

## Ruth Ben-Or

### Pekudei 5977

Coming to the end of the Book of Exodus, probably all the worthwhile things about attention to detail have already been said, so how about a bit of grammar instead?

The root *pkd* means a good many things, both ancient and modern, for example, to visit or to confer a favour, as in "poked Sarah"; a deposit, as in "pikadon", either on a bottle or in a bank, so whether you want to grow the economy or save the planet, this is for you; a task, as in "tafkid"; an annoying jobsworth, as in the stupid "pakid" who ties you up with paper and red tape so that you can't complete the simplest tafkid; the "mefaked" who gives the orders, of which we will hear more when we read about the conquest of the land of Israel; to trust or to confide, as in "beyado afkid ruchi", which is one way of saying that your soul is worth more than accumulating money or obeying orders.

Those of you who like anagrams may have noticed that if you transliterate any of these, you get the letters C, D, F and N which appear in words like find, finance, and confidence, but that may be just a co-incidence.

However, most translations render Pekudei as accounts, the accounts of what was used to build the ohel, or the mishkan (depending upon when you think these chapters were written) and who was responsible. One thing I don't think we have covered yet is the importance of what we can see and what we cannot. Nobody except another artisan pays much attention to hinges or poles or hooks or sockets, but they have to be fashioned as carefully as the beautiful things that the public thinks of when they think of holiness: the blue, crimson and purple curtains, the cedarwood and acacia furnishings and the gold, silver and copper, and even if they are only going to get blackened by smoke and grease, they have to be treated with the same respect. It goes without saying that if you skimp, nobody may notice, except for God,, but sooner or later, it becomes obvious that a bodged job is a false economy in the spiritual as well as the material sense.

The sacred building has already been interrupted once by the golden calf, as if the desire for outward show and a slavish adherence to beauty, prestige and convention without understanding how or why, be it in theology, halacha or even architecture, leads to idolatry. The Jewish people needed prophets like Moses and priests like Aaron, but it also needed craftsmen like Bezalel and Oholiav and accountants like Itamar to make it work from the inside out and to demonstrate the working. There were builders and artists, priests and bureaucrats, but the description of chochmei lev, the wisehearted, was reserved for the artisans, not the intellectuals.

Some thinkers see a parallel between the account of the beginning of the world, God's creation, and the accounts of the sanctuary, a human creation. At the end of one, we have Shabbat, at the end of the other, a template of things not to do on Shabbat. At the end of one the humans' eyes are opened and they know a lot of things, some good and some bad. At the end of the other, their eyes are opened and they can see a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire. As we remember from parashat Ki Tissa, Moses asked to see God, and although his request was denied, he did experience God's glory on Mount Sinai. This time, the whole nation has the chance to see it, although not to hear God speak, because that frightened them last time, apparently. Perhaps having a stake in the work increased their confidence in their task and in the ones who had command over them. Shabbat shalom!