



Parshat Pekudei: Hooks and Connections

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When the building of the Mishkan is completed, Moshe performs a final accounting of the funds collected and how they were used. Our parsha opens with a review of the numbers: how much gold was used, how much silver and how much copper. In the process of this review, the Torah notes a minor expense directed towards the fashioning of silver hooks, which would be used to hold up the tapestries making up the walls of the Mishkan ([Shemot 38:28](#)).

At face value, this expenditure report doesn't seem to offer us much by way of spiritual teaching. After all, the hooks were merely a technical necessity, not a means for connecting the people to God. But the Midrash ([Shemot Rabbah 51:6](#)) sees between the lines a crucial teaching moment for Moshe and the Jewish people. While each and every step of the Mishkan's construction was communicated to Moshe from God, as highlighted by the repeated reminder throughout our Parsha that all steps were undertaken "as God commanded Moshe," the budget review was Moshe's independent undertaking. Concerned that some members of the Jewish people would fear he had skimmed a few silver talents off the top, Moshe made a point of not inaugurating the Mishkan until everyone was assured that no donations had been misdirected or mishandled. Along the way, though, Moshe realized that the numbers don't add up!

Upon running the numbers, he discovered 1,775 Shekel that had not been accounted for – a minor rounding error for all that was collected, but one that nonetheless he felt may cost him his reputation as the faithful leader of the Jewish people. It was in that moment that God directed Moshe's attention upwards, whereupon he noticed the silver hooks, hiding behind the tapestries they were holding up. That was where the rest of the silver had been used, and the matter was settled. The Jewish people celebrated the completion of the Mishkan joyously, confident that Moshe had been faithful in his oversight of the project.

It is no accident that the component of the Mishkan that allowed for a successful accounting were the hooks, known in Hebrew as 'vavim.' The word 'vav' refers not only to hooks, which held together fabrics in the Tabernacle courtyard, but also to the root of the word, the letter 'vav'. The literal meaning of 'vav' in Hebrew is 'and', signifying connection and partnership. To this day, many Sifrei Torah are written in accordance with a kabbalistic tradition called "vavei ha'amudim," 'the vavs/hooks of the pillars,' such that every column of the Torah scroll begins with the letter Vav. But the origin of this tradition, cited by Rema as a custom ([YD 273:6](#)), is not entirely clear.



Perhaps as the Torah is to be our connection between the mundane and the ethereal, it seems fitting that each column of the Torah would begin with the letter Vav, representing this ideal. For without the mundane there is no need for the ethereal, and without the ethereal the mundane is purposeless. The 'vavs,' hanging atop the Mishkan and atop the Torah scroll, hold up our entire weltanschauung. Torah is founded upon connection and trust between the realms of the spiritual and physical.

We, as humans, are born on Yom Vav, the sixth day of creation. We have the ability and opportunity to serve as 'vavim,' as connectors and bridge builders. With strife emerging once again between sectors of the population of Israel, and paradoxically with growing opportunities to connect Jewish communities within and beyond the State of Israel around common cause, purpose and challenge, now is the time for vavim – connections. We must live up to the mission of being born on Yom Vav, of Moshe's meticulous leadership, building bridges through the development of mutual trust and partnership.

Perhaps we will be worthy of making our national homeland, along with the entire world, into a Mishkan, a peaceful dwelling place for us and the Divine presence.

(I wish to thank Rabbi Dr. Jacob J Schacter for sharing with me several years ago the kernel of the idea presented.)