

Dvar Torah Parshat Pekudei 2014

The DT is dedicated today to my son Nathan Shapiro, on the 11th anniversary of his Bar Mitzvah.

We arrive this Shabbat at the end of Sefer Shmot.

We enter the parsha in the midst of a listing “Eleh Pekudei” of the many things under construction that began in t vaayakhel

The parsha goes into loving detail about all the work that “they do” We get caught up in the details, the embroidered threads, lapis lazuli, gold, blue purple twisted threads. So many precious and semi-precious stones, The robes with silver pomegranate bells, the frontlet, “tzitz with a diadem of gold incised with the words :kodesh ladonai. If you just let yourself imagine the details it is visually stunning.

And then the work is finally completed “Vatehchel” of one those wonderful Torah words that echoes in the Bereshit: Vaychulu, it was completed, as well as in the word Kallah, which the midrashim love to draw in, comparing the building of the Mishkan not just to a human rendition of the Bereshit world, as Joshtalked about last week, but also of a chuppah establishing Moses as a mesader kiddushin between God and Israel, making the dedication ceremony a sort of kiddushin.

The people bring everything to Moses. 39:42 Just as the Lord commanded so the Israelites had done all the work (keyn asu et kol ha avodah--worship/work) And when Moses saw that they had performed the tasks as the Lord had commanded, so they had done--Moses blessed them.

2 nice sidebar comments on Moses blessing the people in the meforshim.

Gersonides- A leader should bless those under his direction when they obey him, so that they will be readier to do his will.

Abarbanel- He was astounded that not a single mistake had been made and not a single detail forgotten, which demanded both their skill and their eagerness to serve God.

On the first day of the first month, Nisan, Moses anoints Aaron and his sons, assembles the entire kit (reminds me of Legos), places the Luchot ha Eydut into the ark, attaches the poles, covers it, carries it into the tent, raises the screen, sets up the menorah and the bread and the incense, then the second screen and altars for the sacrifices, the incense, the laver, then the outside enclosure, . Then, when Vaychal Moshe et ha Mlacha. the Cloud covered the tent and God's Kavod filled it.

Bamidbar picks up where this parsha leaves off, describing the dedication offerings that each tribe brings to the Mishkan, a similarly long and elaborate ritual.

Pikudei is fully of visual, magical images and sounds (pomegranate bells) that--if we give in and let our imaginations go to work--permit access into the mystery and wonder of the project and certainly allows a surge of emotion when the Kavod finally enters the space. This is coupled with our standing up at the moment of completion of the reading of the Book so we are meant to feel a satisfying emotional/slash/communal pull. An amazing moment in the life of a community that toils each week with mlacha of coming together to daven and layn the Torah together.

Last week Josh began weighing some of the sources on the differences between a temporary Mishkan and the more permanent Temple.

Does the Torah seem to express a preference? Mishkan or Temple? Entrepreneurial start up or Institution? I think it does express a preference.

We know Jewish history moved towards the establishment of a monarchy even with the caveats of Samuel speaking on behalf of God.. At the moment when Samuel erupts with

displeasure at the prospect of finding a king, he specifically warns the people that a king will adopt the practices of an Egyptian-style king, enslaving the sons and daughters, taking away horses, forcing the people to work for him. Saul's troops are even called his avadim. The comparison that Josh began last week between Solomon and Pharaoh with Mas and Chochmah, is not far from the mark. God's voice in the Torah frequently laments for the years in the desert where the people were sinful and wandering, but looked only towards God (and Moses a bit) for leadership.

The Temple I cult often receives rebuke from God through the prophets. You think the smells of that meat wafting up matter to me? What do I need your offerings for when you don't take care of the poor and the needy? In some ways the Torah is railing against Institutional Judaism, that fails to see real individuals needs right in front of them. A Rabbinical student whose wife wants to bentch gomel after a long illness comes to mind.

Returning to our parsha, I find the balance towards the ephemeral and temporary tipping even more. The peacefulness of Pekudei gives us a hint. Usually, when the people gather for any reason in the Torah, something intense or bad happens: Moses' leadership is challenged, the people ask to go back to Egypt, other upstart leaders try to divide the camp, people complain about the food and the water, snakes strike them, the ground opens up to swallow them, plagues. etc etc etc.

HERE unity and peacefulness stand out. The people work together, create and build. They receive a blessing. Bezalel and Oholiav seem to work in "flow" that wonderful term created by psychologist Chicksentmihayli of Harvard that always makes me think of Michael Jordan approaching the basket.

Engaged in real work (mlacha and Avodah) which means the building of their own religious life, there is harmony. The ephemeral nature of the mishkan is obvious. Moses assembles it from the inside out. People can see each step. Ramban gives a long explanation of how often Moses had to do this, each day of the dedication ceremony. Up and down, in and out, from a plot of sand to something separated and holy, over and

over again. Women must have noticed the woof and warp of the weaving they had accomplished, the embroidery, the copper altar that had been hammered from their mirrors. The men could have seen the dolphin skins they had flayed and stretched, the wood, gold and silver plating they had smelted. Someone polished those colorful and shiny stones for the ephod. Even though the plural verb Vayaasu (they made) seems to refer to Bezalel and Oholiav really represents the entire people working and fashioning together.

Even the name of the Parsha nudges us in this direction. Pekudei is not just the roster of materiEL for the project. VeAdonai Pakad et Sarah,. God takes note of Sarah in Vayera, notices, changes the course of her destiny, remembers, favors after a long time.... Pekudei/Pakod it carries this flavor of all the details that the people are doing to get God's notice, attention and favor.

Certainly the cloud of Kavod settling in is also a a semi-tangible sign of favor and attention.

What does this debate between entrepreneurial and instiutional Judaism mean to us today?

We are now living in a time when the friction between Institutional Judaism and Mishkan-like entrepreneurial Judaism seems to be heating up. I believe that the old denominational that Jews used for a long time to describe where they stood with respect to many aspects of Jewish law, tradition, history, theology, etc are no longer helpful descriptors. I believe this is what we are witnessing. Stakeholders in the status quos of all sorts however are disoriented because their permanent pillars are now shaky. Easier to hunker down, become inflexible, lash out on every possible social media, write articles, condemn, instead of stepping back to see ask how Torah is reflected in the faces of the Jews who observe it.

Maybe it is time for us, as a community of entrepreneurial Jews to advocate for its authenticity in the Torah. Perhaps it will help us understand and tune out some of the folks who are trying to distract us.

So, here are what I want to suggest may be five pillars (NOT permanent) of Entrepreneurial Judaism. We favor:

1. **Creativity-** We have to be the grandchildren of Bezalel and Oholiav and Chol ish chacham lev asher natan adonia chochma utvuna bahema asher ladaat laasot et kol mlechet ha kodesh lchol asher tziva adonari EVERY SKILLED PERSON WHOM THE LORD HAD ENDOWED WITH SKILL EVERYONE WHO EXCELLED IN ABILITY TO UNDERTAKE THE TASK AND CARRY IT OUT.
 - a. This is not just a call for volunteerism. It is a value, source of our work together.
2. **Collaboration.** Creativity comes from people working together, rubbing two sticks of an idea into something better. It is a way of working, doing the melacha.
3. **Risk Taking.** The Israelites were vulnerable out in that desert when they built the Mishkan. We have to embrace all the things we try even if they do not turn out the way we had imagined. (diff places for davening, bring in speakers both satisfying and un-, new melodies, childrens programs, partnerships with other groups, etc etc) are formative for us. I do not think we can EVER afford to lock into “ the way things are done”.
4. **Flexibility-** I know that many people, most particularly people who are trying to live by an ancient tradition do not like change. But change happens whether we embrace it or not. We can remain entrepreneurial and creative if we continue to touch our toes as a community.

5. **Playful**- All the famous start ups that have gone global market themselves as playful, Have you seen photos of Google's headquarters? Maybe we need a ping pong table. I am not sure. But the more we run races, do karaoke, trampoline, eat and drink together the better.

These are just five values but I am sure there are more.

As we move into Vayikra, the most intense rendition of institutional Judaism in the Torah, I hope we can continue to be appreciative of fixed structure, but able to continue this conversation about our own authenticity and values. Shabbat Shalom