

# A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

*This weekly sheet is brought to you by **Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman** of the **New West End United Synagogue** in conjunction with **Shapell's/Darché Noam***

## PARSHAT VAYKHEIL - PEKUDEI

### DVAR TORAH: 3 INGREDIENTS OF LEADERSHIP

The Gemara (Berachot 55b) records a beautiful conversation between Moshe and Hashem. It is linked to the verse, "See (said Hashem to Moshe) I have called in the name of Betzalel son of Uri, son of Chur of the tribe of Yehudah" (Shemot 31:2), when Hashem chose Betzalel to lead the Mishkan project:

"The Holy One, blessed be He, asked Moshe, "Is Betzalel proper in your eyes?"

Moshe responded, "Master of the Universe! If he is proper in Your eyes he is certainly proper in my eyes."

"Even so," said Hashem, "Go tell them (the People of Israel)."

Moshe then asked the People of Israel, "Is Betzalel proper in your eyes?"

Israel replied, "If he is proper in Hashem's eyes and in your eyes, he is certainly proper in our eyes."

The Rav of Krakow, Harav Yosef Nechemyah Kornitzer, זצ"ל (1881-1933, in *התורה על יוסף נחמיה על התורה*), quotes the teaching that Harav Yishayah Horowitz, זצ"ל (1565-1630, author of *Shnei Luchot Habrit*, known as the Shelah), extracted from this Aggadta.

Says the Shelah: A leader must have three qualities. He must be G-d fearing; he must be wise; and he must be accepted by the people. Only Hashem can know if a person is truly G-d-fearing. This explains Moshe's response, "Master of the Universe! If he is proper in Your eyes he is certainly proper in my eyes." And only a wise man can know that someone is wise. This explains the People of Israel's response to Moshe, "If he is proper in Hashem's eyes and in your eyes, he is certainly proper in our eyes." But Hashem still insisted that Moshe ask the People if Betzalel is acceptable to them as the leader of the Mishkan project. This is because a leader must be acceptable to his people.

These three qualities are hinted at, says Rav Yosef Nechemyah, in the following verse: "הבו לכם אנשים חכמים הברו לכם אנשים חכמים – ונבנים וידעים לשבטיכם ואשימם בראשיכם – Prepare for yourselves men that are wise and understanding and known to your tribes; and I will place them at your head" (Devarim 1:13). Rashi explains that the word אנשים, men, refers here to tzaddikim, righteous people. A leader must be righteous and G-d fearing. Next in the list is "wise and understanding." And, finally, they must be acceptable, "known to your tribes."

A leader who possesses only two out of three of these qualities will not function properly. A leader who has popular support and intelligence is still open to corruption and misuse of power if he does not have יראת שמים, fear of Heaven and G-d consciousness. Fear of Heaven carries with it a sense of accountability to Hashem who sees and knows all. It cultivates integrity. And even a leader who is pious and loved by all still needs wisdom and understanding – deep and broad Torah knowledge combined with common sense, intelligence, and an understanding of the world. Leaders make decisions and making correct decisions demands wisdom. Finally, fear of Heaven and wisdom, as important as they are, are still not sufficient for a leader. He must also be accepted by his community, for he must be connected to and united with those he leads. Betzalel was such a leader, approved by Hashem, Moshe Rabbeinu, and the People of Israel.

## SOURCE GUIDE: THINKING ABOUT DOING GREAT THINGS

What is the value of just thinking about doing something great? In an essay in the Shem Mishmuel on Vayakhel (whose springboard is an attempt to understand one word in our Parshah) the author describes how powerful thought is, and helps us answer this question. This source guide is built on that essay.

### A. One Word in Vayakhel

In the first six verses of the following selection from our Parshah, Moshe introduces Betzalel to the nation. He describes the special Divine gifts he has been given, his talents that will enable him to design and build the Mishkan and everything connected with it. The seventh verse includes the word *ועשה*, that is the subject of the essay:

<p><b>1. Shemot 35:30 - 36:1</b>          (30) Moshe said to the Children of Israel, "See. Hashem has called by the name of Betzalel son of Uri son of Chur of the tribe of Yehudah. (31) And He filled him with the Divine spirit, in wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and all work. (32) And to think thoughts to work with gold and with silver and with copper. (33) And the craft of setting stones and the craft of wood, to do all types of crafts. (34) He gave within his heart to instruct – he and Ohaliav son of Achisamach of the tribe of Dan. (35) He filled him with wisdom of the heart, to do all work of craftsmanship and thinking, and embroidering blue, purple, and red dye and with linen and weaving, doing all work and thinking thoughts. (1) And Betzalel and Ohaliav and every man wise-hearted man that Hashem placed wisdom and understanding within them shall do, in order that they should know how to do all of the work for the holy service, according to all that Hashem had commanded.</p>	<p><b>שמות לה:ל – לו:א</b>          (ל) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל רְאוּ קָרָא ה' בְּשֵׁם בְּצַלְאֵל בֶּן אֲוִרִי בֶן חוּר לְמִטֵּה יְהוּדָה. (לא) וַיִּמְלֵא אֹתוֹ רוּחַ אֱלֹקִים בְּחָכְמָה בְּתַבּוּנָה וּבְדַעַת וּבְכָל מְלָאכָה. (לב) וְלִחְשָׁב מַחְשָׁבֹת לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּזָהָב וּבַכֶּסֶף וּבַנְּחֹשֶׁת. (לג) וּבְחַרְשֹׁת אֲבָן לְמַלְאֵת וּבְחַרְשֹׁת עֵץ לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּכָל מְלָאכֶת מַחְשָׁבָת. (לד) וּלְהוֹרֹת נֶתֶן בְּלִבּוֹ הוּא וְאַהֲלִיאֵב בֶּן אַחִיסָמַךְ לְמִטֵּה דָן. (לה) מִלֵּא אֹתָם חָכְמַת לֵב לַעֲשׂוֹת כָּל מְלָאכֶת חֶרֶשׁ וְחֹשֶׁב וְרָקֵם בְּתַכְלֵת וּבְאַרְגָּמָן בְּתוֹלַעַת הַשָּׁנִי וּבַשֵּׁשׁ וְאַרְגָּם עֲשִׂי כָּל מְלָאכָה וְחֹשְׁבֵי מַחְשָׁבֹת. (א) וְעֹשֵׂה בְצַלְאֵל וְאַהֲלִיאֵב וְכָל אִישׁ חָכֵם לֵב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן ה' חָכְמָה וּתְבוּנָה בְּהֵמָה, לְדַעַת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֵת כָּל מְלָאכֶת עֲבֹדַת הַקֹּדֶשׁ לְכָל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה'.</p>
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### B. Acting Internally

What is added by verse 1, asks Harav Shmuel Bornshtein, זצ"ל (the Sochotchover Rebbe, 1855-1926, Poland)?

<p><b>2. Shem Mishmuel Parshat Vayakhel - 5673</b>          It makes sense to explain as follows: The verb <i>עשה</i> is in the past tense. But the Vav switches it so it refers to the future. But why doesn't Hashem write <i>ויעשו</i>, which would clearly indicate action in the future? It seems to me that it comes to hint that after they were full of wisdom, etc., and firmly decided in their hearts to act – it was considered as if they had already acted. This is the meaning of the verse: that they would do in actuality what they had already done in potential.</p>	<p><b>שם משמואל פרשת ויקהל - שנת תרע"ג</b>          ונראה לפרש דהנה עשה הוא לשון עבר אלא שהוא"ו שבראשו מהפכו להבא, ולמה לא כתב ויעשו לשון להבא לגמרי. ונראה שבא לרמז שמאחר שנתמלאו חכמה וכו' וגמרו בלבם לעשות חשוב כאילו כבר עשו, וזה שיעור הכתוב שיעשו בפועל מה שכבר עשו בכח.</p>
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Betzalel and his staff had vividly thought about the building of the Mishkan and everything connected with it, as the Torah describes in verses 32-35. Those thoughts were so powerful that, to a certain degree, they had already acted. They had already built the Mikdash internally, so the actualization flowed naturally. This explains a principle mentioned quoted in the Gemara:

<p><b>3. Berachot 6a</b>          "Then those who fear G-d spoke, a man with his friend, and Hashem paid attention to it [and listened and wrote it in a book of remembrance before Him for those who fear Hashem and give importance to His Name]" (Malachi 3:16). What is meant by "those who give importance to His Name"? Said Rav Ashi: If a person thought to do a mitzvah but was not able to because of circumstances beyond his control, the Torah considers it as if it was already done.</p>	<p><b>ברכות ו.</b>          "אז נדברו יראי ה' איש אל רעהו ויקשב ה' [וישמע ויכתב ספר זכרון לפניו ליראי ה' ולחושבי שמו]" (מלאכי ג:טז). מאי "ולחושבי שמו"? אמר רב אשי: חשב אדם לעשות מצוה ונאנס ולא עשאה מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו עשאה.</p>
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If thinking is so powerful, what is the difference between acting and not acting?

<p><b>4. Shem Mishmuel Parshat Vayakhel - 5673</b>          For when someone made up his mind to act, it is as if he actually acted. But if he was lazy and did not actually do what he decided to do, he in fact retracted, and that negates his initial thought. However if he did not retract – but just was not able to act because of circumstances beyond his control – since he didn't negate his thoughts, it is considered as if he completed and acted.</p>	<p><b>ספר שם משמואל פרשת ויקהל - שנת תרע"ג</b>          כי מאחר שגמר בלבו לעשות הרי הוא כאילו כבר עשה, אלא שאם מתעצל ולא עשה הרי חזר בו ומבטל מחשבתו הראשונה, אבל זה שלא חזר בו אלא שנאנס ואין כאן מבטל הרי הוא כאילו כבר נגמר ונעשה.</p>
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### C. Translating This into Our Lives

This principle has important ramifications for us:

<p><b>5. Shem Mishmuel Parshat Vayakhel - 5673</b>          This teaches a lesson to every person who wants to sanctify himself. He should not be discouraged from thinking about doing things that are beyond his present situation and spiritual state, thinking that he won't be able to actualize them. For even granted that his calculation is correct, that in his situation he does not have the power, he should still plan with conviction and it will be considered as if he acted. Then, because one mitzvah draws along another, he will attain new abilities that he did not initially believe he had; and with that power he will do great things.</p>	<p><b>ספר שם משמואל פרשת ויקהל - שנת תרע"ג</b>          ומזה לימוד לכל איש הבא להתקדש אל יפול לבו עליו לחשוב חשבונות לפי מצבו והלך רוחו שאיננו יכול להוציא מחשבתו לפועל, כי אפי' אי יהיבנא לי' שחשבוננו צודק שלפי בחינתו אין בכחו, מ"מ כאשר יגמור בלבו לעשות נחשב לו כאילו כבר עשה, ומצוה גוררת מצוה הרי ישיג כח חדש מה שלא שיער מראש, ובכח ההוא יעשה חיל,</p>
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Ruth's conversion is an example of this in action:

<p><b>6. Midrash Rabbah Ruth 3:5</b>          "She (Naomi) saw that she (Ruth) was insisting on going with her" (Ruth 1:18) – Rabbi Yehudah son of Simon said: Come and see how beloved converts are before the All-Present One. Once Ruth set her mind on converting, the verse equates her with Naomi.</p>	<p><b>מדרש רבה רות פרשה ג פסקה ה</b>          "ותרא כי מתאמצת היא ללכת אתה" (רות א:יח) – א"ר יהודה ב"ר סימון: בא וראה כמה חביבים הגרים לפני המקום כיון שנתנה דעתה להתגייר השוה הכתוב לנעמי.</p>
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Once one is full of conviction to act, says the Shem Mishmuel, that thought transforms the person, just as it did for Ruth. When she, in her mind, became totally set on joining the Jewish People, the Tanach speaks of her on equal terms with Naomi.

## KIDDUSH HACHODESH IN OUR TIMES BY RABBI YITZCHAK HIRSHFELD

This week we shall be reading – in addition to the weekly portions of Vayakhel-Pekudei – Parshat Hachodesh. This reading heralds the coming of Rosh Chodesh Nisan, the first of the months of our calendar.

Parshat Hachodesh begins with the verse, "This month is for you the first of the months ..." (Shemot 12:2). Embedded in this verse is the mitzvah of Kiddush Hachodesh, the sanctification of the month. The question we would like to address is: Is this Mitzvah in any way relevant to us today? Is this one of those mitzvot which, due to changed historical circumstances, is impossible to fulfill; or is there some role we play in the fulfillment of the mitzvah to this very day?

We know that our calendar has been fixed and predetermined since the days of Hillel, one of the descendants of Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi, who lived in the fourth century of the common era. Until then, from the beginning of Jewish history, indeed since Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon Hakohen were charged with the responsibility of sanctifying the month upon the sighting of the New Moon, the matter had been in the hands of the Sanhedrin or their qualified successors who were "semuchim," i.e. had received "semichah" in a direct chain going back to Moshe Rabbeinu. However, in Hillel's day, the Jewish People who still resided in Eretz Yisrael were faced with persecution and imminent dispersion; and he realized that there would soon be no qualified Beit Din to sanctify the months.

But the question needs to be asked: How does Hillel's fixing of the calendar satisfy the mitzvah that there should be an active Kiddush at the onset of every new month?

The Ramban (Nachmanides), in his glosses to the Rambam's Sefer Hamitzvot (positive commandment #153), maintains that Hillel and his Beit Din sanctified, in advance, every single month from their day to the days of Moshiach. Of course, this approach is based on some halachic assumptions about the feasibility of such a Kiddush, which we will not go into now.

However, the Rambam in Sefer Hamitzvot (positive commandment #153) takes an entirely different approach. He writes that first and foremost the mitzvah of Kiddush Hachodesh through the actual sighting of the moon is a commandment incumbent upon the Beit Din Hagadol (Sanhedrin) in Yerushalayim, and indeed the mitzvah was performed until the days of Abbayei and Rava who lived at about the same time as Hillel. Then, the Rambam goes on to write, there is a Halachah l'Moshe Misinai (part of the Oral Torah) which teaches that in the absence of the Beit Din Hagadol, the current Beit Din declares Rosh Chodesh based on our method of calculation transmitted to us as part of the Oral Torah. And, interestingly, writes the Rambam, this mitzvah is so bound up with the Jewish People's presence in Eretz Yisrael that should there be a time in history when, chas v'shalom (G-d forbid), no Jews would inhabit the Land, there would be no possibility of having a Jewish calendar.

The Ramban attacks the Rambam from several directions. However, due to space constraints, we can only mention one: Where is there a Beit Din of "semuchim" today in Eretz Yisrael which is qualified to perform this Mitzvah?

The following answer is offered by the author of the Meshech Chochmah and others: The Rambam's well-known position is that even today the Rabbis of Eretz Yisrael theoretically could reintroduce the authentic semichah. Since the Jewish People must have a calendar we say the following: We, the residents of Eretz Yisrael, are de facto "musmachim," at least for the purpose of Kiddush Hachodesh. When we decide on the basis of our calculations that a given day is Rosh Chodesh, we are fulfilling the sacred Mitzvah embedded in the words "החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים" - "This month is for you the first of the months ...."

שבת שלום ומבורך

This issue is dedicated in loving memory of  
Yona Yoel ben Eliezer z"l and Yosef ben Yona Yoel z"l

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*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at [www.darchenoam.org](http://www.darchenoam.org) +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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