Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Vayakhel – Pekudei/ Shabbat Hachodesh
March 14, 2026 *** 25 Adar, 5786

The name of the first Parshah, “Vayakhel,” means “And he gathered” and it is found in Exodus 35:1. The name of the Parshah, “Pekudei,” means “Amounts of” and is found in Exodus 38:21.

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.

An accounting is made of the gold, silver and copper donated by the people for the making of the Mishkan. Betzalel, Aholiav

and their assistants make the eight priestly garments—the apron, breastplate, cloak, crown, hat, tunic, sash and breeches—according to the specifications communicated to Moses in the Parshah of Tetzaveh.

The Mishkan is completed and all its components are brought to Moses, who erects it and anoints it with the holy anointing oil, and initiates Aaron and his four sons into the priesthood. A cloud appears over the Mishkan, signifying the Divine Presence that has come to dwell within it.

Ha'chodesh in a Nutshell
https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/74477/jewish/Hachodesh-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This being the Shabbat that falls on or before the first of Nissan, we also read the section of Hachodesh (Exodus 12:1–20), which relates G-d's words to Moses in Egypt two weeks before the Exodus, instructing us to set the Jewish calendar by the monthly new moon, and to regard Nissan as the "head of months." G-d also instructs to bring the Passover offering, to eat it with matzah and bitter herbs, and to abstain from leaven for seven days.

Haftorah in a Nutshell:*Ezekiel 45:18-46:15*

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/659336/jewish/Haftorah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This special haftorah is a prophecy regarding the Paschal Offering that will be brought during the Messianic Era, reflecting the theme of the HachodeshTorah reading—Moses' command to the Israelites in Egypt to prepare and bring the Paschal lamb.

This haftorah is part of Ezekiel's prophecy regarding the third Holy Temple—its structure, inauguration and some of the practices that will be observed therein.

The haftorah begins with a description of the various sacrifices that will be offered during the Temple's seven-day inauguration ceremony, and then mentions that on the 14th of Nissan we shall bring the Paschal offering.

Much of the rest of the haftorah is devoted to the sacrifices that will be brought by the "leader," and prescribes his entry and exit from the Temple.

Food For Thought

Three Types of Community by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z”l 5767

https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/vayakhel/three-types-of-community/

A long drama had taken place. Moses had led the people from slavery to the beginning of the road to freedom. The people themselves had witnessed God at Mount Sinai, the only time in all history when an entire people became the recipients of revelation. Then came the disappearance of Moses for his long sojourn at the top of the mountain, an absence which led to the Israelites’ greatest collective sin, the making of the Golden Calf. Moses returned to the mountain to plead for forgiveness, which was granted.

Its symbol was the second set of Tablets. Now life must begin again. A shattered people must be rebuilt. How does Moses proceed? The verse with which the sedra begins contains the clue:

> Moses assembled all the community of Israel and said to them: “These are the things God has commanded

you to do. Shemot 35:1

The verb vayakhel – which gives the sedra its name – is crucial to an understanding of the task in which Moses is engaged. At its simplest level it serves as a motiv-word, recalling a previous verse. In this case the verse is obvious:

> When the people saw that Moses was long delayed in coming down the mountain, they assembled around Aaron and said to him, "Get up, make us gods to go before us. Shemot 32:1

Moses' act is what the kabbalists called a tikkun: a restoration, a making-good-again, the redemption of a past misdemeanour. Just as the sin was committed by the people acting as a kahal or kehillah, so atonement was to be achieved by their again acting as a kehillah, this time by making a home for the Divine presence as they earlier sought to make a substitute for it. Moses orchestrates the people for good, as they had once been assembled for bad (The difference lies not only in the purpose but in the form of the verb, from passive in the case of the Calf to active in the case of Moses. Passivity allows bad things to happen:

> Wherever it says 'and it came to pass' it is a sign of impending tragedy. Megillah 10b

Proactivity is the defeat of tragedy:

> Wherever it says, 'And there will be' is a sign of impending joy. Bamidbar Rabbah 13

At a deeper level, though, the opening verse of the sedra alerts us to the nature of community in Judaism.

In classical Hebrew there are three different words for

community: edah, tzibbur, and kehillah, and they signify different kinds of association.

Edah comes from the word ed, meaning “witness.” The verb ya’ad carries the meaning of “to appoint, fix, assign, destine, set apart, designate or determine.” The modern Hebrew noun te’udah means “certificate, document, attestation, aim, object, purpose, or mission.” The people who constitute an edah have a strong sense of collective identity. They have witnessed the same things. They are bent on the same purpose. The Jewish people become an edah – a community of shared faith – only on receiving the first command:

> “Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. Shemot 12:3

An edah can be a gathering for bad as well as good. The Israelites, on hearing the report of the spies, lose heart and say they want to return to Egypt. Throughout, they are referred to as the edah (as in “How long will this wicked community grumble against Me?” Bamidbar 14:27). The people agitated by Korach in his rebellion against Moses and Aaron’s authority is likewise called an edah (“If one man sins, will You be angry with the whole community?” Bamidbar 16:22). Nowadays the word is generally used for an ethnic or religious subgroup. An edah is a community of the like-minded. The word emphasises strong identity. It is a group whose members have much in common.

By contrast the word tzibbur – it belongs to Mishnaic rather than biblical Hebrew – comes from the root tz-b-r meaning “to heap” or “pile up”. (Bereishit 41:49) To understand the concept of tzibbur, think of a group of people praying at the Kotel. They

may not know each other. They may never meet again. But for the moment, they happen to be ten people in the same place at the same time, and thus constitute a quorum for prayer. A tzibbur is a community in the minimalist sense, a mere aggregate, formed by numbers rather than any sense of identity. A tzibbur is a group whose members may have nothing in common except that, at a certain point, they find themselves together and thus constitute a "public" for prayer or any other command which requires a minyan.

A kehillah is different from the other two kinds of community. Its members are different from one another. In that sense it is like a tzibbur. But they are orchestrated together for a collective undertaking – one that involves making a distinctive contribution. The danger of a kehillah is that it can become a mass, a rabble, a crowd.

That is the meaning of the phrase in which Moses, descending the mountain, sees the people dancing around the Calf:

> Moses saw that the people were running wild, for Aaron had let them run out of control and become a laughingstock to their enemies. Shemot 32:25

The beauty of a kehillah, however, is that when it is driven by constructive purpose, it gathers together the distinct and separate contributions of many individuals, so that each can say, "I helped to make this." That is why, assembling the people on this occasion, Moses emphasises that each has something different to give:

> Bring of what is yours an offering to the Lord. Let everyone who is willing bring an offering to the Lord: gold, silver, and bronze . . . Shemot 35:5
>
> And let all among you who are skilled come and make

> the things that the Lord has commanded.Shemot 35:10

Moses was able to turn the kehillah with its diversity into an edah with its singleness of purpose, while preserving the diversity of the gifts they brought to God:

> So all the community of Israel left Moses' presence. And they came, everyone whose heart inspired him and whose spirit moved him, and brought an offering for the Lord, to be used for the Tent of Meeting and all its service, and for the sacred vestments. All whose hearts moved them – the men with the women – brought brooches, earrings, signet rings and pendants, all kinds of gold ornaments . . . Everyone who had sky-blue, purple, or scarlet wool . . . Whoever could make an offering of silver or bronze brought it . . . Every skilled woman spun with her own hands, and brought what she had spun . . . All the women whose hearts inspired them used their skill . . . The leaders brought rock crystal stones and other precious stones . . . So the Israelites – all the men and women whose hearts moved them to bring anything for the work that the Lord, through Moses, had commanded – brought it as a freewill offering to the Lord. Shemot 35:20-29

The greatness of the Tabernacle was that it was a collective achievement – one in which not everyone did the same thing. Each gave a different thing. Each contribution was valued – and therefore each participant felt valued. Vayakhel – Moses' ability to forge out of the dissolution of the people a new and genuine kehillah – was one of his greatest achievements.

Many years later, Moses, according to the Sages, returned to

the theme. Knowing that his career as a leader was drawing to an end, he prayed to God to appoint a successor: "May God, Lord of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a person over the community." (Bamidbar 27:16) Rashi, following the Sages, explains the unusual phrase "Lord of the spirits of all flesh" as follows:

> He said to Him: Lord of the universe, the character of each person is revealed and known to You – and You know that each is different. Therefore appoint for them a leader who is able to bear with each person as his or her temperament requires. (Rashi on Bamidbar 27:16)

To preserve the diversity of a tzibbur with the unity of purpose of an edah – that is the challenge of kehillah-formation, community-building, itself the greatest task of a great leader.

****

Vayakhel-Pekudei: Approaching Immigration with an Abundance of Mindset by Claire Davidson Bruder

https://truah.org/resources/vayakhel-pekudei-moral-torah-claire-bruder/

"Renew Your Support Today." "I'm Personally Asking, Claire." "There's Still Time to Give!"

My email inbox is perpetually cluttered with fundraising emails from nonprofits and political groups, each competing with the next, trying to strike the perfect balance of urgency and approachability that will grab my attention and coax me to donate to their efforts. Sometimes, the desperation in these emails turns to deception: subject lines intended to sound like the emails are individualized or come from friends, rather than the mass fundraising efforts they are.

While inbox clutter can be frustrating, even when coming from

organizations we support, it is also understandable. Each of us has limited financial capital – and an even more limited tzedakah budget – and donating to one cause may preclude us from doing the same for another. Even in trying to build a better world, scarcity reigns, and causes we care about are forced to compete with one another for our limited resources. It is so easy, in this world, to feel that there will never be enough.

This week's twin parshiyot, Vayakhel and Pekudei, offer us a vision of another world.

Moses asks all Israelites whose hearts are moved to bring gifts for God that the community can use to build the Mishkan, God's home on Earth and the temporary center for worship as the Israelites wander through the desert. The Israelites comply, and Moses collects luxuries including precious metals and gemstones, sumptuous and sturdy fabrics, decadent oils and spices, and more. But the Israelites don't stop there.

The Torah tells us that "everyone who excelled in ability and everyone whose spirit was moved" made offerings of both materials and service, men and women alike (Ex. 35:21-22). One chapter later, the Israelites continue to bring gifts, day after day, without ever needing to be asked again. Eventually, master craftsmen Bezalel and Oholiab end up having to dispatch Moses to beg the Israelites: please stop making contributions! Their efforts have been more than enough. The overflowing generosity has done its job.

Rarely in my life have I been fortunate enough to experience this type of generosity, one so complete, so rooted in abundance that it is completely unnecessary to make an ask for support, let alone ask people to stand down.

In fact, the only time I have seen inspiring generosity in this

manner was this past January, when I was privileged to represent T'ruah as a member of the MARCH clergy delegation to Minneapolis, where I joined a group of six hundred spiritual leaders from across the United States to answer a call for witness, for learning, and for connection.

Upon arriving in Minneapolis, I was confronted with temperatures well below freezing and a grim reality on the ground, but also a type of activism I had never seen before. There are countless organizations on the ground in Minneapolis working to protect vulnerable neighbors – food pantries, houses of worship, free clinics, legal aid, and more. What makes the Minnesotan resistance so remarkable is the decentralized, non-hierarchical ways in which ordinary people have shown up for each other day in and day out. There is no leader telling them what to do; rather, individuals seek out ways they can be useful through social networks and in their neighborhoods, and simply show up to do what they can.

I had the privilege of meeting activists who spent every free moment between work and meals and school and childcare delivering groceries to vulnerable people, walking kids to school when their parents couldn't do so safely, or following ICE vehicles to track their paths and alert people to their presence.

I left Minneapolis inspired in many ways, most of all feeling called to approach immigration with an abundance mindset. We can choose to believe that there are enough resources to go around. There is enough housing for us all, enough food to share, and enough time in each of our schedules to volunteer. We can give of ourselves in whatever way we want generously, abundantly, without worrying that we are going to run out. This is how we change the world: by refusing to be

guided in our work by a mindset of scarcity.

The Israelites who contributed gold and silver and bronze, fine linen and skins, and gemstones to the construction of the Mishkan did not know whether they would ever recoup those valuable materials. As they wandered through the desert to an unknown land, they did not know whether they might find themselves in need of currency upon arriving at their as-yet-unknown land. And yet, they gave. May we, too, give so freely.

(Claire Davidson Bruder is a rabbinical student at JTS and member of T'ruah's board.)

****

The Give and Take of Strength by Eliezer B. Diamond z"l 2018

https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/the-give-and-take-of-strength-3/

We wish to honor our recently deceased teacher by perpetuating his legacy in this teaching.

Rituals of closure are common in both the secular and religious realms. An example of the first is the sounding of retreat and the lowering of the flag marking the end of the official duty day on military installations. An instance of the second is the siyyum, a liturgical ritual and festive meal that is occasioned by the completion of the study of a Talmudic tractate. Closure rituals relate not only to the past but to the future as well. On the one hand, the temporal demarcation of a past event facilitates the emergence of its distinct identity, internal coherence, and significance, thereby providing insight, understanding, and, at times, a sense of accomplishment. At the same time, by declaring an end, a closure ritual creates space in which one can—and must—begin anew; the past is to be neither prison nor refuge.

Immediately after the final verse of Shemot, the book of Exodus, is chanted this coming Shabbat we will call out to the reader, “Hazak, hazak, venit-hazek”, which might be translated as, “Be strong, be strong, and we will take strength from you.” (For some reason, it has not become the custom to modify the above declaration and use the gender appropriate “hizki, hizki” when a woman is reading the Torah.) The “hazak” declaration is a closure ritual, a performative parallel to the graphic demarcation in the Torah scroll of Shemot’s conclusion by means of four blank lines. It announces that the first part of the national saga has come to a close with the construction and completion of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle. In that endeavor all of Israel was united in dedication to a common goal; each contribution of resources, talent, and effort was vital, while none was sufficient.

The Mishkan was of course of no worth without the presence of its designated occupant: the Shekhinah, the Divine Presence. “For over the Tabernacle the cloud of the Lord rested by day, and fire would appear in [the cloud] by night in view of all the house of Israel in their journeys” (Exod. 40:38). With the advent of the Shekhinah’s presence the inert structure is animated and a new story begins: “The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting” (Lev. 1:1). Shemot’s static image of the Mishkan as a place of rest is replaced with Vayikra’s dynamic one: the Mishkan is to be a place where God and humanity meet, where God and Moses converse and where Aaron is to enter the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur.

Clearly, a closure ritual is appropriate as we conclude the reading of Shemot. But why choose “hazak” as the ritual? Why the need to urge the reader to be strong and to wish strength for ourselves? A moment of completion is a complex one. We

may feel sad that the end has come. In addition, in the moment of completion we often allow ourselves to feel the exhaustion that we have denied in the pursuit of closure, rendering us unready and perhaps unwilling to face the next challenge that lies before us.

So too, with the completion of Shemot. The reading ends with a crescendo, and yet it will be followed by the blessing recited at the end of every aliyah. We the listeners are afraid that, as with the seven lean cows who ate the seven fat ones in Pharaoh's dream, the drama and power of the words we have heard will be swallowed up by the ordinariness of the blessing that follows. We also know that more lies ahead, including the tragic death of Aaron's sons, (Lev. 10:1–2) which will mar the dedication of the building the construction of which has been described so lovingly in Shemot. Therefore, we need strength. We need to be saved from the depression that accompanies endings and we need strength to face and navigate the stories that will follow.

Yet let us ask further: Why do we not simply declare, "Let us all be strong"? Why single out the reader? A teaching of Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, the mid-20th century author of Mikhtav Me'eliyahu, a collection of mussar essays, provides enlightenment. As we all know, says Rabbi Dessler, there are takers and givers. It turns out, however, that some give in order to take and some take in order to give. Suppose that someone agrees to donate a million dollars to a synagogue but then attaches all sorts of conditions to his gift, conditions that serve the needs of his ego but not those of the congregation. This man is giving in order to take; he's a giving taker. On the other hand, let's imagine a dedicated doctor who works night and day to spare his patients from illness and pain. One day, he tells his patients that he is suffering from

exhaustion and will be taking a week's vacation. Only a fool or an ingrate would see this as selfishness. This doctor is taking in order to give; he is a taking giver.

So too with us and our Torah reader. She is our Moses, declaring God's word to the congregation. Reading Torah is a demanding and exacting task, even for those who have years of experience. (Not incidentally, Vayak-hel Pekudei is the second longest of the weekly Torah readings.) The reading is over, the reader is exhausted. We say: you give us inspiration through your chanting of the Torah. We wish you strength, both out of love for you and because we rely on your strength. You can give to us only if we also give to you.

We want our leaders to give us what we need and desire. Too often we are oblivious to their needs and to the limits of their time and energy. They want to give but unless we give too they will ultimately have nothing to give us. Let us make our leaders strong, through love, encouragement, and material assistance, so that we can be strengthened by them. *(Eliezer B. Diamond z"l was the Rabbi Judah Nadich Professor of Talmud and Rabbinics at JTS)*

****

Before We Build, We Must Stop: What the Mishkan Teaches About Shabbat and Burnout by Rabba Daphne Lazar Price

https://yeshivatmaharat.org/before-we-build/

At the beginning of Parshat Vayak'hel, just as the Israelites prepare to build the Mishkan, the Tabernacle, Moses does something unexpected. He gathers the entire community, and instead of launching into architectural plans or fundraising instructions, he commands them to observe Shabbat (Exodus

35:1–3).

It is a jarring interruption. The Mishkan is the holiest construction project in the Torah, a portable sanctuary meant to house the Divine Presence. If ever there were a reason to press forward urgently, this would be it. And yet the Torah insists: before you build sacred space, you must sanctify sacred time.

The placement is deliberate. In Parshiot Terumah and Tetzaveh, the Torah first describes the Mishkan, and only later reminds the people about Shabbat (Exodus 31:12–17). But after the Golden Calf in Parshat Ki Tisa, the order is reversed. Shabbat comes first.

The rabbis understood this reversal as a legal principle: even constructing the Mishkan does not override Shabbat. The Mishnah teaches that the 39 categories of prohibited labor on Shabbat are derived directly from the creative acts required to build the Mishkan (Mishnah Shabbat 7:2). Sewing, weaving, kindling fire, writing, building create holy space. And these are precisely what we refrain from on holy time.

Shabbat and the Mishkan define one another. Sacred creativity is bounded by sacred restraint.

This matters because the Golden Calf was built in a state of panic. When Moses delayed his return from Sinai, the people demanded immediacy: “This man Moses…we do not know what has become of him (Exodus 32:1).” Aaron capitulated. Gold was collected under pressure. The project was born of anxiety and intolerance for uncertainty.

The Mishkan, by contrast, must be constructed slowly, deliberately, and within limits. The repeated refrain in Vayak’hel-Pekudei is “as God had commanded Moses.” Every measurement, clasp and curtain is executed with precision

and restraint. And embedded at the very outset is a boundary: “Six days you may work, but the seventh day is holy” (Exodus 35:2).” Even sacred labor must stop.

20th century Torah scholar Nechama Leibowitz notes that placing Shabbat at the opening of Vayak’hel is corrective. After the Golden Calf, the people are reminded of Shabbat before they are permitted to build the Mishkan (Exodus 35:1–3). In her analysis (Studies in Shemot/Exodus, on Ex. 31 and 35), Leibowitz explains that the Torah anticipates a dangerous assumption: that constructing a sanctuary for God might suspend ordinary limits. It does not. The Mishkan represents human creativity directed toward the Divine. By placing Shabbat first, the Torah establishes hierarchy: no sacred project, overrides covenantal restraint. Creativity without command becomes idolatry. Only disciplined initiative, “as God commanded Moses” can sustain the Presence. For six days we create, and on the seventh, we relinquish control.

This speaks to a temptation mission-driven communities know well: the belief that holy ends justify unbounded means. If the goal is sacred, surely the work must continue. If the cause is urgent, surely rest can wait. If the project builds community, surely exhaustion is a small price to pay. The Torah says otherwise.

By deriving the 39 melachot from the labors of the Mishkan, the rabbis make a radical claim: the highest forms of human creativity are precisely what must be paused. Shabbat is not about avoiding menial labor, it is about ceasing mastery. The same skilled hands that knead dough, weave priestly garments and construct golden vessels must rest once a week. Holiness requires restraint.

This principle serves as a guardrail against burnout. The

Mishkan represents humanity at its most inspired—artisans filled with wisdom (chochmah), understanding (tevunah), and knowledge (da'at) (Exodus 35:31). Yet even their sacred craftsmanship is bounded by time. If they build without stopping, the project ceases to reflect covenant and begins to mirror idolatry.

The Golden Calf was also a religious structure. It was also gold. It was also a communal effort. What distinguished it was not material but motivation. It emerged from urgency and a refusal to wait. Shabbat interrupts urgency by institutionalizing delay.

In an age obsessed with productivity, this message is deeply countercultural. We measure worth by output. We admire institutions that expand quickly. We praise leaders who appear tireless. Even our activism can slip into acceleration without reflection. But the Torah embeds rest into its blueprint.

The Mishkan stands as a testament to what human beings can create. Shabbat stands as a reminder of what human beings must relinquish. Only when we hold both does God's presence dwell among us. *(Rabba Daphne is an adjunct professor of Jewish Law at Georgetown University Law Center. She led Jofa, The Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance, for 7 years, and has worked at the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism and at the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America. R' Daphne is active in the Orthodox community in her hometown of Silver Spring, MD.)*

****

Pekudei: Cultivating Sanctity - Garments of the Soul

Table for Five – Edited by Nina and Salvador Litvak

https://www.accidentaltalmudist.org/table-for-five/2025/03/24/pekudei-cultivating-sanctity/

And out of the blue, purple, and crimson wool they made the meshwork garments to serve in the Holy, and they made Aaron's holy garments, as the Lord had commanded Moses. – Ex. 39:1

Rabbi Elazar Bergman, Founder, hiddentzaddik.com - Our verse is the last of nine verses accounting for the donations given for the building of the Mishkan and its accoutrements. Betzalel and Ohaliav were audited by Moshe Rabbeinu. Governmental oversight and efficiency go back a long way.

Rashi tells us that the first garments were covers for the Mishkan's vessels. They were used whenever the Mishkan was transported. But if they were used only when the vessels were not in use, how did they "serve in the Holy?"

We'll answer this question with a question. Why are they called "garments" instead of "covers"? Because the vessels of the Mishkan were not objets d'art. They were sacred not only in function but in themselves as well. They had, as it were, a soul. The light of that soul was too powerful for a non-kohen to view. To protect him from being overwhelmed, the light needed to be clothed. On the flip side, the light also needed protection. Certain types of sacred light are so fragile and can be irreversibly damaged if viewed with insufficient reverence. So for their own sake, the vessels needed to be clothed.

Aharon's garments were on a higher plane and, therefore, are called "holy." Reason number one for their holiness is that they were made to be used by a human being. Additionally, the garments enhanced the kohen's inborn holiness. The kohen's service in the Mishkan was invalid unless he was wearing the garments. Literally an example of "clothes make the man."

Rabbi Shmuel Reichman, Bestselling Author, International Speaker, and Business Coach - When we hear the word

“holy,” what image rises up within our mind? As Jews, we are told by Hashem the following famous words: “kedoshim tihiyu — you shall be holy.” However, what does this mean? What does it mean to be holy?

This is not a call to be transcendent, angelic beings — lofty and perfect, completely beyond the struggle innate to the human condition. This is not permission to deny our humanity and restrict our sense of self. This is a calling to be human, to be the ultimate human, to bring transcendence and spirituality into this world. We don’t aim to escape this world; we aim to transform it. Kedushah is not transcendence or escapism; it is the meeting between the transcendent and the immanent.

And the same is true for our spiritual leaders. We don’t seek leaders who transcend human struggle and temptation, who sit on mountaintops meditating on their navels. Our leaders are individuals who embrace the physical, uplift it, and connect it to the infinite. Each of us are leaders in our own way; each of us has a unique mission in this world. May we be inspired to build something powerful, sensational, and transformative within ourselves, and then seek to impact the lives of others with our unique talents, helping to build connection, oneness, and kedushah in this world.

Rebbetzin Miriam Yerushalmi, CEO, SANE; author, Reaching New Heights series - There is a Chasidic concept that “each Jew is a Kohen in his own home.” Just as Aaron wore special garments for his Temple service, so too do we don special garments in our G-dly service, our Avodas Hashem. Tanya teaches that our thoughts, speech, and actions are the “garments” of our soul. Like garments, they can be donned or shed at will; as garments beautify and protect our bodies, so too do these protect and beautify our souls. We have the

ability to control these “garments,” and thereby to elevate them infinitely, by using them to serve the will of Hashem through Torah and mitzvos. Every mitzvah we do adds infinitely more beauty, strength, and kedushah to our spiritual garments.

When we realize and appreciate the holiness of our soul–no matter what level it currently is at–we allow our natural love for our true selves to grow. This gives us that extra strength to further elevate our soul and accomplish even more. Unproductive thoughts that weigh heavy in our hearts, leading us to low self-esteem, sadness, and even to depression, G-d forbid, can be totally discarded because we now know where we stand and what to expect of ourselves. Take a moment here and make a conscious decision to set yourself free from any unhealthy spiritual guilt. Free yourself from unrealistic expectations–allow yourself the freedom to grow.

These concepts are explored more deeply in my new book, The Temple Within, published by Mosaica Press and distributed by Feldheim Publishers.

Rabbi Avraham Greenstein, AJRCA Professor of Hebrew -

Rashi and other commentaries explain that the first part of this verse is referring to the garments of the Tabernacle, i.e. the coverings for its instruments, whereas the second part of the verse is referring to Aaron’s garments, i.e. the vestments of the High Priest. The fact that these two types of garments are mentioned in the same verse creates an equivalency between them, and it can perhaps teach us something.

When we clothe something in a garment, it is always an expression of a certain care we are taking with it. Whether we are trying to protect it from the elements, or trying to present it in a special light, or even if we are trying to conceal it, we are

invariably going out of our way to recognize the needs of the thing (person, object, body part, etc.) we are clothing.

We clothe the instruments of the Tabernacle because they are holy, and we clothe the High Priest as a reflection of his elevated role as mediator between us and the Divine. The imperative to do so reminds us of the care we must take with both the inanimate and the animate, the insensible and the sensible. Everything in the world around us is a potential instrument of holy activity, and every person is a potential minister to the Divine. To be conscientious of the holy possibility that surrounds us is to tend to its needs. It is our job to facilitate meaning and holiness in our interactions.

Gavriel Aryeh Sanders, International Spokesman, Be A Mensch Foundation - Twice in our passage, the word “holy” appears—referring to a holy place and holy garments. While today we lack an equivalent sacred space or attire in Jewish liturgical life, the concept of holiness endures. For some, “holy” carries a saccharine connotation, but years ago, someone helped me decode it in simple terms: “set apart for special purposes”—like Passover dishes, reserved for a specific time and elevated beyond the ordinary.

In Jewish life, holiness takes many forms:

• Kiddushin in marriage formalizes the sanctity of the union, setting it apart.

• Kiddush on Shabbat marks the sanctity of time, a pause to reflect, realign, and recharge.

• The Hif’il causative verb (l’haqdish) means “to dedicate, consecrate, or devote”—whether time, space, or resources.

Though we presently do not experience the ancient Temple’s holiness, we can cultivate sanctity—in our homes, our

clothing, our interactions, and even in the way we speak. To be “a holy people” is to live with intention, shaping our daily habits to reflect something beyond the mundane.

Leviticus will soon remind us: “You shall be holy.” This is one of Judaism’s secrets to collective self-esteem, but it can also be a challenge. The pull to assimilate is strong.

Israeli singer Yehoram Gaon once framed it this way: “We want to be a people like all the peoples. But the moment we become such, we cease to be.” The solution to Jewish preservation? Embrace holiness—first as a mindset, then as a way of life.

****

Yahrtzeits

Cynthia Schwartz remembers her father Burton Schwartz on Sat. Mar 14th
Bob Woog remembers his wife Barbara Woog on Sun. Mar 15th
Margie Freeman remembers her father Dr. Elias Freeman on Mon. Mar 16th
Alice Solomon remembers her brother in law Dr. Herbert Fine on Wed. Mar 18th
Shari Mevorah remembers her father Symek Kirsten on Thurs. Mar 19th
Bobbi Ostrowsky remembers her brother Stuart Edelman on Thurs. Mar 19th
Peter Greene remembers his father Stanley Greene on Fri. Mar 20th