

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 23

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PEKUDEI

2nd Adar Sheni 5776

Kohen - First Aliya:

Page 591, Chapter 38, verse 21 – Chapter 39, verse 1

- ✚ Before work began on the construction of the Mishkan (tabernacle), an Audit of all the donations given by B'nai Yisrael took place and was accounted for.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Page 593, Chapter 39, verses 2 - 21

- ✚ The Ephod (Apron) worn by Aaron, the Kohen Gadol, incorporating with the Shoham (Onyx) stone, studded shoulder straps were made and sewn together.
- ✚ The Hoshen Mishpat (The Breastplate of Judgment) was assembled. This consisted of twelve precious stones placed in a four by three row formation.
- ✚ Skilled handicrafts workers engraved the names of the Twelve Tribes of Israel upon these twelve stones. It was then secured by straps, connecting it to the Ephod.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Page 594, Chapter 39, verses 22 - 32

- ✚ The rest of the priestly garments were completed
- ✚ The M'eal (robe) was adorned with alternating golden bells and pomegranates around the hem of the garment.
- ✚ The Tzitz (a golden Headband which was engraved with the words "Holy to Hashem"); and the four garments worn by both Aaron and the other Kohanim: (The tunics, turbans, sashes and trousers) were also completed.
- ✚ The construction of the Mishkan along with all of its vessels and accoutrement were finished too.

R'VI'I - Fourth Aliya:

Page 596, Chapter 39, verse 33 - 43

- ✚ The craftsmen brought their finished products to Moshe for inspection.
- ✚ Moshe saw that all the work had been done exactly to Hashem's specifications, and he blessed them for all for their great work.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Page 597, Chapter 40, verses 1 - 16

- ✚ Hashem instructed Moshe to erect the Mishkan on the first day of Nissan.
- ✚ Hashem also instructs Moshe to place all the vessels in their proper places, and to anoint all of the items with the anointing oil, thus sanctifying them. Moshe is also directed to dress Aaron and his sons in their prescribed priestly garments, and to anoint them, too.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Page 598, Chapter 40, verses 17 -27

- ✚ Moshe fulfils all of Hashem's directives as mentioned above.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Page 599, Chapter 40, verses 28 - 38

- ✚ As soon as Moshe completes the task of properly positioning all of the Mishkan's vessels in it's appropriate place. The Cloud of Glory and Hashem's Divine Presence fills the Mishkan.
- ✚ This cloud also served as Bnai Yisrael's guide throughout their whole time in the Midbar (desert). When the cloud lifted, the people would travel, following the cloud until it rested, where they would set up camp until the cloud would lift again

Haftorah – 1st BOOK OF KINGS Chapter 7 verse 51 to Chapter 8 verse 21

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ The construction of the first Beis Hamikdosh, under Kings Solomon's rule is complete and the elders of Israel are invited to witness the installation of the holy Aron (Ark) containing the two stone tablets Hashem had presented to Moshe on Mount Sinai and the overwhelming presence of the shekinah (Hashem's spirit) in the form of a cloud filling the temple.
- ✚ Solomon delivers a speech to the nation and recounts the history that led up to the Beis Hamikdosh's construction.
- ✚ Although his father King David was denied by Hashem the right to build the temple. His son, Solomon can now declare that Hashem's promise has been fulfilled: "I have succeeded my father David and have ascended the throne of Israel. I have built the House for the Lord and I have set a place there for the Ark, containing the covenant which the Lord made with our fathers when He brought them out from the land of Egypt" (8:20-21).

GEMATRIA RELATING TO THE SEDRA:

- ✚ The Numerical value of the Mishkan מִשְׁכָּן is 410.
- ✚ This correlates to the number of years the first Beis Hamikdosh stood in Jerusalem before it was destroyed.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

Traditionally, as we end a book of Torah, we both congratulate ourselves and resolve to study even more diligently in the future. We say Chazak, Chazak, v'nitchazek: be strong, be strong, and strengthen one another.

This seems like a particularly fitting ending to the book of Shemot in which we the Jewish people began from being homeless slaves to witnessing all the miracles at Mount Sinai and finishing off with the formal dedication of the Mishkan and the installation of Aaron and his sons as Kohanim. Even though they had yet to reach their promised land, they now had a spiritual home that will accompany them throughout their journeys.

Though often overlooked, a key figure in this transformation from slave people to Hashem's guided Nation was Bezalel. As his name ("in God's shadow") implies, Bezalel was divinely inspired in his work as the chief architect of the holy sanctuary. Numerous times the Torah tells us that Bezalel possesses a lev chochma (A Wise Heart) but what exactly was this gift and how did it help Bezalel with his divine task?

While researching this question, the first fact that most of the commentator's stressed upon the most was that even before this gift was bestowed on Bezalel. He had already proved his worth of not only being a skilled craftsman but was a man who possessed an impeccable moral character and was therefore perfect to undertake the lead role in the construction of the Mishkan and all of its holy vessels. Therefore, the commentators infer from this that by being blessed with an additional lev chochma, just enhanced Bezalel talents even further from not only fashioning great art but having the divine inspiration and insight of what Hashem perceived the Mishkan would look like as though Bezalel had designed it himself.

Bezalel demonstrates his wise heart in two different ways in this Torah portion. First, he has a deep appreciation of human nature. The Torah tells us that Bezalel wanted to participate in the making of Aaron's ephod (breast plate). His reasoning to Moshe was: "If I only create the holy furnishings and vessels that will go into the holy of holies, then my fellow craftsmen will think that I must be and feel superior to them. Such an attitude would undermine the teamwork among the artisans necessary to construct the sanctuary and would undermine what the true function of the Mishkan is and what it represents.

Secondly, living 'b'zal el' (in the shadow of God), Bezalel possessed a deep wisdom about the importance of vision to guide our work. When Moshe instructs Bezalel to begin building the articles to be placed in the sanctuary; Bezalel replies, "My Lord Moshe, normally a person builds a house first before embarking on making the furnishings. According to your words; if I am to make the furnishings first, where will I place the furnishings while the tabernacle is being constructed?"

The lesson I derive from this episode that although we are challenged to strengthen and increase our Jewish education and understanding constantly; we have to make sure we put what was learned into practise, otherwise we would have studied in vain.

Like Bezalel, we are being tested to see whether we have grown so busy creating the 'furnishings' of Jewish education that we have lost sight of the 'house' that contained them. Bezalel passed this test with flying colours. With Hashem's help and guidance, so should we.

