

PARSHAT VAYAKHEL  
EXODUS 35:1-38:20  
23 ADAR I 5782/24 FEBRUARY 2022



*The Fire Next Time*  
Oil on canvass diptych by Jennifer Packer

### THE FIRE NEXT TIME

1. You shall kindle no fire throughout your *settlements* on the sabbath day. (Exodus 35:3)
2. Is fire constructive or destructive? It is both. Ordinarily fire is destructive, not constructive; but it is prohibited on Shabbat in our homes because it is used in all, or at least most, of the prohibited categories of work [i.e., those connected to building the Mishkan]. (Seforno to Exodus 35:3)
3. Abraham came across a burning palace. “Is it possible that this palace has no master?” asks Abraham. Whereupon God looks out from the palace and says, “I am the master of this palace.” (Bereshit Rabbah 39:1)

Moses gazed, and there was a bush all aflame, yet the bush was not consumed. Moses said, “I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight: why doesn’t the bush burn up?” (Exodus 3:2-3)

4. The Torah which the Holy Blessed One gave to Moses was given as white fire engraved in black fire. It is fire mixed in fire, cut from fire and given from fire, as it is written: “from God’s right hand a fiery law for them” (Deuteronomy 33:2-4). (Talmud Yerushalmi, Shekalim 25b)

5. Bezalel knew how to join the letters with which heaven and earth were created.... And it is written regarding Creation: “God founded the earth by wisdom (הַחָכְמָה); God established the heavens with understanding (תְּבוּנָה); through God’s knowledge (דַּעַת) the depths were cleaved” (Proverbs 3:19-20). (Berachot 55a)
6. “See, God has called by name Bezalel” (Exodus 35:30). It is written, “Behold, I have created the smith” (Isaiah 54:16). This refers to Bezalel; “that blows the fire of coals.” When Israel sinned with fire, as it says, “And I cast it into the fire of coals, and there came out this calf.” Bezalel came and healed the wound. (Shemot Rabbah 48:7)
7. Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within. I use the word “love” here not merely in the personal sense but as a state of being, or a state of grace – not in the infantile American sense of being made happy but in the tough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth. (James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*)