

I know that many of us this evening feel a dual call. There is the call to be in community in prayer, to experience Shabbat as Shabbat, and also the call to be in solidarity at the Eugene Islamic Center. Some of us were able to attend the solidarity vigil at the Islamic Center at 1:30 pm, but for those who were not, the pull is acute.

The reality is that we often feel dual pulls when it comes to the call of our spirit. Should we spend our free time with community, or recharging in nature? Should we engage in activism, or in rest?

There is a hint at the reality of dual calls in the very first line of this week's parashah, Vayikra, the opening Torah portion of the book of Leviticus, which contains all of the instructions for the sacrificial system. It opens: *וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֵלָיו מֵאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד*, Hashem called to Moshe and spoke to him from the tent of Meeting.

Now, where is this call coming from? What is this *ohel moed*, this Tent of Meeting? In the Torah portions dealing with the building of the tabernacle, back at the end of Exodus, the *ohel moed* seems to be a synonym for the mishkan, the Tabernacle, the dwelling place for the divine presence around which the entire Israelite camp is oriented.

But there is also another tent. In Exodus 33, in Ki Tissa, after the Israelites commit the transgression of Golden Calf, Moshe takes a tent outside of the camp to communicate with God, who in this instance is presumably too angry with the Israelites to make any sort of divine call in the center of their camp. In Exodus 33, verse 7, it says this tent, outside of the camp, where Moshe went to communicate with Hashem *is also called the ohel moed*, the tent of meeting.

For a bit of chronology, at the time of the Golden Calf, the Israelites haven't yet built the mishkan, so Moshe's *ohel moed*, his tent of meeting outside the camp, may just be a temporary fix before the mishkan, the established focal point for divine interaction that the Israelites build and dedicate in the final chapters of Exodus. That is the position of the medieval commentators Ramban and Ibn Ezra, who both say that Moshe was accustomed to meeting with God in the tent outside the camp only until the tabernacle was built, at which point the tête-à-tête between Moshe and the Divine moved to the center of the camp.

That would be satisfying, except that there are hints in Torah that the "fringe" tent outside the camp, as we might call it, remains active, especially at two points in the book of Numbers. In Numbers 11, God commands Moshe to bring 70 elders "to the tent," and receive prophecy. But we are told in verse 26, that two of the elders remained "in the camp," and did not go out to the tent – which makes it clear that this convening was not happening at the mishkan, at the center of the camp, but rather was happening outside of the camp, in the other tent.

Likewise, in Numbers 12:4, when Miriam and Aaron have conflict with Moshe, God tells them all to go *out* to the *ohel moed* – a outside of the camp again.

So what are we to make of the two tents for meeting God? One of my favorite contemporary teachers, Rabbi Ethan Tucker, said this week that perhaps our current technology can be a metaphor for these two tents: if you have google hangouts on your phone and on your computer, and a call comes in, you need to decide which device better suits you in the moment for answering it. Maybe you want the larger view of the computer screen. Maybe you want the comparative mobility of the phone.

Likewise, maybe there were times when Moshe needed the relative privacy of being outside of the camp, and maybe there were times when it was more useful for him to be in the center, for all of the people to see that he was receiving the call from the *shekhina*, the indwelling presence in the *mishkan*.

What does this mean for any of us? Well, for one thing, it affirms the multiplicity of calls that I noted at the outset of my remarks. Even the *mishkan*, which is supposed to be the definitive point for interaction between the Israelites and the divine, is not actually the exclusive locus of that interaction.

But I think that fact that one of the tents is that the very center, and one beyond the boundaries of camp, is also significant. It reminds us that for us, too, different *kinds* of connection are necessary. And sometimes those are the kinds of connection that bring us in to the center of community, and sometimes those are the kinds that we seek in relative solitude.

The only mistake would be to assume that we don't need both. When we default to one, we can wind up with a wonky idea of what spiritual health means. I have people come to me sometimes apologizing that they didn't come to services because they needed to be at home, resting on Shabbat, and I always find that touching but not actually warranting an apology – of course sometimes our spiritual recharge needs to happen outside the center of the camp, so to speak.

But I am also frequently troubled when people tell me that because they connect better spiritually out in nature, or through music, they don't see the point of coming to synagogue.

I, too, understand there to be a special kind of spiritual resonance that I only experience when I'm outside in the woods. But there are spiritual muscles that we exercise, so to speak, by gathering in community, and of course we shouldn't expect that to be the same experience that we have out in the woods or anywhere else.

So, now that as for Moshe, so for ourselves, the call will always come from multiple directions. So, too, we are called to stand in solidarity with our Muslim cousins, and called to feed our own souls through Shabbat practice. Being here this evening is a valid and necessary choice, I hope that those of us who did not make it to the mosque today will still reach out, send cards and otherwise offer support, just as I hope that those who are there this evening will still make time for Shabbat at some point over these 25 hours.

And we certainly can't be in more than one place at once. But we do ourselves a disservice if we don't discern times when we need to be at the center of the camp, times when we need to be outside of the camp, and times when we need to be in between.

Shabbat shalom.