

# HAFTORAH COMMENTARY PARSHAS PEKUDEI

*by Rabbi Dovid Siegel*

*M'lochim I, 7:51-8*

This week's haftorah describes the glorious moment when Shlomo Hamelech completed the construction of the Bais Hamikdash. He gathered the prominent members of the Jewish nation and arranged to transport the Holy Ark from the city of David to the Temple site. The Ark was brought into the Bais Hamikdash with abundant joy and celebration and placed in its inner chamber. The cloud of Hashem's glory appeared above the Sanctuary and the Divine Presence rested amongst the Jewish people.

Shlomo Hamelech responded by blessing the Jewish people and thanking Hashem for fulfilling His promise to Dovid Hamelech. Dovid was greatly disturbed over the absence of the Bais Hamikdash and asked permission to build a permanent edifice for Hashem. Hashem acquiesced in Dovid's plea and informed him that his son Shlomo would be privileged to do so. At this point Shlomo Hamelech repeated Hashem's response to Dovid "Since it was with your heart, Dovid to build an edifice for Me you have done well, because it was with your heart." (8:18) Malbim explains the connotation of these words, "with your heart" in the following manner. Although Dovid Hamelech did not physically erect the Bais Hamikdash, he accomplished its erection in his heart. Dovid devoted his total focus to this purpose and ultimately elicited Hashem's consent to rest His presence amongst His nation.

This dimension was clearly displayed through the Heavenly circumstances related to the Ark's entry to its permanent abode. Our Sages shed light on the peculiar mention of a special kindness to Dovid Hamelech during this ceremony. Scriptures state, "Over all the goodness which Hashem performed to His servant Dovid and His nation Israel." (M'lochim I, 8:61) Our Sages depict Dovid Hamelech as the central figure in the celebration and recount that the Sanctuary doors locked shut and refused to allow the Ark entry. Shlomo Hamelech beseeched Hashem to open the doors mentioning every possible merit. Finally, he mentioned his father Dovid's good deeds and the doors immediately swung open. (Rashi ad loc.) This incident was public testimony to all of the true righteousness of Dovid Hamelech and his perfect relationship with Hashem.

Although Shlomo actually built the Bais Hamikdash's magnificent structure this was insufficient to produce the awaited results. Because Hashem's presence does not rest upon a physical structure, it rests upon His nation. The Ark's miraculous return displayed that Hashem's permanent residence here was due to His permanent relationship with Dovid Hamelech. Had not Dovid devoted his entire life to fulfilling his prophetic statement in Thilim, "I place Hashem before me always"? This conviction

reached far beyond His personal relationship with Hashem and extended to the entire Jewish nation. Dovid consistently agonized over Hashem's temporary quarters and for that glorified era when Hashem would establish permanent residence amongst his people. Now, that this moment finally arrived Dovid received true credit for bringing his dream to fruition.

Hashem informed Dovid at the outset that he successfully achieved his purpose. Dovid's deep passion for Hashem's presence truly built the Bais Hamikdash. The majestic edifice served no purpose without Hashem's actual presence inside of it and that detail only Dovid's heart could accomplish. The moment Hashem's glory appeared in the Bais Hamikdash this significant detail became crystal clear. Shlomo accepted no credit for this and appropriately attributed it to his father's relentless longing and yearning for Hashem's permanent association with His people. .

This lesson is paralleled in this week's sidra where a similar experience happened when erecting the Mishkan. The Torah recounts that the skilled workers presented Moshe Rabbeinu all the Mishkan's components ready for erection.(see S'hmos 39:33) Rashi quotes our Sages who explain that the workers were physically incapable of erecting the Mishkan. They produced to perfection all of the Mishkan's parts and immediately began assembling it in preparation for Hashem's presence therein. However, they could not complete the process because Hashem reserved this privilege for Moshe Rabbeinu. They explain that this was in response to Moshe's disturbance over his inability to participate in constructing the Mishkan. (see Tanchuma P'kudei 11) Our Sages explain that since Moshe Rabbeinu was a leader he was restricted from perform any physical task in public. (Sh'mos Rabba 39:2) However, Moshe Rabbeinu yearned to share in bringing Hashem's presence to His people. Hashem answered this request and secured that Moshe, and only Moshe, would complete the project. Hashem rendered it physically and spiritually impossible for anyone to erect the Mishkan save Moshe Rabbeinu. Even Moshe wondered in bewilderment how any human being could achieve this goal. Hashem informed Moshe to make a serious attempt and He would provide the necessary assistance. (Tanchuma ibid)

The upshot of this seems to relate to the essential role Moshe Rabbeinu played in Hashem's resting amongst His people. The Jewish people seriously strayed from Hashem when they plunged into the ugly sin of the golden calf. Although Hashem forgave the Jewish people, in part, He informed them that His Divine presence would no longer accompany them. The Jewish nation was prone to error and sin and direct association with His presence would be very harmful to them. However, Moshe Rabbeinu refused to accept these new terms and pleaded with Hashem to return to His people. Moshe Rabbeinu appealed to Hashem's mercy and asked Him to display to the entire world His boundless love for His people. Hashem granted His loyal servant this selfless request and consented to return to His people. Even the perfect details of the majestic sanctuary with all its spiritual representations were insufficient reason to return Hashem's presence to His people. Only Moshe Rabbeinu's overriding concern produced this result and it was time for the entire nation to realize this. Therefore, only Moshe could and did erect the Mishkan thus convincing everyone in

whose merit the entire Jewish nation reunited

This lesson stems back to the Jewish people's initial conception of a sanctuary for Hashem. They observed Hashem's open miracles and beheld a clear vision of Hashem standing directly before them. Moshe Rabbeinu and the Jewish people responded by singing to Hashem and pledging, "This is my Hashem and I will glorify Him; the Hashem of my fathers and I will exalt Him." (S'hmos 15:2) Rashi quotes there Targum Unkeles who interprets this to mean that the Jewish people pledged to build an abode for Hashem. They cherished the experience of uniting with Hashem and sought to secure this as a permanent relationship. Rashi adds that after saying this they immediately recognized the true source of their relationship. They therefore completed their words and said, "I am not the beginning of this sanctity; His relationship with me was established and secured for me by my forefathers." Even Moshe Rabbeinu would not take credit for Hashem's association with the people. This remarkable accomplishment could only be credited to its true source, our devoted patriarchs who established a permanent relationship with Hashem for all subsequent generations.

Our Sages teach us that this unique privilege of Hashem's presence amongst us continues even in our times. Scriptures regard our Batei Knessios and Batei Midrashos as miniature sanctuaries wherein traces of Hashem's presence can be found. (see Mesichta Megillah 28a) Undoubtedly, this privilege is not attributed to glorious physical structures rather to the total devotion and concern of those who utilize its services. We should cherish these opportunities and remember that it is not in our merit that we were granted this privilege. Hashem's direct relationship with us stems back to our earliest origins, to our predecessors like Dovid Hamelech and our loyal patriarchs who preserved this relationship every waking moment of their life.

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