

5781 - Exodus 35-40 - Vayak'hel (And he assembled)  
- Pekudei (Accounts)

**Time to Be More Inclusive<sup>1</sup>**

*For years, the trend in education was to segregate children with special needs, but nowadays, we try to include them in conventional classrooms as much as possible.*

*Inclusion, mainstreaming, integration—these are all different ways of how children with different needs are included in traditional classrooms.*

*So, is inclusion beneficial, and for whom?*

*Research over the last fifteen years indicates that with the necessary support and proper training, its benefits seem to be overwhelmingly positive for everyone.*

*Students with special needs gain from increased social opportunities, higher expectations resulting in increased skills and achievements, increased self-respect and confidence, and better preparation for adult life.*

*But the benefits surprisingly were equally shared by students without special needs. They too gained in greater academic success, enhanced feelings of self-esteem from mentoring students, increased appreciation of their abilities, **and a greater acceptance that all people have unique abilities.** They learned sensitivity and empathy as well as strong collaborative skills.*

*In the workforce, a similar idea is gaining traction, as employers are starting to acknowledge **the importance of diversity.** The effectiveness of human resource systems designed for a homogeneous workforce is being questioned as employers recognize the contributions of all different kinds of intelligences, personalities, and talents.*

*So it looks like we were created as diverse human beings for a reason: we all have what to contribute.*

In the beginning of this week's Torah portion, Moses gathers the nation of Israel and lists the various materials that they can contribute to the Tabernacle, G-d's home on earth.

Take from yourselves an offering for the L-RD; every generous hearted person shall bring gold, silver, and copper.—EXODUS 35:5

Each of these materials represents a different persona in the nation. Gold represents the purity of the *tzaddik*, the fully righteous individual. Silver (*keseif* in Hebrew, which also means "yearning") represents the *baal teshuvah*, the returnee. Copper, the least expensive of metals, represents the sinner.

We might have thought that only a *tzaddik*, who is removed from the enticements and ensnarement of this world, has the ability of transforming it into something holy. Or, we might believe that only a *baal teshuvah*, who intimately knows the negativity of this world, can transform its lowliness into loftiness. **But the Torah teaches us even the sinner must be included in this endeavor and has what to contribute.**

Amazingly, **G-d's home on earth is not complete without each of their contributions.**

No matter our spiritual standing, no matter our intellectual abilities or our emotional intelligences, **we were all handcrafted by our Creator to make our world a home for G-d.**

And, whether we consider ourselves low or high, righteous or wicked, someone with limited abilities or someone super talented, **we are all needed. As counterintuitive as it may initially seem, each and every one of us has what to gain from the other!**

What a golden (or is that a copper?) idea!

1. Exodus 35:20-35

<sup>20</sup>Then the whole Israelite community withdrew from Moses' presence, <sup>21</sup>and **everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the LORD for the work** on the Tent of Meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments. <sup>22</sup>All who were willing, **MEN AND WOMEN ALIKE**, came and **brought gold jewelry of all kinds ...**

<sup>24</sup>Those presenting an offering of silver or bronze brought it ... and everyone who had acacia wood for any part of the work brought it.

<sup>25</sup>**Every SKILLED WOMAN spun with her hands** and brought what she had spun ... <sup>26</sup>And all **the women who were willing AND HAD THE SKILL spun the goat hair ...**

<sup>29</sup>All **the Israelite men and women** who were willing brought to the LORD freewill offerings ...

<sup>30</sup>Then Moses said to the Israelites, "See, the LORD has chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, <sup>31</sup>and **he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts**—<sup>32</sup>to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, <sup>33</sup>to cut and set stones, to work in wood and to engage in all kinds of artistic craftsmanship. <sup>34</sup>And he has given both him and Oholiab son of Ahisa-mach, of the tribe of Dan, **the ability to teach others.** <sup>35</sup>**He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as craftsmen, designers, embroiderers** in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers—all of them master craftsmen and designers.

<sup>1</sup> Chana Weisberg, *Shabbat deLights, Bereishit/Shemos* (Chabad.org), pp. 245-247.

a. Rashi explains that this (*the verse about 'wise women' who wove tapestries*) **wasn't just a (condescending) pat on their proverbial collective backs but an honest appreciation for a specialized craft.** Utilizing a little-known technique, the weavers managed to skillfully weave ... hangings were far superior to weavings spun in the conventional method.

**What matters in life is not who you are, or to which gender you belong, but what you can contribute to the common cause. You have a specialized skill? Then utilize your ability to bring beauty and greatness to the world.**<sup>2</sup>

b. **Serving Hashem to the best of your abilities:** The Midrash notes the various "partnerships" involved in making both the Mishkan and the Holy Temple. Regarding the Mishkan, it is stated that Bezalel of the tribe of Yehudah and Oholiav of the tribe of Dan spearheaded the work. The Midrash points out the significance of using an artisan from the tribe of Yehudah (the most exalted tribe) and a member of the tribe of Dan (the lowliest tribe). By placing them together, G-d taught us never to look with disdain upon one whose origins are not noble, for in Hashem's eyes the great and the small are of equal stature. **A less gifted person who serves Hashem with all of his/her capabilities ranks equal to one who is more gifted, for Hashem judges a person in accordance with the intention of his/her heart.**<sup>3</sup>

c. Romans 12:4-5

<sup>4</sup>Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so in Messiah **we who are many form one body**, and each member belongs to all the others.

<sup>6</sup>**We have different gifts**, according to the grace given us ...

d. 1Corinthians 12:12-20

<sup>12</sup>The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Messiah. <sup>13</sup>For we were all immersed by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

<sup>14</sup>Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. <sup>15</sup>If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

<sup>16</sup>And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body ...

<sup>18</sup>But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be ... <sup>20</sup>As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

Exodus 36:1-58

<sup>1</sup>So Bezalel, Oholiab **and every skilled person** to whom the LORD has given skill and ability **to know how** to carry out all the work of constructing the sanctuary are to do the work just as the LORD has commanded."

<sup>2</sup>Then Moses summoned Bezalel and Oholiab **and every skilled person** to whom the LORD had given ability and **who was willing** to come and do the work.

1. **to know how ...**

a. Experience, skill, familiarity.

2. **who was willing ...**

a. Readiness, enthusiasm, eagerness, motivation.

*Anna's Story and the Foundation of Our Nation*<sup>4</sup>

*Growing up in Iran, Anna learned little about Judaism. When she turned twelve, she became obsessed with the Holocaust, grew bitter at G-d, and decided that He would no longer be a part of her life.*

*Once, Anna was riding her bike, fell and inadvertently called out, "Oh my G-d!" Her words made her momentarily think about G-d. "If you exist, give me a sign. When I turn eighteen, show me a rainbow."*

*She was only thirteen and soon forgot about her "deal" with G-d. On her eighteenth birthday, Anna was studying with a friend, but she insisted on leaving so Anna could celebrate. Opening the front door, Anna saw a magnificent rainbow.*

*Years passed. Anna's family escaped from Iran. She and her husband lived in California, where she was in the early stages of pregnancy with her sixth child. At a routine check-up, the doctor informed Anna that her fetus had a defective heart. The baby would need surgery and have trouble breathing its entire life.*

*He advised Anna to abort. She refused.*

*Two weeks before her due date, Anna asked to redo the tests; the results were unchanged. Anna now turned to G-d. "You remembered me at thirteen and eighteen! Please G-d, heal this baby."*

*Anna went into labor, fearing the worst. The baby was whisked off to neonatal care. Anna's doctor reappeared and told her, "I have no explanation, but your baby is 100 percent healthy!"*

2 [www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/1784181/jewish/Patronizing.htm](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1784181/jewish/Patronizing.htm)

3 Rabbi A.L. Scheinbaum—[www.anshe.org/2013/parsha-vayakhel-pekudei/](http://www.anshe.org/2013/parsha-vayakhel-pekudei/)

4 Chana Weisberg, *Shabbat deLights, Bereishit/Shemos* (Chabad.org), pp. 249-251

Anna shared her story when I lectured for a Jewish learning event at her home. She pointed to her "baby," a beautiful and healthy pre-teenager.

Anna reminds me of the powerful Jewish soul. **No matter the circumstances or level of observance, the soul restlessly calls out to its Maker, pursuing a connection.**

This week's Torah portion, *Pekudei*, opens with the various materials donated for the Mishkan, the tabernacle. The donations were given freely, according to the resources and generosity of the individual. **The exception was silver used for the foundation.**

The silver of the community was 100 talents and 1,775 shekels ... half a shekel for each one...—EXODUS 8:25-26

Half a shekel was donated for the foundation.

The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less.—EXODUS 30:15

The Jewish nation is made up of individuals differing vastly in temperament and abilities, social and religious standing, talents and intelligences.

**Each of us can use our unique capabilities and opportunities to be a sanctuary for G-d's presence in our world.** That is why for all other parts of the Mishkan, everyone donated according to their individual means and desire.

**But for the foundation, they gave equally. No matter our differences, at our foundation, in our bond with G-d, we are all equal.**

Moreover, the foundation was made from silver. The Hebrew word for silver, *kesef*, also means "yearning." Deep within our souls, at the very foundation of our being, is an ever-present yearning to come closer to G-d.

#### 1. 2Corinthians 6:15-16

<sup>15</sup>What harmony is there between Messiah and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup>What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For **we are the temple of the living God**. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people" (Exo 25:8; Lev 26:2; Eze 37:27).

##### a. Exodus 25:8

<sup>8</sup>"Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and **I will dwell among (better, in) them.**"

1) The very concept of making a home in finite space for an infinite presence seems a contradiction in terms.<sup>5</sup>

The answer, still astonishing in its profundity, is contained ... (in the words) "They shall make a Sanctuary for Me, **and I will dwell in them [betokham]**" (Exodus 25:8). The Jewish mystics pointed out the linguistic strangeness of this sentence. **It should have said, "I will dwell in it," not "I will dwell in them."** **The answer is that the Divine Presence lives not in a building but in its builders; not in a physical place but in the human heart.** The Sanctuary was not a place in which the objective existence of God was somehow more concentrated than elsewhere. Rather it was a place whose holiness had the effect of opening the hearts to the One worshipped there. God exists everywhere, but not everywhere do we feel the presence of God in the same way. The essence of "the holy" is that it is a place where we set aside all human devices and desires and enter a domain wholly set aside for God ...

#### 2. 1Corinthians 12:12-13

<sup>12</sup>Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Messiah. <sup>13</sup>For we were all (immersed) by one Spirit so as to form one body—**whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free**—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

##### a. Colossians 3:11

<sup>11</sup>Here there is no **Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian (i.e., Barbarian), slave or free**, but Messiah is all, **and is in all.**

##### b. Galatians 3:26-29

<sup>26</sup>So in Messiah Yeshua you are all children of God through faith, <sup>27</sup>for all of you who were (immersed) into Messiah have clothed yourselves with Messiah. <sup>28</sup>**There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua.** <sup>29</sup>If you belong to Messiah, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

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<sup>5</sup> Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Covenant & Conversation: Exodus*, (Maggid Books & The Orthodox Union), pp. 191-192.