

TORAH PORTIONS PARASHAT PEKUDEI

THIS WEEK'S TORAH PORTION

EXODUS 35:1-40:38

Parashat Pekudei / פְּרַשַׁת פְּקוּדֵי

In this week's guide...

COMMENTARY: Israel's adjustment to life on the other side of the Red Sea was challenging. This reading marks the one-year anniversary of "life in the wilderness." It also describes the beginning of living with the manifest Presence of God in the midst of the camp. This story invites all of us to consider what really matters most to us..... 1

NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN: In so many ways, Moses demonstrated excellence in leadership and the project of building the *Mishkan* just might be the peak of his effort. In his role as "Project Manager," Moses is an example leadership as well as a prophetic symbol pointing to *Yeshua* and the Church. Once again, we see that the beauty of Scripture lies in its combination of practicality and profound transcendence..... 2

HEBREW WORD STUDY: There's nothing worse than empty religious jargon. From fancy theological terms (like, "sanctification") to common words we adapt (how about, "pleading the blood"?), our verbiage can be more problematic than we realize when using it with intention. This study will help us with this matter. A better understanding of Hebrew will transform our use of English in prayer and praise!..... 3

OVERVIEW

The title of this week's Torah portion—*Pekudei*—means "accounts." The opening verse of this portion reads, "[These are the accounts \(*pekudei*\) of the Tabernacle of the Testimony...](#)" (Exodus 38:21). Essentially, these texts describe the faithful execution of the plans for the Tabernacle and its inaugural moments as it was raised. The *parsha* concludes with a truly magnificent display of the glory of God that would be echoed at a similar ceremony centuries later.

FUSION GLOBAL WITH RABBI JASON
Weekly Torah Portion – *Parashat Pekudei* / פֶּרַשַׁת פִּקּוּדֵי

Exodus 35:1-40:38

COMMENTARY

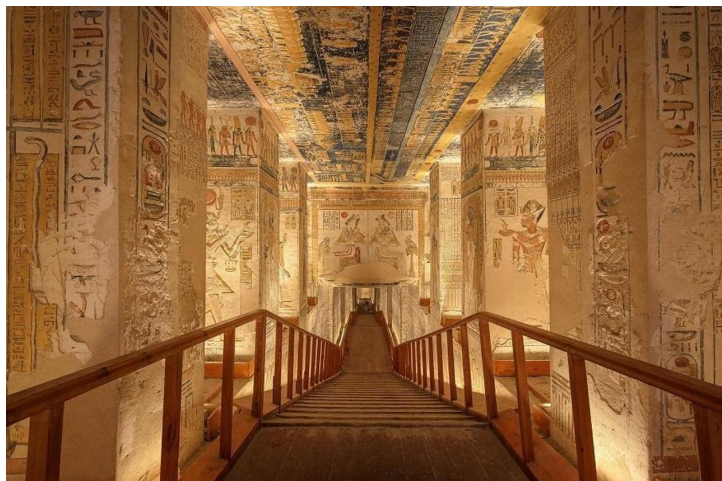
by Staff Contributor

The first year is always the hardest...

- *The first year of being married...*
- *The first year of parenting a newborn baby...*
- *The first year attending high school...*

Without question, surviving that first year creates a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment. Israel is no exception. This week's *parsha* describes the end of the Children of Israel's first year after leaving Egypt. Not only has the newly formed nation survived a year of freedom—imaginably, it must've been quite challenging when all you've known is slavery for over 400 years—but it has finished constructing the very dwelling place of God in their midst. As we conclude our reading of the Book of Exodus, Israel now has its liberty and the presence of God.

While we might think of them as primitive, ancient civilizations had many ornate buildings, rituals, and idols. Egypt, the civilization from which Israel emerged, was probably the most extravagant of them all. The Children of Israel saw massive pyramids laden with gold, obelisks and columns, ominous idols adorned with the bodies of men and the heads of animals, painted in many colors, looming over all who passed by; they saw the priests, adorned in rich regalia, leading the worship of these gods, referring to the Book of the Dead as a guide to their practices and prayers; the people bowed down to the Pharaoh, the great mediator between the gods and humanity. Israel witnessed all this for more than 400 years of enslavement within this culture.



Moses informed the people that they too would have a place of worship filled with gold, silver, bronze, rich tapestries, beautiful craftsmanship, fine carpentry, and consecrated men—one of whom is bejeweled and more ornately vested than the others—who would perform the intricate and meticulous services. The people would be required to attend on certain occasions. Unlike the Egyptians, however, the people would bow to no man or statue. This beautiful and elaborate structure—with its accompanying priesthood, dedicated for officiating its ceremonies—was worthless without one essential event: *“And the glory of ADONAI filled the Tabernacle”* (Exodus 40:34b). This is the “raison d’être” of the *Mishkan*. This reality distinguished Israel from every other nation.

And this wasn't a small matter. God's presence was so thick that Moses, the leader of the whole people, couldn't even enter. This new “house of God” did not center on any man or even the upper echelon of society—it was a place for God to be with His people and lead them intimately by His very presence.

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Fast forward a few thousand years, and let us consider our contemporary “houses of God”...

- Our beautiful buildings are inspiring.
- Our well-conducted services are fantastic.
- Our powerful preaching is challenging.

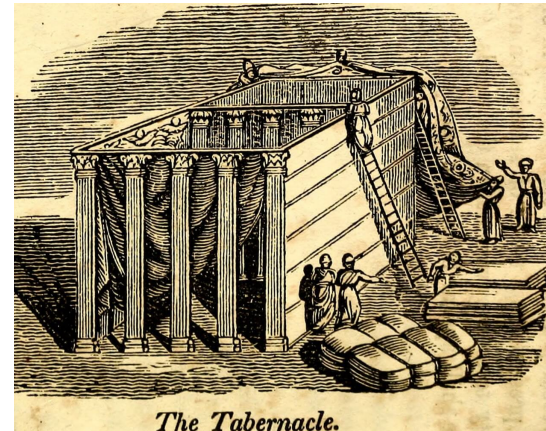


Yet all is for naught without God’s palpable, life-changing, intimate presence. His glory—not just a spiritual, theoretical concept involving the heavens—must be what we seek when we gather. Imagine the next time your congregation gathered together that you could not enter the building, given how strongly God manifested His presence in that place! Imagine “the place where [you] gathered was shaken” (Acts 4:31). Admittedly, every service can’t be like this; we need instruction, teaching, prophetic vision, encouragement, correction, and fellowship. However, let us always remember the true purpose of the house of God: to have a place where God can dwell with His people!

NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN

by Staff Contributor

In this week’s parsha, we notice a sequence of events that points backward to the Creation Story of Genesis and forward to the life and ministry of *Yeshua*. We read, “So all the **work** of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was **completed**; and the sons of Israel did according to all that the Lord had commanded Moses; so they did... And Moses examined all the work, and behold, they had done it; just as the Lord had commanded, this they had done. So Moses **blessed** them.” (Exodus 39:32, 43 NASB *emphasis added*). There is significance to this “work-completion-blessing” progression. For starters, the text’s description of Moses highlights his leadership excellence. Moses was attentive to Israel, noting that not only did they do the assigned work, but they also completed it. Quality leaders make sure we finish what we start!



Rabbi Jonathan Sacks connects this threefold progression in Israel’s construction of the Tabernacle to the story of Creation:

A remarkable parallel is being drawn between God’s creation of the universe and the Israelites’ creation of the Sanctuary...It was a micro-cosmos, a universe in miniature, constructed with the same precision and wisdom as the universe itself, a place of order against the formlessness of the wilderness and the ever-threatening chaos of the human heart...

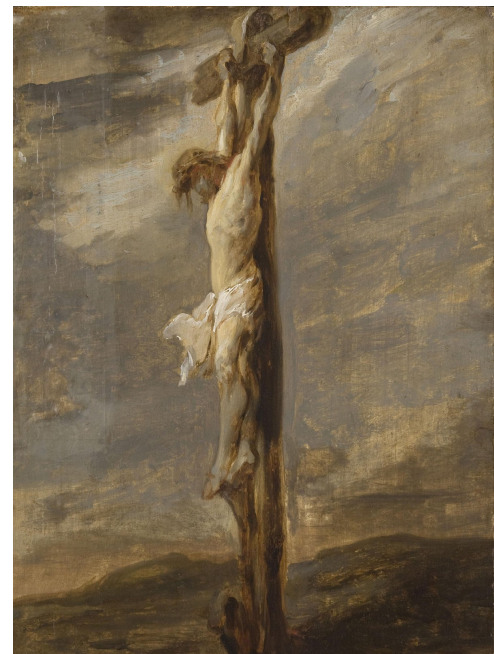
[The Israelites] have used their generosity and skill to build a mini-universe. By this symbolic act they have shown they are capable of becoming, in the potent rabbinic phrase, “God’s partners in the work of creation.”¹

We need to let the weight of this reality sink in! These people lived as slaves—dehumanized and stripped of dignity—for generations. On the other side of their miraculous “Red Sea rescue” and covenant at Sinai, they lewdly worshiped around the Golden Calf. But Moses believed in them and saw their potential to make God’s design a reality. Hence, he celebrated (i.e., “blessed”) them at the project’s conclusion. That celebration provided crucial motivation for the Israelites, as they would now have to live faithfully with the Almighty dwelling in their midst. The true “work” was about to begin.

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Yeshua’s public life and ministry began with a pronouncement of **blessing**: “as He was coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens ripping open and the *Ruach* as a dove coming down upon Him. And there came a voice from the heavens: ‘You are My Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased!’” (Mark 1:10-11). On the Cross, He announced the **completion** of His mission: “When *Yeshua* tasted the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit” (John 19:30). But as we know, the Cross was only the beginning in a certain sense. As Eve came from the side of Adam, so would a Bride emerge from the pierced side of the Messiah. The crucified and risen One “is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for **works** of service” (Ephesians 4:10-12a NIV *emphasis added*).

We have been incorporated into the Body of the Messiah—the blessed One who finished all that His Father had given Him to do (*cf.* John 17:4). It is from this place of **blessedness** and **completion** that we step into the world to **work** as “God’s partners.”



HEBREW WORD STUDY: *qum* (קום) / to raise

by Staff Contributor



North French Hebrew Miscellany 518b Leviathan
(c. 13th century)

This week, we read about Moses assembling the Tabernacle. “Moses raised the Tabernacle, and laid its bases, set up the framework of boards, put in the crossbars and set up its pillars” (Exodus 40:18). That English word “raised” might be easy to skip over as being rather mundane. But sometimes, the most ordinary things are deceptively rich and complex in meaning. This just so happens to be one of those cases. The English verb “raised” is a translation of the Hebrew word *qum* (קום), which Strong’s Definitions describes as “to rise (in various applications, literal, figurative, intensive and causative)...abide, accomplish.”ⁱⁱ While these definitions may seem wildly different to our modern minds, they were interrelated in the mind and culture of the time.

In Job, talking about Leviathan, we read, “A sword that reaches him has no effect [*takum*]ⁱ—nor with a spear, dart, or javelin” (Job 41:18). In this instance, the biblical author used *qum* to describe the accomplishment of a thing. The sword wielded against Leviathan was not able to accomplish anything. Hence, we would say it had no effect. This understanding of the term relates to Moses setting up the Tabernacle. He wasn’t just pitching a tent. He was accomplishing something greater—establishing a dwelling for God among His people.

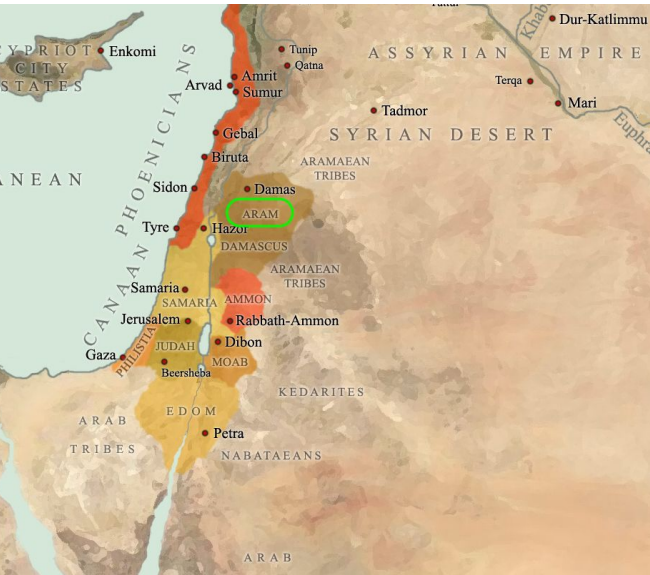
Let’s take a closer look at a couple of verses from the Book of Psalms.

“Arise [*kumah*], *ADONAI*! Deliver me, my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek. You shatter the teeth of the wicked.” –Psalm 3:7

“Arise [*kumah*], *ADONAI*, in Your anger, arise against the fury of my enemies! Awake for me! You decreed justice.” –Psalm 7:6

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We shouldn't understand "arise" to mean the psalmist was pleading with the Almighty to get up from His bed or stand up from His throne. The psalmist's request was much more profound than that (and will probably resonate with many of us). The writer was in dire straits, unable to perceive God's presence. The call to "arise" is poetic and figurative, beseeching the omnipresent One to come into his personal view. These requests for God to rise aren't unlike the phenomenon of dawn. The sun doesn't technically rise, but each morning it comes into view, "bringing" fresh possibilities with it.



Map of Canaan and Syria c.850 BC

In the Book of Isaiah, we find the prophet comforting the king in the face of threats that Aram (an ancient territory located in Mesopotamia and Syria) made against Judah: **"It will not stand [takum], nor will it occur"** (Isaiah 7:7). It's perfectly reasonable to be anxious when a powerful nation is threatening the destruction of your small regional kingdom. So when God—through His prophet—decreed that those foreign threats would not *stand*, they weren't idle words. The Almighty's words cut straight to the heart of the matter: no pagan terrorizing would come to fruition. Let that earthly king talk. Talk is cheap—nothing will come of it.

In modern praise, it is common to call upon God to arise. It might be fruitful to reflect on such lyrics and prayers: what exactly are we asking God to *accomplish*? We're not giving Him a wakeup call—we're expressing a deep longing to see the Almighty take action!

Rabbi Jason & Fusion Global present HEBREW WORD STUDY

קום

קום / qum: VB. *rise, arise, stand.*

1. to go up — to travel up (whether to a physical or abstract location ...culturally determined to be upward / Psa 140:11).
2. to stand up (arise) — to rise to one's feet (Jonah 1:2).
3. to rise up — to rise up for the purpose of taking action (Mic 7:6).
4. to set up (erect) — to construct, build, or erect (Amos 9:11).
5. to raise — to raise from a lower to a higher position (Ezek 26:8).
6. to establish — to institute, enact, or establish (Ruth 4:5).
7. to stand (maintain) — to hold one's ground; maintain a position; be steadfast or upright (Joshua 7:12).

taken from the *Lexham Research Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible*

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THOUGHTS for REFLECTION

Take some time this week to prayerfully consider and discuss with friends:

- This is your invitation to sit with this thought from our Commentary: “all is for naught without God’s palpable, life-changing, intimate presence.” That’s a bold claim! How does that make you feel? What desires does it stir in you? Many of us “settle” for less than this fullness of God’s presence, inoculated by the rigors of daily life. Let’s ask the Holy Spirit for a “divine reset” this week, deepening our hunger and thirst for intimacy with the Lord!
- Are you familiar with the term, “Christianese”? It can refer to religious, spiritual, or theological jargon—words or expressions that don’t make much sense to “outsiders.” Worse yet, we can use these terms mindlessly, presuming certain meanings that aren’t helpful or accurate. **“Arise”** might fall into this category. Are there any others that come to mind? How can we avoid using language unfaithfully but rather, use it in ways that honor God and neighbor?

NEXT WEEK’S READINGS: *Parashat Vayikra* / פְּרִשַׁת וַיִּקְרָא

TORAH

Sunday / Leviticus 1:1-13

Monday / Leviticus 1:14-2:6

Tuesday / Leviticus 2:7-16

Wednesday / Leviticus 3:1-17

Thursday / Leviticus 4:1-26

Friday / Leviticus 4:27-5:10

Saturday / Leviticus 5:11-26

Prophetic Reading (*Haftarah*): 1 Samuel 15:2-34

New Covenant Reading: Mark 6:14-29

Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *Tree of Life Version*.

ⁱ Jonathan Sacks, *Lessons in Leadership: A Weekly Reading of the Jewish Bible* (New Milford, CT: Maggid Books, 2015), 116-117.

ⁱⁱ “H6965 - Qûm - Strong’s Hebrew Lexicon (KJV),” Blue Letter Bible, accessed March 5, 2024, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h6965/kjv/wlc/0-1/>.