



Partners In Torah

San Diego-Los Angeles-Venutra

Take home Dvar Torah

Parshat Vayakhel תשפ"ד

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By: Rabbi Avi Cohen

Hello, Welcome!

**Partners In Torah is a community-wide,
independent and inclusive adult education program
focusing on understanding Jewish relevancy to our lives by
studying text most interesting to each participant.**

**Through one-on-one discussion for 1 hour each week,
friendships are forged between mentors and mentees.**

Partners in Torah

***has proven to be effective at reclaiming the rich legacy
of wisdom, inspiration, and guidance for many who have,
until now, lacked access.***

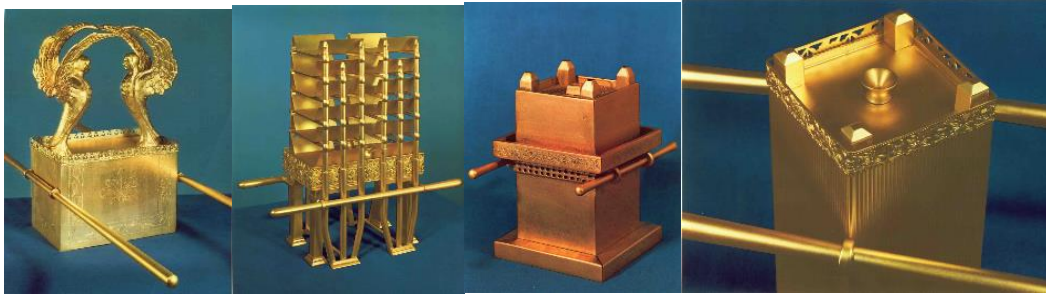
Thank you for joining us!

**Please encourage friends to join you in participating so
that we may grow together as a community.**

Parshat ויקהל - *Vayakhel* describes in detail how the artisan Betzalel and his helpers executed each of the instructions of how to build the Mishkan (the Tabernacle) and its components. Divinely conceived, it is reasonable to assume that the vessels' dimensions and features had deep underlying reasons and meanings. The Sages dwell on these details and extract many valuable lessons. Here are a few.

At Mount Sinai when Hashem gave the instructions to build the Mishkan, the Jewish people still needed to travel to the promised land, Israel. The Mishkan was modular and could be assembled and used when they camped and dismantled and carried with them when they traveled. Exact instructions directed who would carry what, and how to prepare each item for transport.

The large beams, which comprised the Mishkan's walls, traveled on wagons. The vessels and other components were carried by hand. The ארון (Aron) - Holy Ark, the שלחן (Shulchan) - Table with the show bread, the מזבח - brass altar for the animal sacrifices, and the מזבח הקטרת - the gold incense altar, all had sets of rings in which were inserted carrying poles. The Menorah, its tongs, spoons, and vessels for the oil, were all put into a sack of turquoise wool and then covered with a *tachash* skin and carried on a pole by members of the Kehat Levite family. (The *tachash* was an animal with multicolored skin that existed only when the Jews needed to construct the Mishkan.) The other Mishkan items were also carried by poles in sacks of *tachash* skin.



Although all four vessels (shown in order), *viz*, the Holy Ark, the Table for the show bread, the brass altar for the animal sacrifices, and the gold incense altar, all had poles as part of their original construction, their respective poles had different laws.

As far as the Holy Ark is concerned, once the poles were installed into the rings it was forbidden to remove them. Indeed, to assure that the poles never inadvertently slipped out, the ends of the poles were fashioned thicker than the rings' openings. The other vessels' poles would be removed from their rings when at rest in their respective places in the Mishkan and reinstalled for travelling.

The Holy Ark contained (1) the second set of tablets with the Ten Commandments on them, (2) the broken first tablets, and (3) a Torah scroll that rested on a small shelf inside the ark. The Ark thus represented the Torah.

The Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisroel Meir HaCohen Kagan d. 1933) explains that the poles through which the Holy Ark was carried, represent the financial supporters of the Torah. The law that the poles may never leave the Ark teaches us that the Torah's supporters are a fundamental constituent of the Torah, never to be separated from it. When the Ark is in the Holy of Holies (the Tabernacle's innermost area), the supporters of Torah are there with it. Similarly, when the Torah scholars will reap the reward for their diligent Torah study, the

supporters will be there with them as equal partners in their accomplishments, since they were the ones who allowed it to happen through their generosity and continued commitment.

Not only do the Torah's supporters receive reward in the World to Come for the Torah learning of those whom they supported, our Sages teach us that in the World to Come they will actually know the Torah learned by the ones who they supported.

The president of Rabbi Chaim Volozhin's ל"צ" (d. 1821) Yeshiva passed away. The next day, in his daily Talmud lecture, Rabbi Volozhin, while deep into a Talmudic topic, came to an exceedingly difficult question that he could not answer. He concluded his class by saying to his students, "Boys, I must think more about how to resolve this knotty question; we will continue tomorrow."

That night, the deceased president came to Rabbi Volozhin in a dream and gave him the answer to the difficult question.

The next day, Rabbi Volozhin related the president's answer to the class, and commented. "I always knew that one who supports the Torah knows all the Torah learned by those who he supported. What I didn't know is that it was instantaneous!"

Yaakov Avinu's two sons Yissachar and Zevulun took this idea to a higher level. They formed a document of partnership stating that they were equal partners in each other's endeavors. Zevulun, a merchant who travelled to different countries to buy and sell products would split his profits with Yissachar, and Yissachar would in turn split his learning with his brother Zevulun.

Notably, even though Yissachar was older than Zevulun, when blessing his sons, Yaakov blessed Zevulun first. This underscored the

importance of the supporter in enabling his brother to study Torah without worry needing to worry about sustenance.

The first Mishna in Tractate *Zevachim* intriguingly quotes the Sage “Shimon *the brother of Azaria*.” Why is Shimon mentioned as Azaria’s brother? Wasn’t Shimon the Sage?

Rashi explains that Shimon’s brother Azaria supported him and allowed him the freedom to learn Torah without financial concerns. Therefore, every time his brother Shimon is mentioned, Azaria must be mentioned with him since he is the support behind the Sage.

After a speech to prospective donors to his yeshiva, Rabbi Aharon Kotler זצ”ל told the audience that they would receive an equal share in the learning of the men in the Yeshiva, and that they would also know the Torah that the men learned in the World to Come, one of the listeners asked the Rabbi the following question.

“Rebbe, if I am going to receive the same reward as the men learning the Torah, and I am going to know the Torah that they are learning, *why should I study Torah?* By merely supporting them will receive the same reward!”

The Rabbi answered, “So that you enjoy life in this world more! The life of a Torah scholar is the most pleasant enjoyable life in the world.”

So, although the supporter ultimately ends up with the learning and the reward for learning, if he does not himself learn, he will lack the pleasure and deep satisfaction that the study of Torah brings to it devotees.

There is yet another benefit that the one who studies the Torah attains over the supporters alone.

The Talmud teaches us that when a Torah Scholar has introduced a new Torah idea or has taught a Torah concept to someone, when that person repeats that idea in the name of its originator, the originator's lips move in his grave, as if he is saying it right now. It is as if he is still alive saying that piece of Torah, and he continues to reap reward for his Torah even after his death.

Thinking about this concept, it is impossible to imagine how much reward Rashi is receiving since his passing in the year 1105, for the commentaries that he wrote during his short life of sixty five years. He wrote the definitive commentary on most of the TaNaKh-the Torah, *Neviim* – Prophets- and *Ketuvim* – writings.

Whenever a child begins to learn Chumash (Torah) in second grade, he learns it with the commentary of Rashi. When a Torah Sage studies the Chumash, he also learns it with the commentary of Rashi, though on a much deeper level.

Rashi also wrote the definitive commentary on the Talmud. When a child in fifth grade begins learning Talmud, he will learn it with Rashi's commentary. And so will a venerable Sage, who has studied Talmud in depth every day of his life. The difference is that although both are studying the same words, the Sage will plumb so much more depth in it. As this process of learning continues thousands of times daily, all around the world, Rashi's lips are moving in his grave as if he is teaching those thousands of students right now.

This “perk” also goes only to the one who learns the Torah, not his supporter.

Although it seems that the “learner” does give nothing to his supporter in this world, we learn from the Aron Kodesh, the Holy Ark,

that the learner may very well be the source of his benefactor's success in business.

When the Jewish people were ready to enter the Land of Israel, they needed to cross the Jordan River. A river flows, and cannot be split in two. While Hashem could have stopped the water from flowing, He instead did something more spectacular.

The events are recorded in the book of Joshua chapters 3 and 4. Hashem commanded the Cohanim who were carrying the Holy Ark to step into the riverbed with the Ark. As soon as the soles of their feet touched the ground, the water started flowing vertically, *perpendicular* to the river, instead of flowing downstream. This allowed the Jewish people to cross the river. It kept flowing higher and higher until the last person had crossed the Jordan river. The Cohanim were then commanded to step backwards, back onto the riverbank, whereupon the water descended and flowed back down into the river. But there was a problem. How were the Cohanim carrying the Ark going to get to the other side? The Talmud in Tractate *Sotah* 35a reports that the Ark itself carried the four Cohanim who were carrying it, and they all floated across the river.

This is the basis for the idea, "*The Ark carried those who carried it.*" Even though it looked as if the four Cohanim were carrying the Ark, in reality it was carrying them! They were only going through the motions.

Similarly, though it appears that the supporters are carrying the learners, in reality, the Torah learning is the source of blessing for their business to succeed so that they may have the wherewithal to support Torah.

This idea also applies and rings true as we travel through history. Although it looks like we who learn and teach the Torah are preserving it, in reality, the Torah is preserving us. The Torah is the Tree of Life and the secret to the Jewish people's eternity by keeping us connected to the Source of Life, Hashem.

We notice something peculiar about the instructions both for the Holy Ark's poles and for the outside daily sacrificial Altar; it seems that the Torah contains some extra verses (Exodus 25:14):

יד) וְהֵבֵאתָ אֶת הַבַּדִּים בְּטַבְעֹת עַל צְלָעַת הָאָרוֹן לְשֵׂאת אֶת הָאָרוֹן בָּהֶם

14) *And you shall pass the poles through the rings on the sides of the Ark to carry the Ark with them.*

ז) וְהוֹבֵא אֶת בַּדָּיו בְּטַבְעֹת וְהָיוּ הַבַּדִּים עַל שְׁתֵּי צְלָעַת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ בְּשֵׂאת אֹתוֹ

27:7) *And its poles shall be put through its rings, and the poles will be on the altar's two sides when it's carried.*

Why the specific instructions to insert the poles through the rings? Wouldn't that be obvious? How else would they carry the articles with the poles? To compound the difficulty, when describing the construction for these two vessels in this week's portion, the Torah once again tells us that "*they put the poles through the rings.*" What is the meaning of this?

ה) וַיָּבֵא אֶת הַבַּדִּים בְּטַבְעֹת עַל צְלָעַת הָאָרוֹן לְשֵׂאת אֶת הָאָרוֹן

5) *And they brought the poles through the rings on the sides of the Ark to carry the Ark (Exodus 37:5).*

ז) וַיָּבֵא אֶת הַבַּדִּים בְּטַבְעֹת עַל צְלָעַת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְשֵׂאת אֹתוֹ בָּהֶם

7) *And they brought the poles through the rings on the sides of the altar to carry it with them. (38:7)*

The Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin (1817-1893), learns a profound message from the seemingly extra instructions. Unlike the other vessels that had poles to carry them, the poles of the Ark and the poles of the brass altar comprised an integral part of the vessel, not just a method for transport.

As mentioned earlier, the Holy Ark represented the Torah.

The brass altar on which the Kohanim brought the daily community sacrifices symbolized the עבודה - temple service. This corresponds to the daily and holiday prayers recited in the Shuls throughout the year. Because we no longer have sacrifices, the Sages have instituted daily prayers. The morning prayer שחרית - *Shacharit*, replaced the daily morning sacrifice. The afternoon prayer מנחה - *Mincha*, replaced the afternoon daily sacrifice. And ערבית - *Maariv*, the evening prayer, corresponds to the meat of the sacrifices that burned on the altar all night. Our prayers do not reach the exalted level of holiness generated in the Holy Temple, but they suffice to get us by. As you can imagine, the more the better.

This is why we face Jerusalem when we pray. The *Code of Jewish Law* actually states that we should not only direct our prayers to Jerusalem, but we should direct them to the Holy Temple, and, more precisely, to the Holy of Holies in the Holy Temple. This is because despite our prayers having replaced the temple service, the site of the Holy Temple is still the conduit for our prayers to reach Hashem and provides the source of blessing to the world.

The *Netziv* explains that the Torah made a point of telling them to insert the poles through the rings is because the poles, which represent the vessels' portability, indicate that the Ark and the Brass Altar are destined to travel with the Jewish nation throughout the

diaspora. That is, being portable and accompanying the Jewish people through their travels is part of the job of these two vessels.

The Ark represents the Yeshivot, the Torah institutions of learning, and the outer Altar represents prayer, the Shuls where prayer is done. These vessels were designed to travel because the Jewish people cannot survive in the diaspora without them. Without the Torah (the ark) and a Shul (the altar) to pray in, a Jewish person cannot retain his identity as a Jew in the face of the greater secular gentile community. The raging tide against the Torah's values and concepts is so strong that without constant reinforcement it would quickly and easily wash away every last vestige of Torah from a person. Both vessels are thus crucial in their role of preserving Judaism in the Jews in the diaspora.

Torah study is the only way to connect with Hashem's truth and aspirations for the Jewish people. It is through studying and keeping Hashem's Torah that we stay close to Hashem and on the correct path.

Torah study is also the only way to create Torah Sages to lead the Jewish people. The constant and diligent study of the Torah connects, so to speak, one's mind directly to Hashem's thinking and to the concepts and ideas that He has determined are important. Over time, as one amasses more Torah, his mind becomes aligned with Hashem's thinking and infuses him with the Torah's true values and ideals. This is how a Sage becomes a Sage. Their dedication and study of the Torah is so complete that they are actually living Torah scrolls.

This is why a Kollel is such an important institution for the Jewish people. A Kollel is a group of bright, knowledgeable, motivated, dedicated married men, who could excel at any vocation of their choice, but who, instead, choose to dedicate their energies to the

study of Torah exclusively. They study together in groups of two, and challenge each other and learn from each other, honing their skills as scholars. So that they may dedicate every bit of their energy to their study, they are provided a modest stipend to relieve them of the burden of earning a living. These bright stars will be the future leaders of the Jewish people, serving in many of the necessary capacities of Jewish leadership.

Torah study is the only way to create scholars knowledgeable in the Torah's laws to guide the community to properly perform the many mitzvot done each day that require know how. When unusual situations arise, a Torah scholar must be consulted about how to proceed. As new products, for example, come to market and test the limits of what is permitted on the Shabbat and what is not, and what is kosher and what is not, there needs to be scholars who are intimately knowledgeable in the depths of Jewish law who can correctly apply Torah reasoning.

Torah study is the only way to secure *Rebbeim* and *Morahs* (Male and female Torah teachers) to educate each generation of the Jewish nation. Without adequate teachers, we are doomed to raise uneducated children who will lack the understanding of what makes us Jewish and why we should bother being Jewish at all! Torah education for our children (and for us!) is the future of our people.

Torah study is moreover the only way to create Rabbis who will lead congregations throughout the world, who will inspire their congregants to study Torah and to pray properly, and to grow in their Judaism.

Indeed, history has borne this out. Wherever the study of Torah was primary and central to the lives of the people, Judaism thrived; where Torah study was neglected, Judaism withered.

The role of the synagogue (the shul), in Judaism is also crucial to the Jewish people's success and future.

The shul is where a person cultivates his relationship with Hashem. We speak to Hashem thrice daily - time set aside just to connect to Hashem in the deepest way. That's significant!

The shul is also where a Jew goes to water his soul with words of Torah by the rabbi through various classes that are given throughout the week and some even every day.

People need people. Because humans cannot do everything by themselves, a community in which each member cares for the other members is essential. The shul creates a community on many different levels.

Because one needs to hear the weekly Torah portion read on Shabbat, and because a *minyan* (quorum) is required to fulfill that mitzvah, there is a need to go to Shul. Because a Torah observant Jew does not drive or take public transportation to shul on Shabbat, the shul must be within walking distance from his home. How far does one want to walk to and from shul three times every Shabbat? A mile, maybe two? Not much more than that. Hence, people must buy their houses within a certain distance from the shul. This perforce creates community living. People who live next door to each other socialize and help each other in times of need. Their children play together on the street and at each other's houses, becoming lifelong friends. People meet in the streets and greet each other and may even walk to and from shul together.

Not only is a Jew obligated to pray three times a day, he should also try to pray with a minyan where he is guaranteed that his prayers

will be accepted. If he prays alone, his prayer is scrutinized more closely and, if it's not up to par, may be rejected. Therefore, one starts his day by praying the morning prayer - שחרית in a shul with many other people like himself. Thus, he may say "good morning" to between fifty and a hundred people every morning. If he attends a different shul, he will see different people. The same goes for the afternoon and evening prayers. Often the decision of where to pray depends on a person's schedule, which may vary from day to day. Once again, and irrespective of where one ends up, community and camaraderie are being created by the minute. When a person does not show up to his usual spot in the minyan, very often a call goes to the person, "Hey Joe! I haven't been seeing you in shul lately. Everything okay?"

In shul, people share their personal happy occasions with the greater community. The birth of a boy brings a *bris*, and the birth of a girl brings a *kiddush*. Friends from all over town make their way to the kiddush to wish "mazel tov!" and bestow good wishes upon the new parents. Bar Mitzvah's and *aufrufs* (when a groom is called to the Torah the Shabbat before his wedding) are also celebrated in the shul with friends from all over coming to participate. It is not unusual for a person to visit three or four different shuls on one Shabbat to share in the simcha of different friends. These are also the people whom we are going to invite to our children's weddings. They want to share our joy with us and be part of our happiest times, and we wish to reciprocate.

The shul community also stands by its members in their difficult times, such as illness or loss. Visits to the hospital and home after surgery, or condolences upon the loss of a loved one, are restorative and consoling.

Living our Jewish life with the support of friends and community enhances its enjoyment and spirituality.

This, says the *Netziv*, is why the poles constitute an integral part of the Holy Ark and of the brass Altar. What these vessels represent has indeed travelled with us throughout the diaspora and through the ages and has protected, and continues to protect, the Jewish people.