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Time, Space and Man

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z"l (Originally delivered March 19, 1966)

In our traditional Jewish literature, especially our Kabbalistic literature, all of life, experience, and existence are conceived of as consisting of three dimensions: Olam, Shanah, and Nefesh. Literally, these mean: world, year, and soul; actually what is intended by these terms is: Space, Time and Man.

One of the distinguished Rabbis of the State of Israel, Rabbi Shelomoh Yosef Zevin, sees this triadic structure in the opening verses of today's Sidra. We read *va-yakhel Mosheh et kol adat benei yisrael*, that Moses assembled the entire congregation of Israel, and there he taught them the commandments of the Shabbat and Mishkan, the construction of the Tabernacle. The act of assembling all of Israel represents the element of Nefesh of Man. The mishkan is that which occupies a specific place. And Shabbat recurs every week, and hence represents the dimension of time.

It should be understood that this is not merely a way of describing the world or experience. It is a framework that has high spiritual significance, for it means that Judaism considers that these three elements interpenetrate each other and are interdependent.

This view teaches that, on the one hand, man needs the awareness of time and space; that is, he needs the spiritual implications, and the consciousness of the spiritual potentialities, of both history and geography, the realms of Shanah and Olam. Thus, Judaism speaks of *kedushat ha-zeman*, the sanctity of time, as in the celebration of Shabbat and the various festivals. And Judaism speaks too of *kedushat ha-makom*, the holiness of place, as, for instance, the mishkan or, today the synagogue.

On the other hand, both time and space are significant in the divine economy only because of man, because of nefesh. Thus, Shabbat, which is a symbol of time, requires the participation of man (Nefesh) in order to make it

meaningful. According to the Torah, on the seventh day of creation, God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; nevertheless man was commanded, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep to keep it holy," i.e., man too must sanctify the seventh day. It is not enough that time be sacred on its own; it requires the affirmation of man, the participation of his nefesh. The same holds true of the category of space. The holiness of the Sanctuary is contingent upon the initiative of man. In the very commandment in which God makes known His will that we make a sanctuary for Him, we read: *v'asu li mikdash ve'shakhanti; be'tokham*; "and they shall make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell amongst them." The Rabbis observed that the expression is *be'tokham*, "amongst them," and not *be'tokho*, "in it." In other words, God did not want a Sanctuary because He was homeless and needed someplace to live. Rather, the Sanctuary, symbol of sanctity, is important only because it allows man the opportunity to have God dwell within him (*be'tokho*). Thus, both time and space depend upon man; Olam and Shanah require Nefesh.

This same pattern of Time, Space, and Man may be observed not only in our regular Torah reading for today, but also in the special reading for Parshat ha-Hodesh. We read this morning, *ha-hodesh ha-zeh lakhem rosh hadashim*, that this month of Nisan, is to be for us the chief of months. This means that Nisan is Rosh Hashanah. (Indeed the Mishnah tells us that Nisan was the Rosh Hashanah for the kings of Israel, in that the calendar year began with Nisan. Thus, for instance, if a Jewish king began his reign in Adar, then in Nisan it was considered that he had begun the second year of his reign.)

But do we not have another Rosh Hashanah, one which begins on the first day of Tishrei? What, then, is the difference between the Rosh Hashanah of Nisan and the

Rosh Hashanah of Tishrei?

The answer is that the Rosh Hashanah of the Fall, of Tishrei, is that of Olam or Space, whereas the Rosh Hashanah of Spring, of Nisan, is that of Shanah or Time. In Tishrei we celebrate the anniversary of creation, of geography; this is the day on which God created the natural world. In Nisan we celebrate the exodus from Egypt. We commemorate a great historical event, something that occurred in time and that made a difference for all time.

In both of these, Man, the possessor of Nefesh, plays a crucial role. The two Rosh Hashanah's are not merely a birthday of mute nature, or an anniversary of some impersonal historical event. Rather, the Rosh Hashanah of Tishrei emphasizes the element of Din, in which man is brought to the bar of divine justice. At this occasion we are told that man has within himself the capacity to overcome the limitations of the natural world, to transform the inexorable fate determined by the blind laws of Nature. Thus, at the height and climax of our Rosh Hashanah service on Tishrei, we proclaim: *u-teshuva u-tefillah u-tzedakah maavirin et ro'a ha-gezerah*, that by the exertion of this normal nature, by repentance and prayer and charity, man can actually change the decree of his future, the natural result of his conduct and misconduct in the past. So too, the Rosh Hashanah of Nisan is not mere mechanical memorialization of some remote, detached occurrence. It is a time of redemption, and therefore a signal for us that we are to strive for redemption during this month. Perhaps that is why we recite the *Mi she'asah nissim* every Shabbat that we welcome or bless the new month; for the regular appearance of the new moon--on any month--now becomes the occasion to recall human redemption. Moreover, as the Rabbis pointed out, the Torah specifically tells us that *ha-hodesh ha-zeh la-khem*, this month is *la-khem*, "to you," that is, the human court has the right to set the calendar and therefore to determine when the month of Nisan will fall. This is symbolic of the fact that the human element prevails, that man can determine what to do with his time, and hence with his fate and with his destiny. He can fashion his own history. In Judaism, Time, Space, and Man are inextricably bound together.

This thesis has received remarkable confirmation by one of the most brilliant men alive today, Professor R. Buckminster Fuller, inventor of the geodesic dome, in a

recent address reprinted in the latest issue of *The American Scholar*. Prof. Fuller points out that for many years now scientists have maintained that the entire universe is running down. The energy within the world is dissipating into a kind of randomness, which means that everything is becoming successively more disorganized and chaotic and therefore the world, physically, must come to an end. Prof. Fuller points out, however, that there is an opposite tendency to this physical dissipation of the world, this "increase in entropy." That is: the activity of men on earth, and intelligent beings elsewhere in the universe, who by their intellectual and spiritual capacity constantly organize their lives, their thoughts, and their experience more and more sharply. This tendency to organize runs counter to the disorganization tendency within the material universe.

Man, by his systematic intellect and his creative spirit, represents the opposite of the chaotic and the destructive. Hence, even from the point of view of a distinguished scientist, Man, through the exertion of this Nefesh, may yet be the one who will save and redeem the world of Olam and Shanah, of Space and Time:

It is a pity that we do not recognize that fact with sufficient force in our daily experience. Too often we underestimate the role of man in the world, the significance of Nefesh in our universe. Symbolic of this failure is what happened a couple of years ago in Copenhagen, Denmark. A television station received many protests when it scheduled a program of bull-fighting. Many irate citizens wrote in that this was an example of cruelty which they resented. Thereupon the television station substituted for the bull fighting program a film on war, consisting of naval battles. This time no one called to protest.

The same is true of many of our humane societies who agitate for public acceptance of humane laws--which is as it should be. Unfortunately, however, the same people who are so concerned about the welfare of animals, are totally oblivious to man's cruelty to man--especially when the man who is the victim happens to be a Jew.

A more heartening example of the creative role of man in the world came in recent weeks when an Israeli citizen decided to make a dramatic gesture for peace by flying a small plane to Egypt to see President Nasser, and thereafter proceeded to Rome to see the Pope, then to Paris for President De Gaulle, and then probably on to the United States. It matters little whether or not his effort was motivated by self-glorification, cheap publicity, and

a general flair for self-projection. The important thing is that in this terrible cold war, with great power blocks and stubborn nations locked in deadly hostility, controlled by giant bureaucracies, one single human individual was able to emerge from anonymity and obscurity to make his presence felt and move the hearts of his fellow men. The Nefesh somehow prevailed, even momentarily, over the Olam and the Shanah.

The time is long past for us to take a good, long, and deep look at Jewish education from the point of view of this triadic structure of Time, Space, and Man. I believe that the failure of so much of Jewish education to date is a result of the fact that there is Olam and Shanah, but no Nefesh. There is a place called “school” to which children are sent, and a certain time limit which they must serve, generally to Bar-Mitzvah. But there is all too little of the one element which can redeem the entire procedure and make it meaningful and effective: the child, his nefesh, his own interest and heart and soul. Too often children feel that they merely “take up space” and “do time” as if they were juvenile convicts condemned to the agonizing boredom of Jewish education. What is needed is nefesh --and that can be provided by parents who understand that school is not a place to send children but to bring them, and that the home must serve not as counter-pressure to school, but as a model laboratory where the principles and ideals taught in the Jewish school are carried out in practice. The teachers, too, must reemphasize as never before the elements of the child’s own nefesh. A great deal of research is needed in Jewish education if all the investment we have put into it and all the dreams we have

Turning the Clock Ahead

Rabbi Joshua (The Hoffer) Hoffman z”l

In parshas Pekudei, we read that the mishkan was erected on the first day of the first month, or, in current parlance, the first of Nissan (Shemos 40:2). The Midrash Rabbah notes that even though the actual work of the mishkan was completed on the twenty-fifth of Kislev, God wanted to delay its erection until the birthday of Yitzchok. We need to understand why Yitzchok, more than the other patriarchs, had a special connection to the erection and dedication of the mishkan. Although we have, in the past, offered our own explanation for this connection, I would like to present and expand upon the

dreamed for it are to come true.

Much too much of Jewish education today is irrelevant. It is simply a matter of re-learning and re-teaching new techniques of instruction and pedagogy. What a pity if in this age of technological and methodological progress in so many fields, Jewish education should remain backward and retrogressive. Parents, teachers, and the community at large must bring back Nefesh to the Jewish education world of Olam and Shanah.

Finally, all three elements merge together in one paeon of praise to Almighty God as we welcome the new month of Nisan this coming week. Man, indeed, has a positive function as a new season of the year comes about in which Nature is aroused to life once again. The Talmud put it this way: when a man goes abroad in Spring, and notices the trees blossoming and the first green blades of grass pushing their way through the crunchy earth, he ought to make a blessing to his God. He should say, “Blessed are though O Lord, King of the Universe, *she’lo hiser be’olamo davar, u-vara bo beriot tovim v’ilanot tovot, le’hanot ba-hem benei adam* --who has made His world perfect, lacking nothing, creating therein beautiful creatures and wonderful trees, in order to grant thereby pleasure and joy and benefit to the children of men.”

With the coming of Nisan and Spring, the fullness of God’s beautiful world (His Olam) and the onset of the most delightful of his regular seasons of the Shanah must be sanctified by the dedication and gratitude of human beings who, each possessed of true Nefesh, will offer to Him a berakhah, and themselves be blessed thereby.

Read more at www.yu.edu/about/lamm-heritage.

explanation offered by Rabbi Yosef Salant in his Be’er Yosef.

Rabbi Salant explains that since the main activity in the mishkan was the bringing of sacrifices to God, and these sacrifices entail, according to Ramban, imaging oneself actually being brought on the altar, it was uniquely Yitzchok who served as a paradigm in this regard. Yitzchok was the only one of the patriarchs who was brought on an altar as a sacrifice to God. Even though, in the end, Avrohom did not literally slaughter his son, the mdrash tells us that God sees, as it were, his ashes laying before him on he altar, and counts Yitzchok’s willingness to

offer himself as a sacrifice to Him as a merit for the Jewish people. The aim of the mishkan is to bring God's presence down among the people through the medium of the sacrifices brought there, which signify the people's willingness to offer their lives in dedication to God. Therefore, Yitzchok, who actually did this, has a special connection with the erection of the mishkan, and that is why the mishkan was erected in Nissan, the month during which he was born.

With Rabbi Salant's explanation in mind, we can proceed to consider another problem in our parsha, raised by the commentators. The Torah tells us the exact amount of gold, silver and copper that was used in the construction of the mishkan. Why is it important for us to know these details? The Ohr Hachaim, in his comment on the Torah's listing of the amount of gold given, notes a certain redundancy in this verse. The verse begins, "All the gold that was used for the work - for all the holy work..." The words 'for all the holy work' seem to be unnecessary; since we were just told that the gold was for the work. The Ohr HaChaim answers that this apparent redundancy is actually teaching us that every bit of the gold that was

brought as a donation to the mishkan was used in its construction. Even though, usually, when someone makes something out of a metal, there are strips and shavings of it left over at the end, due to cutting things to size, etc., in the case of the metals donated to the mishkan, this was not the case. Everything that was contributed to the mishkan was used for a holy purpose in the mishkan's construction.

Expanding on the idea of the Ohr HaChaim, perhaps we can say that the Torah, in parshas Vayakheil and parshas Pekudei, repeats in great detail the construction of the mishkan and the making of the priestly garments in order to drive home the message that every little detail had a purpose, and was used to serve God. This message takes on greater meaning when we view the mishkan as a vehicle towards offering our lives in dedication to God, as symbolized by the erection of the mishkan during the month of Nissan, when Yitzchok, the only one of the patriarchs to offer himself as a sacrifice to God, was born. By dedicating ourselves to God, striving to fulfill the Mishnaic charge of performing all of our acts for the sake of heaven, we are following the example of Yitzchok in his service of God.

How to Give

Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh (Transcribed and adapted by a talmid from a shiur given in the Gruss Kollel on March 12, 2015)

The parsha starts by telling us how Moshe fulfilled the tzivui from parshas Terumah. He says *Kchu mitchem terumah la-Hashem kol nediv libo yevieha es terumas Hashem* — Take a terumah for Hashem, whoever's heart volunteers them should bring it, the terumah of Hashem. There is an obvious redundancy here. It should either say *yevieha* or *yavi es terumas Hashem*. Why does the Torah need to say both? The *pashtanim*-of-the-*pashtanim* say, ok, sometimes there are redundancies in the Torah text. And here, it simply describes the commandment to bring the donations for the sake of Hashem. Alternatively, Seforno says that Hashem is asking for two separate offerings. Namely, the terumah for the construction of the Mishkan and Machatzis ha-Shekel. However, the Ba'al Ha-Turim wants to find a Mussar vort here—*derech remez, ke-darko ba-kodesh*. He says that the feminine suffix "*yeha*" in the word "*yevieha*" refers to a woman, perhaps. What does that mean, though? The Ba'al Ha-Turim says that many of the things that Hashem asked to bring—like *keseif*

and *zahav*—might be things that a wife might appreciate having around more than her husband would. If someone were to ask me to donate some pretty item lying around the house, I wouldn't mind since I don't need it anyway. But my wife would miss it more. She would appreciate it and wouldn't think that it should be given away easily. Therefore, he says, that's what it means. They should go and consult with their wives. Just because the men don't need extra gold jewelry doesn't mean that their wives agree. Therefore, the men should make sure that their wives are *be-shalom* with it before they donate. It's an important Mussar vort that sometimes it's easy for me to sacrifice something I don't really care about to do a good thing. But when it's a more significant loss for other people, we should be careful. When we want to do a good deed and sacrifice, don't sacrifice something valuable to other people. Give away what you consider precious. And when you want to give away something that belongs to someone else, check with them first if they are ready to do so. Don't

be a tzadik on someone else's cheshbon—even in your own family. That's the *bein adam le-chaveiro* Mussar vort of the Ba'al Ha-Turim.

Sfas Emes says a very nice Mussar *amkus* (which corresponds with some of the kabbalistic ideas in the peirush of the Ramban and other meforshim here) but based on the grammatical dikduk. The pasuk says that *kol nediv libo* should bring it. "It" is a pronoun. A pronoun needs an antecedent. Usually (at least in English), it refers to the most recent noun. And what was the most recent thing that we discussed? Sfas Emes says *kol nediv libo, yevieha*. Whoever has *nedivus lev*. Whoever has a feeling in their heart that they want to give to Hashem should bring that feeling, along with the physical terumah. When Hashem asks us to bring the terumah, the *tafel*—the secondary—is to offer the gold and the silver and the wood for the building. The *ikar* that Hashem wants is not gold and silver. Does Hashem need gold and silver?? Does Hashem need a house?? Does Hashem need anything??

What's in Your Sink?

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Without a doubt, the COVID plague has shown that plumbing fixtures are important, as hand-washing has been a focal activity for all of us. Still, Shemot 38:8 is odd, presenting the Mishkan's kiyor (sink) in a way that highlights apparently unimportant elements:

- The text specifies creation of the kan – the seemingly mundane base on which the kiyor's basin sits;
- The text highlights that the kiyor was made of recycled mirrors, the only recycling noted in the construction of the Mishkan;
- The text goes out of its way to identify the donors, "assembled women, who assembled at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting".

Why are these details highlighted in our parshah's summary of the construction of the Mishkan?

On a basic level, these details underscore the kiyor's important washing function. A kohen who wishes to serve in the Mishkan must wash his hands and feet from the kiyor, in an act called kiddush – consecration. This is not about removing dirt; a kohen who merely steps out of the Beit HaMikdash for a moment must wash upon re-entry. (Mishnah Kelim 1:9; Rambam, Laws of Entry

The Heavens and the Earth cannot contain Him! The material donations are a secondary *terumas Hashem*. The *ikar* is *kol nediv libo, yevieha*. He wants us to bring the "lev." He wants us to bring our feelings, the yearning for Hashem! And, ultimately, that's true not just in the Mishkan but in all of avodas Hashem. Every day, what does Hashem need of us? He doesn't need anything because He is a perfect G-d. *Be-ikar* He wants us to bring Him into our hearts—and we express that by doing various things. That's the whole idea of *Be-Levavi Mishkan evne*, etc. In reality, the Mishkan is not something that existed 3300 years ago in the Sinai desert. The Mishkan is something that's in everyone's heart in a certain way. Sfas Emes says that when it comes to the pasuk: *kol nediv libo, yevieha*, the *ikar* Mishkan is when we give *terumas Hashem* by making room for Him in our hearts, and then we build a physical one also.

We should be zoche to see it in our days, *bi-m'heirah, be-yameynnu!*

into the Sanctuary 5:1-4) The point is sanctification, which warrants our special attention.

From a broader perspective, washing in the kiyor calls to mind the many other occasions when we dedicate our physical bodies for a spiritual purpose.

This may also be why the text emphasizes that the women's mirrors were converted into the kiyor: mirrors represent physical beautification, and here they became a vehicle for spirituality. This theme of the physical enabling the spiritual may also explain the Torah's emphasis on the "assembled women". The Torah describes the assembled women as *tzov'ot*, and a midrash quotes Hashem telling Moshe to accept the mirrors which were used "to create this entire tzava [nation] in Egypt." (Midrash Tanchuma, Pekudei 9)

More deeply, the imagery associated with the kiyor presents a deeper sanctification; washing in the kiyor represents mystical connection with Divine spiritual influence. We see this in Melachim I 7:29, which describes the kan base of the kiyor in the Beit HaMikdash; the kan bears engravings of lions, oxen and cherubim – entities featured on the Divine throne in Yechezkel 1:10 and 10:14! Rabbi Moshe Isserless explained (Torat haOlah 1:14):

- The base of the sink represents our world, a “footstool” for the Divine.
- The assembled women who donated the materials are tzov’ot, like the celestial servants of G-d who are described as tzeva ma’alah, the assembly in Heaven.
- The kiyor’s water represents the Divine influence, received on the hands of the kohanim.
- This influence is conveyed from the kohanim to the world through their activities, represented by their washed feet.
- Divine influence is described rabbinically as a radiant lens, like the mirrors which composed the kiyor.

Washing in this kiyor, whether as consecration, conversion of physical to spiritual, or mystical channeling of Divine influence, highlights the importance of our deeds each time we prepare to perform mitzvot. In fact, sometimes preparation is even its own mitzvah. For example: in Shemot 12:28, regarding the original Korban

Renewing Our Connection

Rabbi Reuven Brand

This Shabbat we read the special section of Parshat Hachodesh that describes Hashem’s instituting the lunar Jewish calendar as we prepared to leave Egypt. The Hebrew word Chodesh, meaning month, is closely related to the word Chadash, meaning new. Hence the verse, “החדש הזה לכם” — “*this month is for you*” (Shemot 12:1) takes on additional meaning.

Rav Gedalia Dov Schwartz zt”l explained that the Torah encourages us to take ownership of our faith, our time and

Turning Back the Clock

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

The wedding date had already been set. Anxiously anticipating this day, the bride and groom shopped for the furniture of their future home. Selecting the actual couches, beds and tables should have taken an hour or two; instead the process stretched across an entire day. Each furnishing excited loving visions of their shared future. As they selected furniture, their imaginations leapt into an enchanted future of marriage and partnership. Selecting a kitchen set, the couple amusingly envisioned early morning breakfasts with their young children. As

Pesach in Egypt, we are told, “And Bnei Yisrael went and did as Moshe had commanded.” On this a midrash comments that the text teaches “reward for going, and reward for doing.” Commenting on that midrash, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin wrote, “Preparation which is recorded in the Torah is of value equal to the mitzvah itself.” (Birkat haNetziv to Mechilta d’Rabbi Yishmael, Bo, Pischa 12)

May our preparations for Pesach this year – the “routine” preparation we would do in any year, the more complicated preparations due to the pandemic, and the special preparations we make because Erev Pesach is Shabbat – be accepted before Hashem as mitzvot unto themselves, like the preparations of the Jews in Egypt long ago. May these preparations enable us to recline at our Seder and truly see ourselves as having left Egypt. And may we merit to celebrate the Seder together in Jerusalem, with a rebuilt Beit HaMikdash.

our destiny. It is up to us to renew our commitments and not be satisfied with our previous levels of commitment. Each year, Parshat Hachodesh reminds us to constantly seek more meaningful ways to connect with Hashem each year during this time, each month with Rosh Chodesh, and even day as the verse describes (Eicha 3:23):

הַדְּשִׁים לְבָבָרִים רַבָּה אִמּוּנָתְךָ.

They are renewed every morning— Ample is Your grace!

they measured their sofa, they anticipated hosting guests in their home. Designing their bedroom evoked thoughts of the many personal and private moments they would share. Each furnishing was deliberately selected and each dimension carefully measured and re-measured. As the wedding was still a few days off, the furniture order was put on hold.

Tragically, on the night prior to the wedding, the bride betrayed her husband-to-be. Hearing of his bride’s disloyalty, a shocked and horrified groom angrily stormed

out of the event hall, casting the wedding into disarray. What was originally intended as a great celebration turned into bedlam and outrage. The two families parted amidst anger and distrust.

A few weeks later family members from each side intervened, attempting to rebuild the shattered relationship. After preliminary meetings and several signs of good trust offered by each side, the groom and bride haltingly agreed to meet. Sitting across a table, but divided by a gulf of mistrust and hurt feelings, they gradually rebuilt their trust and their relationship. After weeks of reconciliation, it was decided that the marriage should proceed; a new date was set.

As the second wedding date drew near, the bride and groom returned to the furniture store to, once again, purchase furnishings for their home. At this stage however, the emotionally “bruised” couple had little interest in luxuriating over their furniture selection. They made hasty decisions and placed quick and “uninspired” orders. Every showroom they visited provoked hurt and pain and, seeking to avoid this sadness, they quickly ordered whatever furniture was readily available- regardless of the exact dimensions and without regarding the quality of the units. They could not bear the pain, so they avoided it entirely. Though they could forgive each other, their marriage and relationship would remain forever scarred by infidelity. Human beings can forgive, but it is difficult to turn back the clock to the past.

I heard this story over thirty years ago, this week, from my Rebbe, Harav Aharon Lichtenstein zt”l, as he extolled the teshuva which G-d offers us. In contrast to the bride and groom in this story who could forgive but could not forget, G-d invites us to repair our failures and recover our original state of purity and innocence- an offer which humans cannot provide. We fall into sin and into failure, but, when G-d forgives us our relationship is reset to its original tone and its original love. We ask of G-d “chadeish yameinu k’kedem’ hoping, not just to be forgiven, but to restore our earlier and more virtuous state and to reestablish the original state of our relationship with G-d.

Rav Lichtenstein asserted this as the reason that the Torah includes a seemingly redundant “double parsha” of Vayakhel and Pekudei. Two earlier sections of Terumah and Tezaveh had already detailed the various materials and dimensions of the mishkan; even the inclusion of these earlier sections is peculiar as the details appear relevant only for the craftsmen and artisans who fashioned the

mishkan. The extensive details concerning the manufacture of the mishkan appear unnecessary for the common man. Yet, the Torah delineates these details, because the process of building a home for, and with G-d was a labor of love. Every item and every dimension was indulged in, and every lavish material reflected our desire to draw G-d into our world. Tragically, the egel debacle ruptured these plans, putting on hold the construction of our home and the manufacture of its furnishings. As the tablets were shattered, our dreams of living in G-d’s home were crushed.

After weeks of prayer and penitence we were forgiven, and the marriage of G-d and His people was rescheduled. The lengthy descriptions in Parshat Vayakhel and Pekudei - practically word-for-word replicas of Terumah and Tezaveh- underscores that G-d felt the exact same love for us after the egel, as He did before our betrayal. Just as the Torah relishes the original list of dimensions in the earlier section of Terumah and Tezaveh, it equally savors the process of construction after our sin and after our forgiveness. The extended list of dimensions in these latter sections of Vayakhel and Pekudei, indicates that our teshuva can actually set the clock back and restore the native purity of our original relationship with G-d.

As we enter the second year of this pandemic, many are beginning to see the “light at the end of the tunnel”. In Israel, the pace of vaccination suggests that life will shortly return to semi-normal. Across the world, we hope that vaccinations will eventually restore normal routines. It is unlikely that society and communities will fully recover their pre-Corona routines in the near future. The cultural and communal after-effects of this pandemic will likely last a while and will shape both public opinion as well as public policy for the foreseeable future. We will not easily set the clock back to 2020.

On an individual level, however, the pandemic offers us a return to an earlier phase of our lives and a more “basic” identity, which our successes in life can sometimes obscure. Corona has robbed us all of many of the accomplishments and dreams which came to define us. Some have lost relatives, others have lost employment and still others have lost the opportunities and goals which, in the past, contributed to our identity. This personal “effacement” forces us to sharpen our self-identity. In the midst of a pandemic, the question “who we are” will more likely yield basic and straightforward answers – as we can less easily hide behind our accomplishments, occupations or broader

goals. Stripped of so many external achievements, it is easier to tap into an internal self-definition which is more primal and more elementary. Loss allows us to return to a past “before” we succeeded in life’s various pursuits. A pandemic is reductive- it reduces us into more simple and unadorned people, more aware of our core identity; for religious people that core identity is our relationship with G-d. Corona helps us turn back the clock to our previous selves, to an earlier state in our lives “before”: before life and its complications forced us to lose our way. Everyone

in life should be able to identify a “before”- a purer state or phase in our earlier lives which to which we would like to return.

We may not recover pre-corona socio-economic experiences for years; our communal life will be reshaped in the post-corona landscape. On a broader level we move forward into relatively uncharted territory. Ironically though, on a more personal level, the reductive nature of this pandemic helps us reclaim our former purer selves.

It turns out that we can turn back the clock on our lives.

The Benefit of the Work of Our Hands

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

In the second of this week’s parshios, Parshas Pekudei, after many months of a labor of love, the Mishkan is finally erected. The promise of וַעֲשׂוּ לִי, מִקְדָּשׁ; וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם, *and You shall make for Me a Sanctuary, so that I will dwell amongst them (Shemos 25:8)* has come to fruition. After the Mishkan was put up by Moshe on the first of Nissan, in the second year from Yetzias Mitzrayim, the pasuk tells us: וַיִּכַס הָעֶנָן, אֶת-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד; וּכְבוֹד ה' מָלֵא אֶת-הַמִּשְׁכָּן, *and the Cloud (of the Shechina) covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Glory of G-d filled the Mishkan (Shemos 40:34)*. The process of redemption that began with our physical redemption from Egypt (Shemos, Va’era, Bo, Beshalach) is now complete with our spiritual redemption, as a nation of Torah (Yisro, Mishpatim) wherein G-d chooses to dwell (Terumah - Pekudei). Not for naught is Sefer Shemos known as “Sefer Ha’Geula” - the Book of Redemption, for the entire book tells the process of redemption from beginning to end.

Prior to the assembly of the Mishkan, the people brought all the parts of the Mishkan, along with its keilim (vessels), to Moshe. The pasuk tells us: וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶת-כָּל-הַמְּלָאכָה, וְהִנֵּה עָשׂוּ אֹתָהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' כִּן עָשׂוּ וַיְבָרַךְ אֹתָם, מֹשֶׁה - *and Moshe saw all the work, and behold, they had done it as Hashem had commanded, so had they done, and Moshe blessed them (39:43)*.

What was the blessing that he bestowed upon the people? Rashi (ibid) teaches:

ויברך אתם משה. אָמַר לָהֶם יְהִי רְצוֹן שְׁתִּשְׁרָה שְׁכִינָה בְּמַעֲשֵׂה וַיִּבְרַךְ אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה, וְהִנֵּה עָשׂוּ אֹתָהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' כִּן עָשׂוּ וַיְבָרַךְ אֹתָם, מֹשֶׁה - *And Moshe blessed them, and he said: May the Shechina rest in the work of your hands, and may the pleasantness of the L-rd our G-d be upon us, and may the work of our hands establish for us, and may the work of our*

hands establish it (Tehillim 90:17).

HaRav Avrohom Yaakov Pam (1913-2001, Rosh Yeshiva Yeshivas Torah Vodaas, Brooklyn, New York) zt”l notes a powerful insight of the Malbim regarding the bracha that Moshe gave the nation.

“The Malbim (in his commentary to Tehillim) offers a penetrating insight. When a person designs and builds a magnificent edifice, he has changed the landscape and added beauty and splendor to the place or neighborhood where the building is situated. However, the person himself is unchanged; he remains the same base personality that he was before he built the building. If anything (he may have changed in a negative sense, because), his ego may be more inflated now than it was before, as he enjoys the prestige and honor this achievement brings him.

“But when a person reaches a milestone in Torah study, he is, in essence, a different person. He had added a new dimension of spiritual depth and breadth to his neshama (his soul), which he will carry with him for the rest of his life.

“This is what the bracha of Moshe to the people, upon completion of the work of the Mishkan, stresses: may our handiwork be עָלֵינוּ - upon us, that is: may our work improve us spiritually.

“There is another insight in Moshe’s bracha, שְׁתִּשְׁרָה שְׁכִינָה בְּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיכֶם, *may the Shechina rest upon the work of your hands*. It is obvious that the Shechina will rest upon the Mishkan and its vessels. An entity enveloped in such intense holiness is a welcome receptacle for Hashem’s presence! But Moshe was alluding to a far more difficult task - that the Shechina rest on the work of one’s hands - on

his farm and field, on his business or profession, that place where a person spends the bulk of his working hours. That is a much greater accomplishment!

“When one earns his livelihood in an honest, legitimate manner according to the guidelines of the Shulchan Aruch and builds his home with funds acquired honestly, the Shechinah feels comfortable (so to speak) resting on such a place and bestowing all the blessings of life that a person wants and needs to be successful.

“Perhaps this is a deeper insight into Moshe’s bracha, something that every person should aspire to achieve” (A Vort from Rav Pam, Artscroll, p.123-124).

In regard to Rav Pam’s first insight, we can further note that the way of the world is that generally, when a person works, the work of his hands benefits others. A builder builds edifices for his customers, a lawyer works on behalf of his clients, a doctor is busy treating and healing his patients, a teacher imparts knowledge to his students, a chef cooks food for others to enjoy, and an accountant files taxes for the citizens.

However! When it comes to avodas ha’kodesh, holy work, when we are involved in acts of ruchniyus, spirituality, we daven that the primary beneficiary of our

toil not be others - rather, may we be enhanced, improved, changed and elevated from our involvement in holy work. ויהי נעם אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵינוּ עִלְיָנוּ וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ כּוֹנֵנָה עִלְיָנוּ וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ כּוֹנֵנָה - *may the pleasantness of the L-rd our G-d be upon us, and may the work of our hands establish for us, and may the work of our hands establish it.*

While a life of Torah and mitzvos surely benefits those around us, let us ensure that any holy endeavor brings benefit to our neshamos, our being, our personalities, our very own selves.

Reb Uri of Strelisk (known as the Strelisker Rebbe, 1757-1826) used to say, “A Jew daily recites the prayer, ‘Let our hearts cling to Your mitzvos’ (morning prayers). The meaning of this prayer is this: That the mitzvos that I fulfill will be etched on my heart. That they will be an integral part of my being. That I will be totally filled with them, and that I will not ever part from them. In this way the love that I have for You, my Creator, will remain permanent” (Tales of the Righteous, S. Raz, p.108).

May we be so fortunate to merit that G-d dwell amongst us and within us, and may the work of our hands benefit us, always for the betterment of the people we are and the ovdei Hashem we strive to be.

Taking A Break to Find Hashem

Rabbi Dr. David Shabtai

Somewhat repetitively, Parshiyot Va-Yakhel and Pekudei detail how Bnei Yisrael constructed the Mishkan and its accoutrements, in eerily similar language to the command to fashion those very items in Parshiyot Terumah and Tetzaveh. In very dramatic fashion, Moshe gathers together all of Bnei Yisrael (ויקהל משה) to be part of the construction effort. In building the Mishkan, nobody is excluded and nobody left behind. Everybody was invited.

But instead of delving into what tasks are necessary or who would be in charge of collecting which materials, or even opening with an inspirational exhortation, Moshe doesn’t talk about the Mishkan at all. Instead, he talks very generally about properly keeping Shabbat. In far less detail than they had just heard at Har Sinai, Moshe reminds Bnei Yisrael that even while they may work six days a week, Shabbat is considered a holy day when work is forbidden. He then mentions that lighting a fire is an example of such prohibited labor.

Given the strangeness of the textual structure, Hazal learn from here that Moshe was teaching Bnei Yisrael that building the Mishkan must cease on Shabbat. Despite the importance of constructing the Mishkan—the center of all Avodat Hashem—it cannot take precedence over the rules of Shabbat. The Re’em (Rav Eliyahu Mizrahi) points out that this is true despite the fact that many of the activities that were destined to take place in the Mishkan (such as bringing korbanot) which would otherwise be considered Shabbat violations must in fact take place, even on Shabbat. The same rules would apply years later during the building of the Beit Ha-Mikdash. Despite its pivotal role in Jewish communal life, its central role in religious ritual, and even its designation as the center of Jewish politics, constructing the Beit Ha-Mikdash must take a back seat to the more mundane and familiar Shabbat restrictions.

While we are generally used to our regular activities being curtailed on Shabbat, it still may come as a surprise that the same applies to building the Mishkan—an activity

that is God-oriented and shouldn't be considered part of our own world of labor. Clearly the Torah is trying to teach us something.

Perhaps the lesson can be found in the single detail that Moshe adds about keeping Shabbat — not lighting a fire. In fact it's one of the only rules of Shabbat that are actually specified in the Torah, leading the Gemara to question whether it's intended to be paradigmatic of all the others or actually different and distinct from them. But regardless of its impact on the other rules of Shabbat, it is interesting that it's the only one listed.

In an interesting twist, the Gemara (Pesachim 53) points out that lighting a fire was the first thing that Adam did right after that very first Shabbat. Beyond simply being his first creative act of the new week, the Gemara describes how Adam attempted to emulate Hashem and used the knowledge / understanding (דעת) which Hashem granted him in creating fire. During the first week in history, Hashem created everything. At the very outset of this second week, Adam started to partner with Hashem. Adam utilized the natural resources that Hashem created and

the tools of knowledge that He granted him, to enhance this world and strive to perfect it. Fire represents man's contributions to the world.

And this may very well be what the Torah is getting at. Even while the Mishkan is God's house, it still requires Man's participation in building it. Much like Adam's fire, whose discovery was a deliberate partnership between Man and God, so too the Mishkan — it's Man's creation, but God's dwelling place. But just like Adam's fire, building the Mishkan is also forbidden on Shabbat.

Shabbat is a time where we are to take a step back from our creativity. To recognize that we indeed have much to contribute to this world; that Hashem has granted us the faculties and facilities to perfect and improve that which He started. But at the same time to recognize that really all comes from Him. Sometimes, even while we are partnering with Hashem in creating, building, and perfecting the world, we can get carried away and focus too strongly and too intently on our role in the partnership. Shabbat is a build in reminder to never forget about the vital, necessary, and pivotal role that Hashem plays in that partnership.