

MORASHAH
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Parashat HaShavuah Series

Vayakhel-Pikudei: Promises to Keep

Memory. We fear losing it. Alzheimers is dreaded for stealing memory. We are a people of memory. Our memory keeps us inoculated from false promises, treaties and illusions, false messianists and false friends.

God keeps His promises. *Barukh She'amar Vehaya Ha'olam*. He decreed it and fulfilled it. God is our Role Model of integrity, of promises made and fulfilled. Do we have any idea how awesome it is to be alive to witness the ingathering of the exiles and the rebirth of Israel after untold generations of waiting? Two millennia of remembering both the Promise and the Promised Land. We remembered the promise. And so did God.

The name of our parasha this week, Vayakhel-Pikudei, is connected to the Remembrance Narrative of God remembering His promise to Sarah Imeinu (Gen 21:1). *Pakad* means "remembered (His promise)". "*VeHashem PaKaD et Sarah ka'asher amar...*" "And God remembered Sarah **as He said He would.**"

God said he was going to give a child to Avraham and Sarah, and He did! God followed through on His promise. And in the Wilderness, the *midbar*, the Promise is again fulfilled. In Vayakhel-Pikudei, God has Israel build the *mishkan* (Tabernacle) and the vessels and the vestments just as He said He would have us do back in Trumah-Titzaveh.

What spiritual meaning concerning "*pakad*" do we learn from this connection between *Sarah Imeinu* and the *mishkan* of this week's parasha? We realize that the creation of the *mishkan*/tabernacle is essentially a recreation of the spiritual energies of Sarah's tent. Betzalel and Ohaliav are the appointed artisans charged with recreating that "tent." Indeed, the name Betzalel means "in the shade of God," i.e., in God's tent, while Ohaliav means "my Father is my tent/shelter."

Sarah's light permeated her tent and granted her family a glimpse of the supernal radiance of Heaven, prefiguring Aaron's role as keeper of the eternal light (*ner tamid*). When Sarah died, the light went out, but it was restored when Rivka moved in as Yitzchak's wife. Its stewardship then passed to Rivka, and from her to all the holy mothers of Israel. Every Jewish woman who lights the holy lights for the Sabbath and Festivals in a sense becomes the High Priest of her home, which we call the *Mikdash M'at*, or the Miniature Sanctuary.

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Just as Adam was lonely without Chava, as Yitzchak was lonely without Rivka, so too was Israel feeling lonely in the wilderness. Modern man leads an atomized – “adamized” – lonely life. Yet we have the secret of returning to God's Home. Anticipating our existential solitude, God instructs that His Tabernacle be built amongst us, so that He may dwell within us so as to assuage our loneliness. He will be our "Eve" in the Garden. We need only open our hearts to let Him in.

Just as the barrenness of Sarah could be reversed so as to produce and nurture a child, so too could the barrenness of the wilderness be reversed so as to produce and nurture a particular nation's unique God-consciousness that could enrich the world via the emanation of the Divine Light. So let us, as bearers of the God-consciousness and the sense of the absurd, venture out into the world to make it a brighter and lighter place, a place of holy light and of holy laughter. Let us shed light upon the darkness. And bring light, laughter, and joy to those who are sad.

Shabbat Shalom!

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