



The Collective Conversation

Weekly Torah Essays from the
Young Israel of Scarsdale Community



Sefer Shemot

Parshat Vayakhel-Pekudei

Adar 5781 / March 2021

Sunday • March 14 • Lunchtime Learning • noon @ YIS Zoom room
Rabbi Ari Kahn will usher in Sefer Vayikra

The Architects: *Ruach HaKodesh*

By Robert Damast

Sefer Shemot opens with the rise of the Jewish nation, the Exodus and the revelation at Sinai, and transitions at its end to a detailed description of the construction of the *Mishkan* covering the last five *parshiyot* beginning with *Parshat Terumah*. The *Haftorah* traditionally linked to *Parshat Vayakhayl* is drawn from *Melachim I* and its description of the construction of Solomon’s Temple. Of interest is the discussion of divine inspiration and its role in the creation of both of these sanctuaries, as well as both Second Temples.

Parshat Vayakhayl presents the unusual appointment of a young man, Bezalel, whom the *Midrash* tells us was only 13 at the time (*Sanhedrin* 69b), to have principal responsibility for the construction of the *Mishkan*. Bezalel is first introduced to us in *Parshat Ki Tissa*, where Hashem tells Moshe that he has selected this young man whom he has “filled with the spirit of God in wisdom and understanding, and in knowledge” (*Shemot* 31:1-5). In this week’s *Parsha* Moshe introduces *Bnei Yisrael* to Bezalel as the architect of the *Mishkan* in nearly identical language to that which Hashem had earlier used (*Shemot* 35:30-33). This repetition makes clear that it is Hashem who has selected Bezalel to construct the *Mishkan*, and that Hashem has instilled in Bezalel *Ruach Elokim* – divine inspiration - to guide his work.

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Solomon’s Temple should perhaps be better referred to as David’s Temple. *Melachim I* reports how *Shelomo* caused the Temple to be built in Yerushalayim, but nothing is said of its design. In *Divrei Hayamim* we learn that it was King David that designed the *Beit HaMikdash* and provided Solomon with detailed plans.

Then David gave to Shelomo his son the plans of the porch, and of its houses and of its treasuries, and of its upper chambers, and of its inner rooms, and of the place of the ark and its covering. (Divrei Hayamim I, 28:11)

King David’s design of the Temple was guided by divine inspiration, as David tells *Shelomo*,

*All this is put in writing by the hand of Hashem who instructed me in this plan.
(Divrei Hayamim I, 28:19)*

Surprisingly, the divine inspiration to build the *Bayit Sheni* was given to a non-Jew, King Cyrus of Persia. The Prophet Ezra records that Cyrus proclaimed that “The Lord God of heaven ... has charged me to build him a house at *Yerushalayim*.” (Ezra 1:2) As to the design of the Sanctuary, this was also set forth in the proclamation of Cyrus, later confirmed in a decree of King Darius, which set forth the specific dimensions of the Sanctuary and its manner of construction. (Ezra 6:3-12).

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As to King Herod’s rebuilding of the *Bayit Sheni*, it is hard to attribute divine inspiration to one who was considered a *rasha*. Yet, the Talmud teaches us that Herod undertook this incredible project upon the advice of R’ Baba ben Buta as an act of *teshuvah*. Noteworthy is Herod’s care to observe Halacha on this project, training 1,000 *Kohanim* as carpenters and masons to reconstruct the sacred precincts and scrupulously avoiding any suspension of the ongoing services. In trying to describe the sheer beauty of the rebuilt Sanctuary, the Talmud notes that Herod originally intended to cover the walls with gold “but the Rabbis advised him not to since it was more beautiful as it was, looking like the waves of the sea.” (*Bava Batra* 4a). Herod’s immense talent and the end result of his efforts can only be seen as the product of divine inspiration, the Talmud noting that,

מי שלא ראה בִּנְיַן הַיְהוּדִים לֹא רָאָה בְּנֵי נֹאֶה מִיָּמָיו

One who has not seen Herod’s building has never seen a beautiful building in his life. (Bava Batra 4a)

It is my prayer this *Shabbat* that *Hashem* gives Israel leaders who are like Bezalel and who are blessed with *Ruach HaKodesh* so as to be the architects of policies that will bring Israel peace both within and without our State.

Bob and Marilyn have been active members at YIS since moving to New Rochelle in 1979. Their three children grew up in the community, David is now living in Los Angeles, Shari in Stamford, and Lisa in Rehovot.

Want to write or dedicate a Parsha essay?

Please contact Steve Smith at LivingTorahFund@gmail.com

The Collective Conversation is a project of the Young Israel of Scarsdale and the YIS Living Torah Fund

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