

V'yak'heil (And he assembled)

by Mark Huey posted 13 March, 2010 www.outreachisrael.net

Exodus 35:1-38:20

1 Kings 7:51-8:21

"Stirred and Willing Hearts"

"Then Moses assembled all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and said to them, 'These are the things that the LORD has commanded *you* to do: For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy *day*, a sabbath of complete rest to the LORD; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death'" (Exodus 35:1-2).

VaYak'heil describes the beginning phases of the construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings. You should recall that the specific description of the *mishkan* (מִשְׁכָּן) or Tabernacle had been given to Moses a number of months earlier, as recorded in various Torah portions. *Terumah* describes the offerings and contributions that were made by the people for its construction. *Tetzaveh* goes into great detail about worship related articles and the specific dedication instructions. *Ki Tissa* relates the trials endured by the Israelites, as they could not patiently wait for Moses to come down from the mountain with this wealth of information.

If you attempt to understand the chronology between the end of *Mishpatim* and the beginning of the construction phase, you see that two forty-day periods had passed, and probably a number of other days. Many Jewish Rabbis have concluded that the construction began on the 11th of Tishri, right after Moses had descended from Mount Sinai after the second forty days and forty nights:

"The glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the mountain top. Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights" (Exodus 24:16-18).

"So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments" (Exodus 34:28).

Without debating the specifics about the actual timing, the Israelites were being prepared for the Lord to dwell in their presence. They had already experienced the trauma at the base of the mountain when the thunder sounded, the lightning flashed, the ground shook, and the blast of *shofars* sounded. They had already determined that Moses needed to be their spokesman and representative before the Holy One.

In recent weeks, they had impatiently rebelled against the Lord and had worshipped a golden calf. Upon Moses' first descent from the mountain, judgment came in the form of death by the sword-wielding Levites or the ensuing plague. After Moses' second descent, the hearts of Israel were definitely prepared for making an offering for the construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings. At this point, our Torah portion *VaYak'heil* begins.

A Shabbat Reminder

Interestingly, as Moses assembled the people of Israel to begin bringing their free will offerings and start construction of the Tabernacle, the admonition to remember *Shabbat* is declared and further defined. Obviously, the Lord is very concerned about the need for a weekly day of rest, or He would not have instructed Moses to mention it again.

Even a project as significant as the construction of the Tabernacle, and the other implements of worship, does not take precedence over the observance of *Shabbat*. The Lord declares *Shabbat* to be a holy day or *yom qodesh* (יִּום קֹדֶשׁ), and indicates that if someone does work, he shall be put to death. The Lord further defines work by indicating that kindling a fire in one's habitation was also a violation of the Sabbath. In other words, God's people are reminded

once again that they are given a choice each and every *Shabbat*. This is a reiteration of the same warning from the previous portion:

“But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for *this* is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people” (Exodus 31:13-14).

Is the Lord trying to make Israel aware of the importance of *Shabbat*? For those of us who are studying the Torah today, the constant repetitions about *Shabbat* should begin to sink into our hearts. Obviously, our Father is very serious about this sign that is supposed to set His people apart.

Collection for Construction

After the *Shabbat* warning, the whole community of Israel is assembled and the collection of articles for the construction project begins. It is evident from the outpouring that the hearts of the people were tenderized for the moment of giving. Certainly, a degree of solemnity circulated among the people as their hearts were beginning to stir toward their free will offerings. Just where was their treasure going to lie? Consider Yeshua's words, “for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21)

During the next thirty-five verses, we see the Hebrew word *lev* (לֵב) or “heart” seven different times. This is very significant, because as we know, the Father is most concerned about the hearts of His people and how they are being turned to Him. Of course, the heart is a very complicated to understand because it has multiple meanings throughout the Scriptures. The word *lev* is “usually rendered as heart but whose range of meaning is extensive...it usually refers to some aspect of the immaterial inner self or being since the heart is considered to be the seat of one's inner nature as well as one of its components” (AMG).¹

In these passages we are introduced to at least two different kinds of hearts, if not more. First, we see the “willing heart” that is inclined to make offerings without any strings attached. Here, the Hebrew verb *nadav* (נָדַב) is coupled in some way with *lev*. *Nadav* means “voluntary desire of the heart to give of oneself or of one's resources to the service of the Lord” (AMG).² The following verses bring forth the absolute willingness of the people of Israel to freely offer all that was necessary for the construction project:

“Take from among you a contribution to the LORD; whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as the LORD's contribution: gold, silver, and bronze...Everyone whose heart stirred him and everyone whose spirit moved him came *and* brought the LORD's contribution for the work of the tent of meeting and for all its service and for the holy garments. Then all whose hearts moved them, both men and women, came *and* brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and bracelets, all articles of gold; so *did* every man who presented an offering of gold to the LORD...The Israelites, all the men and women, whose heart moved them to bring *material* for all the work, which the LORD had commanded through Moses to be done, brought a freewill offering to the LORD” (Exodus 35:5, 21-22, 29).

The other type of heart that is mentioned in this section of Scripture is the “heart of wisdom.” Here, the Hebrew word for wisdom, *chokmah* (חִכְמָה), is coupled with *lev*. *Chokmah* means “wisdom, skill, experience, shrewdness” (AMG).³ The following are examples of this usage in this section of Scripture. Interestingly, you can detect from these passages that God Himself endowed these craftsmen and craftswomen with the “hearts of wisdom” to produce their parts of the Tabernacle:

“All the women whose heart stirred with a skill spun the goats' *hair*” (Exodus 35:26).

¹ Baker and Carpenter, *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 536.

² *Ibid.*, 708.

³ *Ibid.*, 337.

“He also has put in his heart to teach, both he and Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to perform every work of an engraver and of a designer and of an embroiderer, in blue and in purple *and* in scarlet *material*, and in fine linen, and of a weaver, as performers of every work and makers of designs” (Exodus 35:34-35).

The people of Israel responded to not only the offering of materials, but also the construction project from what skill issued forth from their hearts:

“Now Bezalel and Oholiab, and every skillful person in whom the LORD has put skill and understanding to know how to perform all the work in the construction of the sanctuary, shall perform in accordance with all that the LORD has commanded. Then Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every skillful person in whom the LORD had put skill, everyone whose heart stirred him, to come to the work to perform it. They received from Moses all the contributions which the sons of Israel had brought to perform the work in the construction of the sanctuary. And they still *continued* bringing to him freewill offerings every morning. And all the skillful men who were performing all the work of the sanctuary came, each from the work which he was performing” (Exodus 36:1-4).

Many hearts had been stirred during the preceding months. When the opportunity to give arrived, they willfully gave abundantly. In fact, the offering was so overwhelming that Moses had to tell the people to stop bringing materials:

“[A]nd they said to Moses, ‘The people are bringing much more than enough for the construction work which the LORD commanded *us* to perform.’ So Moses issued a command, and a proclamation was circulated throughout the camp, saying, ‘Let no man or woman any longer perform work for the contributions of the sanctuary.’ Thus the people were restrained from bringing *any more*. For the material they had was sufficient and more than enough for all the work, to perform it” (Exodus 36:5-7).

Heart Condition

As you consider *VaYak'hel* with its focus on the heart, it would be a good time to reflect upon your own heart condition. The examples I have given show how the Ancient Israelites whole-heartedly responded to the challenge of building the Tabernacle. Perhaps these heart conditions can be used to bring introspection into our own hearts at this hour of great turmoil in the world. (Think of this examination of the heart like an annual physical examination or a vehicle's timely oil change.)

It is not by “chance” that we are considering this very section of Scripture as the world suffers conflict. Hearts all over the globe are being challenged by decisions that are being made in high government circles. Many people are filled with questions that they believe have no answers. Perhaps the Lord will position you to be available to share the “truth” as you know it. Be prepared to share the “hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). This is an excellent time to get our “hearts stirred” toward the Holy One of Israel, while imploring Him to give us each a “heart of wisdom.”

Just how are we responding to the opportunities presented each day to offer ourselves to the work of the Kingdom? Are you mustering, by your free will, a choice to serve the Holy One with your resources and talents? What about those of you who have been given a “heart of wisdom” with the innate ability to skillfully create objects for the King's use? Are you using your God-given talents for your own benefits or for the building of His Kingdom?

These and a flood of questions come to mind as we ponder our hearts, wills, inclinations, resolutions, and determinations. We must be reminded that the hardened heart is wickedly deceitful as described by the Prophet Jeremiah:

“The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds” (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

With the propensity for wickedness, the Psalmist reminds us that human beings have the tendency to wander away from obedience to the Word:

“With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You” (Psalm 119:10-11).

Of course, the recommended cure is for us to hide the Word in our hearts. By doing so, we might not sin against the Holy One. Perhaps it would be good for us to be reminded of a little “heart check” that Proverbs instructs us to contemplate and consider:

“My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:1-6).

Trusting in God with all your heart, while leaning not upon your own understanding, is critical in maintaining dependence upon the Creator for His leading. Letting Him direct your paths as you acknowledge Him in all your ways gives Him preeminence in your heart and your life. Remember that Yeshua, when asked about the greatest commandment of all, replied with this admonition:

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:36-40).

Clearly, the Messiah wants all of your heart, all of your soul, and all of your mind. This description of the greatest commandment expresses the need for the heart to be totally sold out for the love of the Father. But saying and thinking is one thing. The Apostle John emphasizes how we must let our love for God manifest itself by our actions:

“But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things” (1 John 3:17-20).

Here as you read and reflect on these words, the contrast between “with word or with tongue” versus “in deed and in truth” are quite sobering. How are we measuring up to these strong words? How does your heart respond when you see needs among the brethren? If we are falling short of the goals to extend compassion, perhaps we need to cry out to the Father for more of Him and His stirring of our hearts. We know that if we are His and we ask in faith, He will pour Himself out for us:

“[A]nd whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight” (1 John 3:22).

We thank you, Father, that we can confess to you the condition of our hearts! Stir our hearts Heavenly Father! Soften our hearts with the oil of gladness! Fill us with your Ruach! Make us willing vessels that depend upon You for all things. Prepare us for the days that are ahead and use us that You may be glorified through all that You do through us.

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