

Torah Weekly

March 15-21, 2020
19-25 Adar, 5780
First Torah: Vayak'hel-
Pekudei: Exodus 35:1 - 40:38
Second Torah: Parshat
Hachodesh: Exodus 12:1-20

Haftarah:
Ezekiel 45:18 - 46:15
**PARSHAT VAYAK'HEL-
PEKUDEI**

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 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
We offer 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 (available to all prisons).

Wise Of Heart "Let all those wise of heart come and do"—Exodus 35:10. Moses called upon each individual member of the Children of Israel to come forward and use their particular skill ("wisdom") to build the Mishkan—the desert Tabernacle.

The Mishkan was an amazing work of art and engineering, and much wisdom and skill were required to build it. But why does he issue a call for the "wise of heart"? Is this not a contradiction in terms? After all, wisdom is in the mind, while emotions are in the heart! Perhaps the Torah is teaching us a valuable lesson, especially applicable in the construction of our personal Mishkan. Skill alone is sterile, while emotion alone is unpredictable. The wise person can know something and it can have no effect on his or her life—it remains in the display case of their brain, never used to direct their behavior. Another person may have profound experiences of deep religious emotion expressed so strongly that they reach a point where they lose sight of other good things in which they should be involved, or they become overly critical of others who seem not to be as enthused as they. Hence, G-d directs Moses to tell the Jewish people: As each and every one of you is building a personal Mishkan—a Sanctuary for G-d made of the stuff of your life—remember to be "wise of heart." "Wise"—allow G-dly wisdom to direct your feelings in a constructive, balanced and inclusive way. "Of heart"—allow this knowledge to create a current of excitement and passion for the good and the G-dly that fills your body and changes your world. By *Rabbi Shlomo Yaffe*

Three Types of Community
A long drama had taken place. Moses had led the people from slavery to the beginning of the road to freedom. The people themselves had witnessed G-d at

Mount Sinai, the only time in all history when an entire people became the recipients of revelation. Then came the disappearance of Moses for his long sojourn at the top of the mountain, an absence which led to the Israelites' greatest collective sin, the making of the golden calf. Moses returned to the mountain to plead for forgiveness, which was granted. Its symbol was the second set of tablets. Now life must begin again. A shattered people must be rebuilt. How does Moses proceed? The verse with which the *sedra* begins contains the clue: Moses assembled the whole Israelite community and said to them: "These are the things G-d has commanded you to do." (Exodus 35:1) The verb *vayakhel*—which gives the *sedra* its name—is crucial to an understanding of the task in which Moses is engaged. At its simplest level it serves as a motive-word, recalling a previous verse. In this case, the verse is obvious: When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they assembled around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us." (Exodus 32:1.) Moses' act is what the Kabbalists called a *tikkun*: a restoration, a making-good-again, the redemption of a past misdemeanor. Just as the sin was committed by the people acting as a *kahal* or *kehillah*, so atonement was to be achieved by their again acting as a *kehillah*, this time by making a home for the Divine Presence as they earlier sought to make a substitute for it. Moses orchestrates the people for good, as they had once been assembled for bad. (The difference lies not only in the purpose but in the form of the verb, from passive in the case of the calf to active in the case of Moses. Passivity allows bad things to happen: "Wherever it says 'and it came to pass,' it is a sign of impending tragedy." (Megillah 10b) Proactivity is the

defeat of tragedy: "Wherever it says 'and there will be,' it is a sign of impending joy." (Bamidbar Rabbah 13.) At a deeper level, though, the opening verse of the *sedra* alerts us to the nature of community in Judaism. In classical Hebrew there are three different words for community: *edah*, *tzibbur* and *kehillah*; and they signify different kinds of association. *Edah* comes from the word *ed*, meaning "witness." The verb *ya'ad* carries the meaning of "to appoint, fix, assign, destine, set apart, designate or determine." The modern Hebrew noun *te'udah* means "certificate, document, attestation, aim, object, purpose or mission." The people who constitute an *edah* have a strong sense of collective identity. They have witnessed the same things. They are bent on the same purpose. The Jewish people become an *edah*—a community of shared faith—only on receiving the first command: Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. (Exodus 12:3) An *edah* can be a gathering for bad as well as good. The Israelites, on hearing the report of the spies, lose heart and say they want to return to Egypt. Throughout, they are referred to as the *edah* (as in "How long will this wicked community grumble against Me?" (Numbers 14:27). The people agitated by Korach in his rebellion against Moses and Aaron's authority are likewise called an *edah* ("If one man sins, will You be angry with the whole community?" (Numbers 16:22.). Nowadays the word is generally used for an ethnic or religious subgroup. An *edah* is a community of the like-minded. The word emphasizes strong identity. It is a group whose members have much in common. By contrast, the word *tzibbur*—it belongs to mishnaic rather than biblical Hebrew—comes from the root *tz-b-r*, meaning "to

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heap” or “pile up.”(Genesis 41:49.) To understand the concept of *tzibbur*, think of a group of people praying at the Kotel. They may not know each other. They may never meet again. But for the moment, they happen to be ten people in the same place at the same time, and thus constitute a quorum for prayer. A *tzibbur* is a community in the minimalist sense, a mere aggregate, formed by numbers rather than any sense of identity. A *tzibbur* is a group whose members may have nothing in common except that at a certain point they find themselves together, and thus constitute a “public” for prayer or any other command which requires a *minyan*. A *kehillah* is different from the other two kinds of community. Its members are different from one another. In that sense, it is like a *tzibbur*. But they are orchestrated together for a collective undertaking—one that involves itself in making a distinctive contribution. The danger of a *kehillah* is that it can become a mass, a rabble, a crowd. That is the meaning of the phrase in which Moses, descending the mountain, sees the people dancing around the calf: Moses saw that the people were running wild, and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. (Exodus 32:25) The beauty of a *kehillah*, however, is that when it is driven by constructive purpose, it gathers together the distinct and separate contributions of many individuals, so that each can say, “I helped to make this.” That is why, assembling the people on this occasion, Moses emphasizes that each has something different to give: “Take from what you have, an offering to G-d. Everyone who is willing to bring to G-d an offering of gold, silver or bronze . . . All who are skilled among you are to come and make everything the L-rd has commanded . . .” Moses was able to turn the *kehillah*, with its diversity, into an *edah*, with its singleness of purpose, while preserving the diversity of the gifts they brought to G-d: Then the whole Israelite community withdrew from Moses’ presence, and everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to G-d for the work on the tent of meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments. All who were willing—men and women—came and brought gold jewelry of all kinds: brooches, earrings, rings and ornaments . . . Everyone who had blue, purple or scarlet yarn . . . Those presenting an offering of silver or bronze . . . Every skilled woman spun with her hands, and brought what she had spun . . . The leaders brought onyx stones and other gems . . . All the Israelite men and women who were willing brought to G-d freewill offerings for all the work that G-d, through Moses, had commanded them to do. (Exodus 35:20–29) The greatness of the Tabernacle was that it was a collective achievement—one in which not everyone did the same thing. Each gave a different thing. Each contribution was valued—and therefore, each participant felt valued. *Vayakhel*—Moses’ ability to forge out of the dissolution of the people a new and genuine *kehillah*—was one of his greatest achievements. Many years later, Moses, according to the sages, returned to this theme. Knowing that his career as a leader was drawing to an end, he prayed to G-d to appoint a successor: “May G-d, L-rd of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the community.” (Numbers 27:16) Rashi, following the sages, explains the unusual phrase “L-rd of the spirits of all flesh” as follows: He said to Him: L-rd of the universe, the character of each person is revealed and known to You—and You know that each is different. Therefore, appoint for them a leader who is able to bear with each person as his or her temperament requires. (Rashi on the above verse.) To preserve the diversity of a *tzibbur* with the unity of purpose of an *edah*—that is the challenge of *kehillah*-formation, community-building, itself the greatest task of a great leader.

By Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

March 16, 2020 --- 20 Adar, 5780

Choni the Circle Maker prays for rain (1st Century BCE)

"One year, most of Adar went by and it didn't rain. They sent for Choni the Circle Maker. He prayed and the rains didn't come. He drew a circle, stood in it and said: 'Master of The World! Your children have turned to me; I swear in Your great name that I won't move from here until You have pity on Your children.' The rains came down." (Talmud, Taanit 23a)

March 17, 2020 --- 21 Adar, 5780

Passing of R. Elimelech of Lizhensk (1786)

The great Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk (1717-1786) was one of the elite disciples of Rabbi DovBer, the Maggid of Mezritch, and a colleague of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi. He is also widely known as the *No'am Elimelech*, the title of the renowned chassidic work he authored. Rabbi Elimelech attracted many thousands of chassidim, among them many who after his passing became great chassidic masters in their own right. Most notable amongst them was Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak Horowitz, the "Seer of Lublin." Many of the current chassidic dynasties trace themselves back to Rabbi Elimelech.

March 19, 2020 --- 23 Adar, 5780

Mishkan assembled; 7 "days of training" (1312 BCE)

The Children of Israel began building the "Mishkan" (also called the "Tabernacle"—a portable sanctuary to house the Divine presence in their midst as they journeyed through the desert) on the 11th of Tishrei of the year 2449 from creation (1312 BCE) -- six months after their Exodus from Egypt, four months after the revelation at Sinai, and 80 days after their worship of the Golden Calf. The construction of the Mishkan, which followed a detailed set of instructions issued to Moses on Mount Sinai, lasted 74 days, and was completed on the 25th of Kislev; but the Divine command to erect the edifice came only three months later, on the 23rd of Adar, when Moses was instructed to begin a 7-day "training period." During the week of Adar 23-29, the Mishkan was erected each morning and dismantled each evening; Moses served as the High Priest and initiated Aaron and his four sons into the priesthood. Then, on the "eighth day" -- the 1st of Nissan -- the Mishkan was "permanently" assembled (that is, put up to stand until the Divine command would come to journey on), Aaron and his sons assumed the priesthood, and the divine presence came to dwell in the Mishkan.

Passing of 1st Rebbe of Ger (1866)

Chassidic Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter (1799-1866), author of *Chiddushei Harim* (a commentary on the Talmud and Shulchan Aruch), was a disciple of the Maggid of Koshnitz and Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Peshischa, and the founder of the "Ger" (Gerer) Chassidic dynasty. All his 13 sons had died in his lifetime, and he was succeeded (in 1870) by his young grandson, Rabbi Yehudah Leib Alter (the "Sefat Emmet").

March 21, 2020 --- 25 Adar, 5780

Nebuchadnezzar died (397 BCE)

Death of King Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian emperor who conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the first Holy Temple 26 years earlier, died on the 25th of Adar of the year 3364 from creation. (Jeremiah 52:31)

Rebbitzin's Birthday (1901)

Rebbitzin Chaya Mushkah Schneerson (1901-1988) of righteous memory, wife of the Lubavitcher Rebbe of righteous memory, was born on Shabbat, the 25th of Adar, in Babinovich, a town near the Russian city of Lubavitch, in the year 5661 from creation (1901). In an address delivered on the 25 of Adar of 1988 (the Rebbitzin's 87th birthday, and about a month after her passing), the Rebbe initiated an international birthday campaign, urging people to celebrate their birthdays and utilize the day as a time of introspection and making resolutions involving an increase in good deeds.