

# Torah Weekly

ד"ב

## PARSHAT PEKUDEI PARSHAT HACHODESH

23 - 29 Adar 5785  
23 - 29 March 2025

*Torah:* Exodus 38:21 - 40:38  
*Hachodesh:* Exodus 12:1-20  
*Haftorah:* Ezekiel 45:18 -  
46:15; Samuel I 20:18 & 20:42

PSALMS DAILY

### Psalms for our brethren in the Holy Land

*Psalms 117*

1. Praise the Lord, all nations, laud Him, all peoples.  
2. For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of the Lord is eternal. Hallelujah!

(Please say Chapter 20 daily)

SEFER HAMITZVOT

### Positive Mitzvah 17 The King's Torah Scroll

A Jewish king is required to write (or acquire) for himself a Torah Scroll—from which he does not part all the days of his reign.

### Positive Mitzvah 15 The Mezuzah

We are commanded to place Mezuzahs on our doorposts.

## DON'T SIT. WALK.

Sitting is the new smoking. So goes the new health mantra. Spend too much time at a desk or in front of a screen, and you are at risk of significant danger to your health. The World Health Organization has identified physical inactivity as the fourth-greatest health hazard today, ahead of obesity. In the words of Dr. James Levine, one of the world's leading experts on the subject and the man credited with coining the mantra, "We are sitting ourselves to death."

Our bodies were made for movement, standing, walking and running. If we fail to give the body regular exercise, it can easily malfunction and put us at risk of serious illness. The question is: does the same apply to the soul, the spirit, the mind?

It is fascinating to look at the sequence of verbs in the very first verse of the book of Psalms: "Happy is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of the scornful." That is a picture of the bad life, lived in pursuit of the wrong values. Note how the bad man begins by walking, then stands, then sits. A bad life immobilizes. That is the point of the famous verses in Hallel:

*"Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths but do not speak, eyes but do not see, ears but do not hear, noses but do not smell. They have hands but cannot feel, feet but cannot walk, nor can they make a sound with their throats. Those who make them will be like them; so will all who trust in them."* - Psalms 115:4-8

If you live for lifeless things - as in the bumper sticker "He who dies with the most toys, wins" - you will become lifeless.

Except in the house of the L-rd, Jews do not sit. Jewish life began with two momentous journeys, Abraham from Mesopotamia, Moses and the Israelites from Egypt. "Walk on ahead of Me and be blameless," said G-d to Abraham. At the age of ninety-nine, having just been circumcised, Abraham saw three strangers passing by and "ran to meet them." On the verse "Jacob dwelled [Vayeshev, the verb that also means "to sit"] in the land where his father had stayed," Rashi, citing the sages, commented: "Jacob sought to live in tranquility, but immediately there broke in on him the troubles of Joseph." The righteous do not sit still. They do not have a quiet life.

Rarely is the point made with more subtlety than at the end of this week's Parshah and the book of Exodus as a whole. The Tabernacle had been made and assembled. The closing verses tell us about the relationship between it and the "cloud of glory" that filled the Tent of Meeting. The Tabernacle was made to be portable. It could be dismantled and its parts carried as the Israelites traveled on the next stage of their journey. When the time came for them to move on, the cloud moved from the Tent of Meeting to a position outside the camp, signaling the direction the Israelites were to take. This is how the Torah describes it:

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

There is a significant difference between the two occurrences of the phrase "in all their journeys." In the first, the words are meant literally. When the cloud lifted, the Israelites knew they were about to begin a new stage of their journey. However, in the second instance, they cannot be meant literally. The cloud was not "over the Tabernacle" in all their journeys. To the contrary, it was there only when they stopped journeying and instead pitched camp. During the journeys, the cloud went on ahead.

Rashi notes this and makes the following comment:

*A place where they encamped is also called Massa, "a journey"... because from the place of encampment they always set out again on a new journey; therefore they are all called "journeys."*

The point is linguistic, but the message is remarkable. In a few brief words, Rashi has summarized an existential truth about Jewish identity. To be a Jew is to travel. Judaism is a journey, not a destination. Even a place of rest, an encampment, is still called a journey. The Patriarchs lived not in houses but in tents. The first time we are told that a Patriarch built a house proves the point: *"Jacob traveled to Sukkot. There he built himself a house, and made shelters [sukkot] for his livestock. That is why he called the place Sukkot."* - Genesis 33:17. The verse is astonishing. Jacob has just become the first member of the covenantal family to build a house, yet he does not call the place "House" (as in Bet-El or Bet-Lechem). He calls it "cattle-sheds." It is as if Jacob, consciously or unconsciously, already

knew that to live the life of the covenant means to be ready to move on, to travel, to journey, to grow.

One might have thought that all this applied only to the time before the Israelites crossed the Jordan and entered the Promised Land. Yet the Torah tells us otherwise:

*"The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, because the land is Mine: you are strangers and temporary residents as far as I am concerned."* - Leviticus 25:23

If we live as if the land is permanently ours, our stay there will be temporary. If we live as if it is only temporarily so, we will live there permanently. In this world of time and change, growth and decay, only G-d and His word are permanent. One of the most poignant lines in the book of Psalms - a verse cherished by the French-Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas - says, "I am a stranger on earth. Do not hide Your commands from me." To be a Jew is to stay light on your feet, ready to begin the next stage of the journey, literally or metaphorically. An Englishman's home is his castle, they used to say. But a Jew's home is a tent, a tabernacle, a Sukkah. We know that life on earth is a temporary dwelling. That is why we value each moment and its newness.

Recently a distinguished British Jew, Lord George Weidenfeld, died at the age of 96. He was a successful publisher, a friend and confidant of European leaders, an inveterate fighter for peace and a passionate Zionist. In 5709-5710 (1949-50) he was political adviser and Chief of Cabinet to Chaim Weizmann, first President of Israel. One of his last acts was to help rescue 20,000 Christian refugees fleeing from ISIS in Syria. He was alert and active, even hyperactive, to the very end of a long and distinguished life.

In an interview with The Times on his ninety-second birthday he was asked the following question: "Most people in their nineties slow down. You seem to be speeding up. Why is that?" He replied, "When you get to ninety-two, you begin to see the door about to close. I have so much to do before the door closes that the older I get, the harder I have to work." That is a good formula for staying young.

Like our bodies, our souls were not made for sitting still. We were made for moving, walking, traveling, learning, searching, striving, growing, knowing that it is not for us to complete the work but neither may we stand aside from it. In Judaism, as the book of Exodus reminds us in its closing words, even



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an encampment is called a journey. In matters spiritual, not just physical, sitting is the new smoking.

*By Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks OBM  
Chief Rabbi of the UK, 1991-2013*

## PEKDUDEI IN A NUTSHELL

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

An accounting is made of the gold, silver and copper donated by the people for the making of

the Mishkan. Betzalel, Aholiav and their assistants make the eight priestly garments—the apron, breastplate, cloak, crown, hat, tunic, sash and breeches—according to the specifications communicated to Moses in the Parshah of Tetzaveh.

The Mishkan is completed and all its components are brought to Moses, who erects it and anoints it with the holy anointing oil, and initiates Aaron and his four sons into the priesthood. A cloud appears over the Mishkan, signifying the Divine Presence that has come to dwell within it.

## PARAH IN A NUTSHELL

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

## IN JEWISH HISTORY

**Sunday, 23 Adar 5785 - 23 March 2025**

**Mishkan Assembled (1312 BCE)**

The Jewish People 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 11<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei 2449 (1312 BCE) - six months after their Exodus from Egypt, and four months after the revelation at Sinai. 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 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev; however, the Divine command to erect the edifice came only three months later, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of Adar, when Moses was instructed to begin a 7-day "training period."

During the week of 23-29 Adar, 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

**Passing of 1<sup>st</sup> Rebbe of Ger (1866)**

Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Altar (5559-5626, or 1799-1866), author of Chiddushei Harim (a commentary on the Talmud and Shulchan Aruch), was the founder of the "Ger" (Gerer) Chassidic dynasty. He passed away on 23 Adar of 5626 (1866). All 13 of his sons died in his lifetime, and he was succeeded (in 5630, or 1870) by his young grandson, Rabbi Yehudah Leib Altar, known as the "Sefat Emmet".

**Murder of Ari Halberstam (1994)**

On 18 Adar 5754 (1994) a terrorist opened machine-gun fire on a van filled with Chabad Yeshiva students as it began to cross the Brooklyn Bridge from Manhattan, critically wounding two young men and injuring two others. The killer had wished to fire at the Lubavitcher Rebbe - Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory - but could not get close enough.

While three wounded students - including one who had a bullet lodged in his brain - recovered, 16-year-old Ari Halberstam succumbed to his wounds five days later on 23 Adar.

**Tuesday, 25 Adar 5785 - 25 March 2025**

**Nebuchadnezzar died (397 BCE)**

Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian emperor who conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the first Holy

Temple 26 years earlier, died on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Adar of the year 3364.

**Wednesday, 26 Adar 5785 - 26 March 2025**

**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 5677 (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. She passed away on 26 Adar 5795 (1935), at the age of 51.

**Thursday, 27 Adar 5785 - 27 March 2025**

**Passing of Zedekiah (397 BCE)**

Zedekiah was the last king of the Royal House of David to reign in the Holy Land. He ascended the throne in 3326 (434 BCE), after King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia (to whom the Kingdom of Judah was then subject) exiled King Jeconiah (Zedekiah's nephew) to Babylonia. In 3335 (425 BCE) Zedekiah rebelled against Babylonian rule, and Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem (on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tevet of that year); in the summer of 3337 (423 BCE) the walls of Jerusalem were penetrated, the city conquered, the (first) Holy Temple destroyed, and the people of Judah exiled to Babylonia. Zedekiah tried escaping through a tunnel leading out of the city, but was captured; his sons were killed before his eyes, and then he was blinded. Zedekiah languished in the royal dungeon in Babylonia until Nebuchadnezzar's death in 3363 (397 BCE); Evil Meroduch - Nebuchadnezzar's son and successor - freed him (and his nephew Jeconiah) on the 27<sup>th</sup> of Adar, but Zedekiah died that same day.

**Rebbe Falls Ill (1992)**

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of Adar I, 5752 (1992), the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, 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 3<sup>rd</sup> of Tammuz 5754 (June 12, 1994), the Rebbe's soul ascended on high, orphaning a generation.

**Friday, 28 Adar 5785 - 58 March 2025**

**Decree Against Ritual Circumcision Rescinded (2nd century)**

In Talmudic times, 28 Adar was celebrated to commemorate the rescinding of a Roman decree against ritual circumcision, Torah study and

keeping the Shabbat. The decree was revoked through the efforts of Rabbi Yehudah ben Shammai and his fellow rabbis.

**Purim Cairo (1524)**

Ahmed Pasha was the governor of Egypt under Selim II "The Magnificent," the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Ahmed plotted to cede from the Ottoman Empire and declare himself Sultan of Egypt. In 5284 (1524) he requested of his Jewish minter, Abraham de Castro, to mint new Egyptian currency stamped with his image. Instead, De Castro went to Constantinople, and informed Selim II of Ahmed's plot.

Ahmed decided to exact revenge against Cairo's Jewish community. He imprisoned many of their leaders, and threatened to execute them unless he was paid an outrageously large ransom.

The Jews of Cairo fasted and prayed to G-d. A large sum of money was collected but it did not approach the amount of money Ahmed demanded. Before the planned executions, Ahmed visited his bathhouse. As he was leaving the bathhouse he was attacked and severely wounded by a group of his own advisors and governors. Ahmed escaped but was later captured and beheaded.

From then on, the Jews of Cairo observed the 28<sup>th</sup> of Adar as a day of celebration. A special Megillah (scroll) written to commemorate the miracle was read in Cairo every year on this day.

**Shabbat, 29 Adar 5785 - 29 March 2025**

**Jews Commanded 1st Mitzvah (1313 BCE)**

Shortly before sundown on the 29<sup>th</sup> of Adar 2448 (1313 BCE), G-d commanded Moses regarding the mitzvah of sanctifying the crescent new moon and establishing a lunar calendar. This is the first Mitzvah the Jews were given as a nation.

Moses had difficulty envisaging the moon's appearance at the exact moment of its monthly rebirth. After the sun set, G-d showed Moses the crescent new moon of the new month of Nissan, showing him the precise dimensions of the moon at the moment the new month is to be consecrated. For the generations that followed, each new month was ushered in when two witnesses testified before the Sanhedrin (rabbinical supreme court) that they had seen the new moon. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, Hillel II foresaw that the Jews would no longer be able to follow a Sanhedrin-based calendar. So, Hillel II and his rabbinical court established the perpetual calendar which is followed today - until Moshiach will come and reestablish the Sanhedrin.