

“Indeed *They Did It*” – *Par’shat P’kudey* March 4, 2022

Rabbi Lester Bronstein, Bet Am Shalom, White Plains NY

The Book of Exodus concludes with a sigh of relief after a long effort. The Israelites have left Egypt, crossed the Sea, stood at Sinai, survived the insurrection of the Golden Calf, and finally completed the yearlong effort to construct the Mishkan, the wilderness Tabernacle.

Echoing the language of Genesis chapter 2, where God completes the work of Creation, takes stock of the finished project, and blesses it, here the Mishkan is completed, and it is Moses rather than God who takes stock and gives his blessing.

*Vatekhel kol avodat mishkan ohel mo’ed, v’ya’asu b’nai yisrael k’chol asher tziva hashem et moshe, kein asu*

“Then was completed the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and the Children of Israel did according to all that God had commanded Moses. Indeed they did it.” Exodus 39:32

The Kotzker (Menachem Mendel of Kotzk, 19<sup>th</sup> c), in his usual fashion, points out a stark inconsistency in the text, fully intending to teach us something about ourselves in the guise of resolving the textual problem. He says:

“According to this verse, the Children of Israel were the ones who completed the work. *V’ya’asu b’nai yisrael – kein asu.* “The Children of Israel did it. Indeed they did it!”

“So why,” he asks, “why does the Torah conclude each and every itemized instruction of the project – and there are dozens of separate items and tasks -

with the phrase *ka'asher tziva hashem et moshe* –“Just as God had commanded Moses?”

His answer doesn't necessarily resolve the contradiction in the Torah. But it does teach us something about parenting and teaching that we should have already known, and that perhaps we did know on occasion, but which we have too often forgotten or neglected.

He shows us that “Moses, insofar as he was commanded by God and conveyed those commandments as to how to build the Mishkan, he became the *ruach hachayah* – the “living spirit” behind the making of the Mishkan. “Were it not for him,” says the Kotzker, “the Children of Israel would not have been able to *la'asot asher tziva hashem*. “To do as God had commanded.””

Which is to say, Moses understood two things. One was that if he himself did not stand behind each and every step of the process by instructing, inspiring, encouraging, and advising, it would not have happened at all.

The second, and perhaps more important, thing, was that if Moses had done the work himself, the “children” would never have learned anything. They would never have become stakeholders. They would never have cared about the task.

*And they would never have matured into independent adults.*

The second-hardest role of a parent is to instruct. The hardest role of a parent is to refrain from doing the work of learning and growing *for* the child. It is the task of letting the child learn by fits and starts; of encouraging the child to master the work on his or her own; of allowing a degree of failure to pervade the long

process of growing up. And of always assuring that the child feels the parent's unconditional support and love.

Only then can we say of our children what the Torah says of our ancestors: *kein asu*. "Indeed *they* did it."

And indeed they did. And they will.