



לקוטי שיחות  
PROJECT  
LIKKUTEI  
SICHOS

## Sicha Summary

Chelek 16 | Pekudei | Sichas 3

### The Context:

*Parshas Pekudei* discusses the completion of the *Mishkan* and the dwelling of G-d's presence in it. So intimate and pervasive was His presence that "Moshe was unable to enter the *Mishkan* because... the glory of G-d filled the *Mishkan*." (*Shemos* 40:34) The *parshah*, and the book of *Shemos*, conclude, however, with a seemingly tangential description of the procedure determining the timing of Jewish people's travels: "When the cloud rose up from over the *Mishkan*, the Jewish people would set out... if the cloud did not rise, they would not set out..." (*Shemos* 40:36-37)

The following book, *Vayikra*, which takes up the subject of sacrifices in the *Mishkan* and *Beis Hamikdash*, opens with G-d calling Moshe into the *Mishkan*. The *Midrash* explains that G-d's calling picked up from the end of *Pekudei*, which describes that Moshe could not enter the *Mishkan* because of G-d's overwhelming presence. (*Tanchuma, Vayikra* 1)

### The Question:

Why would the Torah interrupt the main narrative of G-d's presence dwelling in the *Mishkan* with an aside about the departure of the cloud, signaling G-d's command to travel?

### A Larger Question:

The beginning and end of a book of Torah have a thematic connection. The book of *Shemos* began with G-d counting the number of Yaakov's family who came to Egypt, "because of His love for them." (*Rashi, Shemos* 1:1) The book ends with *parshas Pekudei*, an accounting of "all the weights of the

contributions to the *Mishkan*... and all its implements.” (*Rashi, Shemos* 38:21)

But counting, which underscores the limited nature of a given thing — the Jewish people, the *Mishkan* — is antithetical to the overarching theme of the book of *Shemos* which is redemption, expressing the shattering of limitation and finitude.

Why is the book of redemption bookended with limiting numbers?

### **Making Sense of Shemos:**

G-d’s desire for the Jewish people to experience redemption from all constraints was not in order for their particular, mundane realities to be erased, but in order for them to see Divine infinity within the limited, circumscribed human reality. This reflects G-d’s essential desire for Creation — to have a dwelling within the lowest of worlds. On the one hand, G-d desires that His essential, infinite Self be present and revealed. On the other hand, He desires His Essence to be refracted through the prism of a limited, material universe.

This Divine desire, though, can be bifurcated: G-d truly desires to be at home and revealed in the souls of the Jewish people, because they are one with His deepest self. But for this oneness to be recognized and apparent, the Jewish people must display their dedication to G-d in the hostile environment of this lowly world and transform it into a place where G-d is welcome. By revealing the Divine reality even within Creation, a Jew reveals that his soul is one with G-d — the true Divine dwelling.

Therefore, in the beginning of the book of *Shemos*, G-d counts the Jewish people, because this is the ultimate objective of “redemption” — for the souls of the Jewish people to experience unity with G-d within their limited human experience of being “counted objects.”

And at the end of the book of *Shemos*, the material objects of the *Mishkan* are counted, because this is how the dwelling for G-d is actually made — by revealing G-dliness within the material world.

**The Explanation:**

The narrative about the cloud's departure signaling the need to travel is not an interruption, but an integral idea contributing to the theme of *Shemos*. The entire purpose of the *Mishkan* — to create a Divine reality within the world — is most acutely expressed specifically in the departure of the cloud of G-d's Presence. When G-d is not plainly seen — when the Jewish people must travel through the desert of exile without the Divine presence — they can truly accomplish their purpose of bringing Divine awareness and cohesion even to those seemingly directionless and meaningless moments.

This is also why the following book, *Vaykira*, discusses sacrifices: Because the objective of sacrifices is similar to the idea of the departure of G-d's cloud at the end of *Shemos*: to take material objects and experiences — animal, mineral, vegetative — and employ them in Divine service, revealing their latent G-dliness.

**The Lesson:**

When traveling through the desert of life, at times of deep confusion, a person must know that G-d is with them at every step, guiding them to where they need to be in order to transform their corner of the world into a home for G-d. Then the cloud's departure can have a positive connotation — they will reach a level of Divine consciousness that transcends the cloud, and they will be able to bring this awareness back down to their place on earth.