

Short Comments on Pekudei
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שמות ל"ח:כ"א אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדות אשר פקד על-פי משה עבדת הלוים ביד איתמר בן-אהרן הכהן:
Exodus 38:21 *These are the records of the Tabernacle, the Tabernacle of the Testimony, which were drawn up at Moses' bidding—the work of the Levites under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.* Why the need for the records of the Tabernacle? This chapter functions as a mini-almanac - or if we Yiddishized that, we would call it an "AlmaNackele", thus these verses are a kind of *Tabernacle Almanackele!* Almanacs satisfy curiosity and tell a story. Here the curiosity is the quantity of raw materials used in the mishkan and the story is that everything that was donated was used, attesting to the honesty and trustworthiness of Moses.

Tabernacle of the Testimony-משכן העדות. This is the full name of the Mishkan, telling us that its major role was to house the Ark of the Testimony, ארון העדות. Midrash Tanhuma states that the Mishkan functions as testimony to the world that God forgave Israel after the golden calf.

כדי שידעו כל האמות שנתכפר להם על מעשה העגל. ולכך נקרא **משכן העדות** שהוא **עדות** לכל באי העולם.
ל"ח כ"ד: כל-הנהב העשוי למלאכה בכל מלאכת הקדוש ניקח ונתנה תשע ועשרים כפר וישבע מאות ושלשים שקל בשקל הקדוש:

38:24 *All the gold that was used for the work, in all the work of the sanctuary—the elevation offering of gold—came to 29 talents and 730 shekels by the sanctuary weight.* Just for the sake of curiosity, there are 3000 shekels in a talent. The total number of gold shekels in the project would have been 87,730. A shekel is .2 oz. and the price of gold is \$1945 per oz. So the total amount of gold in the mishkan would be worth... \$34,126,970! An extraordinary sum in any era!

ל"ט:ל"ב ותכל כל-עבודת משכן אהל מועד ויעשו בני ישראל ככל אשר צוה ה' את-משה בן עשו:

39:32 *Thus was completed all the work of the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting. The Israelites did so; just as God had commanded Moses, so they did.* The language of the completion of the Mishkan echoes the language of the completion of Creation:

ויבלו השמים והארץ וכל-צבאם: **ויכל** אלקים ביום השביעי מלאכתו אשר עשה וישבת ביום השביעי מכל-מלאכתו אשר עשה:

The heaven and the earth were completed, and all their array. On the seventh day God completed the work that had been undertaken: [God] ceased on the seventh day from doing any of the work. Genesis begins with God making the heavens. Exodus ends with Israel making the Mishkan. Psalm 150:1 captures this paradox beautifully:

הללו אלהים בקדשו גללוהו ברקיע עזו
Praise God in His zone of holiness, Praise God in the expansive heavens of His strength. God is beyond creation and God's presence emanates from the infinitesimal space above the cherubim in the Holy of Holies.

שמות ל"ט:ל"ג-מ"ג וניבאו את-המשכן אל-משה את-האהל ואת-קלבי קרסיו קרסיו קרסיו ועמדיו ואדניו: ואת-מכסה עורת האילם המאדמים ואת-מכסה ערת התקשים ואת פרכת המסוד: את-ארון העדות ואת-בגדיו ואת הפפרת: את-השלקון את-כל-כליו ואת-לקחם הפנים: את-המנורה הטהרה את-נרתיקה נרת המערכה ואת-כל-כליה ואת שמן המאור: ואת מזבח הזהב ואת שמן המשחה ואת קטרת הסמים ואת מסך פתח האהל: את מזבח הנחשת ואת-מקבר הנחשת אשר-לו את-בגדיו ואת-כל-כליו ואת-הכפר ואת-כנפו: את-קלעי הקצר את-עמדתה ואת-אדניה ואת-המסוד לשער הקצר את-מיתריו וימדתיה ואת-כל-כלי עבודת המשכן לאהל מועד: את-בגדיו השרד ושרת בקדש את-בגדיו הקדש לאהרן הכהן ואת-בגדיו בני-לכהו: ככל אשר-צוה ה' את-משה בן עשו בני ישראל את-כל-העבודה: ויבאו את-כל-המלאכה והנה עשו אותה כאשר צוה ה' בן עשו **ויברך אתם משה:**

39:33-43 *Then they brought the Tabernacle to Moses, with the Tent and all its furnishings: its clasps, its planks, its bars, its posts, and its sockets; the covering of tanned ram skins, the covering of dolphin skins, and the curtain for the screen; the Ark of the Pact and its poles, and the cover; the table and all its utensils, and the bread of display; the pure lampstand, its lamps—lamps in due order—and all its fittings, and the oil for lighting; the altar of gold, the oil for anointing, the aromatic incense, and the screen for the entrance of the Tent; the copper altar with its copper grating, its poles and all its utensils, and the laver and its stand; the hangings of the enclosure, its posts and its sockets, the screen for the gate of the enclosure, its cords and its pegs—all the furnishings for the service of the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting; the service vestments for officiating in the sanctuary, the sacral vestments of Aaron the priest, and the vestments of his sons for priestly service. Just as God had commanded Moses, so the Israelites had done all the work. And when Moses saw that they had performed all the tasks—as God had commanded, so they had done—Moses blessed them.* This text is gorgeous on so many levels. It functions as a *Song to the Mishkan*, a kind

of celebration to the assembly of the Mishkan. And in reading it, we visualize the parade of all the items, and we get a sense satisfaction, the way any completed project would bring satisfaction. We experience a vicarious joy as spectators, and share in the aspiration of what is to come. The last verse echoes Creation. *God saw everything that He had made...here Moses sees what they had made, and that they had made it just as God had commanded.* If you read the next chapter describing how the entire mishkan was put together, you will discover that the phrase *כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה just as God commanded Moses*, occurs seven times, which again, is a nod to Creation. Moses blessing of Israel is a beautiful moment. The content of the blessing is not disclosed to us, which is an acknowledgement that any text for this occasion would have been insufficient. Moses is a precursor to Lincoln at Gettysburg: *The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here.* Models of understatement and humility. And so the Torah leaves it unsaid. As anyone who has ever tried to offer a benediction knows, it is not possible to encapsulate all the emotions and significance of this moment. But the rabbis tried to imagine what he said as follows:

אמר להם תשרה שכינה על מעשה ידיכם ר"מ אומר כך ברכן ה' אלקי אבותיכם יוסף עליכם ככם אלף פעמים (דברים א) אמר להם כשם שנתעסקתם במלאכת משכן ושרתה שכינה על מעשה ידיכם כך תזכו ותבנו לפניו בית הבחירה ותשרה שכינה על מעשה ידיכם תוספתא מנחות ז:ג

He said to them, May God's divine presence dwell upon the work of your hands. R. Meir (offered this interpretation:), this is what God bestowed upon them: "Lord, God of your fathers, He will increase upon you a thousand fold." (Deut. 1) He (Moses) said to them, "As you have worked on the building of the sanctuary and the divine presence has dwelled upon the work of your hands, so too, shall you be privileged to build before Him the Temple and have His presence dwell upon the work of your hands." In other words, Moses said expressed the hope that the Mishkan would serve its purpose of bringing God's presence to the people. In Rabbi Meir's imagination, Moses blessed them by saying effectively, the best is yet to come! In yet another midrash on this text, Moses prays that the Mishkan be safe from the 'evil eye' and those who would try to destroy it.

מ:ב ביום־ההוא הראשון באחד להודש תקדים את־משכן אהל מועד:

40:2 *On the first day of the first month you shall set up the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting.*

Look what a year has brought! Exactly one year before this, they were still slaves in Egypt. They were just about to get the instructions of what to do prior to the exodus. They left Egypt, they went through the Red Sea, they experienced thirst, they fought a war, they encamped at Sinai, they experienced God's voice there and were terrified, they entered into a covenant with God and violated it by worshiping the golden calf. Moses shattered the tablets and a civil war broke out. God forgave them, Moses got a second set of tablets and then they proceeded to build the Mishkan. *A year ago we were slaves to Pharaoh and were less than nothing. Look at us now! We are servants of God and precious to Him.*

מ:כ ויקח ויתן את־העדות אל־הארץ וישם את־הבדים על־הארץ ויתן את־הכפרת על־הארץ מלמעלה:

40:20 *He took the Testimony and placed it in the ark; he fixed the poles to the ark, placed the cover on top of the ark...* This had to be the most important moment in the whole assembly. The "deposit" and the *en-coffer-ment* of the tablets. Think of award ceremonies or graduations: the key moment is the moment of *transmittal* of the trophy or certificate. In shul, the return of the Torah to the Ark at the end of the reading hearkens back to this moment.

מ:ל"ד ויכס הענן את־אהל מועד וכבוד ה' מלא את־המשכן:
40:34 *the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Glory of God filled the Tabernacle.* The Tent is now the equivalent of Mount Sinai. Just as the cloud covered the mountain, the cloud now envelops the Tabernacle.

מ:ל"ה ולא־יכל משה לבוא אל־אהל מועד כי־שכן עליו הענן וכבוד ה' מלא את־המשכן:

40:35 *Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud had settled upon it and the Glory of God filled the Tabernacle.* This ought to arouse our curiosity because at Mount Sinai, Moses was able to go into the cloud. According to Sifra quoted by Rashi, from now on, Moses could only enter the Mishkan when the cloud was not there.

מ:ל"ח כי ענן ה' על־המשכן יומם ואש תהנה לילה בו לעיני כל־בית־ישראל בכל־מסעיהם:

40:38 *For over the Tabernacle a cloud of God rested by day, and fire would appear in it by night, in the view of all the house of Israel throughout their journeys.* The book ends with this cool cumulus cloud coda. Hazak Hazak Ve-Nithazek! Shabbat Shalom! Be a Parasha Sheet Sponsor!