

## **#22 VaYakhel – Exodus 35:1 to 38:20**

By Moshe Schwab

### **While Praying**

- \* Learning from each other is important. There is a lot of darkness in the world.
- \* Allow your hearts to open up to grow in the Lord so you can be rooted deep in your faith.
- \* We are part of the body of believers; being active in the body of believers helps us to live holy lives and have a better life; also, being active in the body of believers protects us by helping to keep us separate from worldly things.
- \* Be at peace and enjoy your spiritual growth; stay faithful.

VaYakhel means “and he assembled.” This portion begins with Moshe (Moses) again reminding the people to keep Shabbat. Moshe then tells them that God has told him that they should take up another free will collection (Exodus 25 was the first one) for the things needed for the Mishkan (Tabernacle, Tent of Meeting). Moshe gives them a list of the things they still need. Then the craftsmen were to come and make the articles for the Mishkan and the clothing and adornments for the priests.

The people gave freely for the work of the Mishkan (Tabernacle, Tent of Meeting). Women who could make fabric began their work. The leaders brought precious objects such as precious stones, incense, oil and wagons. Most of this portion has to do with the building of the Mishkan.

The commandment not to have a fire on Shabbat is in this portion (Exodus 35:3). Since the context is clearly the building of the Mishkan, not having a fire on Shabbat has to do with work like smelting metals for the Mishkan. It should tell us that working on our meeting places isn't to be done on Shabbat. Some though apply this command the wrong way and say even turning on a light on Shabbat is wrong because it produces a spark. This obviously has nothing to do with resting on Shabbat. These people ignore the obvious and make up rules that don't really apply to Shabbat.<sup>1</sup> Gathering wood in the wilderness was hard work. Splitting wood is hard work. They had jobs while they were in the wilderness, but they were to rest on Shabbat.

B'tzal'el and Oholi'av lead the work on the Mishkan and they as well as others are filled with the Spirit of God (Exodus 35:31) to do the work and to teach (Exodus 35:34). Be-tzal-el was from the tribe of Judah and filled with the Spirit of God (Exodus 35:30-31) to build an earthly Mishkan. Yeshua is also from the tribe of Judah and filled with the Spirit of God. He presides over the heavenly Mishkan. "But when the Messiah appeared as cohen gadol of the good things that are happening already, then, through the greater and more perfect Tent which is not man-made (that is, it is not of this created world), he entered the Holiest Place once and for all. And he entered not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood, thus setting people free forever;" Hebrews 9:11-12 CJB.

Yeshua gave Himself for believers for all of time. The sacrificing of animals was to remind us we needed forgiveness of our sins. The following prophetic scripture in Isaiah written some 600 years before Yeshua came tells us we needed a sacrifice for sin. "But he was wounded because of our crimes, crushed because of our sins; the disciplining that makes us whole fell on him, and by his bruises we are healed. We all, like sheep, went astray; we turned, each one, to his own way; yet ADONAI laid on him the guilt of all of us;" Isaiah 53:4-6 CJB.

It says God put wisdom in others to do the work on the Mishkan too (Exodus 36:1). The people brought more than they needed so they needed to tell them they had enough. The making of the tent, planks and crossbars, and other items for its construction are described in this portion. The making of the Ark<sup>2</sup> of the

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<sup>1</sup> The Jewish writings say some rabbis said it was okay to work on their meeting places on Shabbat, but not to light a fire. It is easy to figure out that work on a meeting place is work and should not be done. Simply lighting a fire is not hard and continuous work.

<sup>2</sup> Schatz computes the weight of the Ark in the Mishkan at 183 pounds and four men could carry that much weight. We should remember the articles made for the Mishkan had to be made so they could be carried. Schatz' calculation is objective -

Covenant and k'ruvim (cherubs) is described as well as the other items needed for the Holy of Holies including the show-bread table, the altar for incense, and the menorah. The bronze basin located outside the Holy of Holies was made from the mirrors of the women (Exodus 38:8) and is where the priests would wash their hands and feet. The large altar for the sacrifices was located about half way between the entrance to the Mishkan and the Holy of Holies. Hebrews 9:4 tells us the tablets, Aaron's rod, and the golden pot with manna were kept in the Ark of the Covenant. Calculations which say these objects were excessively heavy are probably wrong because the Israelites had to carry them as they went through the desert.

It is amazing what the people of Israel had to learn to do. They had to learn how to do artistic work, metal working, cutting jewels, woodworking, and tapestry making. That's a lot to learn and do. They needed God's gifting didn't they. God also gave them the ability to teach it says.

God gave them a project and they were excited about it. They gave more than was necessary for the work. We also should be sacrificial. "So imitate God, as his dear children; and live a life of love, just as also the Messiah loved us, indeed, on our behalf gave himself up as an offering, as a slaughtered sacrifice to God with a pleasing fragrance;" Ephesians 5:1-2 CJB.

Just as Israel was given God's commandments and a project from God to do, God has given us each other to help us to follow God's commandments. We are to be a body of believers the Bible says (Ephesians 4:16). After I believed in God, I knew very little about how to follow God. I learned a lot of nice things from my parents just by their example, but I also needed to learn what God expected of me. I learned about Jewish foods growing up and not to eat the fat of animals (Leviticus 3:17, 7:22-25), but I needed a lot more than that. We too need to fill in the blanks on how to live like God wants us to live.

The people who helped me to understand the Bible were very helpful. I needed their help and we need each other's help. Learning from each other is important. There is a lot of darkness in the world. It's so easy to get wrapped up in worldly things especially since we come into so much contact with it in our society.

I remember attending some training years ago where people took time to share a short teaching. All one person talked about was politics. We are to follow God and not a political party. Politics is important, but it is not God. I remember someone relating a story about how they were telling someone it is important to care for the poor. The person he was talking to said to him he must be a Democrat now. We follow what God tells us to do. The Bible actually says we are to help the poor and be kind and good people.

We need to be able to distinguish what is from the world and what the Bible says to do. We need to allow our hearts to open up the things of God and grow in the Lord so we can be rooted deep in what God wants for us instead of what our society wants.

It amazes me how people can be so easily influenced. During my lifetime, society went from being thoughtful and valuing good sense to doing things without thinking. People don't seem to understand the consequences and the effect it will have on the future. One of the arguments we hear is rules are old fashioned. Without rules, we would get nothing done. Without rules, there would be no justice. Is rudeness old fashioned? We've seen a lot rudeness happening publicly in politics. Perhaps being kind is old fashioned.

I'm glad we don't have to live like that even if our society has decided to be bereft of goodness and caring. God doesn't teach us to be nasty to others or uncaring. In fact, He teaches the opposite. Shaul said in Romans 12:9-13:

"Don't let love be a mere outward show. Recoil from what is evil, and cling to what is good. Love each other devotedly and with brotherly love; and set examples for each other in showing respect. Don't be lazy when hard work is needed, but serve the Lord with spiritual fervor. Rejoice in your hope, be patient in your troubles, and continue steadfastly in prayer. Share what you have with God's people, and practice hospitality."

Just like Israel was excited to give for the Mishkan, we need to be excited to be part of a body of believers who value being good, love each other, are respectful, and excited about a relationship with God. We are to have joy, hope, be patient, pray, share with others, and be hospitable. Even just one of those things can have a huge impact on our lives. Having hope can give us so much peace. I don't think Shaul is talking about hope in this world.

The Bible tells us to be good to our family, friends, and fellow believers. "Therefore, as the opportunity arises, let us do what is good to everyone, and especially to the family of those who are trustingly faithful." We are part of the body of believers; being active in the body of believers helps us to live holy lives and have a better life; also, being active in the body of believers protects us by helping to keep us separate from worldly things. I'm sure glad I have fellow believers as my friends.

If you think about the Mishkan (the Tent of Meeting), it had at its center the holy of holies. It is sort of like that for each of us. We should have holiness in our heart, in the center of who we are. It had a fence around the area too to separate the Mishkan from the outside world. We too need to put up a fence to keep out the wrong thinking and sinful ways of the world.

Our society seems to be heading in the wrong direction, but we don't have to be like that. We hear about relationships falling apart over a multitude of things. If you don't support what another person believes, the rule now seems to be dislike them or even hate them.

It's even happening among believers. We are not supposed to behave like that. More and more people are disassociating with other believers because they simply don't agree on everything. It's important to agree on our major beliefs, but we don't have to be like that over small issues. Some of these small issues are weird; don't allow a place for the devil in your relationships (Eph. 4:27) or among believers. In Philippians it says, "Only conduct your lives in a way worthy of the Good News of the Messiah; so that whether I come and see you or I hear about you from a distance, you stand firm, united in spirit, fighting with one accord for the faith of the Good News;" Philippians 1:27 CJB.

Shaul (Paul) says to stay away from controversies and fighting. What's most important? It is doing what is right, being faithful, having love, and peace. That is a much better way to live. 2Timothy 2:21-23 CJB says, "So, flee the passions of youth; and, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart, pursue righteousness, faithfulness, love and peace. But stay away from stupid and ignorant controversies- you know that they lead to fights, and a slave of the Lord shouldn't fight. On the contrary, he should be kind to everyone, a good teacher, and not resentful when mistreated."

Be at peace and enjoy your life as a believer and keep growing; stay faithful. Don't let the latest craze of selfishness and unforgiveness get under your skin. The unbelievers in this country are bringing division. We don't have to be like them. Instead, be "united in spirit, fighting with one accord for the faith;" (Philippians 1:37).