

(Dvar Torah continued from the front page...)

Those who participated must have been bursting with pride every time they saw the *Mishkan*:

“It took me the better part of a day to get the beams on that corner right, but it was worth it. Look at how straight and even those edges are!”

“Everyone knows that you do the best job spinning goats’ hair. We would be honored if you would be in charge of spinning all the goats’ hair for us.”

How valued these former slaves must have felt when the work of their own hands became so valuable that Moshe, the great leader, allowed it to be used in the *Mishkan*! They certainly deserved it.

However, as in any group of people, there must have been a few who wanted to contribute but who were not allowed to do so. There must have been capable people whose best work simply did not meet the standard of “skilled enough”:

“We absolutely cannot let that shoddy weaving be a part of our holy *Mishkan* – it just wouldn’t be right. Do you think we can pretend to lose what she’s already woven?”

“You’d like to help build? Oh...well...we already have enough builders here...but why don’t you go out and tend the goats?”

How would you have felt if you had no place in the construction of the Tabernacle? Would it feel like yours? Would you feel like you had a place in the camp around it, or in the nation that cherished it, or among the neighbors who had fashioned it but not allowed you to do the same?

Before becoming a rabbi, I *was* that person. I have been kept from the *bimah* because my singing voice wasn’t up to the community standard. I have been kept out of promotional photos because of my looks. I have been turned away because I did not wear expensive enough clothing on Shabbat. Turning someone away unravels the fabric of the Jewish community, leaving a more perfect but narrower cloth in its place.

As people who recommit ourselves to Torah daily, who wrap ourselves in the fabric of God’s commands, who bind the tradition to ourselves physically and spiritually, we must ensure that our communities have a place of honor, dignity, and respect for everyone. Everyone whose spirit moves him/her brings something to our synagogues and *minyanim*, and we must find a place of *kavod* for each of those offerings.



**Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center**  
Conservative Yeshiva

## TORAH SPARKS

### *Parashat Vayakhel & Pekudei*

#### Shabbat Mevarekhim Hahodesh

March 21, 2020 | 25 Adar 5780

Annual | Exodus 35:1-40:38 (Etz Hayim p. 552-572; Hertz p. 373-391)

Triennial | Exodus 35:1-37:16 (Etz Hayim p. 552-560; Hertz p. 373-379)

Maftir | Exodus 12:1-20 (Etz Hayim p. 380-385; Hertz p. 253-257)

Haftarah | Ezekiel 45:16-46:18 (Etz Hayim p. 1290-1294; Hertz p. 1001-1004)

### D’var Torah: All Whose Hearts Moved Them

**Rabbi Abby Jacobson**, Conservative Yeshiva Alumna & Rabbi at Emanuel Synagogue in Oklahoma City, OK

The second half of the book of Shemot deals with the *Mishkan*, its ritual items, and the ritual clothing for the *Kohanim*. In the double portion of *Parashat Vayakhel-Pekudei*, as in the previous few Torah portions, God clearly expects every person with handicrafting talent to do what they can to make the *Mishkan*:

“And everyone who excelled in ability and everyone whose spirit moved him came, bringing to Adonai his offering for the work of the Tent of Meeting and for all its service and for the sacrificial vestments. . . .And all the skilled women spun with their own hands, and brought what they had spun, in blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and in fine linen. And all the women who excelled in that skill spun the goats’ hair. And the chieftains brought lapis lazuli and other stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece; and spices and oil for lighting, for the anointing oil, and for the aromatic incense. Thus the Israelites, all the men and women whose hearts moved them to bring anything for the work that Adonai, through Moshe, had commanded to be done, brought it as a freewill offering to Adonai.” (Exodus 35:21, 25-29)

**Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center**

Agron Street 8 • P. O. Box 7456 • Jerusalem, Israel 94265  
Tel: 972-2-625-6386 • israel@uscj.org • uscj.org • conservativeyeshiva.org

(Dvar Torah continued on the back page...)

## D'var Haftarah: Power & Pitfalls

*Rabbi Mordechai Silverstein, Conservative Yeshiva Faculty*

The Jewish tradition has always been aware of the double-edged sword of leadership. It is necessary, because society needs someone to take the lead in channeling both its needs and its purpose. But it is problematic, because power has enormous potential to corrupt those who possess it.

In the later part of the book of Ezekiel, the prophet outlines his prophecy of the reorganization of society when the nation would be reestablished after the exile. The first two verses of this special haftarah for Shabbat Hahodesh form the end of a message regarding how the Nasi or head of the nation will finance himself. Ezekiel warns again the Nasi using his power to usurp the property of citizens, demanding just behavior and business practices. (45:9-15) The nation will be financed through proper and equitable taxation from which the Nasi will be responsible for maintaining the proper sacrificial order from the funds collected. The funds were to be collected properly and distributed properly: "All the people of the land shall be with the prince of Israel for this donation. And upon the prince (Nasi) shall be the burnt offerings and the grain offerings and the libations of the festivals and on the New Moons and the Sabbaths..." (45:16-17)

Rabbi Don Yitzhak Abrabanel, who along with being a great sage was also deeply involved in the governance of both Spain and Portugal before the Jews were expelled from these countries at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, understood the machinations of government very well. This is how he accounts for these regulations: "The Holy One Blessed be He legislated for the future that Israel give [taxes] to the Nasi from their harvests each year in order to finance him along with his holdings, so that he should not steal from the people... and so he said: 'You (princes) shall no longer wrong My people'. (45:8) This is why God said to the princes, who are the kings of Israel: 'Enough, O princes of Israel' (45:9), since for a long time before the destruction of the [First] Temple, the kings financed themselves through violence and theft. [Now God demands]: Remove these practices and practice justice." (Commentary on verse 45:9)

In light of these known virtues and pitfalls of monarchy, Ezekiel's prophecy teaches us that the only potential corrective is for political leadership to be well regulated, lest it fall prey to corruption and abuse of power. It is worth noting that this is not only a secular concern, it is a religious one as well.

*At the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem, we offer students of all backgrounds an opportunity to engage with Jewish texts in a dynamic, inclusive, and collaborative environment. We help students gain the skills necessary for Jewish learning and spiritual growth as individuals and in their communities in North America, Israel, and around the world.*

## Parashah Study: Is Wisdom All in The Head

*Vered Hollander-Goldfarb, Conservative Yeshiva Faculty*

### Text: Shmot 35:30-35

(30) And Moshe said to the Israelites, "see, the LORD has called by name Betzalel son of Uri...(31) And He has filled him with a spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge and in every craft, (32) to device plans, to work in gold and in silver and in copper, (33) and in stone cutting for settings and in wood carving to do every craft of devising, (34) and He has given in his heart to instruct – he and Oholiav son of Ahisamach... (35) He has filled them with heart's wisdom to do every task...

- What are the qualifications for the position of 'chief craftsperson of the Mishkan'? What would you have looked for in a person to fill this position? Why?
- How do you understand the 'spirit of God' with which Betzalel was filled?
- What is 'heart's wisdom'? How would you define 'wisdom' based on this passage?

### Commentary: Ibn Ezra Shmot 35:31-35

(31) And He filled him – Here the LORD testified that he is full of wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge; and in addition - that he is wise in every craft. (32-33) And to device in his heart plans the like of which had not been seen; for there are craftsmen of gold but not silver, stone cutters but [who are] not wood [workers]; but he was perfect in all of them. (34-35) And more: To instruct – for there are many wise people who have difficulty teaching others. And Oholiav is his partner in all crafts, also instructing him in wisdom...

- Ibn Ezra parses the abilities of the people that were chosen to lead the process of creating the Mishkan (Tabernacle). How were Betzalel and Oholiav different from other craftspersons? Why would this be significant in their role as the leaders of the project?
- While some specialists are outstanding in their talents, Ibn Ezra recognizes that they lack the ability to teach. Think of a person who was able to teach you something. What made that person a good teacher? What did the person do that made it possible for you to learn? What made you confident that you had learnt this thing well?

## 2020 Conservative Yeshiva Summer Program

Session 1: June 21 to July 8 | Session 2: July 13 to 29

- Hebrew Ulpan, Stimulating Torah Study, and/or Meaningful Volunteering
  - Appropriate for all ages and backgrounds

**Discounts for synagogue professional and current college undergraduates.**

Visit [conservativeyeshiva.org/summer](https://conservativeyeshiva.org/summer) for more information.

We welcome your comments: [torahsparks@uscj.org](mailto:torahsparks@uscj.org)

© 2020, Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center | Conservative Yeshiva