Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Pekudei/Shabbat Hachodesh
March 29, 2025 *** 29 Adar, 5785

Pekuedei 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.

Shabbat HaChodesh in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/74477/jewish/Hachodesh-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This being the Shabbat that falls on or before the first of Nissan, we also read the section of Hachodesh (Exodus 12:1–20), which relates G-d's words to Moses in Egypt two weeks before the Exodus, instructing us to set the Jewish calendar by the monthly new moon, and to regard Nissan as the "head of months." G-d also instructs to bring the Passover offering, to eat it with matzah and bitter herbs, and to abstain from leaven for seven days.

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

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

This special haftorah 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 haftorah 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 haftorah 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 haftorah is devoted to the sacrifices that will be brought by the "leader," and prescribes his entry and exit from the Temple.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Encampments & Journeys by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z”l (5769)
https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/vayakhel/encampments-journeys/

Right at the end of the book of Shemot, there is a textual difficulty so slight that it is easy to miss, yet – as interpreted by Rashi – it contains one of the great clues as to the nature of Jewish identity: it is a moving testimony to the unique challenge of being a Jew.

First, the background. The Tabernacle is finally complete. Its construction has taken many chapters to relate. No other event in the wilderness years is portrayed in such detail. Now, on the first of Nissan, exactly a year after Moses told the people to begin their preparations for the Exodus, he assembles the beams and hangings, and puts the furniture and vessels in place. There is an unmistakable parallelism between the words the Torah uses to describe Moses’ completion of the work and those it uses of God on the seventh day of Creation:

> And God finished [*vayechal*] on the seventh day, the work [*melachto*] which He had done. Genesis 2:2-3

> And Moses finished [*vayechal*] the work [*hamelachah*]. Exodus 40:34

The next verse in Pekudei states the result:

> Then the Cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.

The meaning is both clear and revolutionary. 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 humankind. In making the Tabernacle, humankind created a home for God.

From a human perspective, God fills the space we make for His presence. His glory exists where we renounce ours. The immense detail of the construction is there to tell us that throughout, the Israelites were obeying God's instructions rather than improvising their own. The specific domain called "the holy" is where we meet God on His terms, not ours. Yet this too is God's way of conferring dignity on humankind. It is we who build His home so that He may fill what we have made. In the words of a famous film: "If you build it, he will come."

Bereishit begins with God making the cosmos. Shemot ends with human beings making a micro-cosmos, a miniature and symbolic universe. Thus the entire narrative of Genesis-Exodus is a single vast span that begins and ends with the concept of God-filled space, with this difference: that in the beginning the work is done by God-the-Creator. By the end it is done by man-and-woman-the-creators. The whole intricate history has been a story with one overarching theme: the transfer of the power and responsibility of creation from heaven to earth, from God to the image-of-God called humankind.

That is the background. However, the final verses of the book go on to tell us about the relationship between the "Cloud of Glory" and the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle, we recall, was not a fixed structure. It was made in such a way as to be portable. It

could quickly be dismantled and its parts carried, as the Israelites made their way to the next stage of their journey. When the time came for the Israelites to move on, the Cloud moved from its resting place in the Tent of Meeting to a position outside the camp, signalling the direction they must now take. This is how the Torah describes it:

> When the Cloud lifted from above the Tabernacle, the Israelites went onward in all their journeys, but if the Cloud did not lift, they did not set out until the day it lifted. So the Cloud of the Lord was over the Tabernacle by day, and fire was in the Cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel in all their journeys. Ex. 40:36-38

There is a small but significant difference between the two instances of the phrase *bechol mas'ehem,* "in all their journeys". In the first instance the words are to be taken literally. When the Cloud lifted and moved on ahead, the Israelites knew they were about to travel.

However, in the second instance they cannot be taken literally. The Cloud was not over the Tabernacle in all their journeys. On the contrary: it was there only when they stopped travelling and instead pitched camp. During the journeys, the Cloud went on ahead.

Noting this, Rashi makes the following comment:

> A place where they encamped is also called *massa*, "a journey" . . . Because from the place of encampment they always set out again on a new journey, therefore they are all called "journeys". Rashi's commentary to Exodus 40:38.

The point is linguistic, but the message is anything but. Rashi has encapsulated in a few brief words – "a place where they encamped is also called a journey" — the existential truth at the heart of Jewish identity. So long as we have not yet reached

our destination, even a place of rest is still called a journey – because we know we are not here forever. There is a way still to go.

In the words of the poet Robert Frost:

> The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
> But I have promises to keep,
> And miles to go before I sleep.[1]

To be a Jew is to travel, and to know that here where we are is a mere resting place, not yet a home. It is defined not by the fact that we are here, but by the knowledge that eventually – after a day, a week, a year, a century, sometimes even a millennium – we will have to move on. Thus, the portable Tabernacle, even more than the Temple in Jerusalem, became the symbol of Jewish life.

Why so? Because the gods of the ancient world were gods of a place: Sumeria, Memphis, Moab, Edom. They had a specific domain. Theology was linked to geography. Here, in this holy place, made magnificent by ziggurat or temple, the gods of the tribe or the state ruled and exercised power over the city or the empire. When Pharaoh says to Moses: "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go" (Exodus 5:2), he means, 'here, I am the sovereign power. Egypt has its own gods. Within its boundaries, they alone rule, and they have delegated that power to me, their earthly representative. There may indeed be a God of Israel, but His power and authority do not extend to Egypt.' Divine sovereignty is like political sovereignty. It has borders. It has spatial location. It is bounded by a place on the map.

With Israel, an old-new idea (it goes back, according to the Torah, to Adam, Cain, Abraham and Jacob, all of whom suffered exile) is reborn: that God, being everywhere, can be found anywhere. He is what Morris Berman calls the "wandering God."[2] Just as in the desert His Cloud of Glory accompanied the

Israelites on their long and meandering journey, so, said the rabbis, “when Israel went into exile, the Divine Presence went with them.”[3] God cannot be confined to a specific place. Even in Israel, His presence among the people depended on their obedience to His word. Hence there is no such thing as physical security, the certain knowledge that here-I-am-and-here-I-stay. As David said:

> When I felt secure, I said,
> “I will never be shaken.”
> …but when You hid Your face,
> I was dismayed. Psalm 30

Security belongs not to place but to person, not to a physical space on the surface of the earth but to a spiritual space in the human heart.

If anything is responsible for the unparalleled strength of Jewish identity during the long centuries in which Jews were scattered throughout the world, a minority, it is the concept to which Jews and Judaism gave the name *galut*, exile. Unique among nations in the ancient or modern world, with few exceptions they neither converted to the dominant faith nor assimilated to the prevailing culture. The sole reason was that they never mistook a particular place for home, a temporary location for ultimate destination. “Now we are here,” they said at the beginning of the Seder service, “but next year, in the land of Israel.”

In Jewish law, one who rents a house outside Israel is obliged to affix a mezuza only after thirty days.[4] Until then it is not yet regarded as a dwelling place. Only after thirty days does it become, de facto, home. In Israel, however, one who rents a house is immediately obligated, *mishum yishuv Eretz Yisrael*, “because of the command to settle Israel.” Outside Israel, Jewish life is a way, a path, a route. Even an encampment, a place of rest, is still called a journey.

In this context, one detail stands out in the long list of instructions about the

Tabernacle. It concerns the Ark, in which were kept the Tablets of stone that Moses brought down the mountain, permanent reminders of God's covenant with Israel. On the side of the Ark were gold rings, two on each side, within which poles or staves were fitted so that the Ark could be carried when the time came for the Israelites to move on (Exodus 25:12-14). The Torah adds the following stipulation:

> The poles are to remain in the rings of this Ark; they are not to be removed. Exodus 25:15

Why so? Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explained that the Ark was to be permanently ready when the need arose for the Israelites to travel. Why was the same not true about the other objects in the Tabernacle, such as the altar and the menorah? To show supremely, said Hirsch, that the Torah was not limited to any one place.[5] And so it was. The Torah became, in the famous phrase of Heinrich Heine, "the portable homeland of the Jew." Throughout history Jews found themselves scattered and dispersed among the nations, never knowing when they would be forced to leave and find a new home. In the fifteenth century alone, Jews were expelled from Vienna and Linz in 1421, from Cologne in 1424, Augsburg in 1439, Bavaria in 1442, Moravia in 1454, Perugia in 1485, Vicenza in 1486, Parma in 1488, Milan and Lucca in 1489, Spain in 1492 and Portugal 1497.[6]

How did they survive, their identity intact, their faith, though sorely challenged, still strong? Because they believed that God was with them, even in exile. Because they were sustained by the line from Psalms (23:4), "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me." Because they still had the Torah, God's unbreakable covenant, with its promise that "In spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely, breaking my covenant with them. I am the Lord their God" (Leviticus 26:44). Because they were a people used to travelling, knowing that even an encampment is only a temporary dwelling.

Emil Fackenheim, the distinguished theologian, was a Holocaust survivor. Born in Halle, Germany, in 1916, he was arrested on Kristallnacht and interned at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, from which he eventually escaped. He recalled a picture hanging in his parents' house when he was a child:

> It was not our kind of picture…because what it portrayed was not a German-Jewish experience: Jews fleeing from a pogrom. Even so it moved me deeply, and I remember it well. The fleeing Jews in the picture are bearded old men, terrified, but not so much as to leave behind what is most precious to them. In the view of antisemites these Jews would doubtless be clutching bags of gold. In fact, each of them carries a Torah scroll. Emil Fackenheim, *What Is Judaism?* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), p. 60.

There is nothing in history quite like this Jewish ability to travel, to move on, accompanied by no more than the Divine word, the promise, the call, the faith in an ultimate destination. That is how Jewish history began, with God's call to Abraham to leave his land, his birthplace and his father's house (Genesis 12:1). That is how Jewish history has continued for most of four thousand years. Outside Israel, Jews' only security was faith itself and its eternal record in the Torah, God's love letter to the Jewish people, His unbreakable bond. And during all those centuries, though they were derided as "the wandering Jew,"[7] they became living testimony to the possibility of faith in the midst of uncertainty, and to the God who made this faith possible, the God of everywhere, symbolised by the Tabernacle, His portable home.

And when the time came for Jews to make one more journey, to the land first promised to Abraham and that Moses spent his life as a leader travelling towards, they did so without hesitation or demur. Scenes of leave-taking were repeated time and again during the years 1948-51, when one after another, the Jewish

communities in Arab lands – the Maghreb, Iraq, Yemen – said goodbye to homes they had lived in for centuries and left for Israel. They too knew that those homes were mere encampments, stages on a journey whose ultimate destination lay elsewhere.

In 1990, Dalai Lama, who had lived in exile from Tibet since 1951, invited a group of Jewish scholars to visit him in North India. Realising that he and his followers might have to spend many years in exile before they were allowed back, he had pondered the question, how does a way of life sustain itself far from home? He realised that one group above all others had faced and solved that problem: the Jews. So he turned to them for advice.[8]

Whether the Jewish answer – which has to do with faith in the God of history – is applicable to Buddhism is a moot point, but the encounter was fascinating nonetheless, because it showed that even the Dalai Lama, leader of a group far removed from Judaism, recognised that there is something unparalleled in the Jewish capacity to stay faithful to the terms of its existence despite dispersion, never losing faith that one day the exiles would return to their land.

How and why it happened is contained in those simple words of Rashi at the end of Exodus. Even when at rest, Jews knew that they would one day have to uproot their tents, dismantle the Tabernacle, and move on. “Even an encampment is called a journey.” A people that never stops travelling is one that never grows old or stale or complacent. It may live in the here-and-now, but it is always conscious of the distant past and the still-beckoning future.

> But I have promises to keep
> and miles to go before I sleep.

[1] “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening,” in The Poetry of Robert Frost (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 224-225. [2] Morris Berman, Wandering God: A Study

in Nomadic Spirituality (State University of New York Press, 2000). [3] Megilla 29a; Sifrei, Numbers, p. 161. [4] Yoreh De'ah 286:22. [5] The Pentateuch, translated with commentary by Samson Raphael Hirsch (Gateshead: Judaica Press, 1982), 2:43-35. [6] Paul Johnson, A History of the Jews (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), 2:434-435. [7] See Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes, The Wandering Jew: Essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986). [8] The full story of the encounter is told in Roger Kamenetz's book, The Jew in the Lotus (HarperOne, 2007).

Pekudei: Learning From, Not Erasing, Our Broken Tablets
by Rabbi Elyse Wechterman
https://truah.org/resources/elyse-wechterman-pekudei-moraltorah_2025_/

Sixty years ago, several hundred unarmed protesters attempted to march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, AL. Their goal was to walk the 54 miles to the state capitol in Montgomery and demand the implementation of voting rights previously denied to Black people across the Jim Crow South. Tear gas, billy clubs, and ferocious anger met the non-violent marchers. They faced a wall of white state troopers and sheriff's deputies bent on stopping them, brutally attacking the front-line marchers. Children participating were chased back to their homes. Protest organizer Amelia Boynton was beaten unconscious. John Lewis had his skull cracked.

Images of the violence spread across the nation, creating a national outcry. More people came to Selma, including Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and dared to march across that bridge. Five months later, the 1965 Voting Rights Act was signed into law. Bloody Sunday was a nadir of the American story. The images from it are horrific and shocking: White police officers with billy clubs attacked Black marchers with seeming impunity. Marchers lay on the ground with bloodied

bandages. Many of us want to turn away, to avoid looking at the brutality, and to remember only the victory that came after.

We do so at our peril.

This week, we read the very last lines of the Book of Exodus. The work of building the Tabernacle, the tent of meeting, and the Ark of the Covenant had been completed. The only thing left to do was to put it all together. Moses followed the instructions, putting all the sockets in place and all the curtains together. Then, "he took the eydut (testimony/witness/pact) and placed it in the ark; he fixed the poles to the ark, put the cover on top of it, and brought the ark inside the Tabernacle." (Exodus 40:20-21)

Years later, when King Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem, the priests described the Ark as holding two tablets: sh'nei luchot haeydot. There is a linguistic problem here. The words for the Tablets (luchot haeydot) are already plural — why would we need to add the word "two" (sheni) to describe what is inside? The rabbis of the Talmud tell us that this strange construction refers to the fact that the Ark contained two sets of tablets: The second set, which Moses brought down from Mt. Sinai, is whole and intact. The first set, which he smashed upon seeing the Israelites worshipping the Golden Calf — broken and shattered stones — also resides in the Ark. (Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra 14b)

The obvious question is, why? Why save the broken tablets that recall the greatest sin of the Israelites? Why hold on to a memory of their most significant failings?

James Baldwin instructs us, "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." We must remember the misdeeds of our past no matter how awful, no matter how egregious. This is the meaning of keeping the broken shards in the Ark of the Covenant. Only when we fully acknowledge our brokenness and carry the shards of our errors, can we begin to become whole and heal. Moses inherently understood this. By placing the broken

shards of the Tablets in the Ark, he was telegraphing to the people that it is OK to carry our brokenness with us. In fact, it is necessary.

Dr. Henry Giroux, a critical pedagogy scholar, wrote, "Ignoring past atrocities, historical injustices and uncomfortable truths about a society's foundation is not merely an oversight — it constitutes an active form of violence that shapes both our collective consciousness and political realities." ("Erasing History, Erasing Democracy") A hallmark practice of authoritarianism is the destruction of the historical record, the erasure of the past. Attempting to whitewash American history, the current administration issued executive orders mandating the elimination of curricula that promote "radical, anti-American ideologies," and instead promote the deceitful idea that the United States always lived up to the founding principles of freedom and prosperity. We are witnessing the removal of archival websites from government servers and the cancellation of African American History Month observances. Through these efforts, the administration is tearing apart the historical narrative of the United States, denying the verifiable truth that more people have been left out of the American dream than included in it, that brutality had a role in building this country, and that we have inherited both the gloriousness of the nation's founding ideas and the shame of our failure to live up to them. In short, they are discarding the broken shards.

This month, I traveled to Selma to participate in the 60th anniversary march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. It was a joyful celebration. But the celebration is only meaningful if we remember what came before, if we remember the images of Amelia Boynton and John Lewis bloodied and on the ground. We can only hold on to the freedoms so dearly won by recognizing the jagged shards of history.

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The Give and Take of Strength by Eliezer B. Diamond (2018)

https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/the-give-and-take-of-strength-2/

Rituals of closure are common in both the secular and religious realms. An example of the first is the sounding of retreat and the lowering of the flag marking the end of the official duty day on military installations. An instance of the second is the siyyum, a liturgical ritual and festive meal that is occasioned by the completion of the study of a Talmudic tractate. Closure rituals relate not only to the past but to the future as well. On the one hand, the temporal demarcation of a past event facilitates the emergence of its distinct identity, internal coherence, and significance, thereby providing insight, understanding, and, at times, a sense of accomplishment. At the same time, by declaring an end, a closure ritual creates space in which one can—and must—begin anew; the past is to be neither prison nor refuge.

Immediately after the final verse of Shemot, the book of Exodus, is chanted this coming Shabbat we will call out to the reader, "Hazak, hazak, venit-hazek", which might be translated as, "Be strong, be strong, and we will take strength from you." (For some reason, it has not become the custom to modify the above declaration and use the gender appropriate "hizki, hizki" when a woman is reading the Torah.) The "hazak" declaration is a closure ritual, a performative parallel to the graphic demarcation in the Torah scroll of Shemot's conclusion by means of four blank lines. It announces that the first part of the national saga has come to a close with the construction and completion of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle. In that endeavor all of Israel was united in dedication to a common goal; each contribution of resources, talent, and effort was vital, while none was sufficient.

The Mishkan was of course of no worth without the presence of its designated occupant: the Shekhinah, the Divine Presence. "For over the Tabernacle the cloud

of the Lord rested by day, and fire would appear in [the cloud] by night in view of all the house of Israel in their journeys" (Exod. 40:38). With the advent of the Shekhinah's presence the inert structure is animated and a new story begins: "The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting" (Lev. 1:1). Shemot's static image of the Mishkan as a place of rest is replaced with Vayikra's dynamic one: the Mishkan is to be a place where God and humanity meet, where God and Moses converse and where Aaron is to enter the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur.

Clearly, a closure ritual is appropriate as we conclude the reading of Shemot. But why choose "hazak" as the ritual? Why the need to urge the reader to be strong and to wish strength for ourselves? A moment of completion is a complex one. We may feel sad that the end has come. In addition, in the moment of completion we often allow ourselves to feel the exhaustion that we have denied in the pursuit of closure, rendering us unready and perhaps unwilling to face the next challenge that lies before us.

So too, with the completion of Shemot. The reading ends with a crescendo, and yet it will be followed by the blessing recited at the end of every aliyah. We the listeners are afraid that, as with the seven lean cows who ate the seven fat ones in Pharaoh's dream, the drama and power of the words we have heard will be swallowed up by the ordinariness of the blessing that follows. We also know that more lies ahead, including the tragic death of Aaron's sons, (Lev. 10:1–2) which will mar the dedication of the building the construction of which has been described so lovingly in Shemot. Therefore, we need strength. We need to be saved from the depression that accompanies endings and we need strength to face and navigate the stories that will follow.

Yet let us ask further: Why do we not simply declare, "Let us all be strong"? Why single out the reader? A teaching of Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, the mid-20th century

author of Mikhtav Me'eliyahu, a collection of mussar essays, provides enlightenment. As we all know, says Rabbi Dessler, there are takers and givers. It turns out, however, that some give in order to take and some take in order to give. Suppose that someone agrees to donate a million dollars to a synagogue but then attaches all sorts of conditions to his gift, conditions that serve the needs of his ego but not those of the congregation. This man is giving in order to take; he's a giving taker. On the other hand, let's imagine a dedicated doctor who works night and day to spare his patients from illness and pain. One day, he tells his patients that he is suffering from exhaustion and will be taking a week's vacation. Only a fool or an ingrate would see this as selfishness. This doctor is taking in order to give; he is a taking giver.

So too with us and our Torah reader. She is our Moses, declaring God's word to the congregation. Reading Torah is a demanding and exacting task, even for those who have years of experience. (Not incidentally, Vayak-hel Pekudei is the second longest of the weekly Torah readings.) The reading is over, the reader is exhausted. We say: you give us inspiration through your chanting of the Torah. We wish you strength, both out of love for you and because we rely on your strength. You can give to us only if we also give to you.

We want our leaders to give us what we need and desire. Too often we are oblivious to their needs and to the limits of their time and energy. They want to give but unless we give too they will ultimately have nothing to give us. Let us make our leaders strong, through love, encouragement, and material assistance, so that we can be strengthened by them. *(Eliezer Daimmond is Rabbi Judaqh Nadich Professor of Talmud and Rabbinics at JTS)*

Pekudei: G-D Is In The Details by Rabbi Eliezer Shore, PhD

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

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'eid 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. *(Rabbi Dr. Eliezer Shore is a teacher of Jewish thought and spirituality. He lectures at various universities, colleges and yeshivot in Israel, and his articles and original stories have appeared in numerous publications and anthologies. In addition to his deep commitment to Jewish life and practice, he is university trained, with a background in comparative religion, and a Ph.D. in Jewish Philosophy. Thus, his teaching approach is unique. He relates to traditional texts with the seriousness and passion of a committed spiritual seeker, yet he can also stand outside the texts – reading them historically and culturally, analyzing them for what they mean, not just for what they say, and framing them within the universal, human search for God and for meaning.)*

[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.”

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Yahrtzeits

Shari Mevorah remembers her father Symek Kirstein on Sunday March 30th

Bobbi Ostrowsky remembers her brother Stuart Edelman on Sunday March 30th

Peter Greene remembers his father Stanley Greene on Monday March 31st

Margie Freeman remembers her mother Regina Freeman on Thursday April 3rd

Mel Zwillenberg remembers his wife Susan Zwillenberg on Friday April 4th