



24 February -

2 March, 2019

19 - 25 Adar I, 5779

First Torah:

Exodus 35:1 - 38:20

Second Torah:

Shekalim

Exodus 30:11-16

Haftorah:

Kings II 11:17 - 12:17

■ **CALENDARS**

We have Jewish Calendars, if you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi / Chaplain to contact us.

■ **FAMILY PROGRAMS**

Do you have family on the outside who are struggling, please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

■ **GRAPE JUICE & MATZAH**

Aleph offers free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll, it is available to all prisons.

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THE DAY AFTER

Some years ago, the United Nations held the International Summit on Sustainable Development, here in Johannesburg. The Summit was a great success. One wonders, though, whether all the wonderful decisions and resolutions that were adopted were ever implemented. In other words, were they themselves sustainable?

Good ideas and worthwhile projects are suggested regularly. The question is, do they get off the drawing board? And if they do, how long do they last? What degree of permanence do they enjoy?

Moses gathered the assembly of the Children of Israel — these are the opening words of the Parshah Vayakhel. Rashi tells us that this day of assembly was the day after Yom Kippur. Moses came down from Mount Sinai on Yom Kippur bearing the message of G-d's forgiveness for the sin of the Golden Calf. The next day, he gathered the people and commanded them to build the Sanctuary.

Why is it important to know that this was the day after Yom Kippur?

Perhaps it is because while on Yom Kippur everyone is holy, the challenge is to be holy after Yom Kippur. It is relatively easy to be holy on the holiest day of the year. The test of faith is to maintain our good behavior in the days and weeks following the awesome, sacred experience. Will we still be inspired or will our enthusiasm have waned straight after Neilah? How many Synagogues are filled to

capacity on Yom Kippur and struggle for a minyan the next morning?

A son says kaddish for his father or mother faithfully — for the week of Shiva. And then? Or perhaps he comes to Shul regularly and recites kaddish for the full 11 months. And the next day he's gone.

And it's not only about Shul, it's about life. What happens after the honeymoon? Or the first anniversary? Do we have the commitment and the staying power to be in for the long haul?

Many people get inspired at one time or another. Over the years, I've seen hundreds of men and women go through a phase of dedicated Jewish living only to see them fall back on old habits and lifestyles. And it wasn't because their commitment faltered, but because they did not implement a sustainable program for that commitment to thrive.

Take Shabbat. A person experiences a real sense of Shabbat for the very first time in his or her life. Then again, and again, until they decide that they really want this for themselves. It's so serene, so spiritual, and so special. So they commit to keeping Shabbat. They start walking to Shul every Saturday. There's only one problem. They live three miles from the Shul that inspired them. O.K., it's not impossible to walk three miles; lots of people do it every day to keep in shape. So, as long as they are still on a spiritual high it works, but the reality is that it is simply not sustainable.

Parshat Vayak'hel

If they don't move closer to their favorite Shul, something will snap.

I remember a couple who went so far as to buy an apartment near the Shul and they moved in every weekend. They managed for a while but even that was not sustainable. It became a bothersome schlep to have to move out every Friday and move back every Saturday night. It just didn't last.

So this is a call not only to maintain the momentum of our spiritual inspiration but to take practical steps to do so. To succeed in the long term, we must have a pragmatic plan; a realistic, workable, achievable program to see us through to the end. Otherwise, G-d forbid, our fervent feelings of the moment may turn out a flash in the pan.

Let us be inspired enough to make sure our inspiration lasts..

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

PARSHAT SHEKALIM

This week we read from two Torah's, the first we read the regular weekly Torah portion, as divided throughout the year and the second one we read 'Parshat Shekalim'.

When the Holy Temple stood in Jerusalem, each Jew contributed an annual half-shekel to the Temple.

The 1st of Adar marked the beginning of the collection of the shekalim. In commemoration, the Torah reading of the Shabbat that falls on or before Adar 1 is supplemented with the verses that relate G-d's commandment to Moses regarding the

first giving of the half-shekel.

“Parshat Shekalim” is the first of four special readings added during or immediately before the month of Adar (the other three are “Zachor”, “Parah” and “Hachodesh”).

JUST DO IT

Back in 1981, when I was attending rabbinical college in Boston, there was a young rabbi — fresh out of seminary — who founded a small congregation in the Boston suburb South Brookline. He would often hang out with us as “one of the guys.” From the day he started up his synagogue, he was quite successful. He developed a strong following and quickly put his name on the map. I often wondered to myself wherein lay the key to his success and popularity. Upon meeting him, one really could not notice anything particularly remarkable about him.

One day, I picked up a newspaper only to find a picture of this young rabbi sitting and chatting with President Ronald Reagan in the Oval Office, accompanied by a write-up about how he was sharing the message of Chanukah with the president. The story was carried nationally. That was enough for me. I had to find out how this “young shnok” was doing it. I asked him how he managed to accomplish all of these wonderful things. He put it very simply: “It’s because I want to. It’s not about brilliance, eloquence and experience [though those things are certainly useful and important] as much as it is about confidence, persistence and performance.”

He went on to say: “Look, I decided I had something to say to the president and that I wanted to meet with him, so I went out there and made it happen.”

In the Torah portion of Vayakel, we learn about the various items contributed by the different groups among the Israelites toward the building of the Holy Tabernacle (Mishkan) during the journey in the desert. The Torah tells us that the Nesiyyim — the leaders of the tribes — donated the precious gems for the breastplate of the High Priest.

The commentator Rashi takes note of the fact that when using the word “Nesi’im” to describe the leaders’ participation, the Torah deliberately misspells it as “Nesm” as an indication of a flaw and deficiency in the leaders’ manner of participation.

What was the flaw? You see, when the time came for each group to come forward and state what they would give, the leaders volunteered that they would cover whatever was missing after all other donations came in. As it turned out, the outstanding items were the stones and, as such, this was their contribution.

Now why is this manner of service — agreeing to underwrite whatever was not already covered — somehow deemed deficient? After all, it demonstrated a willingness to be there in whatever capacity they’d be called upon. And, in fact, they did end up donating some rather pricey materials. Where was the flaw in their approach?

The keys to the success of any significant project are capability and motivation. Potential + perseverance = success. Now between the two, which is primary? Our sages teach us, “There is nothing that can stand in the way

of one’s genuine will and desire (ratzon).” Simply put, skill without will leaves one an underachiever, whereas drive and perseverance enables one to rise above one’s shortcomings and achieve greatness.

For example, this Torah portion describes the workers who volunteered to build the Tabernacle as “every man whose heart inspired him.” These Israelites had absolutely no experience in this type of unique construction. What then made them qualified to carry it forth? The answer: Their “hearts inspired them.” In other words, they had a desire. They were eager to do it. And by virtue of this desire and eagerness, they became qualified and rose to the occasion.

This is what G-d wants to see from us. “Don’t tell Me how talented or untalented you are,” the Almighty says. “Just tell me what you’re ready and willing to do, and let Me worry about the ‘able’ part.”

So they ask these Heads of the Tribes: “What will you folks be donating to the Tabernacle?” Essentially, they answer, “Well ... whatever. Just give us a call when all is said and done and let us know where you need us to come in. Metals, boards, stones — we’ve got it all.”

That’s very nice — extremely generous. It’s nice to know what you’re capable of. As leaders of the Jewish people, however, these tribe leaders should have demonstrated that when there is a call for action, it is not a time to talk about what you can do, but what you will do. With the excitement of the construction campaign in the air, they should have been the first in line — not the last — to act with initiative, diligence and specificity. Their failure to do so, however well-intended, is seen as a deficiency.

We’re taught that the most essential ingredient is not contemplation or analysis, but action. When we’re presented with an opportunity to do a mitzvah, to become more religiously observant or to get involved in a worthwhile endeavor, let us lighten up a bit on the philosophical introspection and self-examination and “Just do it!” It is not when we become spiritual that we can first decide to act spiritual. Indeed, it is only if we act spiritual that we can become spiritual.

I’ve seen it time and time again; it really is not about brilliance, eloquence and experience as much as it is about confidence, persistence and performance. In fact, I think I would like to have a conversation about this very issue with the President.

Hmmmm....

By Rabbi Moshe Bryski

FAST OF ESTHER & PURIM

The fast of Esther takes place on March 20, 2019 and Purim is on March 21, please make necessary arrangements with your Rabbi/Chaplain for both the bag lunch and Purim arrangements (to hear the Megillah - scroll of Esther).

PASSOVER

Please begin working with your Rabbi / Chaplain to ensure the paperwork is being processed and the necessary arrangements are being made for Passover.