

Having issued the call for contributions, the Torah tells us that the people gave generously of their gold jewelry:

וַיָּבֹאוּ הָאָנָשִׁים עַל הַנָּשִׁים כָּל יְדֵיב לֵב הֵבִיאוּ חֶח וְנָחִם וְשִׁבְעַת וְכֹמֶז
כָּל כְּלֵי זָהָב וְכָל אִישׁ הֵנִיף תְּנוּפֶת זָהָב לָהּ. (שמות לה:כב)

(A) Then came men and women alike, all who were generous of heart; (V) they brought הָהָה-hah⁽³⁾, and נֶזֶם-nezem-ringlets⁽¹⁾, and טַבַּעַת-taba'at-signet-ring⁽²⁾, and וְכֻמָּז-khumaz⁽⁴⁾, every kind of gold object, everyone who wished to elevate an elevation-offering of gold to God; (Exod. 35:22)

We will come back to the first part (A) of this verse later. For now, let's examine the second part (B), the list of the four types of jewelry that they gave to create the Mishkan: **חָתָם וְזָנוֹב וְטַבַּעַת וְכִנָּוָה** (familiar ones first) ¶ (1). **זָנוֹב-Nezem**: We recognize this word from the encounter of Abraham's servant with Rebekah:

וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר פָּלוּ הַגְּמָלִים לִשְׁתּוֹת וַיִּקַּח הָאִישׁ זָהָב זָרָה בָּקָע מִזֶּשְׁקָלוֹ... (בר' כד:כב)
It was, when the camels had finished drinking, that the man took a gold זָהָב, a half-coin in weight and gave it to her. (Gen.24:22)

Lavan sees the gold **זָהָב** on his sister and immediately concludes that she will be set for life. It is clear that a **זָהָב** is a **nose-ring** because in that same story it tells us so explicitly: **וָאָשֶׁם הִנֵּחַ עַל אָפֶה** - *I put the ring on her nose*. (Gen. 24:47). But later on, in another story (Gen. 35:2), we learn that a **זָהָב** is something that you put on your **ear**: **הַנְּמִיִּם אָשֶׁר בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם** - *the rings that were in their ears* (Gen. 35:4). Thus, a **זָהָב** is either a **nose-ring**, or an **earring**. Fast forward to the Golden Calf episode in last week's parasha. When the people want to make an idol out of gold Aaron says to them: **פָּרְקוּ זָמִי הַזֶּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּאָזְנֵי וּבְנִיתֵיכֶם וּבְיָבֵיאוֹ וְהֵבִיאוּ אֵלַי** - *remove the gold rings that are in the ears of your wives, your sons and your daughters, and bring [them] to me!* (Exod. 32:2) Following which: **וַיִּתְפָּרְקוּ כָּל הָעָם אֶת זָמֵמִי הַזֶּהָב** - *All the people broke off the gold rings that were in their ears, and brought [them] to Aaron* (Exod. 32:3). Elsewhere in the Bible a **זָהָב** is either a **nose-ring** or an **earring**.

¶ (2) **טבעת-Taba'at**: When Pharaoh elevates Joseph, he gives him his **טבעת מעל ידו ויתן אותה על טבעתו** **וַיִּסֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶת טַבַּעְתּוֹ מֵעַל יָדוֹ וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָהּ עַל טַבַּעַת יוֹסֵף**-*And Pharaoh removed his טבעת from his hand and placed it on Joseph's hand*, (Gen. 41:42). Similarly, in the Book of Esther when Ahashverosh elevates Haman., he gives him his **טבעת מעל ידו ויתנה להמן. טבעתו** **וַיִּסֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת טַבַּעְתּוֹ מֵעַל יָדוֹ וַיִּתְּנָהּ לְחָמָן. וַיִּסֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת טַבַּעְתּוֹ מֵעַל יָדוֹ וַיִּתְּנָהּ לְחָמָן**-*Thereupon the king removed his טבעת from his hand and gave it to Haman*. (Esther 3:10) **טבעת** is a **signet ring** or just simply, a **ring** that one puts on a finger.

¶(3) **חֵבֶה**-*hah*: is more difficult to parse. It only occurs six other times in the Bible. In two of those it refers to a kind of *pin* that



Ancient Egyptian gold Jewelry including pins, earrings, rings, and beaded gold necklace.

is placed in the nose:

ושמתי **תחי** באפך ומתי **תח**
*I will place My **תח** in your nose, and My bit between your jaws* (2 Kings 19:28) and elsewhere as a kind of **pin** in the cheek or jaws:

וְשׁוּבָה בְּתִידָךְ וּנְתַתִּי מַחִים בְּלִחְיֶיךָ

I will turn you around and put תָּחִים in your jaws (Ezek. 38:4). Medieval commentator, Rabbi David Kimchi¹ presents this definition in his influential dictionary, Sefer Hashorashim:

ולפי דעתי שהוא החלי שהוא כמיו **מחט** שנוקבין ומתברין בו שתי שפחות החלוק מתחת הגרון וקורין לו בלע"ז אישפינילה [אגו די פומילון]

*In my opinion, which is (admittedly) weak, it is a kind of **pin** that is inserted into two hems of a garment, joining them under the throat, which is called an **espinella**² (a type of small pin). אגן די פּויגלן — meaning a **pin** with a small rounded head, possibly a decorative or functional **pin**.³*

He continues:

וְכֵן נִקְרָא הַפְּלִי שְׁמַעְלִים בּוֹ הַדְּגִים לְפִי שְׂנוּקָב לְחִי הַדָּג וְשִׁמְתִּי **חֲתִי** בְּאַפְּךָ (ישעיה לז:כט) וְנִתְּתִי חֲחִים בְּלִחְיָהּ (יחזקאל לח:ד)

*And this is also the term for the thing that pulls fish out of the water because it **hooks** the cheeks (gills) of the fish...It could also be related to קִיץ-thorn.*

But Kimchi offers another conjecture:

אֲבָל וַיִּבְאֵהוּ בַּחֲתִים אֶל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם (יחזקאל יט:ד) הֵם מוֹסְרוֹת וּכְבָלִים. וְכֵן
אָמַר הַתַּרְגּוּם בְּשִׁלְשָׁלוֹ. וְכֵן וַיִּלְכְּדוּ אֶת־מִנְשָׁה בַּחֲתִים (דברי הימים ב' לג:יא)
בְּכָבָלִים. וְכֵן אָמַר אַחֲרָיָה וְהָ וַיֹּאסְרוּהוּ בַּחֲשִׁמְתִּים.

But it says, they dragged him off with חֲזָמִים to Egypt (Ezek. 19:4) which means shackles and chains. This is what the Targum Jonathan translates as shalshelan-chains. We find something similar in the verse, who took Manasseh captive in חֲזָמִים, (2 Chron. 33:11) which means in chains, bound him in חֲזָמִים-fetters.

Our best guess is that a **ἥ** is a type of **clasping pin**, **brooch**, **fibula**, or even a **gold chain**.

¶ (4) **כִּזְמוֹזִיז** - *khumaz* is even rarer, only occurring twice in the entire Bible. Various translations are: *clasp*, *buckle*, or *ornament*. The talmud suggests that it is a type of intimate feminine jewelry, perhaps a mold in the shape of the womb. (Shabbat 64a). It might be a kind of *pendant* worn around the neck. **Speculation:** Israel was formed in Egypt. Egyptian religion focused on death and the afterlife. Israelites would have known that men and women were buried with their personal gold jewelry. *For the Israelites for whom God was*

¹ Also known as Radak, Provence, 1160-1235, an influential biblical commentator focusing on **peshat**, the plain sense.

² Radak probably spoke Provençal (Old Occitan) in addition to medieval French and Spanish. AI: A possible candidate word is **espinela** or **espinella**, which relates to the term **espiná** (meaning

"thorn" or "spine"), sometimes used metaphorically for small sharp objects like pins.

³ **"agulla de pomello"** is a linguistically plausible reconstruction rather than an attested historical term. The clearest authentic parallel is the Old Spanish **"aguja de pomo"**, which describes a pin with a rounded head.



a God of life, gold jewelry had no place in a tomb. Rather, the gold jewelry was to be aggregated from the people to create the Mishkan: the structure that sustains the life of the people.

We note that the four different types of jewelry listed in the verse, **חָסִים וְנָזָם וְטַבַּעַת וְכִנָּוִת**, are mainly worn by women. With that in mind, let's go back to the first part of the verse, part (A).

The phrase, **וַיָּבֹאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים עִל הָאֲנָשִׁים** is quite awkward. It can mean: *the men and women came alike*, or *the men came along with the women*, or *the men caught up with the women*. There is, quite possibly, a story here. Whenever a community is asked to donate something, a private conversation takes place in the basic unit of the community: the married couple. **Husband: We've been asked for a contribution. Wife: What should we give? Husband: We're being asked for gold. Wife: I can give my wedding ring. Husband: I gave you that ring! How about that gold pendant? Wife: It's from my mother! Husband: That set of earrings? Wife: It's from my grandmother!** When it comes to jewelry, it's personal. Especially gold jewelry. And while men certainly had their share of bling in antiquity, the items mentioned here are principally associated with women. The traditional commentaries on this verse can be grouped in four categories:

1. The men tried to **compete** with the women in their expression of generosity.

שָׂמְחוּ שְׂמֵחָה גְדוֹלָה וַיְהִיאוּ הַנְּדָבָה בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְרִיזוּת. רָאָה מֶה כְּתִיב: וַיָּבֹאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים עִל הָאֲנָשִׁים (שְׁמוֹת לז:כב), שֶׁהֵיוּ דוֹחֲקִין זֶה עַל זֶה, שֶׁבָּאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנְּשִׂאִים בְּעֶרְבּוּבִיא וּמִבִּיאִין הַנְּדָבָה... (תַּנְהוּמָא פֶקוּדֵי יא:ב)

They were overjoyed in the prospect of giving, therefore they brought their gifts with joy and hurried excitement. Look at what is written: the men came after the women, meaning that they were jostling with each other, men and women in a pandemonium, and bringing the gifts. (Tanhuma Pekudei 11:2)

We get a picture here of men and women competing with each other to see who can give first and who can give the most. In this scenario, husbands and wives, or men and women in general, perceive that they have to prove something to each other, either individually or collectively. Put differently, this is the Torah's version of *Anything you can do I can do better* only here it relates to generosity and sacrifice as opposed to say, all the things mentioned in that song.⁴

Today is Day 533. With the renewal of fighting, we continue to pray for the speedy release of the remaining live hostages, and the return of those who were cruelly murdered for proper burial. May God comfort the bereaved, heal the wounded and shield Israel from terror.

⁴ Frank: Anything you can be, I can be greater. Sooner or later I'm greater than you... Frank: Any note you can reach, I can go higher.

2. The men overtook the women out of excessive **guilt** for the Golden Calf.

מֶה בָּא לְלַמְּדֵנוּ כִּי אָמְרוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמֶה יִתְכַּפֵּר עֲוֹן פְּרִיקַת נִזְמֵי נְשׁוֹתֵינוּ וּבְנֵינוּ וּבְנוֹתֵינוּ אֲשֶׁר נָתַנוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֱלֹהֵי זָהָב וְכִינָו וְשֶׁהִקְהֵלָם מִשָּׁה מִיָּד בָּאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים עִל הָנָשִׁים. (מִדְרַשׁ אֲגָדָה שְׁמוֹת לז:כב:א)

What does this text teach us? That (the men of) Israel said: How are we going to atone for the sin of grabbing (the golden) jewelry of our wives and children for the making of a god of gold (the Golden Calf)? And when Moses convened them (to solicit gifts for the mishkan) immediately the men came forth (with their own jewelry) ahead of the women.

(Mid. Aggadah Shmot)

Guilt and shame are powerful forces for giving. Here the men are trying to atone for the overwhelming guilt of fashioning the Golden Calf from the gold they took from their wives. In this interpretation, the men are coming forth with their own golden jewelry ahead of their wives to atone for their sin and to assuage their guilt.

3. The men subdued the women.

כְּלוּמַר לְשַׁלֵּל עַל הָנָשִׁים שֶׁהָיוּ לוֹקְחִין מִכֶּשֶׁטֵי הָנָשִׁים. (בִּיאָרוֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל)

This indicates that they stole from the women, in that they took their jewelry. (R. Isaac Samuel Reggio)

Husbands have stolen from their wives to assert control, to pay down debts, or in this case, to attain honor. This is a rather cynical reading that can be rejected.

4. The men collaborated with the women in partnership.

עַם הָנָשִׁים הַמִּתְנַדְּבוֹת בָּאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים שְׁלֵהוּ לְהַסְכִּים בְּנִדְבָה. (הַכְּתָב וְהַקְבָּלָה)

Together with the generous wives, their husbands came with them, and consented with their giving.

(Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg - HaKetav Ve-Hakabalah)

Here we get the sense that at the very least, the couple discussed it. In this scenario, she advocates giving out of genuine kindness and generosity, and he is moved by her and offers his consent. This is not uncommon. I have had many discussions with couples about dedications to the shul in honor or in memory of a loved one, and have witnessed this kind of interaction personally. *The important takeaway of this little, tiny reference to 'men and women' is that the gold for the Mishkan was acquired not as a result of competition between the sexes, or masculine guilt, or the excessive power of husbands over wives. Rather, it was obtained as a result of partnership, and out of a shared commitment by an entire community of husbands and wives, who offer their gifts out of generosity and genuine respect towards each other.* There was plenty of gold jewelry in Egypt. A lot of it ended up in tombs near death. This verse serves as a stern rebuke of Egyptian culture. It also serves as a reminder that the Mishkan was built out of a spirit of shared sacrifice and devotion. The gold from the intimate jewelry of husbands and wives was melted together to fashion the symbols of God's devotion and love for Israel. For life. **Shabbat Shalom.**

This Parasha Sheet is sponsored by Philip and Heather Kibel to commemorate the yahrzeit of Philip's father, Ben Kibel, z'l.

Annie: I can sing anything higher than you... Annie: Anything you can buy, I can buy cheaper. I can buy anything cheaper than you...