

Introduction to Parsha #23: Pekudei¹

READINGS: ***Torah Pekudei:*** **Exodus 38:21 - 40:38**
 Haftarah: **I Kings 7:51-8:21**
 B’rit Chadasha: **II Corinthians 2:14 – 3:23**



This is the account/reports of the Tabernacle
[Exodus 38:21]

The Amidah Prayer Focus for Parsha *Pekudei* is the *Gevurot*, Part II

Eleh fekudei ha-Mishkan – *This is the account/report of the Moveable Dwelling Place*
Exodus 38:21a.

The name of the last parsha of this great revelation download is ‘*Pekudei*’. With this parsha the Holy One’s great ‘Book of Nation Formation’ – *i.e. Sefer Sh’mot* – will reach its *eye-popping and awe-inspiring conclusion*. Before we plunge off into the dramatic closing narrative of this sefer, however, I believe it behooves us take a moment and marvel at just how much our eyes have seen, and just how much the world has changed, since the great patriarchs of our nation - Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya’akov and Yosef - departed the earth. It is pretty incredible *how far we as a people ... and the universe as an ecosystem ... have come since we ‘Yosef died, being 110 years old: and they embalmed him, and put his remains in an Egyptian sarcophagus.’* Genesis 50:26.

Reflections on the ‘Great Nation Formation’ Chronicles

The Book of Nation Formation has had us on quite an adventure. What started in the lush green pastures of Goshen has brought us to the towering mountain of Sinai. Along the way we have seen miracles – signs and wonders – galore. From the talking thorn bush of Horeb; through a series of supernatural plagues, through a dramatic sea-parting, through constant cloud-shepherding, to daily manna-showers,

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to constant water outpourings, to Divine Emanations and Divine Betrothal Ceremonies, and unfathomable mercies our generation has seen far more that we will ever be able to put into words. And speaking of ‘words’ – we are awash in them! What are we to do with the twenty-something mind-bending hypotheticals of the *Mishpatim Discourse*; with the precious gift of two tablets of testimony inscribed by the Finger of God, pulsing with the energy of Heaven’s Throne Room; with the Tentmaker’s ‘on earth as it is in Heaven’ Dream download; with the memory of gathering/doing ‘community’ man’s way, with its inevitable golden calf fruit; with the Cleft of the Rock’s shocking revelation of the Holy One’s mercy, forbearance, forgiveness, and longsuffering covenant faithfulness attributes? How can we put all these wonders and stunning truths *into perspective*?

A Very Different Type of Resource than the Book of Beginnings

The opening book of Torah – the book the world calls “Genesis” - is a marvelous sweeping narrative of *the encounters of individual men (and women) with the Creator*. It seems timeless - encompassing all the generations of mankind from Adam and Chava through Efrayim and Menashe. The second book, however – the book the world knows as “Exodus” - is very, very time specific. Virtually all of the events that are chronicled in the Book of Names (at least since the opening lines, which recited a little history) took place in the lives of *one generation of people*. In other words, even now as we begin Pekudei if you were to look around the camp you would recognize almost all of the people milling around. They are, believe it or not, the very same people who suffered through Pharaoh’s building programs and hid their male babies from his extinction decree.

Genesis told the tale of *twenty-four generations*; the book of Exodus chronicles *only one*. But the generation whose time on earth is chronicled by the Book of Names was a uniquely blessed generation. The things the men, women and children of that one generation of our ancestors saw – and which we are called upon to relive by each year as we celebrate *Pesach* - are stupendous, overwhelming, and ... well, world-changing.

The Creator of the Universe spoke – and for the generation of the Book of Exodus that meant that *everything changed*. May it be so again in our generation!

The Secret to the Holy One’s Choice Of the Generation to Which He Appeared at Sinai

The fact that the generation we read about in *Sefer Shemot* [Exodus] was *uniquely blessed* does not mean that it was by any means perfect – or even for that matter *particularly meritorious*. The reason the generation of Moshe, Miryam, Aharon, Hur, and Datan was chosen as the generation to see the Holy One activate His Divine Plan for the redemption of mankind through the blood of a lamb was most

definitely not because the people of that generation were more spiritual or more worthy than previous (or subsequent) generations. Our text makes it clear that the people of the generation the Holy One chose to uniquely bless were *quite ordinary folks – folks a lot like us*. So what was there about the generation of Moshe *et al* that caused the Holy One to choose them? Why was *that* generation chosen by the Holy One from all the others to witness the signs, the wonders, the miracles, the Divine protection, the miraculous provision and dramatic revelation of Heavenly Will? Is it possible that what the generation of the Exodus had to offer was simply recognition *that they were totally powerless to effectuate their own redemption*? Is it possible that what sets them apart from most other generations is *an understanding, birthed in slavery to the richest and most powerful nation on earth, that if the Holy One did not redeem them in His power, redemption simply would not come*?

The people of *Sefer Sh'mot* were *not heroes*. Nor were they *world-changers, kingdom-builders, crusaders, or demon-chasers*. These did not clamor to be acclaimed in the world as apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, or evangelists. They were on no quest to make a name – or a reputation - for themselves. These people had no program or agenda to save themselves, much less the world. They held to *no ideology*. They practiced *no talking points*. They did not even have any *political opinions*. They *knew no sermons, doctrines, creeds, or anthems*. They *claimed no special “anointing”*. These were simple folk – what the world considers *rabble*. They were people whose only hope was the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov. Amidst such a people the Holy One knew He could truly show Himself strong. In the midst of such a people the Holy One would not have to share His glory with anyone.

Why is that important? Why does the Holy One not want to share His Glory with powerful, charismatic men and ministries? Is the Holy One - Heaven forbid - *an egotist* who selfishly refuses to share the spotlight? Please understand this one truth if you understand nothing else from the Book of Exodus. Here it is: *The revelation of the glory of the Holy One is an absolutely critical part of His Plan for the redemption of mankind*.

The Revelation of the Glory of the Creator-King is a Critical Part of His Plan of Redemption

When the Holy One created man and breathed life into Him you see He programmed him to *respond to the Holy One's glory*. As a baby is programmed to respond to his mother's voice, breath sounds and heartbeat, even so mankind is programmed to respond to the revelation of the Holy One's glory. For mankind ultimate redemption is to be found only in a world where the knowledge of the

glory of the Holy One covers the earth like the waters cover the sea. That is the way the Holy One created and programmed mankind.

That is of course the basis of and reason for Moshe's plea to the Holy One *'Show me your Glory!'* Whether you know it or not or have ever articulated it or not, somewhere in your *neshama* Moshe's *'Show me your Glory'* plea is your most passionate plea as well. There are, however, factors in place on earth that tend to *cause interference with the nurturing of our souls by the glory of the Holy One.*

Much as a mother's voice, breath sounds, and heartbeat are not always audible to her baby similarly the Holy One's glory is not always clearly discernible by mankind. Competing voices such as the voice of the Serpent, of Nimrod-types, of Pharaohs, and of the political and spiritual *prima donnas* of the world like Bila'am *distract people's attention away from the Holy One's glory* to their own - or at the very least promise a competing glory to those who will listen to and follow them. By directing people's attention away from the Holy One's glory, especially when they do so subtly, in "His Name", such actors actually rob mankind of true redemption. All they can offer is a desert mirage – a sleight of hand. It's all *smoke and mirrors.* Aharon – and 3,000 men of the generation of the Exodus - learned that lesson very painfully in last week's parsha in connection with the golden calf incident.

Moshe will learn the same lesson in the Book of Numbers when he claims that it is he and Aharon instead of the Holy One who provides water from the desert's rock formations to quench the people's thirst. And alas the *prima donna's* of our generation – the spiritual "storm troopers" of all religions (including secular humanism), in our time – will hopefully soon learn this lesson as well.

Hence we have seen thus far in Exodus that the Holy One chooses a man or a woman or a generation who will not compete with Him regarding His glory. He always chooses those who know they in themselves have nothing eternal or meaningful to offer anyone, and who will not claim the credit - or demand compensation for themselves - when the Holy One works wonders and redeems men. He always chooses those who do not need or desire a *stage* - or a *spotlight* - or a *title* - or a "ministry" to make them feel important or fulfilled. He always chooses those who need HIM and HIM alone – those who do not clamor for "the anointing" but for the *Anoint-er.* He always chooses those who allow themselves to be overshadowed and overwhelmed by His Glory and fall down on their faces to worship Him. He always chooses those who like the *Serafim* who surround His Throne are satisfied to spend their lives basking in His glory, and when they speak,

merely cry out over and over again *Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Holy One, God Almighty! The whole earth is full of His glory! Selah!*

Now, equipped with at least some understanding of what the Holy One has been doing in the Book of Exodus and why He has been doing it let us turn our attention to what we will be studying this week. What comes next in the great Revelation adventure? What does it *mean*? And perhaps most important of all ... what is the *endgame*?

Lessons Concerning Galut . . .and Geulah

The book of Exodus opened with the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov in a state of *galut*² [in English, *exile*]. *Galut* is life lived in a *foreign land*, among *foreign people*, as a *foreigner*. When in *galut* a person lives *apart from his natural environment, in a foreign world* – among people who do not understand *his way of life*, do not understand or agree with *the basic approach to life by which he lives*, do not share *his values*, and neither accept *his spiritual identity* nor appreciate *his Divinely-ordained Mission on earth*.

Of course, *galut* is not the ultimate destiny of the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov. Hence the Book of Exodus introduced us to [1] a series of new, deeper Names for and revelatory descriptions of our Covenant Partner in Heaven [see Exodus 3:14-15, 6:2-3, and 34:5-7], and to [2] a very real, very human, yet Divinely inspired and empowered Kinsman-Redeemer who would act on the Holy One's behalf to bring us forth from *galut* at the appointed time [Exodus 2:1-10] Most of the world knows the prophetic Kinsman-Redeemer character by the name 'Moses'. His mother and the Creator, however, called him by the name *Moshe*.

The Book of Exodus has shown us how the Kinsman-Redeemer He has appointed for us operates in *two realms* – the realm of *bringing about redemption* and the realm of *shepherding the redeemed*. Everything the narrative of Torah shows *Moshe the Prophetic Kinsman-Redeemer* doing in these two realms establishes a pattern and precedent for the work of the *Messiah the Ultimate Kinsman-Redeemer* in those same realms.

The Holy One's Agent of Geulah

The first realm in which we saw Moshe the Kinsman-Redeemer operating in *Sefer Sh'mot* was as *the Holy One's agent of geulah*. *Geulah* is a Hebrew noun used in the terminology of covenant relationships. This noun is derived from the verb root

² *Galut* is a noun derived from the Hebrew root *galah, gimel, lamed, hey*, meaning 'to wander', or 'to be exiled'. The Talmud offers the following explanation for the phenomenon of *galut*: "The people of Israel were exiled amongst the nations only so that converts might be added to them." **Pesachim 87b.**

ga'al, which means to fulfill a covenant-based responsibility to intervene in a situation or dispute on an at-risk covenant partner's behalf. It thus means purposeful intervention by someone who has the power to do whatever the weaker covenant partner's situation calls for.

Geulah can, and often does, involve aspects of *redemption and deliverance* [as when a kinsman redeemer redeems his blood-kin from debt or slavery]. But ***geulah*** can also involve an element of *exacting vengeance* [as when a blood-relative avenges a wrong done to his kinsman]. Whatever character the *geulah* takes in a given situation, however, it always involves a strong covenant partner *acting on behalf of a weak covenant partner in whatever way is appropriate to the situation that the weaker partner finds himself*, in order to turn the weak person's difficult circumstances into good.

Do you have that Hebraic picture securely in your mind? Good. Now apply that *geulah* picture to the *galut* that was being experienced by the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov at the beginning of the book of Exodus. The Holy One, as covenant partner to the multitudes in *galut*, chose at a pre-determined time - specifically, at the *appointed time He had mentioned in His covenantal negotiations with Avraham*³ - to intervene on their behalf and end the *galut*. He chose, for this covenant act of intervention, a *human agent of geulah*. With regard to the *galut* in Egypt, *Moshe* was the chosen agent.

Moshe as Mediator and Announcer/Teacher of a Renewal of Covenant

The second realm in which we see Moshe operating in the Book of Exodus is as *the mediator* and *the announcer/teacher* of a *renewal of the covenant* relationship between the Holy One and the 'seed' of Avraham.

The Holy One made a covenant with Avraham and with his seed back in the book of Genesis. This covenant remains firm, in the eyes of the Holy One, forever. But covenants are multi-party arrangements. What remains firm with the Holy One, as 'party of the first part' under the covenant, does not necessarily or automatically remain firm with the human parties to the covenant. The Holy One is eternal and immortal – the human beings with whom He covenants, however, are mortal, and their lives on earth are temporal.

What happened when Avraham grew old? Someone from among his seed had to rise up and assume Avraham's covenant role in his stead. The person chosen from among the seed of Avraham was, of course, *Yitzchak* [Isaac]. The Holy One

³ See Genesis 15:12-16.

renewed with Yitzchak the same covenant He had made with Avraham. Yitzchak accepted the role of covenant partner of the Creator of the Universe, and walked in it.

What happened when Yitzchak grew old? Someone from his seed had to rise up and assume the covenant role once occupied by Avraham and Yitzchak. The person chosen this time was Ya'akov [Jacob]. The Holy One renewed with Ya'akov the same covenant He had made with Avraham and Yitzchak. Ya'akov accepted the role - and walked in it.

And so it went, through the generation of Yosef and Y'hudah, the generation of Efrayim and Menashe, and on and on, up to the 'appointed time' of the Holy One. Many generations later, the appointed time came just as the Holy One had promised Avraham it would. Now Avraham's seed was as the stars in the heavens and as the sand of the earth. Now in order for the covenant to move into its next and promised phase [like a time-release capsule], it was essential that a *collection of someones* from among the seed of Avraham be chosen by the Holy One as a successor to the covenant role of Avraham, and also step forward from among their brethren and accept/renew the Avrahamic side of the covenant relationship.

This time, the Holy One had decreed, the successor to the Avrahamic rights and responsibilities under the ancient covenant would not be any one individual, acting alone. This time, the covenant partner of the Creator of the Universe was to be a *k'hal* – a *called gathering* of the scattered seed of Avraham. And for the inauguration of this momentous 'second phase' of the covenant relationship, the Holy One determined in His wisdom – and in order to establish a pattern that would apply many generations later when the 'third phase' of the same covenant relationship would be inaugurated – that the phase change should be mediated, announced, and explained by a *specially chosen and empowered human agent*.

Moshe was the human agent the Holy One chose to inaugurate the second phase of the Avrahamic Covenant. Since the descendants of the Holy One were then living under oppression, in *galut*, Moshe's first 'job', as aforesaid, had to be to serve as their human *agent of geulah*⁴.

But Moshe's 'job' as an agent of intervention did not by any means stop with *geulah*. Indeed, the *geulah*-function was merely preparatory. The ultimate reason

⁴ *Geulah* is a noun derived from the Hebrew verb root *ga'al*, *gimel*, *alef*, *lamed*, Strong's Hebrew word #1350, pronounced *gaw-awl'*. The first usage of this verb family is in Genesis 48:6, where Ya'akov is blessing Efrayim and Menashe, and refers to the Holy One as the Angel who *redeemed* [Hebrew, *ga'al*] *him from all evil* [*i.e. who intervened on behalf of him in every bad circumstance in which he found himself and turned the bad circumstance to good*].

for which Moshe was called was not to redeem the descendants of Avraham from slavery in Egypt – but was to inaugurate the *second phase* of the Avrahamic covenant. As soon as the Egyptian army was buried in the depths of the Sea of Reeds, therefore, Moshe’s role quickly changed from that of *an agent of geulah* to that of *an agent of mediation, announcement, and instructor of covenant renewal*. It is in different facets of *that role* that we have seen Moshe acting since the miracle at the Sea of Reeds.

More Specifics on The ‘Two Comings’ Pattern

Please note that in each prophetic capacity in which he has served as the prototypical Kinsman-Redeemer Moshe’s ministry has manifested in two ‘comings’.

A. The Two Comings of Moshe - Phase I

In his first ‘coming’ in the *agent of geulah* capacity after stepping into his true identity as a Hebrew Moshe appeared to *fail miserably*. He saw a Hebrew being beaten by an Egyptian, allowed his emotions to run completely amuck, and rushed into the fray as a vigilante, beating the Egyptian to death with his bare hands. What happened as a result? First he wound up being *rejected by his countrymen*; then he was *banished from the country under a sentence of death*.

But then Moshe had a ‘second coming’ as an agent of *geulah*. After a personal experience of transformation at Horeb [the infamous ‘*burning bush*’ experience of Exodus 2 and 3], in the course of which he was mightily empowered by the Holy One, he was used by the Holy One to bring forth *yetziat Mitzrayim* [*i.e.* deliverance from Egypt].

B. The Two Comings of Moshe – Phase II

Once he returned to Egypt however we saw the ‘two coming’ theme repeated again. In Moshe’s first ‘coming’ in his new empowerment he again appeared to be a miserable failure. The first time he went to Pharaoh on behalf of the people Pharaoh just increased the people’s workload. Indeed, *the people perceived that what he had done actually made things worse and more burdensome for them instead of better*. As a result they rejected him a second time. When he tried to describe to the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov the type of renewed and expanded covenant the Holy One desired to cut with them⁵, Torah

⁵ Moshe repeated to the people, in Exodus 6:6-8, the following words from the Holy One: ***‘I am the Holy One. I will bring you forth from your forced labor in Egypt and I will free you from their slavery. I will liberate you with a demonstration of My power, and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to Myself as a nation, and I will be to you as a God. You will know that I am God your Lord, the One who is bringing you out from under the Egyptian subjugation. I will bring you to the land regarding which I raised My hand, [swearing] that I would give it to Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov. I will give it to you as an inheritance.’***

tells us ‘... *they did not sh’ma Moshe because of their bitter disappointment and the oppressiveness of their hard labor.* Exodus 6:9⁶.

But then Moshe had another second ‘coming’ experience like unto the first. The second time Moshe came in this capacity he came not with words only, but clothed in *an unmistakable mantle of power and authority* that everyone could see. This time, he had authority on earth to release a series of strategic supernatural strikes against the enemies of the Holy One’s people [then centered in Egypt]. At Moshe’s word we saw plagues strike crippling blows to every facet of Egypt’s economic, military, religious and political structure. We saw Pharaoh humbled repeatedly. And with this ‘coming’ our ancestors began to trust in his prophetic message, then followed him out of Egyptian bondage, and even walked dry shod through a sea.

C. The Two Comings of Moshe – Phase III

More recently we have seen the ‘two coming’ pattern repeat itself a third time at Mount Sinai. At the *first coming* of Moshe on this mountain [Exodus 19-20], our new creation souls were initially awakened by the blast of the Great *shofar* of Heaven, but we recoiled in fear – and refused to press into the destiny the Holy One had ordained for us [*i.e.* to walk in our collective destiny as a community of persons who stand together in the covenant position of Avraham].

Following Moshe’s directions we were Divinely enabled to hear with our own ears beautiful words of betrothal spoken over us by the Holy One in His own Voice. And yet, we drew back in fear from the Divine Bridegroom. His mission again appeared to fail. We cried out for *him to be our mediator*. And then, when he left the camp to do on our behalf just what we asked him to do, we *sinned with the golden calf*.

Then came Moshe’s third ‘second coming’. Even though we sinned grievously with the golden calf, through his mediation we have experienced forgiveness beyond our wildest dreams – and we are now ready to assume the role the Holy One has ordained for us. We are now ready both for the *renewal of the covenant* the Holy One made with our forefathers AND for the inauguration of that covenant’s prophetic ‘next phase’.

Do you see the establishment of the ‘two comings’ pattern? Now do you understand why Avraham had to appear in the land of promise twice – once in very abortive and unproductive fashion in Genesis 12, and then permanently and with great success beginning in Genesis 13? Can you now see the same pattern repeated with Yitzchak, with Ya’akov, and with Yosef? Can you now understand that the

pattern is well established in Torah, and therefore *should have been expected to repeat itself in relation to Messiah?*

Ah, but I am getting ahead of myself. We were speaking of Moshe, weren't we? And now that another critical aspect of Moshe's assigned work on earth is done it is time for him to make *an accounting*. Parsha *Pekudei* contains that accounting.

The Hebrew ‘Title’ of the Parsha – Pekudei

In the original Hebrew text the opening phrase of our *parsha ha-shavua* is: ***Eleh pekudei ha-mish'kan ...*** The sages chose the second word in this phrase - *Pekudei* – to be the name of the parsha. *Pekudei* is a construct noun⁷ derived from the Hebrew verb root *paqad*,⁸ In its *qal* form this verb generally means to *visit*; to *pay attention to*, or *closely observe*; to *muster*; or to cause to *pass in review*. As Gesenius' notes make clear, the type of interaction/visitation described by the verb root *paqad* is not violent in nature; it is more akin to *poking*, *probing*, or *palpating*. The first Biblical usage of this verb is found in Genesis 21. There we are told:

*the Holy One paqad [visited] Sarah as he had said,
and the Holy One did to Sarah as he had spoken.
Sarah conceived, and bore Avraham a son in his old age,
at the set time of which the Holy One had spoken to him.*

[Genesis 21:1-2]

The Hebraic word picture presented by the verb *paqad* is that of a *visitation* for a *specific investigative or phase-initiating purpose*. *Pekudei* is a visitation whereby someone, or something, is made to pass under the rod and is *closely inspected, evaluated and assessed as to potential, maturity, readiness, and functionality*. Consider the image of *a shepherd inspecting his sheep by having each one pass under his rod*⁹. As each animal in his charge passes through a gate or narrow opening the shepherd stops the animal with his rod making it hold still [more or less] while he *inspects it*. As each animal halts under his rod a shepherd does several things. First of all, the shepherd *takes special note of the animal's overall health*. Secondly, he *analyzes how much the animal has grown since last inspection*. Thirdly, *he pokes, probes and palpates the animal looking for any problems or blemishes* [or, in the case of a ewe with lamb, to determine the progress of the pregnancy]. And finally, before moving on to the next animal in line the shepherd then *does for or to the animal in question whatever he thinks appropriate for its continued development in light of whatever he has found during the inspection*. If the animal needs balm or salve or de-worming, he addresses the specific need. If the animal needs disinfecting or removal of parasites, he takes care of that. If the shepherd

⁷ In Hebrew when two or more nouns appear together in a phrase they are said to be in a “construct relation” to one another. The first noun [in this case, *pekudei*] is being spoken of in relationship to the second noun [in this instance, *ha-Mish'kan*]. Hence to translate such a Hebrew phrase into English the first word of the pair should be translated with “of” or ‘relative to’ following it.

⁸ This verb is formed with the Hebrew letters *peh*, *qof*, and *dalet*. Strong's Hebrew word #6485, it is pronounced *paw-kawd'*.

⁹ In modern agriculture, a working pen and a ‘squeeze chute’ apparatus is often used for this purpose. Animals are herded through a series of increasingly narrow chutes, called working pens, until they are single file. At the end of the chutes is a mechanical device large enough to hold one animal. As an animal enters it, the operator pulls a lever, causing doors at the front and back of the device to close, locking the animal in place.

thinks the animal needs its hooves trimmed he pulls out his flint knife and starts cutting. And so on and so forth *ad infinitum* as in the shepherd's judgment the best interest of the *individual animal* and *the flock as a whole* requires. All the while, of course, the shepherd is talking or singing to the animal, calming its fears, training it to know and trust his voice, and taking his relationship with the animal to a deeper level.

As you can see from this illustrative use of the word, *pekudei* involves much more than *accounting*. It is intimate *accountability*. It is a 'moment of truth'. It is a *vivid experience of the Holy One's most intimate gaze*. It is *evaluation for the purpose of promotion ... or correction*. We all desperately need this. Approach the Great Shepherd with awe and reverence, but do not fear His inspection or His touch. Embrace the accountability. Surrender in complete trust to the Divine Hand under which you are called to pass.

The Over-Riding Theme of Exodus' Concluding Parsha

The purpose of the narrative of this particular section of Torah is to describe for us the concluding days of the physical construction of the *mish'kan*. The narrative of the 23rd parsha - Pekudei - chronicles the high point thus far of our fledgling nation's existence. Why is the season of the construction of the *Mishkan* considered the high point of the nation's existence? Because it is the only time recorded in Torah when all Israel wholeheartedly *sh'ma*-ed, *sh'mar*-ed, and *asah*-ed the instructions of the Holy One without distraction, without diversion, and without dissension.

Having finally received, processed, and appropriated the wonder of our Divine Bridegroom's mercy after the golden calf incident we actually spent 4 1/2 months loving him the way He deserves to be loved. We *sh'ma*-ed His instructions. We came in the volume of the Book, to do His Will. We threw ourselves enthusiastically into the joyous task of preparing a dwelling place in our midst for Him Whom our Soul Loves. With a lot of help from His Empowering Breath, we prepared that dwelling place exactly as He instructed us to - exactly as He instructed. Selah! Twenty-two glorious times in the concluding chapters of Exodus the narrative will repeat the following words, which constitute the over-riding theme of parsha *Pekudei*:

... ka'asher tzivah Adonai et-Moshe
... exactly as the Holy One instructed¹⁰ Moshe

¹⁰ The traditional translation of *tzivah* is 'commanded'. Because the connotation of that English word commanded carries baggage that tends to confuse the modern reader, I have replaced it with the word 'instructed', although that is not a satisfactory translation either. The essence of the word *tzivah*, from the Hebrew verb root *tzavah*, is the establishment of a blueprint to follow or a target to aim for. The Holy One showed Moshe a blueprint, a pattern, to follow – both in regard to the *mish'kan* and in regard to life in

How is this possible, you ask? How could we – or for that matter ANY human beings after the Serpent in the Garden debacle - ever do anything *exactly* as the Holy One instructed? After all, in connection with the golden calf episode did not the Redeemed Community - all the way up to its ‘high priest’, Aharon - prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that, in its own strength, it is incapable of *sh’ma*-ing even the most basic instructions of the Holy One – even basic instructions such as ***make for yourselves no graven image***. Indeed, if someone made a movie of the Redeemed Community’s activities during the period between the Divine Betrothal ceremony of Exodus 19-20 and Moshe’s second 40-day trip up the mountain the movie would probably be entitled ‘*The Three Million Stooges*’.

Yet here we are, just a few months later, basking in the delicious realm of ‘*exactly as the Holy One instructed!*’ We have built the Heavenly structure I like to call the *Divine Tentmaker’s Dream* exactly according to specifications. We have built it under budget, on time, and without ‘falling out along the way.’ Over a period of 4 1/2 wonderful months of *bayit shalom* we have recreated on earth, with physical materials, a perfect scale model of the Throne Room of Heaven. With Divine empowerment, they made every single aspect of the *mish’kan* – down to the last detail - ***ka’asher tzivah Adonai et-Moshe*** – *exactly as the Holy One instructed Moshe*

What has made the difference? It is not our resolve. It is not our merit. It is not the strength of our will or the excellence of our mind. It certainly is not the quality of our love. One thing, and one thing alone, has made the difference. It is the Empowerment of His Own Breath – as directly stated in Exodus 36:1-3 – that has enabled our humble group of what the world and its principalities, powers, theologians and scholars rightly judged to be hopeless failures and stiff-necked rebels to *do the humanly impossible*. This is the mystery of Divine Empowerment – and the joy of Co-laboring with the Holy One as a partner in Covenant instead of attempting to do great exploits to impress Him as a slave might do for a taskmaster. In a mere 4 1/2 months – in the middle of a desert - ordinary men and women working with a mixture of Bridal Passion and Divine Empowerment have actually recreated a perfect scale model of the Throne Room of Heaven – and they have done it in the ethereal realm of ‘*exactly as the Holy One instructed*’.

Can you believe it? We have made every single aspect of the *mish’kan* – down to

general. That blueprint, or pattern, is like a target at which we are to aim our lives. The beauty of the Hebrew word *tzivah* is that it pictures the imputation of righteousness to the one who aims at the target. The emphasis is not on the efforts of the one aiming, but on the Holy One alone. Doing what Torah says does not make one righteous; submitting to the essence of Torah – *sh’ma*-ing the Holy One and forsaking all other voices - allows Messiah’s righteousness to be imparted.

the last detail - *ka'asher tzivah Adonai* – exactly as the Holy One instructed.

This 4 ½ months was a watershed season for us – a period of prophetic importance. It foreshadows another ‘bookend’ season in time, at the end of days, when *B'nei Yisrael* as a nation will once again be overcome with passion for the Bridegroom-King, and as a result will once again perfectly *sh'ma, sh'mar, and asah* the instructions of Torah. See **Deuteronomy 30:1-6; Isaiah 59:20-21; and Zechariah 13:1-2**

I Wonder, Could It Be

Could it be that there is an appointed time in the redemptive plan of the Holy One for a generation to approach the whole of Torah in the same way, and with the same Empowering Spirit, as our ancestors approached the building of the *mish'kan* in the time of *Pekudei*. Is it possibly *our generation* who will approach Torah as a supernatural Covenant lifestyle of love and wisdom embraced not for hope of reward or for fear of retribution, and not in our own strength but in humble cooperation with the Empowering Breath of a glorious Bridegroom-King Who is worthy of nothing less? Is it time for a generation to arise that will acknowledge that no one can claim one ounce of credit or glory for doing even a single *mitzvah* of Torah, because in our fallen state, without Divine Empowerment, we simply *cannot do it - and were never expected to be able to do it?* Is it possible that a people descended from Avraham, from Yitzchak and Ya'akov, and/or grafted into that root, which will awaken to the reality that what we are called to by the Holy One is a *joyful, long-term Betrothal Covenant Relationship*, not a lifetime of bondage to a sadistic, self-centered tyrant's edicts¹¹. Is it not time, in the redemptive calendar of the Kingdom, that we who have been redeemed from bondage began to look at Torah not as just a new, slightly improved set of tasks to master, but as a choreographed journey which a Wise, Loving Bridegroom King has designed to build *relationship with us, and mature love in us*, slowly, gradually, and gracefully.

I believe it is time for these things. All it would take would be for us to lay down our self-righteous attitudes and humbly acknowledge that the '*Ruach Adonai*' – *i.e.* the amazing, all-Wise, all-Compassionate Empowering Breath which reproduces on earth, in ordinary men, His Character, His Wisdom, His Understanding, His Counsel, His Might, His Knowledge, and the Reverential Fear of the Holy One – is what we - as well as all other men on this journey - desperately need. Our Covenant Partner in Heaven has given us His Empowering Breath for this journey. And He will, if we will but *listen to Him*, embrace His teaching, surrender to His

¹¹ The latter was what we knew in Egypt – and was precisely that from which our Bridegroom-King stepped out of eternity into time to set us free.

leadership¹², and accept His assistance, accomplish and give meaning to everything that we in our own strength are powerless to effectuate.

I believe as well that it is time for each one of us to consciously begin to *look for and connect with the personality and the personhood of Messiah in each of the instructions of Torah*. You see, Beloved, it is time we quit thinking of Torah-observance as a means of chalking up brownie points with God, or as a way to establish comparative righteousness vis-à-vis other men, and instead began to see our cooperation with the instructions of Torah and the Empowering Breath of its Divine Author as *the only effectual way our heart and home can become a dwelling place for Messiah*. If Messiah is to *abide/dwell* [i.e. make *mish'kan*] in the likes of me and you, His Spirit simply must be given free reign to convict, chasten, correct, restore, inspire, and empower us at every stage of our journey. And then, when the times of *pekudei* come, according to the prophetic calendar of the Holy One, and He calls each of us to pass under His Shepherd's rod, He will declare over us: *ka'asher tzivah Adonai et-Moshe* - *exactly as the Holy One instructed Moshe*.

A Parsha Pekudei Travelogue

Pekudei begins with the record made by Itamar, Aharon's youngest son, of the quantities the gold, silver, and brass that the Redeemed Community brought in for the Tabernacle's use. Also recorded for posterity was Itamar's description of how those precious materials, along with the other materials the Redeemed Community supplied in anticipation of the project, were employed by those who did the actual building work.

The Making of the Precious Garments of Beauty and Honor

We then read about the making of the garments to be worn in the *Mish'kan* by Aharon and his sons. The priestly garments will be crafted meticulously, one by one, from fine linen, exotic dyes, finely hammered gold and precious stones.

The Inspection and Approval of the Essential Furnishings and Their Implements

We are then taught the sequence and manner in which the individual components and furnishings of the *Mish'kan* were brought to, inspected by, and approved by Moshe.

The Events of the Day of Consecration

Next the Author of Torah will narrate how on the *appointed day* of the first day of first month of the year – almost a year after the Exodus - Moshe assembled all the

¹² See John 16:13 – 14 “... *when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.*”

component parts of the Mish'kan according to the pattern he saw on the mountain. We will then read about the manner in which Moshe brought Aharon and his sons forth, washed and anointed them, and dressed them in the priestly garments for the first time.

The focus of the narrative will then shift to Moshe's placement of the stone tablets received from the Holy One into the ark for the first time. We will then be told how he covered the tablets and the ark with the prophetically designed and intricately crafted 'mercy seat'.

We will then see Moshe place the bread of the presence on the *shulchan* [table] in the holy place, prepare the menorah for lighting, and burn incense for the first time on the golden altar of incense.

Next, it will be time for Moshe to go to the brazen altar in the outer court and lay thereupon the flesh and the grain of the 'offerings' the Holy One told him to make.

Then we will see Moshe fill the bronze laver with water for his brother Aharon and his nephews, Nadav, Avihu, Elazar and Itamar to use to wash their hands and feet before and after performing each element of *avodah*.

We will then see Moshe set up and seal off the courtyard of the *Mish'kan*. From this point forward none will see what is going on inside the *Mish'kan* except they go through the curtain of entrance called 'the Way'.

The Glorious Infilling

After Moshe completes his assembly of the *Mish'kan* we will marvel as Torah describes to our incredulous minds two strange and wonderful events which will make us want to laugh and weep, dance and fall on our faces, all at the same time.

First, the *Radiant Cloud of the Bridegroom-King's Presence* will totally engulf the structure we have just built. We could not go to be with the Holy One at the top of the Mountain – so He comes down the mountain to be with us!

Then, the Glory of the Holy One fills the structure to the extent that no one - not even Moshe - can enter it.

Epilogue

Sefer Sh'mot - the book of Exodus – will then conclude with a short *segue* passage designed by the Writer of Torah to set the stage for both the book of Leviticus and the book of Numbers. The final verse will tell us that from the date of the *Mish'kan's* dedication forward all travels of B'nei Yisrael were to be inaugurated

by the lifting of the *Radiant Cloud of the Presence* from the *Mish'kan* and concluded by the resettling of the Cloud thereupon.

The last words of the *sefer* will advise us that each night throughout all the wanderings that we will read about in the remainder of Torah:

... the Cloud of the Holy One was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

[Exodus 40:38]

A Brief Look At Haftarah Pekudei

I Kings 7:51-8:21: *The Holy One's Glory Filled His House*

This week's haftarah reading continues to describe the building, dedication and inauguration of the Temple *Sh'lomo* [Solomon] built on the site of the threshing floor which David had purchased from Ornan the Yevusi.

As discussed in the introductory shiur for parsha Vayakhel, according to the Maimonides [i.e. the Talmudic sage known as *the Rambam*] the Hebrew people in every generation are subject to a perpetual Divine command to construct on earth a House for the Holy One to dwell in¹³. According to the *Rambam* this is obligatory on Hebrew people in any generation in which the Temple is not standing. And yet even the *Rambam* acknowledges that only the Messiah – at a time when he is serving as an earthly king - can build the ultimate Temple described by the prophet *Yechezkiel* [Ezekiel]

It has been *Divinely programmed into the Hebraic heart* to desire the ultimate Temple – the time, place, and experience of fully dwelling in the Holy Court's of the Bridegroom of Heaven. And therein is the great paradox – we know our hearts and souls will never be satisfied and fulfilled until *the Holy One's ultimate dwelling in our midst is a reality*; and yet we know at the same time that *there is absolutely nothing we can do to cause it to happen*.

Temple Experiment #1: The Construction of Sh'lomo's Temple

Sh'lomo's construction of the first Temple began in the second month of the fourth year of his reign - approximately 970 BCE. This was the 480th year after the Exodus. **I Kings 6:1**. According to Hebrew legend his also just happened to coincide with the 40th year after the ark was captured by the Philistines¹⁴ and the *Mish'kan* ceased its operation.

Even with the employment of over 180,000 men of Israel in the enterprise¹⁵, the

¹³ Maimonides, '*Laws of the Chosen House*', chapter 1, law number 1.

¹⁴ This catastrophic event in the history of the Covenant nation is chronicled in I Samuel chapter 4.

¹⁵ This is chronicled in I Kings 5:13-18.

construction of this magnificent edifice still took seven years to complete. The structure was completed and placed into use in approximately 964 BCE.

For 378 years after its completion the Temple stood as a marvel of architecture, its brilliant gold and bronze highlights glistening in the sun atop Mount Moriyah until the Babylonian army under King Nebuchadnezzar sacked and burned it to the ground in 586 BCE.

The Dedication of Sh'lomo's Temple

As we learn in our Torah readings for the week, pursuant to specific Divine instruction the dedication of the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle] occurred in the first month of the Biblical year, in *Nisan*, the month of the Passover. Sh'lomo, in contrast, chose to dedicate the Temple he had built in the *Fall* of the year, in the seventh month of the Biblical calendar, at the time of *Chag Ha-Sukkot* [i.e. the *Feast of Tabernacles*].

The dedication ceremony Sh'lomo arranged for his Temple was as you might expect *quite a show*. It began with an eye-catching – though very bloody -- procession. In front of all the elders and people gathered at Y'rushalayim for the Festival of *Sukkot* Sh'lomo had the *aron* [ark] transferred from the 'Tabernacle of David' on nearby Mount *Tziyon* into the new Temple. Quite without any Biblical mandate, Sh'lomo provided for slaughter-sacrifices to be made at virtually every step of the march. For we are told:

*And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel,
who had assembled before him, were with him in front of the ark,
sacrificing so many sheep and oxen they could not be counted or numbered.*

[I Kings 8:5]

After the ark was deposited by the priests in the inner chamber of supreme holiness, something akin to what happened in parsha *Pekudei*, with the descent of the Radiant Cloud on the *Mish'kan* in the days of Moshe occurred. The writer of I Kings describes this event as follows:

Vayehi b'tzet ha-kohanim min-ha-kodesh
And when the priests came out of the holy place,

V'he-anan malei et-beit Adonai
the Cloud filled the house of the Holy One

V'lo-yachlu ha-kohanim l'amod l'sharet mipenei he-anan
The priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud;

ki-male ch'vod-Adonai et-beit Adonai
for the Holy One's glory filled His house.

The haftarah will conclude with the dedicatory remarks made by Sh'lomo.

A B'rit Chadasha Reading to Correspond to Parsha Pekudei

II Corinthians 2:14 – 3:18

The B'rit Chadasha readings selected to correspond with *Pekudei* are found in the second and third chapters of the second letter sent by Shaul of Tarsus to the troublesome talmidim of the Greek city of Corinth. Shaul was a man who understood both the *touch of the Shepherd's rod* and the *intimate gaze of the Shepherd's eye*. He understood that *he was nothing*, and that *the Holy One was everything*. He focused on this theme in II Corinthians 3:5, saying:

*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves,
but our sufficiency is from the Holy One*

[II Corinthians 3:8]

Shaul understood that just as the *Mish'kan* of Moshe's day was not built by the independent actions or expertise of master craftsmen, but by ordinary men humbly consenting to co-labor with the Master Craftsman Himself, so in our day the revelation of the glory of the Holy One comes only through the *working of wonders by the Holy One in the lives of very ordinary people* who will bend their knee under His Shepherd's rod and surrender every aspect of their lives to His intimate gaze.

*May we all come to know and trust the rod of the Master Shepherd,
yield to his tender hand and intimate gaze and experience His shalom.*

The Rabbi's son

Amidah Prayer Focus for the Week of Parsha Pekudei

The Gevurot, Part II

Rav l'hoshea

[You are the] Captain of our Salvation

m'chalkel chayim b'chesed

You sustain the living with covenant love

m'chai'ai maysim b'rachamim rabim

and You resurrect the dead with overflowing compassion