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BUILDING A TABERNACLE IN THE WILDERNESS

At the end of the First Book of Samuel, we find King Saul, near the end of his life and rule, the Philistines are massing on his borders, and he doesn't know what to do. He is afraid, overwhelmed, and needs to make a plan, but when he consults with the High Priest and with God, there is no answer. He becomes so desperate to know what will happen, to know how to plan that he disguises himself and goes to the town of Endor to consult the Witch of Endor who will raise up the ghost of Samuel to give him advice. Samuel's ghost is furious for having been disturbed and only tells him, to paraphrase Larry David paraphrasing Bernie Sanders, "you're doomed!"

I wrote my Rabbinic Dissertation on this part of the Bible, and so I picked at this story from every angle, but these past weeks, something new stands out in the story: *how desperate Saul is for information about what is going to happen.*

He can no longer stand NOT KNOWING.

Like Saul, right now we are in the place of knowing something big is happening, but not having nearly enough information to help us imagine that future or plan for it. *Should we postpone the bat mitzvah? Should I put off the wedding for a year? Can we plan an Israel trip for November? Should I retire or put it off?*

We are in a place of not knowing how this is going to play out, how our world will have changed when we look in the rearview mirror at all this, years from now.

Not knowing can be stressful, and very anxiety provoking, especially for those of us who are comforted by having things planned.

But i want to reflect that not knowing is always the condition we are in. Not knowing is the human condition. We just convince ourselves that our plans are solid; they never really are because life can change in an instant.

King Saul found not knowing so intolerable that he did something desperate and foolish. Let's not be like King Saul.

Instead, let's try to relax our shoulders, exhale, and just recognize that right now we are in a place of Not Knowing and the best thing we can do is rely on our connections to friends and family, take it a few days at a time, and just be present with where we are right now without worrying or planning for what we can't control.

We are really where we always have been; we are mortal. We are infinite light wrapped in these fragile bodies. Our mortality teaches us to be as present as we can be *right now*, in this moment, as we can be, to love fully right now.

It is just that We are all having to look at that reality together now, all at once, and feel it together, but we will be ok, because we are already ok.

Soon, we will be celebrating Passover, and our people's escape from slavery in Egypt. And we know that very soon, some of them started to freak out and say, "take us back to Egypt. At least we know we would get meals there."

The Israelites in the wilderness didn't know where things would end up. They just knew their situations had changed, and that the future would be different than the past. And recognizing that, they built the tabernacle, so that God could dwell among them even in this wilderness, this place of not knowing.

And that's what we are doing in our lives.

- We are creating a tabernacle here on ZOOM for Shabbat this evening.
- We are creating a tabernacle when we FaceTime with our families.
- We are creating a tabernacle when we take a long walk and remember the miracle of nature.
- We are creating a tabernacle when we do online yoga, or Roomba, or make some art, or bake something complicated and decadent.
- We are creating a tabernacle when we have a belly laugh with someone.

What are things you might do to build a tabernacle for yourself in this wilderness of not knowing, so that the divine, the holy, the indwelling presence of God – Shechina- is with you and you remember that no matter what happens, you are held by unending love.

How will you build your tabernacle for this time in the wilderness?.....