

Pekudei **Accountings of**
Torah: Exodus 38:21-40:38
Haftarah: I Kings 7:51-8:21
Brit Chadashah: Hebrews 8:1-12

The people have now been camping around the mountain for a year, give or take and their Egyptian slavery was becoming a distant memory. After the tragedy of the golden calf, and when they had again become a covenant people, they began the awesome task of building the ark, the tabernacle and the courtyard. They knew that they were only camping around the mountain until all the ritual materials were assembled and G-d's law was central in their lives.

The portion opens by mentioning that the accounting or tally of all the construction materials was undertaken under the supervision of Ithamar, the fourth son of Aaron. The actual work of crafting what was needed was undertaken under the supervision of Betsaleel and Oholiab. They had to figure out some things that they had never done before, and had to make sure everything was done according to what YHVH had ordained through Moses.

The Tabernacle and all the furniture, was a symbolic link between YHVH and His people. The colours blue, purple and crimson were colours of the sky and reminded people what kind of G-d they served. The Bible does not people the heavens with a host of incredible spiritual beings and does not teach that the earth and the sea are full of god or demigods. There are demons dwelling on earth and sometimes they have wrongly convinced people that they are gods. The Bible does teach that no other gods exist.

Also the people understood that YHVH dwelt above the heavens and His messengers passed through the Heavens to Earth and back again. The Bible portrays the heavens as uninhabited, even though they are physically endless. Life exists on earth and on earth alone. Life on other planets is a modern form of idolatry where the supposed beings will eventually communicate with us and tell us how the universe came into being. All that we need to know about the origin of the universe is found in the book of Genesis.

A list is given of how much gold, silver and bronze went into fashioning the sacred objects and it was a considerable amount. Again, most of the gold would have come from what the Egyptians gave them. We are not told where the bronze came from, but most of it was used to make both the big altar and in the pegs to hold together each panel of the court yard. Each adult male contributed 1/2 a shekel of silver and around 49,000 kilos was used in the tabernacle and the courtyard.

Aaron's robes were sown according to the specifications outlined by Moses and we learn that his breastplate had twelve precious stones, mounted in gold and engraved with the names of the twelve tribes and over the years, Jewish people have ascribed certain stones to particular tribes, even though the Bible does not say which stone went with which tribe. The bottom of Aaron's robe had golden bells interspersed with pomegranates of blue, purple and crimson.

When Aaron went into the holy place and when he went behind the veil into the holy of holies, he was dressed in all of his robes and though the people could not see him, but they could hear him, which was a comfort.

Aaron's sons did not have colourful robes, but with their garments of white linen, they did have a belt which was blue, purple and crimson. Their hats or turbans were plain, but each one had a golden plate attached which was engraved with: "holiness unto YHVH".

Once all the work was done, Moses inspected it all and began the process of putting everything together and setting everything up. Even though much of what was done, was the product of human creativity, the dimensions reflected the instructions from YHVH and Moses was pleased with it.

After incident with the golden calf, Moses moved his tent outside the camp and the presence of G-d hovered over it and filled it when Moses was called to speak with YHVH. The camp would eventually be reorganized into various banners with the Tabernacle as the middle of the camp.

It must have been an exciting day when everything was set up and anointed and when Aaron and his sons were dressed and also anointed. The people had seen each of the holy items being crafted, but once the veil covered the entrance to the holy place, the people never saw these items again – except when they were wrapped up for travelling. The panels of the court yard could be carried in a cart, but all the holy stuff, including the altar of burnt offerings, had to be carried by the priests.

They had been camping in the same place for nearly a full year and they had been taught both the principles they were to live by and the ritual behaviour which had to be used so that the presence of YHVH could dwell in their midst and not put them at risk, because they kept a ritual distance from the presence. Putting together the tent and the furnishings is also mentioned in Leviticus and Numbers and it marks a transition between putting everything together and getting ready to travel to the Holy Land.

We come to the end of the book of Exodus, but we know that all of the book of Leviticus and much of the book of Numbers was also given during the time the people were camping around the mountain. They are no longer former slaves who are just finding their feet in their new life, and learning to serve and worship YHVH. They are given a law code which was explained to them and which they had to learn to integrate into every area of their lives. The same task is given to us today, as we make our lives revolve around worshipping YHVH and applying the principles of His Word to every area of our lives.

The Torah was not yet put into a single scroll, yet its teachings were followed as they were given and the Jews knew that they were becoming the people of the Book. No paganism of any kind was to be allowed to take root in the camp and none of it should be allowed to take root in our lives as well.

They would not be ready to move until all the necessary instructions were given and all the rituals were followed. Our faith should never be seen as some kind of smorgasbord where we can pick and choose which principles to follow and which ones we can ignore. In many places we are told not to add to what has been given and certainly not to subtract from the sacred content. YHVH wants us to live lives that are complete and whole, even as we wander through this darkening, broken world. The life we are called to is richer and better than anything the world has to offer and part of our calling is to be light and salt to the spiritual captives of darkness and give them a desire for freedom. **Chazak, Chazak, V'nitchazek.**

Sermon: G-d's Work is Finished: We Are Just Waiting on His Timing

Passage: *But there is one thing, well beloved, that should not be ignored, that is, that one day with the L-rd is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like one day. The L-rd is not slow in the accomplishment of the promise, as some believe, but He is being patient with you, not wishing that anyone should perish, but that all should come to repentance. The Day of the L-rd shall come like a thief. In that day, the heavens shall pass away with great noise and the element shall be on fire and shall melt away. The earth and all of the works it contains shall be consumed.* (2 Pe. 3:8-10).

When I consider all the pain and folly which is increasing in our darkening world, I sometimes get so impatient for the Kingdom, that I ask myself what is G-d waiting for? He is not waiting for anything, He is just waiting on His timing.

Lately, my health has once again become fragile and there are days when I have no energy at all. When this happens, I want to reach out and do what I can and leave the rest to G-d. He is active in our lives. He is active in our world and none of the noise of life will ever be able to drown out or silence His voice (Prov. 1:20-23). None of the escalating folly of men, nor their carnal refusal to consider the one and only true meaning of life, will ever be able to overthrow the truth of His Word.

Some days, when my energy level is especially low, I begin to feel very discouraged, so I go to YouTube to watch short videos that are sometimes uplifting and sometimes very funny. I have recently been watching some of the bushman pranks. A young man wears a costume that makes him look like a bush and he jumps out at people on the street as they walk by. The reactions are priceless – some people are even so startled that they lose their footing and fall down. All of this is being filmed by a camera man.

People do not appear to get mad at the guy or his camera man and, to my knowledge, neither man has been assaulted or beaten up. Most of the victims just shriek at the top of their lungs when they are startled and then break into smiles and laughter. The duo seem to especially target young people and I am quite troubled by how some victims express their surprise. Some take the Messiah's name in vain, while others resort to foul language. Some do both.

This kind of unscripted, candid humour can be both refreshing and entertaining. After a while, I get distressed that so many people seem to be ignoring G-d and are getting so focused on being entertained that there appears to be little or no room in their lives to contemplate the meaning and purpose of life – which is G-d and the things of G-d. Fewer people than ever seem to be focused on any kind of spirituality. They want to be entertained and not encouraged to delve into biblical spirituality.

Laughter is not wrong and being amused is not always bad. It is the reason why we laugh and what it takes to amuse us that is important. I will never watch violence against women and children, because it is never funny.

From our passage, we see that G-d's timing is different than ours. In terms of eternity, time does not pass according to our agenda. If it appears that G-d is moving very slowly to bring in His everlasting Kingdom over all the nations and generations of mankind, then we just have to learn to be patient and to wait.

We just have to trust and respond to our impatience by applying His Word into every area of our lives. Believers have been wandering through this dying world as strangers and pilgrims for many generations. As we wander, our true business should be living Kingdom Ready lives. Part of what this looks like, is faith in His promises and obedience to His Word and all that it says. Sometimes even sincere believers can be so distracted by the business of living that their lives begin to revolve around a personal, carnal agenda and not around what is really important to G-d.

Even in this, it is only because of G-d's great patience that our futile world has not been ended. What is G-d waiting for? I will say again that our world is basically divided between two core groups – the righteous core and the wicked core. They are locked in conflict to dominate the world. When the last member of the righteous core either turns to G-d or passes out of this life, the end will come. When the end comes, there will still be believers among the nations, but the world will be as dark and sinful as it was in the days of Noah.

As part of my outreach, I do not want to scare people by preaching the end of the world. This ending should be an encouragement to believers, when we become overwhelmed and troubled about the leaky ship which is taking its time sink.

Some believers have very complicated and contradictory ideas about the events which will usher in the end of the world. They even frequently make predictions which have no biblical basis and some of what is thus believed, would be amusing, if it were not tragic. The very second the Messiah returns, the real big bang will immediately happen with great noise and heat. It will be a cosmic meltdown, where every part of this current universe will be destroyed.

When this happens, either the new Heavens and the new Earth will be fashioned from the dissolved elements of the old universe, or when there is really nothing left of our current universe, Messiah will fashion new ones from scratch. So, you see, unless you are living for the world to come, you are wasting your time.

All kinds of immorality and idolatry are once again filling our world on a global scale as the pace of change quickens and as our world fills up with a never ending stream of new gadgets. It is said that the total amount of human knowledge is now doubling every two years and most of the technology we get our hands on its already obsolete the moment we get it. I am not hostile to technological innovations and my heart and I appreciate all the progress we have made in medicine.

However, the basic problems of life have not been solved. We are just moving quicker and quicker and before you know it, your life is nearly over. The words of French proverb remain true: "Bientot ca change, bientot c'est la meme chose (soon things will change, soon things remains the same)". You have to be Kingdom Ready and concerned with the things of the next life, before you can be of any earthly good in this life.

As we wind down from Covid restrictions, we want to get back to being a vibrant, Kingdom Ready community. I want us to start up Bible study Yeshivas again, with in person weekly Prayer Meetings. Our congregation is currently experiencing a considerable amount of financial distress and our finances have dropped to the place that we are barely keeping our head above water. To remedy this, we all need to be tithing 10% of our increase – and this needs to happen both in midst of plenty and even when our pockets are nearly empty. In the eyes of our Messiah, ten percent of a little is the same as ten percent of a lot.

Your leadership is very careful with the expenses as we run the shul. We estimate that it takes around five thousand dollars a month to keep the shul going. We are still able to pay most of our bills, sometimes late and sometimes on time. Over the last year, we usually take in between three and four thousand a month. I have already taken two pay cuts and have told our leadership that all the expenses of the shul must be paid, even if there is not enough left over to pay me – and some months there hasn't been enough.

A close reading of the Bible reveals that tithing is the most practical expression of our biblical faith that there is. As a community, we should also be tithing from our revenues and this can only happen when we all tithe. Honestly, if it were not for our pension income, Patti and I would not be able to make ends meet. I am truly grateful that most of our people are gainfully employed and are dedicated to meeting the practical needs of our various families.

Did you know that tithing ten percent of your increase, empowers the remaining ninety percent in ways which will always surprise us? If someone is having so much financial difficulty that they feel they cannot tithe, let us know so we can help you out of this difficulty. We have grocery cards. When your income shrinks, so does your tithe, but just as you still have to pay all your taxes, even when times are rough, the same should apply to tithing. The Queen Mother used to say that duty was the rent you pay for living. A spiritual part of that duty is paying a tithe of ten percent of your increase.

The Scriptures teach that those who are being fed spiritually should contribute financially to those who are feeding them and this begins by paying your tithe to the shul. As a congregation, B'nai Chayim cannot make any lasting spiritual progress until all of us are tithing. I know that our bills need to be paid and that we need to put food on the table, but we have to put the Messiah first with our pocket books and wallets, if we really want to walk with Him through this darkening age.

Tithing is a big part of Kingdom Readiness. Tithing ten percent of your increase is a New Testament discipline. I know that there are lots of folks with their hands out who want to relieve us of our hard earned money, but tithing ten percent of our increase, removes us from the temptation of being sucked into the materialism and greed that more and more people are caught up in.

The end of all things is coming at the same steady pace and as we wait for the Kingdom, we have to learn to live at the pace which the Bible sets, especially if we do not want to be pulled away from what really matters in life. Tithing ten percent of our increase is a vital part of the steady pace we need to be walking at.

I have never been in it for the money and there could still be many opportunities for me to make a whole bunch more money, even at 69 and with my fragile health. Tutoring and substitute teaching still pay quite well, but I am not interested in keep all I can, canning all I get and sitting on the lid.

Tithing ten percent of your increase is not much to ask and there is no way anyone can say that tithing ten percent of your increase is no longer a requirement for believers. It will not bankrupt anyone or cause anyone not to be able to survive financially.

There have been times when my family had to get by with very little money and when we started the shul, some eighteen years ago, I also held down any number of part time jobs and we made it. There is so much to do in our lives, that holding down extra work might not be realistic. Also, we would like to see many more things done in the shul, but until our finances improve, we remain on survival mode.

I am not trying to complicate or stress out anyone's life, I just want to be faithful to what the scriptures teach, without either adding to this sacred content or subtracting from it. You may be surprised to hear that in Quebec, tithing is a legal requirement for Catholics. The amount was set a long time ago and amounts to about \$90 a year – most employers just deduct it from their employee's paycheck and send it to their local church.

It is not a legal requirement in the rest of Canada, but it is a spiritual requirement from G-d's Word. I know that many believers have not learned to tithe, but it is what the Bible teaches and what our Messiah expects. Nothing more, nothing less.

Some get offended and hostile when tithing ten percent of our increase is mentioned and it is not something they feel comfortable with. (See Galatians 4:16) Our real spiritual comfort zone should always include tithing ten percent of our increase. I am not going to start banging on doors to collect unpaid tithes and I will not stop ministering to people who do not yet tithe ten percent of their increase, but real spiritual maturity and stability – and real Kingdom Readiness, can only come when we tithe ten percent of our increase.

Teaching about tithing is not being legalistic, it is being spiritually realistic. There will always be more calls for our money than the amount we have, but basic financial responsibility only comes when we tithe ten percent of our increase. It may seem a little harsh to say that it is one of the biggest measures of our real spirituality, but it is the truth. Live streamers, are you tithing? A big thank you and G-d bless you to those who are tithing.

We are a Messianic community which believes in living our lives firmly based on what the Bible teaches, whether this is popular or not. Most rabbinic synagogues charge for seats in the High Holy Days services and most of their annual revenue comes from that. I will fund raise the biblical way and never charge people to attend any of our services. Most of our revenues will always come from people tithing ten percent of their increase. We need to be reminded that tithing ten percent of our increase is a biblical principle and when all of us get behind this principle, our shul will be strong and we will make real, sustained spiritual progress.

G-d is being patient as He waits for people from the righteous core to come to faith. He is also being patient as He waits for believers to become obedient to what the Bible teaches. So much of what is happening in our world is nothing but the birth pangs of Messiah's coming Kingdom. Are you living a Kingdom Ready life in every area of your life? Tithing ten percent of our increase is a vital part of our Kingdom Readiness.

Living according to what the Bible teaches in every area of our lives is the only reasonable way to live as we wander as strangers and pilgrims through this darkening world on our way to our Father's Home in Glory. May you be blessed and prosper. May our shul be blessed and prosper. May all messianic shuls be blessed and prosper. Let us remember to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and for our friends in the Ukraine who continue to resist the Russian invasion. Shabbat Shalom and Shavua Tov.