What happened to the Burning Bush that Moses encountered on Mt Sinai? It seems that after the angel in the heart of the fire spoke to Moses, the angel and the fire both departed and the bush quit burning.

What happened to Mt Sinai after God spoke the Decalogue there and upon which Moses communued with God for 40 days and 40 nights? After the Mishkan was built, God no longer spoke from Mt Sinai. The mountain went the way of the bush. No longer needed.

The end of this week’s Torah portion marks the moment when the fire reappeared, from the bush and the mountain, to the Mishkan. The voice of God moved into the Mishkan, speaking from between the keruvim on top of the ark at the center of the Mishkan, as we see in next week’s Torah portion. The voice was present in a cloud by day, and a fire by night.

Whatever else the Mishkan was built for, it was built to house the cloud, the fire and the voice.

What was the Miskhan built of? Essentially, generosity, wisdom, discernment, knowledge, and every fine craft. Weaving, carving, cutting, shaping, and assembling according to a blueprint in the mind of God, transmitted to Be’tzelel. All for beauty (tiferet), and to evoke the mystical presence of God (kavod).
The Cloud, the Fire and the Voice, continued

We don’t know for sure why these details exactly were assembled to create this version of *tiferet* and *kavod*, but we do know how architectural details work, in general. Just search images for “beautiful buildings” (especially religious ones) and be ready to be stunned all over again by the physics and physicality of humanly shaped beauty, music rendered into matter, taking shape in time and space.

The tragedies and particularities of Jewish history and culture have pressed our rendering of the flame, the cloud and the voice mostly into music and words – holy playing and singing, holy texts and holy talks. Our liturgy, rightly sung, creates a cathedral. “Cathedral” is from the Latin word for “chair,” itself from the Latin root “to bring down” – in Jewish imagery, the bringing of the Merkava (the divine throne) and all the heavenly hosts, the singing angels, into the earthly realm. The spoken word captures the divine Word (Aramaic “*memra*”) and it is rendered into human speech, the “*Worte*” as the Hasidic rabbis called it.

The precision of the planks, the curtains, the rods, the menorah, the altars, the tables, the ark, the *keruvim* are like notes of a song, the words of holy speech. The sung and spoken words of the Mishkan that we build together are not finished for others to gaze upon and enter. The notes and words must be sung and said continuously, like a *Ner Tamid*, the eternal flame. Our hearts create the sanctuary into which the cloud, the fire and the voice are housed, into which holy song and holy words are sounded. Every time we assemble to sing, to listen, to learn, we are reassembling the Miskhan, from our wisdom, discernment, and knowledge, from our generosity of heart, from our weaving of every fine craft that the human spirit can shape.

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**Shabbat Zoom Sessions**

*Friday Evening, 7 pm*
Candle Lighting and Brief Teaching
Meeting ID: 845 5543 7908
Passcode: 780011

*Shabbat Morning, 9 am*
Rabbi’s Teaching 9:30 am
Meeting ID: 880 7900 5392
Passcode: 011842
Parashat Pekudei

Synopsis of the Torah Portion

Exodus 38:21 - 40:38

This week’s Torah portion continues the description of the building and setting up of the Mishkan (Tabernacle) begun in last week’s portion.

1. The accounts of the Tabernacle – how much gold, silver and copper was used in the construction.
2. Description of how the priestly garments were made, the materials and the manner of work.
3. Moshe inspects all the work, and finds it all just as God had commanded. He blesses the people.
4. Commandment to set up the Tabernacle on the first day of the first month – 1 Nisan 1313 BCE, nearly one year since the exodus from Egypt.
5. The precise locations of the implements of the Tabernacle, and the commandment to consecrate it with anointing oil.
6. The Mishkan is erected.
7. The cloud covers the Mishkan; the glory of God (k’vod Adonai) fills the Mishkan.

Synopsis of the Haftarah

I Kings 7:51 - 8:21

The Haftarah parallels our Torah portion by describing the completion of the building of Solomon’s Temple. We are told of the assembling of all the elders and leaders of Israel to escort the ark from the City of David to the site of the Holy Temple. Once the ark is placed, the cloud fills the House of God. Solomon blesses the people, and connects the building of the Temple to Israelite history, especially his father, King David. The final words in the Haftarah link the Temple to the covenant made with those who came out of Egypt.
Happy Anniversary...

Babette Markus & Jack Weir on March 21

This Week We Remember...

Dr. Rachel Guth,
mother of David Guth, on March 18.

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PLEASE NOTE: Weekly update, material, as well as flyers, must be in the office by 4PM the preceding Monday!