



Parshas Vayakhel/Pekudei

For the week ending 23 Adar 5758
20 & 21 March 1998

Overview

VAYAKHEL

Moshe 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 of the Covenant, 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 smaller 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 *Shemos* 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, *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.

Insights

WE HAVE THE TECHNOLOGY

"...As Hashem commanded Moshe." (39:1)

One guaranteed way to increase sales of a product is to put a flash on the box saying "New!!! Improved!!!" Inevitably, the veracity of this claim is in inverse proportion to the number of exclamation marks which follow it.

We have an almost insatiable desire for "new." Our society is founded on the self-evident premise that everything can and *needs* to be improved.

There's an old American folk saying: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

In this week's *Parsha*, the words "*As Hashem commanded Moshe*" appear over and over again. Twenty-two times. At the end of every single detail of the *Mishkan*, "*As Hashem commanded ... as Hashem commanded Moshe ... as Hashem commanded Moshe.*" Why this seeming redundancy?

The purpose of the *Mishkan* was to atone for the making of the golden calf. And the underlying flaw evinced by the golden calf was the desire to be smarter than Hashem.

The Jewish People had seen that Moshe had acted as an intermediary between them and Hashem. When Moshe failed to come down from the mountain they saw in the clouds a vision of his dead body being carried on a bier. In their confusion, the Jews surmised they would need someone or something to replace Moshe; some vehicle for the Divine Presence to rest amongst them.

In this assumption they were not far off the mark. But there's another American folk saying: "Close only counts in horseshoes and hand-grenades." Not being far from the mark can be as far as day is from night.

True, there would be a vehicle through which the Divine Presence would rest on the Jewish People, and its name was the *Mishkan*. However, the *Mishkan* could only be built according to the original Maker's instructions. No

Continued on page 2

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel
©1998 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair
General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman

22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, POB 18103, Jerusalem Israel

972-2-581-0315

fax: 972-2-581-2890

info@ohr.org.il

38 East 29th Street 8th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

1-212-213-3100

fax: 1-212-213-8717

RZCorlin@aol.com or estern@aol.com

613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 5V3, Canada

1-905-886-5730

fax: 1-905-886-6065

Somayach@MSN.com

Dedication opportunities are available for Torah Weekly — Please contact us for details.

Parshas **Vayakhel/Pekudei** — 23 Adar 5758, 20 & 21 March 1998

Production Design: Lev Seltzer

Continued from page 1

improvements are possible on these instructions. And when we try to make improvements, we end up with a golden calf. When we try and modernize and pluralize we end up with a golden calf.

The word of Hashem is perfect. It restores the soul. It is like no man-made panacea. If we want Hashem's presence to dwell in our lives, the only way is through following the Maker's instructions — to the letter. Otherwise we end up with a golden calf.

It is for this reason that after each detail of the *Mishkan* the Torah says "as Hashem commanded Moshe."

The essence of the *Mishkan* was that it was "as Hashem commanded Moshe" and not through the mistaken good intentions of man.

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* 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.

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 unsightly features, so too when we see character flaws in others, we should check for those same traits in ourselves. That's what the saying means: "Who is wise? He who learns from every person (*Avos*)."

When the *kohanim* prepared for the service of Hashem in the *Mishkan*, they washed their hands and feet. On a mystical level, this cleansed them 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 they should check 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.

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL II

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

In the courtyard of the Tabernacle stood a very large copper laver from which the *kohanim* washed their hands and feet before performing the service of the *Mishkan*. It was made exclusively from brightly polished sheets of copper that had been used by the Jewish women as mirrors to adorn themselves.

At first, Moshe was loath to accept the mirrors. Since they had been used to incite desire, he considered them unsuitable for such an elevated purpose. However Hashem instructed him to accept them. These mirrors were more beloved to Hashem than all the other gifts to the *Mishkan*, for through these mirrors the women of Israel had established multitudes — legions of Jewish souls in Egypt. When their husbands were exhausted from the back-breaking slave-labor, the women would go out to them, bring them food and drink, and feed them.

As they sat there, they would take out their mirrors and each one would look at herself, together with her husband, in the mirror. She would allure him with words, saying "Am I not more beautiful than you?"

This is what the Torah alludes to when it speaks of the "mirrors of the legions."

Haftorah Parshas Parah: Yechezkel 36:16-38

HEART OF STONE

One who aspires to purify himself spiritually is given help from above.

The period before Rosh Chodesh Nissan is especially favorable for purification. This is one of the reasons that we read *Parshas Parah* at this time of the year.

But there is a more basic reason: In the time of the *Beis Hamikdash*, it was on the 14th of Nissan that the Pesach sacrifice was brought by all the Jewish People.

Parshas Parah deals with the laws of purification that were needed to purify the Jewish People from contact with a dead body — a necessary preliminary to entering the *Beis Hamikdash* and bringing the Pesach sacrifice.

The Haftorah describes the time of Mashiach, when Hashem will “sprinkle purifying waters on the *Bnei Yisrael*” and remove from them all the impurities that have encrusted their souls.

“I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh instead.” (46:26)

Hashem’s *mitzvos* are our life blood. When we neglect them, our hearts freeze over, severed from their lifeline. We become spiritually rigid. Our hearts atrophy, coarsen and eventually become as rigid as stone.

And because we then have made ourselves a heart of stone, we don’t realize that this is why we have so little faith. How can a heart of stone have faith? We don’t realize that our complaints against Hashem come from a rock chamber entombed in our chests.

Eventually it will be too late for a “bypass.” Hashem will come and give us a heart that is soft, that cries, that wants to hear the word of Hashem and beats in time to its Maker.

Sources:

We Have The Technology - Beis Halevi

No Previous Experience Required - Ramban, Rabbi Yerucham

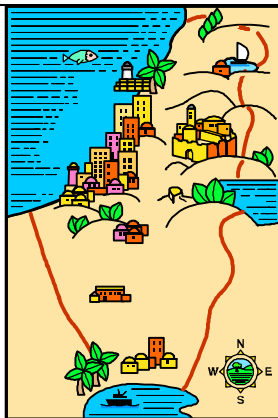
Levovitz, Rabbi Zelig Pliskin

Mirror, Mirror, On The Wall - Toldos Yaakov Yosef

Mirror, Mirror, On The Wall II - Rashi

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael



GIVING EXPRESSION TO LOVE

When Moshe Rabbeinu was refused entry into *Eretz Yisrael* he complained to Hashem:

“The bones of Yosef shall enter the land and I shall not enter?”

“He who proudly admitted that this was his land shall be buried in it,” replied Hashem, “but he who did not admit that this was his land shall not be buried in it.”

Yosef did not deny his Hebrew origin when Potifar’s wife (*Bereishis 39:14*) derided him as a “Hebrew brought here to make fun of us.” He even went further in describing himself to the chief butler (*Bereishis 40:15*) as one who “had been stolen from the land of the Hebrews.”

But when the daughters of Yisro told their father that “an Egyptian man rescued us” (*Shemos 2:19*), Moshe made no effort to correct this false impression and stress his Hebrew origins.

Devarim Rabbah 2:8

What do you do with Torah Weekly?

H. de Jong of Haarlem, The Netherlands, wrote:

What do I do with Thora weekly? First I take some quiet time in the morning in my office when I arrive early, and read your E-mail without disturbance. I think about it, try to figure out how it applies to the situation of my family and myself. Some explanations or stories get fixed somewhere in my background-memory. In the evening my wife, my children (four sons), and myself have dinner together and we speak about what everyone did that day and what we plan to do. Then, sometimes, one of the items I learned from you pops up in my mind, triggered by a situation or by something brought up, and I tell what I remember about it.

Thank you for providing me and my family with a link to our roots.

E-mail what YOU do with Torah Weekly and we’ll share it with other readers.

E-Mail should be addressed to whatido@ohr.israel.net

Parshas Vayakhel/Pekudei

Torah Weekly is available from • World Wide Web: Our address is <http://www.ohr.org.il>

• Fax and Mail in Israel and US-MAIL in America . Send us a note requesting a subscription in Israel, or call 800-431-2272 in the US for details.

several sources: • E-Mail via InterNet. To subscribe, send the message “sub weekly {your full name}” to listproc@virtual.co.il

This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Do not let this land on a garbage heap.

For the week ending 23 Adar 5758, 20 & 21 March 1998