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Covenant & Conversation

**Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from
Lord Jonathan Sacks**

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British
Commonwealth 5772

The Architecture of Holiness

From here to the end of the book of Exodus the Torah describes, in painstaking detail and great length, the construction of the Mishkan, the first collective house of worship of the Jewish people. Precise instructions are given for each item – the tabernacle itself, the frames and drapes, and the various objects it contained – including their dimensions. So for example we read: “Make the tabernacle with ten curtains of finely twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, with cherubim woven into them by a skilled worker. All the curtains are to be the same size—twenty-eight cubits long and four cubits wide ... Make curtains of goat hair for the tent over the tabernacle—eleven altogether. All eleven curtains are to be the same size—thirty cubits long and four cubits wide ... Make upright frames of acacia wood for the tabernacle. Each frame is to be ten cubits long and a cubit and a half wide ...” (Ex. 26: 1-16) And so on. But why do we need to

BS"D

know how big the tabernacle was? It did not function in perpetuity. Its primary use was during the wilderness years. Eventually it was replaced by the Temple, an altogether larger and more magnificent structure. What then is the eternal significance of the dimensions of this modest, portable construction? To put the question more sharply still: is not the very idea of a specific size for the home of the Shekhinah, the Divine presence, liable to mislead? A transcendent God cannot be contained in space. Solomon said so: “But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built.” (1Kings 8: 27) Isaiah said the same in the name of God Himself: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be?” Isaiah 66:1 So no physical space, however large, is big enough. On the other hand, no space is too small. So says a striking midrash: When God said to Moses, ‘Make Me a tabernacle,’ Moses said in amazement, ‘The glory of the Holy One blessed be He fills heaven and earth, and yet He commands, Make me a tabernacle?’ ... God replied, ‘Not as you think do I think. Twenty boards on the north, twenty on the south and eight in the west are sufficient. Indeed, I will descend and confine My presence even within one square cubit.’ (Shemot Rabbah 34:1) So what difference could it make whether the tabernacle was large or small? Either way, it was a symbol, a focus, of the Divine presence that is everywhere, wherever human beings open their heart to God. Its dimensions should not matter. I came across an answer in an unexpected and indirect way some years ago. I had gone to Cambridge University to take part in a conversation on religion and science. When the session was over, a member of the audience came over to me, a quiet, unassuming man, and said, “I have written a book I think you might find interesting. I’ll send it to you.” I did not know at the time who he was. A week later the book arrived. It was called *Just Six Numbers*, subtitled *The deep forces that shape the universe*. With a shock I discovered that the author was the then Sir Martin, now Lord Rees, Astronomer Royal, later President of the Royal Society, the oldest and most famous scientific body in the world, and Master of Trinity College Cambridge. In 2011 he won the Templeton Prize. I had been talking to Britain’s most distinguished scientist. His book was enthralling. It explained that the universe is shaped by six mathematical constants which, had they varied by a millionth or trillionth degree, would have resulted in no universe or at least no life. Had the force of gravity been slightly different, for example, the universe would either have expanded or imploded in such a way as to preclude the formation of stars or planets. Had nuclear efficiency been slightly lower the cosmos would consist only of hydrogen; no life would have emerged. Had it been slightly higher there would have been rapid stellar evolution and decay leaving no time for life to evolve. The combination of improbabilities was immense. Torah commentators, especially the late Nechama Leibowitz, have drawn attention to the way the terminology of the construction of the tabernacle is the same as that used to describe God’s creation of the universe. The tabernacle was, in other words, a micro-cosmos, a symbolic reminder of the world God made. The fact that the Divine presence rested within it was not meant to suggest that God is here not there, in this place not that. It was meant to signal, powerfully and palpably, that God exists throughout the cosmos. It was a man-made structure to mirror and focus attention on the Divinely-created universe. It was in space what Shabbat is in time: a reminder of creation. The dimensions of the universe are precise, mathematically exact. Had they differed in even the slightest degree the universe, or life, would not exist. Only now are scientists beginning to realise how precise, and even this knowledge will seem rudimentary to future generations. We are on the threshold of a quantum leap in our understanding of the full depth of the words: “How many are your works, Lord; in wisdom You made them all” (Ps. 104: 24). The word “wisdom” here – as in the many times it occurs in the account of the making of the tabernacle – means, “precise, exact craftsmanship” (see Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, III: 54). In one other place in the Torah there is the same emphasis on precise

dimensions, namely, Noah's ark: "So make yourself an ark of cypress wood. Make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around" (Gen. 6: 14-16). The reason is similar to that in the case of the tabernacle. Noah's ark symbolised the world in its Divinely-constructed order, the order humans had ruined by their violence and corruption. God was about to destroy that world, leaving only Noah, the ark and what it contained as symbols of the vestige of order that remained, on the basis of which God would fashion a new order. Precision matters. Order matters. The misplacement of even a few of the 3.1 billion letters in the human genome can lead to devastating genetic conditions. The famous "butterfly effect" – the beating of a butterfly's wing somewhere may cause a tsunami elsewhere, thousands of miles away – tells us that small causes can have large consequences. That is the message the tabernacle was intended to convey. God creates order in the natural universe. We are charged with creating order in the human universe. That means painstaking care in what we say, what we do, and what we must restrain ourselves from doing. There is a precise choreography to the moral and spiritual life as there is a precise architecture to the tabernacle. Being good, specifically being holy, is not a matter of acting as the spirit moves us. It is a matter of aligning ourselves to the Will that made the world. Law, structure, precision: of these things the cosmos is made and without them it would cease to be. It was to signal that the same applies to human behaviour that the Torah records the precise dimensions of the tabernacle and Noah's ark.

<http://www.yuhsb.org/student-publications/shema-koleinu/>

SHEMA KOLEINU The Weekly Torah Publication Of The Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy – Yeshiva University High school for Boys Volume XVII, Issue4,773 February 25, 2012

RESPECT FOR THE ARON HAKODESH RABBI MICHAEL TAUBES

This parsha discusses the commandment to construct the Mishkan and the various vessels which would be used in the Mishkan; the first such vessel described is the Aron (Shemos 25: 10-16). Although the Rambam, in his Sefer HaMitzvos (Mitzvas Aseh 20), and the Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 95) seem to hold that the mitzvah to build the Aron is simply a part of the general Mitzvah to build a Mishkan-and subsequently, a Beis Hamikdash-for Hashem to dwell in, the Ramban (Hasagos HaRamban to Sefer Hamitzvos, Mitzvas Aseh 33) and Rabbeinu Saadyah Gaon (Sefer Hamitzvos L'Rabeinu Saadiah Gaon, Parshah 52) disagree, and count building an Aron as an independent Mitzvah. The Rambam (Ibid) explains that unlike the other vessels of the Mishkan, like the Shulchan, the Menorah, and the Mizbeiach, the Aron was not designed to be used as part of any specific Avodah, but rather to house the Luchos, which represented the presence of Hashem at all times. In his introductory comment to this Parsha, the Ramban writes that the entire purpose of the Mishkan was to contain a place for Hashem's Shechinah to rest; this place was the Aron.

After outlining the particulars as to how the Aron was to be built, the Torah states that its purpose would be to house the "Eidus", the testimony, which Hashem would give Moshe (Ibid). The RaHSbam (Ibid. Ha'Eidus) and Ibn Ezra (Ibid. V'Natati) understand that this refers to the Luchos only, but others, including Rashi (Ibid. Ha'Eidus), believe that this refers also to the entire Torah, and a copy of the Torah was thus also to be stored in the Aron. The Gemara in Bava Basra (14a-b) actually discusses precisely what was in the Aron. One authority holds that both the Luchos and a Sefer Torah were kept in the Aron, while the other believes that only the Luchos were there. Both opinions agree that the Shivrei Luchos, the tablets broken by Moshe, were also kept in the Aron, at least eventually, as indicated by Tosafos in Eiruvin (63b). It is worth noting that even the

authority that holds that a Sefer Torah was not kept in the Aron proper agrees that one was kept on the side of the Aron, in a most dignified and respected location.

The Mishna in Megillah (28a) implies a comparison between the Beis HaMikdash and our Shuls today, and the Gemara (Ibid. & 28b) documents the high level of honor and dignity which must be maintained in a Shul. Further on, the Gemara (Ibid. 29a), based on a pasuk in Yechezkel (11:16), refers to our Shuls today as miniature versions of the Beis HaMikdash. Some authorities, like the Maharik (Sha'ailos U'Teshuvos Maharik - Shoresh 161), among others, learn that the sanctity of a Shul is derived from the Torah. The Ran in Megillah (Ran 8a, U'Maan) quotes from the Ramban that the Shul's Kedusha is MideRabbanan. In any case, most agree that a Shul has some level of Kedushah, with an accompanying requirement of honor, because of its connection to the Beis HaMikdash; the Shulchan Aruch (Orech Chaim 151) documents the type of respect and honor which must be exhibited in a Shul in general.

It thus stands to reason that just as the Aron, where the Torah rested, was the "centerpiece" of the Mishkan and the Beis Ha Mikdash, as mentioned above, so too should the place where the Torah rests in our Shuls be a place which has special status. The Rambam (Hilchos Sefer Torah – 10:10) indeed implies that a Sefer Torah must be placed in a special location because the Luchos were, and the words which were on the Luchos are contained in a Sefer Torah. The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah – 282:1) rules accordingly (See Beur HaG"RA ibid. 1). An earlier Mishnah in Megillah (25b) indicates that the Teivah, the "box," where the Sifrei Torah are kept has a higher status of Kedushah than the Shul itself. The Ramo, though (Orech Chaim - 154:1), writes that this may depend on how this Teivah is built – whether as a separate structure or as part of the wall.

This Teivah, of course, is what we call the Aron, as the Ran in Megillah explains (Ran 7a – Beit HaK'neset). Actually, it is worth noting that the Gemara in Shabbos (32a) suggests that one must be very careful to refer to the Aron as the Aron HaKodesh, because the word "Aron" lone means simply a box, and it may be disrespectful to use this common word to describe the place where the Sifrei Torah are kept. Tosafos (Ibid. – Al) makes it clear that the reference in this Gemara is indeed to the Aron HaKodesh which is in our Shuls. The Maharsha, though (Chidushei Halachos Ibid), writes that if it is clear that one is referring to the Aron HaKodesh, it is not undignified to call it simply an Aron, as implied by the Gemara in Berachos (47b).

The Rambam (Hilchos Tefillah 11:2) rules that the Aron HaKodesh should be placed by the wall of the Shul that the people face when davening, so that during davening, they will also be facing towards the Aron; the Shulchan Aruch (Orech Chaim 150:5) accepts this ruling. In our part of the world where we face east in order to be able to face Yerushalayim, the Aron should thus be on the eastern wall of the Shul. In the Biur Halacha (Ibid. – She'Hu), the Mishnah Berurah questions what direction people should face when davening in a Shul where it was impossible to put the Aron along the eastern wall, whether towards Yerushalayim or towards the Aron, and he leaves it in doubt. Earlier, however, the Mishnah Berurah writes (Orech Chaim 94:9) that if the Aron had to be placed somewhere other than on the eastern wall, one should still turn one's face to the east when davening, but never turn his back on the Aron. The Aruch Hashulchan (Ibid. Se'if 13) writes that if the Tzibbur is davening in one direction because that's where the Aron is, one should turn just a little bit towards the east so as not to be davening in a direction completely different than everybody else.

Many people have the practice to stand when the Aron is open and the Sifrei Torah are visible. The Taz, however, (Yoreh Deah 242:13) rules that strictly speaking, this is not necessary, because the Aron is large enough to be considered an independent area, and is thus comparable to the Shulchan, and when the Sefer Torah is on the Shulchan, there is no need to stand. Nevertheless, the Taz (Ibid.) writes that people stand

anyway when the Aron is open as a sign of respect. For the same reason, the Tax rules elsewhere (Ibid. 282:1) that one may stand to give a Derashah with one's back to the Aron Ha Kodesh, because it is considered an independent domain. But he also writes (Orech Chaim 150:2) that one should not position one's seat permanently with his back directly towards the Aron; the Mishnah Berurah (Ibid. Se'if Katan 14) concurs, distinguishing in the Sha'ar Ha Tziyun (Ibid. Se'if Katan 13) between a regular and a temporary positioning of oneself with his back towards the Aron.

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

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

In My Opinion :: Rabbi Berel Wein Credit Cards

One of the more fiendish banking creations of our modern society is that of the credit card. This simple piece of plastic is the greatest source of personal convenience and freedom of opportunity. It is also the source of angst, bankruptcy and even greater forms of tragedy to families and individuals. For credit cards like everything else in human existence come at a cost. Some of it is immediate and most of it is long term.

It is not only that the monthly bill has to be paid – here in the Holy Land the money is taken out of your bank account with no prior notice – but that there are all sorts of other worries that come with a credit card – identity theft, embarrassment when the card is not accepted for some unknown, implausible and unjustified reason and the hassle involved if, God forbid, one loses the card, to name a few problems that constantly hover in my mind.

The freedom to go on a purchasing spree with a credit card, like all other freedoms in life, can be dangerous. Many a family has been destroyed financially and eventually domestically because of outrageous credit card debt. And supplying a credit card to teen-age children can, if not controlled and limited, be a prescription for personal and familial disaster. So, like most advances and seeming conveniences in life and society, credit cards are a double-edged sword depending on how it is wielded and sheathed. The basic rule in life, that there is no free lunch, applies here with a vengeance.

In Avot we are informed that this world is likened to a magnificent store, full of all sorts of goods that one can purchase and enjoy. Not only is the store open for business 24/7 but the storekeeper is willing to extend generous terms of credit with no immediate cash required as a down payment. But like the Israeli credit card system, payment is regularly exacted and collected and usually without any prior notice to the credit card holder/debtor.

We are always surprised and if not even blindsided by the events and challenges that confront us constantly. And Avot makes this reality crystal clear to us. We are all, so to speak, living on credit card debt. And in the spiritual world, no less than in the physical and financial world, debt must eventually be paid or at least somehow successfully negotiated and settled.

The current financial crisis in the Western world is a powerful illustration of the inexorable iron rule of debt and credit.

The consequences of defaulting on spiritual debt to the Almighty are made clear to the Jewish people in the Torah. All of Jewish history can be summed up as simply the story of borrowing on credit and eventually being forced to repay the debt incurred. Much of our spiritual debt, like one's personal financial debt, has been incurred by foolish and unnecessary purchases.

Our spiritual credit card like our financial one has limits to the amount of credit available. I imagine that there is much in Jewish history that we now wish to return to the store. But the Torah store has a very limited return policy based solely on true repentance and further probity in using our moral and spiritual credit cards. And these terms certainly appear to limit our purchasing freedoms in this life.

One of the great problems in current Jewish society is identity theft. Our true self, our personal credit card, has either been stolen or lost due to ignorance, alienation, apathy or terrible negligence. If asked to identify one's self successfully to our storekeeper many Jews are simply unable to do so. Millions of Jews have been robbed of their heritage and history, their value system and their true mission in life and the world. Their credit card is no longer valid, having expired over a few generations of assimilation and physical and spiritual annihilation.

There are many Jews today, especially here in Israel, who are in the process of applying for a new credit card for themselves and their families. We are all aware that such applications are not easily processed nor are they always approved. Nevertheless the willingness of many Jews to attempt to recapture their true identity, and the fact that Israel as a whole has become more traditionally Jewish in outlook - and even in behavior, is a most heartening development. It augurs well for our future here in our land.

Credit can be a blessing but it must be used wisely
Shabat shalom

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

Weekly Parsha :: Rabbi Berel Wein Terumah

Giving away some of one's material wealth is never an easy thing. Our instinct tells us that what is mine, earned through my efforts, should always remain mine and in my possession. In the phrase of the rabbis, we have "a jaundiced eye" towards others and we resent their imposing themselves upon us for continued help and financial donations. We do not even think ourselves to be selfish for thinking and behaving in this fashion.

After all there is a rabbinic opinion in Avot that states that what is mine is mine and what is yours is yours and that this viewpoint is a balanced and median one. Yet there is another opinion expressed in that very same mishna in Avot that declares such an attitude regarding one's possessions to be the trait of the wicked people from the locality of Sodom. This is in line with the Torah's early description of human nature as "being evil from its earliest youth."

The Torah recognizes human nature for what it is. Man is born as a wild donkey, selfish, screaming, kicking and grasping. The Torah came to adjust human nature to seek higher goals and greater moral and social stature. We cannot completely alter human nature. But we can refine it and direct it towards noble goals and higher purposes.

The Torah recognizes that what is mine is mine and what is yours is yours and yet it points out that this seemingly logical balanced view eventually leads down the slippery slope of Sodomite behavior. One must therefore train one's self in the art of giving and donating one's wealth to others, be

they individuals in need or worthy institutions and causes such as the Mishkan/tabernacle.

I unfortunately recently spent over a month confined to a sickbed until the infection that I had came under control and I was able to start walking again. The problem was that during that month of complete physical inactivity my back and leg muscles atrophied, so that even though I wished to walk upright and normally again I could not do so without great pain and difficulty. Eventually, I slowly returned to my normal health and my muscles again became reacquainted with bearing my not inconsiderable bulk.

This physical rule applies to charitable giving as well. One who does not give charity regularly will find that the generous hand muscles that sign the check and open the wallet have atrophied so that even when one wishes to give, it is painful and sometimes even impossible to do so. Therefore the Torah places great emphasis in this week's parsha upon the ability to give freely and voluntarily to the great cause – the holy Mishkan/Tabernacle. It almost becomes the primary commandment in the Torah, in terms of the attention devoted to it in the holy text itself. This is because most of the other commandments of the Torah require discipline and control, not to give into our base natures, but here the Torah demands that we completely overcome our natural state of what is mine is mine and what is yours is yours.

Here we are required not to merely channel or control our nature but rather to change it completely. And that requires constant effort, training and habitual behavior.

Shabat shalom

From Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>

To weekly@ohr.edu

Subject Torah Weekly

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Terumah

For the week ending 16 February 2013 / 5 Adar I 5773

by **Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair** - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Insights

The Lair Of The Lion

“They shall make a Sanctuary for Me.” (25:8)

A while ago, a well-know Israeli daily newspaper, not known for its sympathy to religion, published a cartoon. In the cartoon, a man was having a dream. Out of his head, came the statutory “think-bubbles”. The bubbles got larger and larger until the following scene unraveled. The man saw himself ‘Upstairs’ being questioned by angels with wings wearing what looked suspiciously like black hats: “But why didn’t you keep Shabbat?” they asked. “You knew there was a thing called Shabbat, didn’t you? What about Kashrut? You knew there was something called Kashrut?”

In the following bubble, the man wakes up in a cold sweat. Then a close-up on his face. “Maybe they’re right!” He says.

Some time ago, a baby-food company recalled tens of thousands of its products because some lunatic had put glass in some of them. Was there anyone who thought “Well, the chances of getting the one with the glass is so minuscule – thousands and thousands to one. I’ll just go right ahead and feed this apple puree to my little six-month old baby?!”

If there were five hundred bottles of cola on a table in front of you and you knew one of them was poisoned, would you drink any of them? Is there anyone in the world who would pause, way up the statistical probabilities, and say ‘Well, it’s such a small chance...’

When faced with even the smallest possibility of an enormous danger, not even the longest odds in the world encourage us to take a chance.

So why isn’t everyone religious?

Why don’t people think like this: “What if those religious fanatics are right? After all, even if they’re wrong, so at least I’ll have had a wonderfully rich and fulfilling life, a faithful wife and a lovely family, etc. etc. But what if they’re right and I’m wrong? I’m going to lose out on something eternal. I’m going to get to the next world and I won’t have the price of admission. I won’t be able to get even a cheap seat! I’ll be out in the middle of a cosmic ocean with no direction home. Maybe they’re right! Maybe it’s all true. Maybe there is a World-to-Come. Maybe I will have to give an account in front of the real ‘Supreme Court’. So you know what? I’ll be religious just in case! Better safe than sorry!”

Why don’t people think like this? What’s the difference between a bottle of baby food and Judaism?

In this week’s Torah portion, the Torah starts a lengthy description of the Mishkan. The sheer volume of this account outweighs almost every subject in the Torah. What was the Mishkan and why was it so special that it merits such voluminous expanse in the Book where nothing is merely descriptive and there is no place for sheer literary embellishment?

The word Mishkan comes from the word ‘to dwell’. It was the place that G-d ‘dwelled’ in this lower world. But if G-d is the place of the world - the world is within Him - how can a mere building house He whose glory fills the universe? How can the Omnipresent have a ‘house’?

There is a difference between existence and presence. G-d exists equally everywhere. He is no more in one place than another, because there can be no place where He is not. He is the place of the world. Anywhere where He is not cannot exist, by definition. Rather, the Mishkan and the Beit Hamikdash (Holy Temple) were places where the presence of G-d was palpable. You could see He was there.

Imagine sitting at a computer. You are typing away, lost in the great American/British/Israeli novel. Unbeknownst to you, a lion enters your room. It’s a very quiet, well-behaved lion, and you carry on typing in blissful ignorance.

The existence of the lion is unaltered by whether you carry on typing or you turn around and give yourself a bit of a surprise. However, the presence of the lion has everything to do with whether you turn around or not.

The Mishkan allowed one to see and fear the lion, as it were. G-d’s presence there was palpable.

The word for ‘sight’ in Hebrew is from the same root as ‘fear’ - yirah. What is the connection between seeing and fearing? A person only fears what he can see.

Intellectual concepts don’t frighten us. The biggest proof is that we don’t fear G-d. Even if we’re religious and we know that there is a World-to-Come, a cosmic day of reckoning, even though we know these things clearly, we can’t see them, and so we don’t really fear. Fear comes only from seeing the Lion. Going into the Mishkan was like going into the lion’s lair.

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From Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>

To Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>

Subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Parshas Terumah

And they shall take for Me a Portion. (25:2)

Rashi adds: Li LiShmi, "Take for Me - for My Name." What is Rashi teaching us by adding Li LiShmi - for My Name? Obviously, if a person contributes to the Mishkan which will serve as the repository for the Shechinah, Divine Presence, the person is doing so for Hashem. What does adding His Name add to the equation? The Chavos Yair offers a penetrating explanation which has powerful ramifications for the way we should give tzedakah, charity. He quotes the Shlah HaKadosh who posits that one who gives charity to a poor man - even an amount as minuscule as a perutah, penny, actually partners with Hashem, as the Shem Havayah, Divine Name, of Yud Kay Vov Kay, combine together with him in the act of giving tzedakah. How does this occur?

The perutah, smallest denomination of coin, resembles the yud, the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This is followed by the hay, or kay (since we do not articulate Hashem's Name), the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, alluded to by the hand with its five fingers that holds the penny and gives it to the poor man. The ani, poor man's, outstretched arm bears resemblance to the vov, the sixth letter of the alphabet, and shaped like a vertical straight line. Last, we have the poor man's outstretched hand - once again, with the five fingers alluding to the hay. Thus, when one gives tzedakah, his act of giving embraces the Name of Hashem - Yud, Kay, Vov, Kay.

The Chavos Yair parlays this exposition with a frightening addendum. One must be careful not to ignore the ani, poor man, when he seeks alms. One who waits for the poor man to beg, to stretch out his hand in solicitation, is creating a situation whereby the poor man's outstretched hand, the "vov" and "hay" of the beneficiary precede the "yud" and "hay" of the benefactor. This causes Hashem's Name to be spelled out of its proper sequence! This is the underlying meaning of Ki tzaddik Hashem tzedakos aheiv, yasher yechezu Faneimo, "For righteous is Hashem, those of righteous deeds He loves, those who are upright will behold His Face" (Tehillim 11:7). As Hashem performs acts of tzedakah constantly and at all times, even before one supplicates Him, Hashem wants His people to act likewise - whereby they give the poor man his due, before the man resorts to begging. Yasher yechezu faneimo, "those who are upright (straight) will behold His Face."

This is what Rashi is teaching us when he writes LiShmi, for My Name. The act of giving tzedakah should symbolize Hashem's Name in its proper sequence. This means that one should give before the poor man must suffer the indignity of stretching out his hand to beg.

One morning, following Shacharis, morning prayer service, the holy HoRav Meir, zl, m'Premeshlan, one of the early Chassidic Masters, sat in his "office" accepting people and soothing the hearts of those who came to him to confer his blessing on them. Suddenly, a poor widow entered the anteroom and demanded to see the Rebbe immediately. An argument ensued, as she demanded to go ahead of the line, while the gabbai, attendant, claimed that this was exactly the purpose of a line: there was an order of sequence. She would enter when it was her turn. The woman was not accepting "no" for an answer. Her needs were great - and immediate. She could not wait. Suddenly, the Rebbe called out, "Arye! Allow her to enter. She is in need of alms and must have them immediately."

The woman entered as the Rebbe lifted a large denomination of coin from his table, held it momentarily, and transferred it from one hand to the other. Afterwards, he placed the coin on the table and motioned for the woman to take it.

He later explained his seemingly strange behavior. "You should not think that "Meir" (as he would refer to himself) was playing with a coin. We are taught that one's intention upon giving tzedakah to a poor man should be on Hashem's Name." He then explained that the penny is the yud; the benefactor's hand, the hay; the poor man's outstretched arm, the vov, and his hand the concluding hay. If the beneficiary is a woman, it presents a problem, since the benefactor may not place it in her hand. Physical contact with a woman is prohibited. Thus, Rav Meir transferred the coin from one hand to the other so that he would have the "benefit" of the second hand/five fingers, to allude to the second hay. This gives us something to reflect upon at the next opportunity we have to give tzedakah.

And they shall take for Me a portion. (25:2)

Tanna D'vei Eliyahu says that when Klal Yisrael accepted the Torah with a resounding declaration of Naase' v'Nishma, "We will do and We will listen," Hashem immediately informed Moshe Rabbeinu that it was time to collect contributions for the building of the Mishkan. What relationship is there between Naase' v'Nishma and V'yikchu Li terumah? The Admor m'Mishkoltz, Shlita, offers the following homiletic exposition. He quotes the Bnei Yissaschar who cites the Maharash Primo, zl, who questions our ability to benefit from this world. We are quite aware that Yaakov Avinu and his brother Eisav "divided" their assets, with Eisav taking Olam Hazeh, This World, and Yaakov focusing on Olam Habba, the World to Come. In other words, Eisav received the physical world, and Yaakov became heir to the world of spirituality. What right do we, Yaakov's descendants, his heirs, have to enjoy the bounty of this world?

The Bnei Yissaschar first cites the Talmud Shabbos 88b which interprets the pasuk in Sefer Bereishis 1:31, Vayehi erev vayehi boker yom ha'shishi. "And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." Hashem made a t'nai, stipulation, with the Jewish People, "If you will accept the Torah - good. If you will not accept the Torah - I will return the world to its pre-Creation status of tohu va'vohu, astonishingly empty. We derive from here that the very existence of the world is only because we accepted the Torah. True, this world belongs to Eisav, but without us - there would be no world - period. Eisav would have absolutely nothing! Therefore, Eisav and his minions have no reason to dispute our enjoying this world. We now understand why Hashem, upon hearing Klal Yisrael's declaration of Naase' v'Nishma, responded with a call for donations to the Mishkan. Once the Jews replied in the affirmative, thereby ratifying the "deal" of accepting the Torah, the world was saved.

As saviors of the world they were thus permitted to partake of its bounty. Hashem said, first things first - now that you have, give for the Mishkan.

In an alternative exposition, the Kedushas Tzion, zl, m'Bobov, also quotes the Talmud Shabbos, in which Chazal say that the Heavenly Angels came before Hashem with a claim of bar metzra, which is halachic dictum requiring one who is selling his field to grant first rights to his close neighbor to purchase the field. This right was exercised by the Angels, claiming that they were closer to the Torah whose origins were in Heaven. Thus, it should remain with them. There is one override to the rule of bar metzra. If, by selling the field to his close neighbor, the owner will incur a monetary loss, he does not have to sell it to him.

With this in mind, we have a reason for Hashem informing Moshe to have the nation immediately donate money for the Mishkan. The Angels wanted the Torah - the Jews wanted the Torah. But, if the Jews contributed towards the Mishkan, there would be a solid financial reason for them to receive the Torah instead of the Angels. For, otherwise, the "Owner" would incur a monetary loss.

From every man whose heart motivates him, you shall take My portion. (25:2)

Much has been written in praise of those who generously open their hearts and their wallets to help those who are in need. What about those who volunteer to raise funds

for people and organizations in need? The commentators write that he who contributes charity, receives his due reward regardless of his motivation - be it l'shmah, for the sake of the mitzvah or the person and organization in need, or he is acting beneficently to promote himself. The same does not hold true with regard to the one who has the "fun job" of raising money. He must do so l'shem Shomayim, for the sake of Heaven; otherwise, his reward is very limited. This is derived from V'yikchu Li, they shall take for Me - LiShmi, for My Name, l'shem Shomayim. Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl, explains the tzedakah process and its benefits with a meaningful analogy. The world we live in may be compared to a stormy sea, its waters raging. Man sits in his boat being thrust up and down with the rising and descending waves. Torah and mitzvos are the boat that protect man from the raging world. They are his boat of salvation, his only line of protection from the dangers of the sea. One who sins, inevitably cracks his boat and falls prey to the destructive elements. He is thrown into the water, cast about by the waves, and, ultimately, becomes their victim.

There is, however, one way to have one's life spared, even as his boat capsizes: a lifeline. He grabs hold of that lifeline and literally holds on for dear life until the storm subsides and he is able to make his way to dry land. Man's lifeline is the mitzvah of tzedakah. When all else has failed and he is drowning in the raging waters, the mitzvah of tzedakah allows him to hang on. Even if the Heavenly Tribunal has issued negative decrees against him, he may continue to cling for dear life to his lifeline of tzedakah.

One who inspires another Jew to perform mitzvos is certainly performing an enormous favor for him. It may, at times, appear to be a thankless endeavor, but it is not. Hashem will pay him gratitude, and perhaps, at one point, the person whom he inspired will also remember his origins. When it comes to the mitzvah of tzedakah, however, it is much different. Then, he is quite possibly saving one's life. Availing someone the opportunity to give tzedakah is tantamount to throwing him a lifeline. Imagine that the Heavenly Tribunal has issued a decree that has severe negative - even drastic - implications for a person. It could be a dread illness, a car accident, a severe financial crisis, and it appears that the decree will be carried out. Out of His infinite compassion and love for all of us, Hashem sends a poor man, or someone representing either a group of people in need, or an organization that is hurting. Hashem is thereby sending him a lifeline, an opportunity to be spared from the crisis, the accident, the illness. Tzedakah tatzil mi'maves, charity saves from death, is a very real and absolute dictum. It really does save.

Perhaps if we kept this in mind, the next time we are approached with an opportunity to give tzedakah, we might respond with a more appealing countenance. Rather than looking at the person in need as if he was someone about to rob us of our hard-earned wealth, let us make believe that he is here to throw us a lifeline to the future.

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, Shlita, relates an incident which took place during one of his many fundraising trips abroad on behalf of his yeshivah. He attempted to obtain an appointment with a well-known philanthropist. He made the call, asked to speak with the man of the house, and received a negative reply: "The man of the house is not home." "When will he be home?" Rav Galinsky asked. "In a few hours," was their response.

A number of hours elapsed and Rav Galinsky presented himself at the man's doorstep. "I am sorry; the man of the house was delayed. He is not yet home," was the curt response he received. "When do you expect him?" he asked. "We have no idea," was their way of "graciously" dismissing him.

Rav Galinsky returned to his waiting car and dialed the man's home. "Hello, I have an important message for Mr. "so and so". Is he available?" "One moment," was the response. A few seconds went by and lo and behold, the elusive man of the house came on the line. Rav Galinsky introduced himself and said, "According to halachah, I really must apologize and beg your forgiveness." "Forgiveness?" asked the man, "What did you do to me that requires my forgiveness?"

Rav Galinsky explained, "At first, when you instructed your family to inform me that you were not home, I suspected you of uttering a falsehood. After all, I asked for the man of the house, and I was told that he was not home." At first, I perceived this as an outright lie. But then I realized it was the sad truth. The baal ha'bayis, true master of this house, is the yetzer hora, evil-inclination, who is in absolute control over here. I erred in thinking that you were in charge. Sadly, you are obliged to the yetzer hora. You have my sympathy."

They shall make a Sanctuary for Me - so that I may dwell among them. Like everything that I show you. (25:8,9)

The Mishkan, Sanctuary, was an edifice dedicated to the service of Hashem. A structure of stone and mortar becomes consecrated through the devotion and commitment to G-d of those who build and maintain it. Anything not built solely for G-d has little to no meaning. Man's ability to transform and elevate mere mundane, physical ingredients into a structure of holiness indicates the incredible spiritual powers vested within him. K'chol asher Ani mareh osecha, "Like everything that I show you," is a reference to Hashem showing Moshe Rabbeinu the exact form of

each of the Mishkan's vessels. Thus, Moshe had before him an image of what each of the finished products should look like.

The Sanctuary represents our nation's obligation to sanctify itself in its personal life. Each and every one of us can create his own personal Sanctuary - within himself, through the medium of his devotion to Hashem. How does the image of the Mishkan which Hashem portrayed to Moshe Rabbeinu fit into the equation? It may serve as a blueprint for the collective Sanctuary, but it hardly assists one in creating his personal Mishkan.

The Admor m'Kretchnif, Shlita, explains this with a homiletic twist of the pasuk. Hashem said to Moshe, "They (Klal Yisrael) shall make themselves into a Sanctuary, for Me, by having my Shechinah repose within them. How will this transpire? K'chol asher ani narecha, "I will simulate you to others so that they will see your behavior and total devotion to Me. When they will perceive your commitment and holy demeanor, they will have a living paradigm to emulate." Thus, as Moshe sanctified himself to Hashem, he was by virtue of that very process presenting the archetype eved Hashem, servant of G-d.

V'hayu einecha ro'os es morecha, "And your eyes will behold your teacher" (Yeshayahu 30:20). Imagery is a powerful motivational tool. When one sees greatness - one aspires to emulate and reproduce himself in that image. I present the following narratives, one which extols positive imagery, and the other which intimates the everlasting loss to oneself of overlooking and ignoring the image before him. In his Warmed by their Fire, Rabbi Yisrael Besser shares an episode concerning Horav Elazar Menachem Shach, zl, which demonstrates the long-lasting effects of seeing an image in a positive light:

The saintly Rosh Yeshivah of Ponevez was an individual to whom Torah study was life itself. Though aged and physically weak, he received strength and succor from the time spent with his precious seforim. Every line of Talmud, Rambam, Rishonim added strength to his frail body.

One day, a prominent mechanech, Torah educator, visited and presented the Rosh Yeshivah with a difficult request. As an educator who via his educational programs came in contact with students from many yeshivos in Bnei Brak, he was able to organize a siyum Mishnayos, completion of the entire Mishnah, which would be attended by thousands of youngsters from the area. The siyum was to be held in a hall adjacent to the yeshivah. Was there any way the Rosh Yeshivah could attend? No speeches, no fanfare - just to walk in and grant the children the treat of seeing the gadol hador, preeminent Torah leader of the generation. It would mean so much to them and would be remembered their entire lives. Rav Shach apologized profusely, saying that he was simply physically exhausted. The Rosh Yeshivah was a centenarian upon whom every step took its toll. The mechanech felt bad, but understood that it was simply too much for Rav Shach.

After the gentleman left, Rav Shach turned to Rav Toib, his close confidant and sort of aide, and asked him if he "agreed" with his decision not to attend the function. Out of deep reverence, Rav Toib hesitated, but, then respectfully said, "I must tell the truth, but I wish to do so by relating a story." The Rosh Yeshivah agreed to listen. "My father-in-law, Rav Michel Fried, survived the horrors of the European Holocaust. He lost everything - family and physical possessions. His world as he once knew it was gone. Despite the tremendous losses and mind-numbing emotional pain, he retained his strong emunah, faith, in the Almighty. I once asked him how he was able to persevere in his faith after all that he had suffered. So many others had weakened; what kept him going?"

He replied that as a child, the venerable sage of Radin, the Chafetz Chaim, visited his village, and the entire community went out to greet the great Kohen Gadol. "My father lifted me so that I could gaze at his radiant face and look into his piercing eyes. From that moment on, that image was seared into my mind," his father-in-law said. He would never forget that image of holiness and splendor. His countenance stood before him during the most bitter and lonesome moments, when all was dark and gloomy. That image pulled him from the depths and gave him the strength to look forward with hope to the next day.

Rav Shach listened intently to the story. He remained deep in thought for a moment, and then the elderly Rosh Yeshivah arose from his chair, donned his frock and hat, and went out to see the children.

The second story is also about perception - or - the lack thereof. I came across this story in Rabbi Pesach Krohn's latest literary endeavor, In the Splendor of the Maggid. In the early 60's, Horav Shlomo Freifeld, zl, was engaged as principal of the nascent Bais Yaakov High School of Toronto. Rav Freifeld later devoted his life to establish America's kiruv, Jewish outreach movement, via the yeshivah he founded in Far Rockaway. A dynamic, charismatic and brilliant scholar, he could converse with any Jew, regardless of age, background or religious affiliation about almost any subject under the sun; so broad was his breadth of knowledge. As a role model and rebbe, he had very few peers.

While Toronto was a booming city on the Jewish religious scene, its suburbs ran a far and dismal second. The small Jewish community of Hamilton, Ontario was geographically a mere forty-two miles south of Toronto, but from a Torah

perspective, it lagged far behind. There was an afternoon Talmud Torah that catered to the Jewish children of its secular Jewish community. It was run and staffed by bnei Torah, Orthodox men and women from Toronto, who made the trip more as a labor of love than anything else.

The Talmud Torah decided to have a fund-raising dinner, and sought a guest speaker who would enthrall the gathering and convey the school's message, as well as their financial needs. They asked Rav Freifeld. We must bear in mind that, while Rav Freifeld spoke prolifically, his appearance bedecked in a long black frock, large black beaver hat, and sporting a full beard and payos, was not what the average secular Jew envisioned in a "progressive" representative of the Orthodox community. In fact, as Rav Freifeld was about to enter the banquet hall, he was stopped by the doorman, who, assuming he was a meshulach, charity collector, said, "Sorry, there is no outside fundraising here tonight." Rav Freifeld smiled and said, "I just happen to be the guest speaker at this event. I hope you will allow me to enter."

Rav Freifeld entered the room to the stares of those gathered for the night's event. A tall, imposing man, bedecked in his classic garb, exuding self-confidence and pride, he exhibited an aura of assured dignity. The people looked at him and wondered if this European-style dressed man could even speak English. They were in for a surprise. Their negative perception was about to receive a wake-up call. Rav Freifeld ascended to the podium and regaled them with a powerful speech. They were taken by his eloquence, his command of the language, his sensitivity and brilliant scholarship. The audience sat there enraptured, as he captivated them with a powerful message concerning the legacy of Judaism, each individual Jew's heritage and the sense of pride they should all reflect.

Then he stunned the entire audience with, "Let me share with you a story from the theatre district in Manhattan." With a confident smile he looked at the flabbergasted crowd, who could not believe that this rabbi would have a clue that there existed a theatre district - let alone talk about it. Could such a religious, traditionally-dressed man be so cosmopolitan?

Rav Freifeld related the story of a wealthy businessman from a Midwestern community who spent a week in New York. He assured his friend that while in the big city he would make a point to take in a popular musical that was playing on Broadway. He was told that they had heard that the play was sold out for the remainder of the year. Tickets were an impossible commodity. He assured them that for his money, the tickets would be readily available.

He was wrong. There were no tickets to be had - anywhere. Even the usual scalpers were unable to obtain the tickets at any price. He now had a problem. It was one thing not to see the play; it was totally another for the people back home to discover that there was something his money could not buy. His enormous ego would take a hit. Now, if the people did not know the truth - what could it hurt? So, on the last night of his trip he stood in front of the theatre and asked people who were leaving for a ticket stub and a playbill. He had no trouble with obtaining these useless items. A ticket has value only before the play.

When he returned home, he showed his "souvenirs" to his friends, who were duly impressed. Rav Freifeld waited for the laughter to subside and he concluded with a thunderous voice, "Many of you here in this room are like that gentleman. You have the "stub" of Judaism, but you have missed the real show!" He continued with remarks about Judaism's real history, its beauty, the sanctity of the Jewish home and the deep-felt pride that every Jew should have in being G-d's emissary in the world. He was exceptional, and the audience gave him a standing ovation. They understood his message and so should we.

Va'ani Tefillah
V'solicheinu komemius l'artzeinu.
And lead us upright to our land.

Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, observes that the word komemius, upright, occurs only once in Tanach. V'Eshbor motos ulchem, v'Oleich eschem komemius, "And (I) broke the poles of your yoke, and (I) led you upright" (Vayikra 26:13). It is also to be found in the end of Bentching. Simply, this means that Hashem broke the yoke of the Egyptians over us, and led us out of Egypt in an upright posture. This presents a difficulty, since a Jew is not to walk b'komah zekufah, an overly-erect posture. It bespeaks a sense of arrogance on his part. Rav Schwab remembers when Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, the venerable Mashgiach of Pre-World War II Mir, offered ten zlotys (coin) to anyone who gave the correct answer. Years later, Rav Schwab arrived at what he felt was the correct explanation of the term komemius - as b'komah zekufah, means stretching oneself up to one's full height. Thus, the Torah means that not only did Hashem redeem us from Egypt; He even severed any vestiges of our connection t

o that abominable culture. We were now able to aspire to achieve our fullest potential. At the time of Mattan Torah, when we accepted the Torah with a resounding declaration of Naase v'Nishma, "We will do and We will listen" we were elevated to the highest level of spiritual development. We were b'komah zekufah, at our fullest spiritual height.

In memory of Our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents R' Naftali Michael ben Nesanel z"l, Maras Sara Riva bas R' Yaakov Meir Hacohen a"h - The Rothner Family

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Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

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Rabbi Weinreb's Parsha Column, Parshat Terumah

Sponsored in memory of Nathan and Louise Schwartz a"h

"Charity"

Scholars have long disagreed about what distinguishes human beings from the rest of the animal world. Some have argued that it is man's intelligence and use of language that distinguishes him; hence the term Homo Sapiens. Others have maintained that it is the fact that he uses tools that makes man distinct from other living creatures; hence, the term Homo Faber. There have even been those who have put forward the opinion that man alone of all the rest of the animal species engages in play; hence, the term Homo Ludens.

This disagreement is the basis for my personal practice of stimulating debate by asking groups with whom I interact the question, "What distinguishes the Jewish people? What makes us unique and different from other human groups?" Here too a number of opinions abound. There are those who will instinctively respond, "We are the people of the Book." By this many mean that we are the people who follow the ultimate book, the Bible. Others simply mean that we are a bookish people, tending to be intellectually oriented, and certainly read a lot more than most other cultures.

Another response that I have heard when I pose the question about what makes the Jewish people distinct, is that we alone among other faith communities think of ourselves as a family, as a mishpacha. I always find this response especially gratifying, because it recognizes a feature of our people of which we can all be proud.

There is another answer which I sometimes encounter, and that is that the Jewish people are a giving people, that it is our generosity that distinguishes us from others, that charity or tzedakah is our highest value. This point of view is emphatically expressed, with a degree of irony, in a passage in the Tractate Shekalim of the Jerusalem Talmud which reads:

"Rabbi Abba ben Acha said: One can never fully understand the character of this nation. When they are asked to contribute to the Golden Calf, they give. When they are asked to contribute to the Holy Tabernacle, they give."

This can be seen as an indication of indiscriminate giving, and the Talmud emphasizes that it reflects a deeper tendency to be responsive to all appeals for help, often without paying sufficient attention to the merits of the cause.

The first indication of the charitable instincts of our people is to be found in this week's Torah portion, Terumah (Exodus 25:1-27:19). In the very first verses of this Parsha, the Almighty instructs Moses to gather gifts from the people in order to construct the sanctuary in which He is to dwell. He goes so far as to itemize the materials which will be necessary. The list begins with gold and silver and extends to spices and incense and precious gems.

The people respond willingly and generously, and establish a precedent of charitable giving for all future Jewish generations. Indeed, the Talmud in the passage just referenced, insists that the gifts of gold donated to the Holy Tabernacle were intended to atone for the gifts of gold which were molten into what became the Golden Calf. This year, and in most calendar years, the Torah portion of Terumah is read about a week prior to the holiday of Purim. This holiday too is all about giving. The very celebration of this joyous day consists, as we will read in the book of Esther, of "sending gifts to one another and presents to the poor." (Esther 9:22)

There is an interesting contrast, however, between the practice of giving on the holiday of Purim and the proper strategy for giving during the rest of the year. On Purim we must not prioritize our gifts. We give to "whomever extends his hand". We are permitted to be indiscriminate in our giving, without judging as to who is more needy and who is less so.

But when it comes to the distribution of charity during the rest of the year we are instructed to be far more careful about our practices of giving. It might indeed be our ethnic tendency, as the passage in the Jerusalem Talmud above suggests, to give to idolatrous causes as freely as we give to sacred ones. But we must realize that that tendency is typically based on impulse, on the emotions of the moment, whereas proper charitable giving requires planning and intelligent thought.

These days there are numerous causes which beg for our resources. I hasten to add that few, if any, of them are "idolatrous". Quite the contrary, most of them are legitimate and even important. But charitable giving, according to our rabbis,

requires triage; that is, careful determination of which causes have priority. The rabbis even have set down rules for how to make that determination.

The importance of realizing that not all charitable causes are of equal merit is well illustrated by a homiletic insight which I found in a book written by my respected colleague, Rabbi Daniel Feldman. The book is entitled Divine Footsteps: Chesed and the Jewish Soul. I quote:

"The Vilna Gaon... homiletically understood the verse, 'thou shall not... close your hand against your destitute brother' (Deuteronomy 15:7), as an instruction about the evaluative responsibility contained within the tzedakah imperative. When our hand is closed in a fist, all fingers appear to be the same size. However, when the hand is open, it becomes clear that the fingers are all of different length... Appropriate giving will always require a judgment call..."

We are often moved by appeals which tug at our heartstrings and which prompt us to what some have called "emotional giving". But all of us, no matter how wealthy we are as individuals, and no matter how strong are our finances as organizations, have limited resources. We must attempt, although we can never be absolutely certain that our judgments are correct, to discern the priorities of the moment, and to distinguish between urgent overriding needs and causes which, despite their great merit, must be lower down on our list of priorities, and indeed which may, because of the paucity of our resources, have to be eliminated from that list entirely. These are difficult decisions, no doubt, but necessary ones. Proper charity must be given with an open hand and with an open heart. But it must also be given with an open mind.

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Terumah .

Symbolism of the Aron

Despite the fact that we don't have a Bais HaMikdash today or its various utensils or furniture items, all of the commentaries make attempts to derive great symbolic lessons from the description of the components of the Mishkan that are mentioned in the parsha as well as the way that they were built.

The Torah describes the Aron and its dimensions: "They shall make an Aron of Acacia wood, two and half cubits its length; a cubit and a half its width; and a cubit and a half its height. You shall cover it with pure gold, from inside and from outside you shall cover it, and you shall make on it a golden crown all around. [Shmos 25:10-11]

Various commentaries find significance in the fact that all the measurements for the Aron were given in half ammos [cubits] (2.5 x 1.5 x 1.5) as compared with the other utensils whose dimensions, for the most part, are specified in whole cubit (Amma) units.

The Baal HaTurim says that since the Aron contains the Torah, it is symbolic of the Talmid Chochom. The lesson is that the Talmid Chochom must maintain his humility and see himself in half measures (i.e. – not yet living up to his full potential). In the past, when a child was short, other children would call him using the pejorative, "half-pint." The idea is that he was only a "chatzi shiur" – half of a quantity.

The Kli Yakar comments regarding the same question in a similar vein that the lesson for the Talmid Chochom is that he should always think that his work is only half finished. Even when one finishes Shas or reaches a certain level, he should see his job as only "half done".

The Pardes Yosef cites an interesting observation in the name of the Chida. In Maseches Soferim, it is brought that the pasuk "Darosh Darash Moshe" must be written in the Sefer Torah such that the word Darosh is written at the end of a line and the subsequent word Darash (spelled the same way in Hebrew – Daled – Reish – Shin) is written at the beginning of the next line. The Chidah homiletically explains this very beautifully: When one expounds (Darosh) and he finds himself at the end of the line, thinking "I am already finished", we tell him "No, you are never finished. Go to the beginning of the next line and start expounding all over!" All these are

representative of the symbolism found by various commentators of the half ammos mentioned by the dimensions of the Aron.

Another example of homiletic symbolism that abounds around the description of the keylim [vessels] of the Mishkan is the fact that the poles which were used to transport the Aron were never allowed to be removed from the rings which encase them [Shmos 25:15]. Even though the Shulchon [Table] and the Menorah also had rings and carrying poles to transport them, the law that the poles were never to be removed from the rings only applied to the Aron. What is the symbolism here?

The commentaries explain that by the Shulchon and the Menorah, the poles were there to carry them strictly for pragmatic reasons. The poles of the Aron however represent people who support Torah. They represent the people who pay the bills, so to speak. We should never think that there will come a time when we can discard those who support Torah. They will always remain an essential component of the eternal preservation of Torah amongst the Jewish people. The poles remain in the prestigious place in the Holy of Holies together with the Aron itself.

This is analogous to the message our Rabbis derive from the pasuk "Rejoice Zevulun in your going out and Yissocher in your tents" [Devarim 33:18]. Chazal note that Zevulun (who represents the supporters of Torah) gets first mention in this pasuk to emphasize that he is on par with Yissocher (who represents those who study Torah).

This leads us to the following question. The Torah teaches: "You shall cover it with pure gold, from inside and from outside you shall cover it ..." [Shmos 25:11]. Rashi cites the Gemara [Yoma 72b] that Bezalel made three Arons, two golden and one wooden. They each had four walls and a bottom and they were each open at the top. In other words, the Aron was not really solid gold. It had that appearance but in truth it was made of wood with gold on the outside and gold on the inside. The Menorah was pure gold. Why was the Aron not made this way as well? It was certainly not because they could not afford an Aron of pure gold! What is the symbolism of this wooden interior for the Aron?

Rav Simcha Schepps, z"l, (a Rosh Yeshiva in Torah VoDaath) has a very interesting thought on this subject. There is a major difference between gold and wood. Gold is an extremely soft metal. It is very malleable. The purest form of gold is 24 carat gold. Less pure is 18 carats. 14 carat gold is less pure than 18 carat. They do not make gold more than 24 carats because it would break. It would be too soft. A 14 carat necklace is much sturdier than a 24 carat gold necklace because it has a larger percentage of non-gold alloys mixed in to give it strength.

The symbolism is as follows. The Aron represents Torah. Wood is solid and does not easily bend. The reason they strengthened the Aron with a wooden inside is to emphasize that we should not try to mold the Torah to meet our own needs. Pure gold could be formed and twisted any which way. We are not allowed to do that with Torah.

Unfortunately, we have been witness to different movements that try to shape the Torah. If they cannot fit their lives to the Torah, they try to shape the Torah to match their lives. This is what the Torah wants us to avoid and this is the message taught by the firm solid wood inside of the Aron between the two layers of gold.

In a similar vein, I saw an observation from Rav Zalman Sorotzkin, z"l. In his eulogy for the Brisker Rav Rav Sorotzkin asked, "Why was it that in the Holy Aron that housed the Luchos haEdus [Tablets of Testimony] was kept in the Kodosh Kadoshim behind a curtain?" No one ever saw the Aron Kodosh except for one person, one day during the year. Only the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur ever had a chance to see it! "Why was that?" he asked.

Rav Sorotzkin explained that the Torah was in a vault. It is off limits so that no one should dare try to tamper with it. Rav Sorotzkin compared this concept to the Brisker Rav. He lived in Yerushalayim in a little house and did not have very much to do with the rest of society. His job was that he was the guardian of Torah. He was in the Holy of Holies with the Torah. He was untouchable, just as the Torah must be untouchable.

One final example of symbolism: The Talmud in Yoma links the fact that the Aron had gold plating on the outside and gold plating on the inside with the statement that "Any Talmud Chochom who is not equivalent on the inside with the way he appears on the outside is not a Talmud Chochom." A person who puts on an act for everybody to see on the outside but who in his essence – on the inside – is not like that is no Talmud Chochom! Listen to a story: The Satmar Rebbe, zt"l, came to America after World War II. Rav Shraga Feivel Medelovitz, the Principal of Yeshiva Torah VoDaas invited him to come to Torah VoDaas to present a Torah lecture for the students. The Satmar Rebbe was an outstanding scholar. He gave a well-received shiur and as is customary, the students surrounded him after the lecture raising various points of analysis regarding the lecture. There were Torah discussions back and forth, it was a beautiful scene. Rav Shraga Feivel Medelovitz was taking this all in. He was bursting with pride. He was smiling from ear to ear. This demonstrated that he had been successful in raising a generation of young Torah students in America who were capable of hearing a shiur from the Satmar Rebbe and engaging him in serious dialogue about the contents of his presentation.

After the boys left, he went over to the Satmar Rebbe and said "Nu, what did you think of that? Wasn't it beautiful?" The Satmar Rebbe responded, "Yes it was beautiful, but I wish that these young men would be on the outside like they are on the inside" (inverting the classic Talmudic comment that a Talmud Chochom should be on the inside like he appears on the outside). In other words he was impressed that inside they were in fact fine Torah scholars, but they did not wear beards and payos on the outside which the Satmar Rebbe felt (in accordance with his own customs) was a necessary sign of a Talmud Chochom.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parsha Parables

Stories & Anecdotes that Illuminate the Weekly Torah Portion and Holidays

Parshas Terumah 5773 - February 15, 2013

In loving memory of Phyllis N. Adelsberg on her 20th Yaahrtzeit. by Howard & Robin Adelsberg & Family

Extinct Defined

This week the Torah begins the commandments that entail both collecting for, and the building of the Mishkan, the sanctuary that stood and travelled with the Children of Israel during their sojourn in the desert. The Torah specifies the materials needed for construction: "And this is the offering which you shall take of them: gold, and silver, and brass; and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen and goats" (Exodus) Rashi explains what was needed was the hair of goats. Therefore, Onkelos translated it as "Umay Azai, what comes from the goats, but not the actual goats themselves [i.e., not the goat skins], Because, [if that was the case] Targum's translation of the word Izim [goats] Iziyah (see Gen. 30:32).

Rashi explains why the Targum chooses a particular translation. The Torah continues: In addition to requests for acacia-wood; oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense; onyx stones, and stones to be set, for the ephod, and for the breastplate, the Torah requests contributions of "oros eezim and oros techashim" which seems to mean the skins of goats and the skins of the tachash (whatever that means) and that is where Rashi gets involved once again in why Targum translates a certain way. Rashi explains that the tachash was a species of animal that existed only for a limited time, and it had many hues (gavanim). And once again he rationalizes the Targum "Therefore, [Onkelos] translates [the word tachash as] sasgoona because it rejoices (sas) and boasts of its hues (gavanim) [see Shab. 28a, b]."

It's quite intriguing. Rashi usually quotes the Targum who defines words in the Aramaic language according to the Aramaic dictionary or axioms. In these two cases, Rashi seems to rationalize as to why the Targum translates the way he does. In

the first scenario, Rashi is bothered. After all, in Hebrew, eezim, literally means goats. But the Targum Unkeles seems to say something else. Thus Rashi explains that the Torah is actually not referring to a goat, but rather the goat hair, and therefore the Targum translates it as "What comes from goats." However, the second Rashi is truly difficult. Rashi explains that tachash was a species of animal lasted only a short time. In other words it became extinct. Rashi then describes the tachash as an animal which had many colors. What comes next is quite curious. "Therefore, Unkeles translates it with the word Sasgona, meaning it boasts of its many colors. First, why did Rashi say, "Therefore' Unkeles translates it with the word sasgona, meaning it boasts of its many colors." Maybe that is the Aramaic name? Second, what connection does the name have to do with the fact that the tachash is now extinct?

The Story

As a kid, I would read the Encyclopedia Brown series by Donald Sobel. It was about a kid Leroy Brown from the fictitious town of Idaville. His father was the police chief and he was a kid sleuth whose genius and perceptive abilities earned him the nickname Encyclopedia. In one story a shady coin dealer wants to sell the kids a "rare coin." It was so old he claimed that it was dated 100 BC! Encyclopedia exposed him with one simple point. You can't mint a coin and date it "BC"! How can one date anything that they didn't know would happen?

The Message

Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin explains: If the tachash only existed for a brief time, the period of the Israelites trek through the desert, then how could it have an Aramaic name? How is it possible that Unkelus who lived in the time of the Temple know a name for a species that only existed in the desert and was extinct way before the time he was around? Thus, Rashi explains that the tachash was an animal that had a coat of many hues and colors and "Therefore (even though even though Targum may not have an exact name for it, it is defined by its essence) because it rejoices (sas) and boasts of its hues (gavanim)!

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Subject [Rav Kook List]

Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Terumah: "I Will Dwell in Their Midst"

Why did God command the Israelites to construct a Temple? The Torah indicates the ultimate purpose for this holy structure:

"Make for Me a Sanctuary, and I will dwell in their midst" (Ex. 25:8).

The goal of the Mikdash was to enable God's Presence to dwell in the world, and 'open up' channels of communication with God - prophecy and ruach hakodesh (Divine inspiration).

Three Channels

Rav Kook distinguished between three distinct conduits of Divine communication. Each of these channels corresponds to a particular vessel in the Mikdash.

The first and highest conduit is connected to the holiest object in the Temple - the holy Ark in the Holy of Holies, which housed the luchot (tablets) from Sinai. From the Ark emanated the highest level of prophetic vision, the crystal clear nevu'ah that only Moses was privileged to receive. God informed Moses:

"I will commune with you there, speaking to you from above the ark-cover, from between the two cherubs that are on the Ark of Testimony" (Ex. 25:22).

This unique level of prophecy is the very source of the Torah's revelation.

The second conduit corresponds to the Menorah, a symbol of light and wisdom. The Menorah represents the widening expanse and dissemination of Torah and the wisdom of Israel. This conduit was not restricted to the Ark inside the inner sanctum, but expanded to encompass the Kodesh area of the Temple.

The last conduit relates to the Altar of incense. This is the channel of ruach hakodesh, Divine inspiration that originates in the inner resources of the soul. The phenomenon of ruach hakodesh parallels the service of incense, a hidden service performed inside the Sanctuary. And the Hebrew word for incense, ketoret, is related to the word kesher, meaning a 'tie' or 'connection.'

Opening up the Channels

The Temple service of Yom Kippur aspires to attain complete atonement. It seeks to ensure the proper functioning of these conduits of communication with God. For this reason, the High Priest would sprinkle blood from the special Yom Kippur offerings on precisely these three locations in the Temple:

Between the poles of the Ark;

On the Parochet-curtain separating the Kodesh (including the Menorah) from the Holy of Holies;

On the Altar of incense.

(Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, pp. 167-168)

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Subject Weekly Halacha

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt (dneustadt@cordetroit.com)

Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit

Weekly Halacha

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Shabbos Morning Kiddush

It is customary in some circles to recite Kiddush Shabbos morning [at a shul kiddush or simchah] over a one-ounce cup of schnapps [or liqueur.]¹ Although most poskim object to this custom, as Kiddush must be recited over a cup which holds at least a revi'is and at least a "cheek full" must be drunk,² still there are some poskim³ who defend this minhag for those who are accustomed to do so.⁴ They reason that schnapps is different from wine since it is normally consumed in much smaller quantities and is therefore subject to a different set of measurements.⁵

It follows, therefore, that those who rely on this leniency and recite Kiddush over schnapps should also recite borei nefashos over the schnapps, even though only a small amount was drunk. Although one does not recite a borei nefashos unless he drinks at least 3 fl. oz. of a beverage,⁶ schnapps—according to this view—is an exception and requires a borei nefashos even on a much smaller amount.⁷ Still one should avoid this situation and not recite a borei nefashos unless he drinks a revi'is of some other beverage or a k'zayis of another food.

When no wine or grape juice is available, there is a way of reciting Kiddush over schnapps which will satisfy the opinions of many poskim: Recite Kiddush on a revi'is of schnapps and drink at least a "cheek full", but instead of swallowing it in one shot, sip it slowly, for a period of up to three or four minutes.⁸ When even this is not possible, the next best option is to share the "cheek full" amount with others who are listening to the Kiddush.⁹

Kiddush must always be immediately followed by a seudah (meal). Most poskim maintain that baked mezonos items [including all types of Yerushalmi and noodle-kugels¹⁰] eaten after Kiddush are considered a seudah for this purpose.¹¹ After making Kiddush, at least a k'zayis (approx. 1 oz.) of a baked mezonos item should be eaten within three to four minutes.¹² One who heard Kiddush but did not follow it with a seudah, must repeat Kiddush at home before eating his meal.

On Pesach or other times when mezonos items are not available, the preferred method is to eat the seudah immediately after reciting Kiddush. If that is not practical, one should drink an additional revi'is (3 fl. oz.) of wine or grape juice. If one has no other wine or grape juice, he can rely on the revi'is of wine he consumed for Kiddush.¹³

Although some poskim maintain that one may fulfill his seudah obligation by eating fruit¹⁴ or shehakol items¹⁵ after Kiddush is recited [if there are no mezonos items available],¹⁶ the basic halachah follows the poskim that permit this only under special circumstances, such as the case of a person who is weak and needs to eat and has no baked or cooked mezonos items available.¹⁷ One who relied on this opinion, must repeat Kiddush at home before the meal.

While there is no obligation to repeat Kiddush at home if mezonos items were eaten after Kiddush [unless there are other people at home who did not yet hear Kiddush], it is praiseworthy to do so,¹⁸ all the more so for one who made Kiddush on less than a revi'is of schnapps.¹⁹

Question: Is it permitted to recite Kiddush over wine that was left uncovered overnight?

Discussion: In ancient times, poisonous snakes and reptiles were commonly found even in populated areas. In keeping with the Torah's strict exhortation to safeguard

one's life,²⁰ the Rabbis issued an edict forbidding drinking from any uncovered vessel which had been left unsupervised, for fear that a poisonous snake might have ejected venom into its contents while drinking from it.²¹

This prohibition, known as *mashkim megulim*, "uncovered beverages," is recorded in the Talmud²² and codified by the Rambam as practical halachah. But the Shulchan Aruch, who starts by quoting the Rambam, concludes by ruling that this edict no longer applies.²³ Since poisonous snakes and reptiles are rarely found in populated areas nowadays, there is no longer any reason to forbid drinking an uncovered, unsupervised beverage. The basic halachah follows this opinion, and one is no longer required to concern himself with this prohibition.²⁴

[Note that some poskim maintain that *mashkim megulim* apply even in contemporary times. They argue that poisonous snakes and reptiles do still exist in some remote areas.²⁵ Others argue that a rabbinic prohibition cannot be repealed even when the stated rationale no longer applies.²⁶ While the basic halachah does not follow this opinion and uncovered drinks may be consumed, there are many people who choose to observe these halachos strictly, based on several sources who recommend avoiding *mashkim megulim*,²⁷ especially in Eretz Yisrael.²⁸]

But even those who are generally lenient with *mashkim megulim* are careful not to use such wine for Kiddush²⁹ or for other ritual purposes which require wine, such as Havdalah and Birkas ha-mazon,³⁰ since it is considered "demeaning" to use *mashkim megulim* for mitzvos.³¹ L'chatchilah, therefore, several poskim recommend that wine which was left uncovered and unsupervised for even a brief period—even as little as a few minutes—should not be used for mitzvos.³² If, however, no other wine is available, one may use such wine as long as its taste and smell were not compromised in any way.³³ If the wine was left uncovered for five or six hours,³⁴ and surely if it was left uncovered over night, we are concerned that its taste or smell was affected and it may not be used for Kiddush etc., even b'diavad.³⁵

1 Minchas Yitzchak 10:22.

2 Mishnah Berurah 272:30; Aruch ha-Shulchan 272:13; Minchas Shabbos 79:29; Ketzos ha-Shulchan 89:5.

3 Ketzei ha-Mateh (Mateh Efrayim 625:99); Eishel Avraham 272:6; Maharsham 1:175; Chelkas Yaakov 1:94.

4 Because the practice was defended (in part) due to the scarcity and expense of wine, some poskim suggest that nowadays, Kiddush should be made over wine or grape juice only, see Nimukei Orchos Chayim 273. See also Piskei Teshuvos 289:11.

5 This explanation is based on the view of the Taz, O.C. 210:1, which is rejected by the later poskim; see Mishnah Berurah 190:14.

6 O.C. 190:3.

7 Har Tzvi, O.C. 159. It follows, therefore, that those who follow the majority view and do not recite Kiddush on schnapps, do not recite a borei nefashos when drinking an amount of schnapps less than a revi'is.

8 Mishnah Berurah 271:68. Talking is not permitted until the minimum amount is drunk.

9 Mishnah Berurah 272:30. See Eishel Avraham 272:6.

10 Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasa 54:22; Az Nidberu 8:31. See Meor ha-Shabbos, vol. 2, pgs. 576-577.

11 Mishnah Berurah 273:25. [A notable exception is the view of the Gaon of Vilna, who maintains that Kiddush can be made only when a seudah of bread follows. His view is quoted by the Beir Halachah 273:5, s.v. kasvu, without comment. Aruch ha-Shulchan 273:8 considers this to be the preferred method. See also Rav Akiva Eiger 273:5 quoting Rabbeinu Yonah and Peri Megadim 271:3. The widespread custom, however, follows the view of most poskim; see Beir Halachah 249:2, s.v. mutar.]

12 Some poskim permit eating cooked mezonos items, such as a barley cholent, as well; Magen Avraham, as explained by Igros Moshe, O.C. 2:26.

13 Mishnah Berurah 273:25, 27 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 29; Aruch ha-Shulchan 272:9.

14 Especially dates; Peri Megadim 273:11. See, however, Kaf ha-Chayim 273:42.

15 Preferably cooked; see Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 77:16.

16 Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:63. See also Ein Yitzchak, O.C. 12 and B'tzeil ha-Chochmah 4:2; 5:115.

17 Mishnah Berurah 273:26.

18 Shalmas Chayim 1:59; B'tzeil ha-Chachmah 4:147. See also Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:63 (anaf 8).

19 To satisfy the view of the majority of the poskim mentioned earlier.

20 Devarim 4:9, 4:15, as explained in Berachos 32b. See Beir ha-Gra, C.M. 427:8.

21 Although this is a Rabbinic prohibition (Levush, C.M. 427:1), some poskim maintain that once the Rabbis pointed out that *mashkim megulim* may be dangerous, drinking from them becomes forbidden min ha-Torah; see Levush, C.M. 427:11,

Tevuos Shor 13:2, Chasam Sofer, Avodah Zarah 30a and Aruch ha-Shulchan, C.M. 427:8.

22 Avodah Zarah 30a and Chullin 9b. The original source is the Mishnah (Terumos 8:4).

23 Y.D. 116:1, based on the view of Tosafos, Rashba and Tur.

24 Mishnah Berurah 160:23.

25 Pri Chadash and Pri To'ar, quoted by Birkei Yosef and Aruch ha-Shulchan, Y.D. 116:1.

26 The Vilna Gaon (quoted in Ma'asei Rav 95 and in Pe'as ha-Shulchan 2:32).

27 See Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 116:1; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 33:5; Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 1, pgs. 206-209.

28 Birkei Yosef, Y.D. 116:3 and Pe'as ha-Shulchan 2:32. See Minchas Yitzchak 9:85.

29 O.C. 272:1.

30 Birkei Yosef, O.C. 272:1; Beir Halachah 272:1 (s.v. al); Aruch ha-Shulchan 272:5.

31 There are several explanations as to why, exactly, it is considered demeaning; see Magen Avraham 272:2; Toras Chayim, Bava Basra 97a; Divrei Malkiel 4:1; Sfas Emes, Succah 50a.

32 Bigdei Yesha 272:1, quoting Tosafos Shabbos. See Koveitz Teshuvos 3:45. According to this view, wine and grape juice bottles should not be left uncovered for even a short amount of time.

33 Mishnah Berurah 272:3; Kaf ha-Chayim 272:7. See Az Nidberu 1:7.

34 Divrei Malkiel 4:1.

35 Aruch ha-Shulchan 272:5. See Az Nidberu 1:7.

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By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Playing Scrabble on Shabbos By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Writing is counted among the melachos prohibited on Shabbos, because each board of the Mishkan was marked in order to return it to its correct place whenever the Mishkan was reassembled. Erasing is a melacha because the numbers written on the boards were sometimes erased when a board was improperly marked (Rashi, Shabbos 73a).

Permanent writing is prohibited min haTorah, while temporary writing is prohibited only miderabbanan. "Writing" is permitted when no letters are formed at all. Thus, one may form letters in the air and one may communicate in sign language on Shabbos. Writing in an unusual way, such as with one's weaker hand, is prohibited miderabbanan, although erasing with one's weaker hand is prohibited min haTorah, since it is not difficult to do so. Writing on frosty windows and using disappearing ink or invisible ink on Shabbos is prohibited miderabbanan. The poskim discuss whether eating icing in the form of letters is considered erasing; the Mishnah Berurah rules that although one may bite through the letters, when cutting the cake, one should preferably slice between the letters and not through them. I will shortly explain the distinction between slicing between the letters and biting through them. MAY I PLAY SCRABBLE ON SHABBOS? IS THIS CONSIDERED WRITING AND ERASING?

Discussing the halachic issues as to whether or not one may play the game of Scrabble on Shabbos provides an opportunity to address some other aspects of the laws of writing. As we will see, there is not only a question as to whether or not this constitutes writing, but an additional concern as to whether it could potentially cause one to write.

Two potential writing issues are involved with Scrabble. First, is placing existent letters to form words considered writing? Perhaps writing requires actually forming the letters and not merely placing letters next to one another. Similar shaylos exist with educational toys or puzzles that form words, or combination locks that open by sliding numbers or letters into a certain sequence. In all of these cases, the question is whether forming a word or a code by moving letters together constitutes writing. Similarly, if this is considered writing, does separating the letters constitute erasing?

Scrabble also involves a second shaylah: May one play games on Shabbos where the score is usually kept by writing? Is this prohibited because of concern that one might forget and write on Shabbos?

BREAKING LETTERS

One of the early poskim, the Levush, ruled that it is a Torah violation to open and close a book on Shabbos that has words stamped on the edge of its pages (Levush 340:4). In his opinion, opening the book and thereby breaking the letters in this way violates a Torah prohibition of erasing; closing the book and reconstituting the letters violates writing.

Similarly, assembling or disassembling letters of puzzles and games is prohibited according to the Levush, since one is “writing” by moving the puzzle pieces together and “erasing” by separating them. Other poskim add that the Levush would also prohibit opening and closing a book where the page edges are decorated since this is considered erasing and redrawing the decoration (Machatzis HaShekel 340:6).

According to this analysis, it is prohibited to assemble or disassemble a jigsaw puzzle or a child's picture puzzle on Shabbos, since doing so creates a picture, which is “writing” according to this opinion.

THE DISPUTE

Other poskim disagree with the Levush for two reasons:

(1) There are divergent opinions as to whether moving letters or parts of letters together is considered writing. Writing is forming letters of communication. These authorities contend that bringing existent letters or parts of letters together is not considered writing and is permitted on Shabbos.

The Levush, who contends that creating letters or words is considered writing, even if one creates them from existent letters, disputes this exact point.

(2) Opening or closing the pages of a book is not a melacha, since the book is meant to be opened and closed, just as opening or closing a door is not considered destruction and construction (Shu't Rama #119; Taz 340:2). Opening and closing a door is considered using the door and not the building or destruction of a house. Similarly, someone opening and closing the pages of a book is using it; this is not considered erasing and writing the words on the edges.

Presumably, the Levush contends that there is a major difference between opening and closing a door, which is using it in a normal way, and opening a book with writing on its edges. The writing and erasing that takes place on the edge of the book cannot be considered the normal, integral usage of a book (because it happens incidentally to opening the book), and therefore it is an act of writing and erasing on Shabbos.

Although some poskim agree with the Levush (Magen Avraham 340:6; Chazon Ish 61:1), the majority rule leniently. The Mishnah Berurah concludes that, although the halacha is not according to the Levush, one should preferably be stringent, if one has a different book available (340:17). The same ruling might be applied to puzzles on Shabbos. An adult should preferably not play with a puzzle on Shabbos, if he has an alternate diversion. According to all opinions, one is not obligated to prevent a child from playing with a puzzle on Shabbos, although one should preferably not help him assemble the puzzle (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 443).

Rav Pesach Frank and others contend that even the Levush agrees that bringing together two complete letters does not constitute writing, because his whole argument concerns joining and separating letter fragments. The letters on the side of a book are obliterated each time the book is opened and recreated every time it is shut. However, separating two letters from one another is not erasing, nor is returning letters adjacent to each other considered writing (Shu't Har Tzvi, Tel Harim, Melech Koseiv #4).

SOME DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Rav Frank's explanation resolves several questions on the Levush's opinion. Rashi explains that erasing was a melacha in the Mishkan because the person marking the board sometimes erred and wrote the wrong number on a particular board. Since that number then needed to be erased and corrected, erasing is categorized as a melacha (Rashi, Shabbos 73a). However, if separating letters is considered erasing, then erasing was performed every time the Mishkan was disassembled and the adjacent numbers that indicated the order of the planks were separated from one another. Since this simpler case is not mentioned by Rashi, one may infer that merely separating two numbers does not constitute erasing, and that placing two numbers of letters together does not constitute writing (Shu't Rama #119).

Another question resolved by Rav Frank's approach requires an introduction. Someone who violates Shabbos negligently must bring a korban chatas if he wrote two or more letters. Although writing less than two letters is also forbidden min haTorah (Rashi, Shabbos 74a; however cf. Rashbam, Bava Basra 55b), it is not considered significant enough to require a korban. Yet, there is one situation where one is obligated to offer a korban for writing only one letter on Shabbos: when someone writes the last letter of a book, thus completing it, because in this instance the single letter is very significant (Shabbos 104b).

This Gemara is difficult to explain according to the Levush's position. Since the Gemara is teaching a novel concept, it should have taught the most novel insight possible, which (according to the Levush) is that someone moving one letter closer to

another thereby completing a book desecrates Shabbos. By omitting this case and mentioning the case of someone writing the last letter of a book, the Gemara implies that moving the last letter closer is not considered writing on Shabbos, presumably because moving letters together is not considered writing (Taz 340:2).

THE SOLUTION TO THE QUESTION

As we mentioned, Rav Pesach Frank answers these questions by theorizing that even the Levush agrees that bringing together two complete letters does not constitute writing. The Levush is discussing only creating or destroying letters by bringing together or separating parts of letters, such as happens when one opens or shuts a book. However, separating two letters from one another does not constitute erasing, nor does returning them so that they are adjacent constitute writing (Shu't Har Tzvi, Tel Harim, Melech Koseiv #4).

According to this approach, even the Levush would agree that spelling words while playing Scrabble does not violate Shabbos, since the letters are complete to begin with. He would, however, prohibit assembling a puzzle where letters are created, but he would be unconcerned about assembling a puzzle in which each letter is on a different piece of puzzle.

Incidentally, this may be the reason why the Mishnah Berurah distinguishes between slicing cake between the letters and through the letters. He may hold that slicing between the letters is not an act of erasing and therefore is permitted, since the letters are not obliterated in the process. However, slicing through the letters is an act of erasing, since it obliterates a letter.

IS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRAVEL AND STANDARD EDITIONS OF SCRABBLE?

In the travel edition of Scrabble, the letters lock in place. Does this have any effect on the halacha?

Some poskim rule that it is prohibited to attach lettering firmly to a paroches on Shabbos (Magen Avraham 340:10 as explained by Igros Moshe). According to this approach, firmly attaching a written item is also considered a form of writing. Although not all poskim agree, it seems that one should follow this approach (Minchas Chinuch; Nishmas Adam). This precludes using a game where letters or numbers snap firmly into place, and prohibits playing Travel Scrabble on Shabbos.

LOCKS
Some combination locks are set up so that they lock or unlock when numbers or letters are rotated until they read a certain code. Will this be a problem according to the Levush?

According to what we explained above, these locks are permissible, even according to the Levush, since the code is formed by moving entire letters and numbers (Shu't Tzitz Eliezer 13:44).

TORN PAGES

I borrowed a damaged siddur that has letters torn through the middle. May I place the two parts of the page together on Shabbos in order to read it, or does this constitute writing, since I am “fixing” a broken letter.

At first glance, it seems that this case is dependent on the above-quoted dispute. According to the Levush it should be prohibited to place the two halves of the page together, since one then makes the word legible. However, some poskim contend that even the Levush permits moving two parts of a torn page together, if the word is legible anyway (Shu't Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah 2:75). In their opinion, the Levush prohibits only creating a letter or word that is otherwise illegible.

Until now we explained the first of the two issues involved in playing Scrabble. Now we will discuss the second shaylah – scorekeeping. May one play games on Shabbos where the score is usually kept by writing? Is this prohibited because of concern that one might forget and write on Shabbos?

PLAYING GAMES

Chazal created many gezeiros (Rabbinic prohibitions) out of concern that one may write or erase on Shabbos. For example, they prohibited selling or renting items on Shabbos, lest one record the transaction (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 23:12).

Similarly, it is prohibited to weigh or measure on Shabbos (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 23:13), to marry (Beitzah 36b), to perform a pidyon haben (Shu't Rivash #156; Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 339:4), or to make financial calculations in one's head (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 23:18). All of these are prohibited out of concern that one may jot down some of the information on Shabbos.

Incidentally, even though acquiring things is normally forbidden, someone who finds an ownerless object on Shabbos may keep it, provided, of course, that he does not violate carrying or moving muktzah (Pri Megadim, 371:7 in Eishel Avraham; R' Akiva Eiger, glosses to Magen Avraham 339:6; Sdei Chemed Vol. 2 pg. 220). Since there is no buyer and no seller, Chazal were not concerned that he would write anything.

Chazal also prohibited reading financial documents on Shabbos because one might correct them. Similarly, Chazal forbade reading a guest list or a menu of what one intends to serve on Shabbos, because one might realize that he does not have enough food and erase an entry (Shabbos 149a; Rambam 23:19).

Among these prohibitions was a takanah prohibiting playing games where writing is part of their regular activity (Chayei Adam 38:11). Therefore, one may not play Scrabble or any other game where people usually keep score. Poskim permit playing chess on Shabbos, even though some people write down their moves. This is permitted because most people do not write down their moves.

The melachos of writing are a prime example of how a person must be fluent in all the halachos of Shabbos in order to understand its far reaching ramifications. Who would have imagined that even after proving that Scrabble is not included in the actual melacha of writing, it is nevertheless forbidden because of a decree that one might write in order to keep score? Studying the halachos of writing and the other melachos of Shabbos help us to appreciate Shabbos more, and get the maximum joy out of this special day.

Ohr Somayach :: The Weekly Daf :: Shabbos 135 - 141
For the week ending 16 February 2013 / 5 Adar I 5773
by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach zt'l

A Blessing in Time - Shabbos 137b

The long-awaited moment has come. The mohel has performed the bris milah and both he and the father of the circumcised child have made their blessings. Now it is time for the assembled guests to joyously burst forth with their own blessing for the child's future:

"Just as he entered the bris, so shall he enter into Torah, marriage and good deeds."

This is the text of the blessing as it appears in our gemara editions. It is also the form customarily used in the Ashkenazic community. In the Sephardic community the text, based on the ruling of the Beis Yosef, is directed towards the father: "Just as you brought him into the bris so may you bring him into Torah, marriage and good deeds."

Even though it would seem logical to thus directly bless the father rather than to offer an indirect blessing, the Sifsei Kohen (Yoreh Deah 265:3) provides an explanation for the Ashkenazic custom. Since there are situations in which the father is not alive or not present at the bris, thus rendering it impossible to offer him a direct blessing, it is preferable to have a standard, indirect text of a blessing which suits all occasions.

No matter if it is direct or indirect, the text of this blessing demands analysis in regard to the chronology it maps for the child's future. The common denominator of Torah, marriage and good deeds is that they, like bris milah, are all obligations which the father has in regard to his son (Kiddushin 29a). Torah study, our Sages point out, must precede marriage, and is therefore mentioned first.

But what about the good deeds of mitzvah performance?

Isn't the Bar Mitzvah age of thirteen the point where this is achieved by the father and should it therefore not come first? Rabbi David Avudraham reminds us that even though a boy becomes responsible for the fulfillment of mitzvos at the age of thirteen, he is not held accountable for Heavenly judgment until he is twenty. Since the ideal age for marriage is at age eighteen (Avos 5:21) before one reaches the age of twenty (Kiddushin 29b) we therefore express our wish that the little baby will reach this milestone in his life even before he reaches the age of Heavenly responsibility for good deeds.