DRASH PARSHAT TERUMAH
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Shabbat Fusion
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- This weeks Torah portion is Terumah, form the middle of the book of Exodus and is the story of the building of the Mishkan, the tabernacle or tent of meeting. The portable synagogue that the Israelites built and carried with them throughout the desert.

- This week's Haftarah portion is from Kings and is the story of how Solomon build the first Temple in Jerusalem some 460 years later.

- In both instances God commands that the sacred place be built. God even dictates in exacting detail how the sacred places should be built, what they should look like, the finery of their edifice. But in neither does God provide the money or the material to build it, that is left to the people to come up with. So what do they do? Two very real and very different responses to the challenge.

- In the desert Moses holds a fundraiser, everyone is encouraged to give, as much as they can, whatever they can, something of value to them, the emphasis is on full participation. The Torah highlights the fact that the people as a whole volunteer their possessions and services to build the Tabernacle. God enunciates the ideal at the outset: "Tell the Israelite people to bring Me gifts; you shall accept gifts for Me from every person whose heart so moves him" (25:2). By implication, should they fail to contribute, the project would be delayed, if not aborted. And later the narrative stresses their extraordinary degree of compliance. The occasion stirred both men and women to share equally and unstintingly of their valuables and handiwork for the glory of the sanctuary. Indeed, contributions flowed in at such a furious pace that word had to be issued to end the campaign (Exodus 36:5-6).

- In Jerusalem Solomon's temple there is no trace of voluntarism in the financing of the sacred project. To pay for the cedar and cypress wood and to quarry and transport the building materials, Solomon taxed and imposed forced labor on all of Israel; 30,000 men were forced into labor, he sent them to Lebanon in shifts of 10,000 a month. . . Solomon also had 70,000 porters and 80,000 quarriers in the hills, apart from Solomon's 3,300 officials who were in charge of the work" (I Kings 5:27-30).

- The contrast is striking and the historical ramifications equally so. A medieval midrash observes, "The Tabernacle for which the people volunteered wholeheartedly never fell victim to the evil eye. The Temple, however, for which they did not, fell victim to the hand of the enemy" (*Kasher, Torah Shlemah*, v. 20, p. 6).

- The lesson is clear, the fate of an institution, any institution be they physical buidings or emotional structures is determined by the measures taken to create it. Solomon's Temple rested on shaky ground from the beginning, it never had the full support of the people and it is no wonder that immediately after his death the kingdom split apart, and eventually so did the temple itself.

- That is the lesson of history, what is the lesson for us today?

- In Jewish tradition a home is called a Mikdash M'at – a sanctuary in minature
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  On Sunday your phone will ring, perhaps it already has, mine rang Wednesday night right in the middle of West Wing, on the other end of the line will be a person from Jewish Federation, and they will ask you what Moses asked our ancestors, not what Solomon imposed, but what Moses asked, "Tell the Israelite people to bring Me gifts; you shall accept gifts for Me from every person whose heart so moves him."

  And when that phone rings our hearts should be moved to give, not because the rabbi says so, not because of Jewish guilt, or tax advantages, our hearts should be moved because of the memory of the Mishkan, what it must have been like when every person brought something of personal value to create something of communal holiness. Its not a tax, it is more sacred than that it is Tzedkkah it is G'milut Hasadism, deeds of loving kindness. The money certainly does wonders and is deeply needed, but all of us participating in the giving, in the mitzvah that does even more, it builds our mishkan, it builds our holy tent of meeting and in the process makes us a community of meaning.