

Shabbat Vayehel ShaLom



by Phyllis Chesler

A **generous heart** (“nadiv lev”) and a **wise heart** (“hacham lev”), are mentioned seven times in this parsha. What is the difference between the two? A “generous” heart (mentioned twice), gives and keeps giving. Indeed, the Torah—and the rabbis tell us that the Israelites gave too much and had to be stopped, their generosity simply overflowed.

Nehama Leibowitz, citing the Ramban, discusses why Moshe had to stop them. She also cautions us, in the name of R. Yehudah Ben Pazi, that such overflowing generosity or enthusiasm can lead to actions that are both good and evil as in the people “breaking off their ornaments to give to the golden calf.” (Yerushalmi, Shekalim, I, 1).

A “wise heart” (lev chachma, mentioned five times), belongs to someone who has been endowed by God and/or who has mastered a skill, a craft, and is therefore disciplined, restrained, knows exactly what to do and does no more and no less. Only this kind of person can measure, build, sculpt, sew, and weave the mishkan, God’s dwelling on earth.

I find the image above very poignant, even whimsical, as our sturdy Levite ancestors march off the pages of the Torah and into eternity, engraved forever on our hearts.

Shabbat Vayehel Shalom.