

My parsha is called Pekudei. It's from the book of Exodus, or Shemot.

In this parasha, there is a lot of detail that describes all the steps the people of Israel took to build and complete the Tabernacle, the mishkan, a portable sanctuary. The tabernacle was a spiritual center that, even in the middle of the desert, was a place where the People of Israel could atone for sins or express gratitude, usually through sacrifices.

The mishkan was also the place where God would communicate with Moses, during the time of exile from Egypt, wandering through the desert to find Israel. At the end of the first section of this parasha, Moses' brother Aaron and the priests were given special clothing. This symbolic moment marked the completion of the building of the Tabernacle.

The parsha explains how the people of Israel built the Tabernacle, and Moses blessed them when he saw their work. It had become a holy place. Moses and the people knew this because of a cloud that hovered over the Tabernacle, symbolizing that God was temporarily dwelling in it. When the cloud lifted, it was a sign for people to move on.

In my **Haftarah**, one of King Solomon's achievements was the building of the First Temple, which took seven years. When it was completed, the people of Israel celebrated with ceremonies and festivities.

The completion of the Temple was a major milestone in Israel's history.

With the Temple completed, God's presence would always fill it, and would be a permanent place of worship in Jerusalem.

What I find interesting is how many connections there are between my Torah portion and my Haftarah. Both of them deal with completion of special places, blessings, and the presence of God.

In the Torah, we learn that the Tabernacle was completed. In my haftarah, we learn the Temple in Jerusalem is completed. In the Torah, Moses blesses the people of Israel. In my haftarah, Solomon blesses the people of Israel.

As I was studying my Torah portion, some questions came to my mind. What message is this parsha trying to get across? Beyond the text, what is the main importance of this parsha? Why did Solomon and Moses bless the people of Israel, and instead of giving thanks to God for His presence in these special places?

Both the Tabernacle and the Temple gave the people of Israel a place to do meaningful things together - things for God, and things for themselves, things that unified them. This included prayer, celebration, togetherness and even being silent.

The Tabernacle and Temple also connected to each individual person as a sanctuary. Each person is made up of many different elements to create a unique balance. And one could say that each person has a one purpose, just like the Tabernacle and the Temple.

The Tabernacle and the Temple connected to us individually, and they were also places for God to dwell in, connecting to everyone. Even though God is always around us, the Tabernacle and Temple were permanent places to focus on God, and only God. Before the Temple, the people of Israel had a portable version of Judaism. They didn't have a place to focus on God, and not necessarily anything to symbolize their common beliefs, something to unify them.

The Tabernacle and the Temple gave the people of Israel places to go to - together, and as individuals, two experiences at once. Private contemplation, and public worship.

Imagine how hard it was when the Temple was destroyed - they had to go back to a portable Judaism, and many forgot how to do this.

Today, in the reform movement, synagogues are also called "Temples". Instead of relying only on one, only in Israel, we create sanctuaries - for ourselves as individuals, and for our communities -

everywhere we find ourselves. The people of Israel have become portable, but we need permanent places - for Judaism to be taught, and for God to find us. And for us to find God, as a united people, no matter how much geography may divide us.

Thank you to my amazing friends and family for being here on my special day. Thank you mama, you have put in so much work towards today, and also supported me from day one, I love you to the moon and back and back and back. You give me amazing advice and I feel so much in my heart for you, I can't find words to say. Thank you dada, you have helped me so much along the process of becoming a bat mitzvah and I couldn't be here without you. You are my role model and you give me light when I'm in the dark. Also, thanks for not eating all the food before everyone got here. Thank you so much, Talya, you haven't just been my sister, but you're my best friend. You support me so much, even when I take hours in the bathroom getting ready. I love spending time with you and