

Weekly Teaching

March 8, 2019

Exodus 25: 1–2 & 8

The Lord said to Moses: “Tell the people of Israel to bring me their sacred offerings. Accept the contributions from all whose hearts are moved to offer them...Have the people of Israel build me a holy sanctuary so I can live among them—Build this Tabernacle and its furnishings exactly according to the pattern I will show you.

Exodus 39: 32–42

And so at last the Tabernacle was finished.

The Israelites had done everything just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

And they brought the entire Tabernacle to Moses:

- *the sacred tent with all its furnishings, clasps, frames, crossbars, posts and bases*
- *the tent coverings of tanned ram skins and fine goatskin leather*
- *the inner curtain to shield the Ark*
- *the Ark of the Covenant and its carrying poles*
- *the Ark’s cover — the place of atonement*
- *the table and all its utensils*
- *the Bread of the Presence*
- *the pure gold lampstand with its symmetrical lamp cups, all its accessories and the olive oil for lighting*
- *the gold altar*
- *the anointing oil and fragrant incense*
- *the curtain for the entrance of the sacred tent*
- *the bronze altar*
- *the bronze grating and its carrying poles and utensils*
- *the washbasin with its stand*
- *the curtains for the walls of the courtyard*
- *the posts and their bases*
- *the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard*
- *the ropes and tent pegs*
- *all the furnishings to be used in worship at the Tabernacle*
- *the beautifully stitched garments for the priests to wear while ministering in the Holy Place*
- *the sacred garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments for his sons to wear as they minister as priests*

So the people of Israel followed all of the Lord’s instructions to Moses.

Then Moses inspected all their work. When he found it had been done just as the Lord had commanded him, he blessed them.

After the disaster of the Golden Calf incident, our Spiritual Ancestors felt that God’s presence had moved far away from them, and more than anything they desired reconciliation with the Divine.

God understood this desire of the Israelites and commanded them to build a defined Sacred Space by which they all would equally contribute and feel once again that God was with them in a tangible way.

When the Tabernacle is completed, a Midrash teaches that Moses blesses the Israelites and says: “May it be the will that God’s presence, Shechina, will rest upon the work of your hands.”

The Midrash further notes that Moses doesn’t say “may it be God’s will” rather he simply states “the will”.

The notion being that it always will require “the will” of the Israelites to make God present in their lives; God will only dwell where we let God in.

Another Midrash teaches that when the Tabernacle was initially built, it kept falling down.

The builders tried over and over again to build the construction per the blue prints God had provided, but the same disastrous results would occur and the building would collapse.

According to this rabbinic legend, Moses finally asks God why the Tabernacle won't stand firm.

God answers: “It keeps falling down because you (Moses) were not involved in its work at all. Everyone else participated, but you merely gave instructions and watched over the work of the others.”

God then instructs Moses to go and help with his own hands to build the Tabernacle.

Moses joined all of the others, and together they all began to re-construct the Tabernacle, and this time it stood on its own.

The lesson being that no Jew can leave the work to another; not even a Moses.

The entire collective Jewish People must want God's Presence in their midst, and work together to achieve the goal.

And, it's not simply a matter of “supervising” others; each person must “roll up their sleeves”, and assure that they exert equal effort as everyone else.

The secret of the Jewish people — to have outlasted all of our historic enemies — is that we understood the power of collective will, and unified, diligent efforts.

God is found to be present when there are collective holy intentions and dedicated collective sacred actions.

We are a sacred chain of tradition and love, only as strong as our weakest link.

Each and every day, we work diligently to strengthen the chain that's reinforced by God's unbreakable presence when we collectively include the Shechina as the intertwined element of our whole dedication of time, resources and spirit.

May this be “the will” that we each constantly pursue so that God will truly dwell within our midst.

Shabbat Shalom,

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