



Jewish Congregation of Marco Island

A CLOSE LOOK AT TORAH

Focus on a question in the weekly portion

March 14, 2026



“Fostering diverse modes of attention to textual details cultivates correlative forms of attention to the world and divine reality”

Michael Fishbane (1943-), *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְעִסוֹק בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָה :

“Tachometer Torah”



...read down to the red line

Parashat-haShavu'a Stats

Weekly Portion: vaYaq'heil-P'qudei

Consists of: Exodus 35:1-40:38

Sequence—

in Exodus: 10th and 11th of 11

in annual Torah cycle: 22nd and 23rd of 54



A Salient Selection from the Portion -

Exodus 35:1-10, 35:20-22

Context: *Exodus, second of the Five Books of the Torah, is an account of how God liberated the Israelites from Egypt and entered into a Covenant with us at Mount Sinai, and a record of the legislations we undertook for the conduct of the society we were to establish in the Promised Land.*

Content: *With the last few week's portions having dealt mostly with the specifications for the components of the Mishkan (Divine Abode) the Israelites will build as their portable Shrine, we now read about the capitalization of that project through the free-will offerings of the community.*

35:1] - Moses then convoked the whole Israelite community and said to them: **“These are the things that The Eternal One has commanded are to be done:** [35:2] - On six days work may be done; but The Seventh Day will be sacred to you, a shabbat of complete cessation dedicated to The Eternal One; whoever does any productive work therein, shall be put to death. [35:3] - You shall kindle no fire throughout your settlements on the Shabbat day.”

35:4] - Moses said further to the whole Israelite community: **“This is what The Eternal One has commanded:**

וַיִּקְהַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל עֵדֹת בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אֱלֹהִים
הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת
אֹתָם שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה
וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי יִהְיֶה לָכֶם קִדְּשׁ
שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּתוֹן לַיהוָה כָּל הָעֹשֶׂה בּוֹ
מְלָאכָה יוּמָת לֹא תִבְעְרוּ אֵשׁ בְּכֹל
מִשְׁבְּתֵיכֶם בַּיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל כָּל עֵדֹת בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה
יְהוָה לֵאמֹר

- more over

35:5a] - “ ‘Take from among you gifts to The Eternal One; **everyone willing of heart shall bring it** the contribution of The Eternal One:

35:5b] - “ ‘gold, silver, and copper; [35:6] - blue, purple, and crimson yarns, fine linen, and goats’ hair; [35:7] - red-dyed ramskins, yellow-dyed ramskins, and acacia wood; [35:8] - oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the aromatic incense; [35:9] - lapis lazuli and other set stones, for the *efode* and the breastplate.

35:10] - “ ‘And let all among you **who are skilled artisans come** forth to make all that The Eternal One has commanded’.”

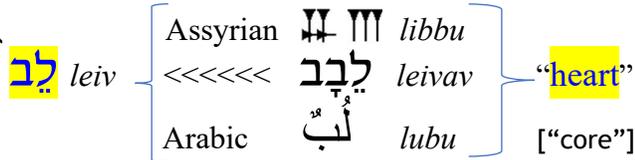
35:20] - At that, the whole Israelite community left Moses’ presence, [35:21] - whereupon **everyone whose heart exalted them—everyone whose spirit so moved them—came, bringing the contribution of The Eternal One** for the work of the Tent of Meeting and for all its service and for the sacred vestments. [35:22] - Men and women (**all the willing hearts** to make a sacred offering of gold to The Eternal One) came bringing brooches, earrings, rings, and pendants— gold objects of all kinds.

קחו מאתכם תרומה ליהוה כל נדיב לבו יביאה את תרומת יהוה

זהב וכסף וינחשת ותכלת וארגמן ותולעת שני ושש ועזים וערת אילים מאדמים וערת תחשים ועצי שטים ושמן למאור ובשמים לשמן המשחה ולקטרת הסמים ואבני שהם ואבני מלאים לאפוד ולחשן

וכל חכם לב בכם יבאו ויעשו את כל אשר צוה יהוה

ויצאו כל עדת בני ישראל מלפני משה ויבאו כל איש אשר נשאו לבו וכל אשר נדבה רוחו אתו הביאו את תרומת יהוה למלאכת אהל מועד ולכל עבדתו ולבגדי הקדש ויבאו האנשים על הנשים כל נדיב לב הביאו חח ונזם וטבעת וכומז כל כלי זהב וכל איש אשר הניף תנופת זהב ליהוה



261x in TaNaCH to signify

- the inner person;
- the soul;
- the mind, as organ of intellect, reflection, and memory;
- moral character;
- conscience;
- temperament and inclination;
- seat of the emotions and impulses.

<p>נָדִיב לֵב < verb נ-ד-ב “being willing”</p> <p>adjective נָדִב “one who is willing”</p> <p>verb מִתְנַדֵּב “offer willingly; volunteer”</p> <p>noun נִדְבָה “a freewill offering; a donation”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">∴</p> <p>35:5, 35:22] - willing of heart</p>	<p>חָכָם לֵב < verb ח-כ-ם “being wise”</p> <p>noun חֲכָמָה “wisdom; sagacity”</p> <p>adjective חָכָם “wise; sagacious”</p> <p>noun חָכָם “a sage; a scholar; one trained or skilled”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">∴</p> <p>35:10] - skilled artisans</p>
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SEMANTICS

donation < Latin <i>dōnāre</i> “to give”	↔	contribution < Latin <i>cōn</i> “with” + <i>tribuere</i> “to bring”
נִדְבָה < נ-ד-ב <i>nadav</i> “to be willing ”	↔	תְּרוּמָה < ר-ו-מ <i>rum</i> “to raise high ”

35:21 - כל אִשׁוֹר **נִדְבָה רִיחוֹ** אֲתוֹ
 everyone whose **spirit so moved** them

כָּל אִישׁ אִשׁוֹר **נִשְׂאוֹ לֵבּוֹ**
 everyone whose **heart exalts** them

“**exalt**” verb נ-ש-א “**lift up**”

➔

“**moved**; prompted; impelled”

⬆

“**exalted**; raised up; lifted”

A) Psalm 100:2 -

בָּאוּ לְפָנָיו בְּרִנָּה עֲבָדוּ אֶת יְהוָה בְּשִׂמְחָה

O serve The Eternal One with joy;
 come into His Presence with glad song....



- more over

יביאה את תרומת ה' - פסוק זה מראה באצבע כי לבד המורגש יש המושכל
 B) Chayim ibn-Attar (1696-1742), *Or haChayim* on Exodus 35:5 - "...shall bring **it**
 the contribution of The Eternal One" - This verse clearly demonstrates that [in higher
 purposes, such as the building of the *Mishkan*,] in addition to the palpable dimension there is
 as well an intangible aspect.

והוא מאמרם ז"ל כי מעשה התרומה מושכל היא בחינת השכינה כי לה יקרא
 תרומת ה'

Now this is the teaching of our sages of antiquity: that the contribution for the *Mishkan*
 included an intangible element arising from the *Sh'chinah*
 [Divine Presence], that "it" which [the Torah text] refers to
 as "the contribution of The Eternal One."

תְּרוּמָה *t'rumah*
 "contribution; offering"
 from verb א-ש-נ "exalt"

ועל ידי מעשה התרומה יפעיל בה דבר טוב
 ויחבר אוהל בל ימוט

It was by means of this [intangible] "offering" that the work was successfully enacted
 thereby, assembling the components of the Tent so that it would not collapse.

ועיקר הרצון במעשה הוא המושכל והוא אומר יביאה

Thus it is that the most indispensable aspect of the manufacture [of the *Mishkan*] was
 that intangible [aspect of God's involvement], which is why the Torah text [in 35:5] reads
 "shall bring **it**."

פירוש יביא לבחינה הנעלמת עם תרומת ה' וביאר הכתוב מי הוא אשר יביאה
 אמר כל נדיב לבו

The meaning of "one shall bring [one's donation]" comes from the inner significance that
 this gift is conjoined together with "the contribution of The Eternal One. So it is that the
 Scriptural text elaborates, regarding "all who would bring **it**" [signifying gifts for God,] by
 adding: "everyone willing of heart [shall bring **it**]"—namely, the involvement of God."

פירוש העושה דבר מנשיאות הלב אשר ידבנו לבו לצד התנועות הרוחנית
 השוכן בלב בחשק הדבר יפעיל במושכל נעלם

The meaning of all of which is that one performs an action from an exaltation of the
 heart, which prompts their heart towards that spiritual inclination which resides in the
 heart— by means of which desire, giving substance to the ephemeral [by actualizing God's
 Own Gift, in return].

אבל אם יביא התרומה בלא נדיבות לב אין זה פועל במושכל

But should one bring the contribution without willing-heartedness, such a gift cannot
 actualize the ephemeral.

C) Psalm 127:1 -

אם יהיה לא יבנה בית
 If The Eternal One has not built the house,
 שוא עמלו בוניו בו
 then vain were the labors of those building on it.



- continued

D) Aaron Lewin of Reisha (1880-1941), haD'rash v'ha-Iyun on Exodus 35:10 -

וְכֹל חָכֵם לֵב בְּכֶם יָבֵאוּ

“Let every **wise-hearted** person among you **come**

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה
and do what The Eternal One has commanded” -

If you wish to perform a *mitzvah*, **do it with expedition**; wasting time on clever expositions simply delays your action.

Hence this verse informs us: “let the one **who is truly wise**— and, accordingly, eager to fulfill the commandments of The Eternal One— not waste too much time discussing them, but **set about it at once** to translate his resolve into action.”

papercut *sukkah* decoration
by Joseph Tz'vi Geiger - Tz'fat, 1910

E) Mishnah, Pirquei Avot 6:20 -

הוּי עֹז כַּנְמֵר וְקַל כַּנְשֵׁר וְרָץ כַּצְּבִי וְגִבּוֹר כַּאֲרִי

Be mighty as a leopard, soaring as an eagle, **swift as a stag**, and bold as a lion
לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹן אֲבִיךָ שְׁבַשְׁמִים
to do the Will of your Celestial Parent.



שְׂמֵנָה מַעֲלוֹת יֵשׁ בְּצַדִּיקָה זֹו לַמַּעֲלָה מִזֹּו

F) RaMBaM (Musa ibn-Maimun, 1135-1204), Mishneh Torah, Gifts to the Poor 10 -



There are eight degrees of charitable giving, each one greater than the next. מעלה גדולה שאין למעלה ממנה זה המחזיק ביד ישראל שמך ונותן לו מתנה או הלואה או עושה עמו שותפות או ממציא לו מלאכה כדי לחזק את ידו עד שלא יצטרך לבריות לשאול

The greatest among them (than which, there is none higher) is to give aid to a fellow Israelite— by means of giving a gift; making a loan; entering into a partnership; or furnishing him with a livelihood— sufficient that he no longer be in need of support from others.

RaMBaM describes four successively lower levels of giving, concluding with these lowest three rungs on the ladder:

פחות מזה שיתן לו אחר שישאל

Less meritorious than that is [failure to anticipate the need, and] **responding only when petitioned**.

פחות מזה שיתן לו פחות מן הראוי בסבר פנים יפות

Less meritorious than that is [responding to the need willingly, but] furnishing less than is required.

פחות מזה שיתן לו בעצב

The least meritorious level is **responding to the request resentfully** [للأسف “unhappily”].

G) David Feinstein (1929-2020), *Kol Dodi* on Exodus 35:22 -

וַיָּבִאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים עַל הַנָּשִׁים כָּל נְדִיב לֵב הַבְּיָאוּ

So the men came, in addition to the women— all those of willing hearts— and brought [every manner of gold jewelry]....

There is a certain ambiguity in this verse, describing the offering of the women's gold jewelry for the building of the *Mishkan*. It is not clear from the phrasing whether the men and women came as equals, or which of them took precedence (since RaSHI says that **the preposition על *al***, which literally means “upon,” can also be translated as “with”). We propose that these two alternative meanings refer to **two different attitudes, both of which are relevant** in the context of this narrative.

If the meaning of על *al* is “in addition to,” it indicates that **the initiative to donate their gold jewelry to God came from the women**. Thus the men— who had at least a concurrent share in ownership of these items as “community property”— came **along with (על *al*)** the women, to demonstrate their concurrence in **the women's gifts for God's Glory** redounding to the credit of them both.

On the other hand, the word על *al* (“upon; over”) suggests that the men **had primacy over** the women in this matter. Taking this reading in hand, the intimation is that **the men took it upon themselves** to urge their wives to give up their finery, **in expiation for their (the men) having earlier given up** their own ornaments for the fabrication of the Golden Calf.

It may be that the Torah phrased this verse ambiguously, precisely in order to indicate that **both** interpretations are correct: both the men **and** the women came to bring the offering for the construction of the *Mishkan*— **with equal enthusiasm, but with differing motivations**.

H) Central Conference of American Rabbis, *American Reform Responsum* 52-55 (1983) -

A man known or reputed to be a gangster wishes to make a contribution to the Temple. **Should his gift be accepted?**

The question may also arise as to **whether a plaque should be put up** in appreciation of his gift, as is done with other generous donors.

There is considerable discussion in the legal literature which relates to the question raised here. The chain of Halachic reasoning begins with the verse

You may not bring the hire of a male or female prostitute into the house of The Eternal One, your God, in payment of a sacred vow, for both those are an abomination [Deuteronomy 23:19].

Aaron of Barcelona [1235-1300], in his *Sefer ha-Chinuch*, explains the reason for the prohibition as follows:

If a lamb is brought to the Altar in the fulfillment of a vow, its purpose is to purify the heart. However, bringing a lamb which had been given as the hire of a harlot would bring back lascivious memories of the sin.

The law is carried over to the Mishnah [T'murah 6:2] and thence to the Talmud [T'murah 29a ff., Baba Qama 65b].

In the Talmud, **the application of this Torah law is generally restricted**. There are opinions given, that the word “harlot” used in the verse applies only to sexual relations with a married woman (which could not be legitimized by marriage). Other opinions say that only the object

itself (e.g., the lamb) may not be given— but that if the object is changed (if it be converted into money, or if grain given to the harlot be converted into flour, or olives into oil), then these converted objects are no longer unfit, and may be brought to the Temple as a sacred offering. So Maimonides records this as the Law [Hilchot Issurei Mizbei'ach 14]:

Only the object itself— that is, the payment in its original form— is prohibited to be brought to the altar.

As such, Tradition regards the Torah's "hire of a harlot" as **the only "dirty money" mentioned in Scripture as prohibited** as Temple gifts, and even these are restricted to the "hire" in its original form. But there is a further and more important question involved here. The law as given in Bible and Talmud applies only to the Temple in Jerusalem and its Altar; can it be legitimately extended to apply also to the synagogue?

There is **considerable doubt about the justification of thus transferring and extending the old Temple restriction to the synagogue.** The doubt is clearly expressed by the *Magen Avraham* [Abraham Gombinder (1635-1682), in his commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch* - Orach Hayyim 153:21], who says that the law refers only to the Jerusalem Temple, and who asserts that that **no classic deciser has extended it to apply to the synagogue** except Jacob Weil (in whose responsa [c. 1425] we could not locate the obstruction thus referenced). Therefore the *Magen Avraham* decides that, since there is doubt whether the prohibition really applies to the synagogue at all, any associated question on the matter should be decided *l'kula*— i.e., permissively.

Moses Isserles [(1525-1572), commenting on the *Shulchan Aruch* text just cited,] does apply the law to the synagogue, and says that no Torah scroll or other sacred synagogue object may be accepted from "the hire of a harlot." However, he adds that money— presuming that the gift had been converted into cash— may be used. As a matter of fact, the application of the Temple Law to the synagogue had already been made before Isserles (i.e., before the sixteenth

century) by Rabbenu Y'rucham of Provence [14th century], whose *Toldot Adam v'Chavah* [Section Chavah, Path 23, part 1] stipulates only that "the hire," etc., may not be used for a Torah scroll or for synagogue candelabra. So as far as the law is concerned, then it is clear that as long as the man you refer to does not give the actual money (coins or gift) which changed hands in a prostitution transaction, his contribution is not prohibited by the *Halachah*.



However, our present concern is not restricted to the letter of the law, even though it does have weight with us; **we are concerned also with the moral effect upon the community** if we accept such a gift. This is a delicate matter and must be carefully weighed.

In our judgment you should accept the gift, because it is his obligation (a *mitzvah*) to support the synagogue and **we have no right to prevent a sinner from performing a righteous act.** For example, it is a *mitzvah* incumbent upon a Cohein to bless the people (in the *Duchan*)— but suppose a Cohein has committed a grievous sin; should we allow him to bless the people? To which Maimonides says [*Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Prayer 15:6] that such a person has an obli-

gation to perform the *mitzvah*. RaMBam explains:

We may not tell a man to add to his sin by neglecting his religious duty to God.

So it is in this case. The man about whom you inquire, as a Jew, has an obligation to support the synagogue according to his means. We have no right to prevent him from doing his duty.

But as to putting up a plaque honoring him, that should not be done. Of course, in general, Jewish tradition favors recording and publicizing the names of donors, in order to encourage other donors. In this case, however, the putting up of a plaque would also be honoring him as a person, and such a man is not one whom the synagogue “delights to honor” [Esther 6:7].

Yet even in this case, something constructive can be done. If he wishes to honor his parents or some other close relative, a plaque can be put up in their name, with his name included as the donor. In this case, besides giving a gift to the synagogue, he is honoring his parents, which makes it a double *mitzvah*.