

In honor of mine and my father's birthdays.

***Dedicated to all those involved in the Tefillin for Yitzi campaign, and the Shabbat Candles for Yitzi campaign, and to all who did a Mitzvah, put on Tefillin, or lit Shabbat candles in my merit.
Thank you so much, it is the best gift.***

Completing the Redemption: Making a Home for Hashem

This week's Parsha, Pekudei, gives an account of all the donations given toward the construction of the Mishkan and how they were used. It tells us about the making of the priestly garments that the Kohanim were to wear when they were to do the service, the anointing of the vessels and how they began the service, and finally, it tells us that "the glory of Hashem filled the Mishkan."¹

Nothing in the Torah is arbitrary, not even the division of our Parshas or their names. One shouldn't think that in order to complete the Torah within a year, they had no choice but to divide it this way; rather, the Zohar² says that there are "53 sedros³ of the Torah," meaning that there are 53 different themes that the Parshas represent. And the Shaloh⁴ Hakadosh tells us that the Parsha of the week is connected to the time of the year in which it falls.

This is the final Parsha of the book of Shemos, which our sages call the book of "The Geula," which means Redemption. This is why the rest of the world has calls it "Exodus." That means that Parshas Pekudei represents the culmination of Redemption, in which we see the ultimate purpose of the Exodus from Egypt, and it is also a lesson for the final Redemption, which we are waiting for.

Most years, Vayakhel and Pekudei are read together; nevertheless, they have two unique

themes, two important messages. However, being that in most years, Vayakhel and Pekudei are read together, and we have a rule that "we follow the majority," even in a year that they are separate, we must learn a lesson from the two themes coming together. In other words, even though these two Parshas sometimes span two separate weeks, in a way, we see it as one long week.

What are the themes of Vayakhel and Pekudei? What is the idea of their together? And what is the connection to the time of the year?

Vayakhel tells us how Moshe gathered all the Jewish People, told them the commandment of building the Mishkan and how they donated to and built the Mishkan and its vessels. Its theme is the effort of the Jewish People in the service of Hashem, as the people served Hashem with everything they had: their money, their bodies and their souls. Their money, as everyone donated gold, silver, copper, etc.; their bodies, as the men and women toiled to do everything necessary to build it; and their souls, as they all gave from their hearts, and used their talents, which are from the soul, to build a home for Hashem's Presence.

The message to us is that we should use all that we have – our money, body and soul – to build our personal Mishkan – our bodies, our homes, our place in the world and our synagogues – each into a home for Hashem.

Pekudei talks about the finalization of the Mishkan, which became complete with the anointing of the vessels and doing the service with them. And of course, that brought us to the main point, that "the glory of Hashem filled the Mishkan." The theme is that when we complete our work, Hashem's Presence dwells with us, and the result is infinitely greater than all the work we put in.

Although the work in Parshas Vayakhel, namely, making everything for the Mishkan, also drew down G-dliness – as all service to Hashem draws down G-dliness – you can't compare what is drawn down by the work of people, who are extremely limited, to the completion of the Mishkan, when Hashem of

¹ Shemos, 40:32.

² Zohar, vol. 1, p. 104b. *Tikunei Zohar*, tikun 13, p. 29b.

³ Another word for Parsha.

⁴ Shaloh, at the beginning of Parshas Vayeshev says that the Parsha that we read is always connected to the time of year. See also *Zohar*, vol. 2, p. 206b.

His own will, filled the Mishkan with His presence, which is infinite.

So the four Parshas that speak about the Mishkan – Teruma, Tetzaveh, Vayakhel and Pekudei – are in the order of how the Divine Presence is drawn into the world. Teruma and Tetzaveh speak of the command from Hashem that gives us the ability to make a home for Him in the physical world. Teruma teaches us about the vessels of the Mishkan, and Tetzaveh teaches us about the garments of the Kohanim, which they wore when they did the service in the Mishkan. Vayakhel is about us putting in the effort to make a home for Hashem, the way He wants it, and Pekudei tells of Hashem's Presence filling our Mishkan.

First, there is the enabling from above, then, there is our effort, doing what we can below. When our work is complete, then Hashem's infinite Presence, beyond anything that we could achieve on our own, fills our Mishkan, and it is a true home for Hashem.

You may ask: Parshas Pekudei speaks about how they made the garments of the Kohanim; isn't that part of making the Mishkan?

According to the Rambam,⁵ it isn't a Mitzvah to make the garments and it is possible that wearing them is also not a Mitzvah.⁶ It is only that in order to do the service in the Mishkan, the Kohanim had to wear the proper vestments, so it would thus be a requirement for a Mitzvah, not a Mitzvah in itself. In other words, it is not part of making the Mishkan, but part of finalizing it and allowing for the Divine Presence to dwell there. That is the theme of Pekudei, so it fits in perfectly.

Vayakhel is our work within the confines of nature, and Pekudei is Hashem's infinite Presence filling our Mishkan: experiencing that which is beyond nature. When Vayakhel and Pekudei come together, it is the ultimate Jewish experience, where

nature and beyond-nature, infinite and finite, come together.

And that is what the Mishkan is all about. Hashem, Who is infinite, dwelling in the Mishkan, which is finite. And that is the idea of the Redemption as well: Hashem, Who is beyond the natural, dwelling openly in this physical world.

Usually, Vayakhel and Pekudei are read in the month of Adar. Adar is the month of Purim, which is always on a regular weekday, the epitome of finite, but at the same time, we are meant to reach the state of, "*ad d'lo yada*," which is beyond the natural.

Since this Shabbos is my birthday, and they are doing a Tefillin and Shabbos candle lighting campaign in honor of my birthday, I will connect the ideas of a birthday, Tefillin and Shabbos candles to Parshas Pekudei.

On a birthday, you celebrate the day you were born, which is the day that Hashem gave you life. It is the day that your mission began, to bring redemption to your part of the world, to make it into a home for Hashem.

Pekudei tells us that Moshe took an exact accounting of everything that went into the Mishkan and how it was used. In other words, in order to be able to accomplish the mission, in order to have Hashem dwell in the Mishkan, there must be an accounting.

On your birthday, you should take an account of where you stand in your mission. Have you given your money and body – i.e., your effort, and soul, i.e., your heart and talents – to make a Mishkan, a home for Hashem? Have you studied Torah, done Mitzvos, treated others properly and used your talents, possessions and time for Hashem?

Tefillin of the arm go next to the heart, and Tefillin of the head are placed over the brain. They are tied, symbolizing the self-subjugation of our hearts and minds to Hashem. When we do that, Hashem dwells upon us, as it says, "And all the nations of the land will see that the name of Hashem is called

⁵ Rambam, *Sefer Hamitzvos*, Mitzvah 33.

⁶ According to the Baal Halachos Gedolos, see *Hasagos HaRamban* to Rambam, *Sefer Hamitzvos*, Mitzvah 33. According to the Rambam there, it is a Mitzvah to wear them, but only when they are doing the actual service.

upon you, and they will be afraid of you.”⁷ Our sages say that this refers to the Tefillin that goes on the head.⁸ This is akin to “The glory of Hashem filled the Mishkan.”

Shabbos and Yom Tov candles are lit after the entire effort of the mundane week and after all the preparations, shopping, cooking, cleaning, etc. When everything is complete, women and girls light the candles, filling the home with Hashem’s light and blessing. They complete their home into a home for Hashem. This is probably the closest we come to “The glory of Hashem filled the Mishkan” in this day and age.

May we merit to see the third Temple, and the glory of Hashem fill it. Then we will see how it was our efforts that made it all possible, and Moshiach will be here. May it happen soon. The time has come.⁹

⁷ Devarim, 28:10.

⁸ Talmud, Brachos, 6a.

⁹ *Likutei Sichos*, vol. 3, pp. 933–937.