

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Pekudei

March 5, 2022 *** 2 Adar II, 5782

[Pekudei in a Nutshell](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1395/jewish/Pekudei-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1395/jewish/Pekudei-in-a-Nutshell.htm

An accounting is made of the gold, silver and copper donated by the people for the making of the Mishkan. Betzalel, Aholiav and their assistants make the eight priestly garments—the apron, breastplate, cloak, crown, hat, tunic, sash and breeches—according to the specifications communicated to Moses in the Parshah of Tetzaveh. The Mishkan is completed and all its components are brought to Moses, who erects it and anoints it with the holy anointing oil, and initiates Aaron and his four sons into the priesthood. A cloud appears over the Mishkan, signifying the Divine Presence that has come to dwell within it.

[Haftarah in a Nutshell: I Kings 7:51 – 8:21](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/639933/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/639933/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This week's *haftarah* describes the dedication of Solomon's Temple, following the theme of this week's Torah reading: the dedication of the desert Tabernacle. The construction of the Holy Temple was completed. King Solomon assembled the leaders and elders of the tribes to Jerusalem, and amidst great fanfare the Levites transported the Ark from its temporary location in the City of David and installed it in the Holy of Holies chamber in the Holy Temple. Immediately, G-d's presence appeared in the Temple, in the form of a smoky cloud.

King Solomon then blessed G-d. He recalled the history of the sanctuary, how his father, King David, had wanted to build it—but was told by G-d that it would be his son who would accomplish this feat. "And the L-rd has established His word that He spoke, and I have risen up in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the L-rd spoke, and have built a house for the name of the L-rd, the G-d of Israel. And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein (is) the covenant of the Lord, which He made with our fathers, when He brought them out of the land of Egypt."

[FOOD FOR THOUGHT](#)

[Integrity in Public Life – Parashat Pekudai from The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust](https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/pekudei/integrity-in-public-life/)

<https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/pekudei/integrity-in-public-life/>

There is a verse so familiar that we don't often stop to reflect on what it means. It is

the line from the first paragraph of the Shema,

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your me’od.”

Deut. 6:5

That last word is usually translated as “strength” or “might”. But Rashi, following the Midrash and Targum, translates it as with all your “wealth”.

If so, the verse seems unintelligible, at least in the order in which it is written. “With all your soul” was understood by the Sages to mean, “with your life” if need be.

There are times, thankfully very rare indeed, when we are commanded to give up life itself rather than commit a sin or a crime. If that is the case then it should go without saying that we should love God with all our wealth, meaning even if it demands great financial sacrifice. Yet Rashi and the Sages say that this phrase applies to those “to whom wealth means more than life itself.”

Of course, life is more important than wealth. Yet the Sages also knew that, in their words, *Adam bahul al mammono*, meaning: people do strange, hasty, ill-considered and irrational things when money is at stake (Shabbat 117b). Financial gain can be a huge temptation, leading us to acts that harm others and ultimately ourselves. So when it comes to financial matters, especially when public funds are involved, there must be no room for temptation, no space for doubt as to whether it has been used for the purpose for which it was donated. There must be scrupulous auditing and transparency. Without this there is moral hazard: the maximum of temptation combined with the maximum of opportunity.

Hence the parsha of Pekudei, with its detailed account of how the donations to the building of the Mishkan were used:

“These are the amounts of the materials used for the Tabernacle, the Tabernacle of the Testimony, which were recorded at Moses’ command by the Levites under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron, the Priest.”

Ex. 38:21

The passage goes on to list the exact amounts of gold, silver, and bronze collected, and the purposes to which it was put. Why did Moses do this? A Midrash suggests an answer:

“They gazed after Moses” (Ex. 33:8) – People criticised Moses. They used to say to one another, “Look at that neck. Look at those legs. Moses is eating and drinking what belongs to us. All that he has belongs to us.” The other would reply: “A man who is in charge of the work of the Sanctuary – what do you expect? That he should not get rich?” As soon as he heard this, Moses replied, “By your life, as soon as the Sanctuary is complete, I will make a full reckoning with you.”

Tanchuma, Buber, Pekudei, 4.

Moses issued a detailed reckoning to avoid coming under suspicion that he had personally appropriated some of the donated money. Note the emphasis that the accounting was undertaken not by Moses himself but “by the Levites under the direction of Ithamar,” in other words, by independent auditors.

There is no hint of these accusations in the text itself, but the Midrash may be based on the remark Moses made during the Korach rebellion:

“I have not taken so much as a donkey from them, nor have I wronged any of them.”

Num. 16:15

Accusations of corruption and personal enrichment have often been levelled against leaders, with or without justification. We might think that since God sees all we do, this is enough to safeguard against wrongdoing. Yet Judaism does not say this. The Talmud records a scene at the deathbed of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai, as the master lay surrounded by his disciples:

They said to him, “Our master, bless us.”

He said to them, “May it be God’s will that the fear of heaven shall be as much upon you as the fear of flesh and blood.”

His disciples asked, “Is that all?”

He replied, “Would that you obtained no less than such fear! You can see for yourselves the truth of what I say: when a man is about to commit a transgression, he says, ‘I hope no man will see me.’”

Brachot 28b

When humans commit a sin they worry that other people might see them. They forget that God certainly sees them. Temptation befuddles the brain, and no one should believe they are immune to it.

A later passage in Tanach seems to indicate that Moses’ account was not strictly necessary. The Book of Kings relates an episode in which, during the reign of King Yehoash, money was raised for the restoration of the Temple:

“They did not require an accounting from those to whom they gave the money to pay the workers, because they acted with complete honesty.”

II Kings 12:16

Moses, a man of complete honesty, may thus have acted “beyond the strict requirement of the law.”[1]

It is precisely the fact that Moses did not need to do what he did that gives the passage its force. There must be transparency and accountability when it comes to public funds even if the people involved have impeccable reputations. People in positions of trust must be, and be seen to be, individuals of moral integrity. Jethro,

Moses' father-in-law, had already said this when he told Moses to appoint subordinates to help him in the task of leading the people. They should be, he said,

“Men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain.”

Ex. 18:21

Without a reputation for honesty and incorruptibility, judges cannot ensure that justice is seen to be done. This general principle was derived by the Sages from the episode in the Book of Numbers when the Reubenites and Gadites expressed their wish to settle on the far side of the Jordan where the land provided good grazing ground for their cattle (Numbers 32:1-33). Moses told them that if they did so, they would demoralise the rest of the nation. They would give the impression that they were unwilling to cross the Jordan and fight with their brothers in their battles to conquer the land.

The Reubenites and Gadites made it clear that they were willing to be in the front line of the troops, and would not return to the far side of the Jordan until the land had been fully conquered. Moses accepted the proposal, saying that if they kept their word, they would be “clear [veheyitem neki'im] before the Lord and before Israel” (Num. 32:22). This phrase entered Jewish law as the principle that “one must acquit oneself before one's fellow human beings as well as before God.”^[2] It is not enough to do right. We must be seen to do right, especially when there is room for rumour and suspicion.

There are several instances in the early rabbinic literature of applications of this rule. So, for example, when people came to take coins for sacrifices from the Shekel Chamber in the Temple, where the money was kept:

They did not enter the chamber wearing either a bordered cloak or shoes or sandals or tefillin or an amulet, lest if he became poor people might say that he became poor because of an iniquity committed in the chamber, or if he became rich people might say that he became rich from the appropriation in the chamber. For it is a person's duty to be free of blame before men as before God, as it is said: “and be clear before the Lord and before Israel,” (Num. 32:22), and it also says: “So shall thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man” (Prov. 3:4).

Mishnah, Shekalim 3:2.

Those who entered the chamber were forbidden to wear any item of clothing in which they could hide and steal coins. Similarly, when charity overseers had funds left over, they were not permitted to change copper for silver coins of their own money: they had to make the exchange with a third party. Overseers in charge of a soup kitchen were not allowed to purchase surplus food when there were no poor people to whom to distribute it. Surpluses had to be sold to others so as not to

arouse suspicion that the charity overseers were profiting from public funds. (Pesachim 13a.)

The Shulchan Aruch rules that charity collection must always be done by a minimum of two individuals so that each can see what the other is doing.[3] There is a difference of opinion between Rabbi Yosef Karo and Rabbi Moshe Isserles on the need to provide detailed accounts. Rabbi Yosef Karo rules on the basis on the passage in II Kings – “They did not require an accounting from those to whom they gave the money to pay the workers, because they acted with complete honesty” (II Kings 12:16) – that no formal accounting is required from people of unimpeachable honesty. Rabbi Moshe Isserles however says that it is right to do so because of the principle, “Be clear before the Lord and before Israel.”[4]

Trust is of the essence in public life. A nation that suspects its leaders of corruption cannot function effectively as a free, just, and open society. It is the mark of a good society that public leadership is seen as a form of service rather than a means to power, which is all too easily abused. Tanach is a sustained tutorial in the importance of high standards in public life. The Prophets were the world’s first social critics, mandated by God to speak truth to power and to challenge corrupt leaders. Elijah’s challenge to King Ahab, and the protests of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah against the unethical practices of their day, are classic texts in this tradition, establishing for all time the ideals of equity, justice, honesty and integrity. A free society is built on moral foundations, and those must be unshakeable. Moses’ personal example, in giving an accounting of the funds that had been collected for the first collective project of the Jewish people, set a vital precedent for all time. [1] A key concept in Jewish law (see, e.g., Brachot 7a, Brachot 45b, Bava Kamma 99b) of supererogation, meaning doing more, in a positive sense, than the law requires. [2] Mishnah, Shekalim 3:2. [3] Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 257:1. [4] Ibid., 257:2.

Shifting Expectations: Parashat Pekudei 5782 by Rabbi Aviva Richman
<https://www.hadar.org/torah-collection/aviva-richmans-divrei-torah>

The Book of Shemot ends in a striking tension: God’s presence fills the mishkan but also precludes Moshe from entering. Having shepherded the people into relationship with God, and having fought so hard to maintain that, Moshe now faces the possibility that the terms of his own relationship with God have drastically changed, as he is shut out of the mishkan. What can we learn from the model of Moshe about how to adapt to unexpected twists and turns in our own roles and relationships?

As God’s presence descends on the mishkan to dwell in the midst of the people, there is a sense of abundant success in the people’s efforts to build the mishkan. In

Parashat VaYakhel, we explored a reading that the people of Israel were not confident God would dwell in their midst after their sin with the golden calf, but, on Moshe's initiative, went ahead and built the mishkan anyway.¹ God's manifest presence is a visible demonstration of God's love for the people, reflecting forgiveness and repair in their relationship.²

And yet, this visible display of God's presence filling the entire mishkan means that Moshe cannot enter.

Exodus 40:35

Moshe could not enter the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud had settled upon it and the Presence of God filled the mishkan.

The very first thing God instructed Moshe about building the mishkan was to build the ark so that God could speak with him there.³ How could it be that Moshe can't enter? Did their efforts somehow fail? Moshe's inability to enter the mishkan might lead to the conclusion that God wants to keep Moshe at a distance.⁴

There is a tension between the manifestation of God's intimacy with the people and the actualization of God's intimacy with Moshe. When God is in a state that most clearly expresses love for the people, Moshe is shut out. For Moshe to be able to speak with God in the mishkan, the Divine Cloud has to remove itself in some way where it cannot be witnessed by the people.⁵ The people's sense of closeness with God, and Moshe's sense of closeness with God, seemingly do not converge.

One might think that Moshe is disappointed and anxious at being shut out of the mishkan. In fact, a midrashic tradition suggests that Moshe had no expectation to enter the mishkan. Moshe is compared to a servant who meticulously builds a palace for a king and writes the king's name on each part of the structure. When the king moves into the palace, he is struck by the servant's dedication:

Vayikra Rabbah 1:7

Every single place he would look he would find his name written there.

He said, "All of this honor has my servant done for me, and I am inside and he is outside?!"

He called him so that he would enter inside.

The parable describes a labor of pure devotion, where the servant every step of the way is focused only on the king. Moshe at every step of the way was solely focused on what God had instructed—hence the refrain in Parashat Pekudei that items were built "just as God commanded Moshe" (כִּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה)—and this intention was "inscribed" on each part of the mishkan. Upon beholding this labor of devotion, God calls Moshe at the beginning of the book of Vayikra, to invite him inside where he never expected to be.

The analogy to Moshe and the mishkan is both beautiful and perplexing. Despite God saying the primary purpose of building the mishkan was to meet with Moshe from atop the ark, this midrash insists that Moshe built the mishkan just for God, and never expected to enter. We have to assume that Moshe shifted his expectations. Originally, Moshe did expect to go into the mishkan because this was its stated purpose, but then, with the rupture between God and the people, he began to doubt that this was ever going to happen. Instead of being paralyzed by this doubt, he abandoned all the ego he had at stake in his own role in the mishkan. He built the mishkan solely for God and to heal the relationship between God and Israel. To enable that outcome, he was willing to write himself out of the story, to remain outside.⁶

The trajectory of Moshe's unexpected entry into the mishkan, as told in this midrash, is all the more striking when compared to the way Moshe's narrative arc ends: with his entry to the Promised Land barred. The Torah tells of Moshe's expectation to enter the Promised Land and the crushing disappointment when God bans him from entry. Multiple times, Moshe begs to be able to enter, but to no avail. This midrash on building the mishkan offers a subversive counterplot, where Moshe gave up on any expectation of entering the mishkan and then unexpectedly gets invited in. Instead of hopes disappointed like at the end of Sefer Devarim, it is a story of abandoned hopes fulfilled.

Like Moshe, our expectations in relationship sometimes need to shift abruptly, and our intentions may need to lie far beyond ourselves. In so many contexts in our lives, we can learn from Moshe's agility, his focus on his purpose rather than himself. The bridge between Shemot and Vayikra teaches that, ironically, these moments that require us to focus least on ourselves—and bring out our strongest hopes for others—may ultimately lead to reaffirmation of our sense of self and place. Moshe is called into relationship with God anew after risking everything for the sake of Israel. May we too know the power of building relationships as we dare to work through our world's messiest problems. And may our deep love for others find its way bounding back to us, just as Moshe's love for the people—and his hopes that they will know divine love—ultimately results in his own experience of deeper intimacy when he unexpectedly hears God call his name.

Shabbat Shalom.

¹ "Moshe's Gamble," available here: <https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/moshes-gamble>.

² Rashbam describes it as such (40:35): להראות חיבתו של הקב"ה על ישראל.

³ Exodus 25:22: "וְנִוְעַדְתִּי לָךְ שָׁמַיְם וְדִבַּרְתִּי אִתְּךָ מֵעַל הַכַּפֹּרֶת מִבֵּין שְׁנֵי הַכְּרֻבִּים אֲשֶׁר עַל-אֲרֹן הָעֵדוּת אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר / אֶצְנֶה אוֹתְךָ אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

cover, from between the two keruvim that are on top of the Ark of the Pact—all that I will command you concerning the Israelite people.”

⁴ The image of the cloud that precludes Moshe’s entry to the mishkan resonates with the scene at Mount Sinai, where God’s cloud descended on the mountain and Moshe had to wait six days before God called him in (Exodus 24:15-16, brought by Ramban as an analogy to our verse). Ibn Ezra’s comment on Exodus 24:16 suggests that, if the description of Moshe waiting six days before being called into the cloud came after the giving of the Torah, it would appear that God was “rejecting” Moshe (מתאנף במשה), and concludes that this waiting period must have before God gives the Torah. If so, the Cloud Moshe cannot enter at Sinai and the Cloud on the mishkan that Moshe cannot enter are crucially different. God chose the mountain as the site for a one-time revelation, and the climax is heightened by the drama of Moshe waiting to be called in. But the people built the mishkan as a place where Moshe could speak with God in an ongoing way. When Moshe can’t enter, that may feel like a failure.

⁵ According to Rashi, the Cloud actually departs. According to Rashbam, it contracts and confines itself to the space between the keruvim atop the ark.

⁶ He might even think that Aharon is taking his place in the mishkan. As noted by e.g. Yalkut Shimoni #515, Moshe acted as Kohen Gadol throughout the initiation ceremony (milu’im). At the end of this period, he consecrated his brother as the new Kohen Gadol, and he hesitated, which is signified by the long shalsholet note that shows up in this exact moment (Leviticus 8:23). After that hesitation, Moshe seems to have finally relinquished any lingering expectation that he might continue in some kind of priestly role after installing his brother and his nephews. When it comes to the mishkan, then, Moshe may assume that this is supposed to be completely Aharon’s domain, despite the Torah’s inclusion of him.

[Parshat Pekudei: God is in the Details by Rabbi Eliezer Shore, PhD](https://www.growtorah.org/shemot/2022/03/02-parshat-pekudei-g-d-is-in-the-details)

<https://www.growtorah.org/shemot/2022/03/02-parshat-pekudei-g-d-is-in-the-details>

Pekudei is the parsha of details. This short, seemingly redundant parsha does little more than sum up the information already presented twice in the preceding perakim. In Parshat Terumah and Tetzaveh, Moshe receives the instructions for building the Mishkan, including its utensils and the priestly garments. Vayakhel describes the actual construction of these items.

But Pekudei begins with another listing of all the material that went into the project, and concludes with a further recounting of the Mishkan’s parts as they are finally compiled into a single structure by Moshe.[1] Considering how incredibly sparing the Torah is with words,[2] it seems strange that this parsha should spend so much time summing up what was said before. Why wasn’t it enough for the Torah to

simply state: “And the people did all that Moshe commanded, and Moshe assembled the Mishkan.”

One explanation lies in the unique purpose of the Mishkan, and its relationship to Creation.

According to the Ramban,[3] the Mishkan was the continuation of the Sinaitic revelation. Just as Hashem spoke to Moshe from the top of Har Sinai, so He continued to address him from the Mishkan.[4] The Mishkan was a “portable” Har Sinai. It was a place of continual revelation, where Hashem’s presence could be vividly felt and experienced.

According to the Midrash,[5] the Mishkan’s significance goes beyond even this. The Sages describe it as a microcosm of the universe, with each of its vessels corresponding to another part of Creation: the Ohel Mo’eid paralleled the firmament, the Menorah paralleled the sun and moon, the Kiyor paralleled the oceans, and so on. The structure of the Mishkan, therefore, was a model of a redeemed Creation, fulfilling Hashem’s original intention for the world as a setting for revelation.

The Torah’s precise recounting of the Mishkan’s construction is, in this way, a form of summary of Creation. It is on an entirely different scale, as is clear from the final pesukim of Parshat Pekudei:

And Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: On the first day of the first month shall you set up the Mishkan of the Ohel Moed. And you shall put in it the Aron HaEdut (Ark of the Testimony), and hang the veil before the Aron. And you shall bring in the table, and set in order the things upon it; and you shall bring in the candlestick, and light its lamps. And you shall set the altar of gold for incense before the Aron HaEdut, and put the screen of the door to the Mishkan. And you shall set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the Ohel Moed...

Thus did Moshe, according to all that the Lord commanded him, so he did... Then a cloud covered the Ohel Moed, and the Glory of G-d filled the Mishkan. And Moshe was not able to enter the Ohel Moed, because the cloud rested on it, and the Glory of G-d filled the Mishkan.[6][7]

As opposed to the creation in Bereisheit, the construction of the Mishkan is very gradual. The Mishkan is not miraculously made by speaking it into existence: precision and care must be taken to do everything correctly and in the proper order. But each piece, each movement, each detail—from hanging the veil to lighting each candle—is actually of supreme importance. We tend to think of revelation as a grand event, but Hashem’s revelation here is born out of attention to the smallest details. These passages tell us that through the precise alignment of details, something infinitely greater than the sum of their parts can be revealed.

We might think that what we need is a grand revelation, a brand new start to Creation—Hashem can speak the words, and plants will grow on a perfect earth. Today, even individuals with little environmental awareness realize the life-threatening changes that are occurring on a global level.[8] It is easy to get lost in the big picture of climate change—the corporate transformation and government action that is necessary in order to mitigate and respond to the disastrous effects of atmospheric warming. Often, that leaves individuals feeling powerless, even meaningless.

But, there is hope in the details of Pekudei. Just as the Mishkan models the creation of the world, so, too, does the value of minutiae extend to every aspect of our world’s environment. Our climate is affected by factors far greater than any one individual.[9] But at the same time, each plant and animal, each piece of litter and watt of electricity are an important part of the greater whole. There could be no sum without its parts, and no environmental harmony without attention paid to each individual.

If we are looking to perfect the world, the place to begin is the Mishkan of our own lives—our homes and workplaces. While our eyes and hearts must always be on the larger picture, the repair of the world begins in locales closest to us, with the smallest details of our lives. This is the preeminent way of Jewish thinking, which recognizes the importance of details in the redemption of the world at large. And one learns to think on both of these levels, simultaneously, as a natural consequence of a Torah lifestyle.[10]

May Hashem help us see His presence in the details of our lives, as well as in the majesty of the cosmos.

[1] In-between is a short section detailing the manufacturing of the priestly garments.

[2]As the Mishnah in Hagigah 1:8 states, many laws are like “mountains hanging on a single thread of verses.” [3] Ramban on Shemot 25:1. [4] Shemot 19:20: “And

Hashem Moshe to the top of the mount...”; Vayikra 1:1. “And Hashem called to Moshe, and spoke to him from out of the tent of meeting...” [5] Bamidbar Rabbah 12:13. [6] Shemot 40:1-7, 16, 33-38.

[7] Compare this to remarkably similar passages in I Kings 7:48-51, 8:6, 10-11.

[8] I have heard from people who work in environmental organizations that many activists, after leaving college and actually entering the field, become so overwhelmed by the extent of the destruction and the job of repair they now face that they fall into deep depression for a while.

[9] For a very simple explanation of the climate system see here:

https://energyeducation.ca/encyclopedia/Climate_system

[10] Jewish ecologists often like to point to the words of Maimonides as suggesting this

approach (*Mishnah Torah*, Laws of Repentance 3:4): “Every individual must think of himself and of the world as a whole as if their merits and demerits were balanced. By committing one sin, he pushes himself and the entire world to the side of demerit, thereby destroying himself; whereas by doing one mitzvah, he pushes himself and the entire world to the side of merit, and brings upon him deliverance.”

[Building Structures to House All Images of God by Rabbi Adir Yolkut](https://truah.org/resources/parshat-pekudei-adir-yolkut-moraltorah/)
<https://truah.org/resources/parshat-pekudei-adir-yolkut-moraltorah/>

You never know how a fresh pair of socks and a peanut butter and jelly sandwich will affect someone. This was one of many takeaways from a trip I took to Portland a few years ago with a group of teens from my synagogue. While in town, we went to Night Strike, a community gathering that mobilizes volunteers to traverse the city streets and engage with those experiencing homelessness. The joy that was apparent on the faces of those we met was palpable. But it came from more than just the gift of objects; they were touched most deeply by the genuine conversations that we had and the experience of really being seen and heard.

The purpose of the whole trip was to engage with and begin thinking about the challenge of homelessness in America. Recent studies show that there are over 500,000 people experiencing homelessness in America for a multitude of reasons. We met a small number of them at locations like Dignity Village, the oldest continually operating, city-sanctioned homeless village in the United States. The hope at the village is that while folks await more permanent housing, they can be recognized in their personhood, value, and dignity that they may have lost after years on the streets.

Those who have always had the privilege of secure housing do not often think of how sacred and precious having a home is. This concept is perhaps more ancient than we think. As we come to the end of the book of Exodus in the portion of Pekudei this week, we see Moses and the Israelites preparing the final touches on the *mishkan*, the portable tabernacle that traveled with the Israelites.

In [Exodus 40:33-34](#), we read:

When Moses had finished the work, the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Presence of God filled the Tabernacle.

That clause about Moses finishing the work evokes strong connections to the creation story for the sages; it's the same word the Torah uses to describe God finishing the work of creation ([Genesis 2:2](#)). As [Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, of blessed memory](#), states, “The creation of the Sanctuary by the Israelites is intended to represent a human parallel to the Divine creation of the universe. In making the

world, God created a home for mankind. In making the Tabernacle, mankind created a home for God.” The very act of housing meriting something divine is embedded within our tradition.

Yet, this portion goes even further in making that connection. Rabbeinu Bahya (Medieval Spanish biblical commentator) notes that throughout the whole narrative around the construction of the tabernacle, the word “*asah*” “עשה,” do/make, is used 248 times. 248 is also the number of positive commandments in the Torah, along with the rabbinic conception of the number of bones in the human body. (Think of this as spiritual anatomy rather than medical.) Rabbeinu Bahya concludes that not only does this section parallel the very act of creation but it also demonstrates that human beings, created in the image of God, are the very reason the world exists. It is incumbent upon us to create spaces for God to come into the world. I would add, if we are not doing everything we can to create structures to house all holy human beings, then we are not doing our part in imitating godliness.

The root causes of homelessness are vast and beyond the scope of this piece, but there are a few things that we can do in the present. We can expand the housing choice voucher program, which has limited reach right now. We can push our local legislatures to enforce “Housing First,” an approach to homelessness that quickly provides permanent housing for individuals and families without preconditions or barriers to entry, such as sobriety, treatment, or service participation requirements. On top of that, we can continue to press the federal government for more homeless relief aid, such as what they provided in the early parts of the pandemic.

When it comes down to it, helping those experiencing homelessness is not just a matter of bricks and mortar. As we learn from our sacred tradition this week, if you build it, not only will God come, but so too will all of those created in God’s image. It’s exactly what we’re put here to do. *(Rabbi Adir Yolkut is a St. Louisian by heart, currently serving as the Associate Rabbi in Temple Israel Center in White Plains, NY.)*

** The following article is about last week's parasha Vayakhel, but I missed it last week so I decided to share it this week.*

[Three Hidden Lessons in a Highly Technical Parasha: Vayakhel by Rabbi Prof. David Golinkin](https://schechter.edu/three-hidden-lessons-in-a-highly-technical-parasha-vayakhel/)

<https://schechter.edu/three-hidden-lessons-in-a-highly-technical-parasha-vayakhel/>

This week’s parasha, Vayakhel, presents a challenge to any darshan or rabbi who wants to talk about the parasha.

Indeed, in a recent book by Hillel Halkin, *A Complicated Jew*, there is a chapter, in which he surveys the weekly portions. He writes “this week was Pekudei, the last Torah reading of Exodus. Before it came Vayakhel. Together, they are two of the most tedious parshiot shavua in the chumash. Vayakhel relates how the Israelites built the Tabernacle... Pekudei how they made the priestly vestments... The commentators fall silent. What is there to add?” Then, of course, he brings his own *chiddush*, his own addition to those weekly portions.

I believe that there are at least three things we can learn from Parashat Vayakhel.

The **first** has to do with the status of women in Judaism. As you may know, in a few weeks, we will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of the first Bat Mitzvah — Judith Kaplan the daughter of Rabbi Professor Mordechai Kaplan— which took place on March 18th, 1922. Those who have made changes in Jewish practice regarding women during the past 100 years, have looked for precedents. Indeed, a wonderful precedent appears in this week’s portion.

Chapter 35: “The whole community, the Israelites, left Moses’ presence. Everyone who excelled in ability and everyone whose spirit moved him came, bringing to the Lord his offering for the work of the Tent of Meeting. Men and women, all whose hearts moved them... and everyone who had in his possession X, Y and Z. Everyone who would make gifts of silver and copper. Everyone who had in his possession acacia wood. And all the skilled women spun upon their own hands and all the women who excelled in that skill spun the goats’ hair. Thus, the Israelites — all the men and women whose hearts moved them to bring anything for the work that the Lord through Moses had... to be done — brought it as a freewill offering to the Lord.” (Lev. 35: 20-29).

In other words, men and women contributed equally to the building of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle, and this is presented in our Torah portion in a very egalitarian fashion. Indeed Rabbi Dr. Tuvia Friedman pointed out in a wonderful article published about 40 years ago about “The Shifting Role of Women from the Bible to the Talmud”: the Bible, we have many examples of women having a much stronger role in Judaism than they had in the Talmudic period.

Furthermore, in the Introduction to my book, *The Status Of Women In Jewish Law: Responsa*, I sketched 41 *tachanot*, 41 stations, on the road to women having more and more public roles in Judaism during the past 150 years. The road from this week’s portion led eventually to the Bat Mitzvah of Judith Kaplan and to many other areas in which women have a greater role in Judaism today than they did in the past.

The **second** thing that we can learn from this week’s portion is found in Chapter 36. We read there that the people who were collecting the money for

the Tabernacle, in addition to what they collected, added their own gift. This was stressed in a work, called *Imrei Shefer* quoted in *Iturei Torah*: “*Vehem heviu elav od nedavah baboker baboker* — and they brought to him an additional contribution in the morning,” meaning the people who were collecting the money also gave a contribution themselves. The *Imrei Shefer* goes on to say that one of the problems with *askanim*, with people engaged in Jewish public life, is they say “I give them my time so I don’t have to give them my money.” *Imrei Shefer* says: no! We learn from *Vayakhel* that those who collect money and those who lead the Jewish people must contribute money to the organizations which they are leading. Finally, the **third** lesson is found in one verse at the end of Chapter 35, talking about Betzalel, the designer of the Mishkan. It says there in the Hebrew “*Ulehorot natan belibbo* — To give directions, he and Oholiab son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan.” *Lehorot* in Hebrew can mean to give direction, it can mean to pasken *Halakhah*, to give *Halakhic* decisions, or it can mean to teach. *Ibn Ezra* says to us that it means to teach, and he says here, *ki yeish chaham gam charash lo yuchal lehorot heiteiv*, there are people who are wise, who have great skills in the area of arts and crafts, but they don’t know how to teach others how to do that. The ideal in Judaism is, of course, to learn in order to teach. The story of Betzalel teaches us that not only did Betzalel know how to *make* beautiful things, but he also knew how to teach *others* to make beautiful things and to build the Mishkan.

So, from this seemingly “boring” parasha, *Vayakhel*, we can learn about the egalitarian tendency of men and women in the biblical period. We can learn that each person who collects money for a good cause must also give money to that cause. And we can learn ***kol halomed chayav lelamed, whoever learns must also teach.***

Shavua Tov from Schechter.

(David Golinkin is President of The Schechter Institutes, Inc. and President Emeritus of the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies. For twenty years he served as Chair of the Va’ad Halakhah (Law Committee) of the Rabbinical Assembly which gives halakhic guidance to the Masorti Movement in Israel. He is the founder and director of the Institute of Applied Halakhah at Schechter and also directs the Center for Women in Jewish Law. Rabbi Professor Golinkin made aliyah in 1972, earning a BA in Jewish History and two teaching certificates from The Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He received an MA in Rabbinics and a PhD in Talmud from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America where he was also ordained as Rabbi.)

Yahrtzeits

Mel Zwillenberg remembers his father Nathan Zwillenberg on Friday March 11th (Adar II 8)

Coming Up At Kol Rina:

**Second and final part of our Brunch-and-Learn series, Sunday, March 6, 2022:
"Praying Anew" with Rabbi Elie Kaunfer**

On Sunday, March 6, beginning at 10:30 am, Rabbi Elie Kaunfer will present the second of his two-part series "Praying Anew." His topic will be "Beyond the Meaning of the Words." Rabbi Kaunfer is President and CEO of the Hadar Institute and author of Empowered Judaism: What Independent Minyanim Can Teach Us About Building Vibrant Jewish Communities. Learn from this outstanding educator and enrich your prayer experience.

This free educational series is sponsored by the Susan Marx Fund for Adult Education at Kol Rina and co-sponsored by Oheb Shalom Congregation, and will be presented on Zoom. Please use the following link to register via Eventbrite and obtain the Zoom link for this event.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/praying-anew-with-rabbi-elie-kaunfer-a-2-part-series-227-and-36-tickets-270938332847>

Monday evening minyan

Our regular weekday evening minyan will take place on Monday, March 7, 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>

Meeting ID: 976 6398 7468

Password: 080691