



Vayakhel-Pekudei

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

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The Rich Get Richer and the Wise Get Wiser

Parshas [Vayakhel](#)

By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

The following thought on Parshas Vayakhel is from the sefer Nachalas Eliezer, written by Rav Eliezer Cohen, who was a mashgiach in the Gateshead Yeshiva in England.

The *pasuk* says, “And He filled him with the spirit of *Elokim*, with wisdom, with understanding, and with knowledge and with every craft.” (Shemos 35:31) The Medrash, according to the interpretation of the *Etz Yosef*, takes note of the verb *va’yMALEH*, which means “and he filled him up.” Filling something up implies that there is already something there prior to filling it up to full capacity. So, if the *pasuk* says that *Hashem* filled up Bezalel with wisdom, it means that Bezalel was already wise.

Hashem gives wisdom to people who are already *chachomim* (wise people). This is reminiscent of a *pasuk* in Parshas Ki Sisa: “And in the heart of everyone wise of heart, I gave wisdom” (Shemos 31:6). Superficially we might ask, if a person is already a *chacham-lev* (wise of heart), why does he need to be given wisdom? The answer is that *Hashem* only gives wisdom to people who are already *chachomim*.

The Medrash comments that a certain Roman matron asked Rav Yosi ben Chalafta about the interpretation of a certain *pasuk* in Doniel (2:21): “...He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who know how to reason.” The matron protested: What is this business of G-d giving wisdom to the wise? It should say that He gives wisdom to the fools! They are the ones who really need wisdom!

Rav Yosi ben Chalafta answered her: My daughter, if you came across two individuals who wished to borrow money from you – a rich man and a poor man – to whom would you rather lend the money? She responded, “Obviously, I would lend my money to the person who already has money, so that if he loses the money I lent him, he still has other money with which to pay me back. If I lend money to a poor man and he loses it, from where will he have money to pay me back?”

Rav Yosi bar Chalafta told the matron, "Let your ears listen to that which your mouth has spoken! So too it is with wisdom.

If G-d would give wisdom to the fools, they would waste it in the taverns and pool houses (i.e. indulging in foolish pleasures). Therefore, He gives wisdom to the wise, who take it and sit in the synagogues and houses of study and occupy themselves with His commandments."

However, we can ask a big question on this Medrash. Isn't the Medrash comparing apples to oranges? It is true that someone would rather LEND money to a wealthy person than to a poor person. But if someone is GIVING AWAY money, then clearly, it is preferable to give the money to a poor person, who does not possess any money, rather than to a rich person, who already possesses plenty of money. Lending money is a business deal, so you prefer to give it to a person who can pay it back. But that is not what the *pasuk* in Doniel is discussing. The *pasuk* is talking about GIVING wisdom to the wise. If we are talking about GIVING wisdom, *Hashem* should in fact GIVE it to the one who has no wisdom. What then is the parable of the Midrash?

The Nachalas Eliezer explains that we are missing the point here. When *Hashem* "Gives wisdom to the wise," it is also not really a GIFT, but rather it is a LOAN. A person with true wisdom understands that the wisdom he possesses is not really his wisdom, but rather, it is on loan. ("Talent on loan from G-d", so to speak.) When a person recognizes that the talent he has been given is "only on loan," he realizes that he needs to guard it and do the right things with it. "It's not mine. It is on lease."

When someone is driving a leased car, he knows that he cannot bang it up. He is going to need to pay for the damage. He needs to return it someday. That is what the Medrash is saying.

When *Hashem* gives us wisdom, money or anything – He is not

GIVING! He is only LENDING. When you lend something precious, you lend it to a person whom you know will not abuse it or misuse it.

Therefore, *chachomim* are the appropriate recipients of wisdom. They realize that wisdom is a loan, which will someday be returned, and that they must use it appropriately while it is in their possession. Fools would think that the wisdom they were given is “theirs,” to do with whatever they wish. They would feel that they own it, and therefore they would abuse it.

You Don't Necessarily Get What You Pay For

Parshas [Pekudei](#)

The *pasuk* in Parshas Pekudei says, “All the gold that was used for the work – for all the holy work – the offered-up gold was twenty-nine talents and seven hundred thirty shekels, in the sacred shekel.” (Shemos 38:24). Parshas Pekudei provides an accounting of all that was donated and all that was used in the construction of the *Mishkan*. The Torah documents exactly how much gold was used in this holy work.

The Seforno on this *pasuk* notes that the Torah specifies the exact value of the gold and other precious materials that were used to construct the *Mishkan* because the amounts were relatively small compared to the gold and other precious materials that were used to construct the first *Beis HaMikdash*.

The *Mishkan*, in comparison with the *Beis HaMikdash*, was the equivalent of a motor home compared to a mansion. The Seforno adds that certainly, compared to the rebuilt Second *Beis HaMikdash* redone by Herod, the *Mishkan* was miniscule.

Nevertheless, as basic and as Spartan as the *Mishkan* was, the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) was evermore present in Moshe Rabbeinu's *Mishkan* than in Shlomo Hamelech's *Beis HaMikdash*, and certainly more so than in the "Temple of Herod," which lacked the *Shechina's* presence to a very large extent. So here we have this very basic temporary dwelling called the *Mishkan* that was built on a shoestring budget relative to the *Batei Mikdash*, and yet there was a constant *hashra'as haShechina* (Divine Presence dwelling among us). Even the *Beis HaMikdash* built by Shlomo HaMelech, with all of its cedars and gold and silver – literally one of the man-made wonders of the ancient world – lacked the level of spiritual dimension that the *Mishkan* possessed.

The Seforno draws a fundamental moral lesson from this: It is not wealth and luxury that cause *hashra'as haShechina*.

The *Shechina* cannot be bought by money. The most fancy and elaborate building does not cause *hashra'as haShechina*, but rather "Hashem desires those who fear Him." Hashem will place His *Shechina* among those who dedicate themselves selflessly to His Service.

This idea is brought home by two *pesukim* in Yeshaya (66:1-2) "Thus said Hashem: The Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool; what house could you build for Me, and what place could be My resting place? My hand created all these things, and thus all these things came into being – the word of Hashem – but it is to this that I look: to the poor and broken-spirited person who is zealous regarding My word." *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* does not care about the thickness of the padding of the theater seats in a *shul*. Hard wooden benches are fine for Him. He does not care about the benches. He cares about the people sitting on those benches.

If the people sitting there are humble of spirit and tremble over His Word, then His *Shechina* will reside in such a *shul*.

A famous Gemara teaches (Nedarim 81a) "Take heed regarding the children of the poor for from them Torah will emerge for Israel."

Poor children will be the future Torah leaders of Israel. The Maharal explains that just as when the Almighty is going to put His *Shechina* in a building, He does not look at the trappings, but rather, he looks at the inner quality, so too the children of poor people are generally humble. They come from poor backgrounds and they are not haughty and overly proud about things. That is where the Torah resides.

Rav Aharon Soloveitchik zt"l used to say the following story: The progenitor of the famous "Brisker Dynasty" was named Rav Moshe Soloveitchik. His son, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, was the Beis HaLevi, the Rav in Brisk who had a son named Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, who needs no introduction and whose pedagogic and biologic descendants are a major force throughout the Yeshiva world across multiple continents to this very day. This major Torah dynasty all descended from Rav Moshe Soloveitchik, father of the Beis HaLevi.

Rav Moshe Soloveitchik was a businessman. He was in the lumber business and he was very successful. His fortune turned and he lost all of his money. It was such a shocking thing that this wealthy patron of so many charitable causes lost all his money. It had such an impact on the community, that the *Beis Din* of his town convened to try to figure out what he was doing wrong to cause him to lose his money.

The Beis Din did a thorough investigation and they could not find anything wrong in Moshe Soloveitchik's religious behavior. The only thing they could find was that he gave more charity than a person is supposed to give. The Talmud legislates (Kesuvos 50a)

that a person should not give out more than 20% of his income to charity. They found that Moshe Soloveitchik exceeded this limit. That is the only thing he did wrong.

When this finding was presented to Rav Chaim Volozhiner, he rejected that reason. He insisted that it cannot be that he lost his money because he gave too much *tzedaka*. Such a thing does not happen, he claimed.

What did Moshe Soloveitchik do when he lost all his money? He learned in the Beis HaMedrash and became an *adam gadol*. Obviously, he was a bright man. And from him came the Beis HaLevi and Rav Chaim Brisker and the Brisker Rav and the entire Soloveitchik dynasty.

In hindsight, Rav Chaim Volozhiner said that he understood why Moshe Soloveitchik lost his money. He lost his money so that his children would fall into the category of “the children of the poor” and therefore the Torah would emerge from the great Soloveitchik dynasty.

I saw in a sefer that Rav Meir Shapiro, the innovator of the Daf haYomi, once gave another explanation to the Talmudic advice “Take heed of the children of the poor, for from them the Torah will emerge in Israel.” He explained that the children of the poor see how their parents struggle to pay tuition. The sacrifice the parents make to afford “*schar limud*” inspires the children and gives them an appreciation for the sacrifice their parents make to allow them to learn. That motivates them to become *talmidei chachomim*.

עֵזְרָא בֶּזְאֵל בֶּן־אוּרִי בֶּן־חֹרִי מִבְּנֵי יְהוּדָה וְהַשֵּׁם יָמַלְאֵהוּ אֶת־רוּחוֹ וְיָדָעַתּוּ אֵת־כָּל־מְלָכָה וְיָדָעַתּוּ אֵת־כָּל־מְלָכָה

Written by Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

And Moshe said to the Children of Israel, “See, Hashem has called by name Betzalel, son of Uri, son of Chor, from the Tribe of Yehudah. He imbued him with a Godly spirit, wisdom, understanding, knowledge — and in every craft.” (35:31-32)

The Torah testifies that Hashem granted Betzalel a “Godly spirit, wisdom, understanding, knowledge —and in every craft.”^[1] Yet the Torah then says that Betzalel “thought thoughts,” which implies, writes Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapira, that Betzalel still needed to use his own mind to create the Mishkan. If Hashem filled him with all the knowledge and skills that were needed, what did Betzalel need to think about?

Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapira answered that even with all the knowledge in the world, Betzalel still needed to use his own creativity in applying those talents in the most effective way.^[2] Essentially, therefore, it was Betzalel’s creativity which contributed towards the building of the Mishkan — the place where Hashem would be most manifest in the world.^[3]

So too, each of *us* have been granted incredible and unique talents and tools to make Hashem’s presence more manifest in the world. Yet, it is still up to us to reveal those skills and work out *how* to apply them. Perhaps the Torah is teaching us in this verse that the way to do this is to “think thoughts” — contemplate how we can use our abilities and creativity to bring Godliness to the world. In fact, Rav Chaim Shmuelevits would often repeat this message when he spoke before Neila on Yom Kippur, that anyone who has not lost at least one night’s sleep over Hashem’s lack of presence in the world and what *he* can do about it has no place standing before Hashem on this Holy day.

[1] Shemos 35:31.

[2] Sefer HaZichron, Rav Chaim Shmuelevits (Moriah), p. 155.

[3] Shemos 25:8.

אֵיךְ לִבְרֹא? לְבַרְכָּהּ לְבָנֵי אֱלֹהִים

Written by Rabbi Shmuel Gluck

The Akeida talks about the human urge to create and what people should do with that urge. He writes that since people weren't created to do nothing (rather to achieve), it is best to create in areas that are most worthwhile. He adds: when people aren't creating they're as if they're dead since their "level" of living is based on the amount they create. Otherwise, the person is alive in name only.

Since our nature is to create, we should create things that matter, things that have true value. Therefore, Hashem tells Klal Yisroel, take that energy, the drive, and build a Mishkan.

The responsibility to create is not a religious one but is a responsibility shared by all people. A non-Jew has the responsibility to find a cure for cancer simply because it's in his DNA. As I often say, every individual strength creates an equal amount of responsibility.

Each person should find their strength and where it can have the greatest impact. Someone with a great voice can make people happy at weddings or he can do more, he can go to hospitals giving happiness to those who have very little of it. Even more, people are expected to combine their multiple strengths and increase their ability to create in areas that matter.

Because creating is in our DNA, everyone needs a project for them to be emotionally healthy. A lack of desire to create goes against human nature and If a person has no desire, it is a sign that there's something wrong with that person (possibly depression), That's why, at Areivim, one of the rules in our residences is to function for eight hours a day. It is also why I advise parents/mentors to make their children/mentees feel accomplished. So, own a project, create something great, and support your Neshama's emotional health.

שְׁמוֹת

Written by Rabbi Daniel Leeman

‘Shemos’, the second of the five books of the Torah, is ‘the book of exile and redemption’. In the book of Shemos though, we read not only of the exile and redemption, but also of the giving of the Torah, entering the land of Israel and also all of the lengthy details of the transportation and building of, and finally the service in the Tabernacle. Accordingly, it is pointed out, that even though we might have been physically redeemed from Egypt, the spiritual redemption was incomplete until the Children of Israel returned not only to their homeland but also to the level of their forefathers (upon whom the Divine presence dwelled) [1].

And so, just like the very first verse of ‘the book of exile and redemption’ deals with the exile, so too the book continues until the complete, spiritual redemption has taken place [1].

(Excuse me for being pedantic, but...) Why then do we not conclude with the verse “the honor of G-d filled the Tabernacle” [2]? Instead, we include the final few verses reiterating how the clouds of glory would ascend above the Tabernacle during the day and how a pillar of fire would take its place at night to the eyes of the Children of Israel throughout their journeys?

R’ Shimshon Dovid Pinkus, of blessed memory, was not exactly one to dress into fancy dress on Purim. But, he related, one year, he indeed dressed up... as a bear. When his young son caught sight of a bear in his house, he became scared; so, he ran towards his father-bear and, pulling on his leg called out for help “Daddy! Daddy!”

Night represents the dark times, our exiles, when it is harder to recognize our Father in Heaven. Day represents the redemption when His presence is as clear as day. Perhaps the book of exile and redemption concludes with the presence of the honor of G-d by day and night throughout the journeys of the Children of Israel alluding to G-d’s presence throughout our exiles. When we recognize our Father in Heaven from amidst our dark exile, only then will we be finally redeemed... may it happen speedily in our days – and nights!

Have a bearneficial Shabbos,
Dan.

Additional sources:

[1] Ramban, intro. to Shemos

[2] Shemos 40:34, 35

Humor

C'Rcuuqxgt'OktcergA

One day, little Jacob is praying to God, when Arthur, the town "grouch," passes by.

"Why in the world are you praying?" asks Arthur. "You're wasting your time."

"God forbid!" says Jacob. "I'm praying to the Almighty God, who has performed wonders and miracles like leading the Jewish people out of Egypt and helping them cross the Red Sea."

Arthur scoffs and says, "Please, you think that really happened? I read that the Red Sea was only about 10 inches deep when the Hebrews left Egypt, so there was no miracle at all!"

Arthur walks towards the bus stop, but looks back and sees Jacob still praying. He can't resist so he turns back and asks Jacob, "Why are you still praying? I told you that God didn't perform any miracles in Egypt!"

"Oh no," says Jacob, "the Almighty God is greater than I thought. How miraculous that he was able to drown an army of Egyptians in only 10 inches of water!"

C'Rw | npi 'Ho k{ 'Vtgg

A simple Jew from the infamous city of Chelm visits Warsaw. He meets the shamash of the shul and the shamash asks him a riddle: Who is my father's son, but he's not my brother? The simple Jew thinks and thinks, finally gives up and asks: Who is it?

The answer is simple: "Me."

"That is great," he thought! When he returns to Chelm he gathers his friends and family and challenges them with the riddle. Who is my father's son, but isn't my brother? They give up. "It is the shamash of Warsaw!" he proclaims grinning at the brilliance.

C'Tcddk{ 'Fq| gp

A Rabbi and his wife were cleaning up the house. The Rabbi came across a box he didn't recognize. His wife told him to leave it alone, it was personal.

One day she was out and his curiosity got the best of him. He opened the box, and inside he found three eggs and \$2000. When his wife came home, he admitted that he opened the box, and he asked her to explain the contents to him. She told him that every time he had a bad sermon, she would put an egg in the box...

He interrupted, "In 20 years, only three bad sermons? That's not bad."

His wife continued... "and every time I got a dozen eggs, I would sell them for \$1."

C'Tgcuqpcdrg 'Fqwdv

Jack Feinstein was a top defense attorney known for coming up with creative defenses for his clients. But on this day, Feinstein had an uphill

battle. His client was on trial for murder. There was strong evidence indicating guilt, but there was no corpse. So In his closing statement, knowing that his client would probably get convicted, Feinstein came up with a trick.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I have a surprise for you all," Feinstein said as he looked at his watch. "Within one minute, the person presumed dead in this case will walk into this courtroom." He looked toward the courtroom door. The jurors, somewhat stunned, all looked on eagerly. A minute passed. Nothing happened.

Finally Feinstein said, "Actually, I made up the previous statement. But, you all looked on with anticipation. I therefore put to you that you have a reasonable doubt in this case as to whether anyone was killed and insist that you return a verdict of not guilty."

The jury, clearly confused, retired to deliberate. A few minutes later, the jury returned and pronounced a verdict of guilty.

"But how?" inquired Feinstein. "You must have had some doubt; I saw all of you stare at the door."

The jury foreman replied, "Oh, we looked, but your client didn't."

