

RABBI JACK'S MESSAGE IN A MINUTE



Terumah, this week's Torah reading, is about the directive to build the Tabernacle. This was to be the initial sanctuary of the new nation of Israel. There is uncharacteristically for our bible, great detail about every ritual object--from the type of wood and gold design of the Ark of the Covenant, to the size of the rings and poles used to carry the holy vessels. But sometimes overlooked in the narrative is not what was built or why, but how and by whom.

The story of our ancestor's prototype synagogue included the clear and specific reference to its construction being made possible because it was an effort undertaken *by all the people*. Every member of each tribe contributed something, financial resources, gemstones, precious metals, other raw materials, talent, skill and time. According to our oldest commentators, it was this feature that contained the most important reason for erecting a portable Temple.

A sanctified place for the public to worship and to connect to the real presence of God can only come to fruition if it was constituted by the whole of the group. Left to a few to achieve the task on behalf of others would not completely suffice as there would be no personal connection, no feelings of ownership, or responsibility. Where there is some level of participation in the establishment or maintenance of sacred space, there is a sense of belonging, and the spirit of the Almighty will necessarily dwell within you.

Moreover, the talmudists taught that this model reveals the fundamental difference between a "state" and a "society". A political entity whether it be a monarchy, a city or other form of government provides basic needs for the citizenry. On the other hand, a community does with and for *each other*. This is our philosophy and mission at Emanu-El. To us, a congregation comes together to ensure its continuity. And, we socialize, learn, pray, celebrate, grieve, comfort, laugh and sing with one another. We care about each member and indeed every individual beyond our walls. We can not forget because understanding the origin of our very first Temple reminds us, this is the way to make our lives holy.

L'shalom,
Rabbi Jack