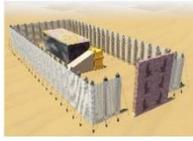




Parsha Snapshot



Vayakhel- Pekudei

Vayakhel

The previous Parsha recounted God's reconciliation with the Jewish People after the tragedy of the Golden Calf. The joyous news of God's forgiveness is announced on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The very next day, Moses gathers the Jews to communicate God's instructions for building the Tabernacle – a symbol of their restored relationship with God.

Before instructing the Jews regarding the Tabernacle, Moses commands them to refrain from all work on the Sabbath; even the building of God's own Sanctuary must cease on this holy day. Moses then relays God's request that the people donate the materials needed for the project.

Both men and women respond to the call with unbridled enthusiasm, contributing over and above the necessary amount; Moses announces that the campaign is over and people should stop bringing supplies.

God declares that the principle architect of the Tabernacle will be Betzalel, a member of the tribe of Judah. God has "filled him with a Divine spirit, with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge..." Betzalel will be assisted by Oholiav, a member of the tribe of Dan, along with any individual "wise of heart, in whom God has placed wisdom and understanding, to know [how] to do all the crafts of the holy work."

The Parsha proceeds to catalogue the components of the Tabernacle previously mentioned in Parshas Terumah; each item was meticulously fashioned by the dedicated Jewish craftsmen.

The classical commentators address the apparent redundancy in the multiple accounts of the Tabernacle in the last five Parshas of Exodus. The commentators discover nuances of meaning in the subtle variations in the various texts. In a larger sense, the Torah's lengthy treatment of this topic indicates God's love and esteem for His children's handiwork, and His desire to dwell upon the subject at length.

Pekudei

Pekudei begins with an accounting of the precious metals – gold, silver and copper – used in construction of the Mishkan [Tabernacle]. The Torah records the quantity of each metal and what it was used for, highlighting the necessity for transparency. Even Moses cannot hold himself above suspicion, and must give an accounting of donated funds. The Torah’s charge to be “clean before God and Israel” means that it is not enough to *be* honest; our behavior must *demonstrate* honesty to all, leaving no room for doubt about our personal integrity.

The Parsha continues by recounting how the Jewish craftsmen fashioned the garments of the Kohanim [priests] and the Kohen Gadol [High Priest] according to the precise instructions relayed by Moses.

The Mishkan is finally complete. Its components are brought to Moses, who recognizes that everything has been done exactly as God commanded. A gratified Moses blesses the people.

God commands Moses to inaugurate the Mishkan in a seven-day ceremony, assembling and disassembling the Mishkan each day. On the first of Nissan – two weeks before the first anniversary of the Exodus –the Mishkan will be assembled permanently, to be dismantled only for the purpose of travel. The Mishkan is put up by Moses himself, who erects the walls, spreads the roof, and places all the furniture in position.

A cloud rests upon the completed Mishkan, symbolizing the Divine Presence. Even Moses may not enter while the cloud hovers over the Mishkan; only when the cloud is removed may Moses come to speak with God. The cloud also guides the Jews in their travels; when it rises into the air, it is a sign that they are to journey to a new place.

“For the cloud of God was on the Mishkan by day, and a fire was there by night, in view of all Israel, throughout their travels.”

This concludes Exodus, second of the Chumash (Five Books of Moses)



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