

# Pardes Yehuda

Weekly Torah Journal By Yehuda Z. Klitnick  
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שבת חזק

פרשת פקודי תשע"ז

אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדות: (ל"ח כ"א)

*These are the numbers of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of the Testimony (38:21)* It is axiomatic that everything taught in the Torah HaKedoshah is a lesson for eternity -- for all future Jewish generations -- be it on a revealed or concealed level. Every yeshiva boy learns early on that the Torah's narratives are not merely dramatic stories or history lessons. So how are we to map our Parsha's myriad details of the gold, silver, and copper donations to the Mishkan to our present life's situation? What moral teaching can we glean from the Mishkan's construction? The key is to perceive and believe with the full strength of one's conviction, and all the depth of feeling one can muster, that every Jew is a miniature Mishkan by and of himself. This is no mere literary metaphor, להבדיל, but a Divinely-inspired insight. A measure of the Shechina/Divine Presence rests upon every Jew, as it did in full upon the Mishkan. Accordingly, every "Mishkan-Jew" must make an accurate accounting about his modern-day "gold, silver and copper" -- his money -- whether enough of it has been given to tzedaka, and whether it has been obtained *al pi Torah*. What is more, one must see that the precious *time* allotted to him in this life is properly spent for Torah and Ma'asim tovim/kosher good deeds. The admonition of (שמות יט ה) *reminds us that everything in this World -- mankind expressly included -- belongs solely to Hashem, and calls forth an accounting in its wake.*

(דרש משה - ר' משה פיינשטיין זצ"ל)

ותָּכַל כָּל-עֲבֹדַת מִשְׁכַּן אֱהִל מוֹעֵד וְנִעְשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת-מֹשֶׁה בְּן עֶשְׂרִים בְּיָמָיו (ל ט לב)

*All the work of the Mishkan of the Tent of Meeting was completed; the children of Israel did it, according to all that Hashem had commanded Moses -- so did they do it. (39:32)* The sequence of ideas is puzzling: First we would expect to read "The Yidden built the Mishkan as Hashem had directed" and only then "It was finished" (or words to that effect.) A later posuk presents another difficulty: (פסוק מג)

וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶת-כָּל-הַמְּלָאכָה וְהִנֵּה עָשׂוּ אֹתָהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' בְּן עֶשְׂרִים וַיְבָרַךְ אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה: (Moses saw the entire work, that they had done it -- as Hashem had commanded, so had they done. So Moshe blessed them. (39:43)

"Moses saw"?!? Didn't the entire Machaneh see that the Mishkan, the focal point of holiness, was completed? And wouldn't "So Moshe blessed them" logically belong earlier, after stating that the work was completed? Would that not have been the logical time to bless the workers -- on the heels of completing the work? In response, let's recall the overall description of the donation process supporting the Mishkan, from a few weeks ago in Parshas Terumah *מֵאֵת תְּרוּמַת מַצֵּת* וַיִּקְהוּ לִי תְרוּמָה מֵאֵת כָּל-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִדְבְּנֶנּוּ לְבָנוּ לִי לְשִׁמְי וְיָשְׁמוּ לִי לְשִׁמְי. The donations were to stem from sincere commitment to this most noble of causes, from heartfelt good will, for the glorification of Hashem's holy name. There is a pointed teaching about human nature ensconced in these questions. When a person embarks on a new course of mitzvah observance, he often exudes a warm fervour in the early stages of his new path. As time goes on, unfortunately, his ardour cools and he gradually sheds his earlier enthusiasm. The Torah describes an opposite scenario vis-a-vis the Mishkan. First we read: Yes, the building campaign was brought to a head *ותָּכַל כָּל-עֲבֹדַת מִשְׁכַּן*, But the Torah proceeds to testify that everything was carried out with unwavering zeal, from start to finish, exactly as Hashem had commanded *וְנִעְשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה'* But who was able to discern the truth about their continuously-glowing and unabated devotion? Only Moshe Rabbeinu, as our Posuk says precisely: *וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה* Moshe could peer into each man's heart and "see", i.e. perceive his entire melacha (בְּלִי-הַמְּלָאכָה) -- the *physical* component of building and contributing, together with the *spiritual* component of a warm, devoted heart. There was no cooling off. Therefore, he blessed them -- deservedly so! (דרשות בן איש חי)

## STORY OF THE WEEK (By Yehuda Z. Klitnick and translated by Duvid Pinchas Rose)

### The Rav of Pietrikov's skilled advocacy saves two Jewish soldiers from the firing squad

The Gaon Rav Menachem Dovid ben Michoel Temkin זצ"ל was born in Warsaw, where he was famed as a genius in Torah, and later served as Rov in Pietrikov, Belarus. He was a chosid of the Imrei Emes of Gur זצ"ל and also enjoyed a close relationship with the famed Avne Nezer of Sochaczew, Poland. He was *nistalek* חשוון ט' 1923 and was succeeded by the Rav of Sunik, the famed gaon Rav Meir Shapira זצ"ל, initiator of the worldwide Daf Yomi Talmud study programme. World War I was, simply stated, a gehinom for European Jews, who suffered endlessly. Pietrikow then was under Russian

hegemony, and no Jew -- nobleman, Rabbi or commoner -- was spared from cruel and brutal conscription. One night Rav Menachem Dovid was startled to hear someone knocking ferociously on the door, clamoring for admittance. There was a coterie of military policemen, bearing a summons for the Rav to appear the next day at the local Judge Advocate General military courtroom in town. They forced the Rav to sign a receipt for the summons, who, thinking that he was next on the conscription list, fainted straight away. When his household revived him, he saw that he was to appear at six o'clock in the morning. He tried to locate an attorney, but it was much too late in the day to find a law office that was still open. At the very

least, he begged a Yid to serve as a Russian interpreter for him, but the man was barred from the court building and the Rav was left to fend for himself. He was guided into a courtroom where he witnessed a tableau of three military judges sitting stiffly, flanked by two fearsome soldiers, with bayonets mounted. Opposite them sat two pitiful Jewish soldiers, bone-thin from their starvation rations, trembling from fear and awaiting their fate. The Rav knew full well that only Hashem Yisborach could be their defender, and thus he uttered a silent tefilla, but remained shaken.

The Rav approached the bench and a bailiff informed him that the man in the middle was the presiding judge, and his colleagues were high-ranking army generals.

One of the generals told Rav Menachem Dovid to present his summons for inspection and, having read it, turned to him with a smile on his face. This unexpected reception calmed the Rav's nerves -- but only partially. The general asked if the Rav recognized him, and the reply was negative. Then he asked if his father's name were Michoel, and if they had lived on a certain street in Warsaw, and this evoked a "Yes!" The general refreshed his memory, recalling that they had been neighbours and that Rav Michoel did many kindnesses for his family. In fact, as boys, they used to play together. The Rav peered closely in his face, and yes, he did begin to remember him. Only then did the Rav regain his composure.

The judge laid out the case against the two Jewish soldiers. They were accused of spying for the Germans. As proof, he cited the allegation that in the midst of battle on the front, the accused constantly shouted something in their "Jewish language", after which numerous Russians fell while they personally remained alive. The court was convinced that they were conveying inside information to the enemy about the exact positions of the Russian soldiers, while sparing their own location, resulting in many casualties. They had been condemned to death. The Rav had been summoned in keeping with a law which guaranteed a Jewish prisoner in a capital case the right to Rabbinic counsel to prepare himself for execution. The Rav privately perceived the kindness and *hashgacha protis* sent his way from Shomayim in that a principal actor deciding the fate of two bedraggled Jewish soldiers in the Czar's army "happened" to be a boyhood chum, and seemed favourably disposed to him. He boldly approached the panel and said, "Your Honours, please allow me to explain the truth about these two men's conduct on the battlefield. You must understand that all Jewish soldiers are staunchly loyal to the Czar. I will whisper privately to you the words which they were shouting, and then you can interrogate them further." The "secret" and foreign words were nothing other than "Shema Yisroel!", every Yid's life-and-death watchword. The judges commanded the Yiddishe soldiers to tell them the mysterious words they shouted every time the enemy approached. Their answer rang out, clear as a bell: "Shema Yisroel!" The way became clear for the Rav to set the record straight and resolve any doubts about the men's fealty to the Czar, or even more dire suspicions. The general who was the Rav's boyhood friend gave him the floor and said that if his explanation satisfied the court,

the hapless Jewish soldiers would be set free [*presumably to return to the front -- a dubious advantage, to put it mildly. [DPR]*] The Rav's words were eloquently targeted to his captive audience. "We Jews throughout our long history have always been closely bonded to G-d our Creator and his absolute Unity. We express that bond with the words which were unknown to you earlier, but which you now recognize are our two soldiers' creed of faith. In time of extreme danger, even facing death, our people have said these words with their fullest conviction, and poured out their hearts to the Creator for a salvation, for our Sages teach that one never -- EVER -- gives up hope even if the executioner's sword is resting on his neck, waiting to strike. Perish the thought that our "Shema Yisroel" was any kind of a secret message to the Czar's enemies! Release these men and you will see that their devoted service will advance them to the officer corps in His Majesty's Army."

The wide-eared judges had never heard such a heartfelt legal defense. With but a moment's deliberation, they acquitted the tearful soldiers and even gave the Rav an official commission appointing him as an official member of the Government, as the equivalent of a military chaplain. The Rav took his leave of the assembled, with especially warm words for his erstwhile comrade and the newly-cleared soldiers. His new credential as an accredited chaplain gave him entree to many circles in his efforts to help Jewish soldiers in need of administrative intervention or counsel. His certificate remained in the family until the outbreak of World War II, when Pietrikov passed to Polish hegemony. The cursed Nazis ימ"ש ignited the Holocaust there in תרצ"ט.

**In Pardes Yehuda (Ki Sisa)** we wrote of the self-sacrifice for Shmiras Shabbos shown by noble and pioneering New York Yidden in the early to mid- 1900's. Stories of their heroism abound, and with the reader's forbearance, we present one more. A relative of mine (YZK) Reb Reuven Eliezer Thillim ז"ל kept a drapery shop in Nyack, NY, near Monsey. When the retail trade settled on Saturday as the busiest day, the drapery shop went into steep decline. Out of desperation, Reb Reuven turned to the Stoliner Rebbe Rav Yochanan זצוק"ל in Williamsburg, where he poured out his heart about his ever-more-precarious *parnossa* situation. The Rebbe's advice was short and to the point: "I see no problem with your being open on **Sundays**. You'll still make a good living!" Reb Reuven was a loyal and devoted chosid of his Rebbe and had not the slightest qualms about the counsel -- and opened for business the very next Sunday. In that time and place doing business on Sunday was simply not tolerated by the gentiles, who were even known to harm a Jew physically for flouting the "blue laws" that prevailed. To make matters worse, to any observer, the shop was situated directly opposite a house of gentile worship (colloquially known in Yiddish as a "kloister"), which could have been taken as a grievous provocation. Wonder of wonders, after their Sunday activities, people started to drift into the drapery store and admired the wares. Reb Reuven tallied up large sales, and built up a following without very much trouble. The Stoliner Rebbe's brocho was fulfilled before his very eyes, in the merit of his faithful Shabbos observance. The store brought a steady *parnassa* for many families and remains active to this day -- *Shomer Shabbos lemehadrin*.

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