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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAYAKHEL - 5771

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February 22, 2011

WISE Giving and CONFUSED Priorities

By Rabbi Eliyahu Safran

“The entire assembly of the Children of Israel left Moshe’s presence. Every man, whose heart inspired him came; and everyone whose spirit motivated him brought the portion of HaShem for the work of the Tent of Meeting, for all its labor and for the sacred vestments.”

What happened? Didn’t the Torah previously report that Moshe appealed for free will offerings from the entire community, not just the rich? The Ohr HaChayim notes that after Moshe’s appeal the “entire assembly of the Children of Israel left Moshe’s presence,” as one, excited, united and enthusiastic group eager to do all that Moshe requested. So, what happened between all leaving as one, and the return of the few?

Everyone loves a great speech. Everyone came to hear a passionate appeal from non other than Moshe Rabeinu. When the oratory was completed, many left and only the ish remained; the nediv lev, the truly committed and thoughtful, only they stayed on to follow through on all that was heard. There is frequently a great gap between good will and positive implementation. Many good intentions evaporate before they are ever actualized. True, many heard Moshe’s sincere appeal. Many were truly willing, excited and uplifted by all that was said. By the time they made their way home and began reflecting on what they would have to give up in order to fulfill their obligations, many had second thoughts. “They were no longer carried by their hearts; they were stultified by their pockets.”

Chazal teach that the contributions for building the Mishkan were to serve as atonement for the making of the golden calf. For example, the “earrings and every kind of gold ornaments” contributed to the Mishkan, were to atone for the “gold earrings” that gilded the Egel. If that is the case, the Yerushalmi wonders, how can we possibly understand that only the nediv lev, the wise hearted, those whose hearts “lifted them up” contributed for the Mishkan’s construction, whereas for the golden calf va’yitparku kol ha’am, everyone contributed? Is this possible? Are we looking at the first classic case of communal mistaken priorities?

Rav Meir Shapiro, revered Rosh Yeshiva and energetic fund raiser of the pre-holocaust Yeshiva Chachmei Lublin, points to a painfully mistaken notion repeated by well intentioned givers throughout the ages. Then and now, fiery, emotionally appealing appeals are made for a variety of causes luring potential contributors to believe that their generosity will help sustain and maintain entities critically needed for a vibrant community. Well intentioned donors give, some even beyond their means. The campaign is over. Full page ads announce the campaign’s results; how much was collected, how the funds were allocated, all the contributors by giving category and in many cases the starting date of next year’s campaign. At that point, the more insightful among the givers begin to soul search about what really happened to their funds. Many disappointingly discover that there are wide gaps between the campaign noises and the realities of how the funds are spent. To their great chagrin is now seems, that there are great disparities between the collector’s seemingly convincing story and what ultimately happened to my hard earned dollars. It happens now, and it happened then.

An entire anxious community contributes heavily and generously to the making of the egel ha’zaav. The convincing campaign literature leads them to believe that their funds are needed to guarantee the future of klal yisrael, appeals we also hear and read about all the time. They were assured that eleh eloecha yisrael – “This is your god, O Israel,” just as we too are media blitzed about organizations and institutions proclaiming that without their vital work klal yisrael is in jeopardy. Many would not even imagine that a golden calf would result from their funds. They were under the false impression that they were contributing for the spiritual future of the Jewish people; a holy and exalted purpose!

Moshe reappears. Questions are asked They begin to audit, examine and demand answers, and as the truth begins to unravel, doubts are cast not only on yesterday’s wasted funds but skepticism evolves about tomorrow’s requests, as well. So now, when appeals are made for the community’s most worthy cause – for G-d’s sanctuary, only the wise hearted respond. Ponzi schemes devastate entire communities, perhaps even more so when they are spiritual Ponzi schemes.

A most puzzling perhaps even frightening question however, emerges from these two fund raising campaigns. After massive contributions were offered for the making of the golden calf, when all was said and done all there was to show for all the riches contributed was one single calf. Yet, no one asks for an accounting. Unbelievable! There were no mass demonstrations demanding an accounting of what happened to all of the riches given, resulting in just one golden calf. On the other hand, when the cause, is as sacred as the erection of the Mishkan, Moshe feels compelled to render a precise accounting of every shekel collected. Wasn’t it obvious that all those leading the Egel campaign pocketed and misappropriated the majority of the funds, and those toiling with Moshe in building a Mishkan were genuinely honest?

This confusing phenomenon mirrors not only the giving to the ancient golden calf and historic Tabernacle. It describes realities of contemporary fund-raising and philanthropic trends. Multi-million dollar campaigns with glitzy public relations ads and web sites seem to attract many more generous contributions than genuinely meaningful causes. Confused priorities continue to plague the giving Jewish community. Memorials, monuments and museums acknowledging that which is no longer accrue millions of dollars for their bricks and mortar, while dynamic and vibrant houses of Jewish living where Torah is taught, hungry mouths are fed and Jewish souls are nourished and sustained for that which must be, valiantly struggle for today’s bread. Does it make any more sense than Egel’s phenomenal success, and Mishkan’s dependence on the few wise-hearted?

What ultimately is the difference between the call to respond to an Egel campaign and the privilege to contribute for a Mishkan? Making a golden calf involves a breaking loose from the bonds of self discipline,

giving free rein to one's instinct rather than to one's spirit or heart. Making a Mishkan demands self discipline, assuming a higher calling, a yoke of Heaven, a calling not all are willing to assume. Contributing to causes that assure Jewish living and continuity requires understanding, perspective and a spirit from on high that we simply can't do with out them.

A poor man ran home in haste and breathlessly told his wife, "I have just been to see the richest man in town and found him at his dinner table eating blintzes. As I stood there smelling their delicious fragrance, the juices in me began to work. Oh my, those blintzes must certainly taste wonderful."

Then the poor man sighed longingly. "If I could only taste blintzes just once."

"But how can I make blintzes? I need eggs for that," answered his wife.

"Do without eggs," her husband sighed.

"But I will need cream."

"Well, you will have to do without cream," the husband responded again.

"And you think sugar doesn't cost money?" the wife says.

"So, then do without the sugar."

The wife set out to work and made the blintzes, but without the eggs, without the cream and without the sugar. With a judicious air the husband started to eat them, chewed them slowly and carefully, and then a look of bewilderment came to his face. "Let me tell you, Sarah," he murmured, "for the life of me, I can't see what those rich people see in blintzes."

Rabbi Dr. Eliyahu Safran, serves as OU Kosher's Vice President of Communications and Marketing. Subscribe to Shabbat Shalom! © Orthodox Union - All Rights Reserved. This Week's Shabbat Shalom | www.ou.org

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From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein

<info@jewishdestiny.com>

Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Jerusalem Post :: Friday, February 25, 2011

**CERTAINTY AND UNCERTAINTY :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

We have all heard the famous phrase that the only certainties in human existence are death and taxes. We are also well aware that the human being craves certainty in his or her existence. We plan for our future, we attempt to provide funds and care for our later years and for our descendants as well.

Yet even a cursory knowledge of general and Jewish history will illustrate that there is no real certainty in any facets of life – health, wealth, success, power, national stability, etc. – and that uncertainty is the norm in human existence- privately, nationally and internationally. Just look at the events of the past month here in our Middle Eastern society.

Everyone - experts, academicians, politicians, op-ed experts and experienced diplomats and heads of governments have been caught short and baffled by the real events that have transpired. All of the certainties of defense and foreign policies that were in place a scant few weeks ago have been replaced by the vast uncertainties that now face us, the region and the world generally. But this was to be expected since all of human life is based upon the principle of uncertainty.

But uncertainty is such an uncomfortable state of being that humans prefer to deny its persistent existence. We listen to our financial planners and invest our wealth according to their projections of what our wealth

will be twenty or thirty years hence and yet our rational mind tells us that they don't know the future since no human being knows it. We crave certainty so desperately that we behave very often in a fashion that is truly counterproductive to our true best interests.

Judaism always preached this doctrine of uncertainty. There is no people in the world that has existed as long and as dangerously in the milieu of uncertainty as has the people of Israel. Lately, I have been studying works of rabbinic responsa spanning four centuries. All of them carry the caveat that circumstances can change rapidly and that their decisions are not to be taken as prophecy for "plague, war, expulsion and persecution" may certainly intervene.

Yet, interestingly enough, there is almost never any note of pessimism or depression in their words and writings. They apparently all acquired the knack of living productive, meaningful and even holy lives in a world of complete uncertainty. They did so by grasping the essence of Torah values, that good is ultimately a wiser path in life than evil, that faith in God is a necessary component in personal and national Jewish life and that by raising generations of loyal and committed Jews, the certainty of Jewish survival and accomplishments will conquer the uncertainties of the circumstances of general human existence.

A person needs an anchor of some certainty in one's life. The Torah and Jewish traditions and the history and memories of the Jewish people can provide that anchor in our turbulent tide of constant uncertainty. All predictions regarding the future, all analyses about the present are inherently tenuous if not downright false. Judaism recognizes this as a constant fact of human life.

The Torah itself writes: "What is hidden belongs to the realm of the Lord our God but what is clearly revealed is that we and our descendants are to live a Torah way of life." The Talmud taught us: "What has been hidden by Heaven, why are you curious to attempt to decipher?"

All of the certainties and ideological waves of the future of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are already to be found in the ash heap of history. So now we are being fed a diet of new certainties under popular words such as democracy, human rights, progressivism and international interdependence.

But even as these new certainties are being advanced and propagated we already feel the sneaking suspicion within ourselves that these certainties are not really so certain. They may not turn out to be the predicted panacea for all human troubles and struggles. For what is hidden from us – the future and its events and upheavals (and in this we can be certain that there will be upheavals) – belongs to Heaven.

Judaism preferred to deal with the present and pragmatic rather than with the unknown, the mysterious and the uncertain future. We have to do our best, our most noble, our kindest and be committed to the preservation of our Torah and our people and state. That is probably the only certainty that we can glean from the events of human life that currently surround us.

Shabat shalom.

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From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein

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Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

**Weekly Parsha :: VAYAKHEL :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

Rashi points out that the section of the parsha that deals with the observance and holiness of Shabat was related to the Jewish people in a public manner with all of the people in attendance. Moshe gathered all of Israel to him to declare the concept of the sanctity of the Shabat. We are taught that almost all of the other precepts, values and commandments of the Torah were taught by Moshe firstly to a select group of his relatives and then to the elders of Israel and then finally they

taught the general public the understanding of Torah and the workings of the Oral Law. Apparently this method was deemed insufficient when it came to the core principle of Judaism which Shabat represents.

Shabat needed a public forum and its importance needed to be emphasized in front of the entire gathering of, similar to the granting of the Torah itself at Sinai or the final covenant with Israel at the end of Moshe's life as recorded for us in the book of Dvarim.

In my opinion, the Torah alludes in this fashion to the fact that the survival of the Jewish people is dependent not only on the private observance of the Shabat by every Jew but that Jewish society must recognize and incorporate within itself a public observance of Shabat as well. It is not only the Jewish home that must be recognizable as being special and holy on Shabat but the Jewish street must also be so recognizable and special on Shabat as well.

The private Shabat observance has made positive strides over the past few decades. The public Shabat however has regressed both in Israel and in the United States. The JCC centers in almost all major Jewish communities in the United States have abandoned the Shabat.

Many of them claim that it is because the majority of their clientele is no longer Jewish. The irony of this excuse is apparently lost on them. The reason that the Jews have abandoned JCC centers is because those Jews also previously abandoned the Shabat. Here in Israel the public Shabat many times is observed mainly in the breach of the existing Shabat laws rather than in observance and conformity with them.

Again, the irony of those who want Israel to be a Jewish state but are not at all supportive of a public Shabat is exquisite. For it is the public Shabat more than any other public sign of Jewishness – flag, language, culture, etc. – that defines Israel as being a Jewish state.

And its continued erosion by greedy kibbutz shops, city malls, open businesses and nightclubs – and, by the way it appears that Friday night, leil Shabat, is the most violent and crime ridden night of the week – have only made our country not only less Jewish but less safe, less civilized, more emotionally unsatisfactory and less secure.

Most of the children here in Israel receive no education regarding Shabat, its history and importance in Jewish history and life. That is a sure fire recipe for diminishing our chances to have a Jewish state here in our holy land. The public Shabat should be strengthened in all ways in order to guarantee a meaningful future for Jewish generations that are yet to come.

Shabat shalom.

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

To Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>

Subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

### **Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Parshas Vayakhel**

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

The Shalah Hakadosh writes that the eish, fire, alludes to the fire of machlokes, dispute, and ka'as, anger. Controversy sparked by anger consumes as much as fire does. One must be cautious never to allow these flames of indignation and contention to kindle and surely not to fan them. As bad as it is during the weekday, the evil increases many-fold if the sanctity of Shabbos is disturbed by these flames. The Zohar Hakadosh says: "Meritorious is he who guards his house, the heart, on Shabbos, seeing to it that no depression or bitterness enters into this domain." It is about this fire that the Torah writes: "You shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings on the Shabbos day." Clearly, one who becomes infuriated is considered as if he kindled the fires of Gehinnom, Purgatory.

Veritably, writes the Maaneh Rach, the fire of ka'as is more serious than physical fire. While physical flames destroy physical matter, the flames spurred by anger destroy the neshamah, soul. The Torah, Bamidbar 31:23, writes: "Everything that comes into the fire - you shall pass through the fire." This means that heat causes the pores of a metal vessel to expand, so that it absorbs the taste of foods that come into contact with it. In order to remove what has been absorbed by heat/fire, one must apply heat to the affected utensil to purge it of the absorbed taste. Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl, interprets this pasuk homiletically. Anything that has come in contact with fire - the fire of anger - must have that fire/anger purged only one way: the fire of Purgatory.

The sin is much worse if it occurs on Shabbos Kodesh. Horav Chaim Plagi, zl, writes in his Kaf HaChaim, "I saw with my own eyes that in any household which was plagued by controversy either prior to Shabbos or on Friday night, something bad would occur during the coming week to a member of that household."

Shabbos is yom menuchah u'kedushah, a day of rest and holiness. "Rest" applies to physical labor; one does not perform labor on Shabbos, because it detracts from the character of the day. Rest means that one does not exert his emotions, using Shabbos as a time for dispute. It is a time of peace and solitude. It is a time, as we say in Bentching, shelo tehei tzarah v'yagon v'anachah b'yom menuchoseinu, "that there be no distress, grief, or lament on this day of our contentment." This is a prayer in which we ask the Almighty not to permit our day of rest to be "disturbed." The Ponevezer Rav, zl, explained this phrase with the following twist.

The Rav was once describing with great enthusiasm how the serenity of Shabbos permeated the psyche of Lithuanian Jews. He focused specifically on the town of Vidz, relating the following incident. One Shabbos morning, a fire broke out in the town. The house of one of the finest, G-d-fearing Jews in the community was completely destroyed. Wooden homes do not stand up well against fire. The Rav of the city went that afternoon to seek out the hapless congregant in order to offer his sympathy and encouragement. He found him sitting atop one of the cinder blocks, finishing Seudah Shlishis and singing zemiros l'kavod Shabbos! It was as if nothing had happened; as if his house was not gone; as if everything that he possessed had not been destroyed. It was Shabbos Kodesh. Concerning this incident, the Ponevezer Rav said, "The concept of she'lo tehei tzarah v'yagon b'yom menuchoseinu, was so much a part of this Jew's psyche, that the she'lo tehei - 'that there not be' - was not an aspiration, or even a halachah - it was a metzius, an entity! On Shabbos Kodesh no distress, grief or lament can exist. It is Shabbos and, therefore, it cannot be!" That was the Jew of old.

As I concluded this Torah thought, I chanced upon one of Rabbi Jonathan Rosenblum's recent blogs. He tells a fascinating story which carries with it a compelling lesson. Rabbi Berel Wein was once invited to a meeting with the editor of the Detroit Free Press. This is the primary newspaper in Detroit, Michigan. The editor took the liberty of sharing a story with Rabbi Wein. His mother had come to America when she was eighteen years old. Uneducated and na'ive to the American way of life, this peasant girl was hired as a domestic maid by an observant Jewish family. In fact, the head of the household was the president of the local Orthodox shul.

The young girl, whose name was Mary, knew nothing about Jews or Judaism. I guess they were not part of Ireland's peasant culture. The family was well-to-do and left for their winter vacation in mid-December, with plans to return on the night of December 24th. Mary realized that there would be no Xmas tree there to greet them. So she took the money that the family had left her for expenses and went out to purchase a beautiful tree; she decked it out with all of the trimmings. The lights shone bright and colorful. To add to the festive surprise, she decorated the front of the house with all kinds of Xmas regalia.

The family returned on December 24th. When they saw their house, they thought that perhaps they had made the wrong turn. They pulled back out of the driveway and drove around the block - only to discover again that their house was decorated to the hilt with everything Xmas. I forgot to mention that they lived only a few doors from the shul where the man was president. What a "wonderful" surprise.

Mary was so excited to greet her employers. After all, she had really gone out of her way to make them happy. During this time, the head of the family was contemplating exactly what he was going to tell the members of his shul about his new ecumenism. The man entered the house, greeted Mary and asked her to step into his study. "Mary," he began, "no one has ever made such a beautiful gesture to us. You have really gone out of your way to make us feel welcome. Let me give you something for all of your trouble." He proceeded to take out a one-hundred dollar bill from his pocket. This was not pocket change during the depression years. He gave it to her and said, "Mary, this is a sign of our appreciation." He then explained to her that Jews do not have Xmas trees.

When the editor concluded his story, he told Rabbi Wein, "And this is why there has never been an editorial critical of Israel in the Detroit Free Press since I have become editor, and I promise you that there never will be as long as I serve as editor."

The shul president's reaction to Mary's misplaced welcome was probably not the same one many of us would manifest. He showed sympathy instead of anger; compassion instead of fury; seichel, common sense, instead of impetuous outrage. This was the right thing to do. His Kiddush Hashem was rewarded over time. The difference was in curtailing his anger, not losing it over something meaningless. The angry person shoots first and then thinks. The baal seichel who is in control of his emotions knows when to "load his gun" and - on the rare occasion - when to "use it."

#### **The Nesiim / Princes brought the Shoham stones and the stones for the settings for the Ephod and the Choshen. (35:27)**

The observer will note that the word nesiim is spelled defectively - without the two yudin which would normally follow the sin and the aleph. Rashi teaches that the defective spelling implies a rebuke leveled at the Nesiim for being late in contributing towards the construction of the Mishkan. Out of a desire to allow all the people to contribute to their heart's content, the Nesiim announced that they would cover any shortfall. How surprised they were when the people gave overwhelmingly, leaving nothing for the Nesiim to contribute except for the precious stones that completed the Ephod and Choshen. When it came time for the chanukas ha'Mizbayach, inauguration of the Altar, the Nesiim wasted no time in bringing their sacrifices. They were taking no chances. Chazal say that they were rebuked for being indolent in bringing their contributions. While the casual observer may not view their actions to be lacking of alacrity, Chazal's perceptive glance is much more penetrating.

Why does Rashi relate the fact that the Nesiim were the first to give to the Altar? He is addressing the deficient spelling of the Nesiim and the rebuke they received. What role do their later make-up actions play in this rebuke? Horav Zev Weinberg, Shlita, suggests that Rashi is alluding to a simple question that might be gnawing at the reader: Once the Nesiim corrected their earlier indolence by being the first to contribute to the Altar, the subnormal spelling of their title should be corrected. Why does the Torah continue with this incomplete spelling? The Torah is teaching us that alacrity for the Altar does not atone for indolence concerning the contributions for the Mishkan. One will receive merit for the former and rebuke for the latter. Furthermore, once certain situations in life have passed-- and we missed out on according them the proper commitment and respect--we can no longer do so. They are gone. We can no longer rectify the situation.

Reuven lost the bechorah, first-born birthright, as a result of his moving Yaakov's bed into the tent of his mother, Leah, following the passing of Rachel Imeinu. His repentance was accepted, he was forgiven, but the bechorah was gone forever. The Bechorim, Jewish firstborn, had always performed the service. They were Klal Yisrael's first Priests. When they sinned with the Golden Calf, they lost their privilege to serve.

Repentance helps for the future, but sometimes, what is lost in the past remains forever lost.

Time is Hashem's greatest gift to us. How we wish we would not have wasted time in the past. Regrettably, every minute that passes which is not accounted for is a minute lost for posterity. How we wish, later in life, that we could retrieve all those wasted minutes, all of the wasted opportunities to spend with our elders - parents, grandparents - learning from their life's experience, hearing the stories of previous generations, how they lived and the lessons we might derive from their lives. Some of us wait until it is too late. Once it is over - it is over.

#### **See, Hashem has proclaimed by Name, Betzalel ben Uri ben Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah. (35:30)**

Rashi teaches us that Chur was the son of Miriam HaNeviah. It is strange that Rashi would mention Chur's relationship with Miriam once again. He had mentioned Chur's lineage previously in Parashas Beshalach when the Torah writes that Chur and Aharon HaKohen supported the hands of Moshe Rabbeinu during the battle with Amalek. Perhaps Rashi is addressing why the Torah emphasizes that Betzalel's selection came directly from Hashem. People might talk; after all, he was Moshe's nephew.

The Midrash teaches us that Chur's name is mentioned here-- in contrast to other places in which an individual's lineage is not traced back to his grandfather-- because Chur is the reason that Betzalel was selected to be the Mishkan's architect. Hashem said to Chur, "By your life, since you gave up your life in My service during the sin of the Golden Calf, when you stood up to the worshippers and subsequently lost your life, I reward you by assuring you that all of your sons who descend from you will elevate to spiritual nobility."

Horav Zev Weinberger, Shlita, notes that, at times, for reasons not explicable to us, Hashem stores rewards away for a number of generations, for just the right time when he offers reparations as He sees fit. Thus, one may be blessed due to the merit of an ancestor. This is not an uncommon phenomenon in our day and age, when we see many great Torah scholars who hail from "simple" family backgrounds. We fail to recognize that these families are far from simple. They are the beneficiaries of great merit, provided to them compliments of an earlier generation.

We have established why Chur merited a grandson of Betzalel's status.

This does not explain, however, why Chur is distinguished as Miriam's son. Rav Weinberger quotes Rashi at the beginning of Sefer Shemos, when the Torah relates the story of the heroines of the Jewish People: Shifrah and Puah, a.k.a. Yocheved and her daughter, Miriam, noting how Hashem rewarded their efforts on behalf of the Jewish infants. Vayaas lahem batim, "He made for them houses" (Shemos 1:2): Rashi comments that these houses were not physical edifices, but rather dynasties. Yocheved became the ancestress of Kehunah and Leviah, and Miriam became the ancestress of David HaMelech. Others say that Yocheved received Kehunah and malchus, monarchy, while Miriam received chochmah, wisdom, which is a reference to Torah. What did they do that highlights them so? They were only acting as a human being should act.

This is where we err. The Midrash is teaching us that it is a grave error to think that, because one is supposedly a decent human being, he will not descend to the nadir of murder. The only reason the meyaldos ha'Ivriyos, Jewish midwives, did not listen to Pharaoh and kill the Jewish infants is that they feared the Almighty. Only yiraas Shomayim protects a person from the most base of sins - not mentchlechkeit! Miriam feared Hashem;

thus, she refused to hurt the Jewish infants. As a result of her dedication, she was rewarded with a grandson of Chur's status, one who was prepared and willing to relinquish his life for Hashem's Name. He stood up to the Golden Calf revelers, and they killed him for it. He stood up to them because he feared G-d He was carrying on a family trait - yiraas Shomayim.

We may add that this might be why the Torah gives no significance to Chur's act of devotion and self-sacrifice. The Torah does not mention that he was killed by the worshippers. Why not? Is it not important? It is significant for us, but, for Chur, it was his heritage. It was his way of life. His grandmother acted similarly when she risked her life by defying Pharaoh's evil decree. Yet, her name is not mentioned in the Torah. We know her as Puah. It is Chazal who identify the elusive Puah as Miriam. Why is there a cloak of secrecy? This was her way of life; nothing was out of the ordinary. She feared Hashem and this was one of the many ways it was manifest. One does not need accolades for living as a Jew should live. It is a way of life.

After I shared the above dvar Torah with one of the groups that I teach, a participant whose gravitational pull to Orthodoxy is at best tenuous, asked: "What kind of reward did Miriam receive for all of the good that she did? Is her son being tragically killed a reward?" Good question, but obviously from a distorted perception. Indeed, we see from here how a limited view of history can pervert our perspective. We view history myopically, through the lens of the present, failing to take in the whole picture: past, present and future. We are not ones to question Hashem's decision but, rather, to believe with full conviction that whatever He does it is with a purpose and meaning. Additionally, since we only witness the "here and now," we fail to see an occurrence as fitting into a span of time which continues far beyond our limited vision. What seems tragic today is quite possibly the component necessary to transform an entire future. The end does not justify the means; it, in fact, gives meaning to the means.

Miriam risked her life for Klal Yisrael due to her absolute fear of Hashem. Her son gave up his life as a result of his allegiance to the Almighty. Did their individual sacrifices go to naught? Hardly, when we consider that their grandson, Betzalel, was the one selected by Hashem to be the architect of the Mishkan. He was to represent the finest qualities of the Jewish faith and imbue them into the edifice that would become the place where Hashem's Shechinah would repose. He was the scion of two sacrifices: Miriam's readiness and Chur's ultimate sacrifice. What was their reward? Betzalel: Can a parent ask for more?

**But the work had been enough for all the work, to do it - and there was extra. (36:7)**

The commentators focus on the seeming contradiction in this pasuk. If there was enough, how was there extra? By their very nature, the words "enough" and "extra" are not consistent with one another. "Enough" implies constriction in amount, while "extra" denotes that there is more than the required amount. Furthermore, what was done with the "extra"? The various commentators offer interpretations for the "extra" and how it was used. Horav Meir Shapiro, zl, suggests a novel approach. Without question, each and every Jew contributed towards the construction of the Mishkan and its vessels. Every Jew gave in accordance with the manner that he was blessed by Hashem - some more, some less - but everyone gave. Furthermore, there is no question that some Jews would have loved to give greater donations than they did, but they simply had to live within a budget. They gave what they had. On the other hand, some of them possessed wealth in much greater proportion than what they actually g

ave, but, by the time they brought their contributions, it was too late. Halachically, we consider a person's thoughts to be consecrated. Thus, for the individual who wanted to give a thousand dollars, but ended up giving only one hundred, the other nine hundred is considered hekdesch, consecrated.

The Lubliner Rosh Yeshivah continues: Is it fair to think that all of those holy machashavos, intentions, the desires to contribute to the House of G-d, are to go to waste? Certainly not! In the Talmud Shabbos 33A, Chazal say, "One who intended to perform a mitzvah and, by accident, he was unable to complete his intentions, it is considered as if he carried out the mitzvah. Therefore, we must say that somewhere, somehow, their intentions for holiness achieved fruition. But where?

This is what is alluded to by the pasuk, "The work had been enough."

The donations that were collected from the people covered exactly what was needed for the Mishkan, but there was extra. This refers to the money that people wanted to give, but could not. Those "extra" funds are hovering throughout the airspace of the Mishkan. It is from these funds that the avir azarah k'azarah, the airspace of the azarah, is holy. How did it become holy? It was neither sanctified, nor was it anointed with the shemen ha'mishchah, oil of anointing. It was the holy intentions of particular Jewish people-- their boundless love for the Almighty-who sought to give more, but could not. These intentions filled the airspace with holiness.

A Jew's strivings, his yearnings, his aspirations are not ignored. Hashem stores them. Every noble intention that a Jew has does not go to waste, even if it does not immediately see fruition. It might even take generations, but for the Jew that contributes in his "mind," whose intentions are noble and holy, those intentions are counted. In the Yerushalmi Yuma 15, Chazal make a compelling statement: "Any generation in which the Bais Hamikdash was not rebuilt is considered as if it was destroyed during that generation." How does one build the Bais Hamikdash? Is it realistic that we could have built it in our generation? Moreover, can we be held accountable for it not being rebuilt? Rav Meir Shapiro explains that the yearnings of the Jews in each generation construct the airspace of the Bais Hamikdash. We did our part. The holy space is there. Now, it is up to Hashem to establish the physical edifice around it.

**Their pillars twenty and their sockets twenty, of copper, the hooks of the pillars and their bands of silver. (38:10)**

The term vavei ha'amudim, which is translated here as "the hooks of the pillars," is used by the early commentators to describe the phenomenon that almost every column in the Sefer Torah begins with a vav, which is the prefix "and." Thus, vavei ha'amudim refers to the vav that begins every amud, column, in the Torah. Indeed, the vav is the most commonly used letter in the Torah. This is in contrast to other languages in which a sentence beginning with the prefix, "and," is considered grammatically deficient. Our Torah does not see it this way. Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl, explains that the Torah is one long hemshech, continuance. It begins with Bereishis, "In the beginning," and it continues on like a chain, with each link connecting to the next in succession until the very end, which-- if placed in a circle-- connects to the very beginning. Every incident begets the next incident; every occurrence gives rise to the next occurrence; every endeavor engenders the successive response.

This is the meaning of the concept, "The end is to be found within the beginning." Let us take the development of a child as an example. We observe a child that is eight years old. On the one hand, he is intelligent, able to recite Chumash and Mishnayos with great proficiency. On the other hand, he plays like a child. What is he? The explanation is that with each ensuing step forward, the child takes along with him a little from before. He builds upon his earlier life. He takes hold of the next rung on the ladder as he stands on the present rung. It is only later, when he has acclimated himself to-- and is completely integrated into-- the new environment, that he stands firmly and exclusively on the next step of his stage of development.

Another example may be gleaned from Shabbos Kodesh. While Shabbos itself is the holy day, it nonetheless sanctifies Erev Shabbos and Motzei Shabbos into one entity, so that the before, during and after are all dedicated to Hashem.

Rav Pincus suggests that this concept applies equally to the chain of the End of Days, the Days of Moshiach. The light of the coming of Moshiach illuminates the darkness of the present galus, exile, connecting the end with the beginning as one leads up to the others. This is the idea behind the incredible baal teshuvah movement, which has reached thousands of souls. Until recently, these individuals would have sunk in the spiritual filth of secular society, but they are now digging themselves out and returning to a life of commitment to Torah. The fellow who, until a few years ago, could not read Hebrew, has become a talmid chocham, Torah scholar of note. It is the days of Moshiach, with new beginning, "touching" the end. Everything is connected; nothing stands alone; one thing leads up to the next. This is, perhaps, a new outlook on Jewish "continuity."

#### **Va'ani Tefillah**

#### **Hashem Ish milchamah**

#### **Hashem is Master of war.**

Chazal teach that when the angels wanted to say Shirah, Praises, to Hashem upon the miracles of the Yam Suf, the Almighty quieted them, saying: "My creations are drowning, and you wish to say Praises?" The question is evident: If the angels were precluded from saying Shirah, how could Moshe Rabbeinu and Klal Yisrael go on and do so? Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, cites what he heard from a gadol, distinguishing between an angel and a human being, in the sense that a malach can do only one thing at a time. He cannot experience two things together. It is either up or down - sad or happy - never both. A human being, however, has the ability to feel two contrasting emotions at once. He can feel sorry for the drowning Egyptians, while simultaneously feeling a sense of joy over his own personal redemption. A malach has a singular purpose - almost, a one-track mind. The ability to feel pain and joy simultaneously does not exist. Thus, the angels could not rejoice and say Shirah over Klal Yisrael's redemption, while their current mission was the destruction of the Egyptians. The two just do not go together.

In memory of our Dean Rabbi Nachum Zev Dessler ZT"L an educator's educator whose example profoundly inspired three generations of families and thousands of students Hebrew Academy of Cleveland

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Subject Rabbi Frand on Parsha

#### **Rabbi Yissocher Frand Parshas Vayakhel**

#### **Laziness May Be Lurking In Noble Decisions Not To Do Something**

There is a pasuk in Parshas Vayakhel, which reads: "And the Princes brought the Shoham stones and the Miluim stones for the Ephod and the Choshen" [Shmos 35:27]. Rashi cites a teaching of Chazal -- "What prompted the Nesiim [Princes] to contribute first at the inauguration of the Mizbeach [altar] [Bamidbar 7:1-2], while they did not contribute first at the construction of the Mishkan [Tabernacle]? The answer is that by the Mishkan, they took the attitude 'Let the public contribute whatever they contribute and we will complete any shortfall.' Since the public contributed everything that was needed, the Nesiim said 'What is left for us to do?' The only things not yet contributed were the Shoham stones and the Miluim stones for the Ephod and the Choshen and so that is what they brought. Therefore, they made sure to be the first to contribute by the dedication of the Mizbeach. Since they were somewhat lazy in contributing to the Mishkan, the spelling of the word Nesiim is defective in this pasuk (without a yud between the sin and the aleph)." Rav Simcha Zissel Brody questions Chazal's assertion that the Nesiim were lazy. Offering to make up any deficit in the Mishkan building campaign does not sound like laziness. It seems very generous! Perhaps

it was a mistake or a miscalculation, but why is it described as "laziness"?

Rav Simcha Zissel says that we learn from here something that we should all take to heart. Namely, whenever we have an opportunity to do something or not to do something and we decide to delay, even for the most noble of reasons, we should realize that such an attitude is really based on laziness and inertia. Rav Simcha Zissel quotes Rabbeinu Bachye Ibn Pakuda's preface to his classic work Chovos HaLevovos [Duties of the Heart]: "When I first decided to write this work, the thought crossed my mind that I was not worthy to write such a sefer. Therefore, I changed my mind and decided not to write it. The decision not to write it brought me some sense of relief and leisure, but I ultimately decided it was only laziness that caused me to come to the conclusion that I should not write it. "Therefore, he did write the sefer and the rest is history. Klal Yisrael is so much richer for that final decision of Rabbeinu Bachye Ibn Pakuda to write and publish Chovos HaLevovos.

Rav Simcha Zissel's point is that regardless of the nobleness of the reason or justification for not doing something, a person must always carefully introspect and truly consider the possibility that the noble justification was only a fig leaf for a not so noble character trait - namely, laziness.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD  
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#### **Rabbi Zev Leff (yeshiva.org.il)**

#### **Parashat Vayakhel - One nation Potential**

#### **Friday, 21 Adar I 5771**

*Dedicated to the memory of Tzvi Yoel Ben Moshe HaLevi*

Holiness is not the realm of the individual but is rather the result of a group effort of all the segments of klal yisroel uniting, each contributing their unique part. Only when there is total unity can we begin to emulate the Divine and be included in His Oneness and total unity.

This unity is expressed in this week's reading in three ways: "Vayakhel" signifying the physical gathering of the Jewish people together in an assembly; "Adat" related to eidus, testimony, all united in common ideas and goals; and "Israel", which is an acronym of the words "Yesh shishim ribo otiyot latora" (there are six hundred thousand letters to the Torah), signifying that each Jew is unique and contributes his individual portion to the Torah.

Only in Eretz Yisroel do we have the potential to truly be one nation, and to realize our potential to be a kingdom of G-d's servants, a holy nation. All Jews being in Eretz Yisroel are united physically as opposed to "Mefuzar umeforad bein haamim" (scattered and divided amongst the nations). Hence, the Kahal aspect is achieved.

Eretz Yisroel with its unique atmosphere of purity and holiness unites the ideas, ideals and goals of its inhabitants centered around and focused on the holiness of the Bais Hamikdash. Hence the Eda aspect is achieved.

And lastly, each tribe finds its unique portion in Eretz Yisroel and develops and realizes its unique contribution to the nation. Hence, the Israel aspect is achieved... Every Jew whose spirit moves him to make aliyah, to fulfill the mitzvos of Eretz Yisroel, to be part of this unity, promotes the holiness of Klal Yisroel.

This is a weekly column contributed by Aloh Naaleh an organization devoted to motivating Jews to make Aliya.  
Shiur Delivered on Adar A, 5763

<http://www.torahinmotion.org>

## **A Thought for the Week with Rabbi Jay Kelman Parshat Vayakhel – Sin and Return**

"There is no man on earth of such righteousness that does good and is free from sin" (Kohelet 7:20). Being human means to sin and since G-d created us as humans this cannot be all bad. We all know that a person can grow only by learning from their mistakes. And the greater the person the greater the mistakes.

"When (asher) a leader sins" (Vayikra 4:22). Rashi quotes our Sages who, based on a play on the words asher, (when) and ashrei (blessed), comment that "blessed is the generation in which the leaders atone even for their inadvertent sins; how much more so for their willful sins". The question is not whether our leaders will sin, that is a given, but rather what will they do after they sin.

If one avoids making difficult decisions, if one is not involved in determining community priorities, one avoids many a sin. But that is not the way of leaders or leadership. Difficult choices must be made, and thus mistakes will be made, mistakes that we can all learn from. Rashi assumes that our leaders will sin not only inadvertently, but even willfully. This too is part of being human. This is fine provided we grow from our missteps, and as Rashi notes, are not afraid to admit them. The greater the leader the harder it is to admit one's mistakes. Might not such an admission diminish them in the eyes of their followers? While this too is part of human nature, the Torah teaches that revealing one's humanity is ultimately the more effective approach.

"The people gathered ( Vayikahel ) around Aharon" (Shemot 32:1) and soon afterward they committed the sin of the golden calf. While G-d expects us to sin and perhaps even desires it to some extent, there are some sins that are so great that the opportunity for repentance is not possible. While one may truly and sincerely regret one's actions the impact is so great that it is punishment that must be our fate. Learning from our mistakes will have to come later and in changed circumstances. The sin of adultery, for example, is so severe that amends are often not possible. At times, even if the couple agrees to forgive and forget, they may not remain married and divorce is forced upon them. Any lessons to be learnt will have to be applied to their next marriage.

Such would appear to be the sin of the golden calf. When the Jewish people rejected the G-d of history, the G-d of revelation, the only apparent option was for G-d to destroy them (32:10).

Yet soon afterwards we read " Vayakhel , Moshe assembled the entire community and said to them: These are the words that G-d has commanded for you" (35:1). G-d's readiness to accept genuine teshuva is much greater than we could have imagined. Even after such a heinous act G-d was ready to re-establish a bond, possibly even a stronger bond with the former sinners. The same nation that gathered ( Vayakhel ) together to build the golden calf now gathers ( Vayakhel ) to re-establish their bond with G-d. To attest to that ongoing relationship even after such a terrible sin, the Torah repeats the long and detailed instructions of the construction of the Mishkan , the symbol of that relationship.

In restating the command to build the Mishkan the Torah begins with the laws of Shabbat, laws we have seen many times before. Although our Sages derive from these verses that construction of the Mishkan was to be halted for Shabbat (Rashi, 35:2), it seems that there is an additional reason for Shabbat to be mentioned here. It is Shabbat more than any other mitzvah that attests to our ongoing relationship with G-d. It attests to our belief that it is G-d who is the ultimate creator. Furthermore, Shabbat testifies to the G-d of history, Who redeemed us from Egypt . The importance of Shabbat is such that the command regarding its observance was actually given prior to our arrival at Sinai, at Mara (Rashi 15:25). With the sin of the golden calf necessitating that our

relationship to G-d be reestablished the Torah begins with the laws of Shabbat.

Shabbat allows us time to reflect on and analyze our activities during the week. Reflection is the first step in the teshuva process, as we strive to ensure the impact of Shabbat will sustain us through the coming week. Rabbi Kelman, in addition to his founder and leadership roles in Torah in Motion, teaches Ethics, Talmud and Rabbinics at the Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto.

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### **Rav Kook List Rav Kook on the Torah Portion Vayakheil: The Dual Nature of the Tabernacle**

An obvious question strikes anyone reading the portions of Vayakheil and Pekudei. Why did the Torah need to repeat all of the details of how the Tabernacle was built? All of these matters were already described at great length in Terumah and Tetzaveh, which record God's command to build the Mishkan.

#### **Command and Execution**

Rav Kook frequently spoke of the divide between the path and the final goal. We tend to rush through our lives, chasing after goals - even worthwhile goals - with little regard for the path and the means. The path is seen as a stepping stone, of no importance in its own right. With these two sets of Torah portions Terumah-Tetzaveh and Vayakheil-Pekudei, we observe a similar divide, between the command to build and the actual construction. This is the difference between study and action, between theory and practice.

Just as our world emphasizes goals at the expense of means, so too it stresses deed and accomplishment at the expense of thought and study. But a more insightful perspective finds a special significance in the path, in the abstract theory, in the initial command.

The Sages imparted a remarkable insight: "Great is Torah study, for it leads to action" (Kiddushin 40b). This statement teaches that Torah study - the theory, the path - is preferable to its apparent goal, mitzvah performance. Torah study lead us to good deeds; but it has an intrinsic worth above and beyond its value as a way to know how to act.

The Talmud discusses whether a blessing should be recited when constructing a sukkah booth. After all, the Torah commands us to build a sukkah - "The holiday of booths you shall make for yourselves" (Deut. 16:13). Nonetheless, the rabbis determined that no blessing is recited when building the sukkah, only when living in it during the Succoth holiday. Why not?

Maimonides explained that when there is a command to construct an object for the purpose of fulfilling a mitzvah, one only recites a blessing on the final, ultimate mitzvah (see Hilchot Berachot 11:8). Thus we do not recite a blessing when preparing tzitzit or when building a sukkah. According to this line of reasoning, if Torah study were only a means to know how to keep mitzvot, no blessing would be recited over studying Torah. The fact that we do recite blessings over Torah study indicates that this study is a mitzvah in its own right, independent of its function as a preparation to fulfill other mitzvot.

These two aspects of Torah may be described as Divine influence traversing in opposite directions, like the angels in Jacob's dream. The Torah's fulfillment through practical mitzvot indicates a shefa that flows from above to below, the realization of God's elevated will, ratzon Hashem, in the lower physical realm. The intrinsic value of Torah study,

on the other hand, indicates spiritual movement in the opposite direction. It ascends from below to above - our intellectual activity without expression in the physical world, our Torah thoughts without practical application.

#### Dual Purpose

The repetition in the account of the Mishkan reflects this dichotomy. The two sets of Torah readings are divided between command and execution, study and deed.

And on a deeper level, the repetition expresses the dual function of the Mishkan. On the practical level, it was a central location for offering korbanot. The Mishkan served as a center dedicated to holy actions. But on the abstract, metaphysical level, the Mishkan was a focal point for God's Presence, a dwelling place for His Shekhinah. "They shall make for Me a Temple, and I will dwell (ve-shekhanti) among them" (Ex. 25:8).

Like the converse influences of Torah, one descending and one ascending, each of the Tabernacle's functions indicated an opposite direction. Its construction, the dedication of physical materials and talents to holy purposes, and the offering of korbanot to God, flowed upwards - an ascent from the physical world below to the heavens above. The indwelling of the Shekhinah, on the other hand, was a descending phenomenon from above to below, as God's Divine Presence resided in the physical universe.

(Adapted from Shemuot HaRe'iyah, Vayakheil-Pekudei (1931))

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#### **Weekly Halacha by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt Lighting the Shabbos Candles**

The obligation to light Shabbos candles rests equally on all members of a household. Nevertheless, our Sages placed the responsibility for the actual lighting upon the wife. One of the reasons given<sup>1</sup> is that candle-lighting atones for Chavah's part in the sin of the eitz ha-da'as (Tree of Knowledge): Chavah caused Adam to eat of the forbidden fruit for which Man was punished by losing his immortality. Since Chavah extinguished "the candle of the world,"<sup>2</sup> it is the woman who sets aright Chavah's misdeed by assuming the obligation of lighting candles for her household.<sup>3</sup> Consequently:

Even if a husband demands that he light the candles, the wife has the right to protest and prevent him from doing so.<sup>4</sup> It is recommended, though, that the husband take part in the mitzvah by lighting and quickly extinguishing the candle wicks, thereby making them easier to light.<sup>5</sup> If candles are lit in other rooms in addition to the eating area,<sup>6</sup> it is the husband who lights them.<sup>7</sup>

If one has no wife, or if he sees that his wife is running late and will be unable to light on time, then he should light the candles with the blessing.<sup>8</sup>

If one's wife is not home for Shabbos, it is preferable that the husband himself light candles and not one of the daughters.<sup>9</sup> If, however, a daughter who is over twelve years old lights for him, he fulfills the mitzvah through her lighting. One cannot, however, fulfill his obligation by having a daughter under twelve light candles for him.<sup>10</sup>

In the event that a brother and sister are at home without their parents, it is preferable that the sister light the candles.<sup>11</sup>

Years ago, it was customary for a woman who gave birth not to light candles on the first Friday night after giving birth. For that one Shabbos, candles were lit by the husband.<sup>12</sup> Several reasons are offered in explanation of this custom, but apparently the main concern was that women were too weak after childbirth to get out of bed and light candles.<sup>13</sup> In view of the improved health conditions prevalent nowadays, many poskim agree that the custom is no longer valid and the wife should light candles as she does every Friday night.<sup>14</sup>

Question: How has electrical lighting affected the traditional way of lighting Shabbos candles?

Discussion: When electricity became commonplace, the poskim debated whether the mitzvah of lighting Shabbos candles could be fulfilled by turning on electric lights. While the vast majority of poskim were of the opinion that one could indeed fulfill this obligation with electrical lighting, and some even held that it was preferable to use electricity, most women opted to continue lighting the traditional candle or oil-based lights. This remains the prevalent custom today. Still, there is a prominent role for electric lights to play in the performance of this mitzvah and indeed, almost every Jewish household relies on electricity in order to properly and completely fulfill the mitzvah of hadlakas neiros Shabbos. Let us explain:

The halachah states that one is obligated to have light in any room that will be used on Friday night.<sup>15</sup> Our Sages instituted this ordinance so that household members would be able to safely move about the house without fear of injury that would disrupt the harmony of Shabbos. Today, most homes rely on some electrical source (night-light, bathroom-light, etc.) to illuminate the areas in which they will find themselves on Friday night. Thus, they fulfill this part of the mitzvah with electric lights.<sup>16</sup>

The appropriate procedure, then, is as follows. When the wife is ready to light candles in the dining room, all the electrical lights in the rooms which will be used on Friday night should be shut off. Those lights should then be turned on by the husband (or wife or another family member), with the intention that they are being turned on for the sake of the mitzvah of Shabbos candles. The wife then lights the candles, and the blessing she recites covers all of the lights in the house, both electrical and otherwise.

There are a number of other scenarios in which electric lights may be used in conjunction with candles in order to properly fulfill the mitzvah:

\* Students residing in a dormitory or guests staying at a hotel are obligated to light Shabbos candles. Even if they light candles in the dining hall, they are still required to light in the area where they sleep. Since it is usually unsafe to leave candles burning in a dormitory or in a hotel room, we must rely on electric lights to fulfill that part of the mitzvah. A small light should, therefore, be turned off and on in honor of Shabbos before Shabbos starts. A blessing, however, should not be made, since the blessing is recited over the candles which are lit in the main dining room.

\* Shabbos guests can technically fulfill the mitzvah of lighting Shabbos candles through the lighting of their hosts. Even though they are not required to light a special candle of their own, it has nevertheless become customary that all married women light their own candles. But since the guests are required to have some light in their sleeping area (to fulfill the halachic obligation mentioned above), the proper procedure for them is as follows: Turn on an electric light in or near one's sleeping quarters, proceed quickly to the dining room and light candles, and have the blessing apply to both acts of lighting.<sup>17</sup>

Sometimes a situation arises where the mitzvah of hadlakas neiros can be performed by using electric lights only. For instance:

\* Moments before Shabbos is about to begin, one realizes that there are no candles in the house and none can be gotten on such short notice. Instead of panicking, the dining room lights should be turned off and then turned on again *lichvod* Shabbos.

\* In a situation where using candles would be difficult or dangerous, such as in a hospital, the poskim agree that one should rely on the electric lights for Shabbos candles. They should be turned off and then turned on again for the sake of the mitzvah.<sup>18</sup>

Many poskim hold that the blessing of *lehadlik ner shel Shabbos* is recited even when the mitzvah is performed by lighting electric lights only.<sup>19</sup> Others hold that in such a case the blessing should be omitted.<sup>20</sup> No clear-cut custom exists and one should follow his or her rav's directives.

Question; Does it matter whether or not the electric lights in the dining room are off or on at the time the Shabbos candles are lit?

Discussion: Contemporary poskim debate this issue.<sup>21</sup> Some question the custom of lighting candles when the electric lights are on, since the candles are not adding any more light to the room. In their opinion, reciting the blessing over candles which are lit in a brightly illuminated room may be a *berachah l'vatalah*. Other poskim dismiss that argument and maintain that since the candles are lit *lichvod* Shabbos and add a measure of festivity and ambiance to the Shabbos table, the candle-lighting is significant enough to warrant the recitation of a *berachah*.

In order to avoid a possible *berachah l'vatalah*, it is recommended that either the husband or the wife turn off the lights in the dining room before the candles are lit, and then turn them on again *lichvod* Shabbos right before (or immediately after the lighting, but before the recital of the blessing) the candles are lit. This way, the blessing which the wife recites over the candles will cover the electric lights as well.<sup>22</sup>

1 Tur, O.C. 263.

2 This is how the Midrash (Tanchumah, Metzora 9) refers to Adam.

3 Contemporary poskim debate whether or not the custom that all of the girls in a household over the age of chinuch light candles with a blessing — is valid; see Aruch ha-Shulchan 263:7; Az Nidberu 6:67-68 and Yechaveh Da'as 2:32.

4 Mishnah Berurah 263:11.

5 Mishnah Berurah 263:12; 264:28. See Tosfos Rav Akiva Eiger, Shabbos 2:6. [The Chazon Ish, however, is quoted as ruling that nowadays, when the candles are of superior quality, there is no reason to light and extinguish them first; see Dinim v'Hanhagos 9:6 and Eहेleh be-Tamar, pg. 17.]

6 See follow-up discussion for explanation of why candles [or electric lights] need to be lit in other rooms.

7 Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav 263:5; Ketzos ha-Shulchan 74 (Badei ha-Shulchan 11). See also Be'ur Halachah 263:6 s.v. bachurim.

8 Mishnah Berurah 262:11.

9 Rav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in The Radiance of Shabbos, pg. 7); Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43, note 46.

10 Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43:7.

11 Rav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 45, note 34).

12 Mishnah Berurah 263:11.

13 See Toras Shabbos 263:4; Tehilah l'David 88:3; Aruch ha-Shulchan 263:7; Hagahos Imrei Baruch 263:6.

14 Rav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in The Radiance of Shabbos, pg. 7); Rav S.Z. Auerbach (oral ruling, quoted in Halichos Bas Yisrael 15:18); Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43:9.

15 Mishnah Berurah 263:2, 29, 31. See Shevet ha-Levi 3:24.

16 Rav Y.Y. Weiss (Kol ha-Torah, vol. 42, pg. 17 and pg. 36).

17 Rav Y. Kamenetsky recommended this procedure for hotel guests as well; see Emes L'yaakov, O.C. 263, note 274.

18 Based on Rama, O.C. 263:4 (concerning candles). See Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 2:157 quoting Rav M. Feinstein.

19 Teshuvos Beis Yitzchak, Y.D. 120; Machazeh Avraham 41; Melamed Leho'il 47; Rav A. Kotler (quoted in Kochvei Yitzchak 1:2); Rav Y.E. Henkin (Eidus l'Yisrael, pg. 122); Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Ashrei ha-Ish, vol. 2, 6:33); Yechaveh Da'as 5:24. See also Tzitz Eliezer 1:20-11.

20 Har Tzvi 2:114, quoting the Gaon of Rogatchov; Mishpatei Uziel, O.C. 1:7; Tchebener Rav (quoted in Shraga ha-Meir 5:11); Rav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in The Radiance of Shabbos, 2, note 26). Rav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in

Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, 43, note 22) maintains that a blessing could be made over a flashlight but not over other lights.

21 See the various views in Igras Moshe, O.C. 5:20-30; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 43, note 166 and 171, quoting Rav S.Z. Auerbach; Shulchan Shelomo, addendum to vol. 1, pg. 20; Divrei Yatziv, O.C. 120; Az Nidberu 3:2; Chut Shani, Shabbos, vol. 4, pg. 65-66, quoting Rav N. Karelitz.

22 This was the custom in the homes of a number of prominent poskim: Rav M. Feinstein (The Radiance of Shabbos, pg. 20); Rav Y. Kamenetsky (Ko Somar l'Beis Yaakov, pg. 50), who turned on the electricity after his wife lit the candles but before she recited the blessing; Rav S.Z. Auerbach (after his wife's passing) turned off the lights, lit the candles and then turned on the lights (reported by his grandson in Kol ha-Torah, vol. 40, pg. 16). See also Be'er Moshe 5:32 and Az Nidberu 1:79-9, 3:2, for a concurring opinion.

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By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

*In honor of the tremendous alacrity with which Betzael and his assistants built the Mishkan, we bring you:*

### Swifter or Better?

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Shacharis in the Air

Rabbi Nosaya called me recently with the following shaylah:

“My flight lands at a time that I can still get to a minyan, but I am sure that there will be a minyan davening on the plane before we land. Should I daven earlier on the plane, or after we land, where I will be able to daven with more concentration?”

Question #2: New Mezuzos

Dovid and Rutie are purchasing mezuzos, but really nice ones are unavailable in the small Jewish community in which they live. Should they delay their purchase until they next visit a larger community, or should they buy the nicest ones available where they live?

There is a principle of the Torah, *zerizin makdimim lemitzvos*, that one should perform a mitzvah as soon as the opportunity arrives. To quote the Gemara: One may perform a *bris milah* any time during the day, but one should try to perform the mitzvah as soon as possible (Pesachim 4a). Thus, since the earliest time to make a *bris milah* is at sunrise, one should perform it as soon as one can.

As a source for the law of *zerizin makdimim lemitzvos*, the Gemara mentions that when Avraham Avinu was commanded to bring his son Yitzchak to the Akeidah, the Torah emphasizes that Avraham got up early in the morning to fulfill his mitzvah. We also find another Biblical source in which Dovid HaMelech lauds those who perform mitzvos at the first opportunity; I hurried and did not delay to fulfill Your commandments (Tehillim 119:60).

Our enthusiasm to carry out Hashem's commandments should manifest itself in a desire to perform mitzvos as immediately as possible. We should bear this in mind for every opportunity that presents itself, whether to perform a *chesed* or to fulfill one of the laws that we do not necessarily understand. As an example of *zerizin makdimim lemitzvos*, the Gemara requires one to check for *chometz* as soon as the evening of Erev Pesach begins and not wait until later that night.

Zerizus versus Hiddur

The issue that we will discuss in today's article is whether *zerizin makdimim lemitzvos* is the only factor in determining when we should perform a mitzvah, or are there other considerations, such as performing the mitzvah in a preferred way. For example, let us say that early on Sukkos morning someone has a kosher *esrog* and other *minim* on which he can recite the *brachah* and fulfill the mitzvah, but he knows that if he waits until later that day he will have access to a much nicer *esrog* with which to fulfill the mitzvah. Should he wait to recite the *brachah* and fulfill the mitzvah until later in the day so that he can fulfill the mitzvah in a more *mehudar* way, or should he recite the *brachah* immediately because of *zerizin makdimim*

lemitzvos? Is performing a mitzvah in a nicer way more important than fulfilling it earlier?

#### Early Discussions

An early authority who discusses our question is the 14th Century Terumas HaDeshen, who was asked what is the optimal time to recite the kiddush levanah prayer that men recite each month upon observing the new moon. Since Chazal mention that one should preferably perform kiddush levanah when one is in a festive mood and while wearing nice clothes (Mesechta Sofrim 20:1), should one carry out kiddush levanah on the first night that one may, or should one wait until motza'ei Shabbos so as to perform the mitzvah in a preferred way, since one will then be in good spirits because of Shabbos and will be wearing one's Shabbos finery? Is the hiddur mitzvah of reciting kiddush levanah when one is happy and nicely dressed more important than performing the mitzvah at the first available opportunity?

The Terumas HaDeshen concludes that one should usually wait until the first motza'ei Shabbos and rallies Talmudic proofs that although observing a mitzvah with zerizus is very important, it is more valuable to perform a mitzvah in a better way. (Cf. Maaseh Rav #159, who disagrees.)

#### Variant Text

It is interesting to note that our text to Mesechta Sofrim states this explicitly: One should recite the blessing on the moon only on Motza'ei Shabbos when one is in good spirits and wearing nice clothes. However, it is noteworthy that aside from the Terumas HaDeshen, who obviously did not have the words only on Motza'ei Shabbos in his text of Mesechta Sofrim, I have found other Rishonim who also clearly did not have these words in their text. (See, for example, Rabbeinu Yonah at the end of Berachos Chapter 4 s.v. Naharda'ei.) It might indeed be that these three Hebrew words in our text of Mesechta Sofrim were added in error by a copyist.

However, notwithstanding the difference in text, the Rishonim all reach the same halachic conclusion – that one should wait until the first motza'ei Shabbos to perform kiddush levanah.

#### Better over Swifter

We therefore see that although one should strive to perform a mitzvah with zerizus, zerizus is not an absolute value: it is better to perform the mitzvah later, but in a preferred way, than to perform it earlier in a less preferred way.

Similarly, we find an early responsum that discusses the exact case I mentioned above: Someone has an esrog that is kosher, but not the nicest. He believes that if he waits until later in the day he will have a nicer esrog on which to recite the brachah. Should he perform the mitzvah now with the kosher, but not mehudar, esrog, or should he wait until later so that he can perform the mitzvah in a more exemplary way? The Shevus Yaakov, a great halachic authority of the 17th- 18th centuries, ruled that if one is certain that he will have a nicer esrog available later, he should wait, but if he is uncertain, he should recite the brachah now on the esrog that he has (Shu"t Shevus Yaakov 1:34).

Here is another case discussed by earlier authorities:

A community is planning to acquire a new sefer Torah. Should they wait until they can get a really beautiful sefer Torah, or should they acquire a sefer Torah as soon as they can, even if it is not as nice, although it is certainly kosher.

Assuming that they already own a kosher sefer Torah, they should wait to acquire the nicer one (Chida's commentary to Sefer Chassidim #878). If they do not currently own a kosher sefer Torah, then they should acquire a kosher sefer Torah as quickly as possible without paying attention to how nice it is.

#### Dovid and Rutie's Mezuzos

Dovid and Rutie's question is almost identical to what we just asked: They are looking to purchase new mezuzos, but live somewhere where really nice ones are unavailable. Should they delay the purchase until they can find nice mezuzos to purchase?

The answer is that, assuming that their current mezuzos are kosher, they should wait to purchase new ones until they can get nice ones. (We are not discussing how much one should spend extra to purchase nicer mezuzos, which is a topic that we will leave for a different time.) However, if they are missing mezuzos that they need to put up, they should purchase them immediately, as long as they know that they are buying kosher mezuzos.

#### Exception to the Rule

Our general rule is that performing a mitzvah in a nicer way takes precedence over performing a mitzvah swiftly. However, there is a major exception to this rule: If

delaying the mitzvah might result in missing the mitzvah altogether, then it is better to perform the mitzvah immediately in a less exemplary way. For example, what if it was cloudy on the first motza'ei Shabbos available that one could perform kiddush levanah, and then later, when one is wearing weekday clothes, one sees the moon clearly between the clouds. Should one wait to change one's clothes before one performs kiddush levanah?

Based on their analysis of several relevant Talmudic passages (Yevamos 39a; Yoma 6b; Sanhedrin 12b), the authorities conclude that if waiting to perform the mitzvah in a mehudar way may result in a major delay, which might cause that the mitzvah not be performed at all, then one should perform the mitzvah already. For this reason, the Terumas HaDeshen, who contended that one should wait until motza'ei Shabbos to perform kiddush levanah, ruled that should the first available motza'ei Shabbos occur relatively late, one should recite the kiddush levanah earlier because of concern that if several consecutive nights are overcast one will lose the mitzvah completely.

By the same token, if delaying purchasing the new sefer Torah may result that it is not purchased at all, then one should not wait but should buy it already.

#### Airborne Prayers

At this point, we can answer Rabbi Nosaya's question, which is whether he should daven on the airplane or wait until the plane lands where he will be able to daven with more kavanah. Based on our analysis, if it is certain that he will find a place where he can daven properly before the time for davening ends, then he should indeed wait to daven in the optimal way. However, if it is uncertain that he will be able to daven within the proper time, he should do so on the airplane, notwithstanding that it is very difficult to daven properly there (see Graz, Orach Chayim 94:5).

#### Review

Based on these points, we should prioritize our mitzvah performance in the following way:

1. Hiddur mitzvah is the first choice. When one is certain that one will be able to perform the mitzvah later in a more mehudar fashion, one should delay in order to do so. An example of this is delaying kiddush levanah until motza'ei Shabbos.
2. When delaying may result in missing the mitzvah altogether, one performs the mitzvah as soon as possible. The same is true if delaying the mitzvah for the hiddur may result in a long delay – we perform the mitzvah as soon as possible.

#### In Conclusion

Our entire discussion revolved around whether and when it is important to perform a mitzvah without delay or are there other mitzvah calculations that supersede that reason to perform a mitzvah early. The main point is that our attitude towards the performance of mitzvos should be one of enthusiasm – we are overjoyed with the opportunity of fulfilling Hashem's commandments and therefore rush to perform His mitzvos as soon as we possibly can. This zeal must also sometimes be tempered with a different type of passion- the desire to perform the mitzvah in an optimal way. It is wonderful that Jews share these two enthusiastic emotions and try to seek balance between them.