

Double Torah Portion Preview for Vayak'heil/P'kudei

Shabbat beginning March 17, 2023

Vayak'heil , “he assembled” the community to tell them of the death penalty for working (including lighting a fire) on the sabbath and command them to donate precious metals, textiles, skins, wood, oils, spices, and gems. Then, Bazalel and the artisans constructed the tabernacle, ark, utensils, lampstand, priests’ garments, altar, and enclosure. Next, P'kudei , “records” where the materials were used and ends describing how God entered His new dwelling place while His cloud hovered over it until lifting to indicate that the community should move.

Rabbi Noa Kushner reminds us that the cloud is a manifestation of God. With today’s observable universe being 93 billion light years wide, it is hard to imagine God dwelling in the tabernacle. When a Torah scribe from Yemen (on the Red Sea) showed us how heating a pebble from his homeland created a cloud that hovered below the ceiling of his small apartment, I could not help envisioning it over the tabernacle. But Rabbi Kushner urged us to seek God wherever we are. Recapturing the awe of the ancient Israelites enables us to keep alert for yet unexperienced beauty awaiting in every possible scale of experience between the atom and the most distant star.