SUMMARY OF VAYAQHEL-PEQUDE

Our Parasha begins with a reminder about the observance of Shabbat, indicating that even the construction of the Tabernacle, or Mishkan, must be suspended on the seventh day. Then the Tora continues with the description of the building of the Mishkan, implying that the people have been forgiven by God for the sin of the Golden calf thanks to the intervention of Moshe. The Tora lists all the materials needed to build the Tabernacle and mentions all the materials, artifacts, and sections of the Tabernacle, and the priestly garments that were to be made.

Men and women donated generously all the materials and labor that Moshe had requested. Moshe announces that God has chosen, and inspired, Betzalel and Aholiab to serve as the head artisans of the Tabernacle construction project, and he transfers all the donated materials to them. The people continue to donate generously, until the artisans informed Moshe that the materials they already had, were more than enough to complete the assigned task. Moshe asks the people to stop donating materials. The workers start their work: the curtains, panels, sockets, the covering of the entrance to the main Sanctuary which separated the Qodesh –where the Menora, the Table of offerings (non-animals) and the Altar of Incense were- and the Qodesh haQodashim where is the Ark of the covenant that contains the Tablets of the Law was. The Tora now describes the construction of the Menorah (the candelabrum) and the Altar of Incense. The anointing oil and incense are also prepared. The description of the Tabernacle continues with the construction of the outer Altar – where animal sacrifices are performed – the copper fountain where the Cohanim would wash their feet and hands: the curtains of the Tabernacle and the beams and hooks that supported them.

The Tora gives an accurate account of the sums and quantities of gold, silver and copper donated for the construction of the

Tabernacle, as well as the list of elements and construction materials used. The Tora then describes the *ephod,* an inverted vest, worn by the Cohen Gadol, and its suspenders, fixed with precious stones, the Choshen Mishpat that the High Priest wears on his chest, with its four rows of three precious stones per row. On each of these stones the names of one of the 12 Tribes of Israel is engraved. Priestly robes also include the Me'il, a purple cloak with gold bells worn by the High Priest, and the Tzitz, or band of gold, that he wears on his forehead. The Tora also describes the garments that regular priests wore: robes, turbans, a belt and pants. The construction of the Tabernacle is completed.

The artisans bring everything to Moshe for a final inspection. Moshe inspects the entire work and confirms that it was done exactly according to Divine instructions. Moshe blesses the artisans and workers. God indicates to Moshe that he should erect the Mishkan on the first of Nisan. God also indicates that all the elements, artifacts and objects of the Tabernacle must be taken to their appropriate places and must be anointed with oil to consecrate them as objects of Divine worship. Moshe must also clothe his brother Aharon and his sons in priestly robes, and anoint them with oil.

When Moshe finished all the work, a Cloud of Glory, indicating the Divine Presence, manifested in the Tabernacle. This same cloud also served as a guide for the Jews during their journey in the desert: when the cloud moved, the people followed it. When the cloud stopped the people set up their camp until the cloud moved again.