

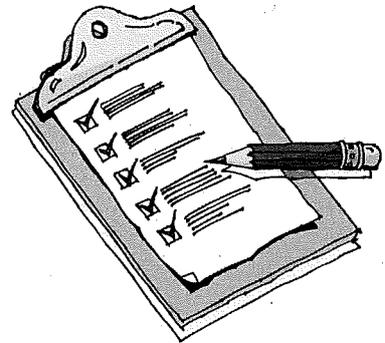
Have synagogue building projects always been this complicated?!

Text 1 – Exodus 39:21, 33-43 (bullet points added)

These are the accounts of the tabernacle as they were rendered according to the commandment of Moses, through the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar, the son of Aaron the priest.

And they brought the tabernacle unto Moses:

- 5 • the Tent, and all its furniture, its clasps, its boards, its bars, and its pillars, and its sockets;
- and the covering of rams' skins dyed red, and the covering of sealskins, and the veil of the screen;
- the ark of the testimony, and the staves thereof, and the ark-cover; the
10 table, all the vessels thereof, and the showbread;
- the pure candlestick, the lamps thereof, even the lamps to be set in order, and all the vessels thereof, and the oil for the light;
- and the golden altar, and the anointing oil, and the sweet incense, and the screen for the door of the Tent; the brazen altar, and its grating of brass, its
15 staves, and all its vessels, the laver and its base;
- the hangings of the court, its pillars, and its sockets, and the screen for the gate of the court, the cords thereof, and the pins thereof, and all the instruments of the service of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting;
- 20 • the plaited garments for ministering in the holy place;
- the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office.



25 According to all that the Eternal One commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did all the work. And Moses saw all the work, and, behold, they had done it; as the Eternal One had commanded, even so had they done it. And Moses blessed them.

Text 2 – Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 55a

The Holy One said to Moses, "Do you consider Bezalel suitable?" Moses replied, "Sovereign of the Universe, if You think him suitable, surely I must also!" God said to him, "All the same, go and consult the people." He went and asked Israel, "Do
5 you consider Bezalel suitable?" They replied, "If the Holy One, ever to be blessed, and you consider him suitable, surely we must!"

Text 3 – Midrash Exodus Rabbah, 51:6

Moses wasted no time, for he said to the people: “Come, and I will furnish you with the complete details of all the expenditure involved.”

Why did Moses need to account to the people when the Eternal One trusted him so implicitly?

5 It was because Moses overheard certain Israelites scoffing behind his back. They said, “See the back of Moses’s neck: how fat it is.” To which his friend retorted, “What! Do you expect a man in charge of the construction of the tabernacle not to be rich?”

10 When Moses heard all this, he said, “I vow that as soon as the Tabernacle is completed, I will give you an account of everything.”

Text 4 – Rabbi Margaret Jacobi, 2016

The word ‘pikadon’ means a pledge or security, something entrusted for the future. I believe that the Hebrew root PKD is about accountability. To be accountable is to count everything and know where it is. This brings us, finally, to this parasha. Here, ‘pikudei’ could be translated ‘accounts’. Accounts are not just financial records. They are about recording financial transactions so that they are clear and transparent, so that we know that money has been used fairly and appropriately. We are told how much gold, silver and brass was donated and exactly how it was used. These gifts were entrusted to Moses for the construction of the sanctuary and Moses accounted for them to the Israelites so that they knew their gifts had been used for the purpose they had been given. We are taught that in all our dealings we must be honest and open. If we have been entrusted with material wealth, we must use it for good.

15 Accountability is not just about money. It is also about how we care for people. In recent years, there has been a worrying trend in Britain and elsewhere for people to feel less responsible for each other. Surveys indicate that people are more likely to blame the poor for their poverty and be less willing to help them, either directly or through taxation, than they did 30 years ago. This has resulted in rising poverty and homelessness. In a few places, homeless people have even been penalised for sleeping on the street or begging for food, rather than being given shelter. Judaism teaches that we do indeed have a responsibility for others. We should take account of each and every person and make sure they are cared for. We have a duty to care for others and ensure that, they, too do not live in fear and without the basic necessities of life, food, shelter and security, which we who are prosperous take for granted.

25 As we read this week’s parasha, may we think about our accountability to others and the task that has been entrusted to us, of working for a world where every person counts.

Text 5 – Simon Patrick (Anglican bishop), 1699

Ithamar maintained an inventory of everything, expressing by name every pin, for instance, and to what use it was put, and in what place it served. Because otherwise such small things might have been lost and they might not have been able to set the Tabernacle up again.

Text 6 – Pope Francis, 2014, listing 15 ailments of the Curia (the Vatican's civil service)

- 1 Feeling immortal and never engaging in reflection;
- 2 Working too hard and neglecting self-care;
- 3 Becoming spiritually hardened;
- 4 Becoming overinvested in management and planning, and “trying to contain and direct the freedom of the Holy Spirit, which is always greater and more flexible than any human planning”;
- 5 Disunity borne of poor communication;
- 6 “Spiritual Alzheimer’s”: forgetting the holiness of their work;
- 7 Internal rivalry;
- 8 “Existential schizophrenia”: abandoning human contact and pastoral work for paper-pushing;
- 9 “The terrorism of gossip”;
- 10 Idolising earthly superiors;
- 11 Indifference to others;
- 12 Joylessness and “the disease of a lugubrious face”;
- 13 Material desires;
- 14 Forming cliques and excluding those perceived as being subjects; and
- 15 Self-serving vanity.