



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

VAYAKHEL-P'KUDEI

Fighting for Time

Building the Mishkan was an urgent priority. The work had to proceed with energy and alacrity.

But there was one proviso: Shabbat had to be a rest day: "Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day you must have a holy day" (Sh'mot 35:2). Work had to be suspended for the Sabbath day.

A day had to replace a building in the consciousness of every Israelite. Not that there would not have been grumbles. "I have so many things to do", Moshe must have been told; "how can God expect me to drop everything for 24 hours?"

The modern rabbi hears the same complaint: "Rabbi, you don't know how fierce the pressure is; Saturday just simply has to be business as usual!"

But nothing should allow Shabbat to be pushed aside or compromised, and it is not because Judaism is harsh or inhumane.

The "business as usual" syndrome is possibly good for business, but it is

disastrous for human relations, for peace of mind, for personal sanity and the human spirit. People tend to have no time for the family: Shabbat gives them the opportunity.

They have no time to think: Shabbat gives them this precious gift. They have no time to breathe the air and look up from the frantic scurrying that keeps them chained: Shabbat clears their lungs, restores their equilibrium and calms their mind and heart.

Shabbat also turns a person into a mensch: life is so competitive that everyone else is a potential rival, but when Shabbat comes, the other person is a human being like oneself, a friend and not an enemy.

How right the sages were when they said that Shabbat is a foretaste of life in the World to Come, "the day which will be all Shabbat".

Account & Reckoning

The sidra is called P'KUDEI, "accounts". It reports the audit of the funds used towards the Mishkan.

Moshe, as the leader of the people, was entrusted with considerable sums, and he had to account for them all.

Would anyone have accused him of

fraud or embezzlement? Probably not. But even a Moshe has to show that all he does is totally above board, beyond all criticism or question.

The same applies to anyone who has money to administer. No-one is exempt from giving DIN V'CHESH-BON, "account and reckoning".

Metaphorically we all have to face an audit and give a DIN V'CHESHBON every day of our lives. How we live, what we do, how we relate to other people, how we relate to God - nothing escapes scrutiny on some level.

The sages even hint that in the World to Come we will be required to account for how we handled all the opportunities that life presented us with.

Let us hope that the Chief Auditor on high will declare Himself satisfied.

-OZ

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH