

Torah Weekly

March 12-18, 2023
19-25 Adar, 5783

Vayak'hel-Pekudei:
Exodus 35:1 - 40:38
Parshat Hachodesh:
Exodus 12:1-20
Haftarah: Ezekiel 45:18-46:15

PARSHAT VAYAK'HEL-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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No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

Furniture First?

Furniture is an important part of our home. How we furnish our home, the colors, designs and art that we choose, says a lot about the people we are and, perhaps more importantly, about the people we strive to be.

Despite its importance, furniture is rarely the first thing we purchase when we decide to acquire a home. First we build a home, and then we fill it with Furniture. Indeed, when the Jewish people built a home for G-d in the desert, Betzalel, the chief architect made this very point to Moses:

For Moses commanded Bezalel to first make the furnishings and afterwards the Mishkan . . . Betzalel responded, "It is common practice to first make a house and then to put furniture into it." Moses agreed with Betzalel, and indeed, first the Tabernacle was constructed and only later did they build the furniture.

This leaves us with a question: Why did Moses initially command Betzalel to make the furniture first? Moses surely knew that doing so is unusual. The home, with its walls and its roof, provides shelter from the outside elements. The home allows the person to take control of and shape his or her environment. The furniture, which facilitates eating, sleeping, studying, etc., represents the specific actions with which we fill our day. Betzalel's perspective was that it is pointless to focus on performing a given action before one is in control

of his environment. It's like having a couch but no home. He asserted that "the common practice," the logical approach, is to first create a tranquil, holy environment in which we are protected from the chaos and confusion of the material world, and only then should we focus on our actions. After all, what would be the purpose of a single positive action, if the rest of one's day is full of unholiness? Thus, argued Betzalel, first comes the home and then comes the furniture. And Moses agreed with Betzalel that, under normal circumstances, one should first transform one's environment before focusing on a specific action. Yet, initially, Moses told Betzalel to first build the furniture and then build the home. Why? Because Moses knew that unusual times would be coming. There would be times when a person would feel that the darkness is too great, that the unholiness is too dominant, and that he or she is too weak to build a shelter from the storm. Moses taught us that in those times, we should first create the furniture—the action. We should choose just one moment of our day and use it for a divine purpose. Even if we don't have a protective home, we can and should engage in holy actions. Moses told us to fill our lives with moments of holiness. And the energy produced from these moments will ultimately empower us to build a beautiful home, full of material and spiritual blessings. *By Rabbi Menachem Feldman*

The Day After

Some years ago, the United Nations held the International Summit on Sustainable Development, here in Johannesburg. The Summit was a great success. One wonders, though, whether all the wonderful decisions and resolutions that were adopted were ever implemented. In other words, were they themselves sustainable? Good ideas and worthwhile projects are suggested regularly. The question is, do they get off the drawing board? And if they do, how long do they last? What degree of permanence do they enjoy?

Moses gathered the assembly of the Children of Israel — these are the opening words of the Parshah *Vayakhel*. Rashi tells us that this day of assembly was the day after Yom Kippur. Moses came down from Mount Sinai on Yom Kippur bearing the message of G-d's forgiveness for the sin of the Golden Calf. The next day, he gathered the people and commanded them to build the Sanctuary. Why is it important to know that this was the day after Yom Kippur? Perhaps it is because while on Yom Kippur everyone is holy, the challenge is to be holy after Yom Kippur. It is relatively easy to be holy on the holiest day of the year. The test of faith is to maintain our good behavior in the days and weeks following the awesome, sacred experience. Will we still be inspired or will our enthusiasm have waned straight after *Neilah*? How many Synagogues are filled

to capacity on Yom morning?
Kippur and struggle for A son says *kaddish* for his
a *minyán* the next father or mother faithfully —
for the week of Shiva. And then? Or perhaps he comes to
Shul regularly and recites kaddish for the full 11 months.
And the next day he's gone.

And it's not only about Shul, it's about life. What happens
after the honeymoon? Or the first anniversary? Do we
have the commitment and the staying power to be in for
the long haul?

Many people get inspired at one time or another. Over the
years, I've seen hundreds of men and women go through a
phase of dedicated Jewish living only to see them fall
back on old habits and lifestyles. And it wasn't because
their commitment faltered, but because they did not
implement a sustainable program for that commitment to
thrive.

Take Shabbat. A person experiences a real sense of
Shabbat for the very first time in his or her life. Then
again, and again, until they decide that they really want
this for themselves. It's so serene, so spiritual, and so
special. So they commit to keeping Shabbat. They start
walking to Shul every Saturday. There's only one
problem. They live three miles from the Shul that inspired
them. O.K., it's not impossible to walk three miles; lots of
people do it every day to keep in shape. So, as long as
they are still on a spiritual high it works, but the reality is
that it is simply not sustainable. If they don't move closer
to their favorite Shul, something will snap.

I remember a couple who went so far as to buy an
apartment near the Shul and they moved in every
weekend. They managed for a while but even that was not
sustainable. It became a bothersome *schlep* to have to
move out every Friday and move back every Saturday
night. It just didn't last.

So this is a call not only to maintain the momentum of our
spiritual inspiration but to take practical steps to do so. To
succeed in the long term, we must have a pragmatic plan;
a realistic, workable, achievable program to see us
through to the end. Otherwise, G-d forbid, our fervent
feelings of the moment may turn out a flash in the pan.
Let us be inspired enough to make sure our inspiration
lasts.

By Rabbi Yossy Goldman

Sunday, March 12, 2023 --- 19 Adar, 5783

Passing of R. Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld (1932)

Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld played a leading role
in the Jewish community of British-Mandatory Jerusalem for almost six
decades. He authored the book of responsa *Salmas Chaim*.

Monday, March 13, 2023 --- 20 Adar, 5783

Choni the Circle Maker prays for rain (1st Century BCE)

"One year, most of Adar went by and it didn't rain. They sent for Choni
the Circle Maker. He prayed and the rains didn't come. He drew a circle,
stood in it and said: 'Master of The World! Your children have turned to
me; I swear in Your great name that I won't move from here until You
have pity on Your children.' The rains came down." (Talmud, Taanit
23a)

Tuesday, March 14, 2023, --- 21 Adar, 5783

R. Elimelech of Lizhensk (1786)

The great Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk (1717-1786) was one of the elite
disciples of Rabbi DovBer, the Maggid of Mezritch, and a colleague
of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi. He is also widely known as
the *No'am Elimelech*, the title of the renowned chassidic work he
authored.

Rabbi Elimelech attracted many thousands of chassidim, among them
many who after his passing became great chassidic masters in their own
right. Most notable amongst them was Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak
Horowitz, the "Seer of Lublin." Many of the current chassidic dynasties
trace themselves back to Rabbi Elimelech.

Thursday, March 16, 2023 --- 23 Adar, 5783

Mishkan assembled; 7 "days of training" (1312 BCE)

The Children of Israel began building the "Mishkan" (also called the
"Tabernacle"--a portable sanctuary to house the Divine presence in their
midst as they journeyed through the desert) on the 11th of Tishrei of the
year 2449 from creation (1312 BCE) -- six months after
their Exodus from Egypt, four months after the revelation at Sinai, and
80 days after their worship of the Golden Calf. The construction of the
Mishkan, which followed a detailed set of instructions issued to Moses
on Mount Sinai, lasted 74 days, and was completed on the 25th of
Kislev; but the Divine command to erect the edifice came only three
months later, on the 23rd of Adar, when Moses was instructed to begin a
7-day "training period."

During the week of Adar 23-29, the Mishkan was erected each morning
and dismantled each evening; Moses served as the High Priest and
initiated Aaron and his four sons into the priesthood. Then, on the
"eighth day" -- the 1st of Nissan -- the Mishkan was "permanently"
assembled (that is, put up to stand until the Divine command would
come to journey on), Aaron and his sons assumed the priesthood, and
the divine presence came to dwell in the Mishkan.

Shabbat, March 18, 2023 --- 25 Adar, 5783

Rebbetzin's Birthday (1901)

Rebbetzin Chaya Mushkah Schneerson (1901-1988) of righteous
memory, wife of the Lubavitcher Rebbe of righteous memory, was born
on Shabbat, the 25th of Adar, in Babinovich, a town near the Russian
city of Lubavitch, in the year 5661 from creation (1901). In an address
delivered on the 25 of Adar of 1988 (the Rebbetzin's 87th birthday, and
about a month after her passing), the Rebbe initiated an international
birthday campaign, urging people to celebrate their birthdays and utilize
the day as a time of introspection and making resolutions involving an
increase in good deeds.