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## **Parshiyot Va Yakhel-Pekudei Shabbat HaChodesh 25 Adar 5783 - March 18, 2023**

We now come to the end of the Book of Shemot (Exodus). It is the book with one of the most dramatic stories ever told. The title, Exodus, alone tells us of the story that in essence “creates” a people. We are closing the book with the double portion that concerns themselves with the Mishkan (Tabernacle). How to build it, furnish it, and the responsibility of the people to get it done.

What makes this ending special? There are three distinct themes in Shemot. We first read of the oppression of our people and our “Exodus” from Egypt. Second, we read and learn about the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. The third theme is all about the Mishkan, the Tabernacle, that would travel as the Sanctuary in the wilderness of Sinai.

What are the reasons for these three themes? As a people, we are granted freedom, by “HaShem’s Hand”, in order to live lives of responsibility. With freedom in hand, there is now a reason for HaShem to give us the Torah. The third important stage is to build the Mishkan, a “Home for HaShem” within the people. HaShem created the world for humanity, now it was our turn to do the same. However, the Mishkan would not limit HaShem. HaShem commands us to, “Make for Me a Mikdash (Sanctuary) so that I shall dwell in ‘them’”. Who is “them”? “Them” is the purpose of the Mishkan, so that HaShem’s presence could be within us. “Them is us”, in that time and today in our time.

In Psalm 23: King David closed the Psalm, “may I dwell in the house of HaShem for all time.” What he is saying is that every house King David would enter would be a House of HaShem because he would bring HaShem’s presence with him wherever he went.

Each and every one of us has an obligation to use our most valuable freedom with responsibility and to carry the light of HaShem’s presence with us. We are tasked with reflecting this light with beauty wherever we are to be found. Just as our ancestors built a Mishkan, through HaShem’s directions, so too must we build a Mishkan in our hearts.

Good Shabbos!

Shabbat Shalom!

Rabbi Nathan W. Langer

