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On this same holy night of Yom Kippur, many many years ago, a tall, lonely man climbed down the slope of a barren mountain, and to the crowd gathered at the foot of the hill he uttered the following words: V'ASSU LI MIKDASH V'SHACHANTI B'SOCHAM, (Ex. 25:8), "let them make for Me, for G-d, a Sanctuary, that I may dwell amongst them." (Tanhuma Terumah:8) . With those words the prophet Moses transmitted to Israel at Sinai, on a Yom Kippur over 3,000 years ago, the first commandment to build the first House of G-d - whether it be called Sanctuary or Tabernacle or "shul" or synagogue.

Our Tradition records that although our people eventually rallied with great enthusiasm to the building of the MIKDASH, they were at first greatly puzzled. This was a new concept, a new idea, and it startled them. Even Moses, we are told, could not understand it. If You are the One G-d of the whole universe, then you are everywhere, and how can we call a small enclosure a BEIS ELOKIM, a House of G-d? Does it mean that G-d will be only here in the MIKDASH and no place else? Is G-d a man that He can be locked within the confines of one building? If all the Heavens can't contain You, how one room?

The Tradition continues with the explanation - the true one - that G-d gave Moses. He told him: LO LFI KOCHI ELA LFI KOCHAN, I do not need this MIKDASH, nor can I ever be contained within any place. Rather - it is necessary for the Children of Israel, that they might have a place to focus their devotions, so that whenever they come to this place they will feel uplifted, transformed, and so thereby find Me more available to them.

Moses, our Tradition tells us, easily grasped the meaning of G-d's explanation. But this was too direct a truth for the Israelites to understand easily. And so G-d explained it to them in a parable, drawing on their own background and experience. (Ex. R. 34). And this night of Yom Kippur, my friends, the same night that the command to build the first Sanctuary was given, I want to relay that Divine parable to you. I want you to listen to it carefully, because it has some important and urgent significance for us.

AMAR HAKADOSH BARUCH HU LEYISROEL.....ATEM TZONI V'ANI ROEH, you are my flock, my sheep, and I am your shepherd, ASSU DIRAH LE'ROEH SHE'YAVO VE'YIREH ES'CHEM, build a little tent for the shepherd so that He may come to watch over you.

And then a second example: ATEM KEREM, V'ANI SHOMER -- you are My vineyard, and I am your gardener, your caretaker, ASSU SUKKAH LE'SHOMER SHE'YISHMOR ES'CHEM, build a little hut for the gardener so that He may care for you.

And the final example: ATEM BANAY V'ANI AVICHEM -- you are My children, and I am your Father, KAVOD L'BANIM K'SHE'HEIM EITZEL AVIHEM, V'KAVOD L'AV K'SHE'HU EITZEL BANAV -- it is an honor for a father to be with his children, and an honor for children to be with their father -- ASSU BAYIS L'AV SHE'YAVO VE'YISHREH EITZEL BANAV, build, then, a house for your Father so that He may come to visit with you.

My friends, in this parable we have three definitions of the function of Religion in general, and especially of a Synagogue, one more important than the other. Here are three reasons for which people practice their religion, three reasons why Jews come to shul. For some it is like sheep who come to the Shepherd. They want security and peace-of-mind. They want G-d to watch over them like the kindly Shepherd He is, to keep away the ravenous wolves of life, the wolves of hunger and disease

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and poverty. This is a legitimate religious approach to G-d, that of sheep to the Shepherd. And so - they build a synagogue for this purpose.

For others, Religion is a matter of discipline and training and cultivation. They look to G-d and Torah for intellectual refinement and character ennoblement, even as a vineyard keeper prunes and plants and weeds and trims his vines. Cultivation, refinement, sensitivity is the goal of Religion for this group. This too is a legitimate goal of Judaism, and one for which synagogues should be frequented.

But the third, most genuine and authoritative approach, which includes the first two, is that which sees man's relation to G-d as that of ~~Fath~~ son to father. A Father will protect His child as much as a shepherd his flock. He will educate and refine His son ~~as a~~ with as much devotion as the gardener gives to his vines. But above and beyond all these there is an intimacy of feeling, a warmth, an all pervading love and mutual respect, a happiness in each other's presence that exist only between ~~can be compared only to~~ a father and son. And when a Synagogue is built not for a Divine Shepherd, and not for a Divine Vinekeeper, but for the Divine Father, then it is neither a DIRAH nor a SUKKAH, neither hut nor tent - but BEIS ELOKIM, a Home of G-d!!

My very dear friends: tonight I come before you to tell you that in the course of the last decades and especially the last few years, this synagogue originally built as a House of G-d, has because of a variety of reasons become unfit for its sacred function as a Home for our Divine Father and His children. We have outgrown it, the family has become bigger, the structure is weakening - - and this night of Yom Kippur, as was true some 30 centuries ago, a challenge is issued to us from above, a challenge and a command: V'ASSU LI MIKDASH - let them make for Me a new Sanctuary, V'SHACHANTI B'SOCHAM, so that I may continue to dwell in their midst.

Tonight I announce to you in happiness and SIMCHAH, in a mood of joy worthy of another SHE'HE'CHAYANU blessing, that this year 5718, Kodimoh will - with the help of Almighty G-d and you His people - have a new and imposing building. Tonight, on the eve of Kol Nidre, I declare that we must no longer allow this building, which was once a true HOUSE of G-d, to further degenerate in o a mere hut or tent, with the very paint peeling off the ceilings, with facilities completely insufficient, with its general appearance not worthy of either our Torah or ourselves. Tonight I tell you that the leaders of the congregation have determined that this year we go forward in response to the sacred challenge of V'ASSU LI MIKDASH. And I can tell you this about their determination, my determination and your resolve: this new MIKDASH we are going to build at Kodimoh will not be a mere tent - because G-d is more than a shepherd and we must be more than sheep. It is not going to be a plain hut - because G-d is more than a gardener, and we must be more than vegetables. We resolve this holy night that this year we will erect a BAYIS, a HOME, a shrine of intimacy and warmth, a fitting place for our deepest devotions - because G-d is our Father, and we are His children!!! And for an old and honored and beloved and precious father you do not build a hut or a tent, nor even an attic, and not even a room in the Old Age Home - you build for Him the most modern, decorous, beautiful, and convenient home you possibly can! We of Kodimoh have always been distinguished in this community by the warmth and participation in our services, by the friendliness of our people, by the unassuming charm of our congregation's collective character, by the sense of intimacy you always find here - in other words - this is our HOME! Well then, let us proceed to build a HOME where we can meet with our G-d like children with their Father, and meet with each other like devoted brothers and sisters!! A HOME - beautiful, spacious, adequate, warm, loving and intimate: that is the MIKDASH we must this night resolve to erect.



Friends, I do not believe you need much convincing to agree that our present facilities are inadequate for our Kodimoh family. Just look about you and you will see the onvious, crying need for expansion. Many of you would like to sit together with other members of your family -- fathers with sons and mothers with daughters. How can we do it in a syngague which has shrunk into a hut, compared to its needs? We know there are very many families who would want to become members of our Kodimoh -- but how can we accept them if there is no place? And for how long are to we continue turning away brothers and sisters from the House of our Divine Father? No, friends, Kodimoh does not have to invent artificial excuses for a building campaign. They are real, very real. They are as real as the fact that our auxilliary services this Rosh Hashannah had to ~~turn away~~ provide "standing room" only for friends and ourteenagers. And let me make it clear: a BAYIS, a Home is a place you live in not only three days a year, but a whole year. And our needs are not confined to the High Holidays. I as a Rabbi would absolutely refuse to participate in a campaign geared to 3-days a year. But I am aware of the pressing every day needs forexpansion: the fact that our Jr.Cong. has increased to over 14 times its original size these last 3 years. Last Saturday -- not a holiday -- we had over 165 children in the vestry. On Rosh Hashannah we had two Jr.services with a combined total of ~~over~~ about 300 children. Last Passover our vestry was too small -- we had "standing room only" for our children. And a number of times this past year when we had a Bar Mitzvah on Saturday, we were forced to call off our Jr. Services because the vestry was taken and there was no room for our youth. Our facilities are not sufficient for weddings and Bar Mitzvahs -- and we always want Kodimoh to be the center of our SIMCHAH, our family joys. Our teenagers do not have the facilities here for their programs -- and they are ashamed to invite out-of-town groups -- there just isn't enough place. Our religious school program is awkward because of space difficulties, and we cannot have enough new and higher classes because of the shortage of rooms, a shortage which forces us to curtail our adult Sunday morning program as well.

No, my dear friends, we need not invent reasons for a campaign. We have them all ready made. And tonight G-d Himself ignites within each and every one of you the same fiery charge He gave on a Yom Kippur long ago: V'ASSU LI MIKDASH V'SHACHANTI B'SOCHAM -- build a new syngague for Me, if you want Me to dwell in your midst!

And do you know what kind of Home the elders of our cong.plan to build for Kodimoh? I will tell you: many people say, "I am not seeking any KAVOD." Well, with us it is reverse. I tell you that we are seeking KAVOD -- for G-d and for us. Remember the Divine parable with which we began? -- KAVOD L'AV KSHEHU EITZEL BANAV...EITZEL AVIHEM. This new Kodimoh must provide for two kinds of KAVOD, 2 kinds of pride and honor & glory. First it must be a KAVOD for our Divine Father. How often does it happen that parents suffer heartache and shame because they cannot eat in or visit a child's home -- it is unJewish, unG-dly, "treif" all through. There is no KAVOD for such a father in such a home, no matter how elegant. OUR new Kodimoh, however, must be a KAVOD for G-d. It must not be an unholy showplace into which G-d is ashamed to set foot. It must remain as Kodimoh always has been -- a powerhouse of our sacred Tradition, a fortress of Torah, of Orthodoxy, of genuine Judaism. It must always and forever be the sort of BAYIS which will remain a KAVOD for our Heavenly Father. Otherwise it is unholy -- it is a theatre or museum, not a House of G-d. And a MIKDASH must be KADOSH, must be holy.

And second: KAVOD LBANIM KSHEHEIM EITZEL AVIHEM. It must be a source of KAVOD for us. It must be attractive and clean and elegant. It must never again be a source of embarrassment to us or our children. It must be beautiful. It must have simple elegance. It must provide enough space for our increased activity. It must make us anxious to be in it. It must be inviting and appealing and a source of KAVOD for us. It must make us be the ones to demonstrate to all Springfield, all New England and the whole American Jewish community that we of Kodimoh have built a Home for

Benediction - צו' אלהים: כי יצאנו ממצרים  
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