

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

VAYAKHEL-PEKUDEI - HaChodesh
MARCH 9, 2013 27 ADAR 5773

Don't forget to move your clocks one hour ahead on Saturday night.
Rosh Hodesh Nisan will be celebrated on Tuesday, March 12.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY URI LEMBERGER

DEDICATIONS: In memory of my uncle Jack David Gindi - Yaakov Ben Victoria HaKohen

SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH SCHEDULE
Candle Lighting - 5:35pm / Mincha / Kabbalat Shabbat - 5:35pm

Shacharit Shabbat Morning - 9:00am Shabbat HaChodesh- Last Shemah at home 8:31

Herman and Rebecca Ovadia sponsor the Kiddush in memory of Rebecca's grandparents yahrzeits:
Oscar and Zelda Silverman and Avraham and Rivka Weinstein. Thanks

Mincha Shabbat Day - 12:20 – Amidah after 12:35pm

This is the last week of early Mincha until next fall when we move the clocks back

Shabbat Ends - 6:36 pm – We will return for Arbit 6:55

Children's Program ... Movie/Game Night at 7:30 following havdalah

Daily Services - Shacharit
Sunday at 8AM - Monday thru Friday - 7:00am SHARP

Class with Rabbi Yenay Monday night at 7PM –

WE WILL BE HAVING COMMUNAL SEDERS - *The cost will be \$75/ adult, \$50/child. – Anyone needing a discount to \$50 a person or anyone needing to be sponsored, please speak with Rebecca. All reservations and monies must be in by This Sunday, March 10...NO EXCEPTIONS! Please respond by email to Rebecca at uft183@yahoo.com or by calling her at home at 432-5690. We must stress the need for volunteers. We also need sponsors for those who may need a reduced rate or who cannot pay. We are all obligated to have guests for Pesach – perhaps each family can sponsor, one or two people or an entire family for one or both nights, we don't want to turn anyone away.*

To subscribe or to unsubscribe, please reply to
ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com

**Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue,
17th Floor, Artistic Frame ... 4PM Mincha through
the summer and fall. Please join us! 212-289-2100**

Our friend Steve Eisenberg forwarded us a job
assistance page which is being sent as a separate
attachment.

In addition, I forgot to attach the image article about
Jonah to last week's mailing so I am attaching it now.

Editors Notes

Most days I write and then send the newsletter with
little if any proof reading. That's why you get those
silly mistakes that one might miss when they review
their own work, but a proofreader with the red marker
tends to catch. So this morning I started writing about
time relating to Shabbat and space relating to
creating a mishkan, and then moving beyond time
and space. I went back to review what I wrote and

realized that this was a class and a little heavy for the
newsletter – or better to say, "way too heavy for the
newsletter". So I back tracked, but that didn't work.

So apologizing in advance for being late with this
week's mailing, I decided to start over and focus on
one idea.

What started me in the first place was the concept of
Shabbat and a 7 day week. We can all understand
the time period of a day. The sun rises and sets and
rises again. We can understand a month. The moon
is first visible, then grows until its full, then gradually
recedes in our eyes until it disappears before
beginning the cycle anew. Even a year, with its
season and our changing position relative to the sun
is understandable. A day, a month, and a year are all
clearly represented in nature.

But where is a week represented in nature? Why has
the world accepted a week of seven days? Historians
explain that the Roman emperor Constantine made
Christianity the state religion early in the 4th Century

CE the 7- day week was officially associated with the Julian Calendar, and the association remained after the Julian Calendar was replaced by the Gregorian Calendar in the 16th Century CE.

The Christians received the 7- day week from the Jews. Let's keep in mind that the earliest Christians were in fact a sect of Jews who believed the Mashiach had come.

I find it typical that historians claim the Torah only dates back to the time of Ezra – about 2300 years ago and not to Moses, 3300 years ago. They also state that even if Moses did suggest a Shabbat 1300 years before the common era, that the 7 day week was used by the Sumerians and Babylonians. "Some Historians believe that around 2350 BCE Sargon I, King of Akkad, having conquered Ur and the other cities of Sumeria, instituted a seven-day week, the first to be recorded."

Joseph Scalinger is quoted as saying: "The septenary arrangement of days was in use among the Orientals from the remotest antiquity." (Remember Abraham sent the sons of Keturah to the East with gifts.)

So where did the ancients get the seven day week from? I have not seen any reasonable answer that leaves G-d out of the picture.

I found it even more interesting that in their deep hatred and fear of religion, the early Soviets, many who were raised in Torah observant homes as children, did anything they could to separate the people from the Creator of the World who instituted the Shabbat at creation. Between 1929 and 1931 the USSR changed from the seven-day week to a five-day week. In 1931, when the five day week wasn't working, the Soviet Union changed to a six-day week. Every sixth day (6th, 12th, 18th, 24th and 30th) of the Gregorian Calendar was a state rest day – I guess even the greatest non believer eventually figures out there is some sanity to a "Shabbat". The calendar was abandoned 26 June 1940 and the seven-day week reintroduced the next day."

So where did the commandment of Shabbat originate? We know that the laws of Shabbat were given at Marah soon after leaving Egypt, again at Sinai and again after leaving Sinai including this week's portion where Moses gathers the people.

But did the Jewish people know of Shabbat before then? The Talmud - Yoma 28b - states, that Avraham Avinu observed every Misvah in the Torah. Avraham Avinu even observed the Misvot from the Rabbis

such as Eiruvei Tavshilin (preparing food for Shabbat before a holiday begins).

The SEFER YUCHASIN (Erech "Avraham Avinu") explains that Eruv Tavshilin was instituted in order to fulfill "Zachor Et Yom ha'Shabbat," "remember the Shabbat; do not forget that Shabbat is coming" by eating all of his good food on Yom Tov, which is Erev Shabbat (Beitzah 15b). In a similar manner, Avraham "reminded" the people of the world that which they had previously forgotten, that the world has a Creator (who created the world in six days and rested on Shabbat).- Although historians date Sargon to 2350 BCE, perhaps he lived at the time of Avraham – some suggest that he was Shem or Malkisedek – and instituted a 7 day week because of the influence of Abraham.

(The Midrash teaches that in Sarah's tent, a special miracle proclaimed that the Divine Presence dwelled therein: the lamp she lit every Friday evening, in honor of the divine day of rest, miraculously kept burning all week, until the next Friday eve. When Sarah died (1676 BCE), the miracle of her Shabbat lamp ceased. But on the day of Sarah's passing, Rebecca was born. And when Rebecca was brought to Sarah's tent as the destined wife of Sarah's son, Isaac, the miracle of the lamp returned. Once again, the light of Shabbat filled the tent of the matriarch of Israel and radiated its holiness to the entire week.)

But why would Hashem keep Shabbat as a secret? Adam certainly was aware of Shabbat and must have passed it down to his descendants.

Did Noah observe Shabbat? It appears that for those in the time of Noah, a week was a time unit used. The Torah writes that Hashem tells Noah, 7:4. "For in another seven days, I will make it rain upon the earth" Rashi comments based on the Talmud Sanhedrin 108b, that, These are the seven days of mourning for the righteous Methuselah. And after the flood we again see, "And he waited again another seven days, and he again sent forth the dove from the ark". .

We again see the use of the term week relating to seven days when Laban after switching Leah at the wedding ceremony, tells Jacob: Complete the [wedding] week of this one, and we will give you this one too, for the work that you will render me for another seven years." So the week must have been a very accepted time unit.

We see at the end of Bereshit when Joseph and his brothers went to bury Jacob, "they conducted a very great and impressive eulogy, and he made for his father a mourning of seven days"

And even in Egypt, we see with regard to the first plague of blood that "Seven full days passed after the L-rd had smitten the Nile".

Finally with Iyov or Job – and we don't know when he lived, but are told that it may have been at the same time as the Exodus we see that his three friends sat and grieved with him for seven days and seven nights — a complete week.

So we have to wonder. Were the Jews in Egypt aware of the Shabbat while they were slaves? Did they observe it? Many of us will recall the Midrash that teaches that while still living in the house of Pharaoh as his grandson, Moses saw that the slaves had no rest. He went to Pharaoh and said: 'If one has a slave and he does not give him rest one day in the week, the slave will die. These are your slaves—if you do not give them one day a week, they will die.' Said Pharaoh: 'Go and do with them as you say.' So Moses ordained for them the Shabbat day for rest."

So we wonder. Can we apply this Midrash? Were they aware of Shabbat? Did they observe it? If so why do we think they are introduced to Shabbat only at Marah. A careful examination leads us to believe that this was not an introduction to Shabbat but a refresher course that came with reminders. Three to four weeks before Israel arrived at Mt. Sinai, benei Yisrael are told to gather enough manna for two days and promised that it would not breed worms. Moses tells them the next day is Shabbat, and he repeats it in verse 26. When some of the people break the Shabbat by looking for maan on that day, Hashem angrily demands to know how long Israel was going to refuse to keep His laws, specifically the Shabbat. .

One has to wonder, if the Shabbat is something so new and only announced a day in advance wouldn't we expect some people to be confused about its proper observance. Why would Hashem get so angry? It seems quite reasonable based on all that we cited above, that Benai Yisrael had known about the Shabbat in some form for generations back to Abraham. And although this still leaves me with a Shabbat HaGadol question which I have two weeks to work out, it means that the Shabbat is not simply a commandment, but Shabbat is woven into creation and into nature. And although we cannot see the 7 day period in nature, it's there.

Rabbi Abittan z'sl would teach that six represents physical completion, being the six directions – up, down, east, west, north and south. Seven though represents true completion, because the seventh is the core that gives life to everything else. Six days we work; the seventh we rest. We prepare during the

sixth days when we can earn for the seventh when we can't. But we forget that those six days are physical and it's the Shabbat that supplies the energy. The six days represent the directions, but the core, the source, the power that allows us to move is the Shabbat.

The Shabbat is a treasure that Hashem took from his chest and gave to us. Let's appreciate the gift and learn how to use it. May this and every Shabbat, bring you Shalom – peace tranquility and more important a sense of completion and wholeness.

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

I found the following from Rabbi Yisroel Ciner struck me personally

This week we conclude the Sefer {Book} of Shmos with Parshas Pekudai—the accounting of materials used for the construction of the Mishkan {Tabernacle}.

The Ramban, at the beginning of the Sefer, described Shmos as the Sefer of Galus and Geulah—Exile and Redemption. With this he explains why Shmos began with the names of Bnei Yisroel {the Children of Israel} who went down to Mitzrayim {Egypt}, even though that information had already been given at the end of Breishis. He writes that Shmos, as the Sefer of Galus and Geulah, had to begin with the very beginning of the Galus—that descent to Mitzrayim.

As such, it follows that Shmos will end with the final stage of Geulah—Redemption. There's often a lot of confusion over what constitutes this redemption. Many would describe Geulah as leaving Mitzrayim, but that took place in the middle of Shmos. Others would say that it was receiving the Torah on Har Sinai {Mount Sinai} but that also took place in the middle of Shmos. Still others would maintain that the stage of redemption would only be reached when we'd enter Eretz Yisroel {the Land of Israel} but that doesn't take place until long after Sefer Shmos.

If so, what was the true redemption that was reached at the end of Shmos?

The end of Pekudai tells what happened once the Mishkan had been erected and all the vessels had been positioned in their proper places: "And the cloud covered the Ohel Moed and the Honor of Hashem filled the Mishkan. [40:34]" The redemption was Hashem's presence resting amongst Bnei Yisroel.

That tangible presence of Hashem that had been seen and felt so clearly on Sinai was now a constant reality, traveling with them wherever they went.

Nowadays, we too can get a bit confused over what constitutes redemption. This past week I accompanied my highschool students on an overnight trip to Boston. On the way we stopped at the Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island. One sensed the foundation of religious freedom being laid when reading the resonating words written by George Washington in response to a letter sent to him by Moses Seixas, the warden of the congregation.

Washington wrote: The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent national gifts. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

May the children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and figtree, and there shall be none to make him afraid. May the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths, and make us all in our several vocations useful here, and in his own due time and way everlastingly happy.
G. Washington

One felt a historical perspective of the great freedoms that we as Jews have enjoyed in the United States and have enabled us to flourish. At risk of getting a little too carried away with this American spirit, we continued on to Boston, contemplated the Holocaust Memorial and visited the colonial cemetery; home to many great people and also to the author of Mother Goose. At that point I began to reflect on the visits to cemeteries I had made during my years in Israel . . . Praying at the grave of Rav Yosef Karo, the author of Shulchan Aruch, for a clarity in halacha {Jewish Law}. Praying at the grave of the Arizal for a deeper understanding of Torah. Praying at the grave of Rabi Akiva to have the strength and exuberance to be willing to start again, no matter what one's age might be. To be willing to see the good in even the darkest of moments. Those were the thoughts that were

running through my mind as I stood at the grave site of Mother Goose . . .

We dare not confuse freedom with redemption. We dare not compare any place in the world to the Land of Israel. And I thank you, Mother Goose, for driving that point home in a very clear way.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: The Parsha begins with the Mitzvah of Shabbos and the penalty for her transgression. Note that Pasuk 35:5 is classic proof of the Oral Law. Those who deny the Oral Law must explain the literal translation of this verse to prohibit having any burning flame on Shabbos. This would forbid the use of lights, heat, and even Shabbos candles! It is the Oral Law which teaches us that the G-d's prohibition was directed at lighting a fire, not having a fire. Moshe asked the Bnai Yisroel to donate the time, talents, and materials for the construction of the Mishkan. The Bnai Yisroel responded with unbridled enthusiasm.

2nd Aliya: Talents and materials were donated and Betzallel and Oholiav were appointed as chief architects and artists. The response to Moshe's appeal was so great that Moshe had to command the people to stop their donations! (see, miracles do happen!) The outer coverings of the Mishkan and the inner tapestries are detailed. The beams of the Mishkan, the Aron Hakodesh, and the Shulchan - Table are described.

3rd & 4th Aliyot: The Menorah and the inner Golden Altar are described. The outer ramped Altar, the Washstand, and the Mishkan's surrounding enclosure are detailed. 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.)

5th & 6th Aliyot: The Kohein Gadol's breastplate and vest are described. The remaining garments of the Kohein Gadol and the other Kohanim are detailed, and Moshe inspects the completed Mishkan. Moshe certifies that the entire project followed the exact details of Hashem's instructions. Moshe blesses the workers.

7th Aliya: 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.

This week, in addition to the regular Parsha, we read the section known as HaChodesh. The additional sections of Shekalim, Zachor, Parah, and Chodesh are read prior to Pesach for both commemorative and practical reasons.

This additional section from Shemos, Parshas Bo, Chapter 12, is read on the Shabbos before the month of Nissan, or on the Shabbos of Rosh Chodesh Nissan. This section is an account of the very first Mitzvah given to the Jewish people as a nation. It includes the concept of Rosh Chodesh - the New Moon, as well as the basic laws of Pesach and the Pascal Lamb. Being that Pesach starts on the 15th of Nissan, this section is read about two weeks before Pesach begins. As with Parshas Parah, Chazal wanted the reading of this Parsha to be a reminder that Pesach is almost upon us! Only two more weeks to make the necessary arrangements to get to Yerushalayim and bring the Paschal Lamb! Only two more weeks and your house had better be in order! (are you panicked yet?)

It is interesting that Hashem selected the Mitzvah of the New Moon as the first national Mitzvah. Basically, the Mitzvah required two eye witnesses to testify before Beis Din that they had seen the tiny sliver of the new moon's crescent that is the very first exposure of the moon's new monthly cycle. The Beis Din would then declare the start of the new month.

The most obvious consequence of this procedure was the 29 or 30 day month, otherwise identified by a one or two day Rosh Chodesh. A two day Rosh Chodesh is comprised of the 30th day of the previous month and the 1st day of the new month. A one day Rosh Chodesh means that the preceding month was only 29 days long making Rosh Chodesh the 1st day of the new month. This would have an immediate effect on the scheduling of Yomim Tovim and other calendar ordained activities. It underscores from the very inception of the nation that the Beis Din, representing the Rabbinic leadership of the nation, were the single most important factor in guaranteeing the practice of Torah throughout time. It was as if G-d would wait for Beis Din to notify Him when His Yomim Tovim were to be.

This week's Haftorah is from Yechezkel - Ezekiel Chapter 45 and is related to the reading of Parshas Hachodesh. The latter chapters of Yechezkel describe the future Bais Hamikdash and the service that will take place once Mashiach has come and the Jews have returned to Eretz Israel. The Haftorah describes the offering that the Prince (the King or the High Priest) will bring on Rosh Chodesh - the New Moon.

This selection from Yechezkel is especially appropriate for the Shabbos that precedes or coincides with the beginning of the month of Nissan. The month of Nissan is known as the month of redemption. Our exodus from Egypt took place in the month of Nissan. The Mishkan was first assembled on Rosh Chodesh Nissan. The Mizbeach was inaugurated into service during the first 12 days of Nissan. Therefore, we hope that this year, in the month of Nissan, we will again merit to be redeemed from exile, rebuild the Bais Hamikdash, and again inaugurate the Mizbeach by bringing the Rosh Chodesh offering in the service of G-d

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"Moshe saw all the work and behold they had done it as Hashem commanded so had they done and Moshe blessed them." (Shemot 39:43)

At first sight the above verse is merely telling us that Moshe blessed the people upon completing the Mishkan. However, there is an additional emphasis in this pasuk. It says, "As Hashem commanded." Rabbi Shimshon Pincus says there is an important message here. Actually, the people were commanded to do this project. They weren't volunteers and had they been lazy and laid back it would have been considered a sin. But, when they did it, they got the best berachah, "May the Shechinah dwell in your handiwork."

The lesson for us is great. Imagine Friday afternoon and the housewife is busy cooking and cleaning. She tries to create great-tasting food and at the same time she works to put the house in order. At times it might enter your heart to say, "Well, that's her job, to run the house," and you forget to bless her. The same blessing, "May the pleasantness of Hashem be upon you." Even though it's her job.

We also find in Parashat Shemini when Moshe and Aharon finished the korbanot (offerings) on opening day of the Mishkan, Moshe blessed them again. Why the second time? The first time when they finished the building, the second time when Moshe and Aharon used the building.

Back to our homes. We know that with our efforts to build our Jewish home, the

Shechinah dwells there. Let's apply the same idea. The first blessing should be right away on Friday afternoon when all the work has been completed and all is ready for the Shabbat meal. The second after the meal, when the holy work was completed, when

everyone tasted and enjoyed the meal. It's worthy to bless her the second time.

We know our Sages teach us that if someone does not show appreciation to his fellow man, eventually he will not show appreciation to Hashem. We see that the Sages equate appreciation of man to appreciation of Hashem. So just like when we eat we thank Hashem twice, with the blessing on the food before and after, so too we must show our appreciation to our fellow man both before and after. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

This Shabbat, we read an additional portion of Torah dealing with the month of Nisan, since Rosh Hodesh Nisan will be this coming week. This Shabbat is therefore called Shabbat HaHodesh, which refers to Nisan.

However, there is an additional significance to this Shabbat. The word Hodesh is related to the word hadash, which means "new". The Passover season has within it the ability for one to renew and to revitalize oneself. The Jewish People were slaves to the Egyptians, and for a slave there is nothing new; everything stays the same. However, when we were freed, we became a new nation, and in addition, we were given the ability to rejuvenate ourselves. This is a very important trait in a human being, and especially in a Jew. In business, the word "new" seems to be on every standard package. When we see someone we know, it's always "what's new?" To renew oneself insofar as Judaism is concerned means to reevaluate our practices and customs, and to improve upon them. It means taking a fresh look at our surroundings, appreciating what we have, and looking forward to each new day for what it can bring us. It means we don't have to be the same today as we were yesterday; rather, each of us can become a new person.

Just as we see nature renew itself in the coming weeks, let us rejuvenate and revitalize ourselves this Passover season, bringing out the best that's in us in many new ways. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

LASTING EFFECT

"And all of the congregation of B'nei Yisrael went out from before Moshe." (Shemot 35:20)

The Or Hachaim questions the apparent redundancy in mentioning from where B'nei Yisrael departed. Is it not obvious that since Moshe had assembled B'nei Yisrael for a specific purpose, upon completion of his speech they would leave from "before Moshe"? The Alter of Kelm answers this

question insightfully. When B'nei Yisrael left Moshe's study hall after listening to a lecture from their great teacher, it was apparent from where they had come, and from whom they had heard words of Torah. Moshe's students did not reflect his teaching only in his presence. Their essence was permeated by their Rebbe's Torah. Thus even upon departure they mirrored his influence. Hence, the Torah emphasizes their place of spiritual sustenance, for it was obvious that they had been coming from before Moshe. They conducted themselves as if they were still in Moshe's presence. One who studies Torah should always portray the image of a Ben Torah. The character development and refinement which are direct benefits of Torah study should be manifest in every activity of a Ben Torah wherever he may be. (Peninim on the Torah)

Rabbi Wein

The book of Shemot that began with such high drama just a few months ago ends this week on a rather bland and apparently purely technical note. The Torah once more reviews and recounts for us the details of the construction of the Mishkan and an exact accounting of the material goods that were used in its construction.

Through the ages, the commentators have dwelt long and hard on these parshiyot in the holy Torah, where every letter and word is eternal, in an attempt to justify this seemingly superfluous repetition. I will not attempt to review all of the different approaches to explain this issue. They are all satisfactory and yet all are somehow short of the mark as well.

I certainly have no great or brilliant insight into the matter myself. But, there is an obvious teaching that all of the commentators agree with that does derive from this review and repetition regarding the construction of the Mishkan.

The Mishkan had the miraculous quality of being built exactly and unwaveringly according to its original plan. Many times in life people and institutions set out to create structures, organizations and policies that will be of great benefit to society upon completion. Rarely if ever does the finished product match exactly the plans and true intentions of those who planned and initiated the project.

All human plans and blueprints are subject to change, alterations and even to cancellation. The plans for the Mishkan, shrouded in the spirituality of God's commandments, were not subject to such changes. Therefore Bezalel and Ahaliav and the Jewish people were complimented for their strict

adherence to the original plans given to Moshe for the construction of the Mishkan.

Every detail of the construction of the Mishkan is reviewed in the parshiyot of this week. All builders are aware of the importance of detail in their work. A missing screw or nail or hook can lead to later disaster. This is true in the physical mundane life of people. It is doubly true regarding the spiritual and moral character of a person and a community. Only in the completion of the details is the whole person or project seen.

The measure of an artist, whether in pictures or music, is always in the nuances - in the details. The avoidance of shortcuts that invariably lead to shabbiness is the true hallmark of the gifted performer. Moshe lovingly records for us every piece of material goods that came together as the holy Mishkan. In kabbalistic thought, every nuance of the construction of the Mishkan is truly an influence on the general world at large.

This only serves to reemphasize the importance of detail in dealing with the Mishkan. The Mishkan is no longer physically present with us but its lessons and greatness still abide within the Torah we study and in the value systems of the Jewish people. By reading the Torah's description of it and studying the underlying principles that it represents, the Mishkan gains life and influence within us individually and collectively. May we be strengthened by this eternal knowledge.

Sir Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations
of the Commonwealth

Two Types of Community

A long drama had taken place. Moses had led the people from slavery to the beginning of the road to freedom. The people themselves had witnessed G-d at Mount Sinai, the only time in all history when an entire people became the recipients of revelation. Then came the disappearance of Moses for his long sojourn at the top of the mountain, an absence which led to the Israelites' greatest collective sin, the making of the Golden Calf. Moses returned to the mountain to plead for forgiveness, which was granted.

Its symbol was the second set of tablets. Now life must begin again. A shattered people must be rebuilt. How does Moses proceed? The verse with which the sedra begins contains the clue:

Moses assembled the whole Israelite community and said to them: "These are the things G-d has commanded you to do." (35:1)

The verb *vayakhel* - which gives the sedra its name - is crucial to an understanding of the task in which Moses is engaged. At its simplest level it serves as a motiv-word, recalling a previous verse. In this case the verse is obvious:

When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they assembled around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us." (32:1)

Moses' act is what the kabbalists called a *tikkun*: a restoration, a making-good-again, the redemption of a past misdemeanour. Just as the sin was committed by the people acting as a *kahal* or *kehillah*, so atonement was to be achieved by their again acting as a *kehillah*, this time by making a home for the Divine presence as they earlier sought to make a substitute for it. Moses orchestrates the people for good, as they had once been assembled for bad (The difference lies not only in the purpose but in the form of the verb, from passive in the case of the calf to active in the case of Moses. Passivity allows bad things to happen - "Wherever it says 'and it came to pass' it is a sign of impending tragedy". (Megillah 10b) Proactivity is the defeat of tragedy: "Wherever it says, 'And there will be' is a sign of impending joy." (Bemidbar Rabbah 13)

At a deeper level, though, the opening verse of the sedra alerts us to the nature of community in Judaism.

In classical Hebrew there are three different words for community: *edah*, *tsibbur* and *kehillah*, and they signify different kinds of association.

Edah comes from the word *ed*, meaning "witness." The verb *ya'ad* carries the meaning of "to appoint, fix, assign, destine, set apart, designate or determine." The modern Hebrew noun *te'udah* means "certificate, document, attestation, aim, object, purpose or mission." The people who constitute an *edah* have a strong sense of collective identity. They have witnessed the same things. They are bent on the same purpose. The Jewish people become an *edah* - a community of shared faith - only on receiving the first command:

"Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household" (Shemot 12:3).

An edah can be a gathering for bad as well as good. The Israelites, on hearing the report of the spies, lose heart and say they want to return to Egypt. Throughout, they are referred to as the edah (as in "How long will this wicked community grumble against Me?" Bemidbar 14: 27). The people agitated by Korach in his rebellion against Moses and Aaron's authority is likewise called an edah ("If one man sins, will You be angry with the whole community? Bemidbar 16: 22). Nowadays the word is generally used for an ethnic or religious subgroup. An edah is a community of the like-minded. The word emphasises strong identity. It is a group whose members have much in common.

By contrast the word tsibbur - it belongs to Mishnaic rather than biblical Hebrew - comes from the root tz-b-r meaning "to heap" or "pile up". (Bereishith 41:49) To understand the concept of tsibbur, think of a group of people praying at the Kotel. They may not know each other. They may never meet again. But for the moment, they happen to be ten people in the same place at the same time, and thus constitute a quorum for prayer. A tsibbur is a community in the minimalist sense, a mere aggregate, formed by numbers rather than any sense of identity. A tsibbur is a group whose members may have nothing in common except that, at a certain point, they find themselves together and thus constitute a "public" for prayer or any other command which requires a minyan.

A kehillah is different from the other two kinds of community. Its members are different from one another. In that sense it is like a tsibbur. But they are orchestrated together for a collective undertaking - one that involves in making a distinctive contribution. The danger of a kehillah is that it can become a mass, a rabble, a crowd.

That is the meaning of the phrase in which Moses, descending the mountain, sees the people dancing around the calf:

Moses saw that the people were running wild, and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughing-stock to their enemies. (32: 25)

The beauty of a kehillah, however, is that when it is driven by constructive purpose, it gathers together the distinct and separate contributions of many individuals, so that each can say, "I helped to make this." That is why, assembling the people on this occasion, Moses emphasises that each has something different to give: Take from what you have, an offering to G-d. Everyone who is willing to bring to G-d an offering of gold, silver and bronze . . .

All you who are skilled among you are to come and make everything the Lord has commanded . . .

Moses was able to turn the kehillah with its diversity into an edah with its singleness of purpose, while preserving the diversity of the gifts they brought to G-d:

Then the whole Israelite community withdrew from Moses' presence, and everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to G-d for the work on the Tent of Meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments. All who were willing - men and women - came and brought gold jewellery of all kinds: brooches, earrings, rings and ornaments . . . Everyone who had blue, purple or scarlet yarn . . . Those presenting an offering of silver or bronze . . . Every skilled woman spun with her hands and brought what she had spun . . . The leaders brought onyx stones and other gems . . . All the Israelite men and women who were willing brought to G-d freewill offerings for all the work G-d, through Moses, had commanded them to do. (35:20-29)

The greatness of the Tabernacle was that it was a collective achievement - one in which not everyone did the same thing. Each gave a different thing. Each contribution was valued - and therefore each participant felt valued. Vayakhel - Moses' ability to forge out of the dissolution of the people a new and genuine kehillah - was one of his greatest achievements.

Many years later, Moses, according to the sages, returned to the theme. Knowing that his career as a leader was drawing to an end, he prayed to G-d to appoint a successor: "May G-d, Lord of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the community." (Bemidbar 27:16) Rashi, following the sages, explains the unusual phrase "Lord of the spirits of all flesh" as follows:

He said to Him: Lord of the universe, the character of each person is revealed and known to You - and You know that each is different. Therefore appoint for them a leader who is able to bear with each person as his or her temperament requires. (Rashi on Bemidbar 27:16)

To preserve the diversity of a tsibbur with the unity of purpose of an edah - that is the challenge of kehillah-formation, community-building, itself the greatest task of a great leader.