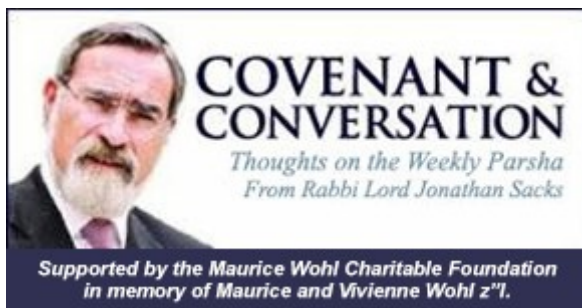


In This Issue

- **Covenant and Conversation** by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks
- **The Guiding Light** by Rabbi Yehonasan Gefen
- **Outlooks and Insights** by Rabbi Zev Leff
- **Between the Lines** by Rabbi Abba Wagensberg



On Leadership: Team-Building

How do you re-motivate a demoralized people? How do you put the pieces of a broken nation back together again? That was the challenge faced by Moses in this week's *parsha*.

The key word here is *vayakhel*, "Moses gathered." *Kehillah* means community. A *kehillah* or *kahal* is a group of people assembled for a given purpose. That purpose can be positive or negative, constructive or destructive. The same word that appears at the beginning of this week's *parsha* as the beginning of the solution, appeared in last week's *parsha* as the start of the problem: "When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered [*vayikahel*] around Aaron and said, 'Make us a god to lead us. As for this man Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to

him."

The difference between the two kinds of *kehillah* is that one results in order, the other in chaos. Coming down the mountain to see the golden calf, we read that "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." The verb "*perah*" with the letter "*ayin*", like the similar "*pereh*" with an "*alef*", means "loose, unbridled, unrestrained."

There is an assembly that is disciplined, task-oriented and purposeful. And there is an assembly that is a mob. It has a will of its own. People in crowds lose their sense of self-restraint. They get carried along in a wave of emotion. Normal deliberative thought-processes become bypassed by the more primitive feelings or the group. There is, as neuroscientists put it, an "amygdala hijack." Passions run wild.

There have been famous studies of this: Charles Mackay's *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* (1841), Gustave Le Bon's *The Crowd: a study of the popular mind* (1895), and Wilfred Trotter's *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (1914). One of the most haunting works on the subject is Jewish Nobel prize-winner Elias Canetti's *Crowds and Power* (1960, English translation 1962).

Vayakhel is Moses' response (1) to the wild abandon of the crowd that gathered around Aaron and made the golden calf. He does something fascinating. He does not oppose the people, as he did initially when he saw the golden calf. Instead, he uses the same motivation that drove them in the first place. They wanted to create something that would be a sign that God was among them: not on the

heights of a mountain but in the midst of the camp. He appeals to the same sense of generosity that made them offer up their gold ornaments. The difference is that they are now acting in accordance with God's command, not their own spontaneous feelings.

He asks the Israelites to make voluntary contributions to the construction of the Tabernacle, the Sanctuary, the Mikdash. They do so with such generosity that Moses has to order them to stop. *If you want to bond human beings so that they act for the common good, get them to build something together.* Get them to undertake a task that they can only achieve together, that none can do alone.

The power of this principle was demonstrated in a famous social-scientific research exercise carried out in 1954 by Muzafer Sherif and others from the University of Oklahoma, known as the Robbers' Cave experiment. Sherif wanted to understand the dynamics of group conflict and prejudice. To do so, he and his fellow researchers selected a group of 22 white, eleven-year-old boys, none of whom had met one another before. They were taken to a remote summer camp in Robbers Cave State Park, Oklahoma. They were randomly allocated into two groups.

Initially neither group knew of the existence of the other. They were staying in cabins far apart. The first week was dedicated to team-building. The boys hiked and swam together. Each group chose a name for itself - they became The Eagles and the Rattlers. They stencilled the names on their shirts and flags.

Then, for four days they were introduced to one another through a series of competitions. There were trophies, medals and prizes for the

winners, and nothing for the losers. Almost immediately there was tension between them: name-calling, teasing, and derogatory songs. It got worse. Each burned the other's flag and raided their cabins. They objected to eating together with the others in the same dining hall.

Stage 3 was called the 'integration phase'. Meetings were arranged. The two groups watched films together. They lit Fourth-of-July firecrackers together. The hope was that these face-to-face encounters would lessen tensions and lead to reconciliation. They didn't. Several broke up with the children throwing food at one another.

In stage 4, the researchers arranged situations in which a problem arose that threatened both groups simultaneously. The first was a blockage in the supply of drinking water to the camp. The two groups identified the problem separately and gathered at the point where the blockage had occurred. They worked together to remove it, and celebrated together when they succeeded.

In another, both groups voted to watch some films. The researchers explained that the films would cost money to hire, and there was not enough in camp funds to do so. Both groups agreed to contribute an equal share to the cost. In a third, the coach on which they were travelling stalled, and the boys had to work together to push it. By the time the trials were over, the boys had stopped having negative images of the other side. On the final bus ride home, the members of one team used their prize money to buy drinks for everyone.

Similar outcomes have emerged from other studies. The conclusion is revolutionary. You can turn even hostile factions into a single cohesive group so long as they are faced with a

shared challenge that all can achieve together but none can do alone.

Rabbi Norman Lamm, former President of Yeshiva University, once remarked that he knew of only one joke in the Mishnah, the statement that "Scholars increase peace in the world" (Berakhot 64a). Rabbis are known for their disagreements. How then can they be said to increase peace in the world?

I suggest that the passage is not a joke but a precisely calibrated truth. To understand it we must read the continuation: "Scholars increase peace in the world as it is said, 'All your children shall be learned of the Lord and great will be the peace of your children' (Isaiah 54:13). Read not 'your children' but 'your builders.'" When scholars become builders they create peace. If you seek to create a community out of strongly individualistic people, you have to turn them into builders. That is what Moses did in Vayakhel.

Team-building, even after a disaster like the golden calf, is neither a mystery nor a miracle. It is done by setting the group a task, one that speaks to their passions and one no subsection of the group can achieve alone. It must be constructive. Every member of the group must be able to make a unique contribution and then feel that it has been valued. Each must be able to say, with pride: I helped make this.

That is what Moses understood and did. He knew that if you want to build a team, create a team that builds.

1. I mean this only figuratively. The building of the Tabernacle was, of course, God's command, not Moses. The fact that it is set out as Divine command before the story of the Golden Calf (in *parshat* Terumah) is intended to illustrate the principle that "God creates the cure before the disease" (Megillah 13b).



Being Righteous at the Expense of Others

Shemot, 37:1: "And Betzalel made the Ark of shittim wood, two and a half amot in length, one and a half amot in width, and one and a half amot in height. And they coated it with pure gold on the inside and the outside..."

Daat Zekeinim, Shemos, 25:11:
Dh: And you will coat it: "It was fitting for the Aron to be completely gold [even in the middle] but because they would have to carry it on their shoulders it would be too heavy. And even though it says that the Aron would carry those who carry it, that was temporary.

The Aron HaKodesh (Holy Ark) was coated with gold on the inside and the outside, with wood in the middle. The Daat Zekeinim notes that it would have been ideal for the Ark to be completely made from gold, so why was wood placed in the middle? They answer that even though the Ark generally carried itself, there were times when people had to carry the Ark, and had it been made solely of gold, it would have been much heavier to carry. They make the same point with regard to the *Mizbayach Hazahav* (Golden Altar on which the incense was burnt). It was made of lighter Shittim wood and only overlaid with gold on the outside, to

make it lighter to carry.

Rabbi Yissachar Frand uses this idea to answer another question pertaining to the Tabernacle. The Torah says that after Moshe told the people to donate to the Tabernacle, once the required amount had been reached, the people wanted to continue to donate and Moshe had to tell them to stop.¹ The Seforno points out that this was not the case with the building of the first and second Temple.

In both cases, more money and raw materials than necessary was collected. What did they do with the extra funds?

The Talmud Yerushalmi states that they made duplicates and triplicates of all the vessels used in the Temple. This is easy to understand – vessels can break, wear out, or become impure, so in the event of that happening, the duplicates were available. However, this was not done for the Tabernacle - why not?

Rabbi Frand explains, based on the Daat Zekeinim, that the people were wandering in the desert at the time of the building of the Tabernacle. Therefore, the Tabernacle and its vessels had to be carried on all the journeys. Had there been duplicates, then it would have required much more exertion to carry it. This reason did not apply in the times of the Temples.

These explanations remind us of a fundamental idea – that we should not be righteous at the expense of other people. Even God Himself, so to speak, did not make the Aron in the most ideal manner, of pure gold, because that would have been a stringency that adversely affected other people.

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter emphasized this concept in his teachings and his personal actions. He once came to someone's house for a Shabbos meal. He went to wash his hands for *netilat yadayim*. The halacha is that ideally a person should wash his hands up until the wrists.² In difficult circumstances, a person fulfills his obligation for washing his hands by only washing until the knuckles. Rabbi Salanter did not wash his entire hands, rather he relied on the opinion that he only needed to wash to the point where his fingers bend.

The observers asked him why he was being so lenient with his handwashing. In those days, there was no running water. The water had to be carried from a well to the house. Rabbi Salanter knew someone had to *schlep* the water up from the well to the kitchen and he saw that the hired help was a poor girl who would be the one carrying the water. He decided that he was not going to be righteous at her expense, and instead relied on a lenient opinion!

Thus far, we have seen that one should not cause pain or discomfort when being strict in halacha, when it can adversely affect other people. The following story³ demonstrates a similar idea can apply when being strict will prevent a person from doing kindness to his fellow.

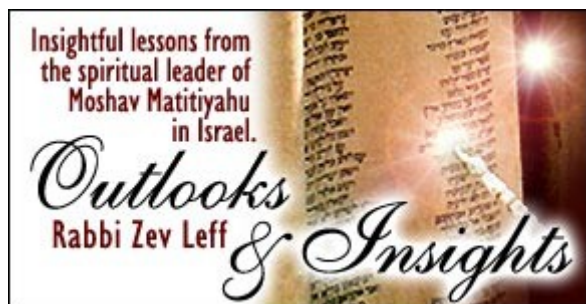
Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach was walking down the street in the month of Nissan and he passed a house with a fruit tree. He paused in front of that house and prepared to recite the blessing of *Birkat Ilanot* (the blessing we make in Nissan on trees in blossom). Another Jew passed by and told him that two blocks down the street, there was a house with two blossoming trees in front of it. Based on

Kabbalah it is ideal to say the blessing in front of two trees.

Rav Auerbach pointed out to this Jew the window of the house in front of which he was now standing. "Do you see the woman in the window? She is a widow. She is standing in the window and is bursting with pride that I, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, the leading halachic authority of the generation, am making my blessing on her tree! It is better to do a kindness by bringing pleasure to a widow, even if it means making the blessing on just one tree, rather than adding the dimension of the Zohar's preference of making the blessing on two trees.

May we all merit to emulate God's concern for other people even when we are involved with our own service of Him.

1. *Shemos, 36:4-7.*
2. *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, Simun 161, Sif 2.*
3. Cited by Rav Yissachar Frand in the name of Rav Silberstein.



Two Aspects of the Mishkan

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani said in the name of Rabbi Yonasan: The name Betzalel indicates his wisdom, for when God told Moses to tell Betzalel to make a Mishkan (tabernacle), an Ark, and the other vessels, Moses reversed the order and said to him, "Make and Ark and the vessels and the Mishkan."

Betzalel then said to him, "Moses, the way of the world is to build a house and then bring into it the vessels, but you told me to first make the vessels and then the Mishkan. Where will I put the vessels that I make? Perhaps God told you to make the Mishkan first and then the Ark and vessels."

Moses responded, "You are called Betzalel - (literally) in the shadow of God, for you knew precisely how to interpret God's words as if you were there, in his shadow." (Talmud - Brachot 55a)

To understand this difficult piece of Talmud requires an appreciation of the Mishkan and its vessels. That in turn depends on understanding the relationship of our bodies to our souls.

We live in a physical world, and our soul is confined in a physical body. For that reason, says *Sefer Hachinuch*, that which we experience physically makes a stronger impression on us and, in turn, motivates our hearts and souls. Thus, for instance, the eating and drinking on Yom Tov is designed to bring out the spiritual joy of our souls. The performance of actions associated with happiness, and not the mental contemplation of happiness, engenders that emotional state.

The proper external actions are, according to *Sefer Hachinuch*, the means by which one reaches the proper inner intention. For that reason, one must occupy himself in the study of Torah - even not for its own sake, for learning will eventually bring him to Torah for its own sake.

The majestic and awe-inspiring Mishkan similarly was a physical environment which

exercised the most profound effect on all who beheld it. The physical impression it created was transmuted into a powerful inner feeling.

Physical actions have another purpose beyond arousing the proper inner attachment to God. Our task in this world is to place our spiritual beings in control of our physical beings. When we act in conformity with our deepest spiritual perceptions, we are actualizing our inner potential. Nachmanides explains (Genesis 22:1) that the essence of the tests to which God subjects *tzaddikim* is that it allows them to realize their spiritual potential in action. Actions performed with the proper intention infuse all realms of the world with spiritual power.

The Sages derive from the command to gild the Holy Ark from both the inside and outside with gold, that a Torah scholar must be the same inside and outside (*tocho ke'baro*), seemingly implying that his inner state must be brought into conformity with his external state.

If we examine the commandment of gilding the Ark, we notice something interesting. There is first a general command to gild the Ark: "*You shall gild it with pure gold*" (Exodus 25:11). Then the Torah specifies, "*from within and without you shall gild it.*" The first general command relates to the outside of the Ark, the physical which engenders the inner emotions. Then after mentioning the internal covering, the Torah again mentions the covering of the outside. This symbolizes the external expression that must be given to the perfected inner intention, the realization of the inner potential.

This same dynamic relation between external action and inner intent is symbolized by the Mishkan itself. Prior to the sin of the Golden Calf, the Mishkan was not needed for God's

presence to devolve upon the Jewish people (see Sforno to Exodus 20:21): "*...in all places where I record my name I will come unto you, and I will bless you*" (Exodus 20:21). With the sin of the Golden Calf, however, the people showed that they needed a physical entity upon which to focus their attention in order to experience God's presence. The Mishkan served this need, and hence only there could God's Presence be felt in its full intensity.

The commentary *Meshech Chochma* notes that in Parshas Ki Tisa the discussion of Shabbos follows the discussion of the Mishkan. In Parshas Vayakhel, the order is reversed. Shabbos strengthens our belief in God as the Creator of the Universe. As originally conceived prior to the sin of the Golden Calf, the Mishkan was meant to give external expression to that belief in God. But it was not needed to engender that belief, since God's presence already dwelt on each Jew wherever he was. Since the Mishkan was only to enhance our belief in the same way that Shabbos does, there would at that time have been no conflict between the activities of the Mishkan and Shabbos. Hence, in Parshas Ki Tisa, prior to the sin, the Mishkan precedes Shabbos.

After the sin of the Golden Calf however, the Mishkan was needed for God's presence to rest on the Jewish People. Construction of the Mishkan was no longer an expression of Divine service, but a precondition for that service. As such, the activities of the Mishkan and attendant construction work could no longer be permitted on Shabbos. This is hinted to in the fact that in Parshas Vayakhel, after the Sin of the Golden Calf, the discussion of Shabbos precedes that of the Mishkan, from which we learn that the activities of the Mishkan are prohibited on

Shabbos.

We can now answer a famous question: If the Mishkan was an atonement for the Sin of the Golden Calf, why does the command to build the Mishkan in Parshas Trumah precede the account of the sin of the Golden Calf in Parshas Ki Tisa? The answer is that the Mishkan served two purposes. The first - the actualization of the spiritual strivings of the Jewish people - preceded the sin of the Golden Calf. Only the second purpose - the creation of a dwelling place for the Divine presence - followed the sin of the Golden Calf.

Moses was first told of the Mishkan before the sin of the Golden Calf. At that time, the structure of the Mishkan itself was of secondary importance, and the vessels through which man would actualize his feelings for God were the principal aspect of the Mishkan. Therefore, Moses mentioned the vessels first. The Jews were then far above the natural order of the world in which the house precedes the vessels. They needed no majestic structure to house the holiness of God's Presence.

Betzalel, however, received the command to build the Mishkan after the sin of the Golden Calf. He realized that God's intention now was to create an environment to inspire inner spiritual feelings which would be actualized through the vessels. Betzalel understood what Moses did not - that God's original command was specific in its order because God knew that the Jewish people would sin and require the Mishkan in order to experience His Presence.

The word "Mishkan" is repeated at the beginning of Parshas Pekudei: *"These are the accounts of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of*

witness." The original purpose of the Mishkan (with the definite article) was to enable the Jewish people to express and actualize their inner emotions and beliefs. After the Sin, the Mishkan became the *"Mishkan of witness,"* the place where God's Presence would be felt.

There is an important message here for us. We must not feel hypocritical if we do the mitzvot without the fullest intentions that we know should accompany these activities. As long as we aspire to attain that intention, our actions will bring us to that goal. Also we must remember that even at the height of spiritual inspiration, we must not minimize the importance of the meticulous observance of the physical Mitzvot, for they are the true culmination of those spiritual feelings. Without them, the potential is unrealized.



The Wise Approach

Greetings from the holy city of Jerusalem!

In this week's parsha, Moses tells the Jewish people that God has appointed Betzalel as chief craftsman to build the Tabernacle (Exodus 35:30). The Talmud (Brachot 55a) explains that Betzalel got this position due to his great wisdom, as follows: Although God initially commanded Moses to build the Tabernacle and only afterwards commanded him to build the

Ark, when Moses told Betzalel what to build, he reversed the order of these instructions.

Betzalel questioned Moses about this order. If the way of the world is to first build a home and only then fill it with furniture, why would it make sense to build the furniture before the structure? Perhaps God had commanded the Tabernacle and the Ark to be built in a different order? Moses saw from this insight that Betzalel was aligned with God's knowledge, and that the name Betzalel (from the words "*b'tzel E-l*," meaning, "in the shadow of God") was fitting for him.

The Midrash (Shmot Rabba 50:2) has a seemingly contradictory perspective on these events. According to the Midrash, the verse, "Betzalel made the Ark" (Exodus 37:1) clarifies the verse in Proverbs (9:9) that states, "Give to a wise person, and he increases wisdom." How is this verse a reference to Betzalel?

The Midrash states that when Moses told Betzalel to build the Tabernacle, Betzalel asked him about the nature of it. Moses replied that the Tabernacle would be a place for the Divine Presence to rest, from which God would teach Torah to the Jewish people. Betzalel inquired where the Torah would be placed. Moses explained that the Tabernacle would be built first, and afterwards the Ark would be crafted, in which to put the Torah. Betzalel replied that this was not honorable to the Torah; therefore, he would make the Ark first.

This Midrash seems to blatantly contradict the Talmudic passage we mentioned above. Which structure was built first, the Tabernacle or the Ark, and what were the reasons for that order?

The Shem MiShmuel proposes an insight. In his

view, there are two approaches in serving God. The approach that is suitable for most people is to study Torah first, so that eventually the intellectual knowledge we acquire will enable us to correct our undesirable character traits. In other words, we must first fill the mind with an awareness of God, and then infuse that awareness into the limbs of our body to perfect our behavior.

By contrast, the second approach is applicable only to an elite few. In this method, we sanctify our behavior first, working to eliminate any character flaws we may have and exerting ourselves to perfect our actions. Only after we have done this do we merit to be filled with Torah.

MIND AND BODY

Based on this idea, we can begin to resolve the contradiction between the order of events in the Talmud and the Midrash. Let us first understand the connection between the two structures we mentioned before (Tabernacle and Ark) and the two elements that the Shem MiShmuel discusses (mind and body). The Tabernacle, which was built using physical labor and craftsmanship, represents the physical control of the limbs. The Ark, on the other hand, where the Torah is placed, represents the intellectual pursuit of Torah knowledge.

The Torah portions of Trumah and Vayakhel both deal with the construction of the Tabernacle. Although Parshat Trumah precedes this week's parsha of Vayakhel in the Torah itself, the commentator Levush HaOra (Exodus 38:22) writes that the events of Parshat Trumah chronologically took place *after* Parshat Vayakhel. We learn this from the first verse of

this week's portion: "And Moses gathered the people" (Exodus 35:1). Rashi states that this gathering took place the day after Yom Kippur, when Moses returned to the people and informed them that they could achieve atonement for the Golden Calf by building of the Tabernacle. This is when Moses mentioned the Tabernacle first and the Ark second. At a later date, in Parshat Trumah, Moses taught the people all the details that the Tabernacle should contain - mentioning the Ark first and the Tabernacle second.

According to the Zohar, Moses was pursued by forces of evil from the time of his youth. He had to exert himself tremendously to refine his actions and behavior. Only after he had perfected his character did he merit to receive the awareness and understanding of Torah. This is why he initially tells the people in Parshat Vayakhel to build the Tabernacle first. The Tabernacle represents physical action and behavioral change - the approach that is appropriate only for an elite few.

This approach resonated with Moses, since it is the approach he lived. The Midrash, in which Moses mentions building the Tabernacle first, is therefore referring to the instructions given in Parshat Vayakhel. Betzalel's objection - that it would dishonor the Torah to build the Tabernacle first - implies that there is an alternative method of drawing close to God. Perhaps it would be more appropriate for the people to follow a different pattern.

Apparently, Moses agreed with Betzalel's assessment. In his subsequent address to the people, in Parshat Trumah, he reversed the order of the building instructions, mentioning the Ark first. This is the approach to which the Talmud

refers, when Moses tells Betzalel to build the Ark before the Tabernacle. As mentioned, the Ark represents intellectual awareness. The approach where awareness precedes major behavioral refinement is more appropriate for the masses. Betzalel's question here is not merely logical (why would one build the furniture before the house?) but also because Moses's previous instructions were in the reverse order. Why did Moses change the order? Moses sees from this question that Betzalel is truly intent on performing God's will and is therefore fittingly named.

We see from here that there is no contradiction between the Talmud and the Midrash. The Talmud is referring to the approach of Parshat Trumah, where the Ark (awareness) comes before the Tabernacle (action). This approach is the more common one. The Midrash is referring to the approach of Parshat Vayakhel, where the Tabernacle (action) comes before the Ark (awareness) - an approach that is appropriate only for an elite few.

May we each merit to find our unique connection to God, and may we soon merit to serve God in totality, with the building of the Ark and the Temple.

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