



### **Pikudei – Chasing the Clouds**

Rabbi Shmuel Silber

*“He set up the courtyard all around the Mishkan and the altar, and he put up the screen at the entrance to the courtyard; and Moses completed the work.” (Exodus 40:33)*

Over the last number of *Parshios* we have read of the collection and subsequent creation of the *Mishkan*. God asked for an earthly abode, a place where His beloved children could come to connect. And now, in this week’s *Parsha*, the last section of the book of *Shemos*, the work was complete. The *Mishkan* was brought to Moshe, the Divine Presence descended upon it, and the relationship between God and His nation was further cemented. Yet, the Torah adds a seemingly extraneous piece of information.

*“When the cloud rose up from over the Mishkan, the Children of Israel set out in all their journeys.” (Exodus 40:36).*

Over the course of the next three verses the Torah discusses *Mishkan* movement. Specifically, when the cloud of God would ascend, it signaled a need to break camp and journey forward. But why is this mentioned here? This belongs in the book of *Bamidbar* which details our various journeys in the desert. Yet, this is the last piece of information closing out the book of *Shemos*. What is the deeper meaning?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, 1902-1994) provides an incredible insight. The purpose of the *Mishkan* was to create a home for God within our midst. Although, we believe that God is everywhere, as physical beings it is helpful for us to have an address, a place where we can dedicate ourselves to connection and elevation. The *Mishkan* was the place where God allowed His Presence to be more acutely felt. The cloud which hovered over the *Mishkan* was a manifestation of God. When one saw the cloud, he understood that Hashem was dwelling within our midst; he felt God next to him. There are times in life when we feel close to God, and there are times when we feel distant. What is the approach of the Jew when he feels disconnected and distant? What should we do when we don’t feel inspired and holy? We must find the strength to seek out our Father. We must find the courage to run after the cloud when we are no longer enveloped by it.

This is the message of the verse.

***U’Vheyalos He’Anan Mey’Al HaMishkan, (When the cloud rose up from over the Mishkan)*** – There are times when the cloud of inspiration seems far away. At times, we don’t feel connected to God. The cloud of holiness seems to leave our inner *Mishkan*.

What is our approach in these moments of disconnect?

***Yis’u Bnai Yisroel B’Chol Maaseyhem, (the children of Israel set out in all their journeys)*** – We move forward trying to catch up to the cloud. Sometimes, the cloud is distant but attainable if we are willing to journey towards it. Spiritual inspiration doesn’t show up at our doorsteps. More often, it is hovering, waiting for us, beckoning to us from a distance. We must travel to it, seek it out, find it, and claim it. If we truly want to be enveloped by the cloud of godliness, we must be ready to travel for it.

And now we understand. The entire purpose of the *Mishkan* was to create a space for God within our community and daily lives. Yet at the end of this incredible endeavor, we are taught that no matter how much we want to keep the cloud near us, at some point it travels forward. It is then that the true nature of our spiritual mettle comes through. We all love holiness, inspiration, and closeness to God, but are we willing to push ourselves, to travel and venture out to acquire them? Meaningful and lasting personal holiness is never acquired with ease. It requires effort, exertion, and willingness to chase after the cloud.