

# Likutei Divrei Torah

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Shabbat Parashat Pekudei

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## Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

### On Jewish Character

Pekudei has sometimes been called the accountant's parsha, because that is how it begins, with the audited accounts of the money and materials donated to the Sanctuary. It is the Torah's way of teaching us the need for financial transparency.

But beneath the sometimes dry surface lie two extraordinary stories, one told in last week's parsha, the other the week before, teaching us something deep about Jewish nature that is still true today.

The first has to do with the Sanctuary itself. God told Moses to ask people to make contributions. Some brought gold, some silver, some copper. Some gave wool or linen or animal-skins. Others contributed acacia wood, oil, spices or incense. Some gave precious stones for the High Priest's breastplate. What was remarkable was the willingness with which they gave:

The people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning. So all the skilled workers who were doing all the work on the Sanctuary left what they were doing and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the Lord commanded to be done."

So Moses gave an order and they sent this word throughout the camp: "No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the Sanctuary." And so the people were restrained from bringing more, because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work. (Ex. 36:3-7)

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

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

Aaron, according to the most favoured explanation, realised that he could not stop the people directly by refusing their request, so he adopted a stalling manoeuvre. He did

something with the intention of slowing them down, trusting that if the work could be delayed, Moses would reappear. This is what he said: Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." (Ex. 32:2)

According to the Midrash he thought this would create arguments within families and the project would be delayed. Instead, immediately thereafter, without a pause, we read: So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. (Ex. 32:3)

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

One cannot understand the nature of this people. If they are appealed to for a calf, they give. If appealed to for the Tabernacle, they give. [Yerushalmi Shekalim 1, 45]

The common factor was generosity. Jews may not always make the right choices in what they give to, but they give.

In the twelfth century, Moses Maimonides twice interrupts his customary calm legal prose in his law code, the Mishneh Torah, to make the same point. Speaking about tzedakah, charity, he says:

"We have never seen or heard about a Jewish community which does not have a charity fund." [Laws of Gifts to the poor, 9:3]

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

We are obligated to be more scrupulous in fulfilling the commandment of tzedakah than any other positive commandment because tzedakah is the sign of the righteous person, a descendant of Abraham our father, as it is said, "For I know him, that he will command his children . . . to do tzedakah" . . . If someone is cruel and does not show mercy, there are sufficient grounds to suspect his lineage, since cruelty is found only among the other nations . . . Whoever refuses to give charity is called Belial, the same term which is applied to idol worshippers. [Laws of Gifts to the poor, 10:1-3]

Maimonides is here saying more than that Jews give charity. He is saying that a charitable disposition is written into Jewish genes, part of our inherited DNA. It is one of the signs of being a child of Abraham, so much so that if someone does not give charity there are

"grounds to suspect his lineage." Whether this is nature or nurture or both, to be Jewish is to give.

There is a fascinating feature of the geography of the land of Israel. It contains two seas: the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee is full of life. The Dead Sea, as its name implies, is not. Yet they are fed by the same river, the Jordan. The difference is that the Sea of Galilee receives water and gives water. The Dead Sea receives but does not give. To receive but not to give is, in Jewish geography as well as Jewish psychology, simply not life.

So it was in the time of Moses. So it is today. In virtually every country in which Jews live, their charitable giving is out of all proportion to their numbers. In Judaism, to live is to give.

## The Person in the Parsha

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersch Weinreb

### Above Suspicion

I have written and lectured extensively on the topic of Jewish leadership. I have frequently indicated that I consider Moses our teacher, Moshe Rabbeinu, a role model for those who would be leaders.

Once, after a lecture on just this topic, I opened the floor to a question-and-answer session. I have always found such sessions useful and instructive. The questions that are raised by the audience are often quite provocative, raising unanticipated issues.

On this particular occasion, a gentleman in the audience raised a question which encouraged me to think long and hard. He asked, "Rabbi, can you recall a moment in your own career when Moses' example influenced your leadership behavior? What specific lesson did you learn from Moses?"

At first, a number of possibilities came to mind. After all, Moses was a teacher, an advocate for the people, a person who came to the aid of the oppressed, a selfless person. Surely there are many aspects of Moses' life that I have tried, however inadequately, to emulate.

But after some introspection, I recalled one specific incident and shared it with the

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audience. I told them that the one time I most consciously followed Moses' example was the time when I was entrusted with some Chanukah gelt.

When I was a child, I remember fondly how my grandfather would gather all of his grandchildren around the Chanukah menorah, have us line up in order of our ages, and distribute to each of us a silver dollar, Chanukah gelt. Many still practice this custom, although I suspect that nowadays far more than a silver dollar is distributed.

One year, back when I was the rabbi of my former synagogue, I received a phone call from a gentleman just a few days before Chanukah. This gentleman was one of the influential trustees of a major charitable foundation. I had interacted with him many times with regard to proposals I submitted to the foundation for grants to community institutions. He typically studied these proposals very assiduously and asked very demanding questions of me about these proposals. He would say, "There is much that I find worthwhile in your proposal. My tendency to be generous inclines me to grant you the funds you request, but I cannot be generous with someone else's money."

He voted against almost every proposal that I submitted.

One year, just a few days before Chanukah, he called. At that point, none of my proposals for charity was even under consideration. I was surprised by his call and even more surprised when he asked me to lunch that very day.

We met at a local restaurant and chatted about all sorts of things for the better part of an hour. Finally, he asked me if I knew what Chanukah gelt was. He himself had fond memories of the Jewish customs he had experienced in his childhood.

When I assured him that I knew very well what Chanukah gelt was, he withdrew an envelope from his pocket and said, "Here is a check for Chanukah gelt. I know that you control a discretionary charity fund and I'd like you to deposit this check in that fund for the use of truly needy families."

Of course, I thanked him profusely for the donation. I did not think it was proper to open the envelope in his presence, so I didn't open it until I returned to my car. I was astonished to find that the sum was easily equal to the yearly salary of most of the members of my congregation. When I looked at the check more carefully, I noted that he had made out the check to me personally, and not to my discretionary fund.

I cannot deny that I immediately heard the loud voice of temptation. But, along with that voice, another voice was heard, and it uttered nothing other than the first verse of this week's

Torah portion, Parshat Pekudei, (Exodus 38:21-40:38): "These are the records of the Tabernacle...which were drawn up at Moses' bidding...under the direction of Itamar son of Aaron the Priest."

The people had contributed vast amounts of silver and gold and other precious materials for the construction of the Tabernacle. Moses, and only Moses, was in charge. He was, in the words of the Midrash, a gizbar, the comptroller of those funds. Technically, he was accountable to no one. He did not have to make a reckoning, and he certainly did not have to invite another person into the process.

But our verse tells us that he not only initiated a reckoning, but he invited his nephew, Itamar, to hold him to account. He insisted upon full accountability for every bit of the material collected.

Midrash Rabbah comments, making use of other biblical verses: "'A dependable man will receive many blessings, but one in a hurry to get rich will not go unpunished (Proverbs 28:20).' Moses was a dependable man, as is written, 'Not so with my servant Moses; he is trusted throughout my household (Numbers 12:7).' He alone was the gizbar, yet he invited others to perform the accounting...our verse does not read, 'These are the records which were drawn up by Moses,' but rather, 'These are the records which were drawn up at Moses bidding.' Moses asked to be held accountable, and did what he could to be assured that he would be held accountable."

Getting back to that cold pre-Chanukah afternoon, I am proud to say that my conscience prevailed. It was in the days before cell phones, but I immediately went to the nearest phone booth and called my "Itamar," a respected member of my congregation. I told him that I held this magnanimous gift in my hands and wanted him to know about it. I asked him to form a small committee which would decide exactly how to distribute the "Chanukah gelt" to those who needed it the most. Until today, we jokingly refer to that committee as "the Itamar committee."

The commentary known as Torah Temimah, written by the early-20th-century rabbi, Rabbi Baruch Epstein, opens his remarks on this week's parsha with a citation from an earlier halachic authority known as Bach: "Although a trustee of charity who has proven himself trustworthy need not be scrutinized, it is, nevertheless, advisable that he give a full reckoning of his collections and distributions, as did Moses our teacher."

Long after the incident with the Chanukah gelt, I came upon this astute remark in the book *The Transparent Society* by David Brin: "When it comes to privacy and accountability, people always demand the former for themselves and the latter for everyone else."

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Not so with Moses. He demanded accountability for himself, and so should we all.

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### Rabbi Dr. Norman J. Lamm's Derashot Ledorot

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#### An Upright Torah

The focus of significance in any synagogue is the Ark containing the Torah. That this is so we learn, according to Maimonides, from a verse in this morning's Sidra. When the building of the Tabernacle was concluded, Moses performed a final act: and he took and he put the testimony into the Ark. The word *edut*, "testimony," refers to the two stone tablets, the *luhot*, upon which were inscribed the revelation of God. And, Maimonides teaches us at the end of his *Laws of Sefer Torah*, just as the tablets were placed in the Ark in the Tabernacle; so are we commanded to place the Scroll of the Law in the Ark in the synagogue. "It is a commandment to designate a special place for a Sefer Torah, and to honor it and to embellish it even more than one thinks adequate. The words on the tablets of the covenant are the same words which we have on our Scrolls."

However, this tracing of the institutions of the Sefer Torah in the aron in the synagogues to the *luhot* in the aron in the Tabernacle, presents certain difficulties. One of the commentaries on Maimonides' famous Code, the author of *הגהות מיימוניות*, records a question asked of his teacher: If indeed the scrolls in the Ark in the synagogue are of the same nature as the tablets in the Ark in the Tabernacle, then why is that the *luhot* in the Tabernacle were placed in the aron in a prone position, lying down, whereas the Sefer Torah that we place in the Ark in the synagogue stands upright? If the source is the tablets in the Tabernacle, then why do we not store the scrolls in our synagogues too lying down?

There is compelling logic to this question. In fact, the author of this commentary records a responsum by the famous Rabbi Jacob Tam who said that had he had realized this point earlier, when they were building his synagogue, he would have ordered a much broader and wider ark in order that he might have the scrolls lying down rather than standing upright.

Nevertheless, the force of Jewish Law and the weight of Jewish customs is against this decision to have the scrolls lying down. In all of our synagogues the Sefer Torah is stored upright; indeed, in some Sephardic synagogues the scroll is read while standing on the table. Why, then, do we keep the Sefer Torah standing up, unlike the Tablets?

A famous Talmudic scholar, R. David Ibn Zimra, known as the RaDBaZ, wrote a responsum on the subject in which he offered three alternative answers. All three answers are meaningful. They contain or imply insights into the nature of Torah and Judaism that are

significant for all times, including our very own.

His first answer is that there is a fundamental difference between the *luhot* and *Sefer Torah*. The Tablets were meant as *edut*, as a testimony, as symbols; they were not intended for reading. Their very presence was important; but people did not come especially to open the Ark and to read the Tablets in order to inform themselves of the Law. Whereas the *Sefer Torah* was meant specifically for reading and for instructing; hence the *Sefer Torah* is kept in an upright position, always ready for immediate use. What we are taught, therefore, is that the Torah must be for us more than a symbol, more than mere *edut*. It must be a guide, a code for conduct. The very word “Torah” comes from the Hebrew *הוראה* which means guidance, pointing out, instruction.

A symbol is revered; a guide is used and experienced. Because of its very sacredness, a symbol often lies prone, it is remote and is less prone to be involved in the turmoil and bustle of life. It is treated with antiseptic respect. A guide, a “Torah,” is of course sacred; but its sanctity is enhanced by its involvement in life with all its complexities and paradoxes, its anxieties and excitements. A Torah, in order to fulfill its holy function, must stand ready—literally stand!—to be read and applied. It is this lack of involvement in everyday life that has caused one contemporary Jewish thinker to bemoan what he has felicitously called our American-Jewish “theology of respect.” We American Jews are a very respectful people; we do not reject Judaism outright; instead, we are more delicate: we “respect” it. We have respect for the synagogue—therefore we keep miles away from it. We respect the Rabbi—hence we never consult him as to the judgment of Judaism on significant problems. We respect Almighty God and therefore would never think of troubling Him about the things that really bother us. We respect Judaism and Torah so much that we never think of taking them seriously in the rigors and hardships of daily existence. But respect alone is something which is offered to a symbol, to the Tablets which are merely *edut*, and which therefore lie prone. They are a symbol—and that is all. It is only when we have transformed the symbol into the scroll, the theology or respect into a Torah of life that our Torah stands upright and ready for use.

This is important for Jewish scholarship in our days as well. Great opportunities are open for scholarship in the mid-twentieth century: the formulation of the attitude of Torah to the great ethical questions of our day. There is a businessman who wants to know the decision of Torah on price collusion and the housewife who seeks instruction on how to treat her maid. There is a young man who is interested not only in the morality but also in the ethics of courtship, and the government employee who wants to know how far he may go in

accepting unofficial gifts. Halakhah can yield such guidance; if we do not know all the answers of Halakhah it is because we need scholars to search more diligently and in greater scope and depth than has been done heretofore.

But nevertheless, the greatest majority of the problems that occur to us can, without new halakhic research, be dealt with decisively and lucidly by Torah. Our Torah is an upright one when we make the decision to consult it in these practical problems. This, indeed, is the difference between an ideal and a principle: An ideal is an abstraction to which we offer our gesture of respect; a principle is that which governs our very real conduct. The *luhot* are symbols or ideals; the *Sefer Torah* is a principle or guide. We have no dearth of ideals; we are sorely lacking in committing our lives to relevant principles. If our Torah is to be a Torah, it must be upright, ready-to use.

The second solution offered by RaDBaZ is to make the following distinction between the Tablets and the Scrolls of the Law. According to tradition, the engraving on the stone went through the tablets from side to side. Nevertheless a miracle occurred and these tablets were they could be read equally well from either side. In other words, despite the fact that the engraving went through and through, you were able to read the message on the stone tablets according to the normal Hebrew system, from right to left, no matter which side you approached them from. Whereas the *Sefer Torah* was written only on one side, on the inside of the parchment. Therefore, the Tablets could be placing lying down; for no matter how you laid them down, you could read them from the side you approached them. But the *Sefer Torah* had to stand with its face, upon which was written the text of the Torah, facing the congregation, so that it might always be ready for immediate reading and consultation and study.

There was a time in Jewish life when Judaism was such that it was that it could be approached from any point of view. In a total Jewish environment, even a semi-literate could be a good Jew. Where one’s milieu was fully saturated with Jewish feeling and Jewish life, study and scholarship were not quite crucial. One could be unlearned and still sense the presence of God, the *Shekhinah*; at the very least, one could benefit from the *Shekhinah*, from the very Jewishness of one’s neighborhood and surroundings. However, in a society depleted of Jewishness, in a milieu emptied of Jewish feeling and life, Jewishness can be acquired only in one way: by study and by scholarship.

We do not live in a total Jewish environment. Our surroundings are secularized and often antagonistic to the goals of Judaism. Therefore, for us, Jewish scholarship, Jewish education, Jewish study, are not only paramount, but indeed the only way to acquire Judaism in the full sense of the word. It is our

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only guarantee of survival. It is interesting that when, two or three generations ago, very wealthy and philanthropic Jews founded our great philanthropic organizations, they acted according to the noblest precepts of Judaism. It goes without saying that charity or *tzedakah* is an all-important mitzvah in our faith. Yet these people, who gave and worked so much for charity, who love their people so, completely neglected the study of Torah. And, tragically enough, today these founders of our Federation do not have one single Jewish survivor left! For indeed, Judaism without *tzedakah* is unthinkable; but Judaism without the study of Torah is impossible.

It is only recently that the day-school movement has won the approbation of larger sections of American Jewry. And not only Jewish studies for children, but also Jewish education has begun to show improvement. Only this week statistics were gathered that indicate that American Jews spend annually in the vicinity of three-million dollars on adult education. Of course, there is a question as to the results, the extent of its work, the methods employed. But nonetheless, it is encouraging news that we have finally come to understand the importance of a *Sefer Torah* which stands ready to be read and studied and researched. For that is why our scrolls are placed in a standing position: to teach us the need for immediate reference and education.

The third answer provided by RaDBaZ is a rather daring idea. The synagogue, unlike the Tabernacle, was meant to be primarily a House of Prayer, not one of revelation and sacrifice. Therefore, since the worshippers come to the synagogue and stand facing the Ark, the *Sefer Torah* too must stand when it faces the worshippers.

In a sense, this summarizes the other two reasons advanced by RaDBaZ. The *Sefer Torah* stands because the worshippers stand. What a beautiful idea! There is a mutual and reciprocal honor exchanged by the Torah and its admirers. The Torah itself rises before the *מחפליים* who take her seriously, who involve her in their daily life, and who study her assiduously. We are told in the First Book of Samuel, that God says “for I will honor those who will honor Me, and those who neglect Me shall be disgraced.” God honors those who honor Him! The Torah stands out of respect before the worshipper!

One of the great and seminal thinkers of Hasidism, the renowned Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of the HaBaD branch of Hasidism, has expressed this idea in yet another way. The Torah as the revelation of God, and indeed even as an aspect of God Himself, is filled with holiness and divine Light. It contains sublime, heavenly illumination. When the student of Torah studies it sincerely and selflessly, without any thought of personal gain, what he accomplishes is the broadening of the

absorptive capacity of Torah for this divine light; he adds to Torah's lustre and brilliance. Whereas, if he studies it for selfish and unworthy reasons, the lights of Torah are dimmed and its brilliance is diminished.

What a bold idea! The fate of Torah depends upon us. The sanctity of Torah is not a constant: its kedushah varies with the sincerity and application of the Jew who studies Torah. If we honor Torah, it honors us by being more sacred. And, Heaven forbid, if we neglect Torah, it contains less illumination and sanctity with which to bless our own lives.

That the destiny of Torah depends upon us we often see in unpleasant ways. Too often do we discover that Judaism is reviled because of the personal conduct of individual Jews who are apparently committed to Torah, but who act in a manner that is unbecoming, unattractive, and unethical. A thousand years ago, the great Gaon, R. Saadia, at the end of his introduction to his offers eight reasons, all of them psychologically potent, as to why people reject God and Torah. One of them applies to our case: a man notices the obnoxious behavior of a Jew who believes in God, and he therefore rejects not only this inconsistent Jew, but also all that he professes, i.e., God and His Torah. It happens so often in our own experience. Let an Orthodox Jew misbehave, and people blame Orthodoxy rather than the individual. It is unfortunate, it is illogical, it ignores the weakness of all human beings no matter what their ultimate commitments; but—it is a fact. And, it places upon us a heavy, yet marvelous responsibility. This very fact, whether we like it or not, reminds us that each of us possesses great risks and tremendous opportunities. We can, each of us, by our actions, influence the destiny of Judaism. We can, by our attitude and approach, either diminish or enhance the lustre of the Light contained within Torah. If we are עומדים, then the Sefer Torah too is עומד; if we stand upright, then Torah stands upright. Heaven forbid, if we lie down on our God-given duties, then Torah falls because of us.

This then is the significance of the position of the Torah in the Ark. It is upright because it must be ready for use as a guiding principle in our lives. It is upright because it must be studied and its message plumbed. It is upright because it stands in respect and honor of those who so use it and thereby enhance its own holiness and illumination. Torah must never lie in state. It must stand in readiness. The Jew must never sink low; he must soar even higher—and thereby contribute to the sublimity of Torah. For as Maimonides put it, in the passage we quoted in the very beginning—it is a mitzvah to honor and glorify and embellish the Torah even more than we can. For if we will not strive to be more than merely respectful Jews, we will become less than respectful Jews. If we do not aspire to become more than human, we are in danger of becoming less than human.

The times we live in, the circumstances that surround us, and our ancient and hoary tradition all call out to us to stand up and live as upright Jews, and so keep our Torah in the ark upright as well.

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#### **Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand**

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##### **We Toil and Receive Reward; For the Toil!**

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #231, Making a Siyum. Good Shabbos!

Parshas Pikudei concludes the construction of the Mishkan. After the construction of all the individual components of the Mishkan, the parts were brought to Moshe. Rashi quotes the Medrash Tanchuma which explains that the reason why the Mishkan was brought to Moshe was because everyone else was unable to assemble it. The Mishkan was simply too heavy for anyone to lift. Since Moshe had not been personally involved in any part of the construction of the Mishkan, HaShem [G-d] reserved the privilege of final assembly for him.

When HaShem told Moshe to assemble the Mishkan, Moshe protested that it was too heavy for him to lift as well. HaShem told Moshe to make the effort. "Make it look like you are trying to erect it." Moshe made the effort and miraculously, it was assembled by itself. Since Moshe made the effort, he received the credit for having put it up.

Rav Meir Rubman explains that we can learn a very important insight regarding spirituality from this Medrash. The Medrash teaches us that regardless of the difficulty of the task, we must make the effort. In other areas of endeavor, a person is only given credit for producing. However, when it comes to Judaism, HaShem is not necessarily interested in results; He is interested in the effort.

The concept that a person receives an "A" for effort is usually a backhanded compliment. In actuality, you received a "D", a near failing grade, but at least you received an "A" for effort. That is the way it is in other areas of life. But regarding Mitzvos, Hashem merely asks that we make the effort. Whether the task is actually accomplished or not is often out of our control and up to Hashem.

When we conclude a Mesechta (tractate of the Talmud), we say the prayer "We toil and they toil. We toil and receive reward and they toil and do not receive reward." What does it mean "they toil and do not receive reward"? This does not seem to be a true statement. People do not work without receiving payment!

The answer is that when we work (at religious tasks), we are paid for the effort, regardless of whether or not we produce. But "they" are only paid for the bottom line. In all other areas of

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endeavor, toil that does not produce results does not receive reward.

Some years ago (1992), I was in Atlanta for a Torah retreat. Atlanta is an amazing community. Thirty years ago, they did not have a minyan of Sabbath observers. Not so many years later, over 300 people were coming to shul on Shabbos—all of them are in some stage of having intensified, and intensifying, their observance of mitzvos.

I asked Rabbi Emanuel Feldman (Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Beth Jacob in Atlanta), "What is the key to your success?" Rabbi Feldman told me that the key is to try to plant seeds. That is all a Rabbi can do. He can try to nurture and water the seeds, but really all he can do is try. He never knows for sure whether or not it will work.

For example, one individual who recently returned to intensive Jewish involvement and observance told Rabbi Feldman that he made is decision because of a Yom Kippur sermon that Rabbi Feldman delivered fifteen years earlier. A comment in that sermon had struck home. He did not act upon it then, but fifteen years later he decided to become religious.

Success is not what it's all about. Kiruv Rechokim is about effort. Whether or not the Mishkan is actually erected is HaShem's worry. We toil and we receive reward—for the effort.

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#### **Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis**

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Why is Purim celebrated in the second month of Adar and not the first? In this Jewish leap year we are now commencing the second month of Adar and fascinatingly, in the Gemara (Megillah 6b), there is a debate as to which Adar Purim should be in. Rav Eliezer's view, which many of us can identify with, is, "Ein ma'avirim al hamitzvot," – "We shouldn't delay a mitzvah," particularly the celebration of a happy mitzvah. Don't put it off – once you've got the chance, go for it! Therefore he advocates that Purim should be celebrated in the first month of Adar.

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel however differs and we follow his view in halacha. What's his rationale? He says that Purim should be in the second Adar in order not to separate one geula from the next, one celebration of redemption from the next celebration, that is to say that Purim and Pesach should be as close as possible on our calendar. Every year they're just one month apart and so too, that should be the case in a leap year. Now I might have thought that the opposite would be the case. If we've got two, major happy festivals, let's separate them. Why cluster them together?

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel here identifies something which we as Jews are passionate about. Having endured so much tragedy, hardship and sorrow over the ages, to be able to celebrate redemption is something very

special for us and we don't just want it to be a one-off celebration. We want to be on a roll. We want to go from happiness to happiness and have none-stop happiness at long last for our people! That's why the joy of Purim is always linked on our calendar to the joy of Pesach.

We are exceptionally privileged and fortunate in our age to be able to celebrate yet other festivals of redemption: from Adar we go to Nissan and from Nissan we go to Iyar, during which we have the new festivals of Yom Ha'Atzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim. Therefore on our calendar today thanks to the inspiration we've received from our rabbis, we guarantee that indeed when it comes to celebrations we are on a roll. And in this spirit may Hashem bless our people with continuous joy, not to suffer great tragedies as we have in the past but to only go from one simcha through to the next.

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### **Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah**

#### **When Defeat is the Ultimate Success**

**Rabbanit Sally Mayer**

In Parshat Pekudei, the mishkan finally comes together. The Jewish People invested greatly in this holy project, donating precious gems and materials, fashioning the beautiful vessels and curtains, carving beams and forming connectors, and putting it all together into the grand resting place for God's Presence in the camp.

In the final pesukim of our parsha and of Sefer Shemot, we hear that the cloud symbolizing God's Presence filled the mishkan. However, there is a discordant pasuk inserted just before the end of the parsha (40:35): "And Moshe was not able to enter the Tent of Meeting, for the cloud had rested upon it, and the Glory of Hashem filled the mishkan." Why mention again that the cloud filled the mishkan, and point out that Moshe could not go inside? It seems strange – the point of the mishkan was for Moshe and the Kohanim to go inside, to speak to God and serve Him; isn't it disappointing that Moshe, who invested his soul in the project, cannot enter right at the climax of the dedication?

Upon reflection, however, the fact that Moshe cannot enter the mishkan is actually the symbol of its success. Imagine an architect who designs a couple's dream house, and the builder who takes the plans and brings them to fruition. The greatest success of those experts is when the couple takes the keys and begins to live there – and by necessity, then, those who designed and built it are locked out! Our greatest joy is when our children grow up and lead independent, successful lives separate from us, not when we have access to every detail of what is happening with them as we did when they were small.

This idea is also reflected in a famous story about the giving of the Torah at Har Sinai. The Talmud in Menachot 29b relates that when

Moshe went up to receive the Torah, he saw that Hashem was "tying crowns" atop some of the letters in the Torah, and asked Hashem why He was doing so. Hashem responds that in the future, there will be a sage named Akiva ben Yosef, who will build interpretations based on these crowns. Moshe asks to see this incredible scholar, and finds himself transported many centuries into the future, sitting in Rabbi Akiva's beit midrash. Moshe hears the discussion but doesn't know what they are talking about, and feels despondent – how can he be the one receiving the Torah from Hashem but not understand the give-and-take in the beit midrash of the future? Moshe is mollified when he hears a student ask Rabbi Akiva the source of a certain halacha, and Rabbi Akiva responds, "This is a law that was given to Moshe at Sinai." But why does this make Moshe feel better? They are saying this law came from him, but it isn't familiar to him! The answer is the same as we discussed above: he knows he has succeeded when his work, his creation, surpasses him. When the Torah Moshe taught is taken further, to places he didn't dream of. When the mishkan he built is off limits because Hashem's Presence has moved in.

There is another Talmudic story that takes this idea one step further. In Bava Metzia 59b, we read of a debate between the majority of the sages at the time and the great scholar Rabbi Eliezer, over the ritual purity status of a certain type of oven. Proper protocol in such a case is to follow the majority view, based on the pasuk in Shemot 23:2. However, Rabbi Eliezer will not accept this outcome. He calls down miracles to prove he is right – may the carob tree be uprooted from its spot, may the stream flow in the opposite direction, may the walls of the beit midrash begin to cave in – yet Rabbi Yehoshua, representing the majority, says we must ignore these supernatural events and follow the regular method of decision-making in halacha. Finally, Rabbi Eliezer calls down a heavenly voice, which states unequivocally that the law is in accordance with Rabbi Eliezer in every case. Rabbi Yehoshua stands up and declares, "It is not in Heaven!" (Devarim 30:12) – once the Torah has been given, we do not pay attention to heavenly voices. This is, at first glance, shocking – is the point of the Torah not to follow God's Will? If He lets us know what that is directly, why would we follow the usual decision-making protocol? The answer to this question comes in the next line of the Talmud: the sage Rabbi Natan met Eliyahu HaNavi and asked him how Hashem reacted when Rabbi Yehoshua said that. Eliyahu answers that Hashem smiled and said, "My children have bested Me, my children have bested Me." Once again, we see that even for God Himself, the greatest success is when our children and our students take what we have taught them and bring it to a new place, even if that place is beyond us.

**Rabbi Benjamin Yudin**

**Revere, Then Hold Dear**

In Parshas Pekudei we learn of the actualization of the Divine project to build a sanctuary to G-d. The Ramban teaches that the Mishkan was a continuation of Mount Sinai; at Sinai we received some of the 613 commandments and the process of receiving the rest of Torah was to be through Hashem's communication with Moshe at the Mishkan. As we are taught (Shemos 25:22), "It is there that I will set My meetings with you, and I shall speak with you from atop the Cover, everything that I shall command you to the children of Israel." Now that this most holy endeavor of creating an Abode for the Divine, one would imagine that the book of Shemos would conclude with the actualization of the Divine promise. We would expect that we would read of Moshe's entering the Sanctuary and receiving communication from Hashem.

To our surprise, this is not the way the book ends. Instead, almost to our dismay, the Torah teaches us at the very end of Pekudei (40:34) that, "The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of Hashem filled the Tabernacle." Yet the very next verse tells us, "Moshe could not enter the Tent of Meeting, for the cloud rested upon it and the glory of Hashem filled the Tabernacle." How strange and difficult to understand. The whole purpose of the Mishkan was for Moshe to enter; and indeed in next week's parsha, Hashem summons Moshe to the Mishkan and gives him the detailed laws of korbanot. Why then could not Moshe immediately enter the Mishkan upon its completion? Moreover, we find the identical situation at the completion of the first Beis HaMikdash by Shlomo Hamelech. On the day of its dedication, right before the very lengthy prayer of the king, we find the very similar language in (Melachim 1, 8:10-11). "And it was as the Kohanim left the Sanctuary that the cloud filled the Temple of Hashem. The Kohanim could not stand and minister because of the cloud, for the glory of Hashem filled the Temple of Hashem." Once again, the very purpose of the Beis HaMikdash, which is, among other privileges, the place for man to offer sacrifices to Hashem, why could the Kohanim not actualize their function and potential?

Rav Nebenzahl shlit" a suggests a most profound response. The Sanctuary is clearly the manifestation and outpouring of love between Hashem and the Jewish people. We are taught that the donations came from those who were "nediv lev - generous of heart", meaning that the majority of the donations were voluntary in nature, and the Torah describes that the response to the appeal for the construction of the Sanctuary was so overwhelming that Moshe had to stop the collection because it exceeded the needs. This is a manifestation of man's love for Hashem. The very building of a Sanctuary ordained by G-d is truly a manifestation of His love for the

Jewish nation, as we find in (Shir HaShirim 3:10) "Tocho rotzuf ahava - its foundation was overlaid with love." The Mishkan was a fulfillment of G-d's desire to have an abode in this world demonstrating again His great love for the Jewish people.

However, ahava - love by itself, unbridled, unchecked, without limitations, can be most detrimental. Proof, the tragic sin of Nadav and Avihu is characterized by the Torah (Vayikra 16:1) as "Vikarvasam lifnai Hashem - they approached Hashem", motivated by their abundant love which led them to offer an offering that was not commanded by Hashem. Rav Nebenzahl suggests that it is for this reason that together with the love there had to be a commensurate measure of yirah for the Sanctuary which in effect kept the love in check, and together reverence and love provide the perfect atmosphere and environment for the Divine.

The purpose of the Mishkan, as stated above, was a continuation of Sinai. Note that at the giving of the Torah at Sinai, we find (Shemos 19:10-15) several laws that needed to be implemented to ensure and maintain the reverence of the occasion. Among these enactments include: the need for all to go to mikvah, to abstain from relations with their spouse for three days prior to the Revelation and, finally, to set boundaries surrounding the mountain lest anyone, motivated by their incredible love for the Shechinah, would attempt to ascend the mountain. The giving of the Torah is a manifestation of His great love for the Jewish people, as we recite daily in our prayers in the second blessing before the recitation of the Shemah, "With an abundant love have You loved us Hashem... You taught the decrees of life." Your giving of the Torah reflects Your faith and trust in us. But this needed to be preceded and safeguarded by the infusion of the decrees reflecting reverence for the occasion. Similarly, regarding both the Mishkan and the first Beis HaMikdash, even Moshe, the most modest man, was unable to enter, teaching us man's inadequacy and lack of true worthiness to enter His holy abode. Only when man appreciates this sense of the incredible divide that exists between Hashem and man can he enter and communicate with Hashem.

We are familiar with the practice of taking three steps backwards before we begin the recitation of the Shemoneh Esrei, and then taking three steps forward and beginning to pray. The commentary Tehila LeDavid (111:1) notes that this is not considered a hefsek between geula and tefila as the stepping backward, according to the Sefer Rokeach, is a sign of man's humility and total subjugation to the Almighty and only then is he in the proper framework to address Hashem. In addition, the very recitation of the verse (Tehillim 51:17), "Hashem Sefasai tiftach" is a further indication of man's inadequacy and needs Divine assistance to pray.

We see clearly from the above that the blending of the two emotions of reverence and love is a prerequisite for entering the Mikdash. It is interesting to note that ahava, which comes from the root hav - to give, is very often accompanied by an object. One selects a beautiful esrog or other mitzvah object as a demonstration of their love of Hashem. Yirah, on the other hand, is not characterized most often by restricting oneself and abstaining from certain behavior. Thus eating in the Sukkah might be a demonstration of ahava for Hashem but not eating or drinking even that which is halachically permissible to so do, and refraining from even drinking a glass of water outside of the Sukkah, would be an indication of yirah. An individual taking upon themselves a more stringent observance of the law is a demonstration of yirah. The Chazon Ish (Sefer Emunos U'Bitachon 1:13) posits that one who is desirous of improving and enhancing his character traits should begin with sur mayrah - abstaining from that which is negative as it is relatively easy for man to do acts of goodness, but to curb one's behavior is exceedingly challenging. It is for this reason that King David (Tehillim 34:15) writes "Turn from evil and do good", putting yirah before ahava, as we find as a prerequisite for Hashem to dwell in the Mikdash. Interestingly, when we are taught at the beginning of Terumah (25:8), "make for me a Sanctuary that I may dwell in them". Our Rabbis note it doesn't say that I may dwell in it, rather that I may dwell in them. I'd like to suggest that each person aspires to have a Divine presence in them and, therefore, each individual has to strive to constantly improve their yiras Shomayim to accompany their love for G-d, making oneself the proper receptacle for His Divine provenance.

The Gemara (Berachos 20B) teaches that whoever is obligated in shamor (abiding by the restrictions of Shabbos) is equally obligated tin the zachor (positive remembrance and enjoyment of Shabbos). Note, however, that this Talmudic teaching begins with the restrictions of Shabbos, teaching that commensurate with one's meticulous observance of the many details of the thirty nine prohibitions of Shabbos will be one's appreciation of the oneg of Shabbos. It begins with the reverence of Shabbos and then one enjoys the love of Shabbos. There are a few practical examples of implementing yiras Shomayim.

It is understandable that one is not to talk during davening in shul. Yiras Shomayim is the understanding that one does not speak in shul other than prayer and the study of Torah even when they are not actually praying in shul. How one conducts themselves in shul before and after davening is a demonstration of their reverence for the shul. Refraining from speaking matters unrelated to prayer or Torah study while one is wearing their tefillin reflects their reverence for the tefillin and the

## Likutei Divrei Torah

relationship it engenders. Placing filters on technological devices helping one to refrain from exposure to negative sites and sights is an outgrowth of yiras Shomayim. Even one's careful reciting of bentching and beracha achrona from a text, as opposed to reciting it by heart, reflects yiras Shomayim.

We are all distraught and nervous over the Russia's invasion of Ukraine. We not only are worried for the many thousands of Jews in the Ukraine, but we are also reminded of the tenuous state of stability in our world. The Talmud (Yevamos 63a) teaches that, "Misfortune - calamities, including wars, come to the world only on account of Israel." This is substantiated by the prophet Tzeephaniah (3:6) who says in the name of Hashem, "I have eliminated nations...I have destroyed their streets... their cities have become ruins" and in the next verse "I said just fear Me (oh Israel) - tikchi musar - learn the lesson." Rashi understands this to mean that when Jews see punishment and devastation brought upon other nations, they will learn the lesson to be fearful lest they too will be punished, and this should move them to repent and improve their ways. Rashi is referring to yiras ha'Onesh - fear of retribution, which is one expression of yirah. May this latest catastrophe quickly come to an end but hopefully leave us with greater yiras Shomayim.

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### Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam

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#### The Job of the Jews

And Moshe did; according to all that HASHEM had commanded him, so he did. It came to pass in the first month, in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the Mishkan was set up. (Shemos 40:16-17)

When (the month of) Adar enters we increase in joy! – Talmud

What is so grand about building the Mishkan that it takes up so much space in the Torah. We have about 4 and ½ chunky Torah portions packed with detailed descriptions of what was commanded and how it was executed with precision.

Every year we revisit this account of what was essentially a singular event in history event for this particular plan. In the meantime, though, mountains and mountains of practical and daily Hallachos are hanging by threads of very spare information provided in the Written Torah.

Can there possibly be a relationship between the Hebrew month of Adar, which hosts Purim and the completion of the Mishkan? Let us see if we can discover a connection. Also, how does Adar catalyze an increase in joy?

Let us take a journey back to the murky origins of the universe when the world was yet, "Tohu v' Vohu", void and astonishingly empty. In that very dark picture, there was a glimmer of hope

literally hovering nearby. The verse reads, “And the spirit of ELOCHIM was hovering on the face of the deep”.

I don’t know if I am qualified to explain all or any of the primordial ingredients present when the world was so young. One thing, though, is abundantly clear. HASHEM- ELOCHIM was hovering in search of a landing port.

What does that mean? In whichever way we can understand it, like an airplane in search of a runway or a helicopter looking for a safe place to set down, still a giant question is begging for a sensible answer. Why was HASHEM hovering in search of a port, a place to land? Create such a space and land! You are the Creator!!!

When the Kotzker was yet a precocious child of 3, his Rebbe asked him, “Where can HASHEM be found?” The impish child answered his Rebbe, “Everywhere!” His Rebbe shook his head indicating that he had not given the right answer and he asked the same question again and again only to be given the same unacceptable answer. Then the Rebbe told him directly, landing a profound lesson, “HASHEM can be found only where He is invited to enter.

A famous Badkan, a Jewish comedic entertainer once said that he went to the airport to pick up his mother in-law. On the way home he asked her, “How long are you staying?” She replied, “As long as you want.” He asked her in wonderment, “You’re not even coming in for a cup of coffee!?” HASHEM had been waiting thousands of years till Avraham and Sara came along and invited HASHEM in, and later, as a nation, a Mishkan was constructed and HASHEM was welcomed into our midst.

At an ecumenical gathering in South Africa many years ago, a minister was given the honor of reciting an opening convocational prayer. He began like this, “May we merit to transcend the dust of materialism that darkens our vision and clouds our ideals and may we transcend the pull of material desire that holds us in its clutches...” Upon concluding another clergy member asked him, “Why do we have to transcend this physical world?! Why don’t we just make a place here on earth for G-d to dwell?” The answer came back emphatically, “That’s the job of the Jews!”

The name of the month ADAR in Hebrew is ALEPH-DALET-REISH! ALEPH stands for HASHEM Who is one. The first time ALEPH is used at the beginning of a word in Torah is ELOCHIM. DALET- REISH spells DAR, to reside. HASHEM finds residence with us in ADAR. It’s not just when we enter the time zone of Adar that we increase in joy but rather when ADAR enters and penetrates us, to that extent joy is amplified.

Purim is packed with eating and drinking with gusto. Yet in just such a setting we joyously

welcome HASHEM into our very midst, in full fulfillment of the job of the Jews.

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### **Mizrachi Dvar Torah**

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**Rav Doron Perez**

#### **Adar: The Month of Happiness**

Why is Adar the happiest of months? Nissan should be the happiest month – the greatest miracle to befall the Jewish people, the Exodus, was in Nissan, so why not then?

It is because of Purim and Pesach needing to be together – we begin two months of joy. No matter how dark and disparaging the time seems, we are able to overcome.