

# Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

## VAYAKHEL-P'KUDEI

The Parasha, the long description of the building of the Mishkan, and the entire Book of Sh'mot finishes with:

*The cloud (of G-d's Presence) covered the OHEL MO'ED. The Glory of G-d filled the Mishkan... The Israelites would travel when the cloud was raised up from the Mishkan... But... they would not depart until the day it rose up (40:34-37).*

Later on (Bamidbar 9:15-23), the Torah narrates at length the procedure through which G-d communicated His Marching Orders to the Israelites in the desert - by means of the cloud by day, and the fire by night.

What place does the travel arrangements of Am Yisrael have here, as conclusion material to the building of the Mishkan and indeed, to the entire Book of Sh'mot?

As a response, the Ramban (in his introduction to the Book of Sh'mot) observes that the entire Book is the story of the first Divinely-ordained national exile, and Geula - redemption from it. Even after departing from Egypt, they were still in foreign territory in the wilderness. But when they reached Mount Sinai, and built the Mishkan, G-d returned and rested

His Presence among them. Their participation in that mitzva with their voluntary donations incorporated in the building of the Mishkan brought them close to Him, as had been their patriarchal forefathers Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov who, in building their own sanctuaries as altars to G-d, also brought themselves near to Him. It was at that point that the Israelites, all working together L'SHEIM SHAMAYIM without quarrelling, were indeed a redeemed nation. It was in Geula that the travelling arrangements occurred. Indeed, the Book of Sh'mot is sometimes referred to as Sefer Geula - the Book of Redemption. And it is these last p'sukim that launch the focus of that Geula, with G-d signifying His working with Am Yisrael by ascending and descending in a cloud as He prompts them stage by stage towards their final destination.

In short, Sefer Sh'mot, Sefer Geula, finishes with the travel arrangements as it was the travelling arrangements that both sealed and aligned for the future the theme of Sefer Sh'mot, the Geula.

What is significantly important is that these events took place outside Eretz Yisrael. It was not Eretz Yisrael that redeemed them, but the reverse. The reality was that they were to arrive there as a redeemed people, with the Mishkan as a representation of it.

This observation is vital, as it constitutes a very important link in the chain of the spiritual development of the Israelite, and later the Jewish People. It has been pointed out that there were four great formative 'watershed' periods: under Avraham Avinu, under Moshe Rabeinu, during the century following the Destruction of the First Temple, and in the exile from Yerushalayim to Yavneh and then beyond, following the Destruction of the Second Temple. None of the shaping events took place when Israel was in the Holy Land under its own rule... Indeed, the Rabbis place a much greater emphasis on the reconstruction of the work of Sanhedrin on its exile from Yerushalayim to Yavneh, than the Zealots' last stand against the Romans at Masada taking place at the same time.

That teaches us that Israel has a vital, but not exclusive part in the sacred traditions and directions for life for the Jewish People. For it is not just the place that contains the holiness, but it is that people bring holiness with them wherever they are, as represented by the travels of the Mishkan to its final destinations in Eretz Yisrael. 'Wherever I let My Name be mentioned, I will come to you and bless you' (Sh'mot 20:21).

It is what the people bring to living in Israel that makes Israel great. Everyone has a different positive contribu-

tion to make. It is on each person to ask themselves what difference their own personal involvement can make, and it the responsibility of each person to do what they can to make it happen. 🌿📖