

# Torah Talk—מאמרי תורה



*The Parasha Letter of The Jewish Primary Day School of the Nation's Capital*

**Parashat Pekudei**  
**March 12, 2016**

**פרשת פקודי**  
**ב' באדר ב' תשע"ו**

Torah Reading: *Shemot* (Exodus) 38:21-40:38

In this final *parasha* in the book of *Shemot*, the work of constructing the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) is completed; Moshe receives the command to anoint its vessels and to anoint Aharon and the *cohanim* (priests).

The author or Author of the Torah did not divide the text into *parashot*. Those divisions were probably made by the *Anshei Knesset HaGedolah*, a group of rabbis who lived just before and during the Second Temple Period. The A/author did not organize the text into chapters. Those were inserted by the people who published the first Bibles after the 15<sup>th</sup> Century invention of the printing press, in order to assure that in the multiple copies newly available to the masses, it would be possible for everyone to be “on the same page.”

The A/author wrote Five Books with no portion or chapter breaks. This means that each book must have a theme or subject matter distinct from the other four books.

Ramban [Nachmanides: 13<sup>th</sup> Century Spain/Palestine] picks up on this fact. In his introduction to his commentary on *Shemot*, he maintains that the theme of the book of *Shemot* is the first exile, that of the Bnei Yisrael in Egypt, followed by their redemption. He further suggests that the book cannot end until the members of the new Jewish nation have re-achieved the status of their ancestors: having a home of their own. Says Ramban:

Now the exile was not completed until the day they returned to their place and were restored to the status of their ancestors. When they left Egypt, even though they came forth from the house of bondage, they were still considered exiles because they were 'in a land that is not theirs' entangled in the wilderness. When they came to Mount Sinai and made the *Mishkan* and the Holy One caused the Divine Presence to dwell again amongst them, they returned to the status of their ancestors when 'the counsel of God was upon their tents.' Then they were considered redeemed. It was for this reason that this second book of the Torah is concluded with the completion of the building of the *Mishkan*, and the glory of the Eternal filling it always.

Through this explanation, Ramban sheds light on why the book of *Shemot* shifts so starkly from the story of the exile and redemption to the seemingly endless list of details on the construction of the *Mishkan* culminating in its dedication. The erection and opening of the *Mishkan* represented the final chapter of the redemption and thus completed the intended theme of the entire book, as Ramban understands it.

Shabbat Shalom.

For Discussion:

- A synagogue is sometimes called a "*mikdash m'at*," a "small Temple." How is a synagogue like the Temple? How is it different?
- What might it have felt like to be at the dedication of the *Mishkan*?
- Why is it important for people to have dedicated places, such as synagogues, in which to pray?