

# DIMENSIONS IN CHUMASH

## PARSHAS PEKUDEI

### Synonyms in Lashon Hakodesh

אֵלֶּה פְּקוּדֵי הַמִּשְׁכָּן...

*These are the reckonings of the Mishkan...*<sup>1</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

Often in Lashon Hakodesh we come across two or more words which appear to share the same meaning, essentially “two ways of saying the same thing.” However, as numerous commentators demonstrate, there is no such thing as synonyms in Lashon Hakodesh. Rather, each word contains a particular nuance or variation within the general theme.<sup>2</sup> A number of examples of this idea can be found in our parsha. Let us consider some of them.

#### PEKIDA AND SEFIRA

The parsha begins with a tally of the materials used in the construction of the Mishkan. The opening verse reads: “אֵלֶּה פְּקוּדֵי הַמִּשְׁכָּן – These are the reckonings of the Mishkan.” We see that the word used for the count is “פקודי”. We are also aware that is another word for counting, “ספירה,” used e.g. in the mitzvah of counting the Omer: “וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם” – You shall count for yourselves.”<sup>3</sup> What is the difference in connotation between these two terms?

The Hakesav ve’Hakabbalah explains that these two words reflect two different types of counting:

- ▷ One type of counting simply takes the form of adding units up until one knows how many there are, for example, the steady count of the days in the omer.
- ▷ Another type of counting involves first counting units within various groups and then adding it all together; for example the census of the Jewish people, who were counted first as families and then as tribes, and then those amounts were added together to give the national total.

<sup>1</sup> Shemos 38:21.

<sup>2</sup> Classic exponents of this idea are the Vilna Gaon, Afikei Yehuda, Hakesav Ve’Hakkabalah, the Malbim and the Netziv.

<sup>3</sup> Vayikra 23:15.

The term ספירה denotes the first type of purely incremental counting.

The second type of counting is called פקידה. This is associated with the word “לפקוד – to remember,” since after one has finished counting the first group, he needs to keep track of that amount as he starts from zero in counting the second group, and so on.

Therefore, since the tally of the materials used in the Mishkan involved calculating how much was used for the various parts and appurtenances, it partakes of the *pekida*-remembering type of count and hence the term “פקודי” is used.

## AVODAH AND MELACHAH

Having described the making of the Mishkan and its vessels in last week’s parsha, and the priestly garments in this week’s, chapter 39 concludes with a summation of the entire enterprise:

כָּל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה כֵּן עָשׂוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת כָּל הָעֲבֹדָה. וַיִּרְא מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל הַמְּלָאכָה וְהִנֵּה עָשׂוּ אֹתָהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה'.

*In accordance with all that Hashem commanded Moshe, so did the Children of Israel perform all the work. Moshe saw all the work and behold, they had done it as Hashem commanded.*

We see that first verse refers to the work with the word “עבודה”, while the second verse uses the term “מלאכה”. What is the difference in connotation?

- ▷ עבודה – refers to the work that one puts *in* to a project.
- ▷ מלאכה – refers to the product that comes *out*.

Helpfully, in this instance, the English term “work” itself shares these two connotations. On the one hand, one could say that something was “thirty hours of work,” referring to the work that went in to the enterprise. On the other hand, one could also refer to important book as “a classic work,” referring to that which was produced.

Similarly, in our situation, the first verse states that the Jewish people had finished investing the necessary work (עבודה) into building the Mishkan, and the second verse says that Moshe surveyed what they had produced (מלאכה) and saw that it was in exact accordance with what Hashem commanded.<sup>4</sup>

## NESINA AND SIMA

Our parsha concludes with a description of the setting up of the Mishkan on the first of Nissan. Verse 18 of Chapter 40 reads:

וַיִּקַּם מֹשֶׁה אֶת הַמְּשָׁכָן וַיִּתֵּן אֶת אֲדָנָיו וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת קַרְשָׁיו וַיִּתֵּן אֶת בְּרִיחָיו

*Moshe erected the Mishkan, he put down its sockets, he placed its beams and put in its poles.*

We note that the placement of the sockets and poles is described with the term “ויתן” while that of the

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<sup>4</sup> Based on Commentaries of Chasam Sofer and Malbim.

beams uses the term “וּישָׁם”. What is behind this differentiation?

The Malbim explains the connotations of these two terms as follows:

- ▷ נתינה – as its name suggests, derives from the word “נותן – to give.” As such, it is used to simply describe not withholding something, but rather placing it before one, without any particular specification as to how this is done.
- ▷ שימה – denotes a more precise or ordered way of placing something.

Thus for example, when Hashem commands Moshe, “וְאֵלֶּה הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר תָּשִׂים לִפְנֵיהֶם” – And these are the laws that you shall place before them,<sup>5</sup> the Mechilta explains this to mean: “Arrange [the laws] before them like a set table (שלחן ערוך).” The use of the word “תשים” indicates Hashem’s insistence that Moshe not only transmit the information, but that he do so in a way which is optimally ordered and organized.

How does all this relate to the items mentioned in our verse?

The halachah states that beams of the Mishkan always needed to be arranged in the exact same order as they were originally placed.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the *melachah* of writing on Shabbos is actually derived from the letters they would write on each of the beams in the Mishkan to identify where along the wall it was to be placed. However, this requirement applies only to the beams, not to the sockets or the poles, which could be placed or inserted in a different order each time the Mishkan was set up.

We can now understand why the Torah uses the term “ויתן” for the sockets and beams, which were placed in a non-specific way, while it uses the term “וּישָׁם” for the beams, which carried the additional insistence of placing them in a specific order.<sup>7</sup>

These examples should hopefully encourage us to give our full attention to the words the Torah uses, and to always ask why a particular word was chosen in each verse and what its unique connotation is.

## חזק חזק ונתחזק

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5 Shemos 21:1.

6 This is the origin of the practice to make an *atarah* for a tallis, so that the same side always covers the head.

7 There is a well-known halachic principle that “מעלין בקודש ולא מורידין” – we ascend in matters of holiness and do not descend.” The Gemara (Menachos 99a) cites our verse as a source for the second part of that principle – that we do not descend. However, the Gemara does not explicate how we derive this from the verse. Perhaps it is as per the observation of the Malbim, namely, that the Torah is particular that the beams always retain their order, so as not to descend in holiness by being placed further away from the Ark than they originally were.