

Parsha Q&A



Parshas Vayakhel - Pekudei

For the week ending 25 Adar 5759
12 & 13 March 1999

Parsha Questions Vayakhel

1. What three different words in this Parsha have the same four letters?
2. Why is the prohibition of work on Shabbos written prior to the instructions for building the *Mishkan*?
3. In verse 35:11, what is the *Mishkan*, the tent of the *Mishkan* and the covering of the *Mishkan*?
4. What were the *bigdei hasrad* for?
5. What was unique about the way the goat's hair was spun?
6. Why did the princes contribute last? How does the Torah show dissatisfaction with this?
7. Who were the two primary builders of the *Mishkan*? What tribes were they from?
8. What image was woven into the *paroches*?
9. Why was the building of the *aron* attributed to Betzalel?
10. What was the *mizbach haolah* made of?

Pekudei

1. Why is the word *Mishkan* stated twice in 38:21?
2. Who was appointed to carry the *Mishkan*'s vessels?
3. What does "*Betzalel*" mean?
4. How many people gave a half-shekel?
5. Which material used in the *bigdei kehuna* was not used for covering the sacred vessels?
6. How were the gold threads made?
7. What was on the hem of the *me'il*?
8. On which day was the *Mishkan* first erected and not dismantled?
9. Where in the *Mishkan* was the *menorah* placed?
10. On which day did both Moshe and Aharon serve as *kohanim*?

Sherlox and the Mystery List

Did you notice that Mr. Glenshire's account details his movements before and after the crime, but not during?" said world famous detective Sherlock Holmes. "There's a conspicuous omission in the middle."

"I really didn't notice," said Watstein. "I was too busy being confused."

"About what?" asked Sherlock.

"This verse: *Everyone who had with him techeles, argaman, red wool, linen, goat's wool, dyed-red ram skins and tachash skins, brought them.*" (Shemos 35:23)

"What's confusing about that?" asked Sherlock.

"It's Rashi's commentary that has me stumped," said Watstein. "Rashi explains the verse by inserting the word 'or' several times. Rashi says: *Techeles or argaman or red wool or dyed-red ram skins or tachash skins.*"

"As you know, Dr. Watstein, a list of items in Hebrew is written with the letter *vav* joining each item. Sometimes *vav* means 'and.' Sometimes *vav* means 'or.'"

"Certainly I know that!" said Watstein. "That's my question! I know that *vav* means 'or.' Why do I need Rashi to tell it to me here? Would I think that a person had to have *all* these things in order to donate any one?"

"There's a conspicuous omission in the middle," said Sherlock.

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Answer:

“Notice the conspicuous omission in Rashi’s comment?” asked Sherlock.

“Hmm, now that you mention it, yes. Rashi repeats every item except for the middle two. The verse lists seven items: ‘*techeles, argaman, red wool, linen, goat’s wool, dyed-red ram skins and tachash skins.*’ Yet Rashi mentions only the first three — ‘*techeles or argaman or red wool*’ — and the last two — ‘*dyed-red ram skins or tachash skins.*’ ”

“Exactly,” said Sherlock. Rashi omits ‘*linen and goat’s wool.*’ Why do you suppose that is? How do these two items differ from the others on the list?”

“Give me a clue,” said Watstein.

“Take note,” said Sherlock, “that the items Rashi mentions are generally combined. That is, they are used *together* in the work of the *Mishkan*. The items Rashi omits, on the other hand, are used separately. Each one is used by itself in some capacity.”

“Yes! Brilliant observation!” said Watstein. “*Techeles, argaman,* and red wool were used in combination; for example, they were together in the High Priest’s clothing. Similarly, the dyed-red ram skins and *tachash* skins were combined, joining together to form one of the *Mishkan*’s coverings. The linen and goat’s wool, on the other hand, were used *separately*. The linen was the lone material of the priestly garb, while the goat’s wool was the single ingredient in one of the *Mishkan*’s coverings.”

“Continue,” said Sherlock.

“Therefore,” said Watstein, “I might have thought that the items which are used in combination must be donated in combination. That is, if you don’t have them all, don’t donate any. Thus Rashi needs to negate this fallacy by inserting the word ‘or’ as he does. But regarding the items which are used separately, it’s obvious that they can be donated separately. Thus, Rashi need not mention those.”

*(Based on Sifsei Chachamim, Sherlock is by Reuven Subar
Inspired by “What’s Bothering Rashi” by Rabbi Avigdor
Bonchek)*

I Did Not Know That!

“Moshe gathered the entire community of Bnei Yisrael” (35:1)

At the time of the sin of the Golden Calf, dissent and disunity splintered the Jewish People. So much so that, according to the Talmud Yerushalmi, each tribe actually had its own golden calf, because they couldn’t agree on one!

Here, with the building of the Mishkan, Moshe seeks to rectify this; he gathers the entire community together, attempting to unite them as when they received the Torah “like one man, with one heart.”

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky in “Emes L’Yaakov”

Recommended Reading List

Vayakhel

Ramban

- 35:1 Date of the Assembly
- 35:21 Generosity and Inspiration
- 35:22 Female Leadership
- 38:8 Mirrors of Virtue

Sefer Hachinuch

- 114 Recess from Judgment

Ibn Ezra

- 35:27 Gifts of the Princes
- 35:34 Learning and Teaching
- 38:8 Mirrors of Devotion

Pekudei

Ramban

- 38:22 Betzalel’s Genius
- 40:2 Timetable of the *Yemei Miluim*

Ibn Ezra

- 38:11 Sunshine and Rain
- 40:35 Covering the Aron

Sforno

- 40:18 Essence of the *Mishkan*

Ba’al HaTurim

- 39:27 Storage of the Garments

Aderes Eliyahu

- 39:33 The World of the *Mishkan*

Answers to this Week's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

Vayakhel

1. 36:35, 37:6,19 - *Paroches*, *kapores* and *kaftor*.
2. 35:2 - To teach that building the *Mishkan* does not supersede Shabbos.
3. 35:11 - The lower curtains visible from within, the goat-skins, and the ram and *tachash* skins, respectively.
4. 35:19 - They covered the *aron*, *shulchan*, *menorah*, and the *mizbechos* during transport.
5. 35:26 - It was spun directly from the goats' backs.
6. 35:27 - The princes wanted the people to contribute first, and only then they would contribute whatever was lacking. Hence, the Torah omits a letter from their title.
7. 35:30, 35:34 - Betzalel ben Uri from Yehuda; Oholiav ben Achisamach from Dan.
8. 36:35 - *Keruvim*. (See Rashi 26:31).
9. 37:1 - Because he dedicated himself to its building more than anyone.
10. 38:1-2 - Wood covered with copper.

Pekudei

1. 38:21 - To allude to the *Beis Hamikdash* that would twice be taken as a "*mashkon*" (pledge) for Jewish People's sins.
2. 38:21 - The *levi'im*.
3. 38:22 - "In the shadow of G-d."
4. 38:26 - 603,550.
5. 39:1 - Linen. (See Rashi 31:10)
6. 39:3 - Gold was beaten into thin plates from which threads were cut. (See Rashi 28:6)
7. 39:24,25 - Woven pomegranates and gold bells.
8. 40:17 - *Rosh Chodesh Nissan* of the second year. For seven days before this, Moshe erected and dismantled the *Mishkan*. (Rashi 39:29)
9. 40:24 - On the southern side of the *Ohel Mo'ed* opposite the *shulchan*.
10. 40:31 - On the eighth day of the *Mishkan's* consecration.