



VAYAKHEL - PEKUDEI

In most years, Parshiot Vayakhel and Pekudei are read together. In Parshiot Terumah and Tetzaveh, from a few weeks ago, G-d gave specific instructions regarding the building of the mishkan and all of its components; THIS week's reading simply states how all the instructions were carried out to the letter.

However, in the fifth verse of this week's reading, there seems to be an inherent contradiction. It reads as follows, "Take from amongst yourselves an offering to the Lord; whoever is of a willing heart shall bring it; the Lord's offering, gold, silver, and brass."

The first half of the verse implies a mandatory contribution from everybody, which indeed was already instructed by G-d to Moshe in a previous chapter. Everyone had to contribute to the Mishkan. Yet, the second half of the verse, particularly with the phrase, "Whoever is of a willing heart", seems to imply that contributions needed only to come from those who desired to give! So which is it? Are the donations to the Mishkan mandatory, or voluntary?

The answer is both (you expected that, didn't you?). True, donations were required from all of B'nei Yisrael; and the people did indeed give joyfully, so much so that after a while, Moshe had to ask them to stop giving (this was the last time that happened in Jewish fundraising history!). Yet, G-d knows that the contributions given on a voluntary basis are going to be the only ones that are given 100 percent willingly. When a person is forced to give, even when he knows it is for a good purpose, there is always going to be a certain level of enthusiasm lacking from that giving. It may be less for some people, and more for others, but it is a factor.

G-d wanted the Mishkan to be complete; therefore, the mandatory contributions were needed. But He also wished to ensure that at least some of the monies and materials donated for "His home" were given with the fullest heart; hence the voluntary donations were asked for as well.

CHAZAK!

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Cohen