

Shiur L'Yom Sh'lishi □

[Tuesday's Study]

READINGS: *Torah Vayakhel:* **Exodus 35:5-29**
 Haftarah: **I Kings 7:15-16**
 B'rit Chadasha: **II Corinthians 9:7**

Every man and woman who felt an urge to give ... brought a terumah.
[Exodus 35:29]

Today's Meditation is **Haggai 1:6-8;**

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is **Part I of the G'vurot** [The Prayer of His Powers]

Kechu me'itchem Terumah l'Adonai** - Take for yourselves from among you a portion of goods dedicated to a higher purpose of the Holy One **Exodus 35:1a.

The cleft-of-the-rock experience has changed Moshe – at least for the short term. Ever since the goodness of the Holy One passed before his eyes he has been acting more like a *gentle servant* than the *'my way or the highway' crusader* he tended to be before. After finally experiencing the transformative energy of Holy One's mercy, his face now radiates light; his demeanor exudes gentleness, humility, goodwill, shalom, the patience that comes from wisdom, and the kindness that comes from emunah. The dark, quick-to-anger, rush-to-judgment, hyper-opinionated part of his personality is nowhere to be seen. The vibe we are now getting from Moshe is actually ... dare we say it ... *merciful ... and compassionate ... and slow to anger ... and forgiving* His face radiates *shalom*. His eyes dance with joy. A *fountain of revelation* pours forth from his lips like spring rain. Through extended immersion in the healing waters of this fountain our broken hearts and fragmented souls are gradually becoming whole again. Fortunately this fountain is not going anywhere. It will continue flowing over us through the rest of the Book of Exodus, through the entire book of Leviticus, and for the first third of the Book of Numbers. There is no use fighting it – we may as well just read, study, meditate on, and *enjoy it!*

We are now seeing Moshe at his best – because we are seeing him at his least. Instead of relating to us as if we were a flock of stiff-necked goats that he has the insufferable burden of shepherding, he is suddenly treating us like beloved kinsmen that he considers it his inestimable privilege to mentor. This last experience in the Presence of the Holiest of All has finally gotten his flesh out of the way of what the Holy One is doing. What we are hearing

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come forth from Moshe now therefore is not his utopian ideas, his personal or cultural woundedness, his political agenda, or his pet peeves. His manner of delivery is no longer that of a self-righteous straw boss barking orders. Now words of encouragement and inspiration roll off his lips like honey - like the gentle teachings of a wise and benevolent father or rabbi. What we are hearing from him now is not just the letter of the Torah, but the Spirit of it. What we are hearing from Moshe now are not the 'crime and punishment'- focused own ideas of good and evil, right and wrong, justice and injustice, or morality and immorality that he has become known for; they are, instead, the redemption-focused thoughts and passion of the Bridegroom King's heart. Even more important than any nugget of truth he is teaching us this time around, he is modeling for us the beneficial effects that actually *walking with the Holy One* – as opposed to just being an expert of His Word – has on a person. Suddenly, through personally observing the dramatic changes the Holy One's Presence has wrought in Moshe, we are actually beginning see in our collective mind's eye the essence of our Beloved Bridegroom's nature. We are no longer afraid that He is going to get angry and order us hacked to death by his Levite brethren. We sense Him wooing us, calling us, gathering us to Him as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. We feel Him loving us, cherishing us, valuing us, nurturing us, and *healing* us.

What are we learning from this change we are seeing in Moshe? We are learning that the relationship between the Holy One and His specially chosen nation is nothing at all like the relationship that existed between Pharaoh and his subjects. The relationship we have with the Holy One is characterized by deep affection - on *both sides*. The Holy One LOVES us deeply – with a love beyond human imagination. He is ZEALOUS for His Bride in a totally healthy way that the unredeemed human mind cannot comprehend. He is passionate about seeing us safe, protected, and nurtured. And He is unwavering in His intention to bring us through every storm, to the fullness He has purposed for us as His Bride-nation. His love for us is not contingent upon anything – not our attitude, not our confession, not our belief system, and not our behavior. He made a covenant with Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov. And nothing – including us in our worst moments or generations – will stop Him from performing it.

RSVP - Repondez, Sil Vous Plait

What will be our response to this great love? Sometimes the response of Israel is warm, and positive, and beautiful – as is the case in this week's parshot. In other seasons the Bride-Nation's emotions in response to the

passionate love and Fatherly care of the Holy One border on the childish and impertinent. And sometimes, alas, our response – individually and collectively – to His love is nothing short of brattish, shrewish, and rebellious. Through it all, however, the covenant remains 100% secure. With the Holy One there is no shadow of turning. He is in this for the long haul. It is not about our faithfulness to the Covenant – it is about HIS. Hence, even when the relationship is being tested it is always described by Scripture in passionate terms of love - whether the kind of love it pictures follows the imagery of bride and bridegroom as in the *Shir Ha-shirim* (The Song of Songs) or the story of Hoshea (Hosea), or whether it follows the more common imagery of father and son as in the chronicles of the *avot* (patriarchs).

The Role that Sinai Is Designed to Play in Our Lives

The revelation at Mt. Sinai represents the penultimate moment of Bride-Bridegroom imagery. It is an essential part of the DNA of every person who enters into or seeks to be engrafted into Covenant with the Holy One. It was at Sinai that Our Bridegroom-King called us His *am segulah*, His *mamleket ha-kohanim*, and His *goy kadosh*. It was at that Mountain that the Holy One declared His troth to us, proclaimed us to be His chosen people forever, and redefined our new nature as the Betrothed Bride-People of YHVH. **Exodus 20:1-17**. It was here at this mountain that the Holy One began to teach us to think like He thinks about the tough issues of real-life. **Exodus 21-23**². As we are about to find out, it was also at this mountain that we learned to work together in humility and harmony in the great process of molding our lives and all our family and social interactions into a strategic beachhead through which the Kingdom of Heaven can invade and influence the kingdoms of this world.

Alas, it was also at this Mountain that we first ignored the Voice of the Almighty and bought into the humanistic, works-based, numbers-focused approach to religion that was taught to us by a charismatic sheik from a foreign nation. **Exodus 18:1-27; cf. Exodus 15:26, 16:28, and 19:5**. It was also at this mountain that we shrank back from the Holy One's Voice and Manifest Presence in immature terror. **Exodus 20:18-21**. and finally degenerated into abomination with the golden calf [**Exodus 32:1-6**]. These three folly episodes reveal the essence and essential points of origin of all human misdirection. Our 11-½ month sojourn at Sinai thus represents both the high points and the low points in the human side of the Covenant experience. Each of us has a

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² Exodus 21-23 contains the '*Mishpatim Discourse*' of the Holy One. In this discourse the Holy One gave us a series of tough hypothetical fact situations and told us how people in Covenant with Him are expected to apply a beautiful blend of wisdom, compassion, and focus on the future instead of the past to bring about healing, reconciliation, and resolution

Moriyah - or mountain of complete surrender - as did our ancestor Avraham. We all visit Moriyah from time to time, at appointed times and seasons in our lives. We all know such a mountain is our ultimate home. But in the routine, day-by-day, mundane affairs, interactions, experiences, and adventures of life our *base of operations* is the revelation we received at Sinai. Sinai represents our enormous potential for getting to know the Bridegroom-King in all His glory, and to receive and process His commissioning in the Great Plan of Redemption for mankind and creation – and the realities of the fact that we have to deal with a plethora of ‘other voices’, a gaggle of easily over-stimulated fleshly appetites, urges, and emotions, and a lot of sometimes charismatic, often angry, and almost always self-obsessed and self-righteous people. Every human being – including us – has some serious *holes in their souls*.

We must always be people of Mount Moriyah in spirit and in aspiration; in conducting the affairs of daily life, however, we are called to be people who have learned and incorporated into their approach to every situation in life, the essential ‘first-love’ lessons of Mount Sinai.

***It is Time For Us to Cooperate and Work Together in Harmony
To Prepare a Place for the Bridegroom-King to Dwell on Earth***

The Holy One has called us to build Him a set of courts on earth corresponding to the glorious chambers He occupies in Heaven. Initially, due to our inability or unwillingness to deal with Him in true intimacy, He plans to use this structure to reveal both the depth, width, height, and breadth of His great love for mankind and the transformative power of His *kippur* (i.e. healing, toxicity absorbing poultice/covering – KJV shorthand ‘atonement’) and *kedusha* (i.e. the pulsing, empowering energy of the Divine Presence – KJV shorthand ‘holiness’). Through the Mish’kan’s inspiring protocols of *kedusha*, *avodah*, and *kippur*, He intends to teach us the fundamentals of how to give love and service back to Him in meaningful and covenant-advancing ways. The next phase of His plan will involve having Messiah model the functions of the Mish’kan for us in human flesh. The final phase will be to have us, in union with the Messiah, take the show on the road, so to speak, by teaching and modeling it to every nation, tribe, and tongue of the human race. To this end, the Holy One is starting at the beginning. He has to first stir us to *embrace Bridal passion*. Then He has to train us to *steward that passion wisely – using it for Kingdom purposes instead of personal ones*. Next, He has to teach us to *respect, honor, give grace to, and faithfully co-labor/work together with others whom He has called*.

The Calling Forth of Covenantal Craftsmanship

We are not told when it happened or what it looked like, but at some point in the Sinai experience the Holy One chose two men - *Betzalel* and *Aholiav* – to visit in a very special way. He prepared them to oversee, inspire, and direct the building the Tabernacle by *filling them both with the Ruach Elohim* [i.e. the Creative breath of God through which the Heavens and the earth were brought into being³]. As a result of this infilling the Holy One promised that these two very ordinary men would be supernaturally enabled to flow in a continuous stream of *wisdom*, of *understanding*, of *knowledge*, and of *skill in all kinds of workmanship*. This was not just natural learning or skill that the Holy One harnessed, appropriated, and caused the men to employ for Kingdom purposes - this was all a product of *Divine impartation* and *supernatural empowerment*. Betzalel and Aholiav were no more skilled craftsmen before the infilling of the Ruach than you or I. It was not natural talent or training that qualified them to build on earth, out of earthly materials, a scale model of the Throne Room of Heaven. It was the *Ruach Elohim* with which the Holy One caused them to be filled. The key to the wisdom and skill of Betzalel and Aholiav was not them having studied under a good human teacher, or refined their artisanship through years of engagement. The wisdom and skill of these men came with and emanated from only one source - their willing and total surrender to the infilling of the *Ruach*.

The Holy One did not, however, stop the wisdom, understanding and skill download with Betzalel and Aholiav. He told Moshe “*in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may craft all that I have instructed/enjoined you to make.*” Exodus 31:6(b).

Our First Season of Extreme Bridal Passion and Extravagant Giving

When the people of the Holy One share a powerful, Divinely inspired vision of Heaven coming to earth in their day, in real time, truly *amazing things begin to happen* in their midst. First of all, *the people who catch the vision become exuberant, extravagant givers*. Compelled by love and gratitude, they redefine not only their *priorities* but also what they consider to be *necessities*. They gladly give away – *For the Bridegroom-King, and for the Kingdom of Heaven!* - things they have in previously seasons clutched tightly to their bosom. Consider the Redeemed Community at Sinai. Every Hebrew left Egypt as a slave. Not one of them had ever had a single

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³ See Genesis 1:2-3.

possession that Pharaoh – or any Egyptian, for that matter – could not take from them at will, without any consequence whatever. The day before the plague of the firstborn, however, at the Holy One’s instruction each man was told to go to the house of their Egyptian neighbors and ask of them *gold, silver, and fine fabrics and garments*. The Egyptians showered these things in great quantities upon each Hebrew who asked for them. Finally each Hebrew had something of value to call his own. This would, they almost certainly assumed, be their ‘nest egg’ or ‘grubstake’ – *i.e.* that with which they would establish themselves in agriculture or profession in the land to which they were going. The gold, silver and fabric/garments the Egyptians gave were not viewed as a luxury by anyone; they were viewed as a necessity. But then the Holy One appeared to them at Sinai. Then they experienced not only His majesty and His holiness but His *transformative forgiveness*, His *unwavering kindness*, and His *unshakeable Covenant love*. And they found out that, wonder of wonders, despite their sinfulness and immaturity the Creator of the Universe actually wanted *to come and dwell with them on earth, in the midst of them, in real time*. As each man stood at the entrance to his own tent and watched the Holy One’s Manifest Presence abide in Moshe’s tent, they began to hunger to have that happen in a way they could not only see from a distance, but participate in personally. Suddenly thinking about – much less holding onto - a ‘nest egg’ or a ‘grubstake’ seemed downright petty in comparison. Suddenly each man redefined ‘necessity’ in light of the revelation he had received of the greatness, goodness, faithfulness to Covenant, protection, provision, promises, and Presence of the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak, and of Ya’akov. What could be more valuable, or more important, to them, their wives, and their children, than building a resting place for the Holy One in their midst? What happens if and when and to the extent the people of the Holy One *simultaneously receive and walk in forgiveness and catch a Divinely imparted vision for coming of the Kingdom of Heaven to earth*? Torah tells us:

*Everyone came whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing,
and they brought the Holy One’s terumah
for the work of the tabernacle of meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments.
They came, both men and women, as many as had a willing heart.*

[Exodus 35:21-22(a)]

*Moshe called Betzalel and Aholiav,
and every gifted artisan in whose heart the Holy One had put wisdom,
everyone whose heart was stirred, to come and do the work.
And they received from Moshe all the Terumah that the children of Israel had brought
for the work of the service of making the sanctuary.
So they continued bringing to him nedavah [volunteered things] every morning.*

Then all the craftsmen who were doing all the work of the sanctuary came, each from the work he was doing, and they spoke to Moshe, saying, "The people bring much more than enough for the avodah of the melachah which the Holy One commanded us to asah.

[Exodus 36:2-6]

They gave more than enough? No actually, they gave *much more than enough* [in Hebrew, *mar'bin*]. Wow! They gave *much more than enough* for the greatest project the world had ever seen at the time? Recently redeemed slaves, who had been destitute all their lives, gave *much more than enough* – all for the joy of building of a beachhead from which the Kingdom of Heaven would launch a cross-generational, strategic invasion of planet earth? More than enough was given by people who, by all human reckoning, were going to need everything they possibly had to give and more to establish themselves in the land to which they were going? Yes, Dear Reader, a great miracle happened there. This was not a tax levied, or a gift commanded. This was exuberant, extravagant, and totally voluntary giving by people who suddenly shared a vision for Heaven coming to earth in their lives.

This was a far cry from ordinary human philanthropy. There was no wing of the Tabernacle to be named after anyone who gave large donations. There was no tax write off. There was no plaque commemorating the ‘generosity’ of the gift. There was no photo opportunity provided to help the donor publicize and get honored for the great gift he or she or they had made. All the givers were going to get was the joy of seeing Heaven touch earth – and raising their children in a camp where holiness was constantly being imparted from above.

Our First Season of Honorable, Trustworthy Stewardship

Not only did the people throughout the Camp move in supernatural, inspired giving, but those who were appointed by the Holy One to be custodians and stewards of the wealth donated by the people also moved in a supernatural gracing. They did not misuse or take advantage of the people’s Spirit-driven urge to give to the vision of Heaven coming to earth. They did not use manipulation, guilt trips, or appeal to vanity, to increase the people’s giving. They did not for even a second see any of the donated items and wealth as being ‘theirs’, or ‘for them’. They did not appropriate a single donated thing to any personal use. They did not build themselves fancy tents with the donations, or buy themselves better camels or donkeys with the gold and silver. They did not even make themselves fancy suits. They did not vote themselves a salary, a bonus, or an expense account. They did not start a retirement fund. And when they had received what was clearly enough to

complete the project they had been commissioned to build, they actually told the people to please, *stop giving*. Wow! Now that is a miracle! And then there is the little issue of everyone in the camp actually laying aside all conflicting personal agendas, all differences of opinion, all complaints, all suspicions, all accusations, and all offenses, and working side by side, for months, in a spirit of cooperation. This was indeed a season of miracles! When people are amazed by the forgiveness and covenant faithfulness of the Bridegroom-King, and share a vision for Him coming to earth in their lives, in real time, miracles like that happen all the time. If, therefore, your community sees more complaint, accusation, offense, reluctance to give, misuse of funds, and self-promotion than the kind of sweet giving, faithful stewardship, and respectful collaboration that we read about this week in Torah, consider whether the people in your community might have a significant problem in one or more of the following areas:

1. No fresh remembrance of the mercy and forgiveness of the Holy One our God;
2. No vision for the Holy One actually coming to/moving upon/performing wonders in your community in real time;
3. No willingness of heart to redefine necessities in light of the Greater Plan of Redemption of the Holy One; and/or
4. No persons in a leadership trust who are living in full surrender to the indwelling *Ruach Ha-Elohim*, and who are therefore trustworthy, unselfish, stewards of whatever the people give.

Matters of Sequence

Back when the Holy One gave Moshe the Divine blueprint of the place where Betrothal visitation through chaperones and according to protocol would take place, He began with the *aron ha-qodesh* – i.e. the holy ark. This was because the primary purpose of the *Mish'kan* was *interaction*, and the most intimate interaction was to take place through drops of blood sprinkled on the “mercy seat” atop the ark between the outstretched wings of the *keruvim*. The Holy One’s focus was thus shown to be communion, conversation, and intimate fellowship with His Bride-to-be. When Moshe, Betzalel, and Aholiav began the construction however they did not begin with the Ark (the innermost, central feature of the *Mish'kan*), but with *the outermost walls* – that which was *farthest away from the ark and the interaction/communion/intimacy it promised*. Why did the *construction efforts* not follow the sequence of revelation? Because we - the Betrothed Bride-to-be were simply not yet ready for intimacy with the Divine Bridegroom. As you will remember, even as the Holy One was speaking the *Aseret HaDibrot* [Ten Words of Prophetic Declaration] in the hearing of the entire

Redeemed Community, we shrank back, and asked for chaperoned, mediated interaction. The mere sound of the Bridegroom-King's Voice overwhelmed us. We could not deal with *al p'nei* [Face to face] intimacy. Like the maiden in Shlomo's Song of Songs, when the Divine Suitor called for His Beloved to "*arise, and come with Me!*" [Song 2:10], we shyly replied "*Turn, my lover, be like a gazelle or like a young stag on the rugged hills.*" Song 2:17. Like an immature Bride-to-be wanted to put our Bridegroom under what our minds considered to be safe *boundaries*. And that is why when the construction began, the inspired artisans constructed the exterior curtains and their framework – i.e. the 'safe' boundaries - first. Only after the boundaries were clearly established and understood could we seriously think about the inner chambers where our chaperones would take us to meet with the Bridegroom-King. Only after the protocol of the chaperones was established and understood could we think about actually meeting with Him, seeing His Face, and hearing His Beautiful but Overwhelming Voice with our own ears once again.

And so it is even today. The Holy One looks upon our relationship with Him *from the inside out*, focusing on the *internals*. We on the other hand have a hard time handling the internals, so we tend to *focus on the externals* instead. But this is changing, Dear Reader. As the Bridegroom brings us toward maturity, more and more people are beginning to seek Him who our heart loves in a real and radical way. In this regard, be assured that the *Song of Songs* is a *prophetic book*. Let the voice of the prophet call forth this passion from you:

*All night long on my bed I looked for the one my heart loves;
I will get up now and go about the city, through its streets and squares;
I will search for the one my heart loves*

*I found the one my heart loves. I held Him and would not let Him go
Till I had brought Him to my mother's house, to the room of the one who conceived me."*

[Song 3:1-4]

The Appointed Time for the Establishment of a Beachhead For the Invasion of the Earth By the Kingdom of Heaven Is Upon Us

Back in parsha *Terumah* the Holy One charged Moshe:

***According to all I teach you, make the tabernacle
and make all its furnishings following the plan that I am showing you.***

[Exodus 25:8-9]

Two full *parshot* and nine whole chapters later, the *Mish'kan* is still not built. So far the only things we as the Holy One's chosen people have succeeded in building to completion so far are a *golden calf* and an *altar for making idolatrous sacrifices*. We have broken Covenant with our Divine Bridegroom in the most grievous way possible. But all that is behind us now. We have, through the golden calf debacle, learned some stunning and wonderful things about the personality and nature of the Holy One our God – things which people who have not sinned grievously and been forgiven much could never comprehend or appreciate. We have learned that the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya'akov is first and foremost a *Compassionate and Loving* and *Covenant-Faithful* and *Sin-Cleansing* and *Life-Restoring* God. We have learned that although we were caught red-handed in the most despicable of sins, He nevertheless looks upon us with *compassion*, and with *love*, and with a depth of unshakeable *covenant-faithfulness* which we cannot even fathom, much less ever hope to reciprocate.

How have we have learned these amazing and wonderful things about the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak, and of Ya'akov? We have learned these things because *we have just experienced them firsthand*. We have learned these things because over the past two *parshot* we have learned what it feels like to be gloriously *forgiven, redeemed, and restored* by the Betrothed Bridegroom we so cavalierly abandoned and so horribly wronged. Oh the wonder of a Bridegroom's love. *Selah!* [Pause, and meditate quietly and reverently concerning that great revelation]. So, Moshe – the Friend of our Beloved Bridegroom – is ready to teach us what he has learned during his latest 40-day and night sojourn in the Glory Cloud of the Holy One's *ways*. He is ready to inspire our awestruck hearts with wonderful stories and stunning images of the things he saw and heard on the Mountain, that we might cry out as passionately as does he for a glimpse of the Holy One's *glory*. And now is the appointed time for a people who have been touched by that great love to begin to make our knowledge of the availability of forgiveness and restoration to Covenant REAL and TANGIBLE for all nations and generations to see.

Building the Mish'kan – Bringing Heaven's Courts to Earth In Real Time!

We now need to build something concrete on earth that demonstrates the amazing truth of how much He loves us – and what loving Him and being loved by Him looks like in *real time*. Moshe is ready. He cannot wait to explain in great detail the instructions which he has received from the Divine

Bridegroom of Heaven to build a structure at Sinai which will fulfill three kingdom purposes:

1. It will serve as the *earthly embassy of the Kingdom of Heaven*;
2. It will serve as the *parlor for carefully choreographed and chaperoned Betrothal Period Interactions* between the Divine Bridegroom and His Betrothed Bride-to-be in the early ‘get-to-know-you’ days; and
3. It will serve as a *stage on which the Divine Passion Play the Bridegroom has written for His Bride-to-be can be acted out*.

Before the readings for the day are over Moshe will describe both the order and the manner in which the various parts of the Tabernacle and its furnishings are to be constructed. Then hundreds of thousands of former slaves will put aside our personal agendas and petty differences, overcome our social phobias, work together, and with our bare hands begin to mold raw materials from the earth into a fitting dwelling place for the Creator of the Universe. Welcome to the ultimate *Tent-Makers Dream!*

The Terumah

Moshe’s instructions will begin with the directive: ***Kechu me'itchem Terumah l'Adonai*** – *i.e. collect from among [ourselves] a portion of goods dedicated to the Holy One*. Moshe will then list all the kinds of materials that will be needed to build the *Mish'kan*, its furnishings, and its utensils and garments of service, and sends us out to find them. Will the people respond? Oh yes Beloved, they will. Moshe is not going to have to do a second’s worth of selling, threatening, begging, or convincing to get us on board with this Dream. He will not have to manipulate anyone’s emotional heartstrings. He will not have to promise blessing-proportionate-with-gift *quid pro quo* [the religious equivalent of a pyramid scheme] in order to talk anyone into donating to the building fund. He will not even have to take the people on a guilt trip. After explaining the Heavenly vision he has just witnessed, Moshe will simply call for a *Terumah* – and the stampede will be The Heavenly vision of the *Mish'kan* is a dream that sells itself⁴. It does not need hype or hyperbole. ***Whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, a Terumah***. It is as simple as that.

Wherever Your Treasure Is, There Lies Your Heart

Of what was this particular *terumah* – *i.e. the lifting up, separating out* – to consist? There were six categories of components. First of all, this special

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⁴ Only *man-conceived, man-focused ministries* have to be sold with marketing campaigns, emotional manipulation, flattery, and guilt trips.

terumah was to consist of three separate kinds of precious metals – namely *gold, silver, and bronze*. Secondly it was to consist of seven very distinct kinds of fabric/upholstery - blue, purple, scarlet cloth, fine white linen, mats of woven goat hair, ram's skins dyed red, and something mysterious and hard to translate which Torah calls '*orot ha-tachashim*'. Thirdly, it was to consist of a very special kind of lumber called *shittim* – which, of course, happened to be the same kind of wood from which Noach had long ago built the ark. Fourthly, it was to consist of substances like olive oil, myrrh, cinnamon, cassia, and calamus for the anointing apothecation. Fifthly, it was to consist of spices like frankincense, stacte, onycha and galbanum for the fragrant incense. And sixthly it was to consist of a wide variety of precious and semi-precious stones for the breastplate of the High Priest.

Let The Greatest Treasure Hunt of All Time Begin!

Have you ever stopped to wonder where a bunch of recently freed slaves was supposed to find all these things – in great quantity, no less - on the floor of the Sinaitic desert? The gold, silver and materials/fabrics had of course been showered upon them by the Egyptians on the night the Holy One delivered them with a Strong Right Hand and an Outstretched Arm. But where in this desert were they supposed to obtain great quantities of *shittim wood*, the various precious kinds of *spices*, the *costly ingredients of incense*, the *dyes*, the *pure oil*, and the *precious stones*? A recently redeemed slave population could not pull these things out of some hat, withdraw them from some bank account, or pluck them in some old family heirloom treasure or hope chest. These things would not suddenly appear on Sinaitic thorn bushes. Before they could be lifted up and separated unto the Holy One real people had to leave the safety of the camp and exert real energies to determine where these things could be acquired in the quantities needed for the *Mish'kan* project.

The collection of these materials was a *monumental task*. Someone had to go out wherever in the world these very special things could be found and acquire them. They had to *barter* and *trade* with crafty Yish'maeli and Midyani merchants in caravans such as the one which had long ago carried Yosef to Egypt. They had to go out and *harvest* and *mill* and *mine*. It was *the greatest treasure hunt of all time*. And it was ***on!*** But the people had caught the Heavenly vision, so they absolutely *delighted in the effort*. They came alive with a sense of purpose and destiny. They caught a glimpse of the passion the sons of Korach would later proclaim with the words: ***“My soul longs, yes, even faints For the courts of the Holy One; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God ... For a day in Your courts [is] better than***

a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. Psalm 84:2, 10. Torah therefore describes the people's response to the call from Moshe:

Vayavo'u kol-ish asher nesa'o libo

And then came forth every man whose heart rose in him

V'chol asher nadvah rucho oto

And everyone whose spirit stirred with willingness

hevi'u et-t'rumat Adonai l'melechet Ohel Mo'ed

and brought the Holy One's Terumah for the work of the Tent of Meeting,

ul'chol-avodato ulevigdei ha-kodesh

for all its service and for its sanctified garments.

[Exodus 35:21]

The Holy One does not need your gold, your silver, your money or anything else you possess or have the ability to acquire. He has no lack of any of those things. But He does want you to catch His vision for the earth. He wants you to feel the same sense of exhilaration, higher purpose and destiny that the souls He redeemed from bondage in Egypt so long ago experienced as they lifted up their eyes and their energies to Heaven. What the Holy One wants, you see, is your *heart*. He wants you to start to experience Him as a Bridegroom with whom you cannot wait to share time and pleasure, not as a taskmaster whom you have to serve from a physical and emotional distance out of fear. Hence the Holy One's word to us is always: *Whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, a Terumah.*

A Very Special 4 1/2 Month Period

The interval in time which the rest of the book of Exodus will cover is the very special and uniquely blessed final 4 1/2 months[□] of the first year of the life of the people the Holy One redeemed from Egypt. This period extends from approximately the time we now celebrate *Chag Sukkot* [the Feast of Tabernacles], in the seventh month, up to and including *Rosh Chodesh* [i.e. the *new moon*] of the month of Nisan – our fledgling nation's first 'New Year's Day'.

□

□ Exodus 19:1 tells us that the people the Holy One redeemed from Egypt with an outstretched arm and a strong right hand arrived at Mount Sinai in the third month of the first year. Exodus 40:2, which we will read this week, informs us that the events with which our parsha conclude occurred "on the first day of the first month" of the second year. The interval between these two bookends is approximately nine months. At least twice, however, during the preceding sections of this 9-month period, Moshe spent 40 days alone with the Holy One on the mount, receiving the Torah. Add to these days the days when the people were preparing to receive the Torah, when they were ratifying it, and the interval(s) between Moshe's 40-day stays on the mountain.

Torah's narrative of this special season in time will be a thing of absolute beauty. Over the course of the 4 ½ months in question the people of the Redeemed Community will actually lay aside every hindrance and work together to build a scale model of the Heavenly *Mish'kan* the Holy One showed to Moshe on Mount Sinai. And they will build it *ka'asher tzivah Adonai et-Moshe* [i.e. exactly as the Holy One had instructed/enjoined Moshe]. Why will this period of time be so special and unique? Consider, Dear Reader, that during this 4 1/2 months not one of us will at any time in the entire *parsha* utter one syllable of murmuring or complaint. Consider that for this whole period none of us will get distracted for even one second by any enticement of the culture of the Egyptians, or of the Chaldeans, or of the *Kena'ani* [Canaanites]. Throughout these glorious days of *shalom* every single one of the people the Holy One has redeemed – whether a natural son of Israel or part of the mixed multitude from among the nations - will share a common vision, and will work together enthusiastically and harmoniously as ONE MAN. Not a single mouth among us will speak a single word of *l'shon ha ra* concerning anyone else in the camp or, for that matter, in the world. Not a single member of the nation will inflict – or even wish - harm upon anyone else. Consider that in the remainder of the narrative of *Sefer Sh'mot* ordinary people will through the Empowering Breath of the Holy One find themselves doing a ton of very extraordinary things. They will do these things with no thought whatsoever for their own glory, honor, or praise but only for the glory, honor and praise of the Holy One. This will in fact be a time of 'May your kingdom come, may your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'.

The Great Wave

The people who caught the Heavenly vision were absolutely exuberant - even extravagant - in their giving of the most precious substance of all – *gold*.

And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and ornaments, all jewels of gold: and every man waved the gold they brought unto the Holy One.

[Exodus 35:21-22]

Did you catch the last phrase? It says every man '*waved the gold they brought unto the Holy One.*' Can you picture that in your mind's eye? Can you visualize and sense the passion behind *the golden wave of the enraptured heart*? If you have ever spent years in bondage, and then set gloriously free in an instant, perhaps you can understand. If you have ever sinned so grievously that you deserve death, and have not only been graciously spared but also gloriously forgiven and restored, perhaps you can

understand. If you have ever been a prodigal, lost, alone, desperate, and at the end of your strength, your hope, and your reason to live, and been welcomed home, embraced, clothed in finery, adorned with jewels from the Family Treasury, and called ‘son’, perhaps you can understand. May we all know the exhilaration of the golden wave!

Breaking Alabaster Boxes of Time and Talent

For our ancestors the sense of exuberant giving did not by any means stop with a processional and a golden wave. For months the song of the redeemed became the Hebrew equivalent of ‘whistle while we work’. For Torah tells us:

*Every skilled woman put her hand to spinning,
and they [all] brought the spun yarn of sky-blue wool, dark red wool,
crimson wool and fine linen.
Highly skilled women volunteers also spun the goats' wool.
Every man and woman among the Israelites who felt an urge
to give something for all the work that the Holy One had called forth
for building at the hand of Moshe
and B'nei Yisrael gave willing unto the Holy One.*

But even as seven years of hard labor for the hand of Rachel seemed as only a few days to Ya’akov ‘because of his love for her’, so months and months of hard labor and painstaking detail seemed to our ancestors as a few hours of pleasurable Sabbath rest because of their love for the Divine Bridegroom. They were, you see, ‘willing’ workers engaged in nothing short of a labor of love.

Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh – And Beyond!

Men and women by the hundreds of thousands went out of Moshe’s presence empty handed, ran to their tents, and then rushed back excitedly bearing contributions toward the *Mish’kan*. Some appeared bearing *precious metals*. Others brought bundles of *acacia wood*. Some carried bundles of *special fabrics, dyed yarns* and/ or *gemstones*. Still others brought vials of *precious oil* and *spices*. Some almost certainly brought various combinations of the above.

These people had not been wealthy in Egypt. The only wealth they had ever known had been showered on them by the Egyptians the night of the Exodus. And yet they gave. Out of a heart moved with gratitude, they gave abundantly, extravagantly, and hilariously. The Torah says they gave all that was needed - and more - with a ‘*willing heart*’.

Introducing the Kingdom of the Willing Heart

The word translated as 'willing' in the passage describing those who participated in the *Terumah* called for by Moshe is *nadvah*. This is a modifier derived from the ancient Hebrew verb root *nadab*[□], meaning to *incite* or *to impel*. The modified form refers to something done, given, or forborne *willingly*. For a group of former slaves from whom everything including the lives of their male children had always been taken *forcefully*, this was a *major paradigm shift*. They had never had a single possession that Pharaoh could not claim for his own on a whim. They had, therefore, clutched every material thing that they could as close to their heart as possible. All their lives they had only done what they had been ordered to do and surrendered what they had no choice but to surrender. For such people, voluntarily relinquishing possession for the sake of Greater Kingdom represented the ultimate form - and indisputable evidence - of freedom.

The pictographs of the Hebrew letters which make up the word *nadvah* are as follows:

Nun – son/heir

Dalet – doorway/entrance

Veit - household/kingdom

Hey – revelation/inspiration

The image I see when I stare at the pictographic mural resulting from the combination of these letters is the image of Avraham in Genesis 18:1ff. There the freshly circumcised covenant heir/son is there seen sitting in the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day *looking for the One Who had called him out of Charan, and passionately longing to renew fellowship with Him*. Suddenly he sees the Divine entourage coming across the dunes toward his encampment. His *heart leaps within him* and he *rises, runs out to greet them, and proceeds to lavish hospitality upon them*. The Creator of the Universe was coming to his encampment – and he in no way intended to let His Glorious Retinue just pass him and his little Hebrew community by. He was *ecstatic* and *extravagant* in hospitality. He spread out an abundant table of food and refreshment. And he sought no reward for this other than the sheer joy of fellowshiping with Him Whom his soul had come to love. As Torah describes the event:

***... he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him;
and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them,
and bowed himself to the ground,
and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight,***

□

□ Nadab is *nun, dalet, veit*. Strong's Hebrew word #5068, it is pronounced *naw-dawv'*.

do not pass on by Your servant.
"Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet,
and rest yourselves under the tree.
"And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts.
After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant."
They said, "Do as you have said." So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said,
"Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead it and make cakes."
And Avraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf,
gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it.
So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared,
and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.
[Genesis 18:2-8]

Looking at the pictographic mural underlying the word *nadvah* also makes me think of the father of the world's most famous prodigal. I see this father figure standing at the entrance to the family home/household in eager expectation, holding a special ring, and a special robe, prepared for his returning son, and anxious to kill the fatted calf and hold a celebration. The concept is also found in Psalm 110 - a Messianic Psalm - as follows:

The Holy One said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand,
till I make Your enemies Your footstool."
The Holy One shall send the rod of Your strength out of Tziyon.
Rule in the midst of Your enemies!

Your people shall be nedavot [plural of nad'vah]
[usually translated as 'willing' or 'volunteers'] in the day of Your power;
In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,
You have the dew of Your youth.
The Holy One has sworn and will not relent,
"You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

Working in the Shadow of the Divine Craftsman

Back when the Divine Bridegroom was first instructing Moshe about the *Mish'kan* the Holy One let it be known that He had designated two men out of all of Israel to head up the *Mish'kan* construction project. The first man the Holy One mentioned to Moshe was *Betzalel*, grandson of *Chur* [Hur], of the tribe of Yehudah. **Exodus 31:2-3**. The second man, whom the Holy One had chosen to assist Betzalel, was *Aholiav*, son of *Ahisamech*, of the tribe of Dan. **Exodus 31:6(a)**.

At that time the Divine Bridegroom told Moshe that He had filled these two men with the *Ruach Elohim* [the Creative breath of God] for *wisdom*, for *understanding*, for *knowledge*, and for *all kinds of workmanship*. The Holy One had not stopped with these two men however. He told Moshe at the same time that *in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may craft all that I have instructed/enjoined you to make.* **Exodus**

31:6(b). Betzalel and Aholiav were not chosen *because they were skilled craftsmen*. They were skilled craftsmen *because they were chosen*. It was not natural talent or training that qualified them to build on earth, out of earthly materials, a scale model of the Throne Room of Heaven – it was the *Ruach Elohim* with which the Holy One caused them to be filled.

The names of these two men reveal some very interesting truths in this regard. First of all let us consider the name *Betzalel*. In Hebrew, this name is ‘spelled’ *beit, tzade, lamed, alef, lamed*[□]. The *beit* [‘b’ sound] at the beginning is a prefix, meaning ‘in’. The *alef – lamed* at the end, pronounced ‘El’, is, in this context, the equivalent of a prepositional end phrase, meaning ‘of God’. The secret to the meaning of the name is contained in the middle letters, *tzade-lamed*. These two letters form the Hebrew noun *tzal*[□], meaning *shadow*, or *shade*. The imagery is that found in the English word *overshadowing*. The Hebrew name *Betzalel* thus means ‘*in the shadow – or shade - or overshadowing Presence - of God*’. What better description of the *Mish’kan* could there be? The *Mish’kan* was to be the shadow, on earth, of the Heavenly reality wrought by the Holy One. His Presence – His Essence - He Who Was, Who Is, and Who Is To Come, *overshadowed* it at all times.

When the writer of Hebrews refers to the *Mish’kan*, its priesthood, and its ritual being the ‘shadow’ of the good thing to come, English readers tend to consider that a bad thing. But they misunderstand. The shadow of the Holy One is in itself a Divine manifestation, evidencing a wonderful overshadowing. Consider Psalm 91:1, where the psalmist says: *He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow [Hebrew, tzal] of the Almighty*. The building of the *Mish’kan* was to begin and was to end with *Betzalel* - the overshadowing Presence of the Holy One. And so it did.

The second man chosen by the Holy One for the oversight of the project was named *Aholiav*[□]. This is a compound phrase meaning *father’s tent*, or *father’s radiance*. Meditate on that one for a few moments, and perhaps you will begin to see the *Mish’kan* in a whole new light. And perhaps you will appreciate it more when you read in today’s aliyah the following account:

UBetzal'el ben-Uri ven-Chur l'mateh Y'hudah
Betzalel son of Uri son of Chur, of the tribe of Judah,

□

□ Betzalel is Strong’s Hebrew word #1212.

□ Tzal is Strong’s Hebrew word #6738.

□ Oholiav is *alef, hey, lamed, yod, alef, veit*. It is Strong’s Hebrew word #171.

asah et-kol-asher tzivah Adonai et-Moshe
made/crafted all that the Holy One had instructed/enjoined Moshe

V'ito Aholi'av ben-Achisamach l'mateh-Dan
With him was Oholiav son of Achisamakh, of the tribe of Dan,

charash v'choshev v'rokem
carpentering, brocading, and embroidering

b't'chelet uv'argaman uv'tola'at ha-shani uv'shesh
with sky-blue, dark red and crimson wool dyes, and with fine linen.

[Exodus 38:22-23]

The Camp of the Redeemed is finally abuzz with Divinely inspired and choreographed activity. Construction of the *Mish'kan* is underway. Citizens of Earth, get ready! Something wonderful beyond comprehension is about to happen. The Holy One is about to establish a beachhead and tactical command center on this planet. He has enlisted the collaboration of Moshe, Betzalel, Oholiav, and everyone in the Camp of the Redeemed who has a willing heart. He has empowered them with by filling them with His Own Spirit. He has given us a glorious blueprint. He has provided a detailed set of specifications. He is releasing wave after wave of wisdom, understanding, and skill as needed – and beyond. He has awakened the hearts of millions with a vision for Heaven invading Earth. Once this beachhead and command center is established, the great invasion will begin - and the earth and its population will never be the same.

What the Holy One had commissioned us to build as his tactical command center in this realm is none other than a scale model of the courts and chambers that He inhabits in Heaven. The blueprint He laid out for us in the *Mish'kan* Discourse are thus not just intended to rock the world of a couple of million redeemed slaves who lived 4000 years ago; the pattern He gave us at Sinai is intended to become part of every redeemed soul's DNA forever. Building it in our appointed time to walk upon the earth, and bequeathing it in pure, unadulterated form to the generation that follows us, is part of every redeemed son or daughter of the Covenant's life-mission. It is the great privilege – and obligation – of every one of us keep reproducing the items the Holy One included in His 'Kingdom-Come' pattern - in our respective lives, homes, neighborhoods, communities, and nations.

***At The Core of Your Being Is There An Aron Ha-Qodesh?
And if So, What is the Substance and Quality of its Contents?***

The first of the seven furnishings constructed by the people in real time was the *aron ha-kodesh* [i.e. the holy ark]. Torah starts off the 'Narrative of the Furnishings' by telling us: ***Vaya'as Betzalel et-ha-aron atzei shitim*** - i.e. and

Betzalel made the ark of acacia wood. First Betzalel had to select from all the timbers the people had brought the best pieces of shittim wood available. Only the best would be fitting for the container that would hold the precious tablets of testimony on which were inscribed the Holy One's words of life, health, and peace. Then Betzalel had to measure, mark, and cut each of the pieces of precious wood. Then he had to cut the mortises that would hold the pieces together. Finally he had to carefully conjoin all these pieces – not only to form the ark's four sides, but also to form the ark's bottom, or floor. It was on that bottom or floor that the holy tablets of testimony would actually rest.

Where did Betzalel do all this intricate work? It had to be a place with adequate lighting so he could see clearly enough to make the intricate cuttings and carvings. What tools did he use? There were no power tools. The tools he used would seem to us crude and primitive. He would have used a **rule**, or measuring line of some kind. He would have used a line – *i.e.* a marking tool or stylus [there were no pencils]. He would have used a plane – *i.e.* a scraping tool to shave off excess wood. He would have used a cutting tool – probably a series of flints fitted side by side into a wood frame at uneven intervals, resembling a modern saw [see Isaiah 10:15]. He would have used some kind of hammer, probably made of hewn stone. He would have used an awl, or boring instrument. He would have used a chisel, probably made of bronze. And for the gold overlay he would have used a heat source, a mold, an engraving tool and a polishing tool.

Close your eyes, Beloved. Can you see all this work being done? Can you imagine what was going on in Betzalel's mind as he contemplated what was going to be placed in this ark, and how important this piece of furniture was going to be to his people – and to the people of the Holy One - in all subsequent generations?

Mah Atah Ro'eh – What Do You See?

In Heaven there are precious scrolls written that record the plans, designs, and decrees of the Holy One our God. If His Kingdom is to come, and His Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven, there must be something here on earth that corresponds to the scrolls. What is the earthly reflection of the scrolls? It is the tablets of testimony. Now do you see why the ark is so important? Now do you see why the thought of it stirs our hearts? The ark was designed to function as the ultimate *treasure chest* of earth. Its assigned function was to house the most valuable and essential item in the world. What was/is the most valuable and essential item in the world? It was/is the

set of stone tablets upon which the Sinaitic revelation¹⁰ stream has been recorded for posterity. As Adam received the very breath and life force of the Holy One in the Garden, so the ark received the very Words of the Holy One at Sinai.

To the Redeemed of the Holy One, the most valuable thing in the world is never gold, silver, or bronze. It is never artwork, precious stones, jewels, or garments. It is never sheep, goats, or oxen, horses, cattle or camels. It is never carts or wagons, cars, planes or spaceships. It is never a weapons cache or a food supply. It is never a flag, a shrine, a religious symbol, or any thing made by human hands. It is not an idea, a concept, a philosophy, and ideology, a religion, a cause, or any other thing conceived by the human mind. It is never even our spouses or children – or for that matter our own lives. To the Redeemed of the Holy One the most important thing in the world is the Word our Creator has spoken over us. Some call us people of the Book, but that is really a misnomer. It is not really the Book that drives us. The Book could be taken from us. The Book could be confiscated and burned by the enemies of our Bridegroom-King. It has happened many times before. It will happen again. That has never stopped us, and it will never stop us. What cannot be taken from us, you see, are *the Words of the Book*. Those Words carry the life force and energy of the Holy One Himself. They are part of us. They are part of our DNA. They are to us a life force – whether or not they are written in a ‘Holy Book’. We are the *People of the Holy One’s D’varim Chayim – Words of Life*. The *Creator of the Universe spoke over us at Sinai*. The words He spoke there declare our new identity, describe our glorious mission, and establish our destiny to collectively become the Bride and co-regent of, and faithfully administrate the government of, the Bridegroom-King of Heaven. As the Psalmist said: ***Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Torah of Adonai.*** Psalm 119:1.

The tablets of testimony, containing the prophetic empowerments and life-instructions of the Creator Himself, are supposed to serve as the spiritual rudder and center of gravity of the camp of the Redeemed - whether they are housed in a physical box or not. As the Psalmist declared: ***Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.*** Psalm 119:11.

How did the actual construction process proceed under Betzalel? Torah does not tell us what went on in Betzalel’s mind as he did this important work. It just says: ***He covered it with a layer of pure gold on the inside, and he made a gold rim for it all around.*** Exodus 37:2.

□

¹⁰ Later in the Wilderness Journey, the ark would also serve as a repository for a jar of supernaturally preserved manna, and for the rod of Aharon.

Betzalel also had to patiently mold, fashion, and affix to the *aron* four gold rings. It was through these rings that the carrying poles, which Betzalel carved out of acacia wood, would be placed to ready the ark for transport. How important these rings – and this method of transporting the ark – would turn out to be! Wherever the Holy One leads us in our journeys, because of the ring and pole system the ark will continue to serve as our rudder, and the instructions for living the Holy One caused to be recorded for posterity on the tablets of testimony will continue to serve as both our community’s *power source* and our individual and collective *navigation system*.

Connecting With the Ark of the Covenant That Resides Within Us All

Remember that when the Holy One introduced the *Mish’kan* Discourse He began with a declaration of His ultimate purpose. He said to Moshe: ***And have them craft/build*** [Hebrew, *asah*] ***Me a sanctuary, that I may abide*** [Hebrew, *shakan*] ***in them*** [Hebrew, *b’tochem*].” The ultimate goal of the Holy One was not that He who made the Heavens and the Earth would dwell in a physical structure made with human hands – but that He would abide in us, His chosen people. His Grand Plan for the Redemption of mankind and Creation involved Him putting on the flesh of the very species through which the Fall had come – and inspiring, empowering, and leading a willing remnant of that species to reconnect with the identity, the mission, and the glorious destiny for which He designed mankind, fashioned him out of clay, and breathed His own *breath* and *life-force* into him¹¹.

Shaul of Tarsus wrote: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?” I Corinthians 3:16. He also wrote: ***You are the temple of the living God. As God has said: I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, And they will be My people.*** II Corinthians 6:16. If this is true, and you are truly the temple of God, you must have a rich repository like the ark within you. In the deepest, most secret places of your soul – the places where desires are formed, delights are embraced, emotions are considered and released, decisions are made, plans are formed, responses and reactions to temptations, challenges, irritations,

□

¹¹ The Holy One stated His purpose for the creation of man in Genesis 1:26, as follows: ***Let Us make man in Our tzel*** [i.e. to be our earthly shadow], ***according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.*** The Holy One then breathed His own breath and life-force into man. As Genesis 2:7 puts it: ***And YHVH Elohim formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils nish’mat chayim*** [i.e. the pant of life]; ***and man began to function as a nefesh chayim*** [i.e. a living soul, consisting of mind, will, and emotions].

provocations, insults, and accusations are generated, each human being in covenant with the Holy One should have a beautiful and finely-crafted *treasure chest* – constantly being filled with the Living Words of the Holy One. Is what is housed in that repository in your soul pure truth from the very mouth and heart of the Holy One, Dear Reader? Or has it become mixed with and polluted by the doctrines, philosophies, ideologies, and programs movements, religions, denominations, sects, offenses, and crusades of fallen men?

Watching As Atonement Assumes A Physical Form Before Our Eyes

If watching the building the ark of the Covenant stirred our ancestors' hearts, what must the task of forming and shaping and constructing the beautiful witness of eternal atonement – often called the 'mercy seat' - have been like? We are told that Betzalel ***made the cover*** [Hebrew *kaporet*] ***of pure gold; two and a half cubits was its length and a cubit and a half its width. He made two cherubim of beaten gold; he made them of one piece at the two ends of the kaporet.*** Exodus 36:6-7. In case you haven't noticed, or thought about it, ***that is a lot of gold!*** Two and a half cubits [i.e. the length] is about 45 inches. That means about 3.75 feet long. One and a half cubits [i.e. the width] is about 27 inches. That is 2 ¼ feet long. So this required a slab of gold a minimum of almost 8 ½ square feet in area – not factoring in either the *thickness of the cover itself* or the *gold used to form the two spread-winged cherubim that faced each other upon the beautiful kaporet.*

This molded piece of gold in the shape of facing *cherubim*, where the blood of atonement would be sprinkled year after year, represented the highest hope of the Covenant, the meeting of the greatest need of all mankind. What is that need? The need for Divine mercy, Divine forgiveness, Divine covering, Divine atonement, and Divine purification. The *kaporet* is the piece de resistance of the entire 'on earth as it is in Heaven' vision. Think about it. In Genesis 3:24, what are we told was set in place by the Holy One at the entrance to the Garden of Eden to guard the 'way to the tree of life'? Torah tells us the Holy One ***placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.*** The *cherubim* on the *kaporet* testify that *there is a way to return to the Garden of Eden and the tree of life.* They testify as well – if we are listening - that atonement has been made for the sin of mankind, and the pathway back to the Garden, the Tree of Life, and intimate, unencumbered, Garden-like communion with the Holy One, is set out in the tablets of Testimony that reside in the ark.

Questions For Today's Study

1. In today's aliyah of Torah Moshe presented to the *k'hal* [called assembly] a call for the community to offer up the materials from which the *Mish'kan* [tabernacle] was to be constructed.

[A] How did the people respond?

[B] What did Moshe tell the people in Exodus 36:6?

2. On a piece of paper make two columns.

[A] On the left side, list the various parts of the Tabernacle and furnishings in the order they were given by the Holy One [Shemot 25-30].

[B] On the right side, list the various parts of the Tabernacle and furnishings in the order they were constructed.

[C] Why do you think the order of construction was different than the order of divine revelation and instruction?

[D] Why do you think the author of the Torah went to such trouble to repeat all the details of the Tabernacle's furnishings and components in this parsha?

3. We tend to think of a "tabernacle" or tent as a lightweight structure easily carried from place to place. This "tabernacle", however, contained quite a bit of rather heavy metal.

[A] What were the only three metals used in the construction of the Tabernacle?

[B] Look up each of these three metals in as many books on symbolism and dream interpretation as you can find, and write a brief summary of what each of the three metals symbolizes.

4. The *Mish'kan* [tabernacle] also contained the skins and dye of what had been living creatures as well as the product of living plants [cloth, yarns, and dye].

[A] What colors of cloth and skins were used in the construction of the *Mish'kan*?

[B] Using the same sources as you used in answering question no. 3, write a brief summary of what you think each of these colors might symbolize.

5. In the Haftarah verses for today Hiram of Tyre is doing at the Temple of Shlomo the same thing Betzalel and Aholiav were anointed to do with

regard to the *Mish'kan* – except that much of what Hiram [the master of Phoenician architecture] builds is *not part of the blueprint given to Moshe on Har Sineh*, but is Phoenician-style decoration.

[A] List the items Hiram crafted/constructed in the order the writer of I Kings indicates he made them;

[B] What things were included in the Temple that weren't in the Tabernacle?

[C] What were the *Jachin* and *Boaz*? [The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols and Smith's Bible Dictionary are likely sources for this information].

[D] Did the Holy One command the addition of these things?

[E] Why do you think Shlomo allowed Hiram to incorporate these Phoenician symbols into the Temple of the Holy One?

6. The Apostolic Scripture reading I have for today is taken from Shaul's instructions to the Believing Community at Ephesus, which consisted of both Jews and Gentiles. The instructions Shaul gives the Ephesians also have to do with the "building" theme of this week's Torah and Haftarah. This passage contains the so-called "five-fold ministry" language, which so many have interpreted as the institution of a "new" model of government for the Body of Messiah. Shaul is not, however, instituting a new model of government – but calling for *humility* and *unity* and *recognition that each individual in the believing community is a unique creation* of the Holy One. Read along, and see what I mean:

*I therefore, the prisoner in the Holy One,
beg you to walk worthily of the k'riah [calling] with which you were called,
with all lowliness and humility,
with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love;
being eager to sh'mar [guard, watch over, treasure, cherish, and keep safe]
the echad [unity] of the Spirit in the bond of shalom.*

*He gave some to be sh'lachim [apostles]; and some, nevi'im [prophets];
and some, used in Kiruv efforts [heralds];
and some, ro'im [shepherds] and morim [teachers];
for the perfecting of the k'doshim [holy ones], to the work of serving,
to the building up of the guf [body] of Messiah
until we all attain to the unity of the emunah [faithfulness],
and of the yada [intimate knowledge] of the Son of God,
to a full-grown man, to the measure of the stature
of the fullness of Messiah; that we may no longer be children,
tossed back and forth and carried about with every wind of doctrine,
by the trickery of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error;
but speaking truth in ahavah [love],
we may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, Messiah;
from whom all the body, being fitted and knit together*

*through that which every joint supplies,
according to the working in measure of each individual part, makes the body increase
to the building up of itself in **ahavah** [love].*

[Ephesians 4:1-3, 11-16]

[A] Shaul starts out by “begging” the believers in Ephesus to do something. What is it Shaul begs the Ephesian believers to do?

[B] What do you think Shaul is referring to in using the expression which translates into English as ‘*the calling with which you were called*’? [i.e. what “calling” is he talking about? Hint: Think *Hebraically* – and put this “calling” into the context of Torah]

[C] For what *purpose* does Shaul say the Holy One “gave” apostles, prophets, etc.?

[D] What do you think an “apostle” was, in Shaul’s Hebraic thought-processes? Which main character of Torah (or TaNaKh) do you see as the prototypical “apostle”?

[E] What do you think a “prophet” was, in Shaul’s Hebraic thought-processes? Which main character of Torah (or TaNaKh) do you see as the prototypical “prophet”?

[F] What do you think an “evangelist” [most literally translated, “herald”] was, in Shaul’s Hebraic thought-processes? Which main character of Torah (or TaNaKh) do you see as the prototypical “herald”?

[G] What do you think a “shepherd” was, in Shaul’s Hebraic thought-processes? Which main character of Torah (or TaNaKh) do you see as the prototypical “shepherd”?

[H] What do you think a “teacher” was, in Shaul’s Hebraic thought-processes? Which main character of Torah (or TaNaKh) do you see as the prototypical “teacher”?

[I] What did Shaul indicate would be the fruit of growing up into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Messiah?

*So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity;
for God loves a cheerful giver.*

The Rabbi’s son

Meditation for Today's Study

Haggai 1:1-8

Now therefore this is what the Holy One of Hosts says:

Consider your ways. You have sown much, and bring in little.

You eat, but you don't have enough.

You drink, but you aren't filled with drink.

You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm,

and he who earns wages earns wages to put them into a bag with holes in it.

This is what the Holy One of Hosts says ***Consider your ways.***

Go up to the mountain; bring wood, and build the house.

I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified,

says the Holy One.