

This Week's Message of Torah from Rabbi Rick Rheins
Parashat Shekalim Vayakhel
Come Together

This week's Torah portion derives its name from its first word, Vayakhel, "And he assembled."

Moses brought together the whole community of Israel in order to build the Mishkan (Tabernacle). The project to build a holy space for worship and inspiration required a great variety of materials but gifts were not mandatory. Rather, all who contributed were to do so voluntarily. Typical of our ancestors and Jews of every generation, they gave with such generosity that Moses eventually had to ask them to stop giving!

Still, even though the work of building the Mishkan was a sacred commandment, it was halted every Shabbat. Indeed, the second verse of the Torah portion reminds us that the commandment of a Shabbat, Day of Rest, supersedes the commandments to build a Tabernacle or Temple:

"On six days work may be done but on the seventh you shall have a Sabbath of complete rest" (Exodus 35:2).

This week, Rabbi Susan and I are in Israel with about two dozen Sinai members. (Check out some of the photos on our Sinai Facebook page and Website.) It has been a fabulous experience so far. We've explored Tel Aviv and Jaffa. We planted trees, climbed tanks and then toured the ancient streets of Jerusalem. We have another week to go with many more fabulous adventures, but on Friday night we'll come together for Shabbat. This day of rest gives us a time for reflection, spiritual inspiration and physical renewal.

As any one who has been in Israel can attest, it is a nation of hyper activity, energy and creativity. But all slows down considerably on Shabbat. The commandment for a Day of Rest may be ancient, but it is even more applicable for our modern era.

We pray that you, your loved ones and friends will come together to enjoy Shabbat. We'll be thinking of you in Jerusalem and hope that one day soon, you will be able to join us for a future Sinai tour to Israel!

Shabbat Shalom!

Rick

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