

Kohelet Torah Discussion

Vayakhel Parsha on 2024-03-09 by Yefim (Jeff) Zhuk

In most cases the name of the Parsha is coded in its beginning. Vayakhel, which means “he gathered”.

Who he? Moses! That happened the next day after Moses returned from the mountain where he convinced G-d forgive Jewish people for building the golden idol, the day of forgiveness, Yom Kippur.

Moses gathered all children of Israel on the next day and passed the commandments from G-d:

“Six days shall work be done, but on seventh day there shall be your holy day”.

From this very generic commandment that describes all Jewish life, Moses came to a very specific one:

“Take all you can offer from your heart, gold, silver, copper, and more to build Mishkan, a portable Tabernacle. Mishkan in Hebrew is “to dwell” and also can be understood as a tent.

Two Jews, Betzalel and Oholiav, were chosen as architects. They also did highly skilled artistic work.

The Parsha includes a very detailed description of a beautiful Mishkan created by the community.

Reading comments, I figured out that in a usual year we learn Pekudei Parsha together with Vayakhel. But this is a leap year, when we learn it separately. Pekudei means “amount of something”. The Pekudei Parshah describes all individual parts of the Tabernacle. While Vayakhel focuses on the community work, the Pekudei underlines importance of every individual part. Keeping these two Parshas together, Torah teaches us that as community is important so every individual Jew is important.

We learn to keep balance between collective mentality and individualism.

Different cultures have very different approach to this matter. For example, China is a pure example of collective culture. United States has been built on principles of individualism, captured in our constitution. I lived in the Union of Soviet Socialistic Republics (USSR), with the culture of collectivism.

In collective mentality it is common to look for a collective enemy.

Traditionally, Jews were the usual suspects, the easiest and most convenient target.

The recent exposure of antisemitism, especially among students, even in the best universities of the US is a clear indication of the worst pieces of collective ideology coming via education.

There are several points for discussion in this Parsha and maybe the most important one is following.

Moses gathered the people the day after and told them. “If you want to create a dwelling place for G-d, it has to be not just on Yom Kippur, but the day after. And the day after that. And every day of the year.”

How can we keep connection with G-d all the time, every day?

Resources:

Vayakhel@Chabat.org

[Antisemitism and Education](#)