



Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Some of you may not know that Danny served on the Highland Park Environmental Commission for six years in the 1990's. He has had an interest in environmentalism from a very early age. When Danny had to do a report in my Political Science class in eighth grade on a bill in the Minnesota Legislature, he chose to discuss a bill proposing to outlaw non-recyclable milk containers ("paperboard cartons".) The seed of this D'var Torah is from's Danny's life-long interest in recycling.

Parshat Terumah is about a different type of "recycling" and the message is much more profound. The type of recycling we are talking about is commonly referred to as "repurposing," that of taking an object and reusing it in a different way than originally intended or envisioned.

The entire *parsha* discusses the plans for the construction of the *Mishkan*, the portable sanctuary. At the beginning of the *parsha*, the materials used to build the *Mishkan* are listed. Since there was no Home Depot in the desert at that time, one obvious question is: Where did all of these materials come from?

One answer is that the gold, the silver, and the fabric were "borrowed" from the *Mitzrim* when *B'nai Yisrael* left *Mitzrayim*. According to *Rashi* (Shemot 12:36) even though *B'nai Yisrael* asked to borrow these items, the *Mitzrim* begged them to take twice as much and keep it, to encourage them to leave *Mitzrayim* as quickly as possible. The metals were melted down and recast into components of the *Mishkan*, and the fabrics were unraveled, respun, dyed, woven, and reused for the coverings of the *Mishkan*.

The profound message conveyed by this repurposing is that one may use even negative reminders of their past in a positive way that enhances their current spiritual life. This may be done with physical objects, and it also must be done with both positive and negative emotional experiences (the negative ones are colloquially known as "baggage") in order for us to attain self-actualization, the highest level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow's hierarchy ranks human needs in a pyramid, and the higher needs can be satisfied only when the lower needs are met. Essentially, you can't build an attic without building a foundation, and all the floors between, first.)

All of us have baggage – especially negative emotional experiences from our own personal *Mitzrayims* – which we carry around with us yet fail to confront day after day. We act surprised whenever we notice that this baggage is still with us. In truth, it will always be with us, since it is ours alone and part of who we are, and it is actually gold, silver, and fabric. All we need to do is to recast or respin that baggage in a way that has positive meaning to us

In this spirit, We are pleased to let you know that we are engaged to be married (to each other, *noch besser*). We have both been through divorces, so we both have baggage we carry with us from our own metaphorical trips to *Mitzrayim*. Together, we pray that *HaShem* will give us the ability to repurpose all of that baggage in a positive way and build a *Bayit Ne'eman B'Yisrael*.

Also in the spirit of repurposing, we are pleased to announce that Elise Gonzales has obtained 60 used Birnbaum *Siddurim* for a nominal amount which has been graciously donated by an anonymous donor. Although the *siddurim* are paid for (and may even be here tonight for all we know as of when we write this on Friday morning,) we suggest that each one of us consider repurposing one or more *siddurim* by rededicating them to Ohel in memory or honor of loved ones.

Nicht gerain Shabbos, we propose an amount large enough to make it meaningful to you. (At least the value equivalent of half a *shekel*, it being *Adar* and all that.) We will, *bli neder*, see to it that appropriate labels are printed up for the *siddurim* and that the honorees or the family of the departed loved ones are notified in an appropriate manner.

Shabbat Shalom,

Jennifer Kotzker
Danny Geretz

<i>Adar</i>	Month in the Hebrew Calendar during which "fundraising" was done during Mishnaic times. Now we seem to do it all year 'round. Also, the month where it is traditional to lighten up a little about comments such as this one.
<i>Bayit Ne'eman B'Yisrael</i>	A faithful (solid) household in Israel
<i>Bnai Yisrael</i>	Jewish nation
<i>Mishkan</i>	Portable sanctuary
<i>Mitzrayim, Mitzrim</i>	Egypt, Egyptians
<i>Nicht gerain Shabbos</i>	This is totally inappropriate to discuss on Shabbat, but we're going to say it anyway
<i>Noch besser</i>	We can't believe how fortunate we are (literally, even better)
<i>Parsha(t)</i>	Weekly Torah portion (of)
<i>Rashi</i>	Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaqi, a seminal medieval French commentator/vintner
<i>Shekel</i>	Biblical standard measure of weight
<i>Siddurim</i>	Prayerbooks

Next Kabbalat Shabbat:

Friday, February 29, 2008 - Parshat Vayakhel - Kabbalat Shabbat

Join us for Kabbalat Shabbat at the Center School, 319 North 3rd Avenue, Highland Park at 6:00 pm. (Hadlakat Neirof at 5:30 pm)