

Summary

VAYAKHEL:

Moshe Rabbeinu exhorts the Bnei Yisrael to keep Shabbos, and requests donations for the materials for the construction of the *Mishkan* (tent of meeting). He collects gold, silver, precious stones, animal skins and yarn, as well as incense and olive oil for the *Menorah* and for anointing. The Princes of each of the twelve tribes bring the precious stones for the *Kohen Gadol's* breastplate and *Ephod*. Hashem appoints Betzalel and Oholiav as the master craftsmen for the building of the *Mishkan* and its vessels. The Bnei Yisrael contribute so much that Moshe begins to refuse donations. Special curtains with two different covers were designed to serve as the material for the *Mishkan's* roof and door. Gold-covered boards set in silver bases were connected, and formed the walls of the *Mishkan*. Betzalel made the *Aron HaKodesh* (Ark), which contained the Tablets, from wood that was covered with gold on the inside and outside. On the cover of the Ark were two small figures facing each other with wings arching over the Ark. The *Menorah* and the *Shulchan*, the table with the showbreads were also made of gold. Two Altars were made: A small one for burning incense, made of wood overlaid with gold, and a larger Altar for the purpose of sacrifices that was made of wood that was covered with copper.

PEKUDEI:

The Book of *Shmos* comes to its conclusion with this Parsha. After finishing all the different parts, vessels and garments used in the *Mishkan*, Moshe gives a complete accounting and enumeration of all the contributions and of the various clothing and vessels which had been fashioned. The Bnei Yisrael bring everything to Moshe. He inspects the handiwork and notes that everything was made according to Hashem's specifications. Moshe blesses the people. Hashem speaks to Moshe and tells him that the *Mishkan* should be set up on the first day of the first month, i.e., *Nissan*. He also tells Moshe the order of assembly for the *Mishkan* and its vessels. Moshe does everything in the prescribed manner. When the *Mishkan* is finally complete with every vessel in its place, a cloud descends upon it, indicating that Hashem's glory was resting there. Whenever the cloud moved away from the *Mishkan*, the Bnei Yisrael would follow it. At night the cloud was replaced by a pillar of fire.

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Parshas Vayakhel/Pekudei — 25 Adar 5756, 15 & 16 March 1996

Commentaries

EARTH-SUIT

"These are the accounts of the Mishkan.."
(38:21)

Your body is a space-suit. It allows your soul to exist in this world. That is its purpose. No-one would ever confuse the space-suit with the man inside it. Prior to the sin of *Adam* and *Chava*, there was no shame, and therefore no need for clothing. They perceived clearly that the *neshama*, the soul, is the essence of a person, and the body is only its 'space-suit'. After their sin, however, this distinction became blurred, and it was necessary to *show* that the body is of importance only insofar as it supports the *neshama*. Since the body is visible, man is easily misled into attributing to it primary importance. For this reason, clothes, by covering the body, stress that the inner spiritual essence, the *neshama*, which is hidden from view, is of essential significance.

Your body is
like space-suit...

The *Midrash (Tanchuma Bamidbar 3)* relates that when the *Mishkan* was erected, Hashem said that *tznius* (concealment, modesty) is extremely fitting here. The *Mishkan* itself was covered

like a *kallah* (bride), with a veil in front and a train behind. The essence of the *Mishkan* is the *Shechina*, the Divine Presence, that dwells there. **If one sees only the glorious structure, attributing intrinsic sanctity to the materials themselves, while forgetting the spiritual essence, the *Mishkan* becomes something akin to an idol.**

Similarly, the Torah mandates an extradegree of *tznius* (modesty) for the Jewish woman. In secular cultures, women are de-valued, sometimes even reduced to physical objects. Emphasis is placed on what meets the eye - the space-suit. The Jewish woman, however, dresses so as to stress the essence of her inner being. *"All the glory of the daughter of the King, is inward."*

(Adapted from Rabbi Zev Leff's "Outlooks and Insights")

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NO PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

“And each person whose heart motivated him came.” (35:21)

Take a look at the really wealthy people in the world. What is it that they all have in common? Tremendous initiative. Initiative means not focusing on what you have now, but having the confidence to project what might be, and to act on it. “And each person whose heart motivated him came.” The workers who made the *Mishkan* (tent of meeting) needed to be motivated by their hearts because none of them had any previous experience in the skills necessary for building it, and there were no teachers to train them! They were the true pioneers. They were successful because they had the inner courage to come forth and volunteer to do whatever was needed. They didn't think about their shortcomings. They projected their dreams.

Just as it takes great initiative to become materially wealthy, so too it takes great initiative to become spiritually wealthy. Capitalize on those peak moments of inspiration to focus your spiritual goals higher and higher, and you will get help from Above to lift you to the skies!

(Ramban, Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz, vyl"ch
Rabbi Zelig Pliskin)

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL...

“He should make the copper laver...from the mirrors of the legions...” (38:8)

When you look at someone else, what do you see? You notice all the character flaws that he himself tries so hard to conceal. When you look at someone else, think that you are looking in a mirror. Just as a mirror reveals to us our ugly physical features, so when we see ugly character flaws in others, **we should check for those same traits in ourselves** in order to eradicate them. That's what the saying means — “Who is wise? He who learns from every person” (Avos).

When the *Kohanim* (priests) prepared for the service of Hashem in the *Mishkan*, they washed their hands and feet. On a mystical level, this washing was to wash themselves clean of any spiritual blemish, from any defect, bias or partiality. The laver in which they washed, was made entirely of mirrors. This reminded the *Kohanim*, that in order to distinguish their own imperfections, they should look first at their neighbor - that he should be their spiritual mirror. They should check in themselves for those character faults that they perceived in others. Because were they only to look at themselves, they would find it very hard to identify their own faults.

(Toldos Yaakov Yosef)

Haftorah for Shabbos HaChodesh: Yechezkel 45:16 - 46:18

PARTNERS IN TIME

The Shabbos before *Rosh Chodesh Nissan* is called *Shabbos HaChodesh Nissan*, the first month of the year, is called 'the king of the months.' On *Rosh Chodesh Nissan*, the Jewish People received the first of all of the 613 *mitzvos* - the sanctification of the moon. Through this *mitzvah*, the Jewish People were given a partnership in the mastery of time: The world of Shabbos is fixed in time. We return to it every seven days regardless. However, the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush HaChodesh* (sanctifying the moon) gave the Jewish People the ability to establish the length of the months and thus to determine the dates of Pesach, Shavuot, Succos, etc. Thus Man becomes a partner with Hashem in sanctifying time - Hashem through the fixed holiness of Shabbos, and the Jewish People through *Kiddush HaChodesh*

The Cesium and Rubidium atom clocks at the U.S. Naval Observatory Time Center are accurate to one second in 300,000 years. But three thousand years ago, Moshe, had no such time-piece. However, somehow Moshe knew the exact length of the lunar month - 29.53059 days - an accuracy which was literally out of this world! In the reference work *Astronomy and Astrophysics* (Loudolt Bornstein Group vol. a Sec 2.2.4 Spruigr, Berlin 1965) the precise length of the lunar

month is listed as 29.530589 days! How did Moshe have a figure so accurate that it took science three thousand years to come to the same number? Our Sages tell us that this number was given to Moshe by Hashem at the beginning of *Parshas HaChodesh*. It was passed down from Moshe to Hillel II, the last prince of the House of David. When Hillel II sanctified all the new moons from his day until the final redemption, he had to know the exact length of the lunar month to within a fraction of a second, for even a small error would, over millennia, amount to a visible error. This was in fact the case with the calendar of Julius Caesar, which by the year 1582 had wandered so far that Pope Gregory XIII erased 10 days from the calendar, with the result that the day after the 4th October 1582 was called the 16th October! There have been approximately 41,000 new moons since the time of Moshe, but from Mount Sinai onward, the secret of the exact length of the lunar month has always been known to the Jewish People, because Moshe Rabbeinu had a clock that was literally 'out of this world'... The Haftorah of *Parshas HaChodesh* describes a month of *Nissan* yet to come. *Mashiach* has arrived and the Third Beis Hamikdash is to be consecrated in a ceremony which starts on *Rosh Chodesh Nissan*. As in *Parshas HaChodesh*, so too in the Haftorah the laws and sacrifices of Pesach are detailed.



Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations.

Kol Mikadesh Shvi'i - Hkca asen kf
“Whoever Keeps the Sabbath...”

“His reward is very great according to his deed ukgp hp kg st n vcrv urfa
Each man at his own camp, and each man at his own banner ukds kg ahtu uvbj n kg aht

Exile, say our Sages (Sanhedrin 37b), is an atonement for sins. One who observes the Sabbath, they also tell us, is forgiven all his sins.

We therefore sing this praise of Divine Mercy which stations as a reward for observing Shabbos, “each man at his camp and each man at his banner” with no need to wander from our homes to achieve atonement for our sins.

Parshas Vayakhel/Pekudei

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