

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET
ON PARSHAS VAYAKHEL PEKUDEI - 5756

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Subject: Torah Weekly - Vayakhel/Pekudei

* TORAH WEEKLY *

Parshas Vayakhel/Pekudei - Parshas HaChodesh

For the week ending 25 Adar 5756 15 & 16 March 1996

Summary Vayakhel:

Moshe Rabbeinu exhorts the Bnei Yisrael to keep Shabbos, and requests donations for the materials for the construction of the Mishkan (tent of meeting). He collects gold, silver, precious stones, animal skins and yarn, as well as incense and olive oil for the Menorah and for anointing. The Princes of each of the twelve tribes bring the precious stones for the Kohen Gadol's breastplate and Ephod. Hashem appoints Betzalel and Oholiav

as the master craftsmen for the building of the Mishkan and its vessels. The Bnei Yisrael contribute so much that Moshe begins to refuse donations. Special curtains with two different covers were designed to serve as the material for the Mishkan's roof and door. Gold-covered boards set in silver bases were connected, and formed the walls of the Mishkan. Betzalel made the Aron HaKodesh (Ark), which contained the Tablets, from wood that was covered with gold on the inside and outside. On the cover of the Ark were two small figures facing each other with wings arching over the Ark. The Menorah and the Shulchan, the table with the showbreads were also made of gold. Two Altars were made: A small one for burning incense, made of wood overlaid with gold, and a larger Altar for the purpose of sacrifices that was made of wood that was covered with copper.

Pekudei: The Book of Shmos comes to its conclusion with this Parsha.

After finishing all the different parts, vessels and garments used in the Mishkan, Moshe gives a complete accounting and enumeration of all the contributions and of the various clothing and vessels which had been fashioned. The Bnei Yisrael bring everything to Moshe. He inspects the handiwork and notes that everything was made according to Hashem's specifications. Moshe blesses the people. Hashem speaks to Moshe and tells him that the Mishkan should be set up on the first day of the first month, i.e., Nissan. He also tells Moshe the order of assembly for the Mishkan and its vessels. Moshe does everything in the prescribed manner. When the Mishkan is finally complete with every vessel in its place, a cloud descends upon it, indicating that Hashem's glory was resting there. Whenever the cloud moved away from the Mishkan, the Bnei Yisrael would follow it. At night the cloud was replaced by a pillar of fire.

Commentaries

EARTH-SUIT

"These are the accounts of the Mishkan" (38:21)

Your body is a space-suit. It allows your soul to exist in this world.

That is its purpose. No-one would ever confuse the space-suit with the man inside it. Prior to the sin of Adam and Chava, there was no shame, and therefore no need for clothing. They perceived clearly that the neshama, the soul, is the essence of a person, and the body is only its 'space-suit'. After their sin, however, this distinction became blurred, and it was necessary to show that the body is of importance only insofar as it supports the neshama. Since the body is visible, man is easily misled into attributing to it primary importance. For this reason, clothes, by covering the body, stress that the inner spiritual essence, the neshama, which is hidden from view, is of essential significance.

The Midrash (Tanchuma Bamidbar 3) relates that when the Mishkan was erected, Hashem said that tznius (concealment, modesty) is extremely fitting here. The Mishkan itself was covered like a kallah (bride), with a veil in front and a train behind. The essence of the Mishkan is the Shechina, the Divine Presence, that dwells there. If one sees only the glorious structure, attributing intrinsic sanctity to the materials themselves, while forgetting the spiritual essence, the Mishkan becomes something akin to an idol.

Similarly, the Torah mandates an extra degree of tznius (modesty) for the Jewish woman. In secular cultures, women are de-valued, sometimes even reduced to physical objects. Emphasis is placed on what meets the eye - the space-suit. The Jewish woman, however, dresses so as to stress the essence of her inner being. "All the glory of the daughter of the King, is inward."

(Adapted from Rabbi Zev Leff's "Outlooks and Insights")

NO PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

"And each person whose heart motivated him came." (35:21)

Take a look at the really wealthy people in the world. What is it that they all have in common? Tremendous initiative. Initiative means not focusing on what you have now, but having the confidence to project what might be, and to act on it. "And each person whose heart motivated him came." The workers who made the Mishkan (tent of meeting) needed to be motivated by their hearts because none of them had any previous experience in the skills necessary for building it, and there were no teachers to train them! They were the true pioneers. They were successful because they had the inner courage to come forth and volunteer to do whatever was needed. They didn't think about their shortcomings. They projected their dreams. Just as it takes great initiative to become materially wealthy, so too it takes great initiative to become spiritually wealthy. Capitalize on those peak moments of inspiration to focus your spiritual goals higher and

higher, and you will get help from Above to lift you to the skies!
(Ramban, Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz, vyl"ch Rabbi Zelig Pliskin)

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL...

"He should make the copper laver from the mirrors of the legions" (38:8)
When you look at someone else, what do you see? You notice all the character flaws that he himself tries so hard to conceal. When you look at someone else, think that you are looking in a mirror. Just as a mirror reveals to us our ugly physical features, so when we see ugly character flaws in others, we should check for those same traits in ourselves in order to eradicate them. That's what the saying means - "Who is wise? He who learns from every person" (Avos).

When the Kohanim (priests) prepared for the service of Hashem in the Mishkan, they washed their hands and feet. On a mystical level, this washing was to wash themselves clean of any spiritual blemish, from any defect, bias or partiality. The laver in which they washed, was made entirely of mirrors. This reminded the Kohanim, that in order to distinguish their own imperfections, they should look first at their neighbor - that he should be their spiritual mirror. They should check in themselves for those character faults that they perceived in others. Because were they only to look at themselves, they would find it very hard to identify their own faults.
(Toldos Yaakov Yosef)

Haftorah for Shabbos HaChodesh: Yechezkel 45:16 - 46:18

PARTNERS IN TIME

The Shabbos before Rosh Chodesh Nissan is called Shabbos HaChodesh. Nissan, the first month of the year, is called 'the king of the months.' On Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the Jewish People received the first of all of the 613 mitzvos - the sanctification of the moon. Through this mitzvah, the Jewish People were given a partnership in the mastery of time: The world of Shabbos is fixed in time. We return to it every seven days regardless. However, the mitzvah of Kiddush HaChodesh (sanctifying the moon) gave the Jewish People the ability to establish the length of the months and thus to determine the dates of Pesach, Shavuot, Succos, etc. Thus Man becomes a partner with Hashem in sanctifying time - Hashem through the fixed holiness of Shabbos, and the Jewish People through Kiddush HaChodesh. The Cesium and Rubidium atom clocks at the U.S. Naval Observatory Time Center are accurate to one second in 300,000 years. But three thousand years ago, Moshe, had no such time-piece. However, somehow Moshe knew the exact length of the lunar month - 29.53059 days - an accuracy which was literally out of this world! In the reference work Astronomy and Astrophysics (Loudolt Bornstein Group vol. a Sec 2.2.4 Spruigr, Berlin 1965) the precise length of the lunar month is listed as 29.530589 days! How did Moshe have a figure so accurate that it took science three thousand years to come to the same number? Our Sages tell us that this number was given to Moshe by Hashem at the beginning of Parshas HaChodesh. It was passed down from Moshe to Hillel II, the last prince of the House of David. When Hillel II sanctified all the new moons from his day until the final redemption, he had to know the exact length of the lunar month to within a fraction of a second, for even a small error would, over millennia, amount to a visible error. This was in fact the case with the calendar of Julius Caesar, which by the year 1582 had wandered so far that Pope Gregory XIII erased 10 days from the calendar, with the result that the day after the 4th October 1582 was called the 16th October! There have been approximately 41,000 new moons since the time of Moshe, but from Mount Sinai onward, the secret of the exact length of the lunar month has always been known to the Jewish People, because Moshe Rabbeinu had a clock that was literally 'out of this world'...

The Haftorah of Parshas HaChodesh describes a month of Nissan yet to come.

Mashiach has arrived and the Third Beis Hamikdash is to be consecrated in a ceremony which starts on Rosh Chodesh Nissan. As in Parshas HaChodesh, so

too in the Haftorah the laws and sacrifices of Pesach are detailed.

Ohr Somayach International

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PARSHAS VAYAKHEL - PIKUDEI DIRE PRECAUTIONS 3/15/96
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Most building dedications are joyous events filled with upbeat speeches and predictions of growth and unyielding expansion. This week, Moshe recaps and reckons all the labor and material that went into the building of the Mishkan. He proudly announces that the contributions of gold, silver, copper and other materials, brought by the children of Israel exceeded the demands. Yet there is one aspect of his inaugural address that is strikingly somber. Instead of declaring that the Mishkan is here to stay and will be the forerunner of the Temple, he begins with a foreboding sense of doom.

The portion of Pekudei (Reckoning) begins in Exodus 38:21 "These are the reckoning of the Mishkan -- the Mishkan of testimony." The Medrash is bothered by Moshe's repetitive expression. Why does he repeat the words Mishkan -- Mishkan? He should have said, "These are the reckoning of the Mishkan of testimony."? The Medrash answers, homiletically, that the word Mishkan has a close relative in the word Mashkon -- collateral. Moshe was alluding, "to the two Temples that were taken back by G-d as collateral for the sins of Israel."

Why on opening day, does Moshe allude to impending doom? Wouldn't such talk be totally demoralizing? What lesson is there for the Jewish People?

In Poland there was a group of smugglers that employed many devious schemes to get goods across the Russian border without paying taxes. Yet, they were not successful until they realized that the border guards never bothered funeral processions.

The smugglers decided to load their wares into coffins, and with all the grief and anguish that accompanies a funeral they carried the contraband across the border. As this ritual became the norm, the fabricated anguish of a funeral procession was abandoned.

One dark night, the group, laughing and kibitzing, came to the border. The guards, noticing an unusually buoyant atmosphere, demanded to open the casket. Upon seeing the illegal goods, the guards immediately arrested the group and brought them to police headquarters for interrogation.

The leader of the smugglers stood before the commanding officer and broke down in tears. "Have mercy upon us. We all have families!" he wailed.

With rage in his eyes the officer responded. "You fool! You are crying now!"

Had you cried as you reached the border, you surely would be laughing now. It is because you laughed then that you are crying now!"

Moshe injected a sense of seriousness into the joy of dedication. He warns the Jewish people at this celebration that even the greatest gifts are not permanent. Even the Mishkan will not last forever. We must have that sense

of seriousness and appreciation relating to everything we cherish. The prophet (Yoel 2:13) tells us, "rend your heart and not your clothing." The sages explain those words as saying "if you rend your hearts, you will not have to rend your clothing." Moshe, in a very subtle way, sends the same message. Even at a wedding, as the groom smashes the glass under the canopy, he reminds himself, his bride, and all those gathered of Moshe's inaugural message. Cherish what you have and guard it dearly. Because nothing left unguarded lasts forever.

Good Shabbos (c) 1996 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

In Thanks to the Almighty upon our Wedding Anniversary

Jerry S. & Anita Ghanoooni

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- "RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frاند on Parshas Vayakhel/Pikudei -
We're a Religion of Deeds -- But Not Necessarily of Results

Parshas Pekudei describes [Shmos 39:32-33] the completion of the building of the Mishkan followed by the bringing of the entire Mishkan to Moshe. On this the Medrash comments with the verse from Mishlei [31:25] "Might and Splendor are her garments, and she will be happy on the final day (va'Tischak l'yom acharon)".

The Medrash continues with an incident concerning Rav Abahu's departure from the world. The Medrash says that Rav Abahu was shown all the good things that were prepared for him in the World-to-come and he became very happy. Rav Abahu said in astonishment, "All of this is for Abahu? I thought I had been toiling for naught and now I see I have a great portion in Olam Haba!"

This Medrash is perplexing. First of all, what is the connection between the incident with Rav Abahu and the bringing of the Mishkan to Moshe? Moreover, what kind of reaction was this by Rav Abahu? Rav Abahu was an Amora, who spent all his life learning Torah. Would we really expect and believe that all his labors of life were for nothing?

Rav Shlomo Breur says a beautiful explanation of this medrash. We all know that Judaism is a deed oriented religion. That which we hear, "Ani Yehudi b'Lev" -- I am a Jew at heart, despite the fact that I do not learn Torah and perform Mitzvos, is not good enough. Being a Jew is about doing -- from the moment we arise until the moment we go to bed. Our religion is not one of sentiment, it is one of deed.

But on the other hand, there is a concept that exists in Judaism that if someone intended to do a mitzvah but was prevented from so doing by circumstances beyond his control, the Torah considers it as if he had done the mitzvah (Ma'aleh alav haKasuv k'ilu asahu). In other words, although Judaism is a deed oriented religion, it is not necessarily a "bottom-line" or "result" oriented religion. As long as one tries and puts in the effort, even though he may not see results, G-d counts it as if he accomplished his intentions. If one works in Kiruv Rechokim -- Jewish Outreach and puts in his

best effort, or if a person puts his best efforts into raising his children, that's all that G-d can ask from a person -- to make the effort. Even if he is not always successful, G-d will credit him as if he had been successful.

This is what Rav Abahu was saying: "There were so many times in my life when I tried and I made the effort, but I was not successful.

I had assumed that on these occasions, my efforts had been in vain.

Now I see that I got reward even for those efforts that I wanted to accomplish but, for whatever reason, I had not been able to accomplish." Therefore, Rav Abahu was happy on the Final Day.

Chaza"l [the Sages] say that when the Jewish People came to Moshe with the Mishkan, they said, "Here are the boards, and here are the poles, but we can't assemble it". The Mishkan was too heavy to put up. Chaza"l explain that Moshe was miraculously given super human strength and only Moshe himself was able to put up the Mishkan. Yet the verse had said, that the "Mishkan" that was brought to Moshe. What does the verse mean, according to Chaza"l, if indeed they did not bring a finished Mishkan to Moshe?

Chaza"l are telling us is that since they did everything they were able to do, with the intention of assembling the Mishkan, the Pasuk credits them as if they had brought the completed Mishkan to Moshe. Like Rav Abahu, having made the effort they could be satisfied with the final result -- "Va'Tiskchak l'yom acharon". They were happy on the Final Day.

Jews Did Not Consider Luxurious Mishkan To Be Luxury

It says in the first verse of Parshas Pekudei [38:21] "These are the accounts of the Tabernacle, the Tabernacle of the Testimony...". There is a redundancy here. The word Mishkan [Tabernacle] is used twice. Rash"i says this is a remez [hint] to the two Temples which were destroyed and were taken from the Jewish people as a Mashkon [a security or collateral].

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky suggests a beautiful insight into this idea. Rav Yaakov says that when a person falls on hard times, he sells the luxuries in his house -- but not the necessities. One can't get along without one's basic needs. If things, however, get worse and one has to even get along without the necessities, then one still doesn't sell those necessities. What he does is borrow money and give the necessities as a security for the loan. But one never, ever, liquidates that which he holds to be a necessity.

The Jewish People, even though they could have built the Mishkan with cheaper materials (they did not have to use gold and silver), felt that the Mishkan was not a luxury -- it was a necessity. As a result, G-d responds by saying that since you consider the Mishkan a necessity, I will deem it a necessity as well. When I will take away the Beis HaMikdash, I will only take it as collateral. Therefore, I will return it, just as one returns a Mashkon.

The verse [36:7] in Vayakhel tells us that there was actually a surplus of materials donated to the "Building Fund" of the Mishkan. Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky comments that the Jews were supposed to go to Eretz Yisroel in a matter of months. The Mishkan was a temporary structure, because in Eretz Yisroel it would be replaced by the permanent Beis HaMikdash. The Jews could have rationalized that for a temporary building they could have put up a tent, there was no need to have such a lavish building. In those days, says Rav Yaakov, the Jews knew what a Mitzvah was. It is worth investing the best materials -- gold and silver -- even for a mitzvah that will last only a matter of months.

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Menachem Leibtag <ml@etzion.org.il> Chumash shiur...
PARSHAT HASHAVUA
by Menachem Leibtag
PARSHAT VA'YAKHEL

Why is Parshat Va'yakhel a word for word repetition of Parshat Trumah - or is it? Furthermore, why does the Mishkan receive so much 'press coverage' in Sefer Shmot?

To answer these questions, this week's shiur will analyze the structure of the parshiot describing and repeating the details of the Mishkan. In so doing, we will expose the thematic link between the Mishkan, Ma'amad Har Sinai, and the overall theme of Sefer Shmot.

PART I

BETWEEN TRUMAH-TZAVEH AND VAYAKHEL-PKUDEI

Although the commandment to build the Mishkan is repeated in Vayakhel-Pkudei, it is presented in a different manner from that in Trumah-Tzaveh. The differences reflect the purpose of each unit of Parshiot.

Vayakhel-Pkudei deals with the actual CONSTRUCTION of the Mishkan, therefore, it follows a most practical order of how someone would go about building the structure:

- The building materials (35:4-29);
- The builder - Btzallel, and fellow artisans (35:30-36:7);
- The "mishkan" - the structure housing the vessels
i.e. the tent covering, the walls etc. (36:8-38)
- The vessels- aron, shulchan, menorah, mizbach ktoret (37:1-29)
- The vessels of the courtyard: "mizbach ha'olah" and "kior"
followed by the curtains of the courtyard. (38:1-20)

In contrast, Trumah-Tzaveh deals with the FUNCTION and purpose of the Mishkan. Therefore, its presentation follows a different order. The Torah first describes the vessels and only afterward the "mishkan" (the "y'riot" and "krashim") itself:

- The commandment to build the Mishkan (25:1-9);
- The aron and kaporet, and their function (25:10-22);
- The shulchan and menorah, and their function (25:23-40);
- The "mishkan" - the structure housing those vessels (26:1-37);
- The "mizbach ha'olah" (27:1-8);
- The courtyard surrounding the mizbayach (27:9-19).

There is, however, an even more fundamental difference. Parshat Trumah records BOTH the detail AND the function of each vessel, while Parshat Vayakhel repeats ONLY the detail.

This distinction is quite logical: Trumah-Tzaveh focuses on the dwelling of the "shchina" on the Mishkan. The function of each vessel relates to that purpose, and therefore is included in that unit. However, Vayakhel-Pkudei focuses on the Mishkan's construction, and therefore it includes ONLY THE BUILDING DETAILS.

This can be explained allegorically: before building a home, one first meets an architect to discuss how the house is to FUNCTION. Then, the architect designs the DETAIL of the house with its function in mind. The finished plans (the blueprints) go to the builder who simply needs the list of materials and precise

dimensions.

'SHCHINA TAMID'

We stated that Trumah-Tzaveh describes the function of each vessel. How does the function of each relate to the presence of the "shchina" in the Mishkan?

Note the function of each vessel, as listed in following table organized by the three levels of "kedusha" in the Mishkan:

KODESH K'DOSHEM

- the Aron - to hold the "luchot ha'eidut"
- the Kaporet - from which God will speak to Moshe

KODESH

- the Shulchan - "lechem panim l'fa'nai TAMID"
- the Menorah - "l'ha'alot ner TAMID"
- the Mizbach Zahav - "l'haktir k'toret TAMID"

CHATZER HAMISHKAN

- the Mizbach Nchoshet- "l'hakriv Olat TAMID"

The "Kodesh K'doshim" contains the luchot, a testimony of the covenant at Har Sinai. There, the actual function of Har Sinai continues, for God will speak to Moshe from between the "kruvim" (25:21-22). Here, God performs the only action by 'coming down' to man. Therefore, no "avodah" (ritual) by man is performed here, it is God's private domain.

Outside this domain is the "Kodesh". Here the kohanim (priests) perform they daily "avodah", lighting the menorah, offering the ktoret, and keeping bread on the shulchan.

Outside the mishkan is the "chatzer" (courtyard). Here, all of Am Yisrael can offer korbanot on the "mizbayach".
[See previous shiur on Parshat Tzaveh for a complete analysis.]

Note that each vessel requires an "avodat TAMID". The word "tamid" means everlasting, or continuous. Am Yisrael must perform their daily "avodat tamid", in order to deserve the continuous presence of the "shchina".

A relationship with God does not come automatically. Rather, it requires constant effort on the part of man.

IN REACTION TO CHET HA'EGEL

In contrast to Trumah-Tzaveh, the dwelling of the shchina is mentioned in Vayakhel-Pkudei only AFTER the construction is completed, at the conclusion of the unit (40:34-38). In light of the events of chet ha'Egel, the shchina can dwell in the Mishkan only after Bnei Yisrael have proven their worthiness by building the Mishkan "ka'asher tzivah Hashem et Moshe", as we shall now explain.

Whether or not the commandment to build the Mishkan was originally given during the first or last set of forty days was the subject of our shiur on Parshat Trumah.

Regardless of when these mitzvot were actually given to MOSHE, Bnei Yisrael first hear this commandment only AFTER Chet ha'Egel. Therefore, the manner in which the construction of the Mishkan is presented to Bnei Yisrael in Parshat Vayakhel should reflect those events. By noting several textual peculiarities, and echoed phrases, we will show how the formulation of this commandment reflects the rehabilitative aspect of building the Mishkan, emphasizing the need to rebuild the strained relationship between God and Bnei Yisrael.

A) The use of the word "Va'yakhel" at the beginning of the Parsha reflects the use of this verb in the opening sentence of the chet ha'Egel narrative:

"VA'YIKAHHEL ha'am al Aharon, va'yomru..." (32:1).

This new 'gathering' of the people to build a symbol of God's

presence acts as a 'tikun' for the original gathering.

B) The first commandment that the people hear is the request that they donate their gold and other belongings towards building the Mishkan (35:5). This parallels the collection of gold used to construct the 'egel' (32:2-3).

C) Allowing Aharon to officiate as the "kohen gadol" (high priest) in the Mishkan, despite his participation in Chet ha'Egel. Recall our explanation in last week's shiur of Aharon's intention when making the "egel" to create a symbol of God's revelation to the people during Ma'amad Har Sinai. Now, Aharon can channel his good intentions in the proper direction.

D) The glaring repetition in this unit of: "asher tzivah Hashem et Moshe" ["as GOD commanded Moshe"]. This key phrase is repeated over twenty times in Vayakhel-Pkudei and is mentioned at every key point:

In the opening statement (35:1, and 35:4), as well in the finale of the commandment (39:32 & 39:43) [See these psukim inside.] Within the commandment to make the 'bigdei kehuna' alone this phrase is repeated eight times! (Note from 39:1->32, at the end of each parsha, at the completion of each 'bege'd').

Finally, during the actual completion of the Mishkan (40:16-32), "ka'asher tzivah Hashem et Moshe" is repeated another nine times, also at the end of each parsha. There can be no doubt that the Torah is emphasizing this phrase. Why?

Recall our explanation of chet ha'Egel that the people were eager to have a physical representation of the "shchina". Despite the human need to create something physical in order to relate to something transcendental, God had already forbidden the construction of any image to represent Him (20:20). Any man-made representation, no matter how pure his intention may be, may ultimately lead to idol worship. [See Dvarim 4:9-24]

Nevertheless, this does not mean that God can never be represented by a physical symbol. When GOD Himself choose the symbol, it is not only permitted - it becomes a mitzvah. Therefore, the Torah's account of the construction of the Mishkan stresses repeatedly that every last detail of God's command was meticulously followed. The Mishkan must be built as God commands, leaving no room for human innovation in the choice of Divine symbol.

PART II

THE PROMINENCE OF THE MISHKAN IN SEFER SHMOT

Now that we have shown that Vayakhel-Pkudei is more than a mere 'repeat' of Trumah-Tzaveh, we shall now examine the relationship between these Parshiot and the rest of Sefer Shmot.

At the conclusion of Parshat Mishpatim, the narrative of Sefer Shmot describes Moshe's ascent to Har Sinai to receive the "luchot", "torah", and "mitzvah" (24:12-18). Before this narrative is continued in chapter 32 (the story of Chet ha'Egel), the laws of the Mishkan are recorded in Trumah/Tzaveh (chapters 25->31). The other laws which Moshe receives during those first forty days are recorded elsewhere in Chumash (in various parshiot in Vayikra, Bamdibar, and Dvarim). [Several psukim concerning shabbat (31:12-17) are an exception, see Further Iyun section.]

Similarly, when Moshe descends Har Sinai with the second luchot, he conveys to Bnei Yisrael ALL of the commandments which God had given him (see 34:32 - read carefully), i.e., most of the laws of the Torah. Although one would expect Sefer Shmot to record those mitzvot at this time, it records ONLY the story of the

construction of the Mishkan (chapters 35->40). Furthermore, many minute details concerning the Mishkan, already described in Trumah-Tzaveh, are repeated.

Why does the Mishkan receive such extensive coverage in Sefer Shmot. Why are its laws and the story of its construction presented in such minute detail?

THE MISHKAN - A SYMBOL

The Mishkan is not only a center for sacrificial offerings, it serves as a potent symbol of the unique relationship between God and Am Yisrael. The first Ramban in Parshat Trumah (25:1), commenting on the juxtaposition of the "Tzvui ha'Mishkan" with "Ma'amad Har Sinai", explains that the Mishkan perpetuates the Sinai experience. It transforms the one-time event of Ma'amad Har Sinai into a continuous and everlasting relationship, allowing man the opportunity to encounter the Divine.

As a symbol of Ma'amad Har Sinai, the Mishkan's structure and rituals reflect not only the events that took place at Har Sinai, but also their purpose. That purpose: to command Bnei Yisrael with the laws which they are to keep in the Promised Land, so they can become a "mamlechet kohanim v'goy kadosh" - to represent God as His special nation - the goal of "brit Avot"!

THE OVERALL THEME OF SEFER SHMOT

In our study of Tanach, we assume that each Sefer contains a primary theme, emphasizing a prophetic message. Thus far in Sefer Shmot, we have followed three primary topics: (1) the Exodus; (2) Ma'amad Har Sinai; and (3) the Mishkan.

Based on the above shiur, we can connect all three sections of Sefer Shmot.

1) Through the process of Yetziat Mitzraim, God fulfills His covenant with the Avot, saving Bnei Yisrael from their bondage in Egypt, so that they can become His special nation (the primary theme of Sefer Breishit).

2) To become GOD'S PEOPLE, Bnei Yisrael enter into a covenant at Har Sinai (chapters 19->24). There, they receive the commandments which will mold their national and individual character, transforming them into God's special nation.

3) The Mishkan, the symbol of that special relationship established at Har Sinai, becomes the vehicle through which that relationship can continue.

[The final stage of "brit Avot" - inheriting the Promised Land - has not yet been fulfilled. Nevertheless, the presence of the Mishkan, enabling the shchina to dwell in their midst, guarantees that the principles of Sinai will be carried with them on their journey into Eretz Canaan.]

THE 'SHCHINA' AND SEFER SHMOT

The function of the Mishkan connects beautifully with the theme of Sefer Shmot and provides its prophetic message. Recall from the shiur on Parshat Tzaveh that chapters 25->29 formed the "shchinah" unit (in contrast to the "ktoret unit" in chapter 30). This "shchina" unit, emphasizing the purpose of the Mishkan, opens with:

(3) "And they shall make for me a MIKDASH, v'SHACHANTI B'TOCHAM [that I will dwell among them]" (25:8); and concludes with:

(3) "v'SHACHANTI B'TOCH Bnei Yisrael, and I will be their GOD.

(2) And you shall know that ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM

(1) who took you out of the Land of Egypt -

[overall purpose:]

L'SHOCHNI B'TOCHAM, ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM."
(29:45-46)

This pasuk reflects the overall theme of Sefer Shmot. It ties together (1) Yetziat Mitzraim, (2) Matan Torah, and the (3) Mishkan with the concept of "shchina". God takes Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt in order that they become His nation. This relationship reaches its highest level when the "shchina" is present; as was the case at Har Sinai, and as should continue in the Mishkan.

[Note how these psukim relate to the pasuk at the beginning of Parshat Va'eyra which defined the very purpose of Yetziat Mitzraim: "And God spoke to Moshe saying: ANI HASHEM, I appeared to Avraham...I established my covenant [Brit Milah] with them...I have heard the cry Bnei Yisrael in their bondage... and I have remembered My covenant [Brit Bein Ha'tarim] ... Therefore: Tell Bnei Yisrael: ANI HASHEM, I will TAKE YOU OUT from your bondage in Egypt and REDEEM you... ['arba lshonot geulah']... and I WILL TAKE YOU TO BE MY PEOPLE and I WILL BE YOUR GOD and your will KNOW that ANI HASHEM ELOKEICHEM who took you out from Egypt.... (Shmot 6:2-8)]

BACK TO BREISHIT

We have not only found unity of theme in Sefer Shmot, but also related its theme to the primary theme of Sefer Breishit, the covenant between God and the Avot.

The concept of the Mishkan is also rooted in the story of Gan Eden. The focal point of the Mishkan are the "kravim" - in the Kodosh ha'Kodashim - from where God's word emanates (25:22). In the Mishkan, we find two sets of "kravim":

- 1) those woven on the parochet (see 26:31! the curtain separating the Kodosh K'doshim from the Kodosh);
- 2) those of the "kaporet" hovering over the "aron".

The first, and only other mention of "kravim" in Chumash is found when man is banished from Gan Eden (Br. 3:24). There, the kravim guard the entrance to Gan Eden, preventing the entry of the unworthy. In brief, the Mishkan is a microcosm of Gan Eden; an ideal environment in which man can cultivate his relationship with God ["v'akmal"].

The location of kravim in the Kodosh K'doshim symbolizes the Mishkan's function as an environment where man can strive to come closer to God:

- 1) The kravim on the parochet remind man that his entry, although desired, remains limited.
- 2) The kravim over the aron indicate that the "etz ha'chayim" (the Tree of Life) of Gan Eden has been replaced by the "luchot ha'eidut" kept inside the "aron".

["Etz chayim hi la'machazikim bah" - see Mishlei 3:1-18.]

Thus, the Mishkan teaches us that by keeping the laws of the Torah, man becomes worthy to embark on the path of return to the "Tree of Life".

shabbat shalom,
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. Just as we noted textual parallels to Gan Eden, there are also textual parallels between the Mishkan and the story of Creation in the first perek of Sefer Breishit. For example "va'teychel kol avodat ha'Mishkan..." (39:32) and "va'yar Moshe et kol

ha'mlacha..." (39:43). Several Midrashim explain that the Mishkan can be understood as the completion of the Creation process.

1. Based on the above shiur, explain why.

2. The entire Mishkan plan is repeated a total of seven times in Sefer Shmot: Trumah Tzaveh - 25:10-30:38 / 31:7-11

Vayk.Pkd: 35:11-19 /36:8-39:32 /39:33-42 /40:1-16 /40:17-33
Connect this as well to perek aleph: the Creation in seven days.

3. Connect this to the location of mitzvot shabbat that concludes the Tzivui Ha'Mishkan unit (31:12-17), and opens the "binyan Ha'Mishkan" unit (35:1-4).

B. Moshe Rabeinu's opening statement of Parshat Vayakhel relates to the commandment to build the Mishkan.

"Ay'leh ha'dvarim asher tzivah Hashem la'asot o'tum" (35:1)

The phrase "ay'leh ha'dvarim" - "these commandments" - according to 'pshat', refers to the Mishkan and NOT to Shabbat. The laws of Shabbat (35:2-3) are mentioned parenthetically as they relate to the mitzvah of building the Mishkan. Not only is there a conceptual relationship between "k'dushat zman" (shabbat) and "k'dushat makom" (mishkan), there is also a very practical one.

When receiving the commandment to build the Mishkan, the people may have concluded that this mitzvah would override the prohibition to work on Shabbat. Thus, Moshe must inform the people that this assumption is incorrect.

A primary example of a 'mlacha' which is needed to build the Mishkan is "hav'ara" - intensifying the fire of the furnace to melt and forge the gold. This would explain in 'pshat' why davka the 'mlacha' of "hav'ara" is singled out.

1. Relate the choice of "hav'ara" to heating the fire to forge the gold used to make the 'egel' (32:4,24).

2. To support this explanation that shabbat is mentioned parenthetically, compare CAREFULLY Shmot 35:1-4 with Vayikra 23:1-4. Notice the parallel structure and the key phrases - "ay'leh ha'dvarim" & "mo'adei Hashem"! Note also "moshvoteichem".

In what way do the "mo'adim" conflict with "shabbat"?

3. Based on the above, explain why Chazal learn the 39 "m'lachot" of shabbat from the construction of the Mishkan.

C. The highest level of "hitgalut", experienced by Moshe (33:11) and Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai (Dvarim 5:4), is known as "panim b'fanim" - face to face. When God 'changed' his attributes to "midot ha'rachamim" (Shmot 33:17-34:9), he stated that man can no longer see His face, only his back (33:20-23).

1. Relate the human face to the vessels of the Mishkan:

For example, menorah to eyes, shulchan to mouth etc.

2. In your opinion, could this represent "pnei Hashem"?

3. What would be the function of the "aron" in this parallel? the function of the "orot izim, v'eylim" as a cover?

4. Accordingly, what is the significance of the "masach l'petach Ha'Mishkan" and the parochet, and limited entry in general?

5. According to Rashi, would this have been the structure of the Mikdash before Chet Ha'egel? According to Ramban?

PARSHAT HASHAVUA
by Menachem Leibtag
PARSHAT P'KUDAY

[Note: I did not realize that there is a double Parsha this week, so I am re-sending last year's shiur on Parshat Pkudei in addition to this year's shiur on Vayakhel. To follow the shiur, have a tanach handy.]
PARSHAT P'KUDAY

Sefer Shmot concludes with the return of the shchina to the Mishkan on the first day of Nisan. The events that occurred on this momentous day are recorded in three different seforim of Chumash, each sefer recording a different aspect:

1) Sefer Shmot (40:17-35) records the erection of the Mishkan and the exact placement of each of the keilim, closing with the dwelling of the shchinah upon it.

2) Sefer Vayikra (9:1-10:7) deals with the special Korbanot offered on that day followed by the story of the death of Nadav and Avihu during the ensuing ceremony.

3) Sefer Bamidbar (7:1-17) records the gift of the "nsiim" - the wagons and oxen - brought on that day to assist the leviim, as well as their presentation of the special dedication offering. [See also Bamidbar 9:15-23 - these psukim will be discussed later.]

Why are the events of this day 'scattered' over three seforim? In the following shiur we will examine a parallel between the end of Sefer Shmot and Parshat Mishpatim in order to find the relationship between Shmot, Vayikra, and Bamidbar and their respective themes. We will then show that the events recorded in each sefer relate to its particular theme.

HAR SINAI AND THE MISHKAN

A striking parallel exists between the description of Moshe Rabeinu's ascent to Har Sinai (24:15-17) and the dwelling of the shchina on the Mishkan (40:34-38):

P'KUDEI : And the "Anan" covered the "Ohel Moed" (40:34)

MISHPATIM : And the "Anan" covered the "Har" (24:15)

P'KUDEI : and God's glory filled the "Mishkan" (40:35)

MISHPATIM : and God's glory dwelled on "Har Sinai" (24:16)

P'KUDEI : "AISH" over the "Mishkan"... "I'ay'nei kol Bet Yisrael"

MISHPATIM : "...k'AISH ochelet b'rosh HaHar I'ay'nei Bnei Yisrael"

(40:38 / 24:17)

This comparison emphasizes the intrinsic connection between the Mishkan and Har Sinai. As we explained in earlier shiurim, the primary purpose of the Mishkan was to perpetuate Ma'amad Har Sinai, the primary theme of the second half of Sefer Shmot. It is appropriate therefore, that the finale of this sefer emphasizes the return of the shchinah "within the camp" to dwell upon the Mishkan.

However, a careful examination of the above parallel to Parshat Mishpatim indicates the absence of a very important element. At Har Sinai, Moshe was called upon to enter the cloud: "Va'yikra el Moshe b'yom ha'shvi' mi'toch ha'anani" (24:16). The situation in Parshat P'kudei appears to be quite different. Moshe was unable to enter the cloud: "v'LO YACHOL Moshe la'vo el Ohel Moed, ki shachan a'lav ha'anani" (40:35). For the parallel to Har Sinai to be complete, Hashem should have called upon Moshe to enter the Ohel Moed, as was the case at Har Sinai. This divine call however, is missing from Sefer Shmot. Does the Mishkan fall short of Har Sinai? Is Moshe not permitted to enter the Ohel Moed?

FROM SHMOT TO VAYIKRA

To answer these questions we simply need to 'flip a page'! Sefer Vayikra opens with the exact pasuk that was expected, but missing, from our parallel to Har Sinai: "VA'YIKRA el Moshe, vay'daber Hashem ay'lav m'OHEL MOED laymor" (Vayikra 1:1)

It seems that this pasuk located at the beginning of Vayikra belongs at the end of Shmot. Why does a new sefer begin at this critical point, in the middle of a story? The answer emerges from a more careful analysis the closing psukim of Shmot.

The final five psukim of Sefer Shmot can be divided into two distinct groups:

(A) 40:34-35

focuses on the dwelling of the shchina on the Mishkan;

(B) 40:36-38

focuses on the travelling of "machaneh Bnei Yisrael" [the camp of Israel], led by the shchinah.

The psukim of (A) continue naturally into Sefer Vayikra. This we proved from our above parallel to Parshat Mishpatim. The psukim of (B), although related, seem to be 'in the way'.

TWO POINTERS

As mentioned earlier, the psukim of (B) deal with the encampment and travel of the "machaneh" as a function of the "Anan" over the Mishkan. This specific topic is discussed in more detail in Sefer Bamidbar. If we examine Bamidbar 9:15-23, we will notice that these psukim flow naturally from (B):

"u'v'yom Hakim et HaMishkan, ki'sa ha'Anan et HaMishkan... u'lfi hay'alot he'Anan m'al haOhel... yi'su Bnei Yisrael..."

In other words, these psukim from Sefer Bamidbar form another continuation to the end of Sefer Shmot!

A beautiful structure emerges from this analysis. Sefer Shmot concludes with two "pointers", one to Sefer Vayikra (A) and one to Sefer Bamidbar (B)! The dwelling of the shchina on the Mishkan has a double effect. First and foremost it affects the Mishkan itself, as explained primarily in Sefer Vayikra. Secondly it affects the "machaneh", the camp of Israel, as reflected in Sefer Bamidbar.

Sefer Shmot therefore, continues in two directions, one focusing on the Mishkan itself (A), and one focusing on the "machaneh" (B).

(A) Once the shchina is present in the Mishkan, a situation is created where it becomes possible for Bnei Yisrael to approach God, to pray, and to offer Korbanot, as explained in Parshat Vayikra & Tzav.

Because of the shchina, entry to the Mishkan is now limited as explained in Parshat Shmini, Tazria, & Metzora.

The privillage of having shchina in our midst requires yearly 'kapara' as explained in Parshat Acharei-mot.

Laws in regard to the kohanim and the korbanot of the holidays continue in Parshat Pinchus.

Finally, Sefer Vayikra concludes with the "Tochacha", explaining that His shchina will remain should Bnei Yisrael keep His Mitzvot (26:11), but will leave should they reject them (26:31). [This theme will be developed iy"h in more detail in our shiurim on Sefer Vayikra.]

(B) The shchina upon the Mishkan affects not only what takes place inside its courtyard, it also affects the surrounding camp - "machaneh Yisrael". The 'machaneh' has now risen in its spiritual level because the shchinah is present in the Mishkan.

Sefer Bamidbar will deal with many topics that relate to this relationship between the "machaneh" and the Mishkan. The most obvious example is the travelling of the camp.

The nation encamps and travels with the Mishkan at its center as explained in Parshat Bamidbar and Naso. The presence of the shchina will affect the way that Bnei Yisrael travel from Har Sinai

through the Midbar towards Eretz Yisrael as detailed in continuing Parshiot. [This theme will be developed more fully iy"n in our shiurim on Sefer Bamidbar.]

EACH SEFER, AND ITS THEME

We return now to our original observation that the events concerning the Mishkan that took place on the first of Nisan are recorded in different seforim in Chumash. Sefer Vayikra, dealing with the effect of the shchina on the Mishkan itself, explains the special Korbanot offered by the Kohanim on that day in order to ensure the presence of the shchina on the Ohel Moed and the Mizbayach (see 9:6, 9:23-24). Sefer Bamidbar, dealing with the relationship between the "machaneh" and Mishkan, recalls the participation of the "nsiim" - the leaders of the "machaneh" - in the dedication ceremony of the Mishkan.

It is this effect of the shchina in the Mishkan on the day to day life of the people in the "machaneh" that is to help form Am Yisrael into an "Am Hashem" in order that they become an "or la'goyim".

shabbat shalom, menachem

"Jeffrey Gross <75310.3454@compuserve.com>" "Halachic Topics Related to the Weekl...

SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS VAYAKHEL-PEKUDEI

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

What is the source for the prohibition of carrying on Shabbos? The Torah says (36:6): Moshe commanded that they proclaim throughout the camp... (Shabbos 96b).

Carrying Garments on Shabbos

QUESTION: In an area where it is forbidden to carry on Shabbos, is it permitted to wear a jacket over the shoulders with the sleeves hanging free? DISCUSSION: There are two reasons why it may be forbidden to wear a jacket in this manner: 1) Wearing a jacket over the shoulders may not be considered "wearing" at all, but rather "carrying", since the normal way of wearing a jacket is by inserting the arms into the sleeves. 2) The jacket may slip off and inadvertently be picked up and carried a distance of four Amos, thus possibly violating a prohibition of the Torah. There are conflicting opinions among the Poskim regarding the validity of these concerns:

Many Poskim hold that neither concern is valid and that one is permitted to wear a jacket over his shoulders(1). Harav Moshe Feinstein is quoted(2), however, as forbidding it under any circumstances. There are Poskim(3) who, although permitting wearing a jacket over the shoulders, nevertheless advise that it not be worn over the shoulders in a public domain (Reshus Harabim De'oraissa).

QUESTION: In an area where it is forbidden to carry on Shabbos, is it permitted to wear a garment that has extra (reserve) buttons sewn onto it?

DISCUSSION: Most Poskim allow one to wear garments with extra (reserve) buttons sewn onto them(4). There are several reasons given for this leniency: 1) The buttons have no importance in and

of themselves and are, therefore, secondary to the garment; 2)

Garments are normally manufactured with extra buttons sewn onto them; 3) Since the buttons are sewn onto the garment they are considered an extension of the garment(5).

QUESTION: In an area where it is forbidden to carry on Shabbos, is it permitted to wear a garment which has a price tag or a cleaners' tag attached to it?

DISCUSSION: If the owner of the garment is not planning to remove the tag from the garment, it is definitely permitted to wear the garment on Shabbos(6). This is because the tag is of no consequence to the wearer and thus becomes secondary to the garment.

If the owner of the garment plans to remove the tag, however, some Poskim hold that the garment may not be worn in an area where carrying is prohibited(7). In their view, the tag cannot be considered to be of no consequence since it is of sufficient consequence that one cares to remove it. Other Poskim, however, permit the garment to be worn with the tag on it. In their view, only expensive objects are important in and of themselves and do not become secondary to the garment(8). Ideally, however, cleaners' and price tags should be removed before Shabbos(9).

QUESTION: In an area where it is forbidden to carry on Shabbos, is it permitted to wear a garment whose belt is looped through the back loops but hangs loose (unfastened) in the front?

DISCUSSION: If the belt is sewn onto the garment, it is permitted(10). If the belt is not sewn onto the garment, there is a difference of opinion among the Poskim if the garment may be worn with the belt unfastened(11).

QUESTION: Is it permitted to pull plastic bags over shoes in order to ease the shoes into the boots?

DISCUSSION: Parents often put plastic bags over their children's feet or shoes to enable them to pull their boots on more easily. These plastic bags are not considered garments, and it is therefore forbidden to wear them if one will be walking in an area where one may not carry(12).

FOOTNOTES:

1 Tzitz Eliezer 13:33; Harav Binyomin Zilber in Az Nidberu 14:14; Imrei Yosher and Orchos Rabbeinu 1:137 quoting the Chazon Ish who permitted doing so and even did so himself.

2 The Shabbos Home pg. 107. His reason, however, is not specified.

3 Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasa pg. 204. See also Be'er Moshe 3:63.

4 Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in Rivevos Efraim 4:87 and in L'Torah Ve'horaah 1:8); Harav S. Z. Auerbach (quoted in Shmiras Shabbos K'hilchasa pg. 215); Harav S. Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Machazei Eliyahu pg. 126); Az Nidberu 2:40.

5 The various reasons for leniency are presented in Machazei Eliyahu # 43. For a dissenting, more stringent opinion, see Be'er Moshe 3:67.

6 Harav S. Wosner in Shevet Halevi 2:61.

7 Az Nidberu 2:45; Harav Moshe Shternbuch in Teshuvos V'hanagos 1:240.

8 Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in L'torah Ve'horaah 1:8); Minchas Yitzchak 3:36. Shmiras Shabbos K'hilchasa pg. 220.

9 Harav M. Feinstein, ibid.

10 Mishnah Berura 301:135.

11 Chelkas Yaakov 2:130; Shmiras Shabbos K'hilchasa pg. 215; Harav C.P. Scheinberg (quoted in The Shabbos Home pg. 118) are lenient. Az Nidberu 13:15 and Be'er Moshe 3:62 forbid it.

12 Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in The Shabbos Home pg. 121).

"Project Genesis <genesis@j51.com>" Project Genesis LifeLine <...
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Project Genesis LifeLine - "It is a tree of life to all who cling to it."
D'var Torah and News from Project Genesis - learn@torah.org -
www.torah.org
Volume III, Number 24 - Parshas Vayakhel/Pikudei

Please pray for the speedy healing of Esther Miriam bat Aliza Geula, Sarit bat Esther, Sara Shifra bat Devorah, Yitzchak ben Tzivia, Netanel ben Chaya, Devorah Esther bat Miriam, Shulamit Ariella bat Sara Imeinu, Reuvain ben Fayga, Laibel ben Chaya, and Tzvi Yehuda ben Chaya Esther.

"Everyone whose heart lifted him up, and everyone whose spirit moved him, came and brought the offering of G-d for the construction of the Tent of Meeting, and for all its work, and for the Holy garments." [35:21]

The Ramban says that "everyone whose heart lifted him up" refers to the work itself, which was also an offering. "For there was no one among them who had learned this from a teacher, or [had been an apprentice with] someone to steady his hands. Rather, they found within themselves that they knew how to

do it, and their hearts lifted them up in the path of HaShem to come before Moshe and say, 'I will do whatever my lord says.'"

We find this same concept later on: "And Betzalel, and Ahaliyav, and everyone with a wise heart, to whom HaShem has given wisdom and understanding within them, to know how to do all the Holy works, [they] will do all that HaShem commanded." [36:1] The greatness of Betzalel was not that

he was a fine artist, or a skilled tradesman (the Betzalel School of Art notwithstanding). His heart moved him. His spirit pushed him. And because he dedicated himself to doing this Holy work, G-d gave him the necessary talents.

Rabbi Asher Zelig Rubenstein, in a class which I was fortunate to attend in Jerusalem, said that this concept is permanent. "Open up your mouth, and I will fill it." If someone wants to build a Holy Tabernacle, G-d will help him to do it - a school, a synagogue, a House of Study.

This applies just as well to the Tabernacle that we can build within ourselves, and within our homes. We may look at the amount that must be done, and conclude that it is impossible -- that we lack the necessary skill. But it is those who push these thoughts aside, and move forward, who eventually succeed.

There is a well known story of a father, very concerned about his son's ability to learn Torah, who came to the Chazon Ish, Rabbi Avraham Y. Karelitz, one of the great Rabbis of the last generation. The father said that his son was unable to achieve any depth of understanding; that he wasn't very intelligent, and couldn't handle complex analysis of many concepts. The Rabbi responded: so let him learn quickly, aiming for a broad but more superficial understanding. The depth would come later.

When the young man was 30, he was still doing this, and apparently wasn't making much progress. But he plodded on. Some said about him, "no one learns the Talmud more, and knows it less."

The father in this story was the Steipler Rav, Rabbi Y.Y. Kanievsky, the brother-in-law of Rabbi Karelitz. Today, his son is widely regarded as a great sage and scholar, whose broad knowledge is unbelievable -- as is the depth of his understanding! Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky is widely considered to

be

in the "next generation" of leading scholars in Israel.

Let no one say it is impossible. If you want to build a Tabernacle, then G-d Himself will help, and make it possible!

Project of earlier this week, thanking all those who participated. Many people from all over the world responded, saying that they would join the effort or even arrange for a communal effort on very short notice. Let us

Good Shabbos,
Rabbi Yaakov Menken

"Bircas Hatorah <bircas@jer1.co.il>"
CSHULMAN, " " Weekly Words of Torah from Bircas H...
3/14/96 1:19pm

VaYakhel - Pikudei

Selected, translated and arranged by Rabbi Dov Rabinowitz

The Gri"z of Brisk observes that the whole parsha of VaYakhel seems amazing; why did the Torah have to repeat every thing which they made. All the details were already described (in parshas Trumah). It would seem to be enough to relate that they did as they were commanded.

He answers in the light of the gemora (Bechoros 17b) which discusses the possibility of making something to absolutely exact measurements. It tries to prove that this is indeed possible from the fact that the Torah reports the measurements of all the vessels of the Mishkan and of the alter, (thereby implying that they were all constructed to their exact measurements). The gemora rejects this thesis with the logic that since HaShem commanded them to make (these utensils), as long as they did so the best of their ability, this would fulfill their obligation.

We thus see that they were never commanded that a tiny deviation, beyond their capability of being exact, would render their workmanship invalid.

This is what the parsha of VaYakhel tells us: that they succeeded in constructing every single detail with absolute exactness, precisely as they had been commanded (even though a tiny deviation would not have rendered their work invalid).

"And all the work of the Mishkan, the Ohel Moed, was completed, and the Children of Yisroel did as HaShem commanded Moshe, so they did." (39,32)

Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotsk observes that this seems to show that the Children of Yisroel were the ones who actually built (the Mishkan), and Moshe was merely the one who was commanded, but they were the ones who executed their task perfectly, just as HaShem had commanded. But this gives rise to a problem: since right through the record of the construction of the Mishkan, the Torah stresses "As HaShem commanded Moshe."

He explains that this comes to teach us that if Moshe had not been the one who commanded them, they would not have been capable of building it "as HaShem commanded." (i.e. Moshe's greatness was the critical factor in their success DR). Thus Moshe was the essential component in the construction of the Mishkan (although he did not actually make anything himself).

(The full significance of this can be understood from the words of the Gri"z above DR).

"Mordecai Kornfeld <kornfeld@netmedia.co.il>" Intriguing glimpses into the

Subject: Parashat Vayakhel 5756 - "The design of the Mishkan's pillars"

The Weekly Internet

P * A * R * A * S * H * A - P * A * G * E

by Mordecai Kornfeld
kornfeld@netmedia.co.il

This week's issue has been dedicated in honor of Yussi Openden by his parents and sisters: Susie, Barry, Dahlia and Adina Openden. Hatzlacha Rabba, Yussi!

*** Would you like to dedicate a future issue of Parasha-Page and help support its global (literally!) dissemination of Torah? If so, please send me an email note. Contributions of any amount are also appreciated. Help spread Torah through the farthest reaching medium in history!

THE DESIGN OF THE MISHKAN'S PILLARS

In Parshiot Terumah and Tetzaveh, we read that Moshe was commanded to build a Mishkan [= Tabernacle] for the Divine Presence. Hashem gave over

to Moshe exact specifications for the construction of every single item in the Mishkan (Chaps. 26-7). Moshe commanded Betzalel, a divinely gifted master craftsman, to build the Mishkan according to these specifications (31:1-11). In this week's Parasha, every article of the Mishkan is once again described in full detail, as we watch Betzalel build the Mishkan, step by step, according to the directives that he was given.

Upon careful scrutiny of the two accounts, however, the observant reader will notice that there are several discrepancies between the Mishkan that Hashem described to Moshe and the one that Betzalel actually built. Two of the most glaring examples of a seeming divergence from the original plan involve the various pillars that were used in the Mishkan. Before examining these discrepancies in further detail, let us first review the Torah's description of the various types of pillars that were used in the Mishkan.

II

Three distinctly decorated sets of pillars were used in the construction of the Mishkan:

(1) 48 pillars, referred to in the Torah as "beams" ("Kerashim") were joined side by side to form the three proper walls of the Mishkan building (southern, northern and western -- the open, eastern side served as the Mishkan's entranceway). These wooden beams were *overlaid with gold*, and

rested upon *silver* sockets. A similar description is given for the 4 pillars which held up the curtain that divided the Mishkan into two separate rooms (26:32). These pillars, too, were overlaid with gold and had silver sockets.

(2) The second set of pillars consisted of the 5 poles that supported the woven screen ("Masach HaOhel") which covered the open, eastern side of the Mishkan. While these pillars were also *overlaid with gold*, they rested upon sockets not of silver but of *bronze* (26:37).

(3) The third set of pillars were those which encircled the Mishkan's courtyard and held up the curtains which formed the perimeter of that courtyard and the woven screen that filled the courtyard's main entranceway ("Masach HeChatzer"). These 60 poles had hooks of silver on them (from which the curtains were hung) and were *girded* ("Mechushakim") with silver*. They, too, rested on *bronze* sockets (27:9-17).

This, at any rate, is the description given in Parashat Terumah. In Parashat Vayakhel, however, when Betzalel actually fashions the pillars, an inconsistency may be noted concerning the second group of pillars (that supported the woven screen at the Mishkan's entrance). While Hashem commanded Moshe to "overlay them with gold" (Shemot 26:37), Betzalel "overlaid their *heads* and *girded them* with gold" (36:38). That is, rather than overlaying pillars with gold in their entirety, Betzalel overlaid only their tops. Besides that, he added girdles of gold, which were not mentioned at all in Hashem's description! Although these

discrepancies would seem to be fairly obvious, I did not find any of the commentators dealing with this issue until recent times. (See Malbim 27:10; Maharil Diskin, addendum #66 to Vayakhel; Ha'amek Davar 36:38 [all ~late 19th cent.]. Only the latter offers a solution to the problem, which is rather forced. Chizkuni [~15th cent. Germany] does actually seem to refer to these discrepancies in his commentary [to Shemot 36:38], however it doesn't seem to bother him in the least.) How can we explain Betzalel's divergence from Hashem's command regarding the construction of these pillars?

III

Upon further examination, we may note yet another inconsistency between the directions given to Moshe and Betzalel's execution of those directions -- this time regarding the third set of pillars, that surrounded the Mishkan's courtyard. Hashem commanded Moshe that the courtyard's pillars should be "girded with silver, [with] hooks of silver" (27:17). Betzalel, however, made "the hooks of the pillars and their girdles of silver, *and the overlay of their tops of silver*" (38:17; see also 38:19 and 38:28). Why did Betzalel add silver plating to the tops of the pillars if such plating was not prescribed in the original command! This question *was* raised by an early commentator -- Rav Yaakov of Courville (~13th cent. France), as quoted by the commentaries of Riva and Pa'aneach Raza on the Torah, end of Parashat Terumah. Malbim (to Shemot 27:10), a relatively recent commentary, raises this question as well. Neither of these two commentators offers any solution to the problem, however.

In order to answer this question, let us first examine more closely the silver girdles mentioned in connection with the second and third sets of pillars. The exact nature of these "girdles" is shrouded in mystery. Rashi attempts to describe them:

The pillars were wrapped around with strips of silver. I am uncertain, however, as to whether these silver strips encircled the entire height of the pillars, or just their tops, or just their middle sections. I do know, however, that "Chishuk" [pl. "Chashukim"] is a term that means to girdle....

(Shemot 27:10)

It stands to reason that knowing the *purpose* of the silver strips would help us to determine their position on the pillars. Rashi offers us no clue as to what the purpose of these strips might have been. A quick search through the commentaries to Shemot 27:10, however, turns up at least four suggestions, proposed by various early commentators, as to the role of the "Chashukim" in the Mishkan.

(1) Ibn Ezra tells us that the purpose of the girdles was to hold the hooks at the heads of the pillars in place. It seems obvious that according to Ibn Ezra, the silver girdles were placed at the *tops* of the pillars.

(2) Sforno asserts that the purpose of the girdles was purely decorative, and that they had no utilitarian function at all. According to this reasoning, it would seem most appropriate to have the girdles encircle the pillars in a long strip, reaching *from their heads to their bases*.

(3) Chizkuni suggests that the girdles were wound around the wooden pillars in order to prevent them from cracking due to their constant exposure to the blazing desert sun. He, too, would presumably portray the Chashukim as long strips of silver that were wound along the *entire* length of the pillars.

(4) Ralbag offers the opinion that the girdles were provided in order to fasten the curtains of the courtyard to the pillars, so that they would not blow in the wind. According to his opinion, it is most probable that the silver girdles were only needed in the *midsections* of the pillars, as the curtains were already fastened to the tops of the pillars -- by means of silver hooks, and to the ground -- by means of bronze tent-pegs (see Rashi, end of Parashat Terumah).

According to all the various theories mentioned above, it may be suggested that an overlay of metal on the top of the pillar would be needed in order for the silver strips to serve their purpose. Strands cannot be wound around a pole without being attached to the pole from the top, or they would simply slip down the pole. Therefore, perhaps we may suggest that the silver strips extended from the overlays that were affixed to the tops of the poles. Furthermore, according to Sforno's theory, that the strips were decorative in nature, it stands to reason that some sort of covering of the top would also be called for aesthetic purposes. It would not be very decorative for the pole to be decked with silver strips all along its height, while its bare wood stood completely open at the top! Similarly, if the strips were to keep the wood from cracking due to exposure to the sun, the tops of the pillars, which were more exposed to the blazing sun than any other part of the pillars, would need a particularly strong protection.

Thus, according to all of the theories, it is easy to see why a commandment to make silver girdles along the poles could be taken to include the requisite accompanying overlay of metal on the tops of the poles. Betzalel did not innovate, when he added an overlay that Moshe did not specify to the tops of the poles. He merely was doing what any artisan would have found necessary to do in order to faithfully fulfill Hashem's original command of girdling the poles with silver. This, then, may be the answer to Rav Yaakov of Courville's question, cited above [section II]. (This, possibly, is also the intention of Ha'amek Davar in reference to the same question, see Ha'amek Davar to Shemot 27:10,17 and 38:17.)

IV

Now let us return to the problem we raised (in section II) concerning the second set of pillars -- the pillars which held up the curtain at the entrance to the Mishkan structure (the Masach HaOhel). The original command was to hang the curtain from four wooden pillars overlaid with gold. Betzalel overlaid their *tops* with gold and provided *girdled them* with gold along their length instead. If Betzalel found it necessary to make silver girdles for these pillars, we now understand why he made overlays for the tops of the pillars as well. As we have shown, these two items come together to form one unit. The question that remains is, why did Betzalel make the girdles altogether if he was commanded to overlay the entire length of these pillars with gold?

The verse, to be sure, does not specifically say to overlay the *entire length* of the pillars with gold. It only mentions that the pillars were to be "overlaid with gold." The word "to overlay" is a very broad term. Although in its "maximalist" sense it means to *totally* cover a surface with a given metal, it may also mean, in a more limited sense, to *partially* cover a surface with the metal in question. If this is so, then Betzalel was within the parameters of following Hashem's commandment when

he made girdles (i.e. a partial silver overlay) instead of a full overlay.

Nevertheless, even if the word "to overlay" *can* be understood, in a minimalist sense, to be referring to a partial covering, what might have prompted Betzalel to adopt this interpretation of the word rather than the maximalist interpretation, which would have called for a total overlay? After all, when it came to the beams ("Kerashim") that comprised the walls of the Mishkan building and the pillars that supported the curtain that divided it in two (the first set of pillars delineated above, section II), there was a command for overlaying also. In these cases, Betzalel actually implemented a complete overlay of the pillars and beams in question! Why did he treat the pillars of the entranceway to the Mishkan (the second set of pillars) differently?

Perhaps Betzalel deduced that the overlays of the first and second sets of pillars were to be different from each other by noting the

difference in the sockets of these two classes of pillars. As noted above, the first set of pillars had silver sockets, while the second set of pillars rested on *bronze* sockets. The third set of pillars (those of the courtyard) also had bronze sockets. Betzalel reasoned that the change in the material of the sockets was in order to spare the Jewish people from paying an exorbitant sum for a part of the Mishkan that played only a secondary role. The beams of the Mishkan structure itself (the first set of pillars) were supported by silver sockets because they were part and parcel with the Mishkan building. The courtyard's pillars (the third set of pillars), however, were supported by bronze sockets, because they were only peripherally involved in the Holy Service. When Betzalel saw that bronze sockets were prescribed for the pillars of the Masach HaOhel (the second set of pillars), he inferred that the golden overlay that was prescribed for them was not an extravagant, full golden overlay, such as that prescribed for the first set of beams. The pillars supporting the Masach HaOhel needed no more than a *partial* overlay, such as that afforded by gold strips!

For these reasons, Betzalel assumed that the pillars supporting the Masach HaOhel needed a Chishuk, rather than a full overlay. And of course, he was correct in this assumption. As Chizkuni (to Shemot 36:38) points out, perhaps this is what Rashi (38:22) means by saying that "even in those instances that Moshe didn't reveal to Betzalel the exact instructions for building a part of the Mishkan, Betzalel built it exactly as Hashem had specified!"

"Rabbi Efrayim Nisenbaum <ENisenbaum@aol.com>
Dvar.Torah@synergy.Destek.Net Dvar Torah, Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei

It's Not What You Do, It's How you Do It

This week's parshios, Vayakhel-Pekudei, both seem somewhat redundant. We find Moshe taking up the collection from the people to build the Mishkan, the Tabernacles and the actual building of all the vessels under Betzalel's direction. The Torah describes every painstaking detail involved in the construction of the Mishkan, despite the fact that it's all been mentioned earlier, at the time of the commandment in Parshas Teruma and Tetzaveh. What is the repetition trying to teach us?

Rashi(35:27) quotes a Midrash, that the princes, the nesim, pledged to donate whatever would be missing after the community finished giving to the construction of the Mishkan. They underestimated the peoples' generosity and enthusiasm. The only things left to be donated were the precious gems needed

for the Kohen Gadol's breastplate and garments, which weren't available in the desert. The Talmud (Yoma 75a) explains, the gems were deposited into the

camp, and the princes brought these gems as their gift.

However, since the princes were remiss in their enthusiasm and efforts to dedicate to the Mishkan, they were taken to task, and the word <nesim> is written in the Torah defectively, without a yud. Although the value of the princes' gifts may have surpassed that of all the other gifts, they were still taken to task. It's not the cost that counts. Hashem doesn't need our money. It's the effort and enthusiasm that goes with it.

It was for this reason that all the gifts had to be "asher yidvenu liebo," a person according to his generosity. Had the people been taxed a certain amount per person, the message would have been that <what> they gave was important, not <how> they gave it, which wasn't so.

This same point is seen again in Parshas Pekudei, 39:33 where the Torah relates how the people brought the Mishkan to Moshe. Rashi brings a

Midrash,
that Hashem wanted to honor Moshe with erecting the Mishkan, since he hadn't done anything else for the Mishkan. Moshe wondered how it was possible for any human being to raise such a heavy structure by himself. Hashem told him to just make the effort, and the Mishkan would raise itself up. That's why in 40:17 it says "hukam hamishkan," the Mishkan was erected, and not that he erected it, because in reality it stood by itself.

It seems kind of strange that Hashem would honor Moshe with something he couldn't even do. What kind of honor is that anyway?

But here too, the Torah is teaching us this same lesson. Even with someone as great as Moshe, more important is the effort we expend to try to accomplish, than in the accomplishment itself. The honor given to Moshe was to allow him the effort in erecting the Mishkan, and not in the actual erection itself.

Living in the extremely result-oriented society that we do, this is an important principle to remember. We want the rich-tasting cup of coffee, without all the grinding and brewing. We look for the muscular physique with the least exertion possible. We wish that we could accomplish our goals-even spiritual ones- in an easier way, without all the challenges and difficulties we face. This is a mistake. In Iyov we're taught, that "Odom Le'omol Yulad," - man was born for hard work. The purpose of our existence is to meet the challenges and difficulties. Without them, the goals themselves would be meaningless. It's like working a crossword puzzle with all the answers already given.

The Torah finds it necessary to repeat all the details in the actual collection and construction of the Mishkan to inform us, that more important than all the pieces necessary for the Mishkan, was the <how> we go about fulfilling all the details.

L'zecher nishmas [In memory of] Reb Mordechai ben R.Ephraim

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"owner-torah-forum@synergy.Destek.Net torah-forum-digest Torah-Forum V2

Barcoh@aol.com
Fri, 2 Feb 1996 17:08:56 -0500
Subject: Re: Giving Maaser - Gross or Net?

Does one give Maaser from one's gross or net income?
[Another reminder to translate and explain EVERYTHING, please! Maaser - "tithes," based on the word Eser, 10. There is a Rabbinic obligation to give 1/10 of one's income to charity in most cases. -- YM]

Someone told me that Maaser is on gross income - and I have difficulty understanding how it can be feasible.

Does one's tax bracket play a factor in the analysis? For example, one grossing \$100,000.00 a year, who is at the 36% tax bracket is paying \$36,000.00 in taxes, and is netting \$64,000.00. Is he paying 10% of \$100,000.00 (the gross) @ \$10,000.00 or is he paying 10% of \$64,000.00 (the net) @ 6,400.00?

Does one's necessary expenses play a factor in the answer? For example, if

he owns a home, and is paying Yeshiva tuition for his children, he is probably barely surviving. Assuming that he is netting \$64,000.00, he is making \$5,333.33 per month. Minus a mortgage, minus tuition, minus necessary living

expenses there is virtually nothing left. Does such an individual still need to give Maaser of gross earnings @ \$10,000.00?

Baruch C. Cohen
Avi Kuperberg <72714.3636@compuserve.com>
04 Feb 96 13:09:55 EST
Subject: Re: Electric Shavers

A recent query asked:
>Am looking for reliable Halachik answers as to which new electric shavers
>are halachically acceptable.

Halacha, based upon a biblical prohibition of cutting the corners of one's beard, forbids one from using a razor to directly shave one's beard. Electric razors, on the other hand, work on a different principle. The beard hairs are caught in the little holes between an outer metal foil and the cutting blades underneath. In effect, it is equivalent to cutting the beard hair with a scissor, rather than directly as with a razor. This is what makes it acceptable.

I don't believe the brand of electric shaver makes a difference since they all work on the same basis.

Avi Kuperberg

elliot gordon <gordone@Phibro.COM>
Fri, 9 Feb 96 11:12:35 -0500
Subject: electric shavers that are "kosher"

In reply
>Am looking for reliable Halachik answers as to which new electric shavers
>are halachically acceptable.

This is a subject I recently checked into. The standard Norelco shavers are considered acceptable by poskim (authorities) that I've either spoken to (Rav Yisrael Belsky) or who've been quoted to me. Rav Dovid Feinstein is quoted as saying that the Norelco "lift and cut" [double bladed] shavers are NOT kosher, and that this was the opinion of Rav Moshe Zt"l.

On the other hand I was told in the name of Rav Elimelech Schechter, that

all electric shavers are by definition kosher. I'm not sure of the reason, but I believe it has to do with the fact that there is a metal cover between the cutting blade and one's skin.

Harry@ganz.demon.co.uk (Harry Ganz)
Thu, 29 Feb 1996 18:17:27 GMT
Subject: Re: Shavers

A recent query asked:
>Am looking for reliable Halachik answers as to which new electric shavers
>are halachically acceptable.

I heard many years ago (although I can't remember from whom) that there is generally no problem with rotary head electric shavers (such as made by Phillips), but according to some poskim, there is a problem with the thin foil shavers (such as made by Braun), which is more like having a blade against the skin.

The question was originally asked, because I sell shavers, and at the time wondered whether selling a Braun shaver to a Jew would be considered "lifnei

Ever" (literally, putting a stumbling block before the blind; ie giving someone the tools with which to do an aveirah).

Harry Ganz

Saul Feldman <sfeld@yu1.yu.edu>
Thu, 29 Feb 1996 15:24:00 -0500 (EST)

Subject: Re: Shavers

In response to Mr. Kuperbergs comment about electric shavers:
In Rabbi Blumenkrantz's Pesach book (5755) he mentioned there are serious shaylos about some of the newer shavers. When I asked this shayla, I was told that Reb Dovid Feinstin, shlita, had a big question about the lift and cut shavers. One rov called up and determined that lift and cut shavers don't work the way they are advertised- and for this reason they are ok. But, were they to work like they are advertised, it would be ossur to use them.

I am curious also to see if anyone has assembled a list of kosher shavers.
Kol tuv, saul

mjoseph@en.com
Thu, 29 Feb 1996 16:26:17 +0000

Subject: Re: Giving Maaser - Gross or Net?

It reply

- > Does one give Maaser [tithes - 10% of income that one is obligated (Rabbinically) to give to charity] from one's gross or net income?
- >
- > Someone told me that Maaser is on gross income - and I have difficulty understanding how it can be feasible.
- >
- > Does one's necessary expenses play a factor in the answer?

I just heard a shuir a few ago by Rabbi Yaacov Feitman in his Shabbos afternoon Contemporary Halachic Issues series on this subject. Expenses can absolutely can be deducted from gross income. I don't want to go into halachic details here, for fear of misquoting them, but there are many poskim who delve into great detail as to what exactly may be deducted. These generally include housing, clothing, food, some tuition expenses.

I hope this helps.
Marc

BASI <altmanbs@yoyo.cc.monash.edu.au>
Fri, 1 Mar 1996 09:04:39 +1100 (EST)

Subject: Re: Shavers

The case of shavers is not so simple. I once showed my Philips (norelco) shaver to the posek Rabbi Avrohom Blumenkrantz the Rosh HaKollel of Kollel Anshei Chemed. After I told him that I had ripped out the "lift and cut" mechanism he tested the blades on his thumb and said that after I make them less sharp it would be OK to use.

Later the Rosh Hakollel of Kollel Beis Hatalmud, Rabbi Binyomin Wurzberger told me that if the blades were too sharp there is a possibility that the hair would be cut like a razor and on scissors, because it would be sharp enough to cut the hair before the scissor like action could take place.

On the other hand, I have also heard from another Rosh Yeshivah that it is OK to shave with them.

I once asked Rabbi Sheinberg, the Rosh Yeshivah of Torah Ohr about shavers and he said that if it left a stubble, then it is OK. I.e. if you are shaving without at any time with it not leaving a stubble then there is a question as to its permissibility (presumably on that setting at least).

"Hillel E. Markowitz" <hem@icf.hrb.com>
Fri, 01 Mar 1996 00:08:50 -0500 (EST)

Subject: Maaser Kesafim (Monetary "tithes")

The Baltimore Eruv published an article on this subject. The basic determination is that one calculates on the net (after-tax) income. One adds any tax refunds back in as income when received. 401K deductions are also subtracted as they are not current income. Insurance premiums withheld from the pay check are part of income (social security withholding is tax not insurance premium).

This is from memory as I do not have the article in front of me but it has been my standard practice based on articles and a psak (ruling) from the rav of my shul.

| Hillel (Sabba) Markowitz | Im ain ani li, mi li? |
| H.E.Markowitz@hrb.com | V'havta L'raiecha kamocho |

yanke@nytimes.com (Yanke)
Fri, 1 Mar 1996 10:32:48 -0500

Subject: Calculating Ma'aser Kesafim (tithes on income)

- In Torah Forum vol.2 #30, Boruch Cohen asks:
- > Does one give Maaser (tithes) from one's gross or net income?
 - > Does one's tax bracket play a factor in the analysis?
 - > Does one's necessary expenses play a factor in the answer?

First, some perspective on these questions: Since the Temple's destruction, we regard the giving of ma'aser on "kesafim" ("monies") as a Rabbinic obligation, as opposed to a Torah-derived one. We therefore abide by certain leniencies. One of these is that we give 1/10 of the net, not the gross. [This stands in contrast to tithing of grain and produce, which is measured on the gross, i.e., the amount grown.]

Secondly, as to the question of what exactly is meant by "net" for the purpose of ma'aser. Or as Boruch puts it, where do you figure in taxes and expenses? The guideline here is that anything required on your part to produce the income is offset against it. Since you must pay a percentage in taxes, the tax is a valid ma'aser "deduction". If you commute to work, the traveling expenses can be deducted. Tuition, on the other hand, is not deductible because that is not an expense associated with earning the income.

If this is beginning to sound like filling out the 1040, you're not far off. There is an extremely informative booklet, available in any Jewish bookstore, called "Ma'aser Kesafim". Besides giving the laws and guidelines of tithing, it comes with a 2-page worksheet patterned after the 1040EZ (easy form). At tax time, around March or April, as you tabulate your annual income and expense, you fill in this Ma'aser form alongside the IRS form (lehavdil!) Not all items are the same -- commuting is not deductible against your average W-2 income but it is for Ma'aser. Once you get the hang of it, it's fairly simple to do. Conceptually, you're looking for expenses incurred directly to produce income.

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"Seth Ness <ness@aecom.yu.edu>" Yeshiva University's weekly devar Tor...

Enayim L'Torah Parshat Vayakheil-Pekudei-Hachodesh
Publication of Student Organization of Yeshiva University

candle lighting: 5:45 pm
shma (morning) (Magen Avraham): 8:29 am

shma (morning) (GR"A): 9:05 am
zman tfila: 10:05 am

The Beneficiaries of a B'racha

by Rabbi Michael Taubes

"vayare Moshe et kol ham'lacha v'hinei asu otah ka'asher tziva Hashem kein asu. vay'varech otam Moshe." (39:43)

With these words, the Torah reports that after all the work on the Mishkan and its various keilim (vessels) had been completed in accordance with Hashem's instructions, Moshe Rabbeinu blessed the people. The Torah does not, however, present any details regarding the content or nature of that b'racha (blessing). RaSH"Y thus explains that Moshe Rabbeinu's b'racha consisted of a request that Hashem should rest His sh'china upon the people's handiwork (y'hi ratzon shetishre sh'china b'ma'asei y'deichem), as well as a perek of T'hilim (90) which speaks similarly of Hashem solidifying or establishing the people's handiwork. This perek of T'hilim is identified as one of eleven recited by Moshe Rabbeinu; this entire idea is likewise elaborated upon by RaSH"Y in his commentary on masechet sh'vuot (15b "v'shir shel p'gaim").

In the Yalkut Shimoni (chelek 1 remez 417), however, this description of the content of Moshe's b'racha is presented as only one opinion; another Tanna, Rabbi Meir, is introduced as saying that Moshe's b'racha called for Hashem to increase the people a thousand fold (Hashem Elohei avoteichem yoseif aleichem kachem elef p'amim), a phrase indeed attributed to Moshe later in the Torah (D'varim 1:11). This dispute as to the nature of Moshe Rabbeinu's b'racha at this time is also recorded in the b'raita in Torat Kohanim on Parashat Shemini (M'chilta D'miluim halacha 15), although there, the author of this dissenting opinion is identified as Rabbi Yose.

These two opinions may reflect a basic dispute as to the nature not only of this particular b'racha given by Moshe Rabbeinu, but of all b'rachot in general. An examination of the first opinion reveals that the focal point of the b'racha is Hashem Himself. It is a b'racha that His sh'china should "spread" and be discernible in this newly completed edifice. It is thus a b'racha whose fulfillment "benefits" Hashem in that His presence will be able to spread and be perceived by all who approach the Mishkan built for Him. According to the other position, however, the focal point of the b'racha is the people, Bnei Yisrael. It is a b'racha that they should increase in number and be successful; it is they who will benefit most directly from the fulfillment of this b'racha. Rabbeinu Bachya, in his Kad Hakemach (erech bracha), as well as in his commentary on a pasuk later in the Torah (D'varim 8:10), explains that there are two objectives in the recitation of any b'racha. The first is that the individual reciting the b'racha should receive Hashem's favor. When reciting a b'racha, one is not, according to this approach, blessing Hashem, because He does not in any way need the blessing of a mere human being. A b'racha is rather intended as a request on the part of the person reciting it that he be worthy of being blessed by Hashem. In a similar manner, the Sefer Hachinuch (mitzva 430) explains that when one recites the words "baruch ata," the intent is not to bless Hashem, because He does not need any blessing, but rather to declare that Hashem is the source of all blessings. Rabbeinu Bachya thus asserts that a b'racha is a person's request to Hashem for his own benefit.

He then adds, however, that in a certain sense, a b'racha serves the interests of Hashem as well. It asks Hashem to increase the extent of His manifestation in the world and through this b'racha, to bless all His creatures. Hashem Himself, therefore, is indeed a "beneficiary" of a b'racha, since through it, His sh'china spreads in this world. For this reason, he notes, we find in the Talmud (Berachot 7a) that Hashem asked Rabbi Yishmael Ben Elisha to bless Him (Yishmael b'ni, barcheini) and that Hashem "desires" to hear the t'filot of tzadikim (Yevamot 64a). A b'racha enables Hashem to increase the effect and perceptibility of His sh'china in this world.

Perhaps the opinions of the Tannaim in the Midrashim cited above are based on these understandings about the primary function of a b'racha. Those who maintain that Moshe Rabbeinu's b'racha to the people focused upon the presence of the sh'china in the Mishkan believe that any b'racha is really for the ultimate "benefit" of Hashem, and is intended primarily to increase His noticeable presence in this world, in this case, by means of the recipients of the b'racha. Moshe thus gave the people a b'racha which requested this increased presence of the sh'china, through the vehicle of the Mishkan which they built. The other Tannaim, however, who explain that Moshe's b'racha was for the growth and development of Bnei Yisrael, believe that a b'racha by definition is primarily for the benefit of the individual person or people. Moshe thus gave the people a b'racha, thereby asking that they be worthy of Hashem's goodness and that they be rewarded for their work; according to this approach, he was acting on their behalf and in their interests by reciting a b'racha which was for their ultimate good.

It is noteworthy that RaSH"Y, as pointed out above, cites only the view that Moshe's b'racha had to do with hashra'at ha'sh'china, implying that the greatest b'racha is that which asks for the sh'china to be increasingly evident, but specifically through the handiwork of man. The greatest b'racha that can be bestowed upon man's physical labor is that it should serve to increase the extent of Hashem's presence throughout the world.

A Just Reward

by Rabbi Eliyahu W. Ferrell

The Mishne B'rura [417:3] writes (based on Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer Chapter 48, brought by the Tur) that Rosh Chodesh was given to women as a Yom Tov because they did not want to give their earnings to their husbands when they wanted to make the eigel ha'zahav. One might ask, why was Rosh Chodesh the reward for this refusal?

The people saw that Moshe delayed in descending from the mountain, and they gathered against Aharon and said to him, 'Arise, make for us a god.'

We see that the perception of a delay in Moshe Rabbeinu's return precipitated the cheit ha'eigel.

Why did they perceive a delay? RaSH"Y explains (based on the Talmud in Shabbat 89a) that Moshe Rabbeinu had told them that he would return by midday on the fortieth day. Moshe Rabbeinu left during the day, and he meant to start counting forty days from that night. The people thought that the day of his ascent was day one. They thought that midday of day 39 was really midday of day 40, and they saw that Moshe Rabbeinu still hadn't returned. With the Satan's prodding, they thought that Moshe

Rabbeinu had died. They then proceeded to urge Aharon Hakohen to build them a "god." The Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer reports that the women refused to give up the earnings that Aharon had requested for the manufacture of the eigel.

The mitzvah of Kiddush Hachodesh, says the RaMBa"m [introductory phrase to Hilchot Kiddush Hachodesh], is to determine which day will be day one of the new month. There are two choices: if the month is malei (complete) then it has 30 days, and "day 31" becomes day one of the new month. However, if it is chaser (incomplete), then "day 30" becomes day one of the new month. Designating a day as Rosh Chodesh is differentiating between which day is truly day one and which is not. Rosh Chodesh then determines when the other days fall as well.

Perhaps this can help us understand the reward given to the women. Presumably, the women also erred in their calculation of Moshe Rabbeinu's day 40. They also must have grown fearful when he didn't return by midday of their day 40. Yet, despite their fears, they refused to participate in the cheit ha'eigel. As a reward they were given as a Yom Tov, Rosh Chodesh, the day that is built on knowing when day one falls.

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