RED ALERT!

VAYAKHEL-P'KUDEI - HACHODESH

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DIVREI TORAH

• This double Parsha is long and quite tedious; it can be classified as one of the more boring readings of the year. But when you begin to analyze what is being read, you begin to realize how precise the Torah must be. The Mishkan was a powerful place, even dangerous, as the case may be. Nadav and Avihu learned the hard way just how dangerous it truly was. This repetition of Parshiyot T'ruma and T'tzaveh is necessary to instruct us how precise the builders had to be.

Rabbi Steinsaltz zt"l compared it to constructing a rocket ship in our times. The builders need to be very precise and exact in their work or the result could be quite disastrous. And in working there, the Kohanim had to be careful in fulfilling their jobs. They had to follow the rules. We don't know why Hashem created these rules. We just know to follow them.

• The Building Fund Appeal was successful beyond anyone's expectation. Even the tribal princes were quite surprised as to the success. When conducting any appeal, we plan a strategy to ensure success. What we do first is to identify the wealthier supporters and approach them before going out to the masses. This is what King Solomon did when he constructed the First Temple. And Herod did the same thing in refurbishing the Second Temple. Moshe, on the other hand, did not. He immediately opened the appeal to everyone, allowing all the people to bring themselves closer to Hashem. Rashi commented that the tribal princes did not contribute right away. They waited to see how the people would do, figuring that they would give whatever was needed at the end. But the people gave more than was needed. The women were remarkable, as they were quite generous in donating what they had in jewelry. They established the zeal that led the way to the most successful appeal ever in history.

• Betzalel was given the credit for creating the Aron because he dedicated his total soul to the holy task at hand. (37:1 and Rashi on that verse). Obviously he took his job very seriously. As stated before, Betzalel was quite young at the time, and even though he was gifted by Hashem in knowing how to do each craft correctly, he applied himself seriously in doing what was necessary. He made the two staves that were attached to both sides of the Aron because the Aron had to be portable. Even when the Aron was installed

within the Holy Temple in Yerushalayim, it had to have these two staves. I believe that the message was that the Torah always had to be portable. The Torah will always accompany the people wherever they go, Yerushalayim or even New York or Florida. The Jews will take the Torah with them no matter where they go in this world.

• There is a standing difference of opinion as to the final shape of the Menorah. The Rambam drew his opinion of its shape as having straight line branches emanating from the central shaft, making the Menorah look like a Y. Some commentators agree with the Rambam. Others claim that the Menorah's branches were semi-circular in design as is depicted in the Arch of Titus in Rome, where Titus paraded it in Rome upon his return from sacking Yerushalayim and the Temple in the first century CE. Where is the Menorah now? Don't really know. Some say it is hidden in the Vatican. More likely is that it was melted down for its gold content in the 5th century CE. If a talent of gold is about 50 kilograms, that means the Menorah's gold would be worth over 8 million dollars today. We will never know.

• There is clear transparency in the precious metals that were donated to the Mishkan project. I notice that there was no call for transparency when the people donated to the making of the Golden Calf. This distinction exists throughout time. When people do something wrong, they don't care how much was raised or who donated what. Only when people do something good is there a demand for transparency. I am not a psychologist or a sociologist, so I don't dare comment as to why this is so. Therefore I am not going to explore the reason this is so, but I recognize it is. One is heartfelt and religious and the other is an emotional outburst of rebellion. One is the demand for accountability of a leader, while the other is leaderless. Be it as it may the same is true in today's society as well.

• The Halacha is clear: the Kohen Gadol is required to wear his special clothing when in the Temple and is not permitted to wear these special clothes outside the Temple. One time that I can remember it happening with no punishment is when Alexander the Great had invaded Israel in the early years of the third century BCE. The scene is described in the Talmud and in Josephus. Each with a different name for the Kohen Gadol, but it is basically the same story. The Kohen Gadol had left the Temple and Yerushalayim dressed in his finest garb to meet Alexander as the latter was on the way to Yerushalayim. Alexander greeted the Kohen Gadol and bowed to him. He proclaimed to

all the men with him that the night before each battle, he would see this image of the Kohen Gadol in a dream, who came to tell him that he would be victorious. Alexander didn't know who it was, until now. So he bowed to him!

- MIDRASH. The Halacha clearly states that when dealing with Tzedaka money, there should be at least two people involved. Not just one person. So how could Moshe be the lone person in charge of the Building Fund Appeal in the Torah? The answer is that in the beginning of P'kudei, Moshe called for an audit on the appeal. And it was done to everyone's delight.

Questions by RED

From the text

1. What image was woven into the Parochet? (36:35)

2. What was the Outside Altar made of? (38:1,2)

3. What three different words in Parshat Vayakhel have the same four letters? (36:35 and 37:6,19)

4. How many people gave a half-shekel? (38:22)

5. On which day was the Mishkan erected and not immediately dismantled? (40:17)

From Rashi

6. What were the Bigdei HaS'rad (knitted vestments) used for? (35:19)

7. What was unique about the way the goat's hair was spun? (35:26)

8. Who was appointed to carry the Mishkan's utensils? (38:21)

9. How were the gold threads made? (39:3)

10. How was the Tzitz (Headplate) fastened to Aharon's head? (39:31)

From the Rabbis

11. How many different categories of labor were needed to build the Mishkan and make the Kohanic clothing? (Shabbat 97b)

12. Hashem really didn't need any contributions to build the Mishkan. Why did He call for them? (Or HaChayim)

13. Moshe took the Tablets and placed them in the Aron. Where were they until then? (Baal HaTurim)

From the Midrash

14. Which is a more joyous day, a person's birth or a person's death?

Haftara of HaChodesh - Yechezkel

15. What three Mitzvot did the Greek-Syrians try to abolish by force?

Relationships

a) Moshe - Betzalel

b) Chur - Itamar

c) Reuven - Zerach

d) Miriam - Elisheva

e) Elazar - Aminadav

ANSWERS

1. The K'ruvim

2. Wood covered with copper (and filled with dirt).

3. Parochet, Kaporet, and Kaftor.

4. 603,550

5. Rosh Chodesh Nissan of the second year in the desert.

6. They covered the Aron, Shulchan, Menorah, and the Altars during transport.

7. It was spun directly from the goat's back.

8. The Leviyim

9. Gold was beaten into thin plates which were then cut into threads.

10. By three blue cords. Two tied to the ends of the Tzitz and one on the top. Then the 3 cords were tied behind his head.

11. 39. The same number as the categories of work prohibited on Shabbat.

12. To allow the people to feel closer to Hashem.

13. In a wooden Ark in Moshe's tent.

14. Death. We should celebrate his successful journey in life.

15. Rosh Chodesh, Shabbat, and Circumcision.

Relationships

a) Great-great Uncle & Great-great nephew

b) First Cousins

c) Uncle & Nephew

d) Sisters-in-law

e) Grandson & Grandfather