

Rosh ha-Shana Second Morning
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As we read the Parsha for this day, we learn about the growth of the tribes after recovering from the episode of the Golden Calf. Moses had to explain to the people that giving was a wonderful thing but at the same time one was willing to give, one also had to consider the goal. Giving to build a golden calf did not exactly lead to anything worth aspiring to. Rather it led people to adore and crave material things instead of the love of G_d.

It taught a lesson, however, and that is that apparently people need something visible to focus their love and worship. So, today, we are reading about the efforts to build a tabernacle, a visible place where G_d can dwell and people can gather and pray. Not only does that make the tabernacle a community place, it also makes the building of the tabernacle a communal event.

People are encouraged to bring something of value to the artisans and builders who will give of their talents to create the Tabernacle. I find it quite moving to read that after a few days Moses has to call off his people and stop them from continuing to bring more gifts. There was silver and gold, bronze, jewels and onyx; women had spun the finest goats' hair into ropes and blankets of blue-violet and purple, rams' skins and tanned leather skins were assembled as was acacia wood, oil for lighting and spice oil for anointing; and you can feel the excitement and pride among the people as they discover a way to participate in the creation of their sacred space. They want to participate and they want to share of whatever they have. I think in modern days we call this "Buy-In".

I know about this because I work as director of volunteer services at a large retirement community in Springfield. I depend on buy-in of my volunteers to deliver services to our seniors. An essential part to getting people to buy into an idea is to make them see and to allow them to participate in the process of creation and to own the goal. If I say, "Let's deliver meals to these neighbors of yours for 2 weeks because they just came home from a difficult hospital stay and they are not yet strong enough to fetch their own meals; and let's call this effort the Friendly Neighbor group", each volunteer can see how they can participate (delivering meals) and what they contribute to the goal (helping neighbors until they regain their strength).

So, what did Moses say to get his people to buy-in? What was G_d's promise to the Israelites? G_d said that if you build a tabernacle I will stay among you all the days. What an incredible gift! Particularly at a time when the community is still working at overcoming doubt – the episode with the Golden Calf is not long past. And Moses, in turn, phrased it like this: everyone whose heart so moves him, he encouraged to bring a gift, to contribute and become part of this communal project. Surely, it is no coincidence that Betzalel is mentioned as the master builder of the tabernacle – he is the grandson of Hur who spoke out firmly against Aaron and the building of the Golden Calf.

Another crucial part to functioning communal life is commitment. Buy-in is the first step to a lasting commitment, a promise one makes to oneself – or G_d – to do something or refrain from something. Commitment is more. It requires buy-in over an extended period of time, the

anchoring of an idea within a person and it most often leads to action. I see commitment in the women who create their most beautiful and valuable purple garment as a gift to G_d, a contribution to the Tabernacle; I see commitment in the men who give their time, strength and talent as builders in this creative process.

And so, this Rosh Hashanah morning, as we continue our journey of contemplation through the next 9 days towards Yom Kippur, let us think about which of our gifts, talents, possessions and/or experiences we want to give and share with the community in the coming year, and what each of us will commit to doing to make the next year a good year for all. Good Yom Tov.