

# Parashat Pekudei פְּקוּדֵי

Torah: Exodus 38:21–40:38

Haftarah: 1 Kings 7:51–8:21

## The Husband's Joy

### General Overview

What is the meaning of testimony? Said R. Simeon, son of R. Ishmael: It is a testimony to the whole world that there is forgiveness for Israel. (Shemot Rabbah 51.4)

*Parashat Pekudei* is the final Torah portion in Exodus. It is a brief one, concentrating on the completion of the Mishkan and concluding with the presence of God taking His place with the children of Israel.

### Exposition

Since this is the last *sidra* of Exodus, it might be helpful to compare the various themes of the book and see how they seem to culminate in the concluding parasha. As we do this, we will examine the themes of:

- I. Bondage and Freedom
- II. Individuals and Nation
- III. Ignorance and Torah
- IV. God's Apparent Aloofness and God's Personal Residence

In this excerpt from Parashat Pekudei, we will actually focus on a section in the appendix, The Husband's Joy.

### The Husband's Joy

Rabbi Elie Munk writes, "Just as a bride is brought to meet her husband-to-be, so was the Tabernacle brought to Moses."<sup>1</sup> Moshe represented the people of Israel to the Holy One. As we see the completion of this Divine house, we see Moshe and God relating to each other as God would to His people.

There is little proof for what we are about to say in this Appendix. The following comments are not readily seen in the black and white words of the Torah text. Therefore, if you choose, you can easily dismiss this whole last point for lack of proof. However, do not dismiss it too readily before you think about what we have to say.

We can easily see how the groom invited His bride to come close to Him. We can also easily observe some of the implications the completion of the house may have had on their relationship both then, now, and in the future. However, one thing that is hidden between the lines of the text is the intense joy the Husband had in being related to His bride.

There is one little window in which a hint of this joy may be seen. We are referring to Exodus 39:43, where we read, "Moses inspected the work and saw that they had done it just as the Lord had commanded. So Moses blessed them."

On the one hand, someone may well assert that Moshe blessed them for their performance. That might be true. We think however, that there is something else for which they were blessed. Quite possibly, Moshe blessed them because they worked as a unified team with one goal in mind — to be near to their God. We believe it is this that furnished the real reason for the blessing.

However, you may ask, was it not Moshe who blessed them? True, yes it was, but throughout the book of Exodus, it was Moshe who always represented God before the people of Israel. Thus, when Moshe blessed them, it was as if God Himself were uttering that blessing upon them.

As we stated in the commentary, we are not told the contents of that blessing. Interestingly enough the *Shemot Rabbah*,<sup>2</sup> which is usually not at a loss for speculating such blessing, also does not venture a guess either. We suggested a possible blessing in our commentary. Let us take another stab at it here!

Could the blessing have possibly gone something like this?

O Israel, blessed are you for your desire to be close to the Lord your God. May your heavenly Bridegroom bring you unlimited moments of untold happiness as you intimately relate to each other in this house. May you also see the Bridegroom in all of His grace and truth as He dwells among you.

Why suggest this type of a blessing? It is because this whole story reminds us of the passage to which we have so often turned throughout these commentaries, John 1:14:

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Why does “moment of blessing” remind us of this passage? The first reason is because of the word “dwell.” The Hebrew word for Tabernacle is *Mishkan*, derived from the Hebrew root which means, “to dwell,” *sh-k-n* (ש-כ-ן). The *Mishkan* was, therefore, the place of God’s dwelling on earth. In like manner, Messiah also came to dwell with His bride. Although John may have written his book in Greek, He was undoubtedly thinking like a Jewish man with His Hebrew oriented mind. Hence, when he told us that Messiah came to dwell among us, He would have had the *Mishkan* in mind.

In addition, John tells us that when Messiah came to *Mishkan* among us, He manifested His grace and truth. This is exactly what happened when God’s special presence enveloped the *Mishkan*. We are told in Exodus 40:34 that when Moshe finished the *Mishkan*, “the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.” Thus, God’s glory tabernacled, or dwelt, among the people of Israel. The bride saw her Husband’s glory.

Moreover, we are also told that the place of this divine manifestation was called in Hebrew *ohel mo’ed* (מועד אוהל), or “Tent of Appointed Meeting.” It was the place where God met with His bride. When such meetings happened He always imparted His word to her. In other words, along with the glory of God being revealed in this *Mishkan*, the truth of God also was manifested.

It was exactly the same with the Messiah, the Living Word, or Living Torah. When He comes among us we are keenly aware of His glory. In fact when He

came the first time, there were those who actually saw the physical manifestation of His glory when He transfigured Himself. When He comes again, it will be a permanent manifestation of His glory. In addition, when Messiah came, He came as the Torah teacher, the teacher of God's truth. Ever and always as He tabernacles among us, Messiah, the Living Torah, is the visible manifestation of the glory and truth of God

Hence, when Moshe blessed the people upon their completion of the Mishkan, he was, in reality, expressing God's blessing to them. Let us look at this slightly differently and say that when Israel finished the Mishkan, God expressed His utter delight that now there was a suitable place for Him to meet intimately with His bride.

It is also the same with us. It is safe to say that when the Messiah brought us close to the Holy One, He expressed His utter delight in having our presence with Him. This, beloved, is what the bridegroom means when he says that he loves us.

## Conclusion

The commentary this week on Parashat Pekudei afforded us an opportune time to give a brief review of some of the outstanding sections of the Book of Exodus. We conclude the same way Nahum Sarna does his commentary, by saying,

The Book of Exodus, which opened with a tale of misery and oppression, closes on an auspicious note. Israel is assured that, day and night, the Divine Spirit hovers over it, guiding and controlling its destiny.<sup>3</sup>

Just as He was with ancient Israel, so is He forever and always with us doing the same things. If we can keep that reality in mind at all times then the rabbinic wish placed at the conclusion of each book of the Torah would most certainly apply to us:

הזק! הזק! ונתחזק!

"Chazak! Chazak! Venitchzeik!"

Be strong! Be strong!

And may we be strengthened!

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<sup>1</sup> Elie Munk, *The Call of the Torah: Shemot*, 539.

<sup>2</sup> *Shemot Rabbah* is part of an ancient rabbinic commentary on the Torah and the five Megillot that is called *The Midrash Rabbah*. This commentary is a midrash, an allegorical and/or sermonic one.

<sup>3</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus*, 237.