

# Parasha Meditation Vayakhel-Pekudei

**Shemot 34:36-40:38**

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

## Learning to Give

### Successful Tabernacle Fundraising

Moshe's fundraising for the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) was easy. Without Moshe having to knock on a single door, all the Jewish people enthusiastically brought donations of materials in abundance for the *Mishkan*. "They came, everyone whose heart lifted him up and everyone whose spirit volunteered him, and they brought Hashem's offering for the Tent of Meeting, and for all its service and for the holy garments."<sup>1</sup> What is the difference between the person "whose heart lifted him up," and the kind of person "whose spirit volunteered him"? Ramban holds that the wise people were lifted by their heart to know how to do the work for the *Mishkan*.<sup>2</sup>

### Between Internal or External Giving

Malbim explains further that the heart is the exterior vessel for the spirit *רוח/Ruach* – Spirit. The spirit raises images from the depth of the soul and reveals them upon the face of the heart. Whereas the spirit is an internal integral part of the soul, the heart is its exterior ruling power, through which Free Choice is expressed.<sup>3</sup> Our Torah verse thus describes two different attitudes with which people gave; those whose internal spirit spurred them to give, and those whose external heart prompted them to give.

### Volunteer Spirit or Open Heart?

There are people whose spirit is filled with good images and volunteerism, yet their heart still does not chose to be generous, because of their love of money. There are others, whose spirit does not volunteer them, yet their heart is generous and loves to give because money is not important to them. Rabbi Gavriel Goldfeder clarifies that some people feel an urge deep down to give, but as the urge comes more to the surface, it meets limitations. A person might really want to give, but he is too attached to his money, time, and personal resources. This person is called one whose "spirit volunteers" but whose heart is limiting. Another kind of person is one who does not feel a deep urge to give, but he doesn't consider his time or money so important, so he is willing to give of them freely. He is called one whose spirit does not move him deeply to give, but his heart is open.

### Generosity Inside and Out

Malbim explains that when it came to donating for the *Mishkan*, everyone had both a volunteer spirit and an open heart. This is why the Torah verse states both that every person was "lifted up by his heart" to have a good will to give, and was moved by "his spirit that volunteered him" to connect deeply through the depth of his faculty of imagination with the great benefit of this generosity

<sup>1</sup> *Shemot* 35:21

<sup>2</sup> Ramban, *Shemot* 35:21

<sup>3</sup> Malbim, *Shemot* 35:21

## Meditation:

Sit comfortably in your chair or cushion, close your eyes and take some deep breaths. Pay good attention to your rhythmic breath, and allow yourself to relax even more.

1. Ask Hashem to help you get in touch with your רוּחַ – *ruach* – spirit, the deepest spiritual backdrop seat of your emotions.
2. Continue breathing deeply while you connect with your *ruach* – the mediator between your *neshama* which is inherently G\*dly, and your *nefesh* which secures your physical survival. Your *ruach* is in between.
3. Visualize the three letters spelling out the word רוּחַ/*ruach* – Spirit. The first letter ר – *reish* means head and has the shape of the profile of the back of the head. ר – *reish* is connected with the *neshama*. Imagine an illuminated ר – *reish*. Breathe into the ר – *reish*. Inhale *rei*, exhale from your mouth to the sound of *shshsh*...
4. Now imagine the last letter of the word רוּחַ/*ruach*, the ח – *chet* which means sin and is connected with the body. Visualize its shape of a closed container which separates between the body and the higher realms. As you breathe deeply imagine the two legs of the ח – *chet* as if they were the two legs of your body.
5. The middle letter ו – *vav*, which means “and” corresponds to the *ruach* – the connecting point between the *neshama* and the body. As you breathe slowly and deeply connect to your רוּחַ – *ruach*.
6. Allow your *ruach* to take you back to a time when you felt especially fulfilled and happy. Get in touch with this exhilarating happiness. Let the waves of happiness emanating from your *ruach* wash over you.
7. Now take some of this happiness and place it into an imaginary box, wrap it beautifully and tie it with a ribbon. Imagine sending this gift to someone you love, and to someone who really needs it. You can send your spiritual gift to several different people without depleting yourself from its content.
8. Continue sending this gift to as many people as you feel like. You can always send it again at a different time.
9. Now let's move to get in touch with our heart. Place both of your hands on your heart and try to feel the rhythmic beating of your heart. If you can't feel it there, you may move one hand to your throat.
10. Think about a material thing that your heart desires very much. It could be a garment, jewelry, money, an electronic item, or your favorite food.
11. Imagine a person you love very much, and imagine how much you would like to share with that person. You would love the person you love to have what you have.

**12.** Choose one of your favorite material possessions and pray to Hashem silently to help you let go of your attachments to this item. Imagine how life would be manageable even without this favorite thing, especially considering how you could make someone else so happy.

**13.** Now imagine your heart enveloped by a wall. Ask Hashem to help you open your heart. Implore Hashem with the following short prayer: “פֶּתַח לִבִּי”/petach libi – open my heart! Inhale “פֶּ/pe” exhale “תַּח/tach,” inhale “לִ/li,” exhale “בִּ/bi.” – “פֶּתַח לִבִּי”/ “petach libi!” Visualize a small opening in the wall surrounding your heart expanding and getting bigger and bigger filled with light.

**14.** Decide now in your heart to give away your favorite thing to a person whom you love so much. If it is too difficult to give away your favorite object, you can practice on something which you like very much but it is not your most favorite thing. If this too is hard, then you can practice on something you like even less, and gradually as you repeat this meditation you can learn to open your heart more and more, to give even more. Tap your hands and feet gently before opening your eyes.

### Notes:

It is important to act upon the decision you made during the meditation and give the actual material gift to the person within twenty four hours. This way you ensure that your heart won't turn you astray to make you change your mind. So give your gift in real life today!

In Yonatan ben Uziel's Aramaic translation of the Torah, the Hebrew phrase “all whose spirit volunteered them” is translated to mean “one whose spirit was perfected to the level of prophecy.” This person has the ability to reach such a level of refinement that s/he becomes a *Mishkan*, his/her heart becomes an altar, and his/her clothing become the holy garments.<sup>4</sup> When we connect with the spirit of giving inside of us and learn to give with an open heart, our gift has a much greater impact. Therefore, it is better to give something small with a generous spirit and a complete heart than to give something greater, which our heart is not really ready to give yet. On the surface the gift may be the same gift as something given in a begrudging way, but on the energetic level they are light-years apart. There is even the kind of person who has nothing to give, but if s/he could, s/he would give everything s/he had.<sup>5</sup> Hashem, knows a person's thoughts,<sup>6</sup> and considers as if this person has built the entire Mishkan.

<sup>4</sup> Yonatan ben Uziel, *Shemot* 35:21.

<sup>5</sup> Malbim, *Shemot* 35:21.

<sup>6</sup> I *Divrei HaYamim* 28:9.

# About Us



## **Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum**

*Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Chana Bracha also began her practice as a spiritual healer through Emuna, tefila and energy work.*

*For more than two decades Chana Bracha has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States. She creates curricula emphasizing women's spiritual empowerment through traditional Torah values. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin located in the Judean Hills of Israel offers a unique program to women of all ages and backgrounds to learn in a holistic Torah study environment that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Intensive textual study of Tanach, Halacha and Chassidut are woven together with creative spiritual expression, and connection with the land of Israel through organic gardening, herbology, Jewish sources of healing and sustainable living. Classes in Jewish mysticism, Chassidism and Jewish meditation are directed at the spiritual thirst so prominent in our times.*

*In 2010 Rebbetzin Chana Bracha published her first book, *Women at the Crossroads: A Woman's Perspective on the Weekly Torah Portion*.*

*Chana Bracha has a married son and several granddaughters. She lives with her husband and younger son on the land of the Judean hills, Israel.*

*If you are interested in:*

*Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin contact [info@berotbatayin.org](mailto:info@berotbatayin.org) or in Spiritual Healing with Rebbetzin Chana Bracha, please contact her at [director@berotbatayin.org](mailto:director@berotbatayin.org)*

*or visit her blog: <http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2010/11/emunah-healing-for-women.html>*

## **Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin – Holistic Torah Study for Women on the Land of Israel**

At Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin, we weave together Torah studies with creative spiritual expression, connecting with the Land of Israel, and healthy, organic lifestyles. In the heart of the Judean Hills, with its serene beauty, our students experience an approach to Judaism that bridges mind, body and soul. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin is designed as a micro-community within the Village of Bat Ayin where women of all ages and backgrounds engage in intense Torah learning as part of an integrated, participatory approach to Torah living.

## **Come Learn With Us!**

Beginner and advanced levels are offered for women of all ages and religious backgrounds. Whether your interest in Judaism has recently been ignited, or you are seeking a wider perspective, Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin offers the opportunity to improve your learning skills while strengthening your commitment to Judaism within the parameters of Halachah – all while engaging your inner creative spirituality, working the Land, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

## **Support Our School!**

You have the unique opportunity to help us continue to build and amplify the light of Torah on the Land of Israel. With your help we can increase our ability to provide women an extraordinary Torah environment where they can build a solid Jewish foundation which will have an impact for generations to come.

