individual observes Shabbos, each one al pi paolo, according to his understanding and endeavor. The s'char, reward, for his observance will reflect his commitment and attitude. The Mishkan was comprised of ascending levels of sanctity, and each person's contribution "found" its place, coinciding with the attitude that catalyzed the contribution. Similarly, Shabbos will be a source of holy sustenance, and the reward for observing it coincides with the individual's level of observance.

We all want to add spirituality to our Shabbos. Many of us do so when our children surround us at the Shabbos table. The singing and the recitation of Torah thoughts, compliments of their school or their own novella, catalyzed by the father's ability to involve them in the thought process; all of these certainly add to the spiritual flavor of Shabbos. What about those who have gone through the "cycle," raised their children, and are experiencing the empty nest syndrome? What do they do to catalyze greater spirituality in their Shabbos observance, especially during the meal, which, for many, is a

primary focus of the day? Perhaps one can invite a not-yet observant Jew to his Shabbos meal. While this might prove to be a challenge for some, it is certainly one worth undertaking. Everybody knows someone who is less observant than he is. Why not invite him for Shabbos and expose him to kedushas Shabbos? It would not only help him, it would simultaneously elevate our appreciation of Shabbos as we reach out to others. We might even save two spiritual lives with one meal - his and ours. Parashas Pikudei

Moshe assembled the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael...Moshe said to the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael...take from yourselves a portion for Hashem. (35:1,4,5)

In this pasuk, Moshe Rabbeinu is addressing the entire nation b'hakhel, all-inclusive - men, women and children - and instructing them with the privilege of constructing the Mishkan. There are a number of mitzvos in the Torah that had been transmitted b'hakhel, during which the entire assembly was convened and instructed in specific mitzvos. The reason for this is that these mitzvos depend upon the koach ha'tzibur, power of the community. They achieve the fullness of their spiritual zenith when they are a communal expression. Horav Boruch Sorotzkin, zl, notes that, conversely, there are certain mitzvos which can be fulfilled even if only one person executes it. He cites his father, the Lutzker Rav, Horav Zalmen Sorotzkin, zl, who related to him that the mitzvah of Lo yarbeh lo sussim v'lo yarbeh lo nashim, a Jewish king is enjoined not to have too many wives or horses, came and complained to Hashem, saying that Shlomo Hamelech had transgressed this imperative. The Lutzker Rav questioned this. Why was it so earth shattering that Shlomo had transgressed a mitzvah? He certainly was not the first tzadik v'kadosh, righteous and holy individual, to err. After all, he was a human being.

Rav Zalmen explains that, if Shlomo would have transgressed any other mitzvah, such as Shabbos for instance, it would not have affected the actual institution of the mitzvah of Shabbos. Others would have made sure that Shabbos would continue to be observed. The mitzvah which applies to a melech Yisrael, Jewish king, applies to only one person. If Shlomo had ignored that mitzvah, it would have been abrogated, since there was no one else qualified to fulfill it. Thus, this mitzvah complained that Shlomo had been causing its extinction.

The mitzvah of erecting the Mishkan is a communal mitzvah. To build a place where the Shechinah will repose, a place from which all of Klal Yisrael will draw inspiration and holiness, cannot be built by individuals. An individual - regardless of his spiritual level - cannot on his own create a place for the Shechinah to repose. The tzibur - together as a unit - must do that.

Furthermore, the Rosh HaYeshivah explains that in order for all of Klal Yisrael to derive spiritual inspiration and influence from the Mishkan, it is essential that they sense that they have a part in it. Therefore, even the poorest Jew was compelled to contribute towards the Mishkan. He had to feel his partnership in this edifice.

The Adanim - which were the silver bases into which fitted the Kerashim, wooden beams - were comprised of a special terumah, collection, from all of Klal Yisrael, because the foundation of this edifice had to originate from everyone equally.

We find later in Parashas Pikudei, that Moshe gave a complete reckoning of the silver, its proceeds and exactly how it was spent. This was done to indicate that there was exactly enough silver, and every bit of it was used for the adanim. This was unlike the gold and copper, which had a surplus. Every individual had to feel that he had an equal share in the Mishkan's foundation.

In Parashas Tzav, we find also that the ceremonies during the Yemei ha'Miluim, the Days of Consecration for Aharon and his sons as they were inducted into the Kehunah, Priesthood, were performed b'hakhel, in the presence of the entire assembly of the Jewish People (Vayikra 8:3). Why was hakhel needed for the induction and consecration service? The Rosh HaYeshivah explains that in

order for Aharon and his sons to have a spiritual influence upon the people, it was necessary for the people to sense that they had a part in their appointment. Chazal teach us in Pirkei Avos that one should "make for himself a rebbe." When I make him a rebbe, I have a more binding connection with him. Thus, it was important for everyone to convene together, so that they could all feel a part of the induction. They were accepting the Kohanim as their spiritual mentors.

See Hashem has called by name. Betzalel ben Uri ben Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah. (35:30)

Moshe Rabbeinu emphasizes that Hashem did not simply call Betzalel. Instead, he says that He called him by name. Indeed, the pasuk's trop, cantillation notes, stress the words, "by name," by indicating that these words are followed by an esnachta, a note denoting a stop in the sentence, rather than being read directly in connection with the following words of "Betzalel ben Uri." The Targum Yonasan interprets "by name" to mean "good name," intimating that Hashem called Betzalel by a "good name." What is the name and what is its connection to Betzalel?

In the Midrash Tanchuma, we are taught that during an individual's lifetime, he receives three names: one from his parents, one from other people, and one is the name that he earns himself. The last name, the one that he earns, supercedes the previous two. In support of this statement, the Midrash cites Betzalel, who merited to build the Mishkan as a result of the good name that he had earned for himself.

This Midrash begs elucidation. The name one receives from people is based upon his character and conduct. If he acts respectably, he earns a good name. If he acts inappropriately, he will tarnish his reputation. What then is the difference between the name one receives from other people and the name that he acquires for himself? Are they not one and the same?

Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl, posits that one's inner qualities, which are known only to Hashem, constitute what Chazal suggest is the name that man acquires for himself. He supports this thesis with the episode in Shmuel 1, 16:7, in which Hashem instructs Shmuel HaNavi to go to Bais Lechem and anoint one of Yishai's sons as king. Hashem did not, however, specify which son. After meeting Yishai's sons, Shmuel was certain that Eliav, the oldest son, was most suited for the monarchy. He saw in him the requisite qualities and character that the melech Yisrael, Jewish king, should possess. Hashem did not agree. He said, "Do not look at his appearance or at his tall stature, for I have rejected him. For it is not as man sees; man sees what eyes behold, but Hashem sees into the heart." Despite the fact that Shmuel was a Navi and an individual whose position on the spiritual ladder was preeminent, he was still not able to discern a man's true essence. After all is said and done, he was still a human being. Only Hashem knows a man's true character. Therefore, the name that one acquires for himself - i.e. the name that Hashem gives him, transcends all others. This name is indicative of his true identity.

While others may have presented themselves as more worthy and more suitable for building the Mishkan than Betzalel, Hashem called him by name, "a good name." His reputation, as defined by the Almighty is what counted the most. Thus, he became the Mishkan's master builder.

What was this "name" that Betzalel earned? How was he more worthy than all the other great people that comprised Klal Yisrael at that point? Rav Gifter explains this by first responding to an apparent anomaly. Klal Yisrael had recently been released from hundreds of years of bitter slavery. They had been confined to brutal treatment and brute work. Certainly, fine craftsmanship and the delicate skills required to build the Mishkan were not part of their work portfolio. Therefore, how did they become master craftsmen overnight? The Ramban explains that their desire to build the Mishkan was so intense that they simply found within themselves the talents needed to construct the Mishkan. Moreover, one individual stood out from among the entire nation. Not only did he excel in one or two crafts - he excelled in every craft and facet connected with building the Mishkan. This individual was, of course, Betzalel, so great was his desire to be the Mishkan's builder. The Ramban notes that it is rare for even the most talented craftsman to excel in more than one or two crafts. Betzalel was the master,

the predominant craftsman in every field. The reason: his desire. When a man desires with his entire essence to fulfill Hashem's will, Hashem grants him the ability to do so, despite the individual's lack of natural talents. Only Hashem knew the true Betzalel, his burning desire to succeed, his passion to build His Sanctuary. This was the "good name" that Betzalel had earned for himself.

An edifice that is built with G-d-given skills emanating from a desire to please the Almighty, manifests an inherently superior level of kedushah, holiness. It is not built merely with skills that have been acquired or learned, but with skills that have been granted specifically for this endeavor. From its very genesis, the Mishkan was constructed with the purest kedushah. This is why it endured.

Parashas Pikudei

These are the reckonings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony, which were reckoned at Moshe's bidding. (38:21)

Moshe Rabbeinu made a full accounting of all proceeds and uses of the contributions. Although all of the metals that were deposited for the Mishkan were done so under the close scrutiny and supervision of Moshe and Betzalel, men whose integrity and distinction were unquestionable, they did not rely on assumptions. Leaders must be beyond reproach, and every penny that passes through their hands must be delineated. The Midrash tells us that, indeed, this accounting was provoked by the rumblings of a group of malcontents. They insolently accused Moshe of pocketing some of the precious metals, using the proceeds to enlarge his own financial portfolio. Despite the ludicrous nature of these claims, Moshe, the consummate leader, insisted that a detailed accounting of "every penny" be made. There are other opinions in the Midrash which contend that there were no allegations leveled at Moshe. It was Moshe's idea that a complete reckoning be made to ensure the total veracity of the proceedings.

In the Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 257:2, it is stated that we do not ask charity collectors to give an account of income and expenditures. Rather, we must trust them to act according to their word. The fact that Moshe gave an accounting was to allay any suspicions. It is thus written in Bamidbar 32:22, "You shall be innocent before G-d and Yisrael." The Bach and Gra both note that Moshe acted on his own volition.

The Mishnah in Shekalim 3:2 says that the gabai, treasurer, who withdraws funds from the treasury of the Bais HaMikdash may not enter the chamber wearing a hemmed garment, shoe or sandal, Tefillin or amulet, or anything that might make people suspect that he placed some coins in a concealed place. The stated reason is that a person must please people in the same manner that he must please Hashem. The pasuk, V'hayisem nekiim, "You shall be innocent," is cited. The Mishnah adds another pasuk as support. "And find favor and good understanding in the eyes of G-d and mankind." (Mishlei 3:8) This pasuk goes further than the pasuk in Bamidbar. The first pasuk teaches us to remove well-founded suspicion, as in the case of the Shevatim who sought to remain in Trans-Jordan, thereby suggesting that they had no desire to go to Eretz Yisrael. In that case, their reputation had already been impugned. The victim of groundless allegations, however, may think that he has nothing to worry about and that there is no need to clear his reputation from aspersions cast by ignorant or even ignoble people. The pasuk in Mishlei implies otherwise. The Ksav Sofer goes so far as to say that not only must one offer an explanation for his ostensibly suspicious actions, but he must even attempt to see that his explanation is understood and accepted.

In summary, we must make sure that all of our actions are above suspicion. There will always be those individuals who look for every reason to gossip. These people have nothing to do with their time but to undermine the efforts of others. Yet, Chazal instruct us to be wary of their tongues. This warning does not always apply. In his commentary to Megillas Rus, Horav Shlomo Alkabetz, zl, explains why Boaz married Rus, disregarding the fact that no one married an Amonis or Moavis. Was he not concerned with what people would say? He explains that the enjoinder to be above suspicion

applies only with regard to what sensible, competent people might say. There is no obligation to concern oneself with the suspicions and comments of those who lack erudition, common sense and rationale. Boaz followed the halachah to the minutest detail. The fact that many people were unaware of the permissibility to marry a Moavis did not affect his decision. He was doing the right thing. Let the scoffers talk. They will do so anyway! The Sanhedrin and the Elders of Klal Yisrael were fully aware of the halachah. He was not going to concern himself with what fools might think and say. "Is there a shortage of pious Jewish girls that he is forced to marry a Moavis?" they might wonder. Once again, this critique did not hinder him, since Rus' reputation as a devout, kind, righteous eishas chayil, woman of valor, was undisputed. The obligation of V'heyisem nekiim would not be binding in this circumstance, since the people that would talk did not count. They were the scoffers, the fools, the rabble rousers.

What really, is the rationale behind this obligation? After all, if I know that what I am doing is above reproach, why should I care what others might think? Horav Yerachmiel Krom, Shlita, explains that this is all part of one's obligation to be mekadesh Shem Shomayim, sanctify the Name of Heaven, in the world. If I tarnish my reputation, I taint the reputation of the Jewish People and - by inference - Hashem. A Jew does not live in a vacuum. He is part of a great legion - Hashem's legion. What he does leaves an impression on the entire army. The Chasam Sofer, zl, views this as an awesome responsibility. He says that prior to any endeavor, one should carefully weigh the action he is about to take to be certain that "people" will view it in the proper light. It goes without saying that if there is no other way to carry out one's mission, if what one must do might not necessarily receive public acclaim, the mitzvah take precedence. He does what he must do, and those who will talk will talk anyway.

Horav Shmuel Vosner, Shlita, interprets the pasuk of V'heyisem nekiim as a promise. If Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven adhere to the conditions that are asked of them, they will be viewed as innocent in the eyes of Hashem and Yisrael. Their mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice, to satisfy the demands placed upon them will guarantee their acceptability in the eyes of all. If a person goes out of his way to dispel what people might suspect - he will succeed.

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

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, suggests that this pasuk alludes to the bitter galus, exile, that has been home to the Jewish People for the last few thousand years. The pasuk is telling us that during all of Klal Yisrael's journeys, throughout the exile following the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash, "fire" has always been burning at night to guide us through the darkness of galus. What is this fire? It is the Torah, as Yirmiyah HaNavi says: "Behold - My words are like fire - the word of Hashem." (Yirmiyah 23:29) This is a reference to the daled amos shel halachah, the four cubits of Jewish law, which illuminates the road for us as we travel through the long, harsh night of exile.

Rav Sholom cites the Ponevezer Rav, zl, who makes a powerful statement regarding these "four cubits of halachah." Chazal tell us that since the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash, Hashem has for Himself in this world only the four cubits of halachah. The usual interpretation of this Chazal is that, until its destruction, the Bais Hamikdash was the place in which Hashem rested His Shechinah. Now that there is no longer a Bais Hamikdash, Hashem has designated a new place - the daled amos shel halachah. This is not the correct interpretation, says the Rav. Even when the Bais Hamikdash was a part of our lives and it stood in all its glory, the four cubits of halachah were still Hashem's focal point and His place of rest. He also graced His Presence in the Bais Hamikdash. Now that there is no Bais Hamikdash, the daled amos are the only place. They are all that is left. Hashem never removed His Presence from the makom Torah, place where Torah is studied.

This is how it has been throughout our exile. The Torah has been our sanctuary, our island of

serenity, our place of refuge, our tower of hope. In the Torah, we have always felt that we were with Hashem. We never felt alone. The continued study of Torah was a remarkable phenomenon, especially during the Holocaust, when Jews turned bunkers, cellars or underground tunnels into batei medrash, houses of Torah study. Their persistence in studying Torah in the ghettos and concentration camps was what kept them going. Torah study was worship. It was the air that they breathed, the blood that coursed through their veins. Rav Saadia Gaon's dictum that "we are a people only by virtue of the Torah" was the operative principle for the Jews in the Holocaust. There was no point in national or individual survival if the Torah were to be abandoned. Throughout our history, our refusal to comply with decrees to forbid Torah study has kept us alive.

In the Vilna Ghetto, an entire religious school system continued while the Nazi guards were unaware that it was going on. In the Dalmorgan Camp in southern Germany, a group of yeshivah students would convene at night to study Mishnayos. This was after a day of hard labor in the clay pits. Bone tired and near starvation, covered with vermin from lack of showers, they would listen as a young student from Novardok recited chapter after chapter of Mishnayos aloud by memory, and the rest would repeat after him. Others studied the Talmud by memory as they marched for hours in the biting cold. Their bodies were cold, but their hearts were warmed by the fire of Torah. They were not alone. Hashem reposed in the daled amos shel halachah which they maintained.

You shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings on the Shabbos day. (35:3)

Shabbos is one of the basic tenets of Judaism. The Torah teaches us that nothing takes precedence over Shabbos, even the construction of the Mishkan. Quite often, those who have returned to a life of Torah-observance have done so after experiencing the beauty and serenity of a Shabbos. This is what makes the following episodes all the more compelling. A family in Eretz Yisrael who had been living on a non-observant kibbutz decided to embrace a life of Torah Judaism. They were giving up the emptiness and sterility that are so much a part of life devoid of mitzvos. They decided to leave the kibbutz and the environment of spiritual negativity that it bred in order to move to the Meah Shearim section of Yerushalayim.

They quickly progressed in their Yiddishkeit, the husband soon becoming a devout and pious Jew. He seized every opportunity to study Torah. His wife, however, had one problem: It seems that she enjoyed smoking cigarettes, an addiction that became especially difficult to overcome on Shabbos. It was almost as if the onset of Shabbos brought about a sudden urge to smoke a cigarette. She did not know what to do. She chose the Torah way of life, a choice to which she meant to adhere. Yet, she had this overwhelming urge to smoke. What could she do?

One of the individuals who was guiding the family on the path of Torah observance decided to approach Horav Yosef Eliyashuv, Shlita, and seek his sage advice. The rav suggested that they thoroughly research this woman's pedigree to confirm that her mother, grandmother and great-grandmother had all been Jewish. One can only imagine the shock when they discovered that the woman's great-grandmother had not been Jewish. This woman, who was having such a difficult time overcoming her urge to smoke on Shabbos, was not Jewish after all!

When the man who made the discovery returned to Rav Eliyashuv with the news, the rav explained the following to him, "Hashem saw that this woman was extremely dedicated to becoming an observant Jewess. She was prepared to eschew her entire past for a future of devotion to Torah and mitzvos. Hashem, however, was aware of something concerning this woman that did not cross anyone else's mind: She was not Jewish. If she were to observe Shabbos as a gentile, she would be guilty of a capital punishment. In order to spare this righteous woman the onus of guilt, Hashem increased her urge to smoke - specifically on Shabbos, so that she would not observe the holy day as a gentile."

When this was all explained to the woman, she gladly accepted upon herself to convert to Judaism. Incidentally, on her first Shabbos as a Jewess, she no longer had an urge to smoke.

In another episode, a woman who had recently been chozeres b'teshuvah, returned to a Torah way of life, came to her rav and complained that her husband, regrettably, was not progressing with her toward Torah and mitzvos. To make matters worse, on Shabbos, the day that meant so much to her, he would blatantly smoke cigarettes.

The rav gave her meaningful advice: She should request of her husband that, out of a sense of respect for her and her beliefs, he should not smoke while the Shabbos candles were burning. The husband agreed and, for a few hours, the sanctity of Shabbos was maintained in their home.

After awhile, the rav suggested that she use thicker candles that would burn longer. Once again, the husband respectfully acceded to her request, and his Shabbos observance was extended. A few weeks later, when the moment was propitious, the woman chose a new type of candle - a yahrtzeit candle that burned for a full twenty-four hours! The husband accepted this new challenge and became a shomer Shabbos. The case is especially interesting when we consider what might have crossed the mind of an innocent spectator. He might have thought that the woman was either eccentric or foolish, when, indeed, she was extremely sagacious and deliberate.

This brings to mind an anecdote that should give us something to ponder. A middle-school girl was enrolled in an afternoon Talmud Torah. She looked forward to learning all about her religion, but was upset when her parents blatantly refused to adopt any of the mitzvos or practices that were encouraged in her school. Their response was the usual, "It is always nice to learn about 'those things' in school, but we do not observe them in our home."

One mitzvah was very important to the young girl, more so than anything else: She wanted her mother to light Shabbos candles. Most of the girls in the class had responded affirmatively when queried if their mothers lit candles. Regrettably, her mother's response was the usual, "We do not do that in our home."

Having given up on her mother, the girl decided to light candles herself. She went to the Jewish bookstore and asked the proprietor for the candles that she should light for her father and mother. Her parents were not home that Friday night, but the girl, who had lovingly saved the candles all week for the special moment, did not forget. She ushered in Shabbos by lighting two candles. Proud that she had fulfilled the mitzvah, she waited enthusiastically for her parents to come home. Her parents came home. When confronted with the sight of the two lit candles, they were horrified. They immediately demanded to know why those candles had been lit. "I lit one for you, mommy, and one for you, daddy," she innocently replied. "But those are Yizkor candles, not Shabbos candles!" her parents explained.

"I do not know what you mean," she said. "What is the difference anyway?"

Needless to say, the parents were impacted by the spectacle and their daughter's response. From that Shabbos on, candles were always lit in their home.

Every wise-hearted person among you shall come and make everything that Hashem has commanded. (35:10)

The commentators write that one who has a great desire to perform a mitzvah should do so immediately, with alacrity. Idle talk about what one is planning to do only delays the actual performance. This is implied by the pasuk: "Every wise-hearted person" - one who is truly a chacham, wise - should act immediately - not just talk about it. The Gaon, zl, m'Vilna interprets this into the pasuk in Mishlei 1:8, "The wise of heart will seize good deeds, but the foolish one's lips will become weary." The wise man does not procrastinate. He acts immediately, carrying out the mitzvah, while the

avil sfasayim, "foolish one's lips," talks and makes plans - and in the end does not even do the mitzvah.

The Chida, zl, cites Chazal who says, "The righteous say little but do much, while the wicked talk a lot, and they do not even do a little." He explains that the righteous do not waste precious time talking about the mitzvah. They perform it. The reshaim, wicked people, talk and talk and make grandiose plans, until they have wasted so much time that the opportunity to perform the mitzvah has passed them by.

Meetings - this is what the yetzer hora, evil-inclination, wants. Talk and more talk, meeting after meeting, just as long as the mitzvah does not get done.

Moshe Rabbeinu instructed Klal Yisrael about the construction of the Mishkan. Their response was immediate: "The entire assemblage of Yisrael left Moshe's presence." (Shemos 35:20) Where did they go? asks Rabbeinu Bachya. They went home immediately to bring their contributions. Indeed, when the men came home, they noted that their wives had already left with their jewelry. So great was their alacrity for the mitzvah.

Zerizus is an attitude necessary for mitzvah performance. It denotes devotion, enthusiasm, diligence, ability and fervor in carrying out the Divine will. It is indicative of an overwhelming desire to please Hashem and a preparedness to perform His mandate. Avraham Avinu was noted for his zerizus. When given the command to sacrifice his beloved Yitzchak, he did not tarry, but rather, he rose at the crack of dawn and personally saddled the donkey, eager to carry out Hashem's command.

A person who fails out of indolence may not see his failure to be a result of his laziness. He will invariably attribute it to other factors. Some will give the excuse that they lack the acumen or skills for successful achievement. Others place the onus of guilt on others; parents, teachers, friends - everyone - but themselves. They rationalize everything in order to cover up the real reason: They are lazy. Psychologists note that the more intelligent one is, the greater is his ability to rationalize his lack of success. The most sophisticated are the most difficult to help, because they believe their own lies.

In his Mesillas Yesharim, The Ramchal cautions us about falling prey to the yetzer hora's cunning. He says that any desire that tends to ease one's burdens should be considered suspect. The alarm clock rings in the morning, waking us to go to davening. Immediately, the arguments for sleeping in and attending a later Minyan begin. They are generated by a desire to remain in bed, a decision that he will likely regret later on.

A chasid once asked the Rhiziner Rebbe, zl, for advice in maintaining proper conduct. After all, one does not always have access to the Shulchan Aruch, Code of Jewish Law, nor is a rav always available. The Rebbe replied, "Do as a tightrope walker does. The way he maintains his delicate balance is that when he senses himself drawn to one side, he leans towards the other side. When you feel yourself tempted to one side, to do something that might be improper, as you process the arguments that would satisfy your desire, give greater credence to the arguments that negate gratification. Those arguments that are pro-gratification are usually nothing more than spurious rationalizations."

Shlomo Hamelech says in Mishlei 26:13, "A lazy person says, 'There is a young lion on the path, a lion between the streets.'" What does this mean? If there really is a lion out there, then the person has something to fear. If there is no lion, why is he called indolent? He is a liar! My rebbe, Horav Chaim Mordechai Katz, zl, explained that, indeed, there is a lion on the road, but a person who is a zariz, filled with alacrity, who is diligent and agile, will find a way around the lion. Nothing stands in the way of he who is a zariz. One who has a mission and is dedicated to carrying it out will surely find a way around, under, or over the lion.

Chazal teach us that the Nesiim were chastised for not coming forward to donate to the

Mishkan. They said, "We will wait until everybody else has contributed, and we will then complete whatever is missing. The commentators see a laxity on their part and suggest that, had they acted with greater alacrity, they would have come forward to contribute. When we think about it, what did they really do wrong? They wanted to make sure that everything needed for the construction of the Mishkan would be supplied, so they waited until the end to contribute their share. Their intentions were certainly noble, as well as practical.

Horav Reuven Grosovsky, zl, explains that man's function in this world is not to complete the Mishkan, but instead to complete himself. Hashem will take care of the Mishkan. The nesim should have been concerned with themselves, with their personal completion. They should have manifest greater zerizus, which they, regrettably, did not.

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

The pasuk seems to have a redundancy. It begins by saying that every man and woman contributed towards the Mishkan and then concludes with the phrase, "Bnei Yisrael brought a donation." Are these not the same people that were mentioned earlier as "every man and woman"? Horav Avraham Pam, zl, in Ateres Avraham, cites the Kehillas Yitzchak that offers a noteworthy explanation, which conveys a powerful lesson. He relates a story that occurred concerning the Maharasha, Horav Shmuel Eidlish, zl, who had a yeshivah in the city of Ostrova. This yeshivah was a Torah center for students from Eastern and Central Europe.

As the yeshivah's popularity grew and students flocked to it from throughout Europe, it was necessary to initiate a building campaign, since space had become a major issue. A fund-raising campaign was launched with the usual opportunities for eternalizing one's name through support of the yeshivah. There was even an auction to sell the z'chus, privilege, of laying the cornerstone of the new building. On the designated day of the auction, an individual approached the gabbai, sexton, in charge of the auction, with a unique request. He wanted to purchase the z'chus of laying the cornerstone, but he wanted to remain anonymous for the time being. Would the gabbai bid for him? The gabbai agreed, and the auction was held. At the end, the gabbai bid 500 rubles, a considerable sum of money which was unmatched by anyone. The anonymous gentleman had won the z'chus of placing the cornerstone.

All eyes were on the gabbai to see whom he would approach with the privilege. Everyone wanted to know the identity of the anonymous donor. Perceiving this problem, the anonymous benefactor had prearranged with the gabbai that this distinction would be reserved for the Maharasha, himself.

The ceremony was over, and the crowd dispersed and went home. The Maharasha asked the gabbai if he could arrange to have the elusive benefactor come to his house, so that he could personally express his gratitude for his generous contribution and for honoring him with the cornerstone laying. When the benefactor arrived at his home, the Maharasha was surprised to discover that the benefactor was not wealthy. "What motivated you to make such a large contribution?" the Maharasha asked. The man replied, "I have no children, and I wanted to do something to promote the growth of Torah in Ostrova."

The Maharasha was impressed with the man's generosity, but it was his modesty that especially left an impact on him. He gave the man the blessing that had heretofore eluded him: He would have a son. Moreover, that son would one day be a student in the yeshivah to which the man had contributed so generously.

One year later, the man's wife gave birth to a son. Thirteen years later, after his son's Bar Mitzvah, the benefactor brought his son to be enrolled in the yeshivah. The hanhalah, yeshivah

administration, refused to admit him, claiming that the boy was too young. The man was not deterred. He went to the Maharasha and reminded him of his blessing and his pledge to accept his son as a student in the yeshivah. The Maharasha remembered his pledge and honored his word. The boy was immediately accepted as a student.

The Kehillas Yitzchak wonders why the man was blessed with a child just because he undertook to sustain Torah? He explains that the purpose of a Mishkan is to be a place where the Shechinah can repose. In reality, however, the primary resting place of the Shechinah is not in an edifice, but on the people themselves. When Hashem notices that people labor to build a Mishkan or a similar edifice, such as a yeshivah for Him, He rewards them with banim tzaddikim, righteous children, who will themselves one day be worthy of being receptacles for His Shechinah.

The architecture of our religious buildings is not our greatest asset. From an artist's point of view, the architecture of a religious edifice may be impressive, but in reality Klal Yisrael's greatest natural resource is not its magnificent buildings, but its pious and virtuous children. Their faces radiate kedushah, holiness, and it is their souls that are the veritable Mishkan for Hashem's Presence. Thus, the meaning of the extra phrase, "Bnei Yisrael brought a donation." This is written to emphasize the notion that when the Jewish People responded with great generosity to building the Mishkan, they were blessed with righteous children who would themselves embody the Divine Presence. When parents appreciate and value the significance of the Mishkan and its contemporary counterpart, its role and function in Klal Yisrael, they merit children that embody and continue this legacy.

Rav Pam gleans from the Maharasha that a segulah for being blessed with children is to involve oneself in building a center for Torah and Tefillah. Hashem compensates us in the manner that we demonstrate devotion to him.

I think this idea is conveyed to us by way of the primary component of which the walls of the Mishkan were constructed. Chazal tell us that the Atzei Shittim, special Shittim wood - or as some translate, Acacia Trees - which comprised the walls of the Mishkan, einu oseh peiros, "do not bear fruit." There is a profound lesson to be derived herein. It is not the structure that bears fruit, nor will the beautiful and impressive architecture produce the spirit of holiness. The soul of Yiddishkeit, the continuing legacy of our People, is the teaching that goes on in the building. We make the building, but Hashem's Shechinah reposes b'socham, within the people that study and pray in the building. Our hope for a future is in the children. The finest teachers, the greatest scholars, can only plant the seeds. The building produces the suitable climate for the inspiration to grow, but it is children who must learn, who must be encouraged to study and to daven with kavanah, devotion, or all will be in vain. The reward is commensurate with the value one places on the endeavor.

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

The Mishkan was filled with numerous vessels, each one exemplifying beauty and magnificence and intimating lofty spiritual ideals and physical blessings. The Menorah, which was made of solid gold, symbolized wisdom. The Shulchan, Table, likewise was magnificent in its gold design. It signified blessing and wealth. The Kohen Gadol radiated glory as he performed the avodah, service, bedecked in his multi colored, gold brocade vestments, topped off with the Breast Plate with its multi colored precious jewels. Indeed, anyone who had the opportunity to see this glorious spectacle was certainly inspired by its rich beauty. Nonetheless, the Torah, in referring to the Mishkan, does not in any way allude to all the pomp and majesty that was manifest in the Mishkan. It refers to the Mishkan as the Mishkan HaEidus, signifying the Testimony, the two Luchos that were contained within its environs. Why is this? Why is the majesty of the Mishkan ignored and the emphasis placed instead on the Luchos, which were not seen anyway?

Horav Moshe Shapiro, Shlita, explains that the focus of the Mishkan, its purpose in Klal Yisrael, determines its name. The tachlis, purpose, is to serve as a place for the Shechinah to repose in Klal Yisrael. To that end, we know that the Shechinah's "place" in the Mishkan, or, the place where the word of Hashem was heard, was from between the two Keruvim which were a part of the Kapores, Cover, of the Aron Hakodesh. The Shechinah rested within the Aron HaEidus, which contained the Luchos and served as testimony to the world that Hashem had reconciled with Klal Yisrael following the sin of the Golden Calf.

Undoubtedly, the majesty that was manifest in the Mishkan was significant, but it was not primary. The Shechinah resides in the place that is modest, in the individual who is devoted to Torah study. Fanfare, pomp and circumstance, are not necessary - Torah study is.

During Horav Chaim Volozhiner's tenure, there lived a man by the name of Reb Moshe Soloveitchik who was very wealthy and was very generous with his money. He contributed to every worthwhile cause and his house was the address for everyone in need. One day he went bankrupt and was left with barely his shirt on his back. Rav Chaim Volozhiner convened a bais din, court of law, to determine what could have caused this dreadful turn of events. The other rabbanim decided that Reb Moshe was punished because he was giving away too much money. According to halachah, one should not donate more than twenty percent of his possessions, a sum which Reb Moshe exceeded many times over. Rav Chaim was not satisfied with this logic.

Nonetheless, Reb Moshe now had the time to throw himself into Torah study. He had no distractions, no business, and no requests for his time or money. He studied diligently and was blessed in developing a vast knowledge of Torah. This knowledge and determination to study was transmitted to his descendants, and the roots of the famous Brisker dynasty began to develop. Rav Chaim Volozhiner commented that this could not have occurred had Reb Moshe retained his enormous wealth. Torah grows in a modest and humble environment. Everything needs its unique climate for growth and development. Luxury and opulence is not necessarily the climate most conducive for Torah advancement.

Rav Moshe Shapiro adds that the Shechinah's voice emanated from between the Keruvim. This teaches us that the Shechinah rests only on the Torah learning of a chavrusashaft, two study partners, who, as the Keruvim, "face each other" and learn together. While one certainly derives schar, reward, for studying Torah by himself, the place of hashraas ha'Shechina's, the Shechinah's resting place, is when Torah emanates from two people who study together.

They brought the Mishkan to Moshe. (39:33)

In this context, the word Mishkan does not mean the completed Mishkan, but rather, the covering of the Mishkan. The workmen could not erect the Mishkan because of its considerable weight. Since Moshe Rabbeinu had until now not had any share in constructing the Mishkan, Hashem wanted him to be the one to erect it. Although the Mishkan's weight was beyond the ability of a human being to raise it, Hashem instructed Moshe to make an attempt and Hashem would raise it. Moshe tried to erect it and the Mishkan stood up by itself. The Midrash cites the pasuk in Mishlei 31:25, "Strength and majesty are her raiment." - this refers to Moshe. "And she joyfully awaits the last day" - this is a reference to the leitzanim, scoffers, who made fun of Moshe, saying, "Is it possible that the Shechinah will rest on the handiwork of the son of Amram?" Moshe did not respond, but on the "last day" when no one could raise the Mishkan, it was precisely Moshe who demonstrated that he has Hashem's support.

This is the way a Torah scholar should perceive matters: the yom acharon, last day. They do not concern themselves with what occurs in the present, nor are they affected by what the skeptics might say. They know and believe that, in the end, Hashem will respond to their needs and they will realize

their reward. The Midrash cites two narratives in support of its statement.

In the first one, one of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai's students left the yeshivah and traveled out of Eretz Yisrael and returned a very wealthy man. The remaining students were envious of his financial success. Rabbi Shimon took them out to a valley and said, "Valley, valley, fill yourself with gold." The valley immediately overflowed with gold. Rabbi Shimon turned to his students and said, "If it is gold that you seek, here, take it! But, remember, you are taking your portion in the World to Come." This is the meaning of Vatischak l'yom acharon. "And (she) joyfully awaits the last day." This refers to the World to Come when a person collects his due.

This Midrash begs elucidation. First, are we to suspect Rabbi Shimon's students of being envious of the one who "made it" financially? Certainly, they were not shallow. Second, were they prepared to leave their revered rebbe for financial opportunity? Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, gives an insightful commentary to this Midrash that conveys a practical lesson for us.

He explains that when the student reappeared as a wealthy man, he immediately returned to his original place in the yeshivah and began to study Torah with his old enthusiasm and diligence. Furthermore, he used his newly-acquired funds to support those in need. Now his friends were jealous. To have the learning and the money, to be able to study diligently and also have the wherewithal to help others, this was truly a position to envy. They also wanted to amass great wealth and then return to a life of Torah and gedulah.

Their rebbe, Rabbi Shimon, understood their aspiration and thus, he brought them out to a valley which he miraculously filled with gold. "You want gold so that you can have a greater portion in the World to Come. You seek to learn and to sustain Torah. Let me explain to you that everything one receives is given to him by Hashem. He only receives what Hashem deems him worthy of receiving. This applies to Olam Habah as well as to olam hazeh. One cannot force the issue and expect to appropriate a greater portion than he deserves. If Hashem would have wanted you to have Torah and gedulah, scholarship and wealth, He would have granted it to you. Since He did not, it is an indication that your function is to devote yourself fully to Torah."

The bottom line is that one receives his reward in the World to Come. While there are those whose good fortune it is to eat out of a silver spoon even in this world, as mentioned above, this is Hashem's decision, determined by His expectations of this person. But what about those who do not lead a Torah life, who, at best, live a life of abandon and, at worst, one of iniquity? Many of them seem to be doing quite well in this world. What happened to the concept of reward only in Olam Habah?

The Chafetz Chaim, zl, provides a powerful parable that should serve as a wake-up call for us. One of the king's officers rebelled against his master. It was an act of rebellion that warranted an extreme punishment, one that should impact a message to others. The punishment was decided: the officer would be placed in a cage in the center of town and given no food until he perished from hunger. It seems to be a cruel punishment, but when one sins against the king, there is no room for leniency. During the first few days the punishment was not apparent, since the officer was properly fed prior to his sentence. It was on day four that the hunger pains began to unnerve him, that the pangs began to eat away at him. He was miserable and, what made it worse - there was no hope in sight. He was paying dearly for his miscreant behavior against the king who had originally been so benevolent to him. Finally, giving in to overwhelming hunger pains, he took a bite out of his own skin. It kept him alive, but after the hunger pains temporarily subsided, he was now overwhelmed with the agony of the wound he had made to his own flesh.

On that day, when this spectacle was occurring and the prisoner was eating his own flesh, a visitor chanced upon the town. This man had not been aware of the officer's rebellion, nor of his punishment. He questioned the townspeople concerning the man in the cage in the center of town. "He

is being starved to death for rebelling against the king," they replied.

"He does not seem to be starving," the visitor commented. "I see him eating heartily. Some punishment."

The spectators who had been watching the scene unfold responded, "Yes, he is eating - but, he is eating himself!"

What a powerful analogy. We wonder how some people get away with performing every iniquity, yet, continue to enjoy life in a manner certainly inconsistent with the way they act. What they fail to realize is that they are receiving their eternal reward - in this world.

According to all that Hashem commanded Moshe, so Bnei Yisrael did all the work. And Moshe saw all the work and, behold, they had done it as Hashem commanded, even so they had done it. (39:42,43)

Upon reading the text we are confronted with a glaring question: Why does the Torah repeat itself? Twice it mentions that the work performed by Bnei Yisrael conformed with the specifications that Hashem had set for them. Horav Aharon Soloveitchik, zl, addresses this query and draws a distinction between the various terms used to describe "work." In the first pasuk, the word avodah is used to describe work, while in the second pasuk, the word melachah is used. These terms are different in that they refer to two different forms of labor.

Avodah connotes a labor that is extraneous to the individual performing the work, while melachah refers to work which is an art form, embodying the personality of the one who effects it. When an artist creates a work of art, he imbues it with his personality, a part of himself is reflected in his creation. Any project, even one as holy as the Mishkan, can be realized through the spectrum of either mere avodah, or personal melachah.

When the craftsmen created the Mishkan they followed the blueprint revealed to them by Hashem. This was their avodah. Supplementing their work, Betzalel, Ohaliav and their associates instilled their personalities and personal devotion into the construction of the Mishkan and its Keilim, appurtenances. It was only when Moshe Rabbeinu noted that both the avodah aspect and the melachah aspect of the construction of the Mishkan conformed to Hashem's specifications, that he bestowed his blessing on the Mishkan. The Mishkan had to represent and reflect the harmony between these two forms of labor and its conformity to the dvar, word, of Hashem.

Likewise, there are two methods through which talmidei chachamim, Torah scholars, disseminate Torah to their students. There are those who provide efficient training, cultivating their student's intellect and scholarship - yet, these students remain on the periphery with regard to their rebbeim. The relationship that should be so intrinsic between a rebbe and his talmid, student, just does not seem to exist. There are, however, rebbeim who not only teach Torah to their students, but they even infuse them with their own personality. These are the devoted mechanchim, educators, who emphasize the melachah aspect of Torah dissemination.

How does one effect harbotzas Torah on a melachah level? What techniques should he employ to reach his students on a personal level? Rav Soloveitchik cites a dialogue between Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Chanina in the Talmud Bava Metzia 85b that lends insight towards obtaining the correct approach one should take. In a most inspiring debate between these two Tannaim the question that was addressed was: How would each respective Tanna restore Torah to Klal Yisrael if chas v'shalom, Heaven forbid, it was forgotten?

Rabbi Chanina felt that through his incredible mastery of Torah, he could have single-handedly revived it through his scholarship and erudition. The problem with this approach is that it works so long

as the majority of Klal Yisrael remains committed to upholding the Torah. Then, through study and more study, they will master the Torah. This approach prevails only on the avodah level since its focus is primarily on academia and knowledge.

Rabbi Chiya addressed a situation when Klal Yisrael will not only be ignorant of the Torah, they will also be disinterested in seeking its wisdom and guidance. Under such conditions the propagation of Torah via the medium of the avodah approach will be deemed ineffective. Rabbi Chiya then intimated to Rabbi Chanina that his approach might restore knowledge of the Torah, but what was going to guarantee continuity to the next generation when the present generation was hostile to Torah philosophy?

Consequently, Rabbi Chiya introduced the melachah approach to Torah dissemination. He felt that by injecting his personality into the hearts and minds of his students, by involving them in the process of Torah learning from its genesis, from preparing the parchment upon which the Torah was written to intellectual guidance and inspirational stimulation and character growth, he would ultimately accomplish much more. The intellectual dialogue of "giving a shiur" would work only to a crowd attuned and ready to learn. Indeed, Rabbi Chiya's melachah method was, and continues to be, more laborious, but there are times, circumstances and students who will thrive only under such tutelage.

It goes a step further. The rebbe who employs the avodah approach to education can simplify his task by a division of labor. He parcels out the running of the yeshivah, the psychological guidance of his students and various administrative and organizational duties to those who are proficient in these respective fields, while he devotes his time to the intellectual development and guidance of his students.

The rebbe who takes the melachah approach does so either out of need, or educational perspective. To succeed in infusing his personality into his students' psyches, it is essential that he do everything himself. He must find the students, prepare the parchment and instructional materials, at times cook the meals, be father, mother, big brother and psychologist and just about everything else, to succeed in his daunting task. The melachah approach is difficult, but, in the long run, it is guaranteed the most success.

There were many rebbeim and roshei yeshivah who exemplified this approach to teaching Torah. I take the liberty of citing from a biography of Horav Shlomo Freifeld, zl, Rosh Hayeshivah of Shor Yoshev in Far Rockaway, NY and an undisputed pioneer in the field of kiruv rechokim, Jewish outreach to the unaffiliated. His unusual personal warmth and sensitivity towards Jews from all spectrums of Jewish life earned him their unequivocal love and respect. They became his talmidim in the fullest sense of the word, adapting his philosophy and, to some extent - his essence. A talmid once remarked about his rebbe, "Rav Shlomo did not love people despite their weaknesses, but because of them. He viewed their shortcomings as tools and mediums by which one could climb and develop."

Rav Freifeld did not wait for a student to come to him. He sought them out, picking up potential students in places far off the beaten path. He focused on chizuk, encouragement and raising a student's self-esteem. He recognized that the capacity for spiritual growth was closely tied to self-esteem. When dealing with a broken neshamah, he would encourage the student to focus on his own capacity for growth. He would not say "be strong." Rather, he encouraged him to "be big," recognizing that not everyone had the potential for strength, but everyone had the opportunity for greatness. He believed in his student's ability to soar spiritually, to become great, and he encouraged them. Indeed, he engendered in his students a drive to greatness.

This approach was especially necessary in reaching out to the many baalei teshuvah, returnees to the Torah way of life, who came in contact with him. The insecurity of a would-be-baal teshuvah who realizes that he has missed out on so much of his rightful heritage can be devastating. Rav Freifeld

taught them self-respect, because he respected them. He saw their potential, recognized their accomplishments and encouraged further achievements. He exemplified the melachah approach and it shows - in his talmidim.

But the seventh day shall be holy for you. (35:2)

Shemiras Shabbos, observing Shabbos Kodesh, is not as difficult as it used to be. One can get a job and not be concerned that his Shabbos observance will be an obstacle. Indeed, Orthodoxy has become an accepted way of life in this country. It has not always been that way. Shemiras Shabbos was often involved with much mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice. In this country, it was frequently a question of decisions between observing Shabbos and parnassah, earning a livelihood. In Europe, this dichotomy was the product of anti-Semitism. Yet, our forebears triumphed over adversity and overcame the challenges to their faith. The following is an incredible story of mesiras nefesh for Shabbos Kodesh, related by Horav Shlomo Brevde, Shilta.

The Steipler Rav, Horav Yaakov Kanievsky, zl, was a gaon and a tzaddik. His brilliance and encyclopedic knowledge of Torah was only overshadowed by his righteousness and total devotion to serving the Almighty. Prior to his engagement to the sister of the Chazon Ish, he shared an incident that occurred with him in Siberia. He felt it was important that his intended be fully aware of his mesiras nefesh for mitzvos.

As a soldier conscripted into the Czar's army, the Steipler was forced to perform back-breaking labor in the frigid cold of the Siberian winter. Regardless of the overwhelming toil and below-freezing conditions, he continued the difficult work because he knew it was the only way that he could continue to serve the Almighty. The problem was that army dictates demanded that everyone work seven days a week. This created a problem on Shabbos. The Steipler emphatically declared that by no means was he going to work on Shabbos. The Russian official did not need more than one insolent Jew who had the gall to refuse his orders. He predictably flew into a rage, typical of the anti-Semite brute that he was. Suddenly, he stopped screaming, as a diabolical smile crossed his face.

Yes, he would grant the Steipler's request on the condition that the soldier pass a little test. If he could prove himself to be a strong warrior, he would be permitted to observe Shabbos. The test was "simple." The captain ordered his soldiers to form two rows opposite each other, arming themselves with truncheons. The Steipler was to "attempt" to make it from one end of the row to the other as the soldiers beat him mercilessly with their truncheons. If he survived the ordeal, he would be allowed to observe Shabbos.

The Steipler understood the situation. He was probably risking his life, but Shabbos was worth the ordeal. He put his hands over his head as protection, whispered a heartfelt prayer and forged on. The guards began to beat him with all they had: no mercy; no sensitivity; pure brutal malevolence. The pain was intolerable, but the reward of keeping Shabbos was the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Blood streamed forth from the cuts and gashes. Inch by inch, he trudged forward, blinded by pain and covered with blood. He reached the end of the line and collapsed - with a faint smile on his lips. He had made it! The Shabbos that he cared about so much must have surely protected him. The captain reluctantly gave in to the Steipler's demand to observe Shabbos. The Steipler lay on the ground, a bloodied, broken mass of humanity. Nobody bothered to pick him up, but he did not care. He had triumphed over the cruel officer. He had triumphed over the yetzer hora, evil-inclination. He had won Shabbos Kodesh.

The Steipler concluded the story, looked at his intended and asked, "Are you prepared to join me in a continuous quest of self-sacrifice for Torah and mitzvos? This is the life I plan to lead." The future rebbetzin, the mother of today's pre-eminent gaon, Horav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, replied in the

affirmative, and they became chassan and kallah.

All the women whose hearts inspired them with wisdom. (35:26)

Shlomo Hamelech says in Mishlei 1:8, "Hear, my child, the discipline of your father, and do not forsake the Torah teaching of your mother." The commentators wonder, what is the "Torah" of the mother? What is the unique lesson that the mother imparts? The Admor m'Nadverna, Shlita, cited by Horav Yitzchok Zilberstein, Shlita, explains that a father's role is to instruct his children to study Torah. He gives his children mussar, ethical lessons, and reprimands in order to keep them on the correct course of study and devotion. There is, however, another component to a child's Torah education without which a child cannot successfully climb the ladder of spiritual development: A Torah environment. The atmosphere in which a child grows - the surroundings that encompass his everyday endeavor - makes the difference in his attitude and demeanor with regard to his studies. This milieu is provided by the mother, the foundation of the home. This is the meaning of Toras imecha, the Torah of your mother. She sweetens the studies, enhances the lessons and gives excitement to their meaning. The child, in turn, loves mitzvos and seeks opportunities to serve Hashem with greater dedication and fervor.

Rav Zilberstein shares an incredible story about the enduring value of a mother's educational endeavor. A newly-married Russian immigrant was brought to him with a question: He knows that he is a Jew, but is not aware whether he is a Kohen, Levi or Yisrael. How should the rabbanim view his status? After a lengthy discussion with the man about life in Russia, Rav Zilberstein asked him if there was anything about his home life, specifically something unique that his mother did, that came to mind. Suddenly, the man's eyes twinkled as he smiled glowingly. "Yes, there was something my mother did every Erev Yom Tov," he said. "She would buy a new pair of socks for my father. It became a big thing in my house, as all the children would wait enthusiastically for my father's Yom Tov gift."

The rabbanim immediately ascertained that the immigrant was a Kohen. Since his father would Duchen, bless the congregation on the Festival, standing before them in his stocking feet, his mother, out of her love and appreciation of the mitzvah, would purchase a new pair of socks for her husband. The immigrant remembered this episode in his life, because it was a prime example of Toras imecha, his mother's Torah. Her ability to inspire him through action inculcated within him a love for the Festival. She set the tone in the home, an appreciation of Yiddishkeit, that her son remembered many years later.

The Keruvim were with wings spread upwards. (37:9)

The Keruvim resembled little children. Their wings spread out upward/Heavenward may be an analogy to a young child's aspirations for spiritual greatness. Indeed, many young children have great aspirations for distinction in Torah. To the eyes of the average observer, they appear to be innocent children, but, in reality, they are Porsei kenafaim l'maaleh, spreading their wings Heavenward. It is up to parents and educators to encourage their children's ambitions, providing them with various opportunities for spiritual advancement.

Horav Meir Shapiro, zl, the Lubliner Rosh Hayeshivah, and founder of the Daf Hayomi would relate that even as a young child, he thought about instituting the Daf Hayomi concept. Regrettably, those with whom he shared the notion viewed it as the unrealistic dream of a young child. Many years later, when that young child became the famous Lubliner Rosh Hayeshivah with the distinction that this title carried, he returned to the city of his youth and met those men who had mocked him as a youth. He reminded them, "Do you realize that your derision almost convinced me? I was about to give up on my idea and Klal Yisrael would have lost out on a wealth of Torah study."

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, cites the Chazon Ish who asserts, "Every ben Torah in our

generation may be considered as being a possible future gadol hador. Every child has the potential of achieving the apex of distinction in Torah erudition. It is up to the parents to encourage and enhance this spiritual growth."

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

Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl, derives a compelling lesson from the pikudei, accountings, of the Mishkan. A person has to make an accounting of everything that Hashem grants him: his life, his wealth, his abilities. There is a purpose in Hashem's gifts. The ways in which we use what He gives us determine whether we have fulfilled that purpose. We are granted life. Do we use it wisely? Do we use it for the right purpose? Do we take what Hashem has given us for granted, only to wake up when it is almost taken away?

How did we use the wealth which He has bestowed on us? Did we give tzedakah, charity, or did we live ostentatiously and give a few 'kopeks' to the poor? Hashem blessed us with abilities, with strengths, with acumen. How did we make use of these gifts? Did we use them to advance our knowledge of Torah, or did we employ them for trivial pursuits?

The Torah demands that one not waste even a penny of his material possessions. It is Hashem's gift, and if He did not want us to use it wisely, He would not have given it to us. The same idea applies to everything that He bestows on us. When Moshe Rabbeinu completed the Mishkan, he gave an accounting of everything that he used for its construction. One day, The Heavenly Tribunal will call upon us to give our accounting. Are we going to be prepared with the correct responses?

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

Rashi notes that the word Mishkan is stated twice. He explains that it is an allusion to the Bais HaMikdash which was nishmashkein, taken as collateral - twice, during its two destructions, for the sins of Klal Yisrael. Furthermore, it is called Mishkan Haeidus, because it serves as testimony for Klal Yisrael that Hashem overlooked the incident of the Golden Calf for them, since He rested His Shechinah among them in the Mishkan. What is Rashi telling us? Are we to view the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash as a way to collect collateral? Second, how is the Mishkan an indication that Hashem disregarded the sin of the Golden Calf?

Horav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zl, explains that if one were to become bankrupt, he would sell off those possessions that are luxuries, that he no longer needs. Those belongings that are essential, without which he cannot live, he would not sell; he would only give them up as collateral to be returned later when he has the funds to redeem them. When we take into account the gold and silver that the Jews possessed at the time that they were asked to contribute toward the Mishkan, it is noteworthy that they gave freely for the Mishkan. One would think, in light of the upcoming wars with Eretz Yisrael's thirty-one kings, they would want to save their money for a "rainy" day. Could they not have made a Mishkan of copper where the Shechinah could repose? The mere fact that they readily gave of their gold and silver to the Mishkan suggests that Klal Yisrael viewed the Mishkan as essential to their spiritual survival.

We now understand why the Bais HaMikdash was taken as collateral. The Jews were acutely aware that they must have the Bais HaMikdash in their midst. To have it removed permanently was inconceivable. It could only be taken away on a temporary basis, sort of a collateral, to be returned when we were worthy.

This is also the idea behind the vittur, overlooking, of the sin of the Golden Calf. The primary cause of the sin was that they thought Moshe Rabbeinu had perished and that they had been left bereft of their beloved leader. This overwhelming fear catalyzed the sin. When they were able to demonstrate their extraordinary trust and conviction, Hashem disregarded, overlooked, their sin. The Mishkan

attested to this fact.

On the day of the first new moon, on the first day of the month, you shall erect the Mishkan, the Ohel Moed. (40:2)

The Midrash relates that when Hashem commanded Klal Yisrael to make the Mishkan, they asked, "Will You remember the sin of the Eigel, Golden Calf?" Hashem replied, "No, I will forget that sin." They continued asking, "Will You also forget that we accepted the Torah at Har Sinai with a resounding Na'ase v'Nishma! We will do and we will listen?" Hashem answered, "No, I will remember that." The Berditchever Rebbe, zl, asks a compelling question about this Midrash. Certainly, Hashem does not forget. He remembers everything. Apparently, the concept of forgetting in relation to Hashem implies that Hashem has overlooked something by design. If this is the case, for what reason would Hashem consider "forgetting" such a momentous experience as our acceptance of the Torah with an overwhelming and determined acquiescence to perform its mandate without question and without rationale?

Rav Levi Yitzchak explains that with our fall to the nadir of depravity when we sinned with the Golden Calf, our previous acceptance of the Torah became greater and more crucial. Had we not sinned, one could venture to downplay our acceptance of the Torah by attributing it to the emunah, faith and conviction, which we inherited from our Patriarchs. It was not an indication of our own belief, but rather something that was integral to our national character. Once we sinned, however, we demonstrated retroactively that our initial response to the Torah was pure, and above all, our own sentiment. When we accepted the Torah, we did so with full faith and integrity. Regrettably, when we sinned with the Golden Calf, it was an indication of our spiritual descent.

We now understand the meaning of the Midrash. Klal Yisrael asks Hashem, "If You will forget the actual sin of the Golden Calf, will You concomitantly also forget the 'favorable' message that our malevolent actions imparted about our earlier acceptance of the Torah?" Hashem replied, "I will remember the good, but not the bad."

And Moshe assembled the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael. (35:1)

Rashi tells us that the word Vayakhel, "and (Moshe) [he] assembled", is written in the hifil, causative, to teach us that Moshe Rabbeinu did not gather the people directly. Rather, he caused them to gather themselves. What is Rashi teaching us? Certainly, he did not gather them by hand. The Satmar Rebbe, zl, explains that the objective of this assembly was unique in that Moshe sought to assemble only those who were Jews, not members of the eirev rav, mixed multitude, the creators of the eigel, Golden Calf. Moshe was not assembling people "by hand," for no specific purpose other than to make an assembly. No! Moshe sought to gather together the Jews of the same weltanschau'ung, perspective on life.

One can gather a group of people together for the purpose of having a group - or one can gather a group of people together in a manner that suggests that he is the one in charge of the group, such that his perspective guides the entire group. Moshe wanted the group to be as one: one G-d; one Torah; one leader - Moshe Rabbeinu. Moshe's words were the koach hame'achad, force/glue that was the mutual bond between them. Every assembly must have a goal in order for it to succeed. Their goal was realized, as they severed their relationship with the eirav rav and became one harmonious group.

Horav Yaakov Kaminetzky, zl, takes a somewhat similar approach. He explains that when the Torah was given to Klal Yisrael, the Jewish people had achieved an unprecedented level of achdus, unity. They were k'ish echad b'lev echad, "as one person with one heart". All their hearts beat as one. When the eigel was made, this unity was shattered. Indeed, the Talmud Yerushalmi, Sanhedrin 10:2 contends that each Shevet, tribe, had its own little eigel. Even then, they could not see eye to eye! Each

one had his own individual perspective on how to rebel against Hashem! What a sad commentary on the Jewish People, suggesting that we have not changed much today. Every group that is not Torah-oriented has its own little eagal. Moshe Rabbeinu had to bring the people together first, under one banner with one outlook. He first had to make a vayakahel, and assemble the people together to give them one goal and one purpose. Then he could instruct them in the next step: building a Sanctuary.

But the seventh day... shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for Hashem. (35:2)

The various commands and admonishments concerning Shabbos Kodesh are reiterated in the Torah a number of times. This clearly indicates the overriding significance of Shabbos to Klal Yisrael. In the beginning of our parsha, as Moshe Rabbeinu assembles Klal Yisrael to instruct them about the building of the Mishkan, he prefaces his talk with a reminder about Kedushas Shabbos, the sanctity of the seventh day. Chazal derive from here that the building of the Mishkan does not supercede the mitzvah of Shabbos. Interestingly, the avodas ha'korban, sacrificial service, was performed on Shabbos. The holy day was "set aside" for the holy sacrifices. Apparently, the building of the Mishkan, which was only a hechsher - preparation, - for the actual mitzvah of offering korbanos, does not override the mitzvah.

The fact that the Torah found it necessary to imply that the building of the Mishkan does not countermand Shabbos, indicates that there is a logical assumption for building the Mishkan, even on Shabbos. After all, we have a halachic axiom, Aseih docheh Lo Saaseh, "a positive commandment prevails over a negative commandment". To build the Mishkan is a positive dictate which should dominate over the negative canon of Shabbos.

The Abarbanel explains that by giving precedence to the positive/active mitzvah of building the Mishkan over the negative commandment, one might be led to believe that enterprise, positive activity, is a greater indication of one's belief in Hashem than passively withholding oneself from transgression. This is not true. While it was crucial that Klal Yisrael build the Mishkan, it did not give them license to eliminate Shabbos. While this demonstrates the significance of Shabbos, it still does not explain why the building of the Mishkan did not eclipse Shabbos. Furthermore, why should positive activity not surpass the restraint that is part and parcel of a negative command?

Horav Moshe Reis, Shlita, suggests that a deeper aspect to Shabbos is often ignored. The Torah in Parashas Ki Sisa (31:14) sums up its characterization of Shabbos with the words, Kodesh he lechem, "For it is holy to you." To the one who views Shabbos superficially, it is nothing more than an inert mitzvah which demands of us that we desist from labor on Shabbos. This does not, however, accurately characterize Shabbos. Perhaps its body is the various constraints placed upon the Jews, but its soul is something much more profound. The essence of Shabbos is its kedushah, sanctity. Thus, the various prohibitions that are involved in the mitzvah of Shabbos reflect kedushas Shabbos, its hallowedness. This idea is reiterated in our parsha when the Torah tells us that Shabbos "shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for Hashem." Sanctity demands the prohibition of mundane activity, because the day belongs to Hashem, Who has consecrated it. Just as there is a sanctuary which is erected in the holiest place, so too, is there a sanctuary for time. Shabbos is our sanctuary of time - the seventh day, designated by Hashem as the holiest day for Him. The kedushah of the Sanctuary obligates one to maintain a high personal level of holiness and purity. Likewise, the sanctuary of time requires one to act appropriately.

Shabbos attests to the creation of the world. It is a positive reinforcement that on the Seventh Day Hashem rested from Creation. It is a mitzvah that serves as testimony to Hashem's creation of the world, and, as such, it is a sanctuary of time, which cannot be overridden by the mitzvah of building the Mishkan. The command to erect a sanctuary in space does not take precedence over the observance of the sanctuary in time.

We suggest another aspect of Shabbos that precludes it from being superceded by the building of the Mishkan. We think of Shabbos as a body of laws which prohibit various forms of labor on the seventh day. While it is true that these labors are prohibited, it is not a negative aspect of Shabbos. On the contrary, it is specifically these prohibited labors that indicate to us the actual character of the mitzvah of Shabbos. Shabbos is an experience which is spiritual in nature. It is elevated above what the human being can physically perceive and absorb. Thus, he must elevate himself above the physical dimension which holds him captive - and cling to Hashem. Shabbos is a day when the Jew transcends the physical and enters into the spiritual realm.

It is regarding this concept that the Zohar HaKadosh writes that "Shabbos is the day of the neshamah, soul." One, therefore, prepares himself prior to Shabbos, divesting himself of the shackles of the physical dimension as he anticipates entering into the spiritual realm. The prohibitions of Shabbos are more than merely a passive form of observance. They are actually a positive aspect of Shabbos, for they help divest the person of his physical encumbrances.

We now understand why one may not construct the Mishkan on Shabbos. By transgressing the "negative" commandments that enhance the Shabbos, one destroys the character of the mitzvah and undermines its spiritual aspect. Without the spiritual qualities of Shabbos, it becomes just another day of the week.

Everyone whose heart motivates him shall bring it. (35:5)

Sincerity is the key word when it comes to contributing to a Torah cause. The amount that one gives is not important. Rather, it is the manner in which one gives: with what attitude, with what sensitivity, with what feeling. Hashem does not need our contributions. What is important to Him is the contributor's inner desire to elevate and coalesce himself with the Almighty. There are people with small hearts who give big checks. The manner in which - and to whom - they give attests to this. There are also those whose checks are much less significant, but they manage to give with a big heart. They will help the "little guy" whose only recognition will be a warm smile, a bowed head and a profound "thank you." These are the "nediv lev's," who open their hearts as well as their wallets.

I recently came across a meaningful story in Rabbi Paysach Krohn's latest publication. The story is compelling, as is Rabbi Krohn's postscript - to which I would like to supplement my own personal comment as well. Reb Reuven Mendlowitz, the brother of Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, zl, had a grocery store in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. While we may call it a grocery store, some of those little stores maintained a standard of kedushah, holiness, that would parallel some yeshivos. On the day of Reb Shraga Feivel's levayah, funeral, the streets of Williamsburg were packed, as thousands of people assembled in Mesivta Torah Vodaath to pay a last tribute to the man who shaped the map of Torah in America. On his way to his brother's funeral, Reb Reuven stopped suddenly and entered a small grocery store along the way.

The people accompanying Reb Reuven were slightly taken aback at this diversion. What could be so important that would take precedence over the levayah? Out of respect for Reb Reuven's piety no one said anything. Yet, it continued to bother them. During the shivah, seven-day mourning period, one of the people summoned the courage to ask Reb Reuven what it was that was so important that day.

Reb Reuven's answer teaches us a lesson in sensitivity and charity. It seems there was a very poor man who daily came to Reb Reuven's grocery to "purchase" bread and milk for his family. Knowing that the man had no money, Reb Reuven never charged him for those necessities. To preserve his dignity, however, he would mark the amount due in a ledger - which both of them knew would probably never be cleared. It was a silent agreement between them. He gave, and he took, and that was the end of it.

"During shivah my store would be closed," Reb Reuven explained, "and this man will have to go to another grocery to get his daily bread and milk. I wanted to make sure that the grocer would not charge my friend, so I went in to assure him that I would personally cover the cost." Incredible! Thoughtfulness, sensitivity and *mentlichkeit*: all embodied in one person. Rabbi Krohn adds, "If that is what the grocers of that generation were like, can we imagine what the *gedolei Yisrael*, the Torah leaders, were like?" I would like to add that whatever the grocers were, they attained such heights because they paralleled their *gedolim*. When the Torah leaders are extraordinary, the common man follows suit.

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)

The pasuk begins by pointing out how every man and every woman brought his/her offerings to the Mishkan. Why, then, does it seemingly reiterate its previous statement by saying, "The Bnei Yisrael brought a free-willed offering to Hashem"? Horav Mordechai Rogov, zl, explains that those who give of themselves and their possessions possess a pure and benevolent spirit of generosity which was imbued in them by those who educated them. *Chesed*, kindness, is taught. It is infused in a person by his *rebbeim*, teachers, who, along with the scholarly knowledge which they impart, also inculcate their students with ethics and responsibility to reach out with loving-kindness to their fellow Jew.

David Hamelech says in *Sefer Tehillim* 92:14, "Those who are planted in the house of Hashem will flower in the courtyards of our G-d." It is in the *yeshivos* and Torah institutions which these individuals attended that they were taught the meaning of *chesed*. When a person has developed deep roots while he is still in the *yeshivah*, he will flourish further when he leaves for the courtyards, when he is involved in commerce in the marketplace, when he interacts in the public arena.

Likewise, as the courtyard is a prelude house, a vestibule that accesses entry into the home, these individuals view their secular/mundane endeavors as being close extensions of the *bais hamedrash*, opportunities for applying the Torah values imparted to them in the *yeshivah*. It is through these endeavors that their *avodas Hashem*, service to G-d, flourishes, as they contribute "back" to support the Torah institutions.

Our pasuk tells us of the men and women who came forward wholeheartedly to contribute towards the building of the Mishkan. What inspired them to seize this wonderful opportunity and participate with such enthusiasm? It was that they had been raised in an environment that taught an appreciation of *chesed*, where it was common that "Bnei Yisrael brought a free-willed offering for Hashem." The ones who had previously responded to support these institutions, in which educating their charges with a sense of responsibility and generosity for the Jewish People, provided *Klal Yisrael* with men and women of benevolence, who, in turn, then devoted themselves to the construction of the Mishkan. It has to start somewhere. The Torah recognizes the source.

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

The parsha begins with a detailed listing of the amounts of the various metals used for the Mishkan. Even though Moshe Rabbeinu himself deposited the metals under the supervision of Betzalel, both individuals whose integrity was beyond dispute, Moshe, nonetheless, made a public reckoning of all of the proceeds and donations. Leaders must be above reproach, and Moshe refused to take a chance by relying on assumptions. The people must be absolutely certain. Only a great man cares about every little detail in regard to other people's money. Leaders, as well as each individual, must keep an accounting of the funds that pass through their hands. Indeed, the *Kav Hayashar* writes that this is a sign of true *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven.

A man once informed the Chazan Ish that his daughter became engaged to a person who was an

outstanding Torah scholar and yarei Shomayim. The Chazon Ish replied, "You are probably correct in stating that he is an outstanding scholar. This is something that you can either inquire about from people or you can speak with him yourself in learning. How do you know, however, that he is G-d-fearing? Have you had financial dealings with him?"

Horav Moshe Aharon Stern, zl, was known for taking meticulous care of other people's money. He was especially careful not to benefit himself from his yeshivah. When one of his sons became engaged, one of the yeshivah's supporters offered him a substantial loan. He politely refused, explaining that if he accepted it, the potential lender might think, "Rav Moshe Aharon represents the yeshivah. I have already given him a loan, so why should I extend myself further and give the yeshivah money?" He refused to be party to any situation in which the yeshivah might sustain a financial loss because of him.

Horav Yosef Yoizel Horowitz, zl, the Alter m'Novardok once stayed at an inn during one of his many travels on behalf of the yeshivah. One of his fellow lodgers was a distinguished Jew from Moscow. It was Erev Shabbos, and the Alter was preparing for Shabbos. He asked the other gentleman if he could borrow a clothes brush to clean his suit for Shabbos. When the Alter went to return the brush, the man had already left for shul. After Shabbos was over and the Alter had returned from shul, he immediately sought out the man, only to be told that he had already left.

The Alter was disconcerted. What should he do? He was in possession of an article that belonged to someone else. How could he return it? There were millions of people living in Moscow. To find one would be like searching for a needle in the proverbial haystack. In hopes of finding someone who might know the elusive owner of the brush, the Alter carried the brush with him wherever he went. Maybe he would become lucky and meet someone who knew someone who knew the owner of the brush. Regrettably, his efforts proved to be in vain.

It was seven years later, and the Alter was riding on a train - the brush still with him. During the course of the trip, he and his seatmate engaged in conversation. The Alter asked the man from where he hailed. When the man replied that he lived in Moscow, the Alter excitedly asked him whether he knew the owner of the brush. To the Alter's great joy and relief, the person not only knew the individual, but he was even his close neighbor. The Alter immediately explained his predicament regarding the brush and asked him to return it.

Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl, once went to someone's house for a bar-mitzvah Kiddush after Shabbos morning davening. He arrived shortly after the celebration had commenced, so that he had to make his own Kiddush. It was not Rav Elya's nature to tarry long at these affairs. It was, therefore, inexplicable that he remained until the end of the Kiddush, which had lasted some time. After all of the guests had departed, Rav Elya asked to speak to the mother of the bar-mitzvah boy. "I would like to beg your forgiveness," he began. "My hands trembled as I made Kiddush, causing some wine to spill onto the tablecloth." He then added that in situations such as this, he would ask forgiveness not only for himself, but for all of the guests. "When we first arrived at your home, the tablecloth was sparkling clean and laid out so beautifully. Now it is covered with crumbs and spills. This did not have to occur, since it is quite possible to take food without causing a mess. Please forgive me, along with everyone else, for the trouble we have caused you."

One might think that the above narratives are unique episodes in the lives of people who were above and beyond our perception. While this might be true, we must understand that they were only acting in accordance with halachah. Their sensitivity towards other human beings, as well as their sense of responsibility to carry out the ethical dictates that are part and parcel of halachah, was exemplary. That is why they were acclaimed as Torah giants.

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

The word Mishkan is mentioned twice. Why? Rashi explains that the word Mishkan - which is spelled mem, shin, kof, nun - can also be read as mashkon, which means collateral. This alludes to the Bais Hamikdash which was twice taken from us as collateral. The sins of Klal Yisrael should have brought about their destruction. Instead, Hashem took out His wrath on the wood and stones of the Bais Hamikdash. They were Klal Yisrael's collateral. A young student once asked HoRav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zl, the following question, "If the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash parallels the taking of collateral for Klal Yisrael's sins, why does Hashem not return the pledge to us, especially since we yearn and long for it so much?" Rav Yosef Chaim gave a penetrating response: "Halachah teaches us that the lender must return the security if the borrower is poor and in need of said object. For instance, if the collateral is a pillow or blanket, which the borrower needs in order to sleep, the lender must return it every night. If, however, the poor man has another pillow or blanket, it is not incumbent upon the lender to return the security.

"Do you want to know why Hashem has not returned the collateral? Why, after all these years of suffering and exile, do we still wait for that security? It is because most Jews are perfectly content with the lifestyle they have adopted in exile. They are wealthy, dignified, and comfortable. They seem to lack nothing. They seem quite content with their "exile"; they do not manifest a sense of urgency, a feeling that something is missing from their lives. Thus, Hashem is not obligated to return the Bais Hamikdash. We are not poor. We do not seem to be lacking anything."

A similar sentiment is expressed by the Sh'lah Hakadosh when he writes, "My heart aches within me, when I see that Jews build beautiful homes for themselves, like palaces of princes, making permanent, long-lasting dwellings for themselves. This gives the impression that they have a lack of appreciation and expectation for our Messianic redemption."

One can imagine what the Sh'lah would say if he were alive today. If he wrote then that there was a "lack of appreciation and expectation," today he might write, "They do not want Moshiach to come, because it would hamper their lifestyle."

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

Lecha Hashem ha'gedulah, "Yours, Hashem, is the greatness, the strength, the splendor, the triumph, and the glory, even everything in Heaven and earth." (Divrei HaYamim I, 29:3). In Midrash Tanchuma, Chazal suggest that this pasuk - which we recite daily in the Vayivarech David prayer - alludes to the fact that the building of the Mishkan had a profound relationship with the creation of Heaven and earth. Horav Nissan Alpert, zl, renders a penetrating interpretation of this Midrash, which we take the liberty of citing.

On the First Day of Creation, Hashem created Shomayim va'aretz, "Heaven and earth." This creation corresponds with the Yerios haMishkan, "Curtains of the Mishkan", as it is written, Noteh Shomayim kayeriah, "stretching out the Heavens like a curtain." (Tehillim 104:2) The Mishkan per se was comprised of ten Yerios, Curtains. Interestingly, the term Mishkan is given specifically to the Curtains. Rav Alpert explains that the ten Curtains which served as a roof for the Mishkan symbolize the creation of Heaven. This teaches us that the purpose and function of the Mishkan is to bring heaven down to earth. By gazing up at the Yerios, we reflect upon our obligation to look Heavenward for Divine assistance.

The Keruvim, facing each other with their wings spread upward, were an integral part of the Kapores, Cover of the Aron HaKodesh, Holy Ark. This also demonstrated the intrinsic relationship between Heaven and earth. Moreover, Hashem's unity encompasses everything that exists, and every creation that exists on earth has its corresponding entity in Heaven. In truth, every physical entity has a spiritual aspect within it. There are spiritual powers and forces that exist within the physical realm. It is up to man to seek to uncover these entities.

On the Second Day, Hashem created the rokiah, sky, to serve as a partition between the Heavenly waters and the earthly waters. Likewise, the Paroches, Curtain, divided the area that was Kadosh, Holy, and that which was Kodshei Kodoshim, the Holy of Holies. Hashem created His world with boundaries and parameters. He separated between places, nations, people, men and women, Jew and gentile. The earth belongs to Hashem, and He elevated Eretz Yisrael, distinguishing it from the world. There is Holy and there is the "Holy of Holies", the Paroches, which serves as the partition between the two. One is not to trespass beyond the line of demarcation that has been delineated by Hashem.

On the Third Day of Creation, Hashem said, "Let the waters beneath the Heaven be gathered into one area, and let dry land appear." The oceans, lakes and rivers came into being. The creation of "water" coincided with the construction of the Kiyor, Laver, from which the Kohanim would be metaher, cleanse/purify themselves. Water has the power to purify because it is a part of the Heavens which was untouched by man. The rivers and lakes constrain man's ability to vanquish. It prevents him from passing further. Water indicates to man that he is only human. He has his limitations which encumber him from going wherever he pleases. Water represents man's weakness. It is for this reason that the Kohanim would wash their hands and feet from the Kiyor prior to entering the Sanctuary to perform their service. Hands and feet are the active organs of the body which represent movement. Water connotes the limitations of that movement. Hence, the Kohanim washed their hands and feet in water from the Kiyor, symbolizing the restraint that is imposed upon man.

Hashem placed the great luminaries in the sky on the Fourth Day. The golden Menorah, which illuminates the Mishkan, whose light drives away the darkness, refers to the Torah, which lights up a path for the Jew with its chochmas haTorah, wisdom derived from the Torah.

Hashem created fowl on the Fifth Day. Coinciding with this are the Keruvim, whose wings spread upward. There is a spiritual aspect to fowl, represented by their ability to soar upward. Perhaps this is why a fowl does not become tamei, spiritually contaminated, except from contact with the neveilah, carcass of a dead fowl, which is metamei only in the bais habeliyah, place where one swallows. It is only through human consumption, when the fowl becomes a part of man - who is an artzi, earth-bound and cannot ascend on his own from his stationery perch on earth - that the fowl becomes tamei.

On Yom ha'Shishi, the Sixth Day, Hashem created man. In the Mishkan, the Kohen Gadol, the man at his spiritual zenith, was designated to serve Hashem.

On the Seventh Day, the Torah writes, Vayechulu, "and Hashem completed His Creation". Regarding the Mishkan, the Torah says, Vatechal kol avodas haMishkan, "All the work was completed." (Shemos 39:32) The Seventh Day introduced a new form of Creation: rest and kedushah, holiness. The koach ha'perishah, ability to desist, to say "enough", is in itself a powerful force. To complete a project in accordance with the exact instructions, no more and no less than the given word, in exact accordance with Hashem's command - all this is reflected in the completion of the Mishkan. There is sanctity in doing something the right way, exactly according to instructions. Moshe Rabbeinu followed Hashem's command to the letter; Betzalel constructed the Mishkan "as Hashem commanded Moshe" - exactly - according to the guidelines given to him by his rebbe, who heard it from Hashem. This is kedushah. It was all according to what Hashem wanted. To listen - to halt one's work when he is told to do so is to sanctify his endeavor, because he does not act on his own - he listens to Hashem.

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

The Yismach Yisrael renders this pasuk homiletically. One who is a baal melachah - who works for a living, who has a trade or profession - and, consequently, cannot spend the six "working days" engrossed in Torah study should work six days. On Shabbos, however, he should dedicate the entire

period for Torah study and holy endeavor. His work week is truly a work week. On Shabbos, he must compensate for the time that he could not devote to learning during the week. The commentators write that such a person who waits a whole week for Shabbos, who yearns for the moment when he will be able to sanctify his endeavor, not only consecrates the Shabbos; but also elevates his mundane work week and sanctifies it. Indeed, Hashem considers it as if he had studied Torah all week. There is a reverse side to this idea. When an individual has the time to study Torah, but does not, he is also punished for the times that he did not study even when he legitimately had no time. Since he has indicated that "time" is not the issue, it no longer plays a factor in protecting him from punishment. One who wastes his Shabbos demonstrates that he attributes little value to his weekday.

But the seventh day shall be holy for you as a Shabbos of Shabboson to Hashem. (35:2)

Horav Avigdor Miller, z.l., teaches us that Hashem has three "sanctuaries", and their order of significance is revealed in this parsha. First and foremost is the Jew, the ben Yisrael, who takes precedence over the other two. Second is the Shabbos, which overrides even the building of the Mishkan. Last is the Mishkan itself, Hashem's abode in this world. Awareness of the Almighty, cognizance of His Presence among us as achieved by the sanctuary of Shabbos, is even greater than the awareness which emanates from the Mishkan. This, of course, is only if the Shabbos is properly revered, and its message utilized.

The expression, Shabbos Shabboson, means cessation of cessations. The focus of Shabbos, its significance to us, is cessation from work, as reflected by Hashem's resting from Creation. In this manner, we remember Creation. We understand that Hashem rested to allow man to recognize - and thereby become aware of - the Almighty. This sets the stage for man to choose by his own free will between right and wrong, between good and evil.

Klal Yisrael utilizes the Shabbos as an opportunity to gain a deeper awareness that nothing functions by itself. As Hashem originally created everything into existence, so does He continue to will everything and only by His will is anything maintained. If properly studied, this lesson of Shabbos is even more fundamental than the lessons imparted by the Mishkan. Rav Miller derives the superiority of the Shabbos over the Mishkan from the fact that one who does labor on Shabbos - even if it is for the construction of the Mishkan - is to be put to death. This represents a clear declaration of the preeminence of Shabbos over the Mishkan. Even more astonishing is the superiority of the sanctuary of the individual Jewish person. It is mandatory to desecrate Shabbos if a human life is in danger, regardless whether the human is a slave, or one whose mind does not function, or even a Jew who is terminally ill and destined to die shortly as a result of a terminal illness. Yet, to prevent the Sanctuary from burning down, it is absolutely forbidden to perform the most simple act of forbidden labor on Shabbos. Hence, we see how the sanctuaries of the Mishkan and Shabbos are secondary to Hashem's ultimate sanctuary: the Jewish person.

Moshe said to the entire assembly of the Bnei Yisrael... This is the word that Hashem has commanded. (35:4)

With the above pasuk, a parsha detailing Hashem's instructions for the construction of the Mishkan and its Keilim, appurtenances, begins. Parashas Vayakhel is followed by Parashas Pekudei which recounts in full detail the successful completion of Hashem's command. In most years, these two parshios are read together on Shabbos. While there are a number of new issues brought up in these parshios, for the most part they are a repetition of Parshios Terumah and Tetzaveh. Nothing in the Torah is unimportant, and no letter is unnecessary. We derive a lesson from everything in the Torah. What lesson is imparted by the seeming redundancy of these parshios?

Horav Avraham Pam, z.l., cited in "The Pleasant Way", an adaptation of his commentary on the parsha, posits that a powerful lesson can be derived from this repetition. Indeed, there is a basic

difference between Parshios Terumah/Tetzaveh and Vayakhel/Pekudei. In the former, the Torah uses the word "v'asisa," "and you shall do," while in the latter, the Torah uses the word "vayaas," "and he did", throughout the parshios to denote the completion of the task that was given to him. The chidush, novelty, about this is that what was planned achieved fruition. Simply put, all too often people talk up a storm about what they plan to do. Meanwhile, the rhetoric flows, while the deeds remain dreams which never become reality. The Torah teaches us that everything Moshe and Klal Yisrael were asked to do, they did. Can we say the same?

Betzalel, son of Uri, son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah, did everything that Hashem commanded Moshe. (38:22)

It seems clear from the text that it was Betzalel who made the Mishkan. Addressing Hashem's choice of Betzalel as the architect of the Mishkan, Chazal wonder why the Torah delineates his pedigree back to his grandfather, Chur. They explain that it was Chur's mesiras nefesh, devotion to Hashem to the point of self-sacrifice, that engendered the choice of Betzalel as the builder of the Mishkan. Chur was killed when he stood up to those who sought to build an idol. Hashem responded to this tragedy saying, "By your life, I will pay you back." The compensation was Betzalel.

There are a number of lessons to be derived herein. Horav Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita, observes that when one acts with mesiras nefesh, Hashem owes him. It is as if Hashem becomes a baal chov, debtor, to this person. An act of mesiras nefesh creates a debt that demands compensation. Betzalel was Chur's reimbursement.

Let us return to our opening statement. Did Betzalel build the Mishkan? So it seems. The pasuk in Tehillim 30:1 states: "A Psalm, a song for the inauguration of the Temple, by David." Chazal query, "Did David build the Bais HaMikdash? No! It was Shlomo HaMelech who built it. It must be that since David was moser nefesh, sacrificed himself, to build it, it was considered as if he were its builder." While this may be a wonderful tribute to David HaMelech, he nonetheless was not the actual builder of the Mishkan. The psalm should have read, "A Psalm; a song to the mesiras nefesh, by David." Mesiras nefesh - yes - but building the Bais HaMikdash - it was not so.

Horav Ezrachi derives from here that the Bais HaMikdash is not built with stones and mortar. It is built with mesiras nefesh, true devotion. An edifice of this holy nature does not have viability if it is made only of physical materials. It needs the dedication and devotion only mesiras nefesh can produce. The Psalmist uses the words, "Chanukas Habayis," "inauguration of the Temple," because it described exactly what David had done. His mesiras nefesh "built" the Bais HaMikdash.

We may now suggest that while it "seems" that Betzalel built the Mishkan, we cannot ignore the fact that Chur's mesiras nefesh catalyzed it. In addition, the idea that mesiras nefesh gives viability to an edifice applies not only to the Mishkan/Bais HaMikdash, but equally to any Torah institution. Material assets do not build Torah institutions. Blood, sweat, tears and mesiras nefesh build it.

I once heard this thought expressed by my revered rebbe, Horav Chaim Mordechai Katz, z.l.. He cited the Mishnah at the end of Pirkei Avos, which relates the famous story of Rabbi Yossi ben Kisma. He was once approached by a gentleman and questioned in regard to his origin. Rabbi Yossi responded that he came from a large city that was home to many great Torah scholars. The man immediately asked Rabbi Yossi if he would leave his home and come to dwell in his town. Rabbi Yossi responded that even if he would be given a vast amount of money, he would only live in a city that was a makom, place, of Torah. The obvious question is: Why not import scholars to the community by bringing in a yeshivah, starting a kollel and hiring rabbonim? If money is no object, then purchase a makom Torah!

The Rosh HaYeshivah explained that money does not build a makom Torah. It does definitely

help. A Torah community, however, is built with blood, sweat and tears. This type of determination and resolve was the foundation of the revitalization of Torah study following World War II. Yeshivos were not built with money; because there was very little money. It was the dedication and hard work of a few good men and women that planted the seeds for the spiritual climate which we enjoy today.

With him (Betzalel) was Oholiav ben Achsimach, of the tribe of Dan. (38:23)

Parashas Pekudei summarizes the building of the Mishkan and the making of the Priestly vestments under the direction of Betzalel and his "partners." The two primary architects were Betzalel and Oholiav. The Midrash notes that the origins of these two individuals were disparate - by design. Betzalel descended from Shevet Yehudah, the tribe of monarchy, dignity and power. Oholiav was a descendent of Shevet Dan, the lowliest of the tribes. In a number of places, the Torah describes Betzalel's genius and unusual spiritual distinction. He was endowed with a G-dly spirit, wisdom and insight. He possessed a degree of wisdom similar to that with which Hashem created the world. Indeed, Betzalel was Divinely inspired to perform the yeoman's task of supervising the building of an abode for Hashem's Presence in this world.

The stage was set, and everything was ready for Betzalel to assume this august position. There was one component that was not yet in place. Betzalel needed a partner. This was not due to his inability to supervise the activity alone. Rather, it was necessary that Betzalel take a specific partner, one who descended from a lineage totally different from his. Oholiav, whose pedigree paled in comparison to that of Betzalel, would be the perfect colleague for Betzalel. What is the reason for this?

Horav Chaim Zaitchik, z.l., explains that the litmus test for successful leadership is one's ability to lead despite having an accomplice working together with him. Some people have difficulty working with others. They want the acclaim for themselves alone. This is especially true if one is relegated to share in the limelight with an individual from an inferior lineage. Regrettably, for some, this might be demeaning. Perhaps, this is why they are weak leaders. There are individuals who are eminently capable, strong and resolute, willing to lead and assume responsibility, even to the point of self-sacrifice. There is one criterion however, which they demand they must do it alone. They neither request, nor desire, any assistance. This is a sign of a weak, insecure person, one who will, not really succeed in the long run.

Betzalel symbolized true leadership. He did not need the "mizrach vont," eastern wall, or any other accolades. There are leaders who are extremely dedicated to a given goal. They give up so much of themselves. There is one condition, however, that must be met: they have to be in charge; they have to get the credit. "It is either ME or nothing" is often the clarion call of individuals who are so wrapped up in themselves that it impedes their ability to see beyond their immediate perimeter. Not so Betzalel. He was happy to take on an associate, to work with another gifted individual, regardless of his position or ancestry. Betzalel set the standard for all future leaders. If only this standard would be followed, there might be room for more leaders.

Every wise-hearted among you shall come and make everything that Hashem commanded. (35:10)

Why did Moshe Rabbeinu not simply say, "All of the wise-hearted among you shall come and construct the Mishkan? Would it not have been more correct to identify what they were doing, building the Mishkan, rather than just telling them to follow Hashem's command? Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl, makes a profound inference. Man only builds the structure, Hashem actually makes it into a Mishkan/ Mikdash when His Shechinah reposes there. All we can do is follow Hashem's dictate, adhering to His command and instruction. Only then can we aspire for the Shechinah to rest there, thereby transforming this edifice into a Mishkan. Any *davar shebikedushah*, holy endeavor, is consecrated by Hashem after

we put in the proper and correct kavanos, intentions. By extension, this applies to any holy edifice. The building becomes holy when Hashem sanctifies it on a level commensurate with our ability to act in the manner which He commanded us. It is a two-way street; we must first do our part.

See Hashem has proclaimed by name, Betzalel ben Uri, ben Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah. (35:30) Every time the Torah details Betzalel's pedigree, it goes back two generations to his grandfather, Chur. Apparently, Chur played an important role in molding Betzalel's perspective on life. Indeed, it was probably because he had descended from Chur that Betzalel was selected to build the Mishkan. Only a very special individual, one whose devotion to Hashem had been exemplary, would undertake this unprecedented endeavor. Chur was the individual who challenged the erev rav, mixed multitude, when they rebelled against Hashem to build the Golden-Calf. He was killed for his devotion. His spirit of mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice, remained alive in his family. His grandson was prepared to be moser nefesh, to build the Mishkan that would atone for the sin of the Golden-Calf. That incident caused his grandfather's death. Hashem needed a person whose devotion to Him was so great that it would override even his own personal feelings. This was Chur's zechus, merit; it was his reward. His grandson would be the architect of the holy Mishkan.

In Shemos 34:7, The Torah tells us, "Notzer chesed l'alafim," "(Hashem) preserves deeds of kindness for thousands of generations." Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl, notes that word "notzer" also means "creates" or "causes to blossom." Thus, the expression "notzer chesed" can be a reference to Hashem's benevolence. He allows an act of chesed which we perform to become a seed of chesed that germinates, grows and blossoms, bringing forth salvation at a later time. Our acts of kindness do not comprise an isolated entity that ends when they are completed. No, at times they catalyze deliverance and happiness for the individual who has performed the act of kindness. Situations also occur in which the reward is manifest at a later time, even generations later, for a descendant. This is what happened with Chur. He acted. His grandson shared in the reward. The seed of mesiras nefesh was planted. It sprouted and blossomed in a grandson who was sanctified by Hashem's Name.

I recently heard an intriguing story from Rabbi Dovid Ordman of Eretz Yisrael. I will attempt to capture its essence on paper. A number of years ago, the Israeli government airlifted thousands of Falashan Jews from Ethiopia in a daring rescue called Operation Solomon. One day the Jews were in Ethiopia, starving and living under terrible conditions. The next day they were welcomed into Eretz Yisrael - free at last. Much planning and political manipulation was involved in carrying out this incredible rescue. It did not just happen overnight. The behind-the-scenes maneuvering involved the United States State Department, the Israeli Government, and the Central Intelligence Agency. Apparently, before the Falashan Jews could be released, it was necessary for the United States, who was "brokering" this rescue, to provide two things: Thirty-five million dollars, and an apology tendered by the President of the United States to the Ethiopian dictator.

The money seemed to have been the minor issue. An apology was not that simple to obtain, nor was it considered "diplomatically correct." The President convened a meeting, which was attended by his thirteen closest advisors. They were asked to vote on the question. Their vote would determine if these thousands of Falashan Jews would live or die. The votes were cast: six for and six against. One vote remained to be cast, that of a prominent African American, a distinguished member of the intelligence community. Everyone looked at him to hear his opinion on the tie-breaking vote. He stood up and addressed the group: "Gentlemen, I am about to cast my vote, but, before I do so, I would like to relate to you a story that occurred some thirty-five years ago, which has critical bearing on my vote."

"One hot, summer night in the Harlem section of New York, a large fire broke out in a tenement house. The fire raged on as the people did everything to escape. The fire fighters did everything in their power to contain the blaze, but it was too late, the fire was out of control. They were able to rescue the tenants - or at least they thought they had, until they looked up and saw three young children on the

second floor screaming from the window: 'Help! Help! Save Us! Please,' they screamed, hysterically. The entire building was engulfed in flames. No one would or could go forward to save them. Suddenly, as if from nowhere, a young man appeared. Ignoring everyone's warnings, he ran into the building. A few minutes later, he came out carrying the three little children.

"In the meantime, the children's father, who had been away, returned to see the awesome sight of his three babies being carried out of a burning building by a young man. Understandably, everyone went over to the hero to praise and thank him for his selfless act of heroism. 'It was nothing,' he said, 'I was only performing a "mitzwah." He kept on repeating this phrase, 'I was only performing a mitzwah,' which, of course, no one understood.

"I, too," continued the advisor, did not understand what a mitzwah was until now. You see, I was one of those three children, and the young man that rescued us was an Ethiopian Jew. I know that a mitzwah is a good deed. I want to repay my rescuer's people; I also want to perform a "mitzwah." I vote that Operation Solomon be put into action."

An act of chesed performed by one individual many years earlier had planted a seed that sprouted many years later, bringing about salvation for thousands.

Moshe assembled the entire assembly of the Bnei Yisrael. (35:1)

A day earlier, on Yom Kippur, Moshe descended from Har Sinai with the second set of Luchos. He assembled all the people to tell them, says Horav Moshe, zl, m'Kubrin, that one must maintain friendship with his fellowman all year - not only on Yom Kippur. The quest for repentance and forgiveness should continue on the day after Yom Kippur also.

All of Klal Yisrael were assembled to hear about the importance of Shabbos. Moshe emphasized that this unique gift was given to everyone. It is not the individual possession of any group or segment of our People. We are all adjured to observe its laws.

~~~~~  
And every wise-hearted man. (36:1)

Horav Aharon, zl, m'Karlin was wont to say; Wisdom without heart, chochmah without lev, is meaningless and futile.

~~~~~  
But the work has been enough...and there was extra. (36:7)

When they collected for the Mishkan, a surplus accumulated. When they "contributed" for the Golden-Calf however, the result was far from abundant. There is no mention that excess gold was left over. Daas Chachamim explains that concerning the Mishkan, Moshe was the sole gabbai, collector. Hence, nothing was wasted; nothing was lost in the shuffle. In contrast, many "machers," movers and shakers, were involved in building the Golden-Calf. When there are so many askanim, people involved, a surplus rarely occurs.

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

The accounting of how the various donated materials were used for the Mishkan takes up a significant place in our parsha. Every detail, every amount, is reckoned and accounted for. Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl, feels that the concept of a reckoning applies equally to every aspect of our lives at every moment of our existence. Just as the artisans were to account for their use of every ounce of material in their possession, so, too, must we be able to give an accounting for the wonderful "materials" and bounty that Hashem has given us.

If we think about it, this idea has a serious implication. Hashem gives us time. Do we spend our time wisely? Do we devote the days and years that have been allotted to us for Torah study, its support and mitzvah performance, or do we allow it to fritter away on frivolities? We are blessed with a plethora of material largesse. Not only will we be questioned if we used our money for tzedakah, charity, and other forms of helping people, we will also be asked if we were careful to use the money prudently and productively for these purposes. Indeed, even in giving tzedakah there are priorities.

We think that Hashem's gifts to us are ours to do with as we please. This is a gross error. There are folios of laws detailing the proper use of property. How we use what is "ours" is determined by the Torah. Likewise, each of us is born with abilities and talents. We will have to give a tally of how we utilized these G-d-given gifts. We must remember that Hashem placed us on this world for a purpose.

Not using His gifts defies that purpose in a manner similar to using them inappropriately.

Betzalel made all that Hashem had commanded Moshe. (38:22)

Rashi cites an interesting dialogue that took place between Moshe Rabbeinu and Betzalel. Moshe had instructed Betzalel to fashion the Aron Hakodesh and then make the Mishkan. Betzalel questioned the sequence, "Should one first make the furniture and then construct the edifice which will contain them?" Moshe responded, "Your name, Betzalel, means b'tzel Kel, in the shadow of G-d. Surely, you must have been standing in the shadow of G-d." The Commentators perceive Moshe's response to mean that Betzalel grasped Hashem's command accurately. This would imply that Moshe Rabbeinu who was surely greater in perception than Betzalel did not completely understand Hashem's command. This is difficult to accept. Moreover, if Betzalel's name denotes the clarity and depth of his understanding of Hashem's Divine wish, his name should have been Uriel, which means one who is illuminated, rather than one who stands in the shadows.

The Sokolever Rebbe, zl, takes a somewhat different approach towards interpreting this dialogue. Moshe felt that the Aron took priority. Its sanctity and eminence was so great that it needed no protection. As the Aron "carried its carriers," so, too, was it immune to any physical damage. The question did not concern damage from outside forces, but, rather, from a laxity in the manner Klal Yisrael conducted themselves in its presence. The issue was decorum in the presence of the Torah. Regrettably, things have not changed much. There are laws which regulate our propriety in a shul, in the presence of the Torah.

Moshe Rabbeinu's relationship to Hashem was certainly closer than Betzalel's. He perceived the brilliance and clarity of the Shechinah associated with the closeness on a more sublime level. He could not fathom anyone acting in an undignified manner in the presence of the Aron. Moshe Rabbeinu's profound humility did not permit him to believe that anyone could be different than he in his reverence for the Almighty.

Betzalel, however, was more "down to earth" than Moshe. He was acutely aware of the frailty of the common Jew. He felt that Moshe was over-estimating the spiritual plateau of the average Jew. He was, consequently, concerned that an exposed Aron would not receive the appropriate respect it deserved and demanded. Hence, he felt that the enclosure to protect the Aron from human irreverence was needed - prior to building the Aron. Moshe agreed with Betzalel, because he understood that Betzalel's perception of the common Jew was more realistic than his. He said, "You decided to make the protective edifice first because you stood in the shadow of G-d. Had you been closer, had you benefited from standing in the direct light, your perception would have been much more lucid. You also could not have conceived that anyone would behave improperly in the presence of the Aron."

Moshe Rabbeinu's response to Betzalel is of a timeless nature. Indeed, the further we are removed from the Revelation of Har Sinai, the deeper we progress in the "shadow of G-d." The precautionary laws that Chazal have legislated for us are to protect us from forgetting this fact; we

stand only in the shadow of the spirituality that Klal Yisrael once manifest.

Moshe did...Hashem commanded Moshe. (40:10,20)

Throughout the parsha, we note how Moshe Rabbeinu acted in accordance with Hashem's command - "to Moshe." Should it not have said "to him," rather than "to Moshe." Are they not one and the same? Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl, was wont to say that Moshe did not attribute any significance to himself in regard to his position as Moshe, the quintessential leader of the Jewish People. There was Moshe - the man, and Moshe - the leader: two different people. It is as if Moshe, the man, was standing by the side as Moshe, the leader, was involved in constructing the Mishkan.

When the Mashgiach of Baranovitz, Horav Yisrael Yaakov Lubchenski, zl, was gravely ill, Rav Elchanan, the Rosh HaYeshivah, came to visit him. As he walked in, the Rebbetzin lamented the fact that her husband would not permit his students to assist him in any way. Rav Elchanan mused, "I do not understand. Perhaps for himself he might not want to take advantage of his students, but what about the Mashgiach? He needs the students to help him, so that he can recuperate more quickly from his illness. Indeed, the Mashgiach should see to it that the Mashgiach gets better, since the yeshivah badly needs the Mashgiach." He supported his statement by relating the way Moshe viewed "himself." This is the perspective of one whose outlook is molded by Torah perspective.

For the cloud of Hashem would be on the Mishkan by day, and fire would be on it at night... throughout the journeys. (40:38)

A Torah scholar whose life is Torah is a microcosm of the Mishkan. He is a living embodiment of the Mishkan, as Chazal say, "the Shechinah resides within each person who is worthy of being a repository for it." Horav Yehudah Tzedaka comments that the Mishkan had two attributes: fire and cloud. Likewise, the Torah scholar should possess these two attributes. Cloud is an allusion to tznius, modesty. He should always be modest, unpretentious, "covered," as if by a cloud. When the honor of Torah is at stake, he must act as a fire, with passion and zeal, not shying away from challenge or confrontation. Humility is a special virtue, one that every Torah leader should possess. There is a time, however, when misplaced humility and self-effacement is a liability. When the Torah, or those who epitomize its doctrine are disparaged, one must rise to the occasion and vehemently oppose those who would undermine the Torah.

Moshe assembled the entire community of Bnei Yisrael and said to them, "These are the things that Hashem commanded... On six days work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you... Moshe said to the entire community of Bnei Yisrael... "This is the word that Hashem has commanded... Take from yourselves a gift for Hashem." (35:1,2,4,5)

Moshe Rabbeinu assembled the entire nation as he instructed them in two mitzvos: Shabbos and the construction of the Mishkan. While each Jew is enjoined to observe Shabbos and maintain the sanctity of the Mishkan, both of these mitzvos have a collective application to Klal Yisrael as a whole. Moshe, therefore, speaks to them as a group. Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl, explains that Shabbos was not given to "Reb Yisrael," the individual Jew, but to Klal Yisrael, the entire Jewish People. The Shabbos observance -- or lack thereof -- of each individual Jew has a compelling effect on the entire klal, for we are all partners in its observance. Each individual Jew is analogous to a limb of a large body called "the Jewish People," whose mate is Shabbos Ha'Malka, the Shabbos Queen. If any one limb causes the queen pain, we all suffer in turn. Shabbos attests to the fact that Hashem created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. To reject Shabbos is to repudiate this belief.

A similar concept applies to the Mishkan whose construction was also commanded to a collective Klal Yisrael. All of Klal Yisrael gave equally for the silver adanim, sockets, of the Mishkan's foundation. Everyone gave according to his desire and ability for the Mishkan itself and for the various

vessels.

We are confronted with a question regarding the text: Since Moshe began by instructing Klal Yisrael in the mitzvos both of Shabbos and Mishkan, why does the Torah begin over again by saying, "Moshe said...take for yourselves a gift for Hashem." We have just concluded that Moshe spoke to them about Shabbos and the Mishkan. Why did it repeat it? Furthermore, why is the idea that he spoke to the "entire community of Bnei Yisrael" reiterated? Last, in Pasuk 35:20, the Torah says, "The entire community of Yisrael departed." Why does the Torah mention their leaving? This is not the "style" of the Torah.

Horav Sorotzkin uses a parable to convey a practical and timely response to these questions. Once a rabbinic leader invited his congregants for a meeting to raise money for an institution that was faltering on the brink of collapse. Realizing that mention of a fundraising meeting would dissuade his congregants from attending, he cited another reason for the meeting, one that did not have financial implications. Thus, everyone would attend. Later, he would reveal his main agenda. Moshe Rabbeinu had the same notion when he "attached" Shabbos observance to his request for financial assistance to construct the Mishkan. He began with Shabbos, and he "moved on" to the Mishkan.

Regardless of the ploy, these risks do not work. As soon as people hear an allusion to money, they suddenly have appointments to go to, places to be, and functions to attend. By the time one broaches the main issue, the wealthy individuals have vanished. By the middle of the lecture/appeal, the middle class invitees have likewise disappeared. As we near the end of the solicitation, we are fortunate to find that a handful of people, who probably have little wherewithal to contribute, have remained.

The Torah tells us that regarding the Mishkan, fundraising events were different. Originally, the "entire community" came to the meeting, and they all stayed. No one conjured up an excuse to leave. Although they might have suspected that the Shabbos exchange was leading up to something else that would cost them, they gladly remained. Even when Moshe began with the nitty gritty, requesting contributions for the Mishkan, no one left. The list of items needed was lengthy, requiring serious donations, yet they all continued to stay. They all waited until the end, when they departed together to gather their gold and silver for the Mishkan. Such was their desire to contribute towards the Mishkan. They came together, they stayed together, and they left together, only to return with their whole-hearted donations. If only that attitude would have endured.

All the women whose hearts inspired them with wisdom spun the goat hair. (35:26)

They spun the wool while it was still attached to the animal. This is certainly a remarkable craft, but what benefit does it derive? Obviously, there was a purpose in performing this extraordinary feat: What was it? Horav Meir Bergman, Shlita, suggests a practical application for spinning the wool in this manner. Everything in the Mishkan must be tahor, ritually clean/pure. The women went to extreme lengths to see to it that the thread would remain tahor until it was actually incorporated into the curtains of the Mishkan. According to halachah, a living animal is not mekabel tumah, never becomes ritually contaminated. Therefore, the women spun the wool while it was still attached to the animal to prevent it from becoming tamei.

From a remark made by the Rambam in Hilchos Tumaas Meis 1:13, we note that this was unnecessary. The Mishnah details the obvious precautions taken in preparing the Parah Adumah and mixing it with the "cleansing water" to be sprinkled upon one who was tamei tumaas meis, had been in contact with a corpse. Since everyone involved with the process was to be tahor, the children who would draw the water that was ultimately mixed with the ashes were raised to be tahor from birth. Everybody else would undergo the seven-day purification process necessary for one who comes into contact with a corpse. Regardless of these unusual measures, the Rambam adds that while we see it is

possible to arrange to have people free of tumaas meis, we should take every precaution to keep them as far as possible from actual contact with the ashes. The Rambam concludes that in reality there is no difference between one who has never become tamei and one who had been tamei and became tahor. In fact, the individual who is sprinkled with the tahor water achieves a special distinction of purity as evidenced by the Torah's proclamation of his pure status.

Accordingly, one who becomes tahor is actually greater than one who has never been impure. Even if a thread would become tamei, it could be cleansed, rendering it even more appropriate for use in the Mishkan. We return to our original question: What was accomplished by choosing to prepare the thread in this more difficult manner, while it was still attached to the goat's body?

In an alternative approach, Horav Bergman suggests the following: He cites the Talmud Bava Metzia 85b in which Rabbi Chiya extolled his method for assuring that Torah would never be forgotten from Klal Yisrael. He said, "What do I do? I go and sow flax and twist nets out of the flax that grows. I use these nets to trap deer. I slaughter the deer and feed the flesh to orphans and prepare Torah scrolls from their hides. I then write the five Chumashim on these scrolls. I go to those towns where there is no teacher for the children and teach five children the five Chumashim and six children the six orders of the Mishnah. I tell the children, 'Until I return, teach each other!' They teach each other, thereby ensuring that Torah will not be forgotten from Yisrael!"

Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, asked why Rabbi Chiya went to such lengths to prepare the scrolls personally. He explained that the best guarantee of success is to perform everything, every single detail, from start to finish l'shem Shomayim, for the sake of Heaven. He cites the Vilna Gaon who says that if a shul were to be built entirely l'shem Shomayim - each board, each brick, each nail and even the workmen's tools - then no one would entertain any inappropriate thoughts during davening. A building that is entirely built for the sake of Heaven retains an element of sanctity unlike anything else.

We now understand why the women made such an effort to spin the goats wool for the curtains of the Mishkan. The wool of a living animal cannot become tamei as it grows. Tumah could creep in, however, once they began the actual work of making the curtains. These people were concerned that the holiest structure that had ever been built by man should not become defiled. To this end, the women undertook the preparation of these panels in the most strenuous manner. Carding, combing, washing and spinning the wool would be performed with utter devotion l'shem Shomayim. No extraneous ideas would be thought. There would be no opportunity for the evil inclination to attach to the project. These people had no training in this difficult and exacting craft, particularly not in doing it while the wool was attached to the animal. As the Ramban explains, "Their heart uplifted in Hashem's ways" and Hashem inspired them in the craft.

They had no one to guide them in their work - other than their "uplifted heart." As they turned to Hashem with absolute devotion, wisdom flowed from the Source of all wisdom. Suddenly, whatever Moshe asked of them, they could do. The Fountain of all wisdom and strength gave them the ability and the knowledge to execute the most arduous task.

This serves as a pedagogical lesson for us as we raise and educate our own children. If our goal is for them to be educated, G-d fearing, holy Jews -- and as observant Jews this should most certainly be our goal -- then we must focus on these things from the moment our children are born. Every aspect of their training should be executed al taharas ha'kodesh, from a totally pure and holy perspective. Only in this way can we anticipate the success of seeing them living lives of true devoutness. The training begins with the parents, who themselves must be unwavering in their commitment and devotion. A child responds to, and emulates, what he sees at home. We must make sure that what he sees is something we want him to mirror as he leaves the home.

Raising children is a most difficult task - not much different than spinning wool on a living

goats' back. This is an almost impossible achievement if not for the Almighty's aid. As the people of that generation uplifted their hearts and turned to Hashem, so, too, should we seek Him out as we raise our children. To paraphrase Horav Chaim Soloveitchik, zl, in regard to raising children, "Even after applying all the pedagogical skills it is important to recite Tehillim mit t'reren, un t'reren mit Tehillim - Tehillim with tears, and tears with Tehillim." With this recipe, we may hope to achieve success.

The Nesiim, Princes, brought the Shoham stones and the stones for the Eiphod and the Choshen. (35:27)

Rashi cites the Midrash that notes that the word Nesiim, Princes/leaders, is written without the two yuds it would customarily have. The defective spelling of their title is an implied critique of these leaders for not coming forward immediately, like everyone else, to bring their contribution. Their attitude was, "Let the people first give and then we will be mashlim, complete the shortfall." They underestimated Klal Yisrael's absolute devotion, for the national response was so generous that there was almost nothing left for the Nesiim to give. The Torah spells their title defectively because their "lagging" indicated an element of laziness. We must endeavor to understand the significance of the missing yud. Horav Zev Weinberger, Shlita, explains that it was not indolence on their part for which they were chastised, it was rather their attitude in creating a pirud, separation, within Klal Yisrael. They distinguished between their own contribution and everybody else's. While this was certainly not their intention, their lack of participation created such an impression. The purpose of the Mishkan is to engender harmony among our people, not to create an opportunity for disunity. The "yud" symbolizes the Yid, Jew, the letter of the alphabet that unifies Klal Yisrael as one. For this reason, specifically the "yud", the symbol of harmony and oneness, was deleted from their name.

When the Mishkan was completed, everyone attempted to raise it up -- to no avail. They all tried, but did not succeed. They turned to Moshe and asked him to raise it. By subjugating themselves to him, by collectively deferring to him, they personified the ingredient most essential for hakomas ha'Mishkan, raising the Mishkan - unity. Moshe accepted, and succeeded in raising the Mishkan as a result of their collective achdus, unity.

This is a thoughtful exposition regarding Chazal's critique of the Nesiim. How is a lack of unity, or the fact that the Nesiim displayed an air of superiority, related to laziness? Chazal say they were indolent; they rationalized; they looked for excuses not to rush forward with alacrity and enthusiasm. What does that have to do with elitence and its consequent lack of achdus?

We suggest that the lesson to be derived is that achdus is not a natural phenomenon. People have to overcome inner challenges to act in harmony with others. They have to work at achdus if it is to become a reality. We do not make committees for unity and expect it to just happen. It takes hard work to overcome inner fears, to prevail over one's own ego; to learn to respect others; to display a willingness to live together in harmony. One cannot pay lipservice to unity. It is a challenge that one must be willing to accept and follow through -- regardless of the various setbacks that may occur. One who is slothful, who takes an apathetic attitude towards life, will not succeed in sustaining harmonious relationships with others.

This does not mean that the Nesiim were chas v'shalom, Heaven forbid, lazy in any way. When Chazal critiqued any of the Patriarchs or Torah giants of the past, they were doing so in a relative perspective, in accordance with their lofty spiritual/moral plateau. Chazal sensed that a tinge of indolence commensurate with the Nesiim's lofty spiritual level was the source of their lack of enthusiasm in contributing towards the Mishkan.

See, Hashem has proclaimed by name, Betzalel son of Uri, son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah. (35:30)

Rashi notifies us here that Chur was Miriam's son. We wonder why Rashi waited until this point to tell us this aspect of Chur's lineage, as Chur's name occurs previously in Parashas Ki Sisa. That would have been a proper place to detail Chur's pedigree. Furthermore, Chur gave up his life to sanctify Hashem's Name when he took a stand against the Golden Calf revelers. Why is this incident presented only as an allusion? One would think that such an act of extreme devotion would receive a more prominent exposure than just a cursory mention. The fact that his grandson was the architect of the Mishkan is truly a great merit, but does Chur not deserve recognition in his own right?

Horav Zev Weinberger, Shlita, derives a profound lesson from this apparent omission in the text. If citing Chur's greatness and devotion means recalling the tragic sin of Klal Yisrael, their terrible degradation and downfall - if one cannot be mentioned without the other - then we acquiesce and do not openly recount Chur's brave deed. We conceal Chur's eminence in order not to denigrate others.

This is the meaning of true greatness.

Take from yourselves a portion for Hashem, everyone whose heart motivates him shall bring it, as a gift for Hashem. (35:5)

In recognizing the contributions towards the Mishkan of the dor ha'midbar, generation of the wilderness, the Torah uses the phrase *nedivus ha'lev*, donations of the heart. What is a donation of the heart? Ibn Ezra notes two variances in the Torah's idiom regarding Klal Yisrael's contribution. Hashem commanded them, "Kechu me'itchem," "Take from yourselves." To "take" is the opposite of to "give." Placing the prefix "mem" (*meitchem*) before a word changes its meaning. Thus, "Kechu me'itchem" has the same meaning as "Tenu," give. Why did the Torah express this idea in such an awkward manner? Second, what is the meaning of "*nediv libo*"? Literally translated, it means, "donating the heart." Why does the Torah use a phrase that must be understood so differently than its literal meaning?

Horav Chizkiyah Cohen, zl, explains the ascending levels of giving. The Mishkan demanded the highest level, total selflessness in giving, in order that a contribution be deemed worthy of inclusion in Hashem's Sanctuary. A person has a conscious awareness and a subconscious inclination. One may believe that he is contributing wholeheartedly. His subconscious, however, may have a totally different perspective. Indeed, we find that the Torah excluded a letter from the name of the Nesiim because they were hesitant in responding to the call for contributions. The commentators explain that they were not really lazy; they had a good reason for being slow to contribute. They felt Klal Yisrael should be given the initial opportunity. They would be responsible for the short-fall. Chazal, however, attribute their rationale to a subconscious tendency towards indolence. Hashem's Sanctuary does not tolerate anything less than total commitment - even on a subconscious level.

Horav Mordechai Miller, Shlita, explains that this was the uniqueness of the dor ha'midbar; Hashem demanded of them a *nedivus ha'lev* in the literal sense - they contributed their heart! There was no conflict between their overt contribution and their instinctive obscure emotions. While some people overtly contribute magnanimously, all they really give is their material wealth. They do not give of themselves; they do not give their hearts. This is why the Torah insists that they take from themselves - not simply give a donation. To take is a stronger -- more aggressive -- form of contribution, one in which the contributor overcomes his inner emotions and marshals them to work towards a common community goal.

The Nesiim brought the shoham stones and the stones for the settings for the Eiphod and the choshen. (35:27)

The Nesiim were the princes, or leaders, of every tribe. Rashi cites the Midrash which notes the word Nesiim is spelled in Hebrew without the two "yudin" that it would normally have. This defective spelling was deliberate - as a punishment for their not bringing their contributions together with everyone else. They had waited to see what would be lacking, so that they would fill the deficit. To

their surprise and chagrin, the national response was so overwhelming that there was almost nothing left for them to give. Chazal note a taint of laziness on their part which caused their delay in giving. For this, the Torah spells their name incompletely.

It is important to preface the expositions of the various commentators with the obvious note: Regardless of the critique against them, the Nesiim erred unknowingly. Their conscious intention was clearly l'shem Shomayim, for the sake of Heaven. How were they to know that Klal Yisrael would be so industrious and come forward immediately to fulfill the requirement completely? Hashem Yisborach, however, sees beyond what seems to be obvious. Incidentally, the Kesav Sofer points out that since a mitzvah is attributed according to the one who completes it, the Nesiim wanted to be the last ones to contribute for the Mishkan. While this idea is praiseworthy, it does not compensate for the lack of zerizus, alacrity, in mitzvah performance.

The question that confronts the commentators is: Why is the "yud" designated to be the letter deleted from the word, rather than any of the other letters? The simple answer which is given is that when one deletes the "yud," the sound of the word still does not change. In contrast, the deletion of any of the other letters would dramatically alter the kria, reading, of the word. Horav Zaidel Epstein, Shlita, offers a novel reason. For most letters of the alphabet, the sum of the numerical value of the other letters is not equal to the letter itself when that letter is removed from its spelled out name. For instance, aleph: The letter aleph has a value of one, while the rest of the word, lamed and fay, equals 110; bais is equal to two, while the rest of the word is yud, saf, which equals 410. When the yud, whose value is ten, is removed the vav and daled still equal ten. This implies that the yud is tocho k'baro, its inner essence/value is equivalent to its external essence. In other words, "What you see is what you get." There is a consistency between the chitzonius, external, and the penimius, internal.

While the Nesiim thought they had introspected and had cleansed themselves of any vestiges of personal interests, the Torah implies that this was not true. There was an inconsistency; their actions were not motivated completely by a sense of l'shem Shomayim. There was a taint of indolence inherent in their delayed giving. Horav Moshe Reis, Shlita, cites the Chidushei Ha'Rim who says the "yud" denotes the Yehudi, Jewish essence, that was missing, characterized by their act of indolence. A Jew is excited, enthusiastic, energetic to serve the Almighty. He does not sit back and wait. He is filled with alacrity to go forward to serve Hashem. The Nesiim were not. Hence, the letter which symbolizes Jewishness was deleted.

Other commentators contend that the error lay in a different realm. The Kesav Sofer says that the "yud," the smallest of all the letters of the alphabet, implies the attribute of anavah, humility. The Nesiim sought to complete the mitzvah, in order to emphasize their contribution. This, regrettably, indicated a deficiency in their name. The Beis Yisrael supplements this by saying that the Nesiim chose to separate themselves from the klal, community, by deciding to donate on their own. This idea is implied by the missing "yud." The "yud" symbolizes the Jewish People who survive through achdus, unity. They chose to contribute on their own, not to unify with the others. Hence, they are missing the "yud" from their name.

The Pnei Menachem makes a similar comment, suggesting that their sin was in creating a distinction between "them"/ Klal Yisrael and us/Nesiim. They should all have worked together, sharing in their avodas Hashem. Last, the Pnei Menachem, citing a common theme in his derashos, lectures, places the blame on their lack of ayin tova, good eye. They declared that they would supplement what is missing. How did they know that something would be missing? What right did they have to underestimate the people's commitment to the Almighty? The purpose of a leader is to look for the best in his flock. Their vision of Klal Yisrael was unfortunately myopic.

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

The Midrash relates that Hashem told Klal Yisrael, "When you made the eigel ha'zahav, Golden Calf, you angered Me by saying, 'Eilah elohecha Yisrael,' 'This is your god, Yisrael.' Now that you made the Mishkan using the words, 'Eilah pikudei HaMishkan,' 'These are the reckonings of the Mishkan,' I have reconciled with you." We must endeavor to understand the significance of the word, "eilah," particularly its role in the sin of the Golden Calf and its role in the reconciliation vis a vis the Mishkan. It seems that the primary sin of the eigel was the proclamation of, "This is your god." Similarly, the actual construction of the Mishkan did not seem to effect the response of forgiveness until its completion, with the expression "These are the reckonings."

Horav Chizkiyahu Cohen, zl, cites the Midrash at the beginning of Parashas Mishpatim, which distinguishes between the word "eilah" and "v'eilah." Apparently, "eilah" negates the preceding, while "v'eilah" with the prefix "vav" - "and" - includes the preceding. In other words, when the word "eilah" is used, it implies a total rejection of any previous relationship to the present. When Klal Yisrael said, "Eilah elohecha," "This is your god," they were really saying, "This is our god - and nothing else. We reject any past commitments and renege any previous relationship with Hashem." A new dawn is rising, which brings with it a new god - a golden calf. This was the ultimate chutzpah! They did not merely create an idol, they felt the need to emphasize their rejection of the Almighty.

Horav Leib Chasman, zl, makes a similar point regarding Lot. Avraham Avinu's nephew, student and protege, achieved an exalted plateau of spirituality. There was one major difference between Avraham and Lot - the origin of their calling. Avraham Avinu heard Hashem's command through a prophetic vision from the Almighty Himself. Lot heard it from Avraham. His exposure was limited. Thus, Avraham's level of commitment was greater than Lot's. How did this disparity subsequently take effect? We are well aware of Lot's separation from Avraham. Lot went to Sodom, with its evil environment, because he hoped to benefit from a material standpoint. What about the spiritual dangers he would encounter? Lot did not care. The Midrash tells us that he said, "I do not want Avraham or his G-d." Lot rejected Hashem. Why? What characterized the distinction between Avraham and Lot? Avraham rejected all alien beliefs. He denigrated every idol and pagan deity. He sublimated himself totally to Hashem. In contrast, Lot did not. He followed Avraham, studied from him, but took along his prior baggage. He did not reject his past. Thus, he ultimately rejected the Almighty.

Sur meira va'asei tov, turn away from evil and do good. Before one's positive behavior can have a lasting effect, he must first purge himself of the ra, evil, within him. Lot did not. Is it any wonder that the tov, good, to which he had committed himself was temporary?

When Klal Yisrael created the Golden Calf, they did not consider their action to be an open rebellion against Hashem. Perhaps there was a vestige of pure intention in their minds. They sought a "supplement" to their religion. When they proclaimed, "Eilah elohecha Yisrael," "This is your god, Yisrael," they were rejecting the past, they were spurning the Almighty. This sin was intolerable. When they completed the Mishkan and declared, "Eilah pikudei haMishkan," "These are the reckonings of the Mishkan," citing the word "eilah" which negated their previous heresy, their attachment to the Golden Calf, Hashem could now forgive them.

In an alternative exposition, Horav Cohen cites the Maharzav, who explains the word eilah, as an expression which praises one's actions. "Look at what I have accomplished; I take pride in what I have done," is the underlying meaning of "eilah." We now understand the gravity of Klal Yisrael's sin. In the Talmud Berachos 19a, Chazal state, "If you see a Torah scholar sin in the evening, you can be sure that by the next day he has already performed teshuvah." We are not infallible. Everybody errs once in a while. The scholar, which is a term that is applied to one who is virtuous and committed, is filled with regret, immediately repenting his misdeed. The sinners who encircled the golden calf proudly proclaimed, "This is your god! Eilah, we are excited about our idol." The arrogance that spewed forth with the word "eilah," was unforgiveable, unless they would react in a similar manner towards another

structure, a structure dedicated to holiness, a sanctuary - the Mishkan. The second "eilah" expiated the first "eilah."

In reality, both answers express the same idea. Klal Yisrael's teshuvah, repentance, could not be accepted until there was a total reversal, a complete recanting of their past attitude. This was accomplished through an emphatic rejection of the past, through a sense of pride in their future commitment. We cannot continue to proclaim our allegiance to the Sanctuary as long as we pay lip-service to the Golden Calf!

And they made the holy vestments for Aharon, as Hashem had commanded Moshe. (39:1)

Aharon HaKohen demonstrates the paradigm of love for a fellow Jew. He was the "ohev shalom, v'rodeif shalom;" loved peace and pursued peace. He sought to maintain relationships between Jews and between husband and wife. He set the standard for all of us to emulate. In our quest to follow in Aharon Hakohen's noble example, we might over-zealously tend to ignore some basic precepts of the Torah. We might bend the rules in order to promote harmony among our fellow men. We might resort to employing unconventional methods for creating a more positive relationship between husband and wife - methods that are not necessarily Torah-oriented.

Horav Aharon Zakai, Shlita, infers this to be the pasuk's message: "And they made the holy vestments for Aharon," - when people want to don the garb of Aharon, when they want to clothe themselves in Aharon's garments - a simile for acting like Aharon, attempting to promote good-will among people, it must be "as Hashem had commanded Moshe." We must adhere to the Torah's dictate and follow Hashem's prescription for creating harmony among people. Aharon succeeded without breaking His rules. Why should we act differently?

These are the things that Hashem has commanded, to do them...on six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy. (35:1,2)

The Torah introduces the laws regarding the building of the Mishkan with an admonition to observe Shabbos. Rashi notes the juxtaposition of these laws and infers that building the Mishkan does not override the observance of Shabbos. Abarbanel explains that since building the Mishkan is a symbol of the strong bond that exists between Hashem and Klal Yisrael, one might think that it should take precedence over everything, even Shabbos. After all, action is a positive expression of our love and commitment to Hashem. Should it not have preeminence over the observance of Shabbos, which represents a cessation from action? Specifically, in response to this line of thinking, the Torah emphasizes the laws of Shabbos in connection with the construction of the Mishkan, in order to teach us that Shabbos takes precedence over the building of the Mishkan.

Horav Eli Munk, zl, gives two reasons for the predominance of Shabbos over the building of the Mishkan. Firstly, the Mishkan and its successor, the Bais Hamikdash, would one day disappear. Shabbos, on the other hand, is a mitzvah which was to last forever. Its observance would ensure that the loss of the Mishkan and the Bais Hamikdash would not affect Klal Yisrael's relationship with Hashem. Structures are temporary; mitzvos are eternal. To paraphrase Horav Munk, "More than the Jews have kept Shabbos, Shabbos has kept the Jews." We must realize that non-observance of this critical mitzvah can evoke grave consequences in our relationship with Hashem.

A second reason for the prioritization of Shabbos over the Mishkan is based on a comparison between the concepts of time and space. Hashem sanctified the seventh day of Creation, making Shabbos the symbol of holiness in the dimension of time. In a similar manner, the Mishkan serves as the representative of holiness for the dimension of space. Kedushas ha'zman, sanctification of time, takes precedence over kedushas ha'makom, sanctification of place, precisely because Hashem initiated the concept of time after the seventh day. Since man fashioned the Mishkan, however, it demonstrates

man's ability to create holy places which Hashem consecrates.

The holiness of time is inherent in Creation, while the consecration of space is not. Man can attain perfection within the dimension of time by using the hours and minutes that are allotted to him for spiritual purposes. Such opportunity does not exist in the spatial dimension. Holiness is not increased by vanquishing space or increasing one's possessions in quantity or quality. Our function as Jews does not depend on certain fixed points on earth, but rather in the manner in which we serve Hashem during the specific times that have been established for us. The dimension of space has the flexibility to allow changes to take place. Time does not have this characteristic. It is eternally fixed. We infer from the prohibition against desecrating Shabbos for the sake of building the Mishkan that the sanctity of time has greater significance than the sanctity of space.

Moshe assembled the entire assembly of the Bnei Yisrael. (35:1)

Moshe Rabbeinu gathered together the entire nation for the specific purpose of instructing them regarding the building of the Mishkan. Horav Baruch Sorotzkin, zl, observes that the power of certain mitzvos is catalyzed by their acceptance and performance by the tzibbur, entire community. There are other mitzvos that attain validity even if only one person observes and fulfills them. The mitzvah of building the Mishkan, the place where the Shechinah will repose, the source of Klal Yisrael's kedushah and taharah, holiness and purity, is one that must involve the entire Jewish People. No individual, regardless of his ability to achieve even the loftiest degree of sanctity, can alone create a place of hashroas ha'Shechinah, a place in which the Shechinah rests. It must be a communal endeavor in which every individual takes part, each adding his own component of kedushah.

Horav Sorotzkin supplements this with the notion that in order for all of Klal Yisrael to receive spiritual influence from the Mishkan, each individual must sense that he has a share in it. He must believe that he is one of its builders and that he is as much a participant in the building of the Mishkan as is everybody else. Hence, even the poorest Jew was instructed to contribute towards the building of the Mishkan. This act engendered within him the feeling that the Mishkan was the source of Divine light for all people.

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

If we read the text carefully, we note a redundancy. If "every man and woman" contributed towards the Mishkan, why is it necessary to reiterate that "Bnei Yisrael brought a free-willed offering"? Are not the "men and women" included in "Bnei Yisrael"? Horav Mordechai Rogov, zl, observes that many individuals who support Torah institutions and sustain those in need have themselves been educated in Torah institutions which stress the value of tzedakah. People contribute to those organizations with which they identify. When they see the importance of an institution or an endeavor, they support it. One who has been the recipient of a Torah education or has been sensitized to the importance of supporting Torah-oriented endeavors, will do so--because of the education he has received. Consequently, those who support a Torah institution are actually accomplishing two things. First, they are credited for sustaining the institution. Second, they are the catalysts for the students who will one day become themselves Torah supporters as a result of the education that they have received. The philanthropist is a link in the chain of Torah support. Through his contribution, he helps create the next generation of Torah supporters.

This is the hidden message of the pasuk. The contribution of the "men and women" who supported the Mishkan was not motivated by a sudden decision. Who was responsible for engendering the positive feeling for Torah support that brought out these "men and women"? Who motivated them to rise to the occasion and support the Mishkan? The members of "Bnei Yisrael" who had previously contributed catalyzed the next generation's outpouring of support. We must remember that when we

support a Torah institution, we are preparing the future generation of Jews who will maintain the legacy of Torah.

These are the reckonings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony, which were reckoned at Moshe's behest. (38:21)

Sforno cites various differences that distinguished the Mishkan from its two successors, the Batei Mikdash. He posits that these differences ensured the Mishkan's eternal viability, providing that it would never fall into the hands of enemies and be destroyed. First, the Mishkan contained the two Luchos: Second, it was initiated through Moshe Rabbeinu; Third, the avodah, service, was carried out through Isamar Hakohen and the Leviim. Fourth, the fact that Betzalel was the architect and builder of the Mishkan helped to guarantee its everlasting nature. Indeed, all those who occupied themselves with the building of the Mishkan were men of stature, integrity, and piety. In contrast, the Batei Mikdash were constructed by workmen of various nations. In many cases they did not possess the other attributes that gave the Mishkan its unique distinction.

We can learn a compelling lesson from Sforno's words. The two Batei Mikdash together functioned for a total of eight hundred and thirty years. During this time undoubtedly millions of korbanos were offered, and the Kohanim and Leviim served under the guidance of a righteous Kohen Gadol. They still, however, did not achieve the level of sanctity that was present in the Mishkan. The Batei Mikdash could not compete with some of the traits of the Mishkan. From the very onset the Mishkan was built with kedushah and taharah, holiness and purity, by individuals invested with these same virtues. Horav Shmuel Truvitz, Shlita, emphasizes that the hachanah, preparatory stages, were performed with incredible kedushah and taharah. This reality distinguishes the Mishkan from the Batei Mikdash.

Horav Truvitz supplements this idea by citing the fact that the doors to the Bais Hamikdash were not destroyed. Rather, they sunk into the ground, because they were the work of David Ha'melech. Regardless of Klal Yisrael's iniquities which caused the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash, the gates were not destroyed. They withstood the churban, because they were fashioned with holiness and purity. In the "end," it was the "beginning" that made the difference.

We can learn a more profound lesson. David Hamelech yearned to build the Bais Hamikdash. He was not destined, however, to be the one to build it. As a reason, Divrei Hayamim 1:28 cites the fact that he was man of war who had spilled blood. In his commentary to Sefer Bamidbar 16:21, the Ramban questions this. Did David do anything wrong? Did he kill anybody that was not deserving of death? All he did was to execute justice according to the laws of the Torah. He responds that the Bais Hamikdash is a place where rachamim, mercy, reigns. David, however acted in accordance with din, justice, which does not necessarily coincide with mercy. Although Bnei Yisrael actually built the Bais Hamikdash, David Ha'Melech provided the inspiration. Thus, the Bais Ha'Mikdash did not emanate the trait of rachamim.

We learn from here that the first inspiration sets the tone for the structure of an endeavor. Even if the actual construction has been performed in accordance with the appropriate ideals, if its original incentive was not consistent with the lofty ideals inherent in such an edifice, it will not endure.

We may add one postscript. Raising children and educating them in the Torah way is no different than constructing a Mishkan. In both cases, one desires to permeate an edifice/person with holiness. Success or failure is determined by the purity of one's kavanos, intentions. All too often we try to recapture our youth through the lives of our children. We attempt to guide them along the correct path of our choosing. Our concern is not for our children--but for ourselves. We should set realistic goals that are in accordance with the laws of the Torah. Regrettably, our approach may have a more secular-orientation than its Torah counterpart. We should learn from the Mishkan, which merited

everlasting existence as a result of the proper intentions behind it. With the right intentions and many Tehillim, we will merit to raise a generation that will remain true to the Torah way.

This article is provided as part of Shema Yisrael Torah Network
Permission is granted to redistribute electronically or on paper,
provided that this notice is included intact.

For information on subscriptions, archives, and other Shema Yisrael

Classes, send mail to parsha@shemayisrael.co.il

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

info@shemayisrael.co.il

<http://www.shemayisrael.co.il>

Jerusalem, Israel

972-2-532-4191