

שמות ל"ה:א-י'

(א) וַיִּקְהַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת-כָּל-עֵדֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אֱלֹהֵי הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת אִתְּכֶם: (ב) שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָהּ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי יִהְיֶה לָכֶם קָדֹשׁ שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּתוֹן לַיהוָה כֹּל-הָעֲשֵׂה בּוֹ מְלָאכָה יוּמָת: (ג) לֹא-תַבְעֲרוּ אֵשׁ בְּכָל מִשְׁכְּתֵיכֶם בַּיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת: {פ}

(ד) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-כָּל-עֵדֶת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה יְהוָה לֵאמֹר: (ה) קָחוּ מֵאִתְּכֶם תְּרוּמָה לַיהוָה כֹּל נָדִיב לִבּוֹ יְבִיאֶהָ אֵת תְּרוּמַת יְהוָה זָהָב וְכֶסֶף וְנַחֲשֵׁת: (ו) וְתַכְלֵת וְאַרְגָּמָן וְתוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי וְשֵׁשׁ וְעִזִּים: (ז) וְעֹרֹת אֵילִם מְאֻדָּמִים וְעֹרֹת תַּחֲשִׁים וְעֵצֵי שִׁטִּים: (ח) וְשֶׁמֶן לַמָּאֹר וּבִשְׁמִים לְשֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה וְלִקְטֹרֶת הַסַּמִּים: (ט) וְאַבְנֵי-שֹׁהַם וְאַבְנֵי מִלֵּאִים לְאַפֹּד וְלַחֹשֶׁן: (י) וְכָל-חֲכָמֵי-לֵב בְּכֶם יָבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה:

Exodus 35:1-10

(1) Moses then convoked the whole Israelite community and said to them: These are the things that יהוה has commanded you to do: (2) On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a sabbath of complete rest, holy to יהוה; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. (3) You shall kindle no fire throughout your settlements on the sabbath day. (4) Moses said further to the whole community of Israelites: This is what יהוה has commanded: (5) Take from among you gifts to יהוה; everyone whose heart is so moved shall bring them—gifts for יהוה: gold, silver, and copper; (6) blue, purple, and crimson yarns, fine linen, and goats' hair; (7) tanned ram skins, dolphin skins, and acacia wood; (8) oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the aromatic incense; (9) lapis lazuli and other stones for setting, for the ephod and the breastpiece. (10) And let all among you who are skilled come and make all that יהוה has commanded:

Rabbi Aviva Richman (from HADAR; *Moshe's Gamble*)

The word va-yakhel (and he gathered) signifies Moshe taking a leap, deciding that the people will go ahead and build the mishkan, and afterwards see if God decides to dwell in it. He hopes this gathering will atone for the people's "gathering upon Aharon" to build the golden calf. VaYakhel doesn't come from relief, as Ramban would have it, but from uncertainty, even nervousness, alongside a steadfast insistence that this is the direction the relationship must go.

The gathering of VaYakhel also requires intuition in the face of the unknown, but this time driven by Moshe's vision, rather than by Aharon being swept up in the crowd's chaos. VaYakhel expresses human initiative, hopefulness, and a dose of hutzpah. Suddenly the refrain of the people building each part of the mishkan "just as God commanded Moshe" (throughout chapter 39) is more of twisting God's arm, or an expression of desperate hope, rather than signifying blind obedience. Even though God hasn't explicitly commanded to build the mishkan after the golden calf, they have decided to go ahead and build anyway.

Their work was not in vain; Moshe's gamble paid off. God recognizes the people's desire and effort, and in response decides to dwell among them again. This reading of Parashat VaYakhel is more like our own mode of existence, aware of the ways we have failed and not entirely sure of the prospects for repair...we live out a VaYakhel that is about taking initiative to create a space where God might inhabit our lives and our world, without any confidence God will.

The "gathering" that results in manifest blessing rather than destruction stems from vision and resolve, doing our best to interpret the residue of God's words, and bringing together a community in its full array of people and skills to live out that vision. Maybe after investing so much effort, we too will merit divine blessing. Meanwhile, this parashah teaches us not to expect God's voice to emerge anytime soon, and just get to work.

Rabbi Shefa Gold (from Torah Journeys)

VAYAKHEL BLESSES US WITH THE AWARENESS of the true nature of the heart that is unconstrained by fear. Even though the disaster of the Golden Calf is still a fresh memory, Moses can look out at us and see that our true nature is ruled by a generous heart. When he calls on the gifts and talents and generosity of the people, he does not do so only for what they come to offer to the communal project. He is calling the people to know their own gifts and to experience the blessing of a generous heart.

When we can experience the flowing and giving heart, freed from the constraints of fear, we begin to know and trust ourselves as if for the first time. We can relax and let go of worries about not having or being enough, because the experience of flowing generosity feels effortless and infinite. *Vayakhel* tells us that Moses had to ask the people to stop giving because they had become so intoxicated with their experience of generous flow. We are reminded that together we have more than enough to complete the task of making a place for God to dwell among us, between us and within us.

Rashi and those who follow him propose that the entire narrative of the Mishkan, which takes up a major portion of the book of Exodus, has at its symbolic core the repairing of the relationship between God and Israel. The Sefat Emet says that even the sin of the Golden Calf, which was ostensibly the cause of the problem in the first place, was actually only to teach Israel how to return!

Most of us don't do anything as dramatic as build a golden idol, but many of us sometimes feel like we're not going anywhere, we're not growing or feeling any sense of spiritual wholeness or relationship with the Holy One. The Sefat Emet says: keep trying, and never let yourself believe that you are unworthy of a relationship with God. That's not to say that living your life in the light of God and Torah (however we understand the term) is easy; after all, the Israelites had to build the Mishkan, with great effort and sacrifice and attention to detail. No less would be expected of anybody trying to repair a broken relationship; the extraordinary promise of the end of the book of Exodus is that broken relationships can be healed and broken souls can again be whole with God.

שמות ל"ה:כ"א-כ"ב

(כא) וַיָּבֹאוּ כָּל-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-נִשְׁאָו לִבּוֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר נָדְבָה רוּחוֹ אֹתוֹ הֵבִיאוּ אֶת-תְּרוּמַת יְהוָה לְמַלְאכַת אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וּלְכָל-עֲבֹדָתוֹ וּלְבִגְדֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ: (כב) וַיָּבֹאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים עַל-הַנָּשִׁים כָּל | נָדִיב לֵב הֵבִיאוּ חָח וְנָזָם וְטַבַּעַת וְכוּמָז כָּל-כְּלִי זָהָב וְכָל-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הֵנִיף תְּנוּפֶת זָהָב לַיהוָה:

Exodus 35:21-22

(21) And everyone who excelled in ability and everyone whose spirit was moved came, bringing to יהוה an offering for the work of the Tent of Meeting and for all its service and for the sacral vestments. (22) Men and women, all whose hearts moved them, all who would make an elevation offering of gold to יהוה, came bringing brooches, earrings, rings, and pendants —gold objects of all kinds.

שמות ל"ה:כ"ט

(כט) כָּל-אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר נָדַב לִבָּם אֹתָם לְהֵבִיאַ לְכָל-הַמְּלָאכָה אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּיַד-מֹשֶׁה הֵבִיאוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל נְדָבָה לַיהוָה: {פ}

Exodus 35:29

(29) Thus the Israelites, all the men and women whose hearts moved them to bring anything for the work that יהוה, through Moses, had commanded to be done, brought it as a freewill offering to יהוה.

Rabbi Jill Hammer (from Torah Queeries, p.113-114)

As the Israelite people build the mishkan, the shrine they will carry through the wilderness, they rely on their inner wisdom and individual gifts. Although the pattern of the mishkan comes from the Eternal, the gifts that make the sanctuary what it is come from the depths of the human heart. The mishkan is replete with images of love and

relationship: images we can use to transform our experience of what Torah is.

The Israelites respond, not out of obedience, as they did at Sinai, but because their hearts speak to them. (In the Biblical conception, *lev*, "heart," refers to the thoughts of the mind as well as the emotions.) In fact, their hearts respond to them with very specific wisdom: the men who work the metal and gold are called *chacham lev*. "wise-hearted," and the women who spin the wool are named as *nasa liban otana bechochmah*: "those whose hearts lifted them up in wisdom." An inner sacred truth is coming out of the people through acts of creation. As the Tabernacle grows in beauty every single israelite becomes part of the process of putting it together....The beauty of the mishkan comes from the beauty of the generous-spirited hearts that design and build it. So, too, we can only build sacred community when the wisdom of the individual heart has a recognized place alongside sacred text.

Rabbi Erin Leib Smokler (from The Sefat Emet on the Parsha; IJS weekly Torah study)

Beautiful as this gush of voluntarism is, its meaning as the anchor of the mishkan (as suggested by the repetition of the notion) bears exploration. Why must donations be animated by a certain kind of a heart? What is the significance of *nedivut lev* (generosity) in the construction of this structure? The Sefat Emet offers a compelling perspective on the essential role of "generous heartedness" at the center of the mishkan. Recognizing the juxtaposition of our mishkan narrative with that of the Golden Calf, the Sefat Emet suggests that we read the two stories together. The idolatrous catastrophe at the foot of Sinai was not erased with pronouncements of divine forgiveness or Moses' emergence with two new tablets. The relationship between God and the Jewish people, so new and precarious even without this drama, suffered a tremendous rupture in its wake. But it was not God who needed coaxing back into the relationship, says the Sefat Emet. It was the people of Israel. Though God never ceased to love them, even in the face of grave sin, they ceased to believe that they could be loved.

A deep feeling of unworthiness was the lasting effect of their initial betrayal. In a counter-intuitive yet empirically effective move, the Divine addresses the people's sense of their

inadequacy by inviting them, through Moses, to experience their adequacy. It does so through a call to service in the mishkan. Give of yourself. Get out of your own way, your own narrative of shame and insufficiency. Open yourself to something larger than yourself. Be a nadiv lev. Offer your heart generously to someone else or something else. Give out love and you will find within yourself a new way to receive love.

For in the words of the Orchot Tzadikim (Anonymous, c. 1400-1500).

"אין דבר בעולם המביא את האדם לידי אהבת העולם כמו הנדיבות . (אורחות צדיקים , שער הנדיבות, "שער א")

"There is nothing in this world that brings a person to love of (or from) from the world like generosity. "(Orchot Tzadikim, The Gate of Generosity, Gate 1)

Nothing renders a person more available to love from God. The centrality of nedivut in the mishkan--that meeting place of God and human beings-- stands as enduring testimony that generosity of the heart has the power to heal the heart.

Rabbi Shefa Gold (from Torah Journeys)

PEKUDAY BLESSES US WITH AN ACCOUNTING of all the work we have done to build a spiritual life. All the components are there. The effort and artistry and riches that have gone into this life-project are made visible to us. This is why I came here... to do this work.

I look back at my journey and remember the days when my resistance to the work took up most of my attention. I still have days like that. Yet today, as I bask in the blessing of Pekuday, I can remember, above the din of my whining and complaint, that this is the work that I was born for. In the big picture, there is nothing more compelling or that gives me more joy than to make a place for the Divine Presence to dwell among us, between us and within us.

To this project I have brought the gold of my love and the silver of my shining desire for

Truth. I have made hooks and sockets to connect me with the whole of Creation. I have brought every color of my changing moods, offering them up to that which is eternal. I have mined carnelian, turquoise, topaz, sapphire, emerald, agate, onyx, jasper, crystal, lapis lazuli, and amethyst — in the Ground of My Inheritance. I have faceted these jewels with tools of mind and heart. I have chiseled, cleaned, and polished these collected treasures and arranged them for my descendants.

And this Mishkan that I have built and that we have built together, will, with its beauty, send us to the holy dimensions where God dwells beyond conceptions, beyond form, or religion.