

Kol Rina  
*An Independent Minyan*  
Parashat Vayakhel/Shabbat Shekalim  
February 26, 2022\*\*\* 25 Adar, 5782

Kol Rina – An Independent Minyan, is a traditional egalitarian community. We are haimish (homey/folksy), friendly, participatory, warm and welcoming. We hold weekly services in South Orange as well as holiday services and celebrations which are completely lay led. We **welcome all** to our services and programs from non-Hebrew readers to Jewish communal and education professionals.

[Vayakhel in a Nutshell](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1338/jewish/Vayakhel-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

[https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/1338/jewish/Vayakhel-in-a-Nutshell.htm](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1338/jewish/Vayakhel-in-a-Nutshell.htm)  
Moses assembles the people of Israel and reiterates to them the commandment to observe the Shabbat. He then conveys G-d's instructions regarding the making of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). The people donate the required materials in abundance, bringing gold, silver and copper; blue-, purple- and red-dyed wool; goat hair, spun linen, animal skins, wood, olive oil, herbs and precious stones. Moses has to tell them to stop giving.

A team of wise-hearted artisans make the Mishkan and its furnishings (as detailed in the previous Torah readings of Terumah, Tetzaveh and Ki Tisa): three layers of roof coverings; 48 gold-plated wall panels, and 100 silver foundation sockets; the parochet (veil) that separates between the Sanctuary's two chambers, and the masach (screen) that fronts it; the ark, and its cover with the cherubim; the table and its showbread; the seven-branched menorah with its specially prepared oil; the golden altar and the incense burned on it; the anointing oil; the outdoor altar for burnt offerings and all its implements; the hangings, posts and foundation sockets for the courtyard; and the basin and its pedestal, made out of copper mirrors.

[Shekalim in a Nutshell: Exodus 30:11-16](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/111736/jewish/Shekalim-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

[https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/111736/jewish/Shekalim-in-a-Nutshell.htm](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/111736/jewish/Shekalim-in-a-Nutshell.htm)  
This week's Torah reading also includes Parshat Shekalim (Exodus 30:11–16), which speaks of the half-shekel each Jew contributed to the Sanctuary.

[Parashat Shekalim Haftarah in a Nutshell: II Kings 12:1-17](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/640159/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

[https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/640159/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/640159/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm)  
The *Parshat Shekalim* Torah reading discusses the annual obligation for every Jew to give half a shekel to the Temple coffers. The *haftarah* discusses the efforts of King Jehoash (9th century BCE) to earmark these communal funds for the upkeep of the first Holy Temple.

Background for this *haftarah*: Because of an alliance with the Northern Kingdom of Israel, idol worship had become rampant in the erstwhile righteous Davidic

dynasty-controlled Southern Kingdom. When the king of the Southern Kingdom, Ahaziah, was killed, his mother Athaliah murdered the remainder of the royal family and seized the throne. During her brief reign, she actively promoted idolatry. Unbeknownst to her, one of Ahaziah's sons, a small baby, was hidden and survived. When he became seven years of age, Jehoiada the High Priest led a successful revolt against Athaliah, and installed the child king, Jehoash, as the new King of Judea.

The *haftorah* begins with the new king renewing the people's covenant with G-d. They destroyed all the pagan altars and statues and appointed officers to oversee the Holy Temple. Jehoash then instructed the priests regarding all the funds that were donated to the Temple. According to his plan, all the funds would be appropriated by the priests. In return, the priests would pay for the regular maintenance of the Temple. In the 23rd year of Jehoash's reign, the priests neglected to properly maintain the Temple. Jehoash then ordered that all monies should be placed in a special box that was placed near the Temple altar, and these funds were given directly to the workers and craftsmen who maintained the Temple.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Spirit of Community – Vayakhel by the Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust

<https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/vayakhel/the-spirit-of-community/>

What do you do when your people have just made a Golden Calf, run riot, and lost their sense of ethical and spiritual direction? How do you restore moral order – not just then in the days of Moses, but even now? The answer lies in the first word of today's parsha: Vayakhel. But to understand this, we have to retrace two journeys that were among the most fateful in the modern world.

The story begins in the year 1831 when two young men, both in their twenties – one from England, the other from France – set out on voyages of discovery that would change both of them, and eventually our collective understanding of the world. The Englishman was Charles Darwin. The Frenchman was Alexis de Tocqueville. Darwin's journey aboard the *Beagle* took him eventually to the Galapagos Islands where he began to think about the origin and evolution of species. Tocqueville's journey was to investigate a phenomenon that became the

title of his book: Democracy in America.

Although the two men were studying completely different things, the one zoology and biology, the other politics and sociology, as we will see, they came to strikingly similar conclusions – the same conclusion God taught Moses after the episode of the Golden Calf.

Darwin, as we know, made a series of discoveries that led him to the theory known as natural selection. Species compete for scarce resources and only the best-adapted survive. The same, he believed, was true of humans. But this left him with serious problem: If evolution is the struggle to survive, if the strong win and the weak go to the wall, then all ruthlessness should prevail. But this is not the case. All societies value altruism. People esteem those who make sacrifices for the sake of others. This, in Darwinian terms, doesn't seem to make sense at all, and he knew it.

The bravest, most sacrificial people, he wrote in *The Descent of Man* “would on average perish in larger number than other men.” A noble man “would often leave no offspring to inherit his noble nature.” It seems scarcely possible, he wrote, that virtue “could be increased through natural selection, that is, by survival of the fittest.”[1]

It was Darwin's greatness that he saw the answer, even though it contradicted his general thesis. Natural selection operates at the level of the individual. It is as individual men and women that we pass on our genes to the next generation. But civilisation works at the level of the group.

As he put it:

A tribe including many members who, from possessing in a high degree the spirit of patriotism, fidelity, obedience, courage, and sympathy, were always ready to give aid to each other and to sacrifice themselves for the common good, would be victorious over most other tribes; and this would be natural selection.”

How to get from the individual to the group was, he said, “at present much too difficult to be solved.”[2]

The conclusion was clear even though biologists to this day still argue about the mechanisms involved.[3] We survive as groups. One person versus one lion: lion wins. Ten people against one lion: the lion may lose. *Homo sapiens*, in terms of strength and speed, is a poor player when ranked against the outliers in the animal kingdom. But human beings have unique skills when it comes to creating and sustaining groups. We have language: we can communicate. We have culture: we can pass on our discoveries to future generations. Humans form larger and more flexible groups than any other species, while at the same time leaving room for

individuality. We are not ants in a colony or bees in a hive. Humans are the community-creating animal.

Meanwhile in America, Alexis de Tocqueville, like Darwin, faced a major intellectual problem he felt driven to solve. His problem, as a Frenchman, was to try to understand the role of religion in democratic America. He knew that the United States had voted to separate religion from power by way of the First Amendment, the separation of church and state. So religion in America had no power. He assumed that it had no influence either. What he discovered was precisely the opposite:

“There is no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America.”[4]

This did not make any sense to him at all, and he asked various Americans to explain it to him. They all gave him essentially the same answer. Religion in America (we are speaking of the early 1830s, remember) does not get involved in politics. He asked clergymen why not. Again they were unanimous in their answer. Politics is divisive. Therefore if religion were to become involved in politics, it too would be divisive. That is why religion stayed away from party political issues. Tocqueville paid close attention to what religion actually did in America, and he came to some fascinating conclusions. It strengthened marriage, and he believed that strong marriages were essential to free societies. He wrote:

“As long as family feeling is kept alive, the opponent of oppression is never alone.”[5]

It also led people to form communities around places of worship. It encouraged people in those communities to act together for the sake of the common good. The great danger in a democracy, said Tocqueville, is individualism. People come to care about themselves, not about others. As for the others, the danger is that people will leave their welfare to the government, a process that ends in the loss of liberty as the State takes on more and more of the responsibility for society as a whole.

What protects Americans against these twin dangers, he said, is the fact that, encouraged by their religious convictions, they form associations, charities, voluntary organisations, what in Judaism we call chevrot. At first bewildered, and then charmed, Tocqueville noted how quickly Americans formed local groups to deal with the problems in their lives. He called this the “art of association,” and said about it that it was “the apprenticeship of liberty.”

All of this was the opposite of what he knew of France, where religion in the form of the Catholic Church had much power but little influence. In France, he said:

“I had almost always seen the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom

marching in opposite directions. But in America I found they were intimately united and that they reigned in common over the same country.”[6]

So religion safeguarded the “habits of the heart” essential to maintaining democratic freedom. It sanctified marriage and the home. It guarded public morals. It led people to work together in localities to solve problems themselves rather than leave it to the government. If Darwin discovered that man is the community-creating animal, Tocqueville discovered that religion in America is the community-building institution.

It still is. Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam became famous in the 1990s for his discovery that more Americans than ever are going ten-pin bowling, but fewer are joining bowling clubs and leagues. He took this as a metaphor for a society that has become individualistic rather than community-minded. He called it *Bowling Alone*. [7] It was a phrase that summed up the loss of “social capital,” that is, the extent of social networks through which people help one another.

Years later, after extensive research, Putnam revised his thesis. A powerful store of social capital still exists and it is to be found in places of worship. Survey data showed that frequent church- or synagogue-goers are more likely to give money to charity, regardless of whether the charity is religious or secular. They are also more likely to do voluntary work for a charity, give money to a homeless person, spend time with someone who is feeling depressed, offer a seat to a stranger, or help someone find a job. On almost every measure, they are demonstrably more altruistic than non-worshippers.

Their altruism goes beyond this. Frequent worshippers are also significantly more active citizens. They are more likely to belong to community organisations, neighbourhood and civic groups, and professional associations. They get involved, turn up, and lead. The margin of difference between them and the more secular is large.

Tested on attitudes, religiosity as measured by church or synagogue attendance is the best predictor of altruism and empathy: better than education, age, income, gender, or race. Perhaps the most interesting of Putnam’s findings was that these attributes were related not to people’s religious beliefs but to the frequency with which they attend a place of worship. [8]

Religion creates community, community creates altruism, and altruism turns us away from self and toward the common good. Putnam goes so far as to speculate that an atheist who went regularly to synagogue (perhaps because of a spouse) would be more likely to volunteer or give to charity than a religious believer who prays alone. There is something about the tenor of relationships within a community that makes it the best tutorial in citizenship and good neighbourliness.



What Moses had to do after the Golden Calf was Vayakhel – turn the Israelites into a kehillah, a community. He did this in the obvious sense of restoring order. When Moses came down the mountain and saw the Calf, the Torah says the people were pru'ah, meaning “wild,” “disorderly,” “chaotic,” “unruly,” “tumultuous.” He “saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies” (Ex. 32:25). They were not a community but a crowd. He did it in a more fundamental sense as we see in the rest of the parsha. He began by reminding the people of the laws of Shabbat. Then he instructed them to build the Mishkan, the Sanctuary, as a symbolic home for God.

Why these two commands rather than any others? Because Shabbat and the Mishkan are the two most powerful ways of building community. The best way of turning a diverse, disconnected group into a team is to get them to build something together.[9] Hence the Mishkan. The best way of strengthening relationships is to set aside dedicated time when we focus not on the pursuit of individual self interest but on the things we share, by praying together, studying Torah together, and celebrating together – in other words, Shabbat. Shabbat and the Mishkan were the two great community-building experiences of the Israelites in the desert.

More than this: in Judaism, community is essential to the spiritual life. Our holiest prayers require a minyan. When we celebrate or mourn we do so as a community. Even when we confess, we do so together. Maimonides rules:

One who separates himself from the community, even if he does not commit a transgression but merely holds himself aloof from the congregation of Israel, does not fulfil the commandments together with his people, shows himself indifferent to their distress and does not observe their fast days but goes on his own way like one of the nations who does not belong to the Jewish people – such a person has no share in the world to come.[10]

That is not how religion has always been seen. Plotinus called the religious quest, “the flight of the alone to the Alone”.[11] Dean Inge said religion is what an individual does with his solitude. Jean-Paul Sartre notoriously said: hell is other people. In Judaism, it is as a community that we come before God. For us the key relationship is not I-Thou, but We-Thou.

Vayakhel is thus no ordinary episode in the history of Israel. It marks the essential insight to emerge from the crisis of the Golden Calf. We find God in community. We develop virtue, strength of character, and a commitment to the common good in community. Community is local. It is society with a human face. It is not

government. It is not the people we pay to look after the welfare of others. It is the work we do ourselves, together.

Community is the antidote to individualism on the one hand and over-reliance on the state on the other. Darwin understood its importance to human flourishing. Tocqueville saw its role in protecting democratic freedom. Robert Putnam has documented its value in sustaining social capital and the common good. And it began in our parsha, when Moses turned an unruly mob into a kehillah, a community.[1] Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, Princeton University Press, 1981, pp. 158-84. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 166. [3] This is the argument between E. O. Wilson and Richard Dawkins. See Edward O. Wilson, *The Social Conquest of Earth*, New York: Liveright, 2012. And the review by Richard Dawkins in *Prospect Magazine*, June 2012. [4] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, abridged with an introduction by Thomas Bender, (New York: Vintage Books, 1954), I:314. [5] *Ibid.*, I:340. [6] *Ibid.*, I:319. [7] Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000. [8] Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010. [9] See Jonathan Sacks, *The Home We Build Together*, (London: Continuum), 2007.[10] Maimonides, *Hilchot Teshuvah* 3:11. [11] Andrew Louth, trans., *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition from Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 50.

### Moshe's Gamble: Parashat VaYakhel 5782 by Rabbi Aviva Richman

<https://www.hadar.org/torah-collection/aviva-richmans-divrei-torah>

There is a classic debate about the order of the Torah with respect to the passages about the mishkan (tabernacle) and the golden calf. In one view, it was written in order, with God's intention for the mishkan derailed by the people's sin, but ultimately restored as they achieve forgiveness. In the other view, the text is out of order, and the mishkan came only in response to the people's sin. When we integrate the insights of both sides of this debate, we land on a third approach that emphasizes the power of taking initiative in relationships, even though we aren't certain what to expect.

The chief representative for maintaining the text's chronological order is Ramban. He describes how Moshe received the instructions for the mishkan (Exodus 25) before the golden calf (Exodus 32), and waited to tell the people until he was certain that God had forgiven Israel (Exodus 34). He sees a complete reconciliation, noting the connection between God's initial statement, "They shall make me a sanctuary so I will dwell in their midst" (25:8) to God's renewed covenant after the sin as Moshe begs, "May God go among us!" (34:9).<sup>1</sup> When Moshe gathers the people to build the mishkan, he speaks with relief, heralding a

return to the “youthful love” between God and the people before things went wrong.<sup>2</sup>

On the other side, a midrashic tradition<sup>3</sup> cuts up and reorders the biblical text, asserting that the instructions to build the mishkan recorded in chapter 25 were actually only given after the people were forgiven for the golden calf. Rashi sides with this invasive reorganization, but doesn’t explain why.<sup>4</sup> R. Eliyahu Mizrahi, in his commentary on Rashi, explains the narrative incoherence if the instructions for the mishkan had been given before the sin:<sup>5</sup>

Sefer Mizrahi Shemot 31

...How would Moshe have known that the Holy Blessed One had been reconciled with Israel about the matter of the mishkan to the point of instructing them about donating to the mishkan? Perhaps [God] had only reconciled to the point of giving tablets to Israel...

Contra Ramban, a straightforward reading of the Torah would not assume that God’s forgiveness fully restored the relationship to the pre-sin state. If the instructions for the mishkan were given before the sin, Moshe could not have been assured that God wanted to dwell with the people.<sup>6</sup> The only way, according to Mizrahi, that Rashi can conceive of Moshe instructing the people to build the mishkan, is if God explicitly expressed this desire after the sin.

When we take both of these readings seriously, we land on a third reading less focused on the nature of divine forgiveness and more focused on human agency. We can follow the straightforward order of the text, alongside Mizrahi’s logic behind reorganization. After the extended process of asking God’s forgiveness for the sin of the golden calf, Moshe is actually not sure whether God still wants the mishkan. When we look carefully into the text of the Torah, we see that God never explicitly speaks of “dwelling in the midst of the people” throughout their negotiation. We also realize that God doesn’t speak to Moshe in the entirety of Parashat VaYakhel. God doesn’t tell Moshe to build the mishkan now—Moshe just jumps in and sets this massive project into gear.<sup>7</sup>

If we don’t follow the path of reordering, we can now understand Parashat VaYakhel in a totally new way. The word va-yakhel (and he gathered) signifies Moshe taking a leap, deciding that the people will go ahead and build the mishkan, and afterwards see if God decides to dwell in it. He hopes this gathering will atone for the people’s “gathering upon Aharon” to build the golden calf ( ויקהל העם על )<sup>8</sup>. VaYakhel doesn’t come from relief, as Ramban would have it, but from uncertainty, even nervousness, alongside a steadfast insistence that this is the direction the relationship must go.<sup>9</sup> Unlike the reordered version of Sefer Shemot, where building the mishkan reflects strict obedience to God’s immediate



command, when we read the chapters in order, VaYakhel represents Moshe's daring initiative. The antidote to the golden calf is not strict obedience to an explicit divine instruction. The gathering of VaYakhel also requires intuition in the face of the unknown, but this time driven by Moshe's vision, rather than by Aharon being swept up in the crowd's chaos.

VaYakhel expresses human initiative, hopefulness, and a dose of hutzpah. Suddenly the refrain of the people building each part of the mishkan "just as God commanded Moshe" (throughout chapter 39) is more of twisting God's arm, or an expression of desperate hope, rather than signifying blind obedience. Even though God hasn't explicitly commanded to build the mishkan after the golden calf, they have decided to go ahead and build anyway.

After all of the effort amassing and building, Moshe finally hears affirmation and acceptance when God speaks to him (Exodus 40:1), telling him to erect this mishkan they have worked so hard to create. In other readings, that verse seems redundant—didn't we know that God wanted them to build the mishkan?—but becomes the much anticipated climax of a suspenseful drama in our reading. Their work was not in vain; Moshe's gamble paid off. God recognizes the people's desire and effort, and in response decides to dwell among them again.

This reading of Parashat VaYakhel is more like our own mode of existence, aware of the ways we have failed and not entirely sure of the prospects for repair. We don't live in Ramban's picture where we have complete confidence of God's return, without any residual effect from our failures. And we don't live in Rashi's picture, where God explicitly speaks up and tells us of a desire for "excessive intimacy" (in Mizrahi's words) after we have messed up. Instead, we live out a VaYakhel that is about taking initiative to create a space where God might inhabit our lives and our world, without any confidence God will.

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

Shabbat Shalom. <sup>1</sup> Ramban on Shemot 35:1: יקהל משה את כל עדת בני ישראל - יכלול "כל עדת בני ישראל" האנשים והנשים, כי כלם התנדבו במלאכת המשכן. והנה משה אחר שצוה לאהרן והנשיאים וכל בני ישראל האנשים כל אשר דבר ה' אתו בהר סיני אחרי שבור הלוחות, ונתן על פניו המסוה, חזר וצוה והקהילו אליו כל העדה אנשים ונשים. ויתכן שהיה זה ביום מחרת רדתו. ואמר לכולם ענין המשכן אשר נצטוו בו מתחלה קודם שבור הלוחות, כי כיון שנתרצה להם הקדוש ברוך הוא ונתן לו הלוחות שניות וכרת עמו ברית חדשה שילך השם בקרבם, הנה חזרו לקדמותם



34:34: תבוא קהלת משה רבינו, דכתיב ויקהל משה את כל עדת בני ישראל, ויכפר על קהלת 9  
This reading, that they don't actually know if God will dwell in it while they build the mishkan, is borne out by the drama of Parashat Shemini, where there is uncertainty about whether God's presence will dwell with the people, whether they have actually been forgiven for the golden calf. See for example Rashi on Vayikra 9:23.

### [Building Mishkans Together: Vayakhel by Rabbi Lizzi Heydemann](https://truah.org/resources/parshat-vayakhel-lizzi-heydemann-moraltorah/)

<https://truah.org/resources/parshat-vayakhel-lizzi-heydemann-moraltorah/>

From 2016 through 2020, there were a lot of social justice marches in Chicago, a few of which took place on Saturdays. This always put me, and most Jews I knew, in a hard place. On the one hand, we wanted to support women, Muslims, immigrants, LGBTQ people — whomever's rights or safety were being threatened. But on the other hand, Shabbat is our day of rest, the one day we try to disengage from the struggles of the world. It can be hard to sink deeply into rich, restful Shabbat heartspace while loading up with water, poster board, markers, the baby carrier, and granola bars in a mom bag to catch the train downtown to march and shout at the top of our lungs.

Let me say: For many Jews, what I just described sounds like a perfectly meaningful, not to mention Jewish, way to spend Shabbat. Others wouldn't march in a rally on Shabbat (or any other day, for that matter), but they'd happily send money to support the cause, gladly call legislators, or serve up a big hot meal to their friends coming home after the protest.

Anyone involved in social justice work has at one point or another wondered if what they're doing is enough, or is the right thing to do, especially when one looks around and sees how many powerful, inspired people are doing other things. How can a person know what to contribute to a movement, and whether it's sufficient? Parshat Vayakhel – “he convened” – describes Moses giving direction to the Israelites answering the question: How do you find your place in a movement? Moses is talking about the particular community project of building the Mishkan, but these verses also can give us insight into movement building writ large.

Moses convened the whole Israelite community and said to them: here is what God commanded — bring gifts to God from everyone whose heart moves them. Gifts for God: gold, silver, copper, blue, purple, crimson yarns, fine linen, goat's hair, tanned ram skins, dolphin skins, acacia wood, oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the aromatic incense, lapis lazuli and other stones for setting, for the ephod

and breast piece. And let all among you who are skilled come and make all that God has commanded... (Exodus 35: 4-10)

After this list of materials is the list of things to be made with them: the Tabernacle, the tent, its covering, the menorah, the incense holder, the clasps and the planks, the utensils, the bars, the posts, the sockets, the ark, the poles, the curtain, the table, and a few more things. Oh, also the clothes the priests need to wear for the sacrificial services. It's an impressive list.

Listing all the things that need to be done impresses upon the listener that no one person could possibly do everything — there's simply too much. Not even a Mishkan-building overachiever could imagine that they alone could be responsible for bringing and creating all of these materials and implements in the service of the movement. Thus, this lifts the burden off the person wanting to help and wondering if what they're doing is right, or is enough, and reframes the project as a collective endeavor: You cannot do it all, so do what makes your heart sing. The movement needs people whose hearts are moved, the Torah says. That's what will bring God's presence down and help it dwell among us. That's what creates a movement that's not just functional but deeply humane and fundamentally sacred. Any living organism contains cells that perform different functions; when they do their jobs with integrity, the whole organism thrives. Our movements for justice rely on the ecology of different people and different groups bringing the contributions that make our hearts sing. We need the person whose Judaism motivates them to observe a traditional Shabbat in shul, and then walk in their tallis from one part of the city to the other to stand in solidarity. We need the people who show up with water, signs, and snacks to distribute to protesters. We need the organizers behind the scenes forging coalitions that will extend before and beyond any particular rally or march. We need the artists and musicians and singers and theater-makers, bringing a much-needed joy and levity to justice spaces. We need the people who don't necessarily show up in body, but show up with financial support to fund the efforts of those whose contribution will primarily be time and expertise. We need the people with the savvy to lobby, to write legislation, and to change policy at high levels. We need rabbis, too, to provide support and inspiration to people who have a sense *that* they should show up as Jews, but not necessarily *why*.

So pick the thing that moves your heart. Do that. Let someone else do the thing that moves theirs. Together, we'll build the Mishkan. Together, we'll build strong and inspired movements for change. (*Rabbi Lizzi Heydemann is the founder and senior rabbi of Mishkan Chicago, an independent post-denominational spiritual community breathing new life into Judaism by helping people find deeper senses of purpose, connection, and inspiration. She is on the executive board of T'ruah.*)



This week's parasha, Vayakhel, presents a challenge to any darshan or rabbi who wants to talk about the parasha.

Indeed, in a recent book by Hillel Halkin, *A Complicated Jew*, there is a chapter, in which he surveys the weekly portions. He writes "this week was Pekudei, the last Torah reading of Exodus. Before it came Vayakhel. Together, they are two of the most tedious parshiot shavua in the chumash. Vayakhel relates how the Israelites built the Tabernacle... Pekudei how they made the priestly vestments... The commentators fall silent. What is there to add?" Then, of course, he brings his own chiddush, his own addition to those weekly portions.

I believe that there are at least three things we can learn from Parashat Vayakhel. The first has to do with the status of women in Judaism. As you may know, in a few weeks, we will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of the first Bat Mitzvah — Judith Kaplan the daughter of Rabbi Professor Mordechai Kaplan— which took place on March 18th, 1922. Those who have made changes in Jewish practice regarding women during the past 100 years, have looked for precedents. Indeed, a wonderful precedent appears in this week's portion.

Chapter 35: "The whole community, the Israelites, left Moses' presence. Everyone who excelled in ability and everyone whose spirit moved him came, bringing to the Lord his offering for the work of the Tent of Meeting. Men and women, all whose hearts moved them... and everyone who had in his possession X, Y and Z. Everyone who would make gifts of silver and copper. Everyone who had in his possession acacia wood. And all the skilled women spun upon their own hands and all the women who excelled in that skill spun the goats' hair. Thus, the Israelites — all the men and women whose hearts moved them to bring anything for the work that the Lord through Moses had... to be done — brought it as a freewill offering to the Lord." (Lev. 35: 20-29).

In other words, men and women contributed equally to the building of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle, and this is presented in our Torah portion in a very egalitarian fashion. Indeed Rabbi Dr. Tuvia Friedman pointed out in a wonderful article published about 40 years ago about "The Shifting Role of Women from the Bible to the Talmud": the Bible, we have many examples of women having a much stronger role in Judaism than they had in the Talmudic period.

Furthermore, in the Introduction to my book, *The Status Of Women In Jewish Law: Responsa*, I sketched 41 tachanot, 41 stations, on the road to women having more and more public roles in Judaism during the past 150 years. The road from this week's portion led eventually to the Bat Mitzvah of Judith Kaplan and to many



other areas in which women have a greater role in Judaism today than they did in the past.

The second thing that we can learn from this week's portion is found in Chapter 36. We read there that the people who were collecting the money for the Tabernacle, in addition to what they collected, added their own gift. This was stressed in a work, called *Imrei Shefer* quoted in *Iturei Torah*: "Vehem heviu elav od nedavah baboker baboker — and they brought to him an additional contribution in the morning," meaning the people who were collecting the money also gave a contribution themselves. The *Imrei Shefer* goes on to say that one of the problems with *askanim*, with people engaged in Jewish public life, is they say "I give them my time so I don't have to give them my money." *Imrei Shefer* says: no! We learn from *Vayakhel* that those who collect money and those who lead the Jewish people must contribute money to the organizations which they are leading. Finally, the third lesson is found in one verse at the end of Chapter 35, talking about *Betzalel*, the designer of the *Mishkan*. It says there in the Hebrew "Ulehorot natan belibbo — To give directions, he and *Oholiab* son of *Ahisamach* of the tribe of *Dan*." *Lehorot* in Hebrew can mean to give direction, it can mean to *pasken Halakhah*, to give *Halakhic* decisions, or it can mean to teach. *Ibn Ezra* says to us that it means to teach, and he says here, *ki yeish chaham gam charash lo yuchal lehorot heiteiv*, there are people who are wise, who have great skills in the area of arts and crafts, but they don't know how to teach others how to do that. The ideal in Judaism is, of course, to learn in order to teach. The story of *Betzalel* teaches us that not only did *Betzalel* know how to \*make\* beautiful things, but he also knew how to teach \*others\* to make beautiful things and to build the *Mishkan*. So, from this seemingly "boring" parasha, *Vayakhel*, we can learn about the egalitarian tendency of men and women in the biblical period. We can learn that each person who collects money for a good cause must also give money to that cause. And we can learn *kol halomed chayav lelamed*, whoever learns must also teach.

Shavua Tov from Schechter.

*(David Golinkin is President of The Schechter Institutes, Inc. and President Emeritus of the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies. For twenty years he served as Chair of the Va'ad Halakhah (Law Committee) of the Rabbinical Assembly which gives halakhic guidance to the Masorti Movement in Israel. He is the founder and director of the Institute of Applied Halakhah at Schechter and also directs the Center for Women in Jewish Law. Rabbi Professor Golinkin made aliyah in 1972, earning a BA in Jewish History and two teaching certificates from The Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He received an MA in Rabbinics and a PhD in Talmud from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America where he was also ordained as Rabbi.)*

## Yahrtzeits

Cynthia Schwartz remembers her father Barton Schwartz on Saturday February 26th (Adar 25)

Bob Woog remembers his wife Barbara Woog on Sunday February 27th (Adar 26)

Margie Freeman remembers her father Dr. Elias Freeman on Monday February 28th (Adar 27)

## Coming Up at Kol Rina

**Join us, as Kol Rina Presents Rabbi Elie Kaufner in a two lecture series, Praying Anew, on Sunday, February 27 and March 6 at 10:30 a.m.**

This free, educational series is cosponsored with Oheb Shalom Congregation of South Orange, NJ and will be presented on Zoom.

February 27: Praying Anew: Unlocking Meaning in the Words of the Siddur

March 6: Praying Anew: Beyond the Meaning of the Words

About the speaker: Rabbi Elie Kaunfer is President and CEO of the Hadar Institute. A graduate of Harvard College, he completed his doctorate in liturgy at the Jewish Theological Seminary, where he was also ordained. A Wexner Graduate Fellow and Dorot Fellow, Elie is a co-founder of the independent minyan Kehilat Hadar and has been named multiple times to Newsweek's list of the top 50 rabbis in America.

Register for this free, educational program today!

Please click the Register button below. You will be sent a Zoom link on the evening before the event.

Contact Information:

Email: [KolRinaNJWelcome@gmail.com](mailto:KolRinaNJWelcome@gmail.com)

**Sunday, February 27, 2022 10:30 AM**

**Register**

**Praying Anew with Rabbi Elie Kaunfer.**

**A 2-part series: 2/27 and 3/6**

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### **10th Anniversary Concert: Second call: Deadline extended**

Our Gala 10th Anniversary Concert will take place Sunday, March 6, beginning at 3 PM. We are giving everyone a few more days to purchase tickets at the early bird price of \$36 until this Friday, February 25, after which the price will go up to \$54. Please use these extra few days to let your non - Kol Rina friends know about our big event!

Here is just a partial list of our talented performers: Daniel Baer, Jonah David, Richard Eisenstein, Cantor Perry Fine, Margie Freeman and Rabbi Len Levin with Dr. Lynn Reyman, Bob Kammer, Cantor Eliana Kissner, Marty Steinberg, Janet Wolkoff, and

Karina Bruk. Accomplished musicians from outside our community include Cecilia Duarte, principal singer at the Houston Grand Opera, Sarunas Jankauskas, clarinetist at James Madison University, and Ginny Johnston, singer-songwriter and conductor. You can access this concert via Zoom so you can enjoy the concert from the comfort of your home. COVID permitting, there will also be limited seating at the Kol Rina space where a number of live performances will originate. Tickets for the concert on Zoom will be sold for \$36 on or before Friday, February 26 and for \$54 thereafter. Enjoy this wonderful event while contributing to the continued strength and vibrancy of Kol Rina. Please consider purchasing additional concert tickets for family or friends or making a donation. If you are a Kol Rina member: Note that we are linking the pricing for the concert with our Mishloah Manot program as well. Details are in the Mishloah Manot letter which went out (to Kol Rina members only) on February 21.

In addition to the basic ticket prices, there are sponsorship opportunities which will be acknowledged in our program, as follows:

Maestro: \$108  
Bel Canto: \$180  
Aficionado: \$360  
Virtuoso: \$540

Sponsors will be offered priority seating for our live performance on a first come, first served basis. Please note that live seating availability will be limited.

You may purchase tickets and make donations through the following link:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/kol-rina-honors-its-10th-anniversary-with-a-celebratory-concert-tickets-264320899927>

\*Important note about donating on Eventbrite:\* When you make your donation by clicking on the Tickets button, you do not have to log into Eventbrite. Just click "continue as guest."

Wishing you the best of health and happiness. We look forward to our joining together at a fabulous Zoom concert.

L'hitraot,

**Nikki Pusin**

President and Coordinator

Kol Rina

An Independent Minyan

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**Mishloach Manot**

**HAPPY PURIM!**

It's time to place your orders for this year's Mishloah Manot! As in past years, participation means you are sending a beautiful Mishloah Manot bag filled with goodies to ALL of our members. You will be fulfilling one of

the mitzvot of Purim and also supporting an important fundraiser for Kol Rina. We hope everyone will choose to participate!

WE ARE AWARE THAT THERE IS ANOTHER MAJOR FUNDRAISER OCCURRING SIMULTANEOUSLY. For that reason, we are modifying our suggested contributions for the Mishloah Manot this year. There are three ways to send your Mishloah Manot, as follows:

- If you (individual or family unit) are supporting the Gala 10th Anniversary Concert at the BEL CANTO level (\$180) or above, you may send Mishloah Manot to all members of Kol Rina for an additional suggested contribution of \$18 or more.
- If you (individual or family unit) are supporting the Gala 10th Anniversary Concert at the MAESTRO level (\$108), you may send Mishloah Manot to all members of Kol Rina for an additional suggested contribution of \$36 or more.
- You may send Mishloah Manot to all members of Kol Rina for a suggested contribution of \$118 or more.

EVERY KOL RINA MEMBER/FAMILY WILL RECEIVE A BAG. Delivery will be available in the Oranges/Maplewood/Millburn/Short Hills/Livingston. People living outside those areas will need to pick up their bag.

Additional bags will be available for purchase at \$18 apiece. You will have to pick them up on March 16 at the Megilla reading in the evening (Covid permitting) (or by special arrangement—we will do what we can to accommodate you) and deliver them yourself.

#### **HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO DO to participate:**

- 1) Send an email NO LATER THAN MARCH 6 by clicking this link: [krmishloachmanot@gmail.com](mailto:krmishloachmanot@gmail.com). Orders sent to any other email may not be processed. Please copy the "tearoff" at the bottom of this email, paste it into your email, and fill in the blanks.
- 2) If you would like to purchase additional bags, you may so indicate on the "tearoff" and add the sum of \$18 per bag to your total.
- 3) Mail a check for the total you owe to Kol Rina, PO Box 649, South Orange, NJ 07079. Make the check out to Kol Rina and write "PURIM MM" on the memo line. OR you may pay through the Kol Rina website, using Paypal. Please add a 4% surcharge to your total to offset the cost to Kol Rina for Paypal. (E.g. for a donation of \$118, the surcharge would be \$4.72.)

WE NEED HELP! If you are able to help pack or deliver bags on March 13, or if you can pick up your own bag, let us know.

Questions? Call Fran Nelson at 201-618-4678.

THANKS for your support! And may you have a joyous Purim!

The Mishloah Manot Committee

Lisa Small  
Fran Nelson  
Nikki Pusin  
Ilisia Kissner

Here's the "tearoff." Copy and paste it into your email.

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My name as I would like it to read on the card: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number in case we have questions: \_\_\_\_\_

MY ORDER: Check one and fill in the dollar amount:

\_\_\_\_\_ I am supporting the concert at the BEL CANTO level (\$180) or above. My Mishloah Manot contribution will be ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I am supporting the concert at the MAESTRO level (\$108). My Mishloah Manot contribution will be ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to send Mishloah Manot to all members of Kol Rina. My Mishloah Manot contribution will be ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like additional bags:  
# \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$18 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

I will pay by

\_\_\_\_\_ Check

\_\_\_\_\_ Paypal through the Kol Rina website (I will add a 4% surcharge to my payment: \$4.72 for a \$118 donation)

\_\_\_\_\_ I can pick up my bag on March 16 at the Megilla reading (Covid permitting)

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like my bag to be delivered (Please note: If you live outside the area of the Oranges/Maplewood/Millburn/Short Hills/Livingston, delivery will not be available)

\_\_\_\_\_ I can help pack bags on Sunday, March 13 (time to be arranged)

\_\_\_\_\_ I can help deliver bags on Sunday, March 13

**TODAH RABBAH** (many thanks) FOR YOUR ORDER and YOUR HELP!