

## VaYakheil

Exodus 35:1-38:20  
1 Kings 7:40-50  
22<sup>nd</sup> Torah Reading, 10<sup>th</sup> in Exodus  
(122 verses)

## Pekudai

Exodus 38:21-40:38  
1 Kings 7:51-8:21  
21<sup>st</sup> Torah Reading, 9<sup>th</sup> in Exodus  
(92 verses)

### Overview / Commentary

This week two portions are combined; VaYakheil (*and he assembled*) and Pekudai (*accounts*). We also complete the Book of Exodus (Shemoth) this week. This Sabbath is also one of 4 special Sabbaths around Purim. Shekalim and Zacor come before Purim and Parah and this week's special reading HaHodesh come after.

This special Sabbath gets its name from the opening words of Exodus 12:2 – *HaHodesh hazeh.....* - The verse literally translated says, “This month *is* to you a head of months; it is a first one to you – for months of the year. I love this time of year. The flowers are in bloom and all of nature sings that newness is in the air. Time for Israel, was to begin with their freedom.

The special section of the Torah that is read on this Sabbath HaHodesh is Exodus 12:2-20. It tells of Pesach (Passover) and contains the command to keep Passover and Unleavened Bread.

As George Robinson notes in his work, *Essential Torah – A Guide to the Five Books of Moses*, those who are following the weekly Torah portions are now in the heart of the cycle just as the Children of Israel are in their heart of their journey.

The word *heart* is a key word in the Torah readings this week.

The events of this week's Torah portions are the carrying out of the instructions given to Moses in Exodus 31:1-11 (Construction of the Mishkan) and Exodus 31:12-17 (the charge to keep the Sabbath). When Moses presents these instructions to the children of Israel, he presents the Sabbath BEFORE the details of the Mishkan.

This is especially interesting since the children of Israel are about to embark on a most holy *work*. The Hebrew word translated *work* – melakah occurs numerous times in this week's lesson as if to say that while they are creating a Sanctuary on earth – a place of true holiness, they must remember to maintain a sanctuary in time – Shabbat! It should be remembered that the Sabbath is the very first thing called holy in the Hebrew Bible.

The work for which they have been tasked was to create what the Torah calls a Mikdash. This Hebrew word is based upon the root word Kadosh – *holy or separate*.

In Exodus 25:8-9 we read that the purpose of the Mikdash was to create a place where God could dwell with the Children of Israel. The principle Hebrew word translated as Tabernacle is *mishkan*. The root word shekan means to dwell. Many have heard of the Hebrew word Shekinah. This too is based upon the same root.

A few other passages to read for further study:

Exodus 24:16

Ezekiel 43:9

Zechariah 2:10-12 (14 – 15 Hebrew)

Furthermore, we read in Exodus 25:9 we learn that the Mishkan in its entirety was to be made according to a pattern shown to Moses in the mount. This same idea is found in several other passages (Exodus 26:30, 27:8, Numbers 8:4).

Moses takes an offering (*terumah*) from the people. This offering was a matter of the heart. Several times we see the word heart in this week's class. Here are some examples:

Exodus 35:5 – *nediv libo* – where *nediv* is best translated into English as *willing or generous* – the root of *libo* is *lev* and translates as heart. So the offering comes from those with a “willing heart”.

35:10 – And let all who are wise of heart – *chacham lev...*

35:21 – And they came, every man whose heart was lifted – *nesa o libo*  
...and every man whose spirit was willing – *nadva ruacho*

see also vv. 22, 25, 26, and 29 for other examples of “heart” in these passages.

In Exodus 28:3 we see that to be “wise of heart” is the result of being filled with the Spirit of Wisdom. The Torah, believe it or not – despite what one may have heard or even read in later religious literature – tells us that people could be filled with the Spirit of God long before the advent of Christianity!

A good example of this is Betzalel. He is filled with the Spirit of God – in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge and in every work.

Here are some things that I gleaned from this week's Torah lesson:

1. Any undertaking worthwhile begins with an awareness of and observance of Shabbat – *remember and keep!* There is plenty of work to do. Recall that the word “work” occurs frequently in this week's lesson. Shabbat is the first thing

- called Holy in the Bible. Whenever we seek to bring about true holiness we must never forget to sanctify our time.
2. We must be led by the Spirit of God. The creation story begins with the Spirit of God. No matter what it is that we seek to “create”, it must be established upon the gifts of the Spirit given to Betzalel. I would go so far as to call wisdom, understanding and knowledge as the *roots of the Spirit*. Did you realize that these three words are directly tied to God’s creative activity in the book of Proverbs 3:19-20.
  3. Communal participation is required, but only those whose heart is:
    - a. Willing
    - b. Stirred or lifted
    - c. Wise

We should all use our gifts, talents and callings. We should give according to our means. This is not always money, but can apply to abilities.