

Almost the entire Torah portion of Vayakhel centers on the construction of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle. While we would expect the Torah to be lengthy in describing the exact donations, gifts, and necessary materials, the superfluous language at the conclusion of the discussion is most surprising. As a postscript to the collection process, the Torah tells us, "Moshe commanded that they proclaim throughout the camp, saying, man and woman shall not do more work toward the gifts of the sanctuary." Immediately after the people stopped bringing materials, the Torah tells us "The work had been enough for all of the necessary labor, and there was extra."

Why does the Torah need to tell us about the orders to stop, is it not obvious that they stopped collecting when they had all that was needed? In addition, the summation appears to contradict itself. On the one hand we are told that the donated materials were sufficient and no more materials were needed. However, in the very next verse we read that there was extra. Which of these verses is accurate? Did the collections suffice or was there in fact a surplus? And if there was a surplus what happened to the extra donations?

Judaism means so many different things to so many Jews, however the one constant is that Judaism means a sense of community. Irrespective of denomination, sect, or gender every Jew feels that they are a small, yet integral part of a greater whole. There are many different events and opportunities that succeed in engendering this beautiful feeling from prayer to holidays to life cycle events. However, one seminal event that truly epitomizes the intense communal responsibility that each Jew feels was the building of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle in the desert.

At an emotional moment in our nascent history, following the calamitous events of the golden calf which challenged the very foundations of Judaism, the building of this magnificent structure was certain to help repair the broken hearts and shattered souls of this downtrodden nubile nation. It was not merely the structure of the Tabernacle, but also the process of its construction that would so impact the Jewish people. At this moment, no Jew had to be exhorted to open their wallets, they only had to be told that it was time to close their wallets. They so much wanted to join in this community project that they would not stop donating. Moshe had to practically beg them to stop bringing materials, because they had everything they needed. However, words would not suffice. The desire to contribute to a communal need burnt so deeply in their hearts and souls, that despite Moshe's exhortations, there was a surplus.

The Gerrer Rebbe explains that this was actually Moshe's greatest fear. To have donated material that could not be used meant that there was a Jew who wanted to contribute to community needs and in fact did donate, yet his gifts would be rejected, his community offering would go untouched. At the very moment when community involvement was foremost on their minds, could communal rejection be a possibility? Moshe could not even stomach this painful thought. He tried his hardest to insure that no donation would be extra, and each gift would have a purpose. Yet, the unthinkable occurred and a surplus was found. The Rebbe says that at that moment Moshe received divine assistance and miraculously was able to find a use for every donation. The two phrases summarizing the gifts, enough and extra are not at all contradictory; they most accurately describe the miracle of the surplus materials. Although in reality there was extra, miraculously it turned into enough as a need was found for each and every gift.

We think that miracles only occur in the most dramatic or life altering events, yet it happened here as well. Why? Because the opportunity to contribute to a community cause, to be part of a far greater whole, is in fact a life altering event, and not one to be ignored or G-D forbid rejected.

May we all merit to see what that generation saw - that communal life is a transformed life.

**Shabbat Shalom
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