

## **Shabbat Shalom with a Side of Torah – Vayakhel**

I think I have mentioned before that I collect bumper stickers. Most are satirical, some are tacky, some are serious, while others slightly bizarre, but they all struck my fancy – meaning that I had to add each to my collection. Such is the collection that there are times I open mail to see that friends have found the next must have addition to add, so they come from all over the world. As I look through them, some are timeless while others respond to a given situation in time -- some are both, at the same time. I have one that admonishes us to understand, “We live for the day when schools have all the money we need and the Air Force has to hold bake sales to build a bomber.” Of course there is one with the obligatory statement of generic frustration with people, “You! Out of my gene pool!”

The one I seem to be pulling out and pondering over most frequently, though, seems to fit all of the above criteria. It is just plain tacky and sardonic, "I must hurry after them for I am there leader." Still and all, it is a sad but true statement of the status of leadership in our religious world, and, coincidentally, one that speaks to the warning contained in this week's Torah portion.

As the Book of Exodus comes to an end, we see what looks to be a change in the power structure of the nation. Moses has been the main guy; the Shaman who advocates between God and the people. As the book ends, Moses finishes the work of building the Tabernacle, checks it over, and then is not allowed back in -- ever. What kind of God would make Moses, the leader, go through all of that and then not let him enter again? Why punish him this way?

Maybe this is the wrong question. Some have argued that he was kept from the Tabernacle for destroying the first set of tablets (no differently than he was kept out of the land of Israel over striking the rock). What if they are wrong? I help train non-profit boards. I teach leadership, management, and vision. There is a distinction between leadership and management. Leaders lead, while managers manage. Leaders do not have to be the ones in charge; they simply have to be the ones who set the tone and direction for the ones who manage. There is a great story about a man who has come to take over leadership of a safari. The crew over which he is assigned is ferociously cutting through the brush and trees, cutting a path to the ocean. As he gets to the site, he climbs to the top of the trees to check out the progress. To his horror, he found that they were going the wrong way; the ocean was in the opposite direction. He yelled down to the manager of the crew, to tell them what he found. The manager screamed back, "Don't get in the way, we're making great headway through these trees in record time!"

Moses was not meant to manage. He was meant to lead. Our tradition calls him "Moshe Rabbaenu - Moses, our teacher." Having made sure that we were pointed in the right direction and that God had a place to dwell amongst Israel, it was up to the priesthood to manage the altar worship. Moses still had to do the planning and the leading, he heard disputes and healed relationships. He led the people across the wilderness; to the River Jordan. What we find in the books of Joshua and Judges are the management stories of the people put in charge of running the government and the worship cult. Certainly there are leaders, but most of these stories are of people of complete tasks, not of those who create vision. The leaders are not necessarily the generals or the priests; they are the prostitute Rahab

in Joshua, the commoner Ya-el who killed Sisera, Jonathan who kept his father King Saul from killing David, and the many prophets who taught that living ethical lives transcended all legal requirements.

It is in these stories that we find the true values of our respective traditions. We see that those who make the difference are not always the one's "calling the shots." Rather, they are the ones who want to make a difference. Leaders lead. We all know of people who claim to be in charge but who find themselves chasing after the people they claim to lead. Whether it is the stances of conscience we don't take for fear of our status or the fads/trends we adopt in order to still fit in; so many who claim to be "out front" are merely the ones who can exploit their status or out position their opposition. We manage status; we lead growth. Leaders lead, and do not necessarily need to be in charge to provide vision, courage, and strength to those with whom they interact. In the religious world, I think we have lost touch with the need to lead and stand on our skills to manage, and management lacks vision. We all have rituals that, to be authentic -- have to be performed a certain way and by only certain people. We get so caught up in managing things by "our own rules," that it is as if we claim to manage God's work and relationships more than we really do lead people into a relationship with God to see and understand the necessity for God's work. When we manage we draw lines and create checklists. When we lead, we create energy and expand our vision. We have to ask, "Are we doing what we need to do or simply what we are told to do?" When we can know that these are both the same, we know we are leading our piece of the world in to a much better place. We need to make sure that this is always the standard by which we measure what we do. Shabbat Shalom.