

PARSHAS PEKUDEI: MAY THE DIVINE PRESENCE REST IN THE WORK OF YOUR HANDS

by Rabbi Yaakov Horowitz

Parshas Pekudei describes the culmination of the enthusiastic work of the B'nei Yisroel. After all their dedicated labor; the mishkan was assembled, the various kelim (utensils) were arranged in their proper position, and the cohanim were dressed for their service of Hashem. Moshe surveyed all the work that was done and was pleased. He observed that, "They had done their work just as Hashem had instructed [them] - v'henei asu osah k'asher tzivah Hashem (Shemos 39:43)." At that point, Moshe blessed them.

From the reading of the pasuk, it is not clear as to the nature of this bracha. Rashi explains that Moshe offered the following blessing: "Yehi ratzon shetishreh Shechinah bma'asei yedaichem - May it be the will [of Hashem] that the Shechinah, the Divine Presence, rest in the work of your hands." Rashi notes that Moshe concluded his blessing with a pasuk in Tehillim (90:17), V"yehi noam Hashem Elokeinu olaynu... - May the pleasantness of Hashem our G-d be upon us and may our handiwork (the Mishkan) establish [it] for us.

Rabbi Avraham Shmuel Sofer, known by the name of his sefer, The K'sav Sofer, asks several questions:

- * At first glance, this moving statement of Moshe seems to be a prayer, not a blessing. After all, Moshe is beseeching Hashem that He rests His presence among the Jews. How does this tefilah mesh with the words of the pasuk, "And Moshe blessed them?"
- * Additionally, why was Moshe's blessing necessary at all? At the onset of Parshas Terumah, (Shemos 25:8) Hashem has already assured the B'nei Yisroel that His Presence would rest among them once the Mishkan was built? Why was there a need for the prayer of Moshe at this point?
- * And finally, why did Moshe omit the name of Hashem from this prayer? Usually, we recite, "Yehi Ratzon mil'fanecha Hashem Elokainu...May it be the will of Hashem our G-d" (In Moshe's prayer, he used the words Yehi Ratzon only, and left out the name of Hashem).

The K'sav Sofer explains that Moshe understood the deeper meaning of the construction of the Mishkan. Hashem had no desire for an ornate building with beautiful trappings. He wanted to rest His Presence in the handiwork of His humble, selfless people. Throughout the building of the Mishkan, Moshe was concerned that the Jews may get so involved with the actual building of the Mishkan

and its various utensils that they might lose sight of the main objective, the resting of Hashem's Presence.

As the Midrash points out, Hashem's promise to rest His Presence clearly indicates this reality. He promised that when the Jews will build the Mishkan, "V'shachanti b'socham - I will rest among THEM. The Midrash notes that the word b'socham (among them) is used rather than b'socha (in it) to indicate that Hashem's intention was to rest among the Jews who selflessly built the Mishkan, not in the actual building!

Moshe watched with pride as the B'nei Yisroel rose to the challenge. Throughout the construction of the Mishkan, their intentions were pure - to honor His name, not to bask in their handiwork. I would like to suggest that in recognition of their selfless devotion, the Torah keeps repeating, "Ka'asher tzivah Hashem es Moshe - as Hashem instructed Moshe," as each utensil is listed throughout Parshas Pikudei. This would not only refer to the artisans constructing the utensils according to the specifications of Hashem, but also that their intentions were along the lines of Hashem's request, as noted by Rashi (Shemos 25:2) before the very first donation of the raw material for the Mishkan; that it be done for the purest of motives - lishmi - for the sake of Hashem.

The interpretation of the K'sav Sofer gives us new insight in the blessing of Moshe. He looked on with pride as his people dedicated themselves - generously and selflessly - to the building of the Mishkan. (Shemos 39:43) "Moshe saw all the work, and they had done it as Hashem had commanded (for His honor), and Moshe blessed them".

The K'sav Sofer explains that at this point Moshe blessed them, "Yehi ratzon shetishreh Shechinah bma'asei yedaichem - May it be your desire that Hashem's Presence rest among you. He blessed them that the pleasantness of Hashem be upon them (Tehilim 90:17) - that the Shechinah always grace the Mishkan that they built with such devotion.

Moshe was blessing the Jews in his presence - and all future generations of their children - that they always remain on this spiritual plateau. He instructed them to see the forest, not only the trees. They should forever remember that the purpose of the Mishkan, and any mitzvos that they do, is far more than the sum of the parts of that particular mitzvah. Its greater meaning is to bring Hashem into our daily lives, in the hope that His Presence will rest in our handiwork - and our hearts ... forever.

Best wishes for a Gutten Shabbos.

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Rabbi Horowitz is the founder and dean of Yeshiva Darchei Noam in Monsey, NY, as well as the founder and Program Director of Agudath Israel's Project Y.E.S. (Youth Enrichment Services), which helps at-risk teens and their parents. He is a popular lecturer on teaching and parenting topics in communities around the world, and is the author of several best-selling parenting tape and CD sets.

For more information on Rabbi Horowitz's parenting tapes, visit <http://www.rabbihorowitz.com/> or call 845-352-7100 X 133.