

Torah Weekly

ת"סג

February 27 – March 5, 2022
27 Adar 1 – 2 Adar 2, 5782

Exodus 38:21 - 40:38
Haftarah: Kings 1 7:51 – 8:21

PARSHAT PEKUDEI

Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

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Brick by Brick

When my fifth-grade teacher returned from a goodwill trip to China, she made a typical Chinese meal for her class, and told us stories of what she'd seen and the people she'd met. One story that stayed in my heart was her description of how typical villagers would prepare for a wedding. You see, in many of the small rural communities that she had visited, people lived in deep poverty and resources had to be carefully set aside years in advance. Some families would actually set aside bricks, stacked up in a corner of their yard, each year as their child grew up. Then, when the child became engaged, they would use these bricks to build the new couple a simple home. It struck me that they would make such tangible preparations so early in life—that they were so focused already on a wedding date set far in the future.

The narrative of Jewish history tells a similar tale. When the Jewish nation was still very, very young, we began setting aside materials for our own marital home. Our forefather Jacob arrived in Egypt and quickly planted trees for constructing the Tabernacle, the place where G-d would dwell together with us in a more intimate, revealed way than anywhere else on earth. Our wedding was still hundreds of years, and hundreds of miles, away, but love and anticipation kept the event in sharp focus.

For weeks now, we've been reading in the weekly Torah portions about the culmination of efforts that began with the planting of

those trees in Egypt. We read how we were taken out of Egypt, made it to our wedding canopy on Mount Sinai and then received instructions for how to properly construct a home for G-d, who is metaphorically referred to as the husband of the Jewish people. This week we experience the final stages in establishing our home: Moses has finally given over to the Jewish people the instructions he has received from G-d, and then the Tabernacle is built.

The Torah describes it as a labor of love. "Every man whose heart motivated him, whose spirit inspired him to give ..." (Exodus 35:21). The detailed work involved in constructing not only the actual building, but the elaborate vessels that would be used in it, the woven tapestries that would cover it, and the clothing worn by those who served in it, was an expression of the inner commitment of each individual Jew to G-d.

The two portions that describe this, Vayak'hel and Pekudei (which in many years are indeed read as a single portion), are a kind of call and response—a two-part love song between the Jews and G-d. As happens in any healthy, normal relationship, the outpouring of true commitment and affection embodied in our efforts elicited a response from G-d.

"The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of G-d filled the Tabernacle ... For the cloud of G-d would be on the Tabernacle by day, and fire would be on it at night ..." (Exodus 40:34, 38) The cloud of glory and fire

that rested on the Tabernacle were manifestations of G-d revealing Himself to us. This was one of the greatest expressions of love and intimacy we could possibly receive from Him.

Actually, G-d reveals Himself in this world all the time, but not in a way that we readily see Him. Instead, what we see is a (relatively) small sampling of His capabilities. The millions of species that exist, the broad range of colors, sounds, smells, tastes, even the emotions that we experience, together with all the other details of existence—all communicate to us details about G-d's desire and, for lack of a better word, His talents. But they still don't communicate Him.

Yet there is another, less tangible way (for most of us, at least) that G-d reveals Himself in this world, and though less tangible, it is the basis for our existence. This is the Divine energy or light referred to in Chassidut as sovev kol almin—the Transcendent Light. Like an idea whose brilliance we aren't yet ready to grasp, it seems to hover just beyond reach. Yet in a moment of cosmic clarity, it can suddenly be manifest in this world. That's what happened when we made the Tabernacle and anointed it. Suddenly, it was filled with the remarkable glory of G-d.

This light which, for most of our lives, is beyond our grasp is the very source of our life, the conduit through which G-d re-creates each and every one of us every nanosecond of our lives. As such, it is actually an



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No One Forgotten.

expression of the deepest level of our relationship with and dependence on G-d, yet we are so much less conscious of it than we are of the less intense, more intimate light that animates this world in an obvious way.

But the lesson of these Torah readings on building the Tabernacle is also an instruction in how we can sensitize ourselves to this light in our everyday lives. The Tabernacle is a microcosm of the world itself, indeed of man himself, and when we likewise turn our self into a dwelling place for G-d, we may just catch a glimpse beyond what meets the eye, and succeed in making that transcendent light a little more revealed in the world around us.

But like the Chinese villagers, we need to realize that homes aren't built in a day. It takes years of carefully adding to our resources, of acquiring the necessary bricks of knowledge and good deeds. But if we stay focused on the goal, we just might succeed in making Him feel at home.

By Rabbi Chana Kroll

The Ultimate Happiness

There is a quiet happiness: an inner sense of bliss, the innocent joy of a small child, one of wonderment and gratitude. It is a happiness to carry with you at all times.

Then there are those seasons when happiness blooms for all to see, bursting out in song, in dance, in celebration. A festival, a wedding, a time to feast and rejoice with family and friends.

But the ultimate happiness is the joy of Purim. It is no longer about you, your family, your life. It is about making others laugh, bringing smiles to the weary, celebration to those who feel abandoned, a feast to those who had lost all hope.

It is a season for breaking out of yourself, out of your character, out of all those bounds you have set for yourself—"beyond knowing."

The light of Purim knows no bounds.

Likkutei Sichot, vol. 16, p. 371.

The Highest Happiness

True happiness is the highest form of self-sacrifice.

There, in that state, there is no sense of self
—not even awareness that you are happy.

True happiness is somewhere beyond "knowing."
Beyond self.

All the more so when you bring joy to others.

Likkutei Sichot vol. 16, pp. 365–372.

Diversity

Only from One who is neither water nor fire can come both the oceans and the stars;

From One who is neither large nor small can come both the blue whale and the gnat;

From One who is neither light nor darkness
can come both the eyes of the hawk and the ears of the bat,
the glistening fierceness in a leopard's eye,
the tender care of a mighty eagle for her eaglets,
silence and noise, destruction and renewal, order and chaos

—all in the same instant, all within a single being.

We must preserve the diversity of our world, and of one another, for in that diversity is expressed the deepest secret of the divine.

Sichot Kodesh, 5738, vol. 2, pp. 201-203.

Sunday, February 27, 2022 --- 26 Adar 1, 5782

First Property Purchase (1677)

In 1658, fifteen Jewish families emigrated from South America to (what was to become) the United States. These families were of Sephardic lineage and settled together in Newport, Rhode Island, where they established a Jewish congregation. For many years they held weekly prayer services in private homes.

When the need arose for a Jewish cemetery, the community purchased a piece of land on Wednesday, February 28, 1677.

This was the very first piece of land in the colonies which was owned by a Jewish congregation. In this cemetery are buried many of the early members of this congregation, and it is still maintained by the Jewish community.

Passing of Sarah Schenirer (1935)

Viewing the dire lack of formal Jewish education provided to Jewish girls in her native Poland, Sarah Schenirer founded the first Bais Yaakov girls' school in Krakow in 1917. Despite some initial opposition, the Bais Yaakov school network quickly expanded throughout Poland and beyond. Today, there are hundreds of Bais Yaakov schools worldwide, attended by tens of thousands of students.

Monday, February 28, 2022 --- 27 Adar 1, 5782
Rebbe Falls III (1992)

On the 27th of Adar I, 5752 (Monday, March 2, 1992), the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson of blessed memory, suffered a disabling stroke while praying at the gravesite of the previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch. On the same date two years later, the Rebbe lost consciousness following another stroke; three months later, on the 3rd of Tammuz 5754 (June 12, 1994), the Rebbe's soul ascended on high, orphaning a generation.

Friday, March 4, 2022 --- 1 Adar 2, 5782

Plague of Darkness (1313 BCE)

The 9th plague to strike the Egyptians for their refusal to release the Children of Israel from slavery -- a thick darkness that blanketed the land so that "no man saw his fellow, and no man could move from his place" (Exodus 10:23) -- commenced on the 1st of Adar, six weeks before the Exodus.

Ezekiel Foretells Egypt's Downfall (421 BCE)

On this date, in the year following the Holy Temple's destruction, G-d tells Ezekiel to take up a lamentation for Pharaoh, king of Egypt, foretelling his downfall in the hands of the Babylonians.

Passing of Ibn Ezra (1164)

The highly regarded Biblical commentator, Rabbi Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra (1089?-1164CE), passed away on Adar 1, 4924.

Passing of Shach (circa 1663)

Adar 1 is also the yahrtzeit (anniversary of the passing) of the great Halachist Rabbi Shabtai Hakohen Katz (1621-1663?), author of the *Siftei Cohen* commentary on Rabbi Yosef Caro's Code of Jewish Law. He is known as "Shach" -- an acronym of the name of his work, which serves to this day as a primary source of Halachah (Jewish law).

Shabbat, March 5, 2022 --- 2 Adar 2, 5782

Agadir Earthquake (1960)

Hundreds of Jews, including some students of the local Chabad Yeshivah, were among the thousands of victims to perish in a devastating earthquake that struck Agadir, Morocco on the 2nd of Adar in 1960.