Overview

Vayakhel

Moshe Rabbeinu exhorts 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. 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 (holy ark), which contained the Tablets, from wood covered with gold inside and out. On the ark’s cover were two small figures facing each other, with wings arching over the ark. The menorah candelabra and the shulchan, the table with the showbreads, were also made of gold. Two altars were made: A small incense altar made of wood overlaid with gold, and a larger altar for the purpose of sacrifices made of wood covered with copper.

Pekudei

The Book of Shemos concludes 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. 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., the month of Nissan. He tells Moshe the order of assembly of the Mishkan and its vessels. Moshe does everything in the prescribed manner. When the Mishkan is finally complete with every vessel in place, a cloud descends upon it, indicating that Hashem’s glory rests there. Whenever the cloud moved away from the Mishkan, Bnei Yisrael would follow it. At night the cloud was replaced by a pillar of fire.

Insights

Go For The Gold!

“Every man who raised up an offering of gold to Hashem” (35:22-24)

When speaking of the gifts of gold to the Mishkan Sanctuary, the Torah uses the expression “every man who raised up (lit. waved) an offering of gold to Hashem.”

Whereas when speaking about the silver gifts to the Mishkan, it says “every man who separated a portion of silver.” The Ramban comments about the disparity between the description of the gifts of gold and the gifts of silver. Those people who brought gold were far fewer than those who brought silver. When someone brought gold, either he himself would wave it or the collectors of the Mishkan’s gifts would wave the gold in praise of his important donation.

When you use your gold card in order to support G-d’s dwelling place in this world you’ve got something to shout about.

No Previous Experience Required

“And every man came whose heart was lifted up” (35:21)

Imagine turning up at a spotless hi-tech computer plant and offering your services to build computer chips.

Each chip is no more than a few millimeters square and yet it contains a multitude of components and is capable of making millions of calculations in the time it takes you to say “I’m looking for a job.”

They say to you: “Fine. What experience do you have?”

You say “None. But I know in my heart that I can build all the chips you need.”

“Yeah, look there’s a food factory down the block. Why don’t you try over there? Maybe you’d be better off frying their chips than ours…”

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When Bnei Yisrael left Egypt, they had been slaves for so many years. The only skills that they had developed in those years of apprenticeship were how to stir mortar and shlep stones. Not exactly an ideal training ground for the extremely high degree of artistry necessary for the building of the Mishkan.

Where was their training as carpenters, embroiderers, metal-smiths, sculptors, weavers?

And yet they came to Moshe and said, “Whatever my lord commands, I will do it.” And they did it.

Even though the Mishkan performed the incredibly complex task of uniting Heaven and Earth, but because it was a spiritual building, all it needed was the desire of its builders to serve Hashem; then Hashem, as it were, filled in the rest of their resumes.

When we want to serve Hashem, to be good Jews and good people, we should remember that no previous experience is required, just a heart that's uplifted to serve.

**Hitting the Mark, or Marking the Hit?**

“Ten curtains of linen, twisted with turquoise, purple, and scarlet wool” (36:8)

In this week’s Parsha, the Torah details the same description of the Mishkan and its furnishings as it did previously in Parshas Terumah. Why the need for this repetition?

The Dubner Magid was famous for his use of the mashal (parable). With a short story he could illuminate a Torah idea, lighting up the eyes and the minds of all who listened.

The Vilna Gaon once asked the Dubner Magid how it was that he was able to find such wonderfully telling parables that always seemed to hit the bull’s eye. The Dubner Magid, of course, replied with a mashal:

There once was a prince who desired greatly to become a master archer. One day while he was traveling he came to a small village. An archery contest was in progress. The prince noticed that one of the contestants’ accuracy was uncanny. Each of his targets was pierced exactly in the center.

The prince asked this fellow how he was able to achieve such striking results. This was his reply: “Well first I aim at a tree. Then, once I hit the tree, I run up to it and paint a circle around the arrow.”

Said the Dubner Magid to the Vilna Gaon: “I do the same. First I find an interesting story, then I look for a relevant verse or Torah thought which it explains.”

In much the same way, this is what Hashem did when He brought the universe into being. First of all He “wrote” the mashal — the Torah — and then He looked into it and created the world.

The Torah is the blueprint of the world. But more than an architect’s blueprint which is lifeless, the Torah is the dynamo, the source of the spiritual energy that keeps the world turning.

A fluorescent light may consume only a few watts whereas an air-conditioning unit will need several thousand.

In the same way, the “spiritual electricity” of one Torah verse alone was enough to sustain all the creatures of the sea: “Let the waters teem with teeming living creatures…” (Bereishis 1:20)

However, the Mishkan which was Hashem’s “dwelling place” in this world, required the “spiritual current” of a much higher order.

This is the reason there are so many verses in the Torah which refer to the Mishkan. Every verse in its description is like another volt, another watt.

**Sources:**

- *Go For the Gold!* - Ramban, Rabbi Moshe Zauderer
- *No Previous Experience Required* - Ramban, Rabbi Yehoshua Bertram
- *Room At The Bottom* - V.S.
- *Hitting The Mark, or Marking The Hit?* - Rabbi Mordechai Perlman, Rabbi Reuven Subar

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**Parshas Vayakhel - Pekudei**

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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 25 Adar 5759, 12 -13 March 1999
Haftorah: Yechezkel 45:16-46:18

This haftorah, the haftorah of Parshas Hachodesh, prophetically narrates the consecration of the third and everlasting Beis Hamikdash. As this will occur on the first of Nissan, we thus read this haftorah on the Shabbat preceding the first of Nissan.

The haftorah begins with the entire Jewish nation contributing towards the Temple’s consecration, by raising the funds of the festive inaugural offerings conducted by the prince mashiach. This festivity will be celebrated on Passover. The haftorah ends with official regulations regarding the prince’s authority in granting estates to his subjects, stating that he will not use his power to confiscate lands from their rightful owners, as some of the corrupt kings had done.

The Chodesh Festival

The haftorah refers to Rosh Chodesh as a festival (46:1-3). This festive nature is evident also from the obligation to bring a musaf offering on Rosh Chodesh (Num. 28:11).

The Tur (Orach Chaim 417) states that Rosh Chodesh was in fact intended to be holy like a Yom Tov, with a prohibition of creative activity, but unfortunately we lost this opportunity subsequent to the sin of the Golden Calf. We were commanded to observe the three regalim festivals — Pesach, Shavous and Succos — in the merit of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov; and the twelve Rosh Chodesh festivals were to have been observed in the merit of the twelve tribes. However, when the twelve tribes sinned, Rosh Chodesh lost an element of its holiness and became a day when toil is permitted. The custom for women to abstain from unnecessary work on Rosh Chodesh is because they did not participate in the sin of the Golden Calf. Thus, for them it retains an air of its original grandeur.

Love of the Land

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

Beit Shemesh

This large development town has become, for many religious Jews, a virtual suburb of Jerusalem. Historically, it was tied to Israel’s capital in another way.

When the Philistines took the holy ark from the Israelites, they were so frightened by the havoc which Heaven visited upon them that they sent the ark back to Israel on a wagon drawn by animals without a human driver. The wagon headed for Beit Shemesh where it was received with great rejoicing.

From Beit Shemesh the ark was eventually carried to Kiryat Yearim, and then to Jerusalem under the direction of King David.