

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 6 Adar II, 5784, corresponding to March 16, 2024.

TORAH DIALOGUE
(p. 385 Hz) (p. 591 S) (p. 362 Hi) (p. 530 AS)

PEKUDEI פקודי

Exodus 35:1

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis]

1. The Accounting. The beginning of this Parshah is dedicated to giving us an exact accounting of all the donations made by Bnei Yisrael for the construction of the Mishkan. For sacred endeavors, an exact accounting is necessary. It is not a result of any suspicions they might have had about Moshe. It was the cause, the fact that they were build the Mishkan that necessitated the accounting. This shows us the importance of transparency in all religious matters. In our day, we have suspicions about all national leaders. We do require checks and balances to make sure there is some sense of honesty in people with powerful positions in life. With dictators we expect the worst. We knew that leaders like Arafat and Abbas made a fortune for themselves personally while leading their political followers, even though their constituents were primarily poor. Such is life in our day.

2. A normal refrain ends each paragraph: "as Hashem had commanded Moshe." We note this phrase or wording similar to it eighteen times in the Parshah, corresponding to the original eighteen Berachot in our daily Amidah. (Talmud). This indicates that both the Mishkan and our Amidah embody communication with Hashem. This is especially true in our time, without a Mishkan. Communication is the key to all relationships. In prayer, we do not always hear a response. Hashem does want to hear from us, but our response is not oral. It comes in the form of action. Years ago I met a Jewish man in southern Georgia, who had owned a factory that manufactured furniture. After some successful years, he was forced out of business by big companies. He sat in his office lamenting his fate. He felt he was too young to retire. He prayed to Hashem for help. Thirty minutes later he received a phone call, and he now works for the Jewish Veterans in his area. He recognized God's role in his life. That day he started wearing Tephillin every day. Hashem does respond. Keep praying.

3. The sockets that supported the structure of the Mishkan held it in place. There were 100 sockets, corresponding to the 100 Berachot that we are required to recite each day. The Hebrew word for a socket is Adden, whose root also means master, or Hashem in this case. When a man recites 100 blessings each day, he is testifying that Hashem is master of the universe. Each person has these spiritual sockets supporting the Mishkan that resides in each of us. (Chidushei HaRim, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Rotenberg-Alter, 1799-1866, who was the founder of the Ger Chassidim. Although I don't usually quote Chassidisch Torah, I was somehow drawn to this particular commentary.)

4. Our Sages also point out a parallel between "as Hashem had commanded Moshe" to "Hashem saw all that He made

and behold it was very good." This comment challenges us to fill the gap and understand what our Sages were saying. Perhaps the comment was to focus our attention to the aspect of the creation of the world. Just as Hashem created a world, He also created a new world with the structure of the Mishkan. Here Hashem was creating a new human being, one who allows the spirituality of Hashem to enter our bodies. Hashem can now dwell amongst us, literally. As the majority of the Jewish people were lost in Judaism, we lost the Mishkan/Temple, and with it the closer connection that we had with the Almighty. Again we note the fantastic meaning that the Mishkan actually had. (RED)

5. The sanctification of the Mishkan, its utensils, and Kohanic clothing was performed through the anointing oil. During the First and Second Temples we lost this oil. The sanctification and spiritual elevation of a person, object, or place was consecrated through usage, in practice. (Yoma 14b). How do we sanctify a synagogue? By usage! When we assemble to pray, the usage of the building as a place of prayer elevates the place to a place of Kedushah. When you talk of frivolous matters in a synagogue, the place will lose its Kedushah. When we pray at a "pick up" Minyan in someone's backyard, as we all experienced in the pandemic, we were not able to create the Kedushah of the place. We realize the importance and efficacy of our actions in creating Kedushah, or losing it. (RED)

6. The Kohanim washed their hands and feet before ministering in the Mishkan/Temple. Some Sages interpreted this action as requiring the hands and feet to be washed at the same time. It is hard for us to envision how they did this. Rabbi Yosi son of Rabbi Yehudah maintained that the Kohen would put his hands one on top of the other and lay them together on both of his feet, which were also positioned one on top of the other. Then water was poured all of them at one time, and this would sanctify them. In order for the Kohen to maintain his balance, another Kohen would support him. (Zavachim 19b). It is known that during the Second Temple, the basin used for washing the Kohanim had faucets. This enabled the water to fall on his hands and feet. (Yoma 37a) (Rabbi Steinsaltz)

7. When all was said and done, the Mishkan was erected. But while the Cloud of the Glory of Hashem was resting on the Mishkan, Moshe was not able to enter the Mishkan. (40:35). In the mid 19th century, a new Reform Temple was constructed in Vienna, with ornate gold lettering over the front entrance which read, "And the Glory of Hashem filled the Mishkan." One day Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Chiyos (brilliant Talmudic scholar, 1805-1855, Galicia) walked by the Temple, he noted the inscription. He remarked that they should have quoted the beginning of that Torah quotation, namely: "And Moshe could not enter the Mishkan!"

8. MIDRASH, Shemot Rabbah, 52:5. Rabbi Elazar, son of Rav Yosi said: It can be compared to a king who possessed an only child, a daughter whom he loved so dearly that he called her my daughter. When his loved increased he called her my sister, and finally my mother. Hashem called Israel as a daughter, then when His love increased He called Israel My

sister. And finally when love increased even more, My mother.

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT PEKUDEI 5784

I. From the Text

1. Who was in charge of the tribe of Levi? (38:21)
2. What tribe was Betzalel from? (38:22)
3. On what calendar date was the Mishkan erected? (40:2)
4. What was the first item installed into the Mishkan? (40:3)
5. After the Mishkan was erected, Moshe could not enter it. Why not? (40:35)

II. From Rashi

6. Why is the Tabernacle called the Tabernacle of Testimony? (38:21)
7. Which was constructed first, the utensils or the Mishkan to house the utensils? (38:22)
8. A Talent (Kikar) was a measurement of gold. (38:24). How many shekels were in a talent?
9. What were the “knit vestments “ used for (Bigdei HaSrad)? (31:10)
10. How often were the incense spices offered in smoke? (40:27)

III. From the Rabbis

11. Where were the Tablets (of the Ten Commandments) stored until they were placed in the Aron (Ark)? (Ramban)
12. Who erected the Mishkan all by himself (with Hashem’s help)? (Ba’al HaTurim, and Rashi on 39:33)
13. Who served as the High Priest in the week before the Mishkan was officially erected? (Ramban)

IV. Midrash

14. In what month was all the work done in creating the various parts of the Mishkan?

V. Haftarah

15. Who did the preparations for the building of the Holy Temple before King Shlomo constructed it?

VI. Relationships

16.

- a) Aharon - Elazar
- b) Moshe - Itamar
- c) Kehat - Peretz
- d) Naphtali - Chushim
- e) Metushelach - Noach

ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT PEKUDEI 5784

1. Itamar the son of Aharon
2. Yehudah
3. On the first day of Nissan
4. The Aron (Ark)
5. Because the Cloud of Glory rested upon the Mishkan.
6. It testified to the fact that Hashem forgave Bnei Yisrael for the sin of the Golden Calf.
7. The Mishkan
8. 3,000 shekels
9. They were the coverings to wrap the most sacred utensils during journeys.
10. Every morning and evening; twice daily.
11. In Moshe’s tent.
12. Moshe
13. Moshe
14. In the month of Kislev
15. King David
16.
 - a) Father Aharon
 - b) Uncle Moshe
 - c) First Cousins (sons of Levi and Yehudah)
 - d) Uncle Naphtali
 - e) Grandfather Metushelach

Joshua & Lori Beth Schlinsky in memory of his father, Rabbi Milton Schlinsky-Rav Moshe ben Yaakov Tzvi z”l.