

This past Tuesday evening, I attended Naomi Klein's speech at the University of Oregon about Climate Change and the societal leap that she sees is necessary in order to survive the great upheaval that our globe is experiencing.

I found her words to be very inspiring, especially when, after describing several successful protests against proposed oil drilling, fracking and coal mine expansions, Klein said, "we have gotten really good at saying no, when new toxic projects are proposed. But for our movement to be successful, we're going to need more than no. We're going to need a vision of a society that we're saying 'yes' to."

From there, she described a vision that she and other Canadian cultural workers had produced, entitled, "the Leap Manifesto." The leap Manifesto is available online. It's a comprehensive, and I think compelling, vision for how to channel the challenges that climate change poses towards creating a more equitable and nourishing society for all.

Allow me to read to you an excerpt of this sweeping vision:

"A leap to a non-polluting economy creates countless openings for similar multiple "wins." We want **a universal program to build energy efficient homes, and retrofit existing housing, ensuring that the lowest income communities and neighbourhoods will benefit first** and receive job training and opportunities that reduce poverty over the long term."

It also says:

“Shifting to an economy in balance with the earth’s limits also means **expanding the sectors of our economy that are already low carbon: caregiving, teaching, social work, the arts and public-interest media. Following on Quebec’s lead, a national childcare program is long past due.** All this work, much of it performed by women, is the glue that builds humane, resilient communities – and we will need our communities to be as strong as possible in the face of the rocky future we have already locked in.”

I thought of Klein’s talk when I sat down with this week’s Torah portion, Tetzaveh. This week’s parasha devotes an entire chapter to the creation of the priestly garments that the high priest would wear when presiding over Temple ceremonies: the breastplate, ephod, robe, fringed tunic, headdress, sash, with great details about the intricate crafting of each. If you google search “priestly vestments,” among the advertisement for modern ministry wear, you’ll also see a great number of artistic renderings of how these ancient garments might have looked.

Of course, there has not been a Jewish high priest wearing such garments for thousands of years. Since the second Temple was destroyed, the priestly functions have ceased to exist, and with them, the priestly bling, and much of the content of the second half of the book of Exodus and most of Leviticus is no longer directly applicable to us.

But there is one specific commandment that remains: this week's parasha begins with the phrase, "V'Atah tetzaveh et b'nei Yisrael," You must command the Israelites, God tells Moses, to bring clear olive oil for the regular lighting of the lamps. Clear olive oil was the most precious, expensive kind of oil for lamps. It is what is required for the "ner tamid," the eternal light," demanded in this verse.

This verse beginning the Torah portion has had a staying power that outlasted all of the other instructions in the parasha. As Nechama Leibowitz points out, of all of the commandments regarding the structure of the holy sanctuary, the eternally lit lamp, the Ner tamid, "remains intact during the period of exile." She quotes Midrash HaGadol, an early midrash work, which notes that the Torah portion begins with Moses being commanded to command the people. The word Tetzaveh has the same root as the word mitzvah.

Midrash Hagadol says, "Why the expression, "Command," rather than "say," or "speak"? - to imply: enthusiasm, now and for all time. . . Though the Temple was destroyed and the lamps become obsolete we have the synagogue and houses of study, our 'miniature temples,' in which we perpetuate the kindling of the lamps."

When Jerusalem burned, the temple was destroyed, and the basic structures of our people's spiritual life crumbled, Judaism was fundamentally transformed. From being a land based tradition, it became a diaspora tradition. From being a sacrifice-based tradition, it became a study based tradition. From being a tradition of action, it became a tradition of story. The ancient Rabbis sitting in a roof loft during Passover understood when they couldn't bring the Passover sacrifice, that they had to tell the story of how it all happened - and so we got the seder.

Through that whole shift, we kept the ner tamid, the eternal light, burning in our miniature temples, including in this one, thousands of year after the central Temple was reduced to a single retaining wall. The core center of Jewish community, the fire of warmth and illumination, the fire is still lit at the center of our gathering places. It is no longer lit by our very finest, most expensive oil, but the symbolism remains intact: that we have survived every upheaval by bringing the best of what we've got to the center of the community.

We are in the midst of another great transition, and an intense cultural struggle over what that transition will look like. The week's verbal spat between Pope Francis and Donald Trump indicate both the positions and the scale of this struggle.

Transition is inevitable, Naomi Klein reminded us on Tuesday evening, but equity is not. The world is changing, and without checks, our society is certainly headed down a cruel path of an ever increasing wealth gap, xenophobia, and violence. But if we can face the inevitability of change with the same clear-eyed creativity as our ancient Rabbis, mourning the trappings, but holding onto the core, then we may have a chance to shape the transition in a way more in line with the vision of Klein's leap manifesto; addressing systemic racism and misogyny while expanding a physical infrastructure of transportation and information, and a community infrastructure of caring and support.

This can start small. I attended a meeting last week called, “seismic shift.” Mostly Municipal workers and utility workers were discussing how to do long-term disaster planning. I found it sad but unsurprising that I was the only faith leader there. But long-term disaster response is exactly what our people know how to do! We know how to mourn what is gone and work with the core of what we still have. We know how to keep the ner tamid burning.

So look, I know it’s hard when I talk about sweeping societal issues without telling you what to do about them. Some of you like assignments. So if you want an assignment, here’s a few things: Attend the public hearing of Our Children’s Trust” Federal Constitutional Climate Case here in Eugene, on March 9<sup>th</sup>, meeting at 9:15 am. Read “the Leap Manifesto.” It’s easy to find on-line, and I’ve printed out a few copies by the entrance to the sanctuary. Remember that this manifesto was written by a bunch of cultural workers getting together and talking. And the Passover seder was created by a bunch of rabbis in an attic. So my final suggestion I have is that we have more conversations about this transition. That we come up with ideas - plausible ones and implausible ones, and that we communicate with each other about them. This is not just how we are going to survive. This is how we will keep the ner tamid burning through another iteration.