

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 21

Vayakhel-Pekudei

The Names:

The names of the often-combined parshiyos of Vayakhel-Pekudei seemingly contradict the theme of their contents.

Vayakhel means to assemble — to gather many individuals into one overarching group. The parshah, though, details each individual utensil that was used in the Mishkan. Thus, the parshah emphasizes the individual parts of the Mishkan, but the name highlights the idea of the group, which glosses over individual differences.

Pekudei means to count each individual element, yet the parshah speaks about the Mishkan in its completed state, highlighting the value of the entire structure, not the individual utensils.

The Explanation:

There are three possible ways to describe the relationship between an individual element and the group it is associated with.

1. The individual item has no independent value; its entire value is in being part of a group.
2. The individual item has independent value, yet when the individual elements coalesce into a group, they are endowed with new significance and value — the value of the group.
3. Initially, the individual has no independent value, yet when it becomes part of a group, it is endowed with individual value.

The Mishkan is an example of the third relationship between the individual and the group: Originally, each utensil did not have independent value as it was being constructed. Once the Mishkan was completed, however, each utensil received a unique value apart from its contribution to the general structure of the Mishkan.

Thus, in Vayakhel, which describes the individual utensils, the general group is emphasized. The individual utensil does not have value at this point; each utensil is merely part of the process of erecting the Mishkan as a whole.

Once the Mishkan is completed, however, in Pekudei, each utensil's individual properties and value begin to emerge.

This is the logic behind Ramabam's classification of the mitzvos of building the Mishkan and creating the individual utensils: Rambam writes that, "we were commanded to build a Beis Hamikdash... this general command includes many individual species of commands... all of these together are called the Mikdash, and G-d's command is also specified regarding each element of the structure." (Sefer Hamitzvos, positive mitzvah 20)

After Rambam states that the command is a general one, containing all the elements of the Mikdash, he then modifies this statement to say that there is an individual command concerning each utensil. Meaning, the importance of the individual utensil is an emergent quality that comes from the structure as a whole being completed.

The Lesson:

A person may think that his own individual and spiritual growth should be his primary concern, and his belonging to the community is of secondary concern. The truth is the opposite: First and foremost, each Jew is part of the community of the Jewish people. Only after discovering your place in the community does your individual value and light emerge. That is why we preface our morning prayers by rededicating ourselves to the mitzvah of loving our fellow Jew as ourselves. We verbalize the obligation to love our fellow before praying because only by subsuming our individuality within the community do we actually discover our individual identities.

Though this seems to be a paradox, it is only because, externally, the concepts of individual and community are mutually exclusive. But from the vantage point of G-d's Essence, both the individual and the community are expressions of G-d's unity. Each individual soul is a reflection of G-d's undivided Essence.
