

Vayakhel and Pekudei

Double Portion of the two Parshyot

We ended the last Parsha of KiTissa with Moshe bringing the two tablets of stone down from the mountain because the first tablets were crashed to the ground when Moshe saw the Golden Calf. The beginning of this Parsha demonstrates Moshe's character of leadership. He had to rally the troupes together, organize and give direction on how this motley crew was going to be the light unto the nations. By focusing on building a place of Gdliness, Moshe was restoring the enthusiasm the Israelites had felt prior to the Golden Calf incident. "Let's get back on track", we have a job to do, Gd is our partner, and we can organize ourselves to be a great nation. Moshe gave the Israelites the impetus and their own guilt from the sin made the Israelites attentive and willing to fulfil the commandment of the building of the Tabernacle. This portable structure was to house the tablets that Moshe brought down from the mountain. The tablets and the structure were the center point of the Israelites mission. Throughout the Torah you will read how the Israelites guarded, had ceremonial pageants, did all the rituals in the Tabernacle and each movement and procedure had structure and rules. The dimensions, materials used, and colors are all outlined in the Torah, and they all have symbolic meaning. Judaism is a religion based on symbolism. When you read the detailed descriptions of the accoutrements in the Tabernacle, each is exactly how it is supposed to be. It is Divinely inspired to represent, perform and highlight the symbols of the hidden messages the Torah wants us to figure out. By working at finding out the answers we step by step come closer to the Maker.

First and foremost, Shabbat is mentioned in Parsha Vayakhel, as a reminder that no matter how important building a "house of worship" is, Shabbat supersedes the building. Shabbat is mentioned here in the Torah for this reason.

Then the Torah mentions Bezalel and Oholiab in both Parshyot, who were singled out as having a Divine talent in craftsmanship. Then it describes the people who were moved by spirit to participate in the construction of the Tabernacle. These people contributed by bringing the requested items. Moshe had the detailed plans; he organized the people, and they were on their way to building their portable massive structure.

Getting the people back on track was a tremendous leadership quality that jumps out of the pages. Moshe's success was getting the people to be a community and work together to accomplish this goal. The Israelites witnessed the miracle at

Mount Saini, but then straight after, lost faith and built the calf. As mentioned, their faith in Gd did not wain, it was their faith in Moshe, not returning. The idea of community is the structural DNA of Judaism. The first symbol of this is to build a place that we can share common ideology where there is a formula and structure to follow, where everyone counts as an important contributor, and all hands are needed. Secondly, the Tabernacle was Gd's place on earth. How to bring Gd, as it were, from heaven to earth, or in Moshe's case, from the top of the mountain to down in the middle of the congregation. The congregation of the ancient Israelites and the congregation of today. This parsha talks about the free-will giving of the items by the population. This is the ideal scenario of building a community with a foundation that will last. But it takes everyone's participation, recognizing some have more expertise and some work with direction. Judaism and the Jewish soul thrive when there is productivity and accomplishment. This was one of the goals Moshe had for the people, to feel that sense of community, accomplishment and giving. That all sounds characteristic of our modern day mitzvot.