

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Vayakhel-Pekudei
March 13, 2021 *** 29 Adar, 5781

Parasha in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1338/jewish/Vayakhel-in-a-Nutshell.htm

Moses assembles the people of Israel and reiterates to them the commandment to observe the Shabbat. He then conveys G-d's instructions regarding the making of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). The people donate the required materials in abundance, bringing gold, silver and copper; blue-, purple- and red-dyed wool; goat hair, spun linen, animal skins, wood, olive oil, herbs and precious stones. Moses has to tell them to stop giving.

A team of wise-hearted artisans make the Mishkan and its furnishings (as detailed in the previous Torah readings of Terumah, Tetzaveh and Ki Tisa): three layers of roof coverings; 48 gold-plated wall panels, and 100 silver foundation sockets; the parochet (veil) that separates between the Sanctuary's two chambers, and the masach (screen) that fronts it; the ark, and its cover with the cherubim; the table and its showbread; the seven-branched menorah with its specially prepared oil; the golden altar and the incense burned on it; the anointing oil; the outdoor altar for burnt offerings and all its implements; the hangings, posts and foundation sockets for the courtyard; and the basin and its pedestal, made out of copper mirrors.

Haftarah in a Nutshell – Shabbat Hachodesh: Ezekiel 45:18-46:15

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/659336/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This special haftarah is a prophecy regarding the Paschal Offering that will be brought during the Messianic Era, reflecting the theme of the Hachodesh Torah reading—Moses' command to the Israelites in Egypt to prepare and bring the Paschal lamb.

This haftarah is part of Ezekiel's prophecy regarding the third Holy Temple—its structure, inauguration and some of the practices that will be observed therein. The haftarah begins with a description of the various sacrifices that will be offered during the Temple's seven-day inauguration ceremony, and then mentions that on the 14th of Nissan we shall bring the Paschal offering.

Much of the rest of the haftarah is devoted to the sacrifices that will be brought by the "leader," and prescribes his entry and exit from the Temple.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Celebrate (Vayakhel-Pekudei 5781) by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l

<https://rabbisacks.org/vayakhel-pekudei-5781/>

If leaders are to bring out the best in those they lead, they must give them the chance to show they are capable of great things, and then they must celebrate their

achievements. That is what happens at a key moment toward the end of our parsha, one that brings the book of Exodus to a sublime conclusion after all the strife that has gone before.

The Israelites have finally completed the work of building the Tabernacle. We then read:

So all the work on the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, was completed. The Israelites did everything just as the Lord commanded Moses ... Moses inspected the work and saw that they had done it just as the Lord had commanded. So Moses blessed them. (Ex. 39:32, 43)

The passage sounds simple enough, but to the practised ear it recalls another biblical text, from the end of the Creation narrative in Genesis:

The heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. On the seventh day God finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all His work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done. (Gen. 2:1-3)

Three key words appear in both passages: “work,” “completed” and “blessed.” These verbal echoes are not accidental. They are how the Torah signals intertextuality, hinting that one law or story is to be read in the context of another. In this case, the Torah is emphasising that Exodus ends as Genesis began, with a work of creation. Note the difference as well as the similarity. Genesis began with an act of Divine creation. Exodus ends with an act of human creation.

The closer we examine the two texts, the more we see how intricately the parallel has been constructed. The creation account in Genesis is tightly organised around a series of sevens. There are seven days of Creation. The word “good” appears seven times, the word “God” thirty-five times, and the word “earth” twenty-one times. The opening verse of Genesis contains seven words, the second fourteen, and the three concluding verses 35 words. All multiples of seven. The complete text is 469 (7×67) words.

The account of the construction of the Tabernacle in Vayakhel-Pekudei is similarly built around the number seven. The word “heart” appears seven times in Exodus 35:5-29, as Moses specifies the materials to be used in the construction, and seven times again in Exodus 35:34–36:8, the description of how the craftsmen Bezalel and Oholiav will carry out the work. The word *terumah*, “contribution” appears seven times in this section. In chapter 39, describing the making of the priestly vestments, the phrase “as God commanded Moses” occurs seven times. It occurs again seven times in chapter 40.

A remarkable parallel is being drawn between God’s creation of the universe and the Israelites’ creation of the Sanctuary. We now understand what the Sanctuary

represented. It was a micro-cosmos, a universe in miniature, constructed with the same precision and “wisdom” as the universe itself, a place of order against the formlessness of the wilderness and the ever-threatening chaos of the human heart. The Sanctuary was a visible reminder of God’s Presence within the camp, itself a metaphor for God’s Presence within the Universe as a whole.

A large and fateful idea is taking shape. The Israelites – who have been portrayed throughout much of Exodus as ungrateful and half-hearted – have now been given the opportunity, after the sin of the Golden Calf, to show that they are not irredeemable, and they have embraced that opportunity. They are proven capable of great things. They have shown they can be creative. They have used their generosity and skill to build a mini-universe. By this symbolic act they have shown they are capable of becoming, in the potent rabbinic phrase, “God’s partners in the work of creation.”

This was fundamental to their re-moralisation and to their self-image as the people of God’s covenant. Judaism does not take a low view of human possibility. We do not believe we are tainted by original sin. We are not incapable of moral grandeur. To the contrary, the very fact that we are in the image of the Creator means that we humans – uniquely among life forms – have the ability to be creative. As Israel’s first creative achievement reached its culmination Moses blessed them, saying, according to the Sages, “May it be God’s will that His Presence rests in the work of your hands.”[1] Our potential greatness is that we can create structures, relationships and lives that become homes for the Divine Presence.

Blessing them and celebrating their achievement, Moses showed them what they could be. That is potentially a life-changing experience. Here is a contemporary example:

In 2001, shortly after September 11th, I received a letter from a woman in London whose name I did not immediately recognise. She wrote that on the morning of the attack on the World Trade Centre, I had been giving a lecture on ways of raising the status of the teaching profession, and she had seen a report about it in the press. This prompted her to write and remind me of a meeting we had had eight years earlier.

She was then, in 1993, the Head Teacher of a school that was floundering. She had heard some of my broadcasts, felt a kinship with what I had to say, and thought that I might have a solution to her problem. I invited her, together with two of her deputies, to our house. The story she told me was this: morale within the school, among teachers, pupils and parents alike, was at an all-time low. Parents had been withdrawing their children. The student roll had fallen from 1000 children to 500. Examination results were bad: only 8 per cent of students achieved high grades. It was clear that unless something changed dramatically, the school would

be forced to close.

We talked for an hour or so on general themes: the school as community, how to create an ethos, and so on. Suddenly, I realised that we were thinking along the wrong lines. The problem she faced was practical, not philosophical. I said: "I want you to live one word: celebrate." She turned to me with a sigh: "You don't understand – we have nothing to celebrate. Everything in the school is going wrong." "In that case," I replied, "find something to celebrate. If a single student has done better this week than last week, celebrate. If someone has a birthday, celebrate. If it's Tuesday, celebrate.' She seemed unconvinced, but promised to give the idea a try.

Now, eight years later, she was writing to tell me what had happened since then. Examination results at high grades had risen from 8 per cent to 65 per cent. The enrolment of pupils had risen from 500 to 1000. Saving the best news to last, she added that she had just been made a Dame of the British Empire – one of the highest honours the Queen can bestow – for her contribution to education. She ended by saying that she just wanted me to know how a single word had changed the school, and her life.

She was a wonderful teacher, and certainly did not need my advice. She would have discovered the answer on her own anyway. But I was never in any doubt that the strategy would succeed, for we all grow to fill other people's expectations of us. If they are low, we remain small. If they are high, we walk tall.

The idea that each of us has a fixed quantum of intelligence, virtue, academic ability, motivation and drive is absurd. Not all of us can paint like Monet or compose like Mozart. But we each have gifts, capacities, that can lie dormant throughout life until someone awakes them. We can achieve heights of which we never thought ourselves capable. All it takes is for us to meet someone who believes in us, challenges us, and then, when we have responded to the challenge, blesses and celebrates our achievements. That is what Moses did for the Israelites after the sin of the Golden Calf. First he got them to create, and then he blessed them and their creation with one of the simplest and most moving of all blessings, that the Shechinah should dwell in the work of their hands.

Celebration is an essential part of motivating. It turned a school around. In an earlier age and in a more sacred context it turned the Israelites around. So celebrate.

When we celebrate the achievements of others, we change lives.

[1] Sifrei, Bamidbar, Pinchas, 143.

[Sacred Space, Sacred Time: Parashat VaYakhel-Pekudei by Rabbi Yitz Greenberg](https://mechonhadar.s3.amazonaws.com/mh_torah_source_sheets/GreenbergParashatVaYakhelPekudei5781.pdf?utm_campaign=Dvar%20Torah%205781&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=114934473&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--Yqk_8FI28spno-CjLUmdpUek-)

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Our double Torah portion concludes the tabernacle section of the Book of Exodus. It tells how the various parts of the tabernacle were fashioned, then it describes the erection of the building, the placing of all its appurtenances in their proper places, and finishes with a financial report on the amounts of precious metals used and an inventory of the special textiles incorporated.

Surprisingly, the Torah “interrupts” the account to instruct the Israelite on laws of Shabbat observance. The Torah tells us that labor (melakhah, dignified, creative work), that is, creation, is prohibited on the Shabbat (Exodus 35:2-3). The traditional commentaries scramble to explain the insertion of a seemingly unrelated set of laws. In his commentary Rashi suggests that the Shabbat instruction is inserted here—before the construction is described—to underscore that the work of building the tabernacle is prohibited on Shabbat.¹ The holy work of building a house in which to meet and serve God, nevertheless, must stop on Shabbat. Getting the sanctuary done faster is not religiously significant enough to interfere with the global Shabbat instruction to live a day of pure being, dedicated to internal reflection and relationship. (Only *pikuah nefesh*, saving a life, is weighty enough to override the Shabbat prohibition of labor, because life is Judaism’s highest value).

There is another possible approach. These Shabbat laws are not an interruption but a juxtaposition. Shabbat represents sacred time. The tabernacle represents sacred space. These two phenomena are closely related. They are parallel to each other and they play an identical role in the ecology of Jewish religion. Hence they appear together in our Torah portion.

The key goal of Judaism, as I have argued in this series, is to repair and perfect the world so life will flourish to its fullest degree. In the Messianic age, human honor and dignity—the infinite value, equality, and uniqueness of every individual—will be upheld on a daily basis in real life. Living the Jewish covenant involves working in every generation to overcome the inequalities inflicted by poverty, oppression or discrimination, as well as to end the life-degrading effects of hunger, war, and sickness. We work on the present reality in an effort to improve it. There is a real tension between the ideal we strive for and what can be done in the present status quo. This tension is the dynamic which generates the energy to pursue our activities at an intense (covenantal) level and strive to live by the higher values in our daily lives. Given that the pace of covenantal improvement is incremental, we spend our whole lives in this work and the task is passed on to the next generation.

The challenge is: How do we keep up the present impact of the ideal, when its actual realization is so far away? The covenantal process generates a real danger, that one will participate in—and then accommodate—the present reality, so as to slip into its routine. One may even unconsciously come to accept the norms and expectations of the status quo. How can we avoid selling out the dream and the mission?

There is a second danger. “What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?”² How do we not lose the intensity and drawing power of the

dream? This is the Achilles heel of the covenantal method, with its commitment to function in the present reality while working to change it.

The Jewish tradition deals with this challenge by creating sacred time and sacred space. The future perfected world is brought forward into the present in the form of a “mini-cosmos,” a miniature version of the ultimate goal. In the realm of time, the Torah carves out one day of the week, Shabbat. A. J. Heschel calls it an “island in time.”³ During these twenty-five hours, one experiences the ultimate reality-to-come. On Shabbat, there is no labor (melakhah), i.e. dignified creative work to upgrade the world. This is not so much a prohibition as it is an imagined future fantasy, turned into a present experience. On this day, the world is complete, so there is nothing left to do.⁴

In a perfect world, one needs only to be, to live, to relate to family and friends, to self-develop, to learn Torah, to make love, to have family meals with time for conversation, to sing songs, to learn, as well as to enjoy company and guests. On Shabbat, good food and wine is provided to deepen the pleasure. On Shabbat there is no war, no deprivation, no public mourning. In effect, one lives in Messianic time and experiences the joys of a completely repaired world and the delight of a fully human experience with no distraction or anxieties to mar the day. For now, this is only twenty-five hours and the peace and perfection are artificially created in that the rest of the world is not keeping Shabbat. But for the practitioner, the promised future perfection is present, vivid, and real.⁵

The same function is carried out in the creation of sacred space. In this building—be it tabernacle or temple—one carves out a mini-world. It is made of precious, permanent, non-decaying metals, like gold and silver, to symbolize eternity and the absence of decay and death. In this space, no human death is present. Even people who have been in proximity to death and as a result become ritually impure, cannot enter until they have undergone a purification and rebirth-to-life ceremony. In this space, the priests are perfect physical specimens, foreshadowing the Messianic era with full cure of disabilities that handicap people.⁶ Everyone is ethically on their best behavior.⁷ There is no war, no strife, no clashing interests. One feels the presence of God in the absence of evil and in the unity of the divine and human in common cause. Again the Messianic reality is only inside this one building. But the experience is vivid and real.

This is the covenantal method of keeping the dream alive. A mini-redeemed world is set up and experienced deeply in time and space now. The encounter is so powerful that the participant knows that this is real - not just an idle fantasy. Thanks to this present experience, the future is not some distant star that is too far away to exercise gravitational pull. Then when one walks out of the Temple or re-enters the weekday, one sees with fresh eyes all the flaws, the missing qualities, the compromises of the present. Energized by the taste of the messianic, the religious celebrant determines not to settle for the status quo but to change it.

This is the covenantal method of world transformation which the Torah portion holds up as twin tracks on the way to tikkun olam, world repair. Start by redeeming one

day, then widen the liberation steadily into Sunday, Monday—until all seven days are perfected. Start with one ideal building, then extend it to one city, then into one country. Keep on extending the zone of life, freedom, perfection, get some allies along the way, and some day the whole world will be redeemed, a Garden of Eden with liberty and justice, love and peace for all.

Shabbat Shalom.

¹ Rashi's comment on Exodus 35:2, based on the Mekhilta. ² The first lines of Langston Hughes' poem, Harlem (1990). ³ Abraham J. Heschel, The Sabbath, ch. 1, pp. 12-25. ⁴ For another exploration of this theme, see Shai Held's essay on Parashat BeHar, "Another World to Live In: The Meaning of Shabbat," available here: <https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/another-world-live>, and published in Shai Held, The Heart of Torah. ⁵ For a fuller exposition of Shabbat as Messianic preenactment, see I. Greenberg, The Jewish Way, especially pp. 149-163. ⁶ On this theme, see my previous essay on Parashat Teztaveh, "On the Priesthood, Or: Holiness is Living in the Fullness of Life," available here: <https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/priesthood>. ⁷ "Who will dwell in your holy mountain (Temple)? One who walks uprightly, acts justly, speaks the truth... does not slander..." (Psalm 15:2ff). For more on the model of the Temple as a place of perfection / a paradise, see Jon Levenson, Sinai and Zion, pp. 137-142.

Holy Bling – Vayakhek Pekudei by Amy Kalmanofsky
<https://www.jtsa.edu/holy-bling>

I loved rummaging through my grandmother's jewelry. To my child's eye, her jewelry box was a treasure chest filled with sparkling gems, pearls, and gold. All "paste," I learned, but to me they were the crown jewels.

I would drape myself with necklaces and stack rings on my fingers and bracelets on my wrists. I did not follow the rule that one should always remove an item of jewelry so as not to appear over-laden. I loved a full-on blast of bling.

Like my grandmother's jewelry box, the Mishkan—Israel's portable sanctuary—was a treasure chest. Parashat Vayak-hel-Pekudei describes the colorful fabrics, rich woods, and precious metals that comprise the Mishkan, its furnishings, and the costumes of the priests who served within it.

The Mishkan must have shimmered with its purple, red, and blue hues, sparkled with its emeralds and sapphires, and glowed with its gold, silver, and copper. It was a full-on blast of bling. It must have been beautiful.

Beauty is essential to all religious life. Exodus 15:2 declares: "This is my God and I will glorify God." From this verse, develops the idea of *hiddur mitzvah*—the idea that beauty enhances ritual observance.

The Talmud interprets this concretely and specifies that the silks that wrap our Torah scrolls, the fringes worn on our garments, the shofarot we blow, the sukkot we sit in should be beautiful (BT Shabbat 133b). The physical beauty of these objects reflects the glory of God.

The Mishkan radiates *hiddur mitzvah*. Its grand, overwhelming beauty is a physical testimony of God's glory. I imagine that a worshipper who enters the Mishkan is

struck by its beauty, and spontaneously shouts out the words of Psalm 24: “Who is the sovereign of glory? The Lord of Hosts is the sovereign of glory!”

There may be times when God chooses to dwell in something as mundane as a small desert bush (Exod. 3:2), but God’s bejeweled and bedazzled house reflects God’s fullest magnificence and communicates Israel’s awed awareness of it.

Yet, the beauty of the Mishkan does more than reflect God’s glory. The Mishkan is a product of Bezalel and Oholiab and of other artisans who are endowed with the skill and creativity to design and craft its woven curtains, carved furnishings, and hammered ornaments (Exod. 35:30–36:1).

As such, the Mishkan is a work of art whose beauty reflects the glory of the human spirit and is a testimony to human creativity and artistry.

Beauty is essential to religious life because it reflects and celebrates God’s glory and because it reflects and celebrates the glory of the human spirit and its capacity to make beauty and art.

Beauty is manifest in many forms. Visual beauty—displayed in the Mishkan’s spectacular details—is particularly powerful. Visual artists—painters, crafters, dancers, architects, directors, fashion designers—manipulate materials that effectively communicate their wondrous ability to imagine and create new objects and whole worlds.

But there are other manifestations of beauty that are equally powerful, although less tangible than visual beauty. There is the transformative beauty of music and of written and spoken language, the elegant beauty of logic, and the profound beauty of deep emotion.

We see and need all forms of beauty in religious life. We need golden lampstands and crimson cloths. We need drums and lyres. We need psalms and talmudic arguments.

We need it all to worship our God who infuses our world with beauty. We need it all to express our human spirit and to celebrate our capacity to create beauty.

Right now, I crave beauty. I have not been to a museum or to the theater in a year because of COVID. Without Shabbat dinners and festive occasions, there is no reason to dress up and wear my grandmother’s jewelry. Unable to travel far, I have seen limited natural beauty.

But the beauty I have seen, heard, and experienced has helped me through this time. It has fed my spirit and has inspired me to see beyond the constrained darkness of the moment, to see the beauty in God’s world and the beauty in the worlds we humans create.

We need beauty to express the glory of our creator and the glory of our creativity. We need a world that sparkles and shimmers, that hums and sings, that’s crafted and elegant. And sometimes we need a world with a full-on blast of bling. *(Amy*

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[A Stately Pleasure Dome by Ilana Kurshan](https://drive.google.com/file/d/175BFvwB6mlb_L9rIBjBaYdoEs3aVg8wR/view)

https://drive.google.com/file/d/175BFvwB6mlb_L9rIBjBaYdoEs3aVg8wR/view

The two parshiyot we read this week, Vayakhel and Pekudei, describe the building of the Mishkan, the portable sanctuary, in accordance with the specifications that appeared in Terumah and Tetzaveh. Indeed, much of the language of this week's parshiyot repeats the language of those earlier parshiyot, suggesting that the building of the Mishkan was merely the mechanical, mindless execution of God's plan, without any room for human initiative. But the Talmud and midrash tell a very different story about the vision and creativity involved in building a dwelling place for God.

A simple reading of the biblical text suggests that God communicated a blueprint for building the Mishkan to Moshe, who imparted it to the artisans, who built in exact accordance with these specifications. But the rabbis did not imagine the process so smoothly. The Talmud (Menachot 29b) relates that the ark, table, and Menorah descended from heaven in fiery form for Moshe to replicate. Moshe turned to God in bewilderment: "How am I supposed to make like those?" (Bemidbar Rabbah 12:10). God responded that he is supposed to use wood and gold to recreate the structures shown to him in a fiery vision: "See and follow the patterns for them that are being shown to you on the mountain" (Exodus 25:40). This midrash suggests that when Moshe went up on Mount Sinai, he was given a vision of a Platonic ideal of the Temple vessels which he then had to translate into earthly materials.

The act of translating vision into reality was not easy for Moshe. The midrash (Tanchuma Vayikra 11:8) plays on the term used in the Torah to describe the fashioning of the Menorah from gold – it had to be mikshah, made of hammered work. The word mikshah comes from the same root as kashah, which means hardness and difficulty. The Menorah posed a particular challenge to Moshe, perhaps because of the elaborate cups, calyxes, and petals adorning its branches. As the midrash relates, God therefore engraved the Menorah upon Moshe's hand when Moshe was up on Sinai. Moshe was instructed to descend the mountain and then copy the image God had engraved on his hand so as to fashion the Menorah. Only after receiving an in-person tutorial from God on the mountain was Moshe able to come down and fashion the Menorah.

According to this understanding, the challenge of building the Mishkan was the challenge of taking a heavenly vision and transforming it into human terms. This is a challenge familiar to many artists who are afforded a moment of inspiration in which they glimpse a vision which they must then translate into the materials at their disposal – whether it is paint or stone or music or language. The British Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge dramatizes this artistic challenge in his poem "Kublah Khan." Coleridge explains in a preface that he wrote the poem one night after he fell asleep reading about Xanadu, the palace of the Mongol ruler Kublah Khan. He woke with a poetic vision of the palace, which he set about writing down, but he was interrupted by a knock at the door and the vision fled. The poem

depicts the glory of Xanadu while also capturing the poet's despair at his inability to recreate that "stately pleasure dome" in words, including the damsel who appeared in his vision of the palace:

Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry "Beware, beware!"

The poet longed to revive the symphony he heard and recreate the vision of the palace he saw in his dream, so that he might make domes and caves out of the airy immateriality of language. Devastatingly, the vision fled before he could take down notes on the palm of his hand, and the poem remained, as Coleridge termed it "a fragment." His Mishkan was never built.

As Coleridge knew, much of the frustration of the artistic life is the frustration of trying to translate vision into reality and inevitably falling short. But this is also the challenge of the religious life. Our tradition imparts to us spiritual ideals that we have to incorporate into the messy reality of life on earth. Like the instructions for building the Mishkan, the Torah may be read as an instruction manual for building an ideal society: Care for the stranger. Respect the elderly. Do not covet. But when it comes to implementing those ideals in our legislation and in our lives, it is often far from simple.

And yet somewhat miraculously, as the Torah reports at the end of Pekudei, the Mishkan was completed according to plan: "Just as the Lord commanded Moshe, so the Israelites did all the work" (39:42). The cloud covers the Tent of Meeting and God's presence fills the Tabernacle – with its golden Menorah and its braided chains of corded work and its embroidered screens of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, all exactly as God ordained. The building of the Mishkan reminds us that when we are able to translate heavenly visions into human terms, we do not just craft works of magnificent beauty – we also create a space that points to God's presence in our midst.

[The First Lay Leader by Bex Stern Rosenblatt](https://drive.google.com/file/d/175BFvwB6mlb_L9rIBjBaYdoEs3aVg8wR/view)

https://drive.google.com/file/d/175BFvwB6mlb_L9rIBjBaYdoEs3aVg8wR/view

What does it mean to be a lay leader? What does it mean to follow a passion without making it a profession? Is there intrinsically a division between the rabbis and the congregation? If so, where does the lay leader fall? To what extent is lay leadership tied up in financial support for the congregation or institution? And what motivates lay leaders to sacrifice on behalf of their communities?

We can begin to answer these questions by reading about the first lay leader, the *nasi* in this week's Haftarah, Ezekiel 45:16-48:18. The *nasi* emerges as a new and distinct role in Ezekiel 40-48. We find ourselves once again after the destruction of the First Temple, imagining the ways we will rebuild the Temple and rebuild the nation. We have already looked at the role of the priests, now from the Zaddokites, in the rebuilding (see my Haftarah commentary on Parashat Tetzaveh.) The *nasi* emerges with the priests as an integral part of Ezekiel's vision of the new world.

The term *nasi* appears many times in the Tanakh, carrying various meanings. Coming from the root *nsa*, to lift up, it can mean prince or leader, tribal chief or ruler, and sometimes is used to refer to King David and his dynastic line. Rashi notes the confusion over what is meant by '*nasi*,' noting that he thinks it means high priest but has also heard that it can mean king. We can find an answer in the middle, understanding *nasi* as lay leader, existing in the space between priests and people, exercising leadership while leaving kingship to God.

The *nasi* fills a number of roles. He serves as the conduit between the priests and the people, acting both as a messenger between the two groups. He has a special place reserved for him in the Temple compound - the eastern gate. He can enter the Temple and observe the workings of the priests, but he is not one of them. He joins the people in their access to the Temple on *hagim*, entering from the northern gate and proceeding to the southern gate. The *nasi* is a role model, knowing when it is appropriate to relinquish his privileged viewpoint to represent the people better.

The *nasi* is also a financial provider. He is granted choice land, surrounding the Temple. From this land, he must provide various sacrifices for the sake of the entire people. Although they also give back to him, the financial burden on him is much greater than what he receives. For this reason, he is granted the land. He models how to use his fortune to give back. Ezekiel is at pains to establish strict rules around how the *nasi* can pass down his land. It is to be kept within the family - it cannot be given as a permanent gift outside the family. And the family is subject to the same norms as the *nasi*, to continue to use their wealth to support the people.

Many commentators express discomfort at the difference between the way *hagim* are to be celebrated in Exodus and the changed laws that Ezekiel presents here. And there is always a danger, as we tell and retell the Pesach story every year more distant from the first telling, that we adapt the story to the point of losing all meaning. There is a possibility that, having lost Moses as a leader, and then having lost the Temple and sovereignty itself we invent a *nasi* to serve a role that did not originally need to exist. As we turn again toward Pesach this year, may we read and respect the original stories, understanding our own lay leadership in light of the wisdom and adaptability of earlier models.

Yahrtzeit

Shari Mevorah remembers her father Symek Kirstein (Simcha ben Chana) on Sunday March 14 (Nisan 1).

Bobbi Ostrowsky remembers her brother Stuart Edelman on Sunday March 14 (Nisan 1).
Peter Greene remembers his father Stanley Greene on Monday March 15 (Nisan 2).
Margie Freeman remembers her mother Regina Freeman on Thurs March 18 (Nisan 5).
Mel Zwillenberg remembers his wife Susan Zwillenberg (Shifra Malkah bat Yoseph Shmuel v'Grunah) on Friday March 19 (Nisan 6).

Our regular weekday evening minyan will take place on Monday, March 1, beginning at 8:00. Your presence allows mourners and those observing yahrzeits to say Kaddish. Please support your Kol Rina friends by attending.

Use the following Zoom link to attend:

<https://zoom.us/j/97663987468?pwd=NjFhaVZUZkpSZ3pxQWJjOU5UWFR4QT09>