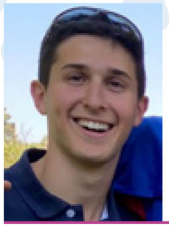
THE TRIBE WEEKLY
PARASHAT VAYAKHEL-PEKUDEI 13-14 MARCH | 25 ADAR

ALL RISE



BY: **NAFTALI ARDEN**

Tribe gap year student

In a *parasha shiur* I attend in Yeshiva, we have talked much about how the layout of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) described in *Shemot* is similar to the way we design our shuls today.

An example of this is the *Aron* (Ark) mentioned this week in *Parashat Pekudei*, where Moshe (Moses) lays down the *Luchot* (Tablets of stone containing the commandments). This is imitated in shuls with *Sifrei Torah* (Torah scrolls) kept in Arks today.

I find it interesting, however, that Moshe lays the *Luchot* in a prone position, lying down, and we keep our *Sifrei Torah* standing upright today. Should we not follow tradition and lay down our *Sifrei Torah* in the *Aron Kodesh*?

Rabbi David ben Zimra (known as the Radbaz, 1479-1573) responds to this question bringing three ideas to the table:

The first explains that the *Luchot* were meant as a testimony, as symbols of God's commandments. People did not come to the Ark to study them. The Torah, however, is a guide. It is kept in an upright position for immediate use. The Torah is more than just a symbol; it is a code that we consult for practical use and it standing upright symbolises this. It is like a movie poster you have on your wall vs the film you actually watch. You don't study the poster, but it reminds you that you like the film. Watching the film is the practical experience that you can enjoy and take from.

The second point suggests that the *Luchot* could be read from either side when first presented to *Bnei Yisrael* (the Children of Israel). Therefore, they could be placed lying down and still be read. The *Sefer Torah* has writing only on one side and so stands so we can read the written side. The Radbaz uses this analogy to demonstrate that, at the time they were given, Judaism could be approached from any point of view. *Bnei Yisrael* were living in a totally Jewish environment. Now we live in secularised communities, and it is much more difficult to learn and understand Torah. Its standing up therefore symbolises its accessibility and calls us to read and learn from it.

The final idea portrays a sense of mutual respect. Just as we stand when the Ark is opened, the Torah stands as a sign of respect to us, a mutualistic relationship. If we fall, so does the Torah.

Rabbi Norman Lamm (1927-2020) comments: 'The Jew must never sink low; he must soar even higher...for if we will not strive to be more than merely respectful Jews, we will become less than respectful Jews. The times we live in... call us to stand and live as upright Jews, so we keep our Torah in the Ark upright as well.'

It is vital we understand the respect the Torah is due. We must work hard to ensure we uphold its values and *halachot* (laws) to stand strong as *Am Yisrael*. Shabbat Shalom.

Parasha Anagrams

Unjumble the letters to uncover words or phrases from the article above!

1. BATS LET
2. A HORSE FRET
3. A DEK HONORS
4. HUT GRIP
5. HOMES
6. MOM NAN ALARM
7. I PEEKD I PUT A PHRASE

Answers: 1. Tablets 2. Sefer Torah 3. Aron Kodesh 4. Upright 5. Moshe 6. Norman Lamm 7. Parashat Pekudei