

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Pekudei
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Pekudei in a Nutshell

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

The name of the Parshah, "Pekudei," means "Amounts of" and it is found in Exodus 38:21.

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

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 priests 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."

[On Jewish Character: Pekudei by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l](#)

<https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/pekudei/on-jewish-character/>

Pekudei has sometimes been called "The Accountant's Parsha", because that is how it begins, with the audited accounts of the money and materials donated to the Sanctuary. It is the Torah's way of teaching us the need for financial transparency.

But beneath the sometimes-dry surface lie two extraordinary stories, one told in last week's parsha, the other the week before, teaching us something deep about Jewish nature that is still true today.

The first has to do with the Sanctuary itself. God told Moses to ask people to make contributions. Some brought gold, some silver, some copper. Some gave wool or linen or animal skins. Others contributed acacia wood, oil, spices, or incense. Some gave precious stones for the High Priest's breastplate. What was remarkable was the willingness with which they gave:

The people continued bringing [Moses] additional gifts every morning. So all the skilled workers who were doing all the work on the Sanctuary left what they were doing, and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for the work God has commanded us to do."

Moses ordered an announcement to be made throughout the camp:

"Let no man or woman make anything more as an offering for the Sanctuary."

And so the people brought no more, because what they already had was more than enough to for all the work that was to be done. Ex. 36:3-7

They brought too much. Moses had to tell them to stop. That is not the Israelites as we have become accustomed to seeing them, argumentative, quarrelsome, ungrateful. This is a people that longs to give.

One parsha earlier we read a very different story. The people were anxious. Moses had been up the mountain for a long time. Was he still alive? Had some accident happened to him? If so, how would they receive the Divine word telling them what to do and where to go? Hence their demand for a Calf – essentially an oracle, an object through which Divine instruction could be heard.

Aaron, according to the most favoured explanation, realised that he could not stop the people directly by refusing their request, so he adopted a stalling manoeuvre.

He did something with the intention of slowing them down, trusting that if the work could be delayed, Moses would reappear. This is what Aaron said:

“Take off the gold rings from the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.” Ex. 32:2

According to the Midrash, he thought this would create arguments within families, there would be resistance to the requests for jewellery, and the project would be delayed. Instead, immediately thereafter without a pause, we read:

So all the people took the gold rings from their ears and brought them to Aaron. Ex. 32:3

Again the same generosity. Now, these two projects could not be less alike. One, the Tabernacle, was holy. The other, the Calf, was close to being an idol. Building the Tabernacle was a supreme mitzvah; making the Calf was a terrible sin. Yet their response was the same in both cases. Hence this comment of the Sages:

One cannot understand the nature of this people. If they are appealed to for a Calf, they give. If appealed to for the Tabernacle, they give.
Yerushalmi Shekalim 1, 45

The common factor was generosity. Jews may not always make the right choices in what they give to, but they give.

In the twelfth century, Moses Maimonides twice interrupts his customary calm legal prose in his law code, the Mishneh Torah, to make the same point. Speaking about tzedakah, charity, he says:

“We have never seen or heard about a Jewish community which does not have a charity fund.” Laws of Gifts to the poor, 9:3

The idea that a Jewish community could exist without a network of charitable provisions was almost inconceivable. Later in the same book, Maimonides says:

We are obligated to be more scrupulous in fulfilling the commandment of tzedakah than any other positive commandment because tzedakah is the sign of the righteous person, a descendant of Abraham our father, as it is said, “For I know him, that he will command his children . . . to do tzedakah” . . . If someone is cruel and does not show mercy, there are sufficient grounds to suspect his lineage, since cruelty is found only among the other nations . . . Whoever refuses to give charity is called Belial, the same term which is applied to idol worshippers. Laws of Gifts to the poor, 10:1-3

Maimonides is here saying more than that Jews give charity. He is saying that a charitable disposition is written into Jewish genes, part of our inherited DNA. It is one of the signs of being a child of Abraham, so much so that if someone does not give charity there are “grounds to suspect his lineage.” Whether this is nature or nurture or both, to be Jewish is to give.

There is a fascinating feature of the geography of the land of Israel. It contains two seas: the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee is full of life. The Dead Sea, as its name implies, is not. Yet they are fed by the same river, the Jordan. The difference – and this is key – is that the Sea of Galilee receives water and gives water. The Dead Sea receives but does not give. To receive but not to give is, in Jewish geography as well as Jewish psychology, simply not life.

So it was in the time of Moses. So it is today. In virtually every country in which Jews live, their charitable giving is out of all proportion to their numbers. In Judaism, to live is to give.

[Three Thoughts on Parshat Pekudei: Leadership, Labor, Art by Ester Meir Horvitz](https://ots.org.il/words-of-wisdom-ester-meir-horvitz-on-parshat-pekudei/)
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In Parshat Pekudei, we delve further into the intricate construction of the Tabernacle. In these chapters that conclude the Book of Shemot, a profound question arises: How does a book that opens with a genocide, then proceeds to relate an incredible narrative of redemption and freedom; goes on to paint a vivid picture of breathtaking miracles; inspires the readers with Moshe’s outstanding leadership capabilities; relates the monumental event of the giving of the Torah with its laws and statutes, culminating in the intense drama of the shattering of the Tablets of God – how does such a remarkable account of extraordinary events conclude with an inventory, detailing the items and utensils of the Tabernacle, ending in a manner akin to a financial report? Why does such a powerful book conclude with an inventory?

What significance is held by this inventory, spanning chapters 38 through 40, that demands our careful attention? Here are three reflections on why this portion is as significant as the earlier chapters of the Book of Shemot:

1. Transparency and integrity
2. In praise of labor
3. The importance of Art

First Reflection:

Moshe meticulously accounts for every shekel collected from the community, exemplifying leadership rooted in transparency and integrity. This attention to

detail underscores the responsible utilization of public funds. Furthermore, while these chapters detail the construction of the Tabernacle, the dwelling place of the Divine, they highlight a profound paradox: God's presence permeates even the minutiae, every numerical calculation, and meticulous detail. In light of recent local elections, let us offer a prayer for leaders who govern with the same integrity and transparency as Moshe demonstrated in this week's portion.

Second Reflection:

Meir Ariel, in his song "The Song of Labor," eloquently captures the essence of these portions. He eagerly anticipates observing the craftsmen engaged in building the Tabernacle.

"Take me to the tents of Israel, to the mountain high,
To witness this labor, 'neath the desert sky –
Where the wanderers dwell, in their transient abode,
I'll wander, I'll ponder, where labor's scent is stowed,
'Neath the desert sky, where labor's scent is stowed.
(...)

I'll join the craftsmen, who fashion and shape,
The vessels and trinkets, that gleam and drape,
And then pour the molten, with fervor and heat,
Into copper and silver, and gold pure and sweet,
With fervor and heat, into gold pure and sweet."

Ariel, raised and educated in the kibbutz movement, grew up on the ethos of labor as the essence of life. As he wanders and observes the laborers and craftsmen, he wonders if all workers receive the same "airtime":

"And here I muse in thought and in rhyme,
On the essence of labor, in space and in time,
Do all get their share, in the broadcast of life,
Or just those who paint, amidst struggle and strife,
In the broadcast of life, amidst struggle and strife?"

He cannot help but ponder his occupation, sitting and writing his words and playing his instrument, wondering about the meaning of his occupation in the world[1].

I will add that after the first reflection on leadership that must account for its use of public funds, it is also appropriate to dedicate a few verses to the work of the craftsmen. Behind the actions are people who perform their work in good faith and with much love.

Third Reflection:

In the concluding chapters of the Book of Shemot, as the people have achieved freedom and the laws have been established, there emerges a sense of security that fosters artistic expression and creation. This phenomenon echoes the early days of the Zionist movement, when figures like Martin Buber advocated for the fusion of Art and Judaism to catalyze the revitalization of the Jewish people. In fact, in one of the Zionist Congresses, Buber called for the "Joining of Hands", referring to the said synthesis of Art and Judaism. And, indeed, Art plays a pivotal role in nation-building, as exemplified in the Book of Shemot and the early Zionist endeavors.

Muki Tzur, a member of Kibbutz Ein Gev, poses a crucial question: What distinguishes renewed Jewish Art from Avoda Zarah, idolatry? He draws a parallel to Remembrance Day in Israel to shed light on this distinction. He writes as follows: "What is the difference between Avodah Zarah and renewed Jewish Art? Remembrance Day in Israel teaches us the difference. How do we ensure that Remembrance Day does not turn into the celebration of Death, but preserves life and our commitment to it? In all ceremonies and upon all tombstones, in all elegies and sermons, we must protect that thin thread that separates the sacred from the mundane; distinguishes between life and the sacrifices of life; differentiates between loyalty to our children and the sacrifice of children; discerns between Avodah ["labor"] and Avodah Zarah ["idolatry"]. In this chapter in the Book of Shemot, we build an altar. However, those who hold onto the altar are only those who hold onto life.[2]"

As we conclude our journey through the Book of Shemot, let us pray for leaders who embody integrity and transparency, who honor and sanctify life, and who possess the wisdom to distinguish between true Art and idolatry. (*Ester Meir Horovitz is a Rosh Midrasha at Ohr Torah Stone's "HaMidrasha Hayisraelit".*) [1] David Peretz, 929 <https://www.929.org.il/page/88/post/2360> [2] Muki Tzur 929, <https://www.929.org.il/page/88/post/2328>

Parshat Pedukei: G-d is in the Details by Rabbi Eliezer Shore PhD

Edited by Grow Torah

<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 prakim. In Parshat Terumah and Tetzaveh, Moshe receives the instructions for building the Mishkan, including its utensils and the Bigdei Kehunah. 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 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'ed paralleled the firmament, the Menorah paralleled the sun and moon, the Kiyor paralleled the oceans, and so on. The structure of the Mishkan was therefore 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 necessary 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 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 every watt of electricity are important parts 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 the 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 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. *(For Rabbi Shore's bio please look here*

<http://www.eliezershore.com/bio.html>) [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](#). [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."

[Pekudei: Using Our Gifts by the Accidental Talmudist](https://www.accidentaltalmudist.org/torah/2024/03/11/vayakhel-pekudei-using-our-gifts-2/)

<https://www.accidentaltalmudist.org/torah/2024/03/11/vayakhel-pekudei-using-our-gifts-2/>

"These are the accountings of the Mishkan..." (Ex. 38:21)

In last week's Torah portion Vayakhel, Moses assembles the Children of Israel and conveys God's instructions for building the Mishkan, the portable tabernacle in the wilderness where the Divine Presence dwells. The people donate generously to fund the required materials, which include precious metals, dyed wool, animal skins, oil, wood, stones, and other materials.

This week, in parsha Pekudei, The Torah includes a detailed accounting of how the funds are allocated. For instance, 100 talents of silver donated by community members are for casting sockets (Ex. 38:27) and 1,775 donated shekels are for making hooks (Ex. 38:28.) Rav Moshe Feinstein teaches that this accounting of funds for the Mishkan contains an important message for each of us. Just as it was necessary to ensure that gifts received for the Mishkan were used properly, so too we must ask ourselves whether our own gifts are being used properly.

Rav Moshe explains this personal assessment as a two-step process:

- ➡ Acknowledge to yourself the unique gifts, talents and strengths God has given you. There is something special that only you can contribute to the world, and it is your holy responsibility to figure out what that is.
- ➡ Continually conduct an honest analysis of whether you are using your gifts most effectively and how you can do better.

May we all make this world a better place by contributing generously of our God-given talents!

Yahrtzeits

Mel Zwillenberg remembers his father Nathan Zwillenberg on Monday March 18th.



