

WHY DID MOSHE SAVE HIS BLESSING FOR PARSHAS PEKUDEI?

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshios Vayakhel & Pekudei

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 805, Barch Sh'omar, Ashrei and Yishtabach. Good Shabbos!

Parshas Pekudei is the last of 5 Parshiyos in the second half of Sefer Shemos that contains the details of how the Mishkan was built. If we feel a sense of accomplishment at having learned these 5 parshas, we can imagine the joy the people experienced at the momentous occasion in Parshas Pekudei, when the Mishkan was finally assembled for the first time. We read in the parsha that "Moshe saw all the work, and behold! - They had done it as Hashem had commanded; so had they done; and Moshe blessed them. [Shemos 39:43]"

Rashi quotes Chazal that the blessing Moshe gave them was "May the Divine Presence of G-d rest in the work of your hands". Now that all is said and done, the blessing was that the L-rd should rest His Presence on the people and on the building.

Rav Simcha Schepps, who was a Rosh Yeshiva in Torah VoDaas, shared an interesting insight. Rav Schepps says that a more logical place to have given the Jewish people this Bracha [blessing] would have been at the outset of the building of the Mishkan. The pasuk near the beginning of Parshas

Terumah says: "They shall make Me a Sanctuary so that I may dwell among them" [Shemos 25:8]. This Bracha of "May the Divine Presence of G-d rest in the work of your hands" would have been a very appropriate blessing to say at that moment. Why does Moshe save it for the end of the process?

Rav Schepps answers based on a pasuk in Tehillim, with which most of us are familiar: "Who will go up upon the Mountain of Hashem and who will rise up to His holy place?" [Tehillim 24:3]. All the

commentaries say that this pasuk alludes to the fact that there are two different challenges in life. There is the "Who will go up upon the Mountain of Hashem?" This means who has the strength of character and the drive to go up to the Mountain of G-d? This is one challenge. But there is an even greater challenge than getting up there. The greater challenge is once you are already at the top of the mountain, to be able to stay up there.

In fact, it is easier to climb to the top of the Mountain of Hashem than it is to remain there. Repetition and boredom set in. The day in, day out, monotony sets in. Remaining on the Mountain of the L-rd is a much more difficult task than going up there in the first place.

In August / September, during Elul Zeman in Yeshivos - everyone is enthusiastic. By the time we reach the end of Adar, only the elite are still standing at the peak of the Mountain of Hashem. It is like that in many areas of life.

When we were Bar Mitzvah boys and we started putting on Tefillin, the ritual involved great excitement. When one has been putting on Tefillin for 40 or 50 years, some of that enthusiasm is lost. The truth of the matter is that this is the way it is in most marriages as well. "The first year" is great. It is the honeymoon period. But when one has been married 10, 20, or 30 years, the excitement of that first year does not seem to persist.

We cannot let that happen. The challenge is not only "Who will climb up the Mountain of G-d?" to reach the peak of the mountain. The challenge is even more so, "who will remain standing on His holy place?"

So, at the beginning of the building of the Mishkan, everyone was enthused. Remember the context. They had committed the sin of the Golden Calf. The Almighty threatened to wipe them out. Moshe Rabbeinu prayed on their behalf and finally on Yom Kippur, he descended again from Mt. Sinai with the second Luchos. They started building the Mishkan on the day after Yom Kippur. Everyone participated with adrenalin and emotion. That is the phase of "Who will climb up the Mountain of G-d?"

However, now that the Mishkan is built, the excitement dissipates. Now starts the day in, day out, repetitive routine. Morning, evening, morning, evening...

We bring the same Korban Tamid, day in and day out. Therefore, Moshe Rabbeinu's Bracha to them is "May it be His will that His Divine Presence abide in the handicraft of your hands." In other words, may the initial enthusiasm be maintained throughout the ongoing phase of the Mishkan's daily operation.

Using the Term "House of Israel" Instead of the Term "Children of

Israel"

I heard the following thought in the name of Rav Nochum Lansky, one of the Roshei Yeshiva in Yeshivas Ner Yisroel.

Parshas Pekudei marks the end of the Book of Shemos. The last pasuk in the Book of Shemos reads as follows: "For the cloud of Hashem would be on the Mishkan by day, and fire would be on it at night, before the eyes of all the House of Israel in all their journeys." [Shemos 40:38]

Let us contrast the use of the wording "House of Israel" with the last pasuk at the end of the Book of Vayikra: "These are the commandments that Hashem commanded Moshe to the Children of Israel on Mount Sinai." [Vayikra 27:34] Similarly, the last pasuk at the end of the book of Bamidbar says: "These are the commandments and the ordinances that Hashem commanded through Moshe to the Children of Israel in the Plains of Moav, at the Jordan, by Jericho." [Bamidbar 36:13]

Both the book of Vayikra and the book of Bamidbar end with the more commonly used expression Children of Israel (Bnei Yisrael), while the book of Shemos ends with the less commonly used designation "House of Israel" (Beis Yisrael). What is the nuance here? What is the Torah hinting at?

Rav Lansky suggests that there is a tremendous symmetry here. How does the Book of Shemos begin? The opening pasuk reads: "And these are the names of the Children of Israel who came to

Egypt with Yaakov, each man AND HIS HOUSEHOLD (u'beiso) came."
[Shemos 1:1] This book is about the genesis of the Jewish people.

This is where we became a nation. But a nation is not a conglomeration of millions of people. A nation - at least the Jewish nation - is a nation of families. That is what makes us into an "am" [nation]. It is the BAYIS [household] that makes us into a nation. If we think back to the narrative of the Book of Shemos, we will see this emphasis on the BAYIS over and over again. "They should take a lamb for the HOUSEHOLDS of the fathers; a lamb per HOUSEHOLD" [Shemos 12:3]. The Korban Pessach was brought together with one's family. "Thus shall you say to the HOUSE (beis) of Yaakov..." [Shemos 19:3]. The formation of the Jewish nation is family by family. This is our strength.

We hear so much about the dissolution of American society and how we are losing the structure of our society because the nuclear family is breaking up. Just as a chain is only as strong as its links, so too a nation is only as strong as its families. That is why the book of Shemos places such an emphasis on the building of 'Bayis' - faithful households.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch notes that the halacha exempts a groom from going off to war during the first year of marriage. The rule of thumb is that whenever there is a clash between a mitzvah incumbent on the public (mitzvah d'rabim) and a private mitzvah (mitzvah d'yachid), the public mitzvah takes precedence. In light of this principle, Rav Hirsch asks why the personal mitzvah to rejoice

with one's wife the first year of marriage trumps the public mitzvah to go out to battle with the nation. Rav Hirsch answers that building and cementing the relationship that is the foundation of a Jewish household IS a mitzvah d'rabbim (a mitzvah affecting the nation). This is a contribution to the entire community. We are only a nation by virtue of the fact that we are a nation of strong families.

For this reason, the book of Shemos begins with the pasuk that emphasizes that the Jewish people came down to Egypt - "each man with his HOUSEHOLD" and ends with the pasuk which emphasizes "the entire HOUSE of Israel."

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei are provided below:

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