

# Vayakhel-Pekudei-Hachodesh 20 “Corona Process”

## Sermon by Rabbi Eliezer Hirsch 3/20/20

Good Shabbos. Shabbat Shalom. First, I'd like to acknowledge that this week's **sermon** is sponsored by the Barsky family, in commemoration of the yahrzeit of beloved and devoted mother, wife, and daughter, Mrs. Harriet Barsky (Tzviah Mintzah Bas Shlomo HaKohen) z'l. May her memory be a blessing.

And on that note, in the absence of kiddush and shul, each week's sermon will be available for sponsorship to help us survive this difficult situation. We pray that the merit of the spreading of Torah will help stop the spread of this terrible virus.

I'd also like to extend congratulations to Rebekah and Sylvan Garfunkel, and their son Marky, upon the birth of a baby boy. Mazal tov!

The Coronavirus has deeply affected the entire world, obviously including our community, and we're all praying this pandemic will end soon, and that we'll be able to gather in person once again. Until then, we will deliver the weekly D'var Torah by podcast.

I will be teaching my annual “Pesach Without the Pain” classes on Wednesdays March 25 and April 1<sup>st</sup>, April Fool's day (where I will probably say something like, “you can eat bagels on Pesach...just kidding!”)

I would also like to offer Mekor members a complimentary copy of my Pesach preparation guide, “Pesach Without the Pain” and/or my companion guide to the Haggadah, “Bringing Order to the Seder” while supplies last. Just email the shul with the request and we will do our best to make them available for pickup someplace in Center City.

We will also be offering other live online classes, so stay tuned for that info. My “Pesach Without the Pain” podcasts are on my blog site (the link for that site can be found in the shul newsletter or on the shul website) and there are Pesach classes from previous years as well as the Hilchot Pesach “bite sized” classes which are 3-4 minute mini classes I have been posting to the site daily, so check it all out. We also encourage you to email the shul if you'd like to offer an online class or other activity for our community.

Every year on this Shabbat, I ask the oft-asked question about our Parsha: *Why does the Torah in Vayakhel Pekudei repeat all the details about building the mishkan?*

We've already completed 2 parshiot, Terumah and Tetzaveh, which present painstaking detail about God's commandment to build the Mishkan. Those parshiot provide a blueprint for the Mishkan's structure, as well as specifications for all the furnishings and ritual objects.

When we reach our Parshiot of *Vayakhel Pikudei*, where it states that we implemented those instructions by building the Mishkan, why can't we simply read the oft repeated pasuk *ka'asher tziva hashem et Moshe, the Jewish people did just as God*

*commanded Moshe*, and leave it at that? If we were at shul, I'd make my annual joke that we could just read that one verse, and kiddush would be very early that Shabbat. So why does the Torah repeat every single detail, taking up two parshiot? What's the purpose?

I think we can answer this question by considering Parshat Hachodesh. The most common explanation regarding the significance of Parshat Hachodesh is that it's fitting to read this Parsha right before Rosh Chodesh Nisan, because Rosh Chodesh Nisan is the topic of Parshat Hachodesh! Parshat Hachodesh also reminds us that Pesach is coming, with details about for example, the observance of Nisan as the first month of the new year, the Korban Pesach, and the mitzvah of Matzah -- all commandments God gave us before we left Egypt. Most holidays start on the actual date of the event we're commemorating. But like Purim and Adar, the "soft" observance of Pesach begins with Rosh Chodesh Nisan.

Moreover, in the seder itself, we state *Yachol Meirosh Chodesh*, that we **could** have celebrated with the Korban Pesach on Rosh Chodesh.

Why is that hypothetical even posed? Why would we start the holiday 2 weeks before the Exodus took place? Clearly there must be a strong connection between Rosh Chodesh Nisan and the message of Pesach and the seder. We can discern that connection from Meseschet Rosh Hashana 10b-11a, which states that there are 2 opinions about when God created the world. Rabbi Eliezer asserts that the world was created on Rosh Hashana, but according to Rabbi Yehoshua, the world was created on Rosh Chodesh Nisan. Tosefot famously concludes that they are **both** correct -- the creation of the world in **thought** took place on Rosh Hashana, while the creation of the world in **action** occurred in Nisan.

As we've explained before, these two types of creation represent two different perspectives on life. On Rosh Hashana, we use thought, which allows us to focus on our overall path in life. This could be why the period of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is a time of contemplation, which can give us the wide berth to make life-altering choices and essentially do Teshuvah in one instant.

In contrast, our emphasis during Pesach is more on actions, which by their very nature must be taken one at a time. The entire holiday is filled with action: spring cleaning, eating special foods, objects we refer to at the seder -- a lot of physicality. The process of completing all of these actions is one that requires considerable patience.

And **that's** why I believe that the Parsha which describes our departure from Egypt is called Parshat **Bo**, and as we learn in Mesechet Rosh Hashana 11b, that leaving Mitzrayim was *forecast, meshumar u'ba misheshet yimei braisheet -- guarded and occurring from the 6 days of creation.*

The word **ba**, *occurring or approaching*, is a word we use over and over for Mashiach, which like yetziat mitzrayim, is another kind of redemption. For example, the *Rambam's 13 principles* states: *I completely believe in the **approaching** of the mashiach - **be'viat hamashiach** (from the Hebrew word "**ba**"), and even though he tarries we wait for him every day that **he will approach - sheyavo** (again from the word "**ba**".) This is teaching us that the mashiach, our redemption, **is constantly in the***

**process** of “**ba**” it is approaching, it is occurring – it’s a long drawn out process, not something immediate.

The Midrash says that Hashem redeems us *keheref ayin*, in the blink of an eye, very sudden and almost unexpected, **but we still must wait for that moment.**

Which brings us back to our question about why this week’s Parsha reiterates every detail about the mishkan. Like the Mashiach coming, Vayakhel-Pekudei entails a process which requires patience at every step of the way.

And that’s also why God made us wait 2 more weeks to celebrate Pesach. We need to be reminded by reading Parshat Hachodesh that redemption takes time, because it is a process we need to endure and have the patience to see it through to the end.

The message from Covid-19 is **not** necessarily, as some say, that Mashiach is coming tomorrow. The message is that we will need patience to endure this long and difficult process, just as we did during Yetziat Mitzrayim. But if we pay heed to the name of our parsha – *Vayakhel, and they gathered together*, we will rely on the strength of our community until the day, hopefully soon, when we can return to our small “Mishkan” in Center City and celebrate our lives together in person once again. Shabbat shalom.