

Parshas Vayakhel and Pekudei and Hachodesh

This week we read three “Parshas”: the two full Parsheos of Vayakhel and Pekudei, and the added reading of Hachodesh, which was also read a few weeks back in Parshas Bo. The first two Parsheos mark the completion of the book of Shemos. Earlier this week, my wife’s great uncle, R’ Mendel New in Australia, passed away, and one of the eulogies was his son, Rabbi New from Atlanta, who commented on the difference between this week’s parsha and the previous weeks, in terms of the mentioning of all the items built in the Mishkan. In earlier Parshas, the commandments were to build; they were instructions, whereas in this week’s Parsha, the Jews gathered to complete the building once they had put the items in place. This got me thinking that there are two steps to completing a task: the first is the instructions, and the second is the basking in the completion of the task. Ideally, both parts receive equal merit, as the Torah points out regarding the Jews and their task of building the Mishkan. The virtue here was that not only did they listen, but they also did so as required, which is what can be said of every Mitzvah. There is the way we are commanded to do it, and we, at the very least, must complete that. And on a broader global level, if all our Mitzvas are part of building the third Beis Hamikdash and bringing in Moshiach (the outcome),

then we must do everything in our power to follow the ‘instructions’, i.e. learn Torah and perform Mitzvas for the outcome of the final product, the ushering of Mashiach. How then does this connect to the Parsha? Vayakhel (gathering) is the collective, whereas Pekudei (allotments) are individual donations. The two parts are the way the Jews exist, both valuable on an individual and collective basis. This theme ties in with the Parsha Hachodesh, which is the first Mitzvah the Jews were commanded as a nation, and it empowers Jews to work within Halacha to serve Hashem. We are empowered in the physical realm to take control and take stock of this world in order to turn it toward Hashem. With the gathering of the Jews for that Mitzvah, Hashem directed us that ultimately our existence in the physical realm is the purpose and way in which we can make the realm an abode for Hashem, which is how we will bring Mashiach. Interestingly, the time of this Parsha coincides with when Moshe came down from Har Sinai the second time, i.e., on Yom Kippur, but Hashem waited until 1 Nisan, a few months later, to dedicate the Mishkan into service. This also connects to the timing of when the Jews were let out of Egypt. By going to Egypt, the Jews became the nation they needed to be, then they were able to receive the Torah, which is the way Hashem guides us through this physical existence to bring out the final purpose, to make a dwelling place for Hashem in this abode.

Good Shabbos