

Pekudei: Noam Hashem B'Maasei Yadeinu

- Nisson Shulman.

Moshe's prayer was necessary before the Mishkan would stand, that Hashem's Shehina descend on the work of our hands, but moreover that through the grace of Hashem, the work of our hands will be established. Nothing will happen in any area of Jewish life without maase yadenu; children, community, Synagogues, Yeshivos, security of Israel, depends on this combination of Noam Hashem, and maase Yadenu. Without maase yadenu Hashem will not help us. And Maase yadenu alone will not succeed.... The Talmud in Sotah, al mi yesh lanu lehishaen... Parshat Shekalim brings to mind all the great causes of our people, and all will succeed only with the combination of maase yadenu and noam Hashem.

1. Viyehi Noam...Uma'asei Yadeinu
2. The Midrash that the sanctuary was erected through Moshe's efforts, but not till he prayed, that Hashem grace the work of our hands.
3. We have a tendency to expect. We expect children to stay within our faith. But only MAASE YADENU will help them do so.
4. Missionary menace; we expect children to be strong enough to resist. But only MAASE YADENU will achieve this.
5. We expect that there should be youth in our community, children in Synagogue, young people involved in our prayer. It won't happen by itself. It requires the work of our hands.
6. We expect the media to tell the truth about Israel, but wishing won't have any effect at all, and the only thing that might affect them is our own more clever approach to public relations, in other words, maase yadenu.
7. We are told to rely on a foreign power for security. The 1956 war was started when the foreign powers we relied on for security in Sinai turned tail and withdrew. In fact, it is probable that every one of the wars of Israel could have been prevented if foreign powers had kept their promises and were straight in dealing with Israel. What reason can we have to rely on them today? Israel therefore relies on MAASE YADENU, and maintains the buffer zone on the West Bank, builds a security wall despite opposition from nations, has learned the hard way to practice reliance on MAASE YADENU.
8. The response to the holocaust we hear so often is NEVER AGAIN. What will insure that it happen, never again? Surely reliance on the benevolence of nations is not enough! Surely it requires MAASE YADENU!
9. We are told that there are social problems in Israel: absorption, immigration problems, problems of economy. MAASE YADENU is the answer to all of this, but only half the answer.

10. For our tradition teaches that we cannot rely on ourselves alone. And if AL TIVTECHU BINEDIVIM, then upon whom can we rely? AVINU SHEBASHAMAYIM. That is clearly stated by the Gemara in Sota (49a and b). There it is stated that there will come a time like ours when troubles shall engulf, not only our people but all the world; when there will be arrogance everywhere, even in the halls of learning; when children will mock their parents; when liquor will be plentiful, and drugs abound; when crime shall overtake the land. al mi yesh lanu lehisshaen? Upon whom can we rely? On our Father in Heaven.

11. Is this a contradiction? Is this gemara denying the importance of MAASE YADENU? Not at all. It really is saying that after all is said and done, the bottom line, God's blessing is all we have to rely upon. But he does not give his blessing unless we show by the work of our hands that we are worthy of it. And that is what Moses meant when he prayed that God's blessing be upon us and that He establish the work of our hands. We must do our share. Only then will the Almighty do his. That is the road we must follow; deeds and faith; neither alone is sufficient.

12. Action without faith is sinful, and Bar Kochba, according to our tradition fell because he thought he could do it alone without God's help.

13. Faith alone without action is pointless. When God said to Moses at the shore of the REED SEA with the Egyptians behind and the sea in front, Why do you cry out to me, speak to the children of Israel and let them march, He was teaching this lesson, that there is a time for crying out to God, but first we must begin the proper course of action. Speak to the children of Israel, and command them, FORWARD MARCH! One of the stories arising out of the Six Day War, when the threat was greatest and the tanks were moving, was the pious Jew who exhorted all who would hear, YIDDEN, FARLOST SACH NISHT AF NISIM; SAGT TEHILIM; "Jews, don't rely on miracles; Say Tehilim!" Even he demanded we do not rely on miracles. But we say, not only say Tehilim, but also build planes and tanks and develop the structure of defense.

14. That is the meaning of the Midrash that portrays how the Mishkan was erected by miracle, and not by human agency, not even by Moses' hands. It collapsed again and again, until Moshe Rabbenu's prayer, VIYEHI NOAM... In this way the Midrash teaches that no one, not even all the people together, can invoke God's blessing and His spirit, can erect His sanctuary.

15. So that's the point of the Midrash. If the people all together succeeded in erecting the sanctuary, it might have been thought that it stood only because of their efforts. That wasn't intended. Nor could Moses do it himself. It would have been an impossible task. But God won't do it without human effort. So Moses put his back to the work. And God sent miraculous help and behold, the sanctuary stood.

16. It doesn't matter if the task seems impossible. It is ours to begin the work. And if God wants us to succeed, we shall. VIYEHI NOAM ADOSHEM ALENU UMAASE YADENU KONENEHU. It is the word of our own hands, which God would establish.

17. This is Parshat Shekalim. It is symbolic of every great Jewish cause. But no matter what the cause, it will only be successful by that great partnership, Maase Yadenu, and Noam Hashem alenu.

VIYEHI NOAM ADOSHEM ALENU, UMAASE YADENU KONENEHU. That is what Moshe Rabbenu meant when he began his prayer, YEHI RATZON SHETISHRE SHECHINA BEMAASE YADENU.