

Moving Forward with a *Mishkan*

This week's parsha is Vayakhel, "And he gathered...." Moshe gathered the people together to finally commence the major task of building the *Mishkan*, the sanctuary that served our people in the desert and for hundreds of years after. But before he did, the actual "gathering" referred to in the first *pasuq* was to remind them about Shabbat, the foundation of their religious life. Thus, the three elements that form the basis of our parsha are the gathering together in a common cause, the religious basis for it (symbolized by Shabbat, which was a day that the vital building ceased) and the actual project of constructing a *Mishkan*. In this way, our ancestors moved forward into the next phase of their communal existence.

This past week Darchei Noam took a major step toward its own future and that of the larger Jewish community. After much thoughtful discussion and passionate debate, the membership voted to elect a full time rabbi and chose one of the finalists as its choice. The details will be completed and publicized shortly. I will personally congratulate him when every "i" is dotted and every "t" is crossed. I hope also to have chances to wish you *l'hitraot* before I complete my term here. But the path has not been easy. There have been financial challenges, external pressures from those who think they have the right to tell us how to practice Torah Judaism, and the internal pressures of trying to bring a wonderful congregation to its next level.

I believe the basis of our parsha can provide us the themes for moving forward. First, the sense of *Vayakhel* – the need to gather together, no matter where we stood on the concept of a full time rabbi and no matter which of the candidates we preferred. Next, we have to constantly remind ourselves of the religious basis of why we came and continue to come together – symbolized by Shabbat. Finally, we have to continue building our *Mishkan*, a tabernacle that is a voice of committed Halachic observance, vibrant davening, passionate Torah learning, kindness and *chesed*, as well as community involvement. In short, we want to continue building a home for Modern Orthodoxy in the Twin Cities.

At the end of next week's Parsha, Hazal tell us that Moshe blessed the work with the words, "May it be Hashem's will that the *Shechina* rests on your handiwork!" That is my *bracha* to you as well.

Shabbat Shalom!

Rabbi Joseph S. Ozarowski