

TORAH THOUGHTS – SANCTUARY

This week's Torah portion includes the iconic phrase, "Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." (Exodus 25:8) I don't think this means that we can only encounter God in certain structures. As we pray each day, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts! The *entire world* (emphasis mine) is filled with God's glory!" (Isaiah 6:3, and part of the *Kedushah* during the *Amidah*) We can find God in nature, in the love we feel for a family member, during a ritual celebration, and in the work done to promote justice and peace.

God understood that we humans need special spaces for meditation and prayer. In fact, it is our way raise the importance of buildings by assigning them unique functions, and by creating and decorating them in specific ways. Capitals, museums, theatres, and other edifices are designed to inspire a sense of wonder appropriate to the activities that take place within them.

Rabbi Harvey J. Fields wrote, "We create religious sanctuaries, however, out of our need for ... environments where we can find moments for reflection, comfort, and hope in difficult times, direction and wisdom when we face moral choices, and beautiful rituals with which to celebrate the most important moments in our lives." (A Torah Commentary For Our Times, Exodus/Leviticus, p. 65)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. From the stained-glass windows, to the Ark and bimah, to the relatively new chairs and more, our goal is to inspire and enhance your sense of spirituality in the sanctuary. When you are there, do you feel as Rabbi Fields wrote? Why or why not?
2. Creating a beautiful space requires much effort and is an ongoing process. We are in the midst of a major project – replacing the yahrtzeit boards and installing a brand-new display with clear Lucite plaques. When you visit the sanctuary in the next few weeks, the walls will look different, but the result will be inspiring!
3. Rabbi Mendel of Kotzk asked, "Where is the dwelling of God? Wherever we let God in." Discuss what you think the rabbi means.

Shabbat shalom!

Rabbi Pont