

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

PARASHAT PEKUDEI/SHEKALIM
Haftarah: Melachim II 11:17 - 12:17

FEBRUARY 28 – MARCH 1, 2014 29 ADAR I 5774
Rosh Hodesh Adar II will be celebrated on Sunday & Monday, March 2 & 3.

DEDICATIONS: By Sammy Kassin in memory of his mother
Margalit Bat Victoria – Margie Kassin 29 Adar 1 - Shabbat

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH

Candle lighting this Friday evening is at 5:27 p.m. Mincha at 5:30
SHABBAT 9:00 AM - Please say Shema at home by 8:38AM

Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30
Ages 0-5 - in the Playroom
Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library
Treats, Games, Stories, Prayers and Fun!

Kiddush this Shabbat
Donated By Hindy and Mathew in honor of Bobby on his birthday, Abal 120 happy and healthy years.

Mincha follows Kiddush with amidah not before 12:36 PM

Shabbat Ends – 6:27PM
Return for Arbit – 6:45 PM

Kid's Movie Night follows at 7:30
Pizza and Fun!

This week's Family Movie Night is sponsored by the Jakubowitz Family In order to best coordinate with the Lido Movie Night, if there is a request in advance, we will offer babysitting services after the movie until 10pm. Please contact Rabbi Colish in advance if you would like this option. The cost will be \$5 per family

Lido Beach Synagogue, The Sephardic Congregation and Tzipora Long Beach Hadassah presents
The Rape of Europa

This is the documentary that inspired the new film Monuments Men
This Saturday Night - March 1, at 7:30 PM
at Lido Beach Synagogue
\$5 Suggested donation to cover costs

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit Sunday 8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)
Rosh Hodesh Adar II will be celebrated on Sunday & Monday, March 2 & 3.

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday Night Class with Rabba Yenai – 7PM –
Daily class with Rabbi Colish at 6:30AM

To subscribe or to unsubscribe, please reply to ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com
 Newsletter archives now at BenaiAsher.Org

Our weekly article is now printed in the Jewish Voice. Please pick up a copy at your local shop or go on line to JewishVoiceNY.com. You can also comment on the articles there and tweet them to your friends.

Follow us on twitter @BenaiAsher for a daily dose of Torah, Israel or something of interest

Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 5PM – Please join us! 212-289-2100

If anyone can join us for Minyan – give us 22 minutes and we'll give you the world to come – we would appreciate it. Through the first week in March when we change the clock we will be moving tefilah to 5PM in order to say mincha and arbit. As a couple of regulars cant join us we would appreciate any help from the outside. If you have friends or relatives who work or live by 59th and 3rd, please pass the word. THANKS

Editors Notes

This week we conclude the book of Exodus. We began the book back in December, which because of recent events feels like a lifetime ago to me. We recounted then, the family of Jacob coming down to Egypt. We experienced their slavery, the birth of Moses, his encounter at the burning bush, and his mission to save the Jewish people.

Over the next few weeks we felt the wrath of the ten plagues ending with the death of the first born and Pharaoh's order to leave Egypt. We walked through the sea with our ancestors, marched through the desert, ate the Mann from heaven and the water miraculously drawn from a rock, and arrived at Sinai. Their collective soul of the Jewish people experienced the revelation and received the Ten Commandments. Then while Moses was in heaven receiving the tablets, we messed up and formed the golden calf. Moses begged for forgiveness. He returned on Yom Kippur with a second set of tablets and the following day we went to work building the tabernacle. With God's presence resting on the Mishkan and among us; with God leading us through the desert towards the holy land, this chapter and this book comes to an end.

Yet the story continues. It's a story we recount over each year and each generation the story grows.

Parshat Pikudei has a great deal of personal meaning for me. The first time I read the Torah in the main sanctuary at Ahi Ezer, was this week, 40 years ago. Although I was only 12 ½ years old, I was very

confident. I had been studying under cantor Meir Levy for a few years as part of his choir and I had been reading the Torah aloud in the smaller synagogue from the age of 9 under the direction of Rabbi Mevorach. At the last moment I was told that another young boy would share the reading with me. This young boy was coming from Israel. He was a cantorial prodigy. His name was Yechiel Nahari. Yes, that Nahari! He read first and he was everything they said he would be. All I remember was that I completed the portion. I was loud. I think I gave up the choir that day too.

16 years later I again had the opportunity to read this portion of Pikudei and for me it was in a very unusual setting. Our daughter Aryana was born and my in-laws asked that we name her in the Jewish center of Atlantic Beach. I agreed on condition that they let me read. Murray Veroba who was the Gabbi at the time, and whom I have come to know, respect, and love over the years aloud me to read with Syrian style taamim or notes. Memory of that day came back recently when Murray asked me to lead the prayer one afternoon knowing full well that although I was in and Ashkenazi Synagogue I would be praying following my Sephardic custom. The JCAB has a great attitude of Vive la difference.

What would we be without memories? Memories bring laughter but sometimes tears. Memories bring comfort but sometimes questions. Memories can be used to help us and sometimes use to hurt us.

I recently read a well-known author's essay on memories of his father. He described the generation gap; the fact that his father was born across the sea while he was born here, and he described their many battles. He concluded by explaining that as time passed he realized that he had become more and more like his father and with each passing day whatever they argued about disappeared.

Reading that, I recalled the one big disagreement that I had with my own father; a disagreement that lasted for some time. I had just begun working with him. It was an odd situation brought together by a number of strange overlapping events. Although I was still a child, I found myself with a very heavy burden of responsibility that greatly outweighed my days or my experience. The business was under tremendous financial pressure. This was compounded by the fact that the person who had been responsible for all sales as well as overseeing all overseas production had left the company.

My reaction was to take any and all action within legal limits no matter how ghastly it may appear to an

outsider. This was a war being fought on many fronts. There was a battle in Europe, another battle in the States, a battle in the Far East, and finally a huge battle with the banks. My philosophy at the time, as a kid trained in the electronic stores of Fifth Avenue and by the business books I literally consumed on a daily basis, was that all is fair in love and war. And in war we take no prisoners.

That's where my father and I had our disagreement; a disagreement that lasted for months. The best way for me to explain the disagreement is to bring a story from the Talmud.

Rabba Bar Chanah once hired workmen to transport barrels of wine for him. They were negligent and as a result, the barrels of wine broke and the rabbi incurred a severe financial loss. He took the workers to court, suing them for the value of the wine that was destroyed and the workers' only defense was, "You know, we can't afford it. We don't have the money. What are you going to do about it?" So the courts found in favor of the workers. So, Rabba Bar Chanah questioned the court and said, "Is this the law? Is it not the law that I am entitled to recover for their negligence?" And the court told him, "For you, this is the law. You are a righteous person and because you are a righteous person, you have to take into account the equities of the situation, the unfairness, the fact that these are people who need the money, etc., and, therefore, you are compelled by virtue of your righteous status to go beyond pressing your exact legal rights."

Rabba Bar Chanah accepted the decision and was willing to move on. But the story gets stranger. These workers who should have been responsible for the barrels turned around and sued him for their wages. They said, "Well, wait a second, you didn't pay us our wages for that day." So, he was dumbfounded. He said, "Okay, it's one thing to say I can't recover from you but are you going to recover from me when you broke my wine because of your negligence?" Astoundingly, the court said, "Yes! That's a good idea. You have to pay." And, once again, he asked, "Is this the law?" And they told him, "For you, that's the law. These are people who need the money and therefore, you must go beyond the law."

Something tells me that Rabba Bar Chana walked away that day smiling. I on the other hand didn't. "What do you mean that WE don't do this or WE don't do that, why not?" I wondered. "Why do we follow the rules and then some, while others don't even follow the rules? Can't we for once stick to the rules and leave the piety to the rabbis? This is an extraordinary situation."

My appeals fell on deaf ears. The response was always simple and always the same. "It doesn't matter. WE don't do that!"

The portion of Pikudei repeats in a seemingly unnecessary fashion the words "Ka-Asher Sivah Hashem Et Moshe"; reinforcing the fact that everything was made and done "exactly as Hashem commanded Moses." This repetition is made 18 times in this portion alone, when it easily could have been stated once at the end or once at the beginning. Why restate it so often?

My father understood that there is more than just the law. There is the nuance of the law. There is what stands behind the law and what stands behind the misvah. That nuance, that expectation, that beyond the letter he felt was included in the command and it was necessary to repeat again and again that it has to be exactly as G-d commanded.

I took something from my father in those years. I was willing to walk away. They say we become more and more like our parents with each passing day. I look forward to the day though that just walking away won't be enough. I look forward to the day when I can walk away smiling.

Shabbat Shalom
David Bibi

In this weeks issue, we have an article published in the Wall Street Journal by Lucette Lagnado discussing the Boycott Movement. Following that is an amusing story on being a Republican on the Upper West Side, and finally an Article detailing Israeli Minister Bennett's interview on BBC: 'Would You Hand Over Half of Britain to Someone Who Keeps on Killing You?'

Rabbi Mansour talks about educating our kids. Rabbi Wein about an antidote for depression, Rabbi Sacks about recognizing accomplishments, and we didn't get Sam Gindi's article featuring the thoughts of Rav Miller this week.

Anti-Israel Jews and the Vassar Blues Lucette Lagnado for The Wall Street Journal

Recently I was contacted by a fellow Vassar alumna through Facebook. She wanted to know if I was aware that our genteel alma mater had become a hotbed of anti-Israel, pro-boycott sentiment.

Suddenly, my stomach was in knots-a feeling that Vassar has managed to evoke in me ever since I

went there in the 1970s. An Orthodox Jewish girl from Brooklyn on a full scholarship, I fixated on this Seven Sister school as my entryway to the American dream, the epitome of style and grace that also prided itself on teaching "critical thinking."

In this case the cause of my angst was a young woman named Naomi Dann, the president of the Vassar Jewish Union. She had penned a piece for the campus paper strongly supporting the recent move by the American Studies Association to boycott Israeli academic exchanges—a decision denounced by college presidents across the country, including Vassar's.

Her piece strung together all the familiar buzzwords and clichés used by Israel's critics: "atrocities," "oppressive," "abuses," "colonial," and, of course, "apartheid." Signed jointly with the co-president of Students for Justice in Palestine, Ms. Dann even slammed Vassar's president and dean of the faculty for daring to oppose the boycott against the Jewish state.

There was more to fuel my Vassar angoisse. The head of the Jewish Studies Program, a professor named Joshua Schreier, had also expressed support for the boycott movement. Prof. Schreier was quoted in the campus paper ruminating that while once "instinctively against" the boycott, he had heard more "substantiated, detailed" arguments on its behalf, and as a result "I am currently leaning in favor of it," he concluded delicately, as if choosing a flavored tea.

As for Vassar's rabbi, Rena Blumenthal, she was MIA—on leave in Israel, no less—and emailed to say she couldn't weigh in from afar. Huh?

To be sure, I had been aware that the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement had taken off on some college campuses, even in the Ivy League. It had become chic to attack Israel even—especially—if you were Jewish. I heard from an alum who was stopped by his own child, a Vassar student, from taking a public stand against the BDS movement. The student was fearful of being ostracized for having a parent who supported Israel.

Suddenly the toxic essence of this movement to make Israel and its supporters pariahs in the groves of academe and the cocktail parties of polite society hit home in a way it hadn't before. It also brought back painful memories about my own Vassar experience, and the shattered illusions that had marked it.

I had gone to Vassar a naïf, a sheltered girl from an immigrant community. Mine was a neighborhood of Jewish exiles thrown out or pressured out of Arab countries in the 1950s and 1960s—in my family's case, Egypt. We were victims of the Middle East conflict who were barely mentioned in the history books. Though we had been mistreated and denied our homelands, we suffered alone and in silence. No cool campus groups spoke up for us then, or now.

Our values were God, faith, family and Israel. We were passionate about the Jewish state, a country that took so many Middle Eastern Jews in when, one after another, Arab countries had forced or pressured us out. I was raised as a Sabbath observer, a keeper of dietary laws, and, oh, expected to marry young and refrain from sex before marriage.

Those were the quaint values I carried to Vassar, which I had chosen from among a multitude of schools for the old-fashioned ideals its name evoked. I had read a brochure alluding to a tradition of students drinking sherry with faculty. To someone more familiar with Manischewitz wine, sipping sherry with my professors epitomized what I wanted on this earth: a life of civility and grace. This was Jackie Kennedy's Vassar.

Instead, I found myself on a campus in the throes of a 1970s rebellion. There was a drug culture and a drinking culture, but no sherry culture I could find. Vassar prided itself on being edgy and embraced open sexuality and every other cause of the tumultuous era.

My disillusionment came fast. My first day I wandered to the "ACDC"—the forbidding central dining hall—and timidly asked a manager where I could find the kosher section. She looked at me as if I were from another planet.

What followed were months of kosher TV dinners, in big aluminum packages. It was incredibly decent of Vassar to obtain those for me, yet every time I lugged one these dinners from the kitchen to the table in their silver foil, I felt the stares of my fellow-diners.

It never got easier. I could never take that train from Grand Central back to Poughkeepsie on Sunday nights without the blues setting in. And now, so many years later, my Vassar blues were back.

The other night I received a press release from the president of the Vassar Jewish Union, Ms. Dann—yes, her again. This time, she was attacking Hillel, the venerable campus organization that has offered a home to generations of Jewish students. Following in

Swarthmore's footsteps, the Vassar Jewish Union was becoming an "open Hillel"-no longer obliged to heed Hillel's pesky rule of banning speakers who demonize Israel or believe the Jewish state shouldn't exist. The release was replete with more clichés about needing a "diverse range of personal and political opinions" that it argued Hillel failed to provide.

I am still waiting for the day a student or faculty member stands up to these academic hooligans at the Vassar Quad. Now that would show some "critical thinking."

As for Vassar's Rabbi Blumenthal, she finally agreed to speak to me from Israel over the weekend. She firmly opposes the boycott, she declared, and has been upset by the anti-Israel sentiments on campus, noting: "I am here because I love this country. I am a Zionist."

Bravo, rabbi. How nice to hear of one Israel defender at Vassar. I can only pray that others on campus listen.

Ms. Lagnado, a Journal reporter, is the author of two memoirs of her Egyptian-Jewish family, "The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit" (Harper Perennial, 2008) and "The Arrogant Years" (Ecco, 2012).

**Mr. X Returns — And Makes a Confession
How did I suddenly become the enemy? I've never committed a crime. I pay my taxes. I'm a responsible husband and father. I even give up my seat on the bus if an elderly or pregnant woman — excuse me, person — gets on.**

That doesn't make me a saint, I know. But I went to bed one night thinking I was a pretty decent guy and woke up the next morning to find I was the living, breathing embodiment of a racist, homophobic, ignorant bigot. Even worse, I am personally keeping poor children in poverty.

The reason? It's not anything I can say out loud in my neighborhood, but under the cloak of anonymity, I will confess my little secret — I am a registered Republican. This becomes a problem when you toss in the fact that I reside on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. It's not just that I live in one of the bluest voting districts in the country; it has also become one of the most intolerant. Here, where people truly believe they are the most open-minded souls on earth, my political affiliation is seen as no different in the minds of many of my neighbors as being a Nazi. Trust me, I've heard that comparison.

There are times in history when a strange herd mentality takes over a population. It can come from both the Left and the Right and it never leads to anything good. Over the last decade and especially since the election of President Obama, there is a growing wave of anger towards anyone who doesn't conform completely to the Left's progressive (formerly liberal) agenda. It is not unlike the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s when millions of young students rampaged through China, lofting their little red books in the air. It's a mindset that must destroy anyone who doesn't agree with it.

I hear it on the street and at work, my "friends" post it on Facebook, it is a constant refrain on MSNBC and in the New York Times. This wave of intolerance has also managed to rewrite history. Otherwise intelligent people have come to believe that nothing has changed in America since the 1950s in terms of civil rights, or women's rights or economic rights. All those gains that I lived through and supported somehow never happened. It's as if Rosa Parks or Betty Friedan or Oprah didn't exist. And if I raise a factual point that might refute this belief structure — like the fact that medical and law schools today graduate more women than men or that there is an undeniable black middle class — I am met with deep hostility. It turns out my political views are the least of my crimes. Because I have figured out a way to keep working in a challenging free market economy, I am told that I am somehow keeping others from doing the same thing. Because I have a home with food in my refrigerator, there are people who are homeless and hungry. Everything I have achieved has come not from very late work nights but from privilege. This, of course, makes me a very bad man.

I hear this from the top, from President Obama, himself. I am "the folks not paying their fair share." That's me, even with almost half of my income going to taxes ... even though I reside closer to the bottom 40% in real numbers than the super rich.

The new mayor of my city has now focused on my selfishness as well. According to Mr. De Blasio, I have hoarded my "big dreams" keeping them from poor children ... I have used this great city as part of my own elite domain restricting others from using it. Worst of all, I now learn that I am part of the plantation system. Although in a subsequent article in the New York Times, I am told that the 'plantation' reference used by Rev. Frederick A. Lucas Jr. at Mayor De Blasio's inauguration last month was simply part of "the African-American pulpit tradition of symbolism."

I am curious if the New York Times excused George Wallace when he stood in the schoolhouse door 50 years ago because he was using the "White Southern tradition of symbolism."

With the President constantly dwelling on income inequality and the Mayor discussing the two New Yorks — one of great privilege and the other suffering from terrible disadvantages — I have actually to stop and remind myself of something.

I arrived in New York City in the middle of a recession after graduating from a state school in the Midwest, unlike the President (Columbia and Harvard) or the Mayor (NYU and Columbia). In all fairness, I will admit that I had a valuable trust fund that probably placed me ahead of the pack right at the start. My trust fund had nothing to do with money. I had two parents — a mother and a father, grandparents, and the Boy Scouts that instilled a work ethic in me. Despite of all my screwing around with my friends, I miraculously received a pretty solid education along the way.

So, in the finest baby boomer tradition, I will pass the buck. Please understand, this isn't really my fault at all. I was actually taught the evil lesson that the one percent was something to strive for ... I was told never to begrudge success, but admire it. I never resented people living on Park Avenue, I wanted to be one of them.

What I find strange, but not surprising, is that the President, the Mayor and everyone on the Left will readily accept all the evils that they denigrate — the vast amounts of money, the grand estates and, of course, the top tier schools — all you have to do is demonstrate your hatred for white Southerners, Christians who actually go to church and, of course, anyone who votes Republican.

Then you can fly off to the Vineyard on a private jet for the weekend and feel downright noble.

Mr. X resides on New York's Upper West Side.

Israeli Minister Bennett to BBC Host: 'Would You Hand Over Half of Britain to Someone Who Keeps on Killing You?'

Israeli Economy Minister Naftali Bennett on Tuesday turned the tables in an interview on BBC's Hard Talk when he asked host Stephen Sackur, "Would you hand over half of Britain to someone who keeps on killing you?"

In the combative interview, Bennett countered Sackur at every turn.

Asked about his resistance to the internationally acclaimed "two-state solution," Bennett said the history of Arab violence and two decades of diplomatic failures mean "fresh thinking" is required. "In our land, there are nearly 2 million Palestinians.... They're not going anywhere, but we're not going anywhere," Bennett said. "We gotta figure out how to live together, how to work it out."

Sackur insisted, asking Bennett why he was against offering "sovereignty." Bennett responded that "every time" Israel withdraws from land, "they kill us."

"Would you hand over half of Britain to someone who keeps on killing you?" Bennett asked the host.

"For 20 years we tried this direction, in [the international peace agreements of] 1993, in '95, 2000... and you know what they did? They killed 1,000 Israelis," Bennett said. "It's not working. It's time to try a different approach."

"That something else is peace between the people. Businesses in Judea and Samaria of Israelis and Palestinians together. That's the real bridge to peace, build it bottom-up, because clearly the diplomats are failing."

Sackur said that Saeb Erekat, the lead Palestinian Authority negotiator in the ongoing peace talks with Israel, recently appeared on his talk show and said the PA recognized Israel in the 1993 Oslo peace accord.

Bennett disagreed and described what he said was the PA's plan to divide Israel repeatedly until there is nothing left to recognize:

"Here's what Erekat is essentially saying: divide the land, give us half of it, first of all. Now we have our Palestinian state, and now let's start debating your half, and let's turn it into a bi-national state."

"No," Bennett said. "It's got to be the homeland of the Jews. We only have one homeland, the Arabs have 22 — 300 times the size of our tiny state. I don't know how many of your viewers realize that from the ocean to the Green Line it's a 10 minute ride. That's how narrow our state is, but he wants a piece of that."

"What he doesn't get is he needs to recognize Israel as a Jewish state and, yes, we only have one. The Jewish nation only has one state in the world, and that's Israel. But if he wants it to be a multi-national state that means he wants his state, and then the day we sign that deal, he'll begin fighting for the small Jewish state."

Sackur then addressed the notion that refusing a two-state deal is succumbing to "real naivety" in the belief that Palestinian-Arabs will eventually lose their will to fight.

"I've unfortunately fought in every battle in Israel since 1990. I've lost my best friends in battle, in the First Intifada, the Second [Intifada], the Second Lebanon War... A thousand people blew up in Tel Aviv and Haifa and Jerusalem when we did hand over land," Bennett said.

Asked by Sackur if he has "empathy" for the plight of Palestinian Arabs, Bennett replied: "I have immense empathy... [but] we've got a tiny home, one home for the Jews. We don't have anywhere else to go. The Arabs have 22 states, much bigger, and that's it. That's what we've got, that's what we've had forever."

When Sackur mentioned the opinions of Ahmed Tibi, the Arab-Israeli Member of Knesset who heckled Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper during a historic speech at the Knesset last month, Bennett used that example to show the strength of Israeli democracy.

"We're a democracy," Bennett said. "One democracy in the Middle East. We have a Supreme Court, freedom of speech."

"Ahmed Tibi, he is an Arab-Israeli out of 1.5 million, he is a member of our parliament. Show me in Saudi Arabia a Jewish member of parliament; show me in Jordan; show me in Syria; show me in Lebanon," Bennett said. "We're the only democracy in the entire Middle East who really gives free rights and equal rights to women. Everyone can speak up in Israel and everyone does."

When asked by Sackur why his position on a Palestinian homeland seemed "out of step" with international consensus, and if he were "ready to contemplate" diplomatic and economic sanctions against Israel, Bennett responded that "common wisdom" has been proven to be right only about half the time.

"The fact that a lot of people think something doesn't make them right," Bennett said. "Everyone thinks the right thing is to hand over land to my enemy."

However, "the Israeli public, the younger generation, is flocking to my party because they see reality not from Washington, D.C., not from London, [but] from ground up."

Asked about recent comments from Israeli businessmen who said Israel's economy can't afford a failure of the peace talks, Bennett said, "I would ask those business people, 'how will Israel's economy look the first time a plane is shot down from the West Bank, which is 4 km from Ben Gurion Airport?'"

"We've got apartheid going on in Lebanon; we've got apartheid going on in Syria. In Syria, they butchered 100,000 people," Bennett said, asking why "sanctions" haven't been threatened on those states. He later added, "We're not blowing up mosques like others are blowing up churches."

When Sackur pressed him on the economic implications of a boycott of Israel, Bennett, who was an internet entrepreneur before entering politics, responded with figures.

"The fourth quarter of 2013 was the best high tech quarter in Israel's recorded history; last week, we sold a company for \$900 million," he said. "The stent in your heart is Israeli; the irrigation system is Israeli; the navigation system is Israeli."

Meanwhile, he said economy ministers in Europe asked him, "how do we build another start-up nation?"

Israel is "helping out in India, in Africa, all around the world," Bennett added. "Google set up shop in Israel,

Microsoft, Facebook has now set up shop. Israel has seen more R&D centers of multi-nationals than any other country in the world."

Asked if Israel's relations with the U.S. are currently at their "lowest," Bennett said, "America is our biggest ally" with "deep intelligence and economic" co-operation at many levels.

He told Sackur, "The only problem with your approach is that it has nothing to do with reality, beyond that it's perfect."

"I see the fact [that] more American investment is coming into Israel, more American intelligence collaboration," not less, Bennett said. "We do have disagreements on the Palestinian issue, on the Iranian issue, [but] it's okay. Friends can disagree."

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya Pekudei begins with an accounting of the materials used in the construction of the Mishkan. (gold = 4,386.5 lb./ silver = 15,088.75 lb./ copper = 10,620 lb.)

2nd & 3rd Aliyot The Kohein Gadol's [High Priest] breastplate and vest are described. The remaining garments of the Kohein Gadol and the other Kohanim [Priests] are detailed.

4th Aliya Moshe inspects the completed Mishkan. Moshe certifies that the entire project followed the exact details of Hashem's instructions. Moshe blesses the workers.

5th, 6th & 7th Aliyot On the 1st day of Nissan, 2449, the Mishkan was assembled. After every vessel was properly in place, the presence of Hashem, the Shechina, descended in a cloud and filled the Mishkan.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"This is what they should give, everyone who passes among the counting, half of the shekel by the holy shekel." (Shemot 30:13)

This Shabbat is Shabbat Shekalim, and we read the portion that contains the command for each Jew to give a half-shekel coin to build the Mishkan. We read this prior to Rosh Hodesh Adar II before the holiday of Purim. We also have the custom to give the half-shekel in shul before Purim. In the context of the Parashah, however, it was the means by which to count the Jewish people. Each person would give a coin and then the coins were counted, instead of counting the people directly.

Rabbi Nosson Wachtfogel zt"l explains that we have four special Shabbats prior to Passover, the

first being Shabbat Shekalim. All four readings are preparations for the coming of the redemption by the Mashiah. We have a tradition that the redemption will come in the month of Nisan, the month when the Passover holiday arrives. He says we must prepare ourselves for the coming of the Mashiah. As we said, the shekalim was a means of counting the Jewish people. This counting is a way of gathering the people. The first stage of the redemption is to gather all the Jews from everywhere. This is to take place outside the land of Israel as proven in the Torah. The reason is that we cannot all come together to Israel before we all repent. The land of Israel can only receive the nation as a nation in good standing with Hashem. This gathering of all the Jews outside of Israel is also mentioned in the Ramban and the Shlah Hakadosh. This is followed by Shabbat Zachor. That Amalek must be eradicated is the actual process of teshubah. The following week is Shabbat Parah, which represents the purity we receive with teshubah. The fourth is Shabbat Hahodesh, which means we receive a new spirit. All of this is our process to greet the Mashiah.

There is one other thing, and we will be ready. Rabbi Elyashiv zt"l explains that in the Megillah, Haman tried to bribe Ahashverosh with silver to give him permission to wipe out the Jewish nation. So we give our silver half-shekel coins prior to Purim to uproot the power of Haman's silver. Haman said, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your realm. Their laws are different from every other people's. They do not observe even the king's laws." There is a hint here that they don't keep the King's (Hashem's) laws, they are scattered, they don't try to get together, they only care about their own spirituality. They are not concerned enough about their fellow Jew's spirituality. Therefore Hashem commands us to give a half-shekel, only half. This way we will realize we are only half, and then we will be ready. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

**"These are the reckonings of the Sanctuary"
(Shemot 38:21)**

Moshe made a reckoning of all the donations to the Mishkan to see that everything was accounted for. The Midrash says that he was surprised to see that there was some silver not accounted for, and sat there wondering where it went. He even heard some people murmuring under their breath about Moshe's wealth and whether it was connected to the lost silver. Ultimately, Hashem called out to Moshe reminding him where the lost silver was used, and everything was accounted for down to the last item.

We see from here an amazing lesson. People tend to suspect even the greatest among us, no less than Moshe Rabenu. There is a tendency in

human nature to find fault in others. Although this is sometimes disappointing and maybe even disheartening, we should not lose hope in the goodness of human nature. In the long run, the innocent will be proven so, even if Hashem has to make a miracle to clear one's name. If a person knows that he's free of guilt, rather than despair, he should put his faith in Hashem to ultimately exonerate him. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

**RABBI ELI MANSOUR
Visit DailyHalacha.com, DailyGemara.com,
MishnaBerura.com, LearnTorah.com
At What Age Does Education Begin?**

Parashat Pekudeh continues the Torah's description of the Mishkan, its furnishings and the priestly garments, a project which was led by a man named Besalel. The Torah tells us that Besalel was the grandson of Hur, a leader who was killed during the tragic incident of Het Ha'egel (sin of the golden calf). When the people approached Hur and demanded that he make for them an idol, he refused, and he was eventually killed for his opposition.

Why was specifically Hur's grandson chosen for the job of constructing the Mishkan?

The answer, perhaps, is that Besalel's illustrious background of firm faith and courage enhanced the sanctity of the Mishkan. Besalel came from sacred stock, and this background helped infuse the Mishkan – his handiwork – with a greater level of Kedusha.

The Talmud tells that Rabbi Hiya credited himself with ensuring the perpetuation of Torah. He explained that he took some flaxseeds, planted them, and used the flax which grew to make a trap for deer. He then trapped a deer, fed its meat to the poor, and used its hide as parchment on which to write the Torah. Then he studied with five young students with these books. When Rabbi Yehuda Ha'nasi heard about Rabbi Hiya's accomplishments, he exclaimed, "How great are the actions of Hiya!" Rabbi Hiya understood that the earlier in the process one is able to inject it with Kedusha, the greater an impact it will have. The inspiration given to these five children was drawn not merely from their experiences in school, but from the origins of this enterprise. Already the planting of the seeds for the trap for the animal from which the books were prepared was done with Kedusha. And this brought the level of Torah learning to an entirely different level. Just as Besalel's righteous grandfather enhanced the sanctity of the Mishkan, similarly, the sacred origins of the books

used by Rabbi Hiya's students raised the level of Kedusha and inspiration which they received.

A father once asked a certain Rabbi at what age he needs to begin the process of his child's Hinuch (education).

"The process should have begun many years ago," the Rabbi replied. "Hinuch begins when the parents are in school."

Of course, this is not to say that a parent who did not receive a proper Torah education no longer has the ability to properly educate his or her own children. It is never too late. But it does mean that our children's education begins with our own spiritual growth and training. Building ourselves is a crucial component of our efforts to build our children. By enhancing one's own level of Kedusha, he is able to enhance his children's level of Kedusha and help reach great heights of spiritual achievement.

Rabbi Wein A SAD, SAD WORLD

There is a well-known anecdote/legend that circulates in the Mussar/yeshiva circles about a young yeshiva student who left the yeshiva world and its environment to find his fortune in far distant fields. At the time that he left the yeshiva he had a beard and dressed modestly as was his Jewish tradition. A decade later he met by chance on the street the head of his former yeshiva. The former student now was completely clean-shaven and dressed in the most modern and fashionable garb of the time. Nevertheless, the old mentor recognized his former student and engaged him in conversation. He innocently asked him: "Since I am not a man of the world and you obviously are, would you please answer a few questions that I have about the outside society? Are most people happy or depressed? Are most people satisfied with their wealth or do they consider themselves to be poor? Are most people psychologically well adjusted or are they anxious and sometimes almost insane?

And finally, are most people physically healthy or are they afflicted with disease, discomfort and some sort of illness?" The student was taken aback by this conversation but he dutifully replied: "Master, I must admit the truth to you. Most people are not happy, they do not consider themselves wealthy no matter how much money they have, many psychologists and therapists are doing a thriving business because a great deal of the world is dysfunctional and even somewhat crazy, and those that are sick and ill, in pain and in anxiety, far outnumber those who consider themselves completely healthy, normal and

well-adjusted." To which the mentor commented: "So for such a sad, depressed, sick, poor world you removed your beard?!"

In our daily prayers we state: "That we should not toil for emptiness and nothingness nor should we have been born to be confused and depressed." Judaism does not negate the outside world. It is a practical religion that deals with life as it is and does not make unrealistic demands upon its adherents.

So even though the outside world may be one of poverty, mental strain, physical pain and suffering and constant frustration; that is the world that we live in. We are not to shut ourselves in lonely solitude and become hermits. But, as I have often pointed out in these columns, Judaism is always a religion of balance.

And the balance here is not to allow us to remove our beard, so to speak, because of the pressures of the outside world and our desire to conform to its current standards and political correctness.

Like hundreds of millions, if not even billions of others. I own a cell phone. I rarely use it and for most of the time it is in the off mode. I do so purposely because I still value human conversation face-to-face. My grandchildren all text – they cannot spell correctly and many times are flustered when having to actually communicate with another human being on a personal and face-to-face basis.

The outside world tells me that I am a Neanderthal, a relic of a long past era. Maybe so, but I am not willing to 'shave my beard' on this issue. It represents to me a very advanced technological world that is innately sad, poor, disconnected and in very many cases very dysfunctional.

Ukraine, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Congo, Zimbabwe, Bosnia, North Korea and a host of other countries on the globe are not pleasant places to currently be in. In fact, large parts of the world and of its billions of people are enveloped in sadness, violence, injustice and death.

If one does not have principles and beliefs that transcend current events and the present situation of the outside world then one is doomed to this constant feeling of depression, tension and enormous frustration. The Torah gave us a set of principles and beliefs in order to be able to live in such an uncomfortable world and yet have a feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment.

The Torah promised us eternal life and unending memory. The Torah deals with the myriad details of daily life and weaves them together into a tapestry of meaningful and satisfying values. The sadness of the outside world can be somewhat ameliorated by a sense of serenity and accomplishment in our inner world. Prayer, study, charity, good thoughts and good behavior are all part of building our inner world and

allowing us to successfully deal with that most difficult and sad outer world. This is a daily lesson that should never be ignored.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

If leaders are to bring out the best in those they lead, they must give them the chance to show they are capable of great things, and then they must celebrate their achievements. That is what happens at a key moment toward the end of our parsha, one that brings the book of Exodus to a sublime conclusion after all the strife that has gone before.

The Israelites have finally completed the work of building the Tabernacle. We then read:

So all the work on the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, was completed. The Israelites did everything just as the Lord commanded Moses ... Moses inspected the work and saw that they had done it just as the Lord had commanded. So Moses blessed them. (Ex. 39: 32, 43)

The passage sounds simple enough, but to the practised ear it recalls another biblical text, from the end of the creation narrative in Genesis:

The heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. On the seventh day God finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. (Gen. 2: 1-3)

Three key words appear in both passages: "work," "completed" and "blessed." These verbal echoes are not accidental. They are how the Torah signals intertextuality, that is, hinting that one law or story is to be read in the context of another. In this case the Torah is emphasizing that Exodus ends as Genesis began, with a work of creation. Note the difference as well as the similarity. Genesis began with an act of Divine creation. Exodus ends with an act of human creation.

The closer we examine the two texts, the more we see how intricately the parallel has been constructed. The creation account in Genesis is tightly organised around a series of sevens. There are seven days of creation. The word "good" appears seven times, the word "God" thirty-five times, and the word "earth" twenty-one times. The opening verse of Genesis contains seven words, the second fourteen, and the three concluding verses 35 words. The complete text is 469 (7x67) words.

The account of the construction of the Tabernacle in Vayakhel-Pekudei is similarly built around the number seven. The word "heart" appears seven times in Exodus 35: 5-29, as Moses specifies the materials to be used in the construction, and seven times again in 35: 34 - 36: 8, the description of how the craftsmen Bezalel and Oholiav were to carry out the work. The word *terumah*, "contribution" appears seven times in this section. In chapter 39, describing the making of the priestly vestments, the phrase "as God commanded Moses" occurs seven times. It occurs again seven times in chapter 40.

A remarkable parallel is being drawn between God's creation of the universe and the Israelites' creation of the Sanctuary. We now understand what the Sanctuary represented. It was a micro-cosmos, a universe in miniature, constructed with the same precision and "wisdom" as the universe itself, a place of order as against the formlessness of the wilderness and the ever-threatening chaos of the human heart. The Sanctuary was a visible reminder of God's presence within the camp, itself a metaphor for God's presence within the universe as a whole.

A large and fateful idea is taking shape. The Israelites, who have been portrayed throughout much of Exodus as ungrateful and half-hearted, have now been given the opportunity, after the sin of the golden calf, to show that they are not irredeemable. They are capable of great things. They have shown they can be creative. They have used their generosity and skill to build a mini-universe. By this symbolic act they have shown they are capable of becoming, in the potent rabbinic phrase, "God's partners in the work of creation."

This was fundamental to their re-moralization and to their self-image as the people of God's covenant. Judaism does not take a low view of human possibility. We do not believe we are tainted by original sin. We are not incapable of moral grandeur. To the contrary, the very fact that we are in the image of the Creator means that we – uniquely among life forms – have the ability to be creative. As Israel's first creative achievement reached its culmination Moses blessed them, saying, according to the sages, "May it be God's will that His presence rests in the work of your hands." [1] Our potential greatness is that we can create structures, relationships and lives that become homes for the Divine presence.

Blessing them and celebrating their achievement, Moses showed them what they could be. That is potentially a life-changing experience. Here is a contemporary example.

In 2001, shortly after 9/11, I received a letter from a woman in London whose name I did not immediately recognise. The morning of the attack on the World Trade Centre, I had been giving a lecture on ways of raising the status of the teaching profession, and she had seen a report about it in the press. This prompted her to write and remind me of a meeting we had had eight years earlier.

She was then, in 1993, head-teacher of the school that was floundering. She had heard some of my broadcasts, felt a kinship with what I had to say, and thought that I might have the answer to her problem. I invited her, together with two of her deputies, to our house. The story she told me was this: morale within the school, among teachers, pupils and parents alike, was at an all-time low. Parents had been withdrawing their children. The student roll had fallen from 1000 children to 500. Examination results were bad: only 8 per cent of students achieved high grades. It was clear that unless something changed dramatically, the school would have to close.

We talked for an hour or so on general themes: the school as community, how to create an ethos, and so on. Suddenly, I realised that we were thinking along the wrong lines. The problem she faced was practical, not philosophical. I said: 'I want you to live one word – celebrate.' She turned to me with a sigh: 'You don't understand – we have nothing to celebrate. Everything in the school is going wrong.' 'In that case', I replied, 'find something to celebrate. If a single student has done better this week than last week, celebrate. If someone has a birthday, celebrate. If it's Tuesday, celebrate.' She seemed unconvinced, but promised to give the idea a try.

Now, eight years later, she was writing to tell me what had happened since then. Examination results at high grades had risen from 8 to 65 per cent. The roll of pupils had risen from 500 to 1000. Saving the best news to last, she added that she had just been made a Dame of the British Empire – one of the highest honours the Queen can bestow – for her contribution to education. She ended by saying that she just wanted me to know how one word had changed the school and her life.

She was a wonderful teacher, and certainly did not need my advice. She would have discovered the answer on her own anyway. But I was never in any doubt that the strategy would succeed. We grow to fill other people's expectations of us. If they are low, we remain small. If they are high, we walk tall.

The idea that each of us has a fixed quantum of

intelligence, virtue, academic ability, motivation and drive is absurd. Not all of us can paint like Monet or compose like Mozart. But we each have gifts, capacities, that can lie dormant a throughout life, until someone awakes them. We can achieve heights of which we never thought ourselves capable. All it takes is for us to meet someone who believes in us, challenges us, and then, when we have responded to the challenge, blesses and celebrates our achievements. That is what Moses did for the Israelites after the sin of the golden calf. First he got them to create, and then he blessed them and their creation with one of the simplest and most moving of all blessings, that the Shekhinah should dwell in the work of their hands.

Celebration is an essential part of motivating. It turned a school around. In an earlier age and in a more sacred context it turned the Israelites around. When we celebrate the achievements of others, we change lives.

Parts of this newsletter are courtesy of Project Genesis: Torah on the Information Superhighway. Permission is granted to redistribute, but please give proper attribution and copyright to the author and Project Genesis, and refer to learn@torah.org and <http://www.torah.org/>. Both the authors and Project Genesis reserve certain rights. For full information on copyrights, send email to copyrights@torah.org.

Shabbat Shalom From Cyberspace E Mail Edition is published each week since 1995 and is distributed to 18,000 readers. Our goal is to spread torah knowledge. Articles are downloaded from sites and from e-mail forwarded to us. We encourage you to reprint the newsletter and distribute it to co-workers, friends and family. You can retransmit copies by fax, mail or by hand. Be a part of the Mitzvah of spreading torah. It takes so little to make copies and distribute them. And with E Mail it just takes a click to send this along.

