

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 22

5th March 2016

VAYAKHEL

25th Adar 5776

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 35, verses 1 - 20

- Moshe assembles B'nai Yisrael together to warn them that they must not work on the Shabbat.
- He explains to them that lighting fires on Shabbat is also forbidden.
- Moshe then reiterates the purpose of the Mishkan, and the donated materials required to build it.
- Moshe also emphasised that he would like skilled workers to come forward and volunteer their services to either assist with the Mishkan's construction or help sew and weave all the garments required, to be worn by Aaron and his sons whilst they are performing their duties.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 35, verses 21 - 29

- Inspired by Moshe's motivating speech, the men and women came to him willingly, handing over their gold and silver jewellery in abundance, along with all the other necessary materials needed for the construction.
- The leaders of the tribes provided the precious stones required to be set into the Ephod (apron) and the Hoshen (Breast Plate)

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 35, verse 30- Chapter 31, verse 7

- Moshe informs B'nai Yisrael that Hashem has chosen Betzalel as the chief architect, and that Oholiav will be his assistant.
- B'nai Yisrael had donated so much gold, silver, copper and other materials that Moshe has to step in, to politely ask them to stop giving.

R'VI' - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 31, verses 8 - 20

- The construction of the Mishkan began with the curtains. These were made from linen, entwined with turquoise, purple and scarlet wool.
- Each curtain was twenty eight cubits long and four cubits in width.
- Eleven extra curtains made from goats hair, measuring thirty cubits in length and 4 cubits wide, to form a tent which will surround the Mishkan.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 31, verse 21 - Chapter 32, verse 16

- The K'rashim (Planks of wood with Tenon's covered in gold, with silver sockets attached), along with the Parochet (woven partition walls) and the screen covering the entrance were made next.
- Betzalel commenced work, constructing the Aron (Ark), the Aron's lid with the two carved K'ruvim and the Shulhan (Table).

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 32, verses 17 - 29

- Betzalel then hammered out the seven branched menorah from one block of pure solid gold; Followed by the wooden altar covered in gold for which the incense will be burned upon.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 33, verses 1 - 20

- Finally the Mizbayah (altar), all the copper vessels, the laced hangings attached to wooden poles making up the courtyard and the embroidered screen covering the entrance gate were completed.

Maftir – PARSHAS SHEKALIM, Shemot Chapter 30 Verses 11 - 16

The Maftir of "Shekalim" describes the half-*shekel* coin that every Jewish Male, over the age of twenty was required to contribute on a yearly basis in order to purchase all the communal korbanos (sacrifices) which were offered up on a daily basis in the Mishkan.

Haftorah – PARSHAS SHEKALIM, 2nd BOOK OF KINGS Chapter 11 verse 17 to Chapter 12 verse 17

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ Aged 7, Yeho'ash, the sole survivor from the House of Dovid Hamelech following their massacre by the hands of Queen Athalya, was crowned King.
- ✚ Upon seeing that the 155-year-old Bais Hamikdash was in need of strengthening and redecorating, Yeho'ash knew that funds were needed to be raised in order to carry out the necessary maintenance. He placed a designated collection box by the side of the Mizbayah for the people to come and place their contributions. The Money was quickly obtained and the repairs were duly carried out.

GEMATRIA LINKED TO SEDRA:

- ✚ From reading this week's sedra, our sages extrapolated that there are 39 different melacha's (labours) that are prohibited on Shabbat. How did they come to this conclusion?
- ✚ If you count up the number of vessels that are made for the purpose of the Tabernacle, you will find 39 vessels listed. As the work forbidden to perform on Shabbos are mentioned before the building of the Mishkan itself, this infers that the total number of different forms of work prohibited on Shabbat is also 39.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

One of the more fascinating and perplexing ornaments discussed in this week's sedra is the K'ruvim (the winged angelic figures made of gold) that stood on top of the Aron in the Kodosh Hakodashim (Holy of Holies). The reason why I find it a mystery is that the Torah strenuously points out in a number of places, (especially after the story relating to the 'Heter Eigel') that the creation of any carved figures or idols are totally forbidden and yet here Hashem gave a direct command to fashion the K'ruvim. In a shape of two recognisable images. Isn't this a contradiction?

The most recognised answer is that these K'ruvim were not intended to serve as an intermediary which was the purpose of the Eigel but rather to inspire a stronger connection and closeness towards Hashem. To understand this notion better Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch goes back to the book of Beraishis where K'ruvim were first mentioned and utilised. Adam and Eve had just been banished from Gan Eden (the garden of Eden) and at that point Hashem erects a K'ruvim that is holding a revolving flaming sword in his hand in order to guard the tree of life.

Rabbi Hirsch subtly points out that the K'ruvim was not protecting the tree but rather preserving it. The path towards the tree embodies 'Truth', i.e. recognising Hashem's presence in all aspects of life. Whereas the revolving sword represents the recurring trouble, pain and suffering in which Mankind have endured throughout History ever since. This manifestation of the "revolving sword" is seen shortly after Adam's expulsion when we read about the fratricide of Kayin murdering his brother Hevel because of jealousy. Kayin's terrible sin was at the same time both a personal tragedy (brother killing brother), but also a tragedy for mankind.

In Pirkei Avos (Ethics of the fathers) Rabbi Elazar Ha-Kappar states, "Jealousy, lust, and ambition remove man from the world." For those who believe in Hashem, jealousy is illogical and unfounded since it is ultimately Hashem who decides what each person is entitled to, and if someone has something you don't, then it simply wasn't meant to belong to you in the first place. However; our "yetzer hora's" (evil inclinations) are always present; generating these negative feelings, such as jealousy which makes a person impulsively do irrational things which they will later regret and be punished for.

In Summary the 'revolving sword epitomises the impulsive and negative reactions to insecurity, pain and disappointments; that in the worst case scenario like the torah says could even lead to murder. The "K'ruvim," on the other hand, denotes the recognition of Hashem's providence in the world, and the futility of the emotion, jealousy, and coveting of material goods belonging to others. We as individuals have the power to master and regulate our yetzer hora's, turning and even channel the negative impulses towards a positive purpose instead.

This is the message that emerges from the K'ruvim mentioned in Berashis, and then again in today's Parsha. They are teaching us how not to succumb to our natural inclination to lash out in anger at times of disappointment or pain, but instead to trust complicity in Hashem's kindness even when we don't immediately perceive that goodness in our most difficult moments.

