

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Terumah
February 29, 2020 *** 4 Adar, 5780

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Terumah in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1311/jewish/Terumah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

The people of Israel are called upon to contribute thirteen materials—gold, silver and copper; blue-, purple- and red-dyed wool; flax, goat hair, animal skins, wood, olive oil, spices and gems—out of which, G-d says to Moses, “They shall make for Me a Sanctuary, and I shall dwell amidst them.”

On the summit of Mount Sinai, Moses is given detailed instructions on how to construct this dwelling for G-d so that it could be readily dismantled, transported and reassembled as the people journeyed in the desert.

In the Sanctuary’s inner chamber, behind an artistically woven curtain, was the ark containing the tablets of testimony engraved with the Ten Commandments; on the ark’s cover stood two winged cherubim hammered out of pure gold. In the outer chamber stood the seven-branched menorah, and the table upon which the “showbread” was arranged.

The Sanctuary’s three walls were fitted together from 48 upright wooden boards, each of which was overlaid with gold and held up by a pair of silver foundation sockets. The roof was formed of three layers of coverings: (a) tapestries of multicolored wool and linen; (b) a covering made of goat hair; (c) a covering of ram and tachash skins. Across the front of the Sanctuary was an embroidered screen held up by five posts.

Surrounding the Sanctuary and the copper-plated altar which fronted it was an enclosure of linen hangings, supported by 60 wooden posts with silver hooks and trimmings, and reinforced by copper stakes.

Haftarah in a Nutshell: Kings 5:26-6:13

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/632637/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This week's haftarah describes the construction of the Holy Temple under the direction of King Solomon, echoing this week's Torah portion which discusses the construction of the Desert Tabernacle.

The haftarah discusses the manpower — both Jewish and non-Jewish — that Solomon recruited for the building of the Holy Temple. Also discussed are the hewing and transportation of the stone, the laying of the foundation, as well as the dimensions of the Holy Temple, its components and materials.

The haftarah ends with G-d's word to King Solomon: "This house which you are building, if you walk in My statutes, and execute My ordinances, and keep all My commandments to walk in them; then will I establish My word with you, which I spoke to David your father. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake My people, Israel."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What Do We Receive When We Give (Terumah 5780)

<http://rabbisacks.org/terumah-5780/>

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Tell the Israelites to take an offering for Me; take My offering from all whose heart moves them to give” (Ex. 25:1-2).

Our parsha marks a turning point in the relationship between the Israelites and God. Ostensibly what was new was the product: the Sanctuary, the travelling home for the Divine Presence as the people journeyed through the wilderness.

But a case could be made for saying that even more than the product was the process, summed up in the word that gives our parsha its name, Terumah, meaning, a gift, a

contribution, an offering. The parsha is telling us something very profound. Giving confers dignity. Receiving does not.

Until that moment, the Israelites had been recipients. Virtually everything they had experienced had been God-given. He had redeemed them from Egypt, liberated them from slavery, led them through the wilderness, and created a path for them through the sea. When they were hungry, He gave them food. When they were thirsty, He gave them water. Apart from the battle against the Amalekites, they had done almost nothing for themselves.

Though at every physical level this was an unparalleled deliverance, the psychological effects were not good. The Israelites became dependent, expectant, irresponsible and immature. The Torah chronicles their repeated complaints. Reading them, we feel that they were an ungrateful, querulous, petulant people.

Yet, what else were they to do? They couldn't have crossed the sea by themselves. They couldn't have found food or water in the wilderness. What produced results was complaining. The people complained to Moshe. Moshe turned to God. God performed a miracle. The result was that, from the people's perspective, complaining worked. Now, however, God gave them something else entirely. It had nothing to do with physical need and everything to do with psychological, moral and spiritual need. God gave them the opportunity to give.

One of my early memories, still blazing through the mists of forgotten time, goes back to when I was a child of perhaps six or seven years old. I was blessed with very caring, and also very protective, parents. Life had not given them many chances, and they were determined that we, their four sons, should have some of the opportunities they were denied. My late father of blessed memory took immense pride in me, his firstborn son. It seemed to me very important to show him my gratitude. But what could I possibly give him? Whatever I had, I had received from my mother and him. It was a completely asymmetrical relationship.

Eventually, in some shop I found a plastic model of a silver trophy. Underneath it was a plaque that read, "To the best father in the world." Today, all these years later, I cringe at the memory of that object. It was cheap, banal, almost comically absurd. What was unforgettable, though, was what he did after I had given it to him.

I can't remember what he said, or whether he even smiled. What I do remember is that he placed it on his bedside table, where it remained – humble, trite – for all the years that I was living at home.

He allowed me to give him something, and then showed that the gift mattered to him. In that act, he gave me dignity. He let me see that I could give even to someone who had given me all I had.

There is a strange provision of Jewish law that embodies this idea. "Even a poor person who is dependent on tzedakah (charity) is obligated to give tzedakah to another person." [1] On the face of it, this makes no sense at all. Why should a person who depends on charity be obligated to give charity? The principle of tzedakah is surely that one who has more than they need should give to one who has less than they need. By definition, someone who is dependent on tzedakah does not have more than they need. The truth is, however, that tzedakah is not only directed to people's physical needs but also their psychological situation. To need and receive tzedakah is, according to one of Judaism's most profound insights, inherently humiliating. As we say in Birkat ha-Mazon, "Please, O Lord our God, do not make us dependent on the gifts or loans of other people, but only on Your full, open, holy and generous hand so that we may suffer neither shame nor humiliation for ever and for all time."

Many of the laws of tzedakah reflect this fact, such that it is preferable that the giver does not know to whom they give, and the recipient does not know from whom they receive. According to a famous ruling of Maimonides the highest of all levels of tzedakah is, "to fortify a fellow Jew and give them a gift, a loan, form with them a partnership, or find work

for them, until they are strong enough so that they do not need to ask others [for sustenance].”[2] This is not charity at all in the conventional sense. It is finding someone employment or helping them start a business. Why then should it be the highest form of tzedakah? Because it is giving someone back their dignity.

Someone who is dependent on tzedakah has physical needs, and these must be met by other people or by community as a whole. But they also have psychological needs. That is why Jewish law rules that they must give to others. Giving confers dignity, and no one should be deprived of it.

The entire account of the construction of the Mishkan, the Sanctuary, is very strange indeed. King Solomon said in his address on the dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem, “But will God really dwell on earth? Even the heavens to their uttermost reaches cannot contain You, how much less this House that I have built!” (1 Kings 8:27). If that applied to the Temple in all its glory, how much more so of the Mishkan, a tiny, portable shrine made of beams and hangings that could be dismantled every time the people journeyed and reassembled every time they encamped. How could that possibly be a home for the God who created the universe, brought empires to their knees, performed miracles and wonders, and whose presence was almost unbearable in its intensity?

Yet, in its small but human way, I think what my father did when he put my cheap plastic gift by his bedside all those years ago was perhaps the most generous thing he did for me. And lehavdil, please forgive the comparison, this is also what God did for us when He allowed the Israelites to present Him with offerings, and then use them to make a kind of home for the Divine Presence. It was an act of immense if paradoxical generosity.

It also tells us something very profound about Judaism. God wants us to have dignity. We are not tainted by original sin. We are not incapable of good without Divine grace. Faith is not mere submission. We are God’s image, His children, His ambassadors, His partners, His emissaries. He wants us not merely to receive but also to give. And He is willing to live in the home we build for Him, however humble, however small.

This is hinted in the word that gives our parsha its name: Terumah. This is usually translated as an offering, a contribution. It really means something we lift. The paradox of giving is that when we lift something to give to another, it is we ourselves who are lifted.

I believe that what elevates us in life is not what we receive but what we give. The more of ourselves that we give, the greater we become.[1] Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Mattenot Aniyim 7:5. [2] Ibid., 10:7.

[The Golden Crown of Parenting by Lilly Kaufman](http://www.jtsa.edu/the-golden-crown-of-parenting)
<http://www.jtsa.edu/the-golden-crown-of-parenting>

And you shall cover it with pure gold, inside and outside you shall cover it, and you shall make for it a crown of gold surrounding it. (Exod. 25:11)

These are architectural details of the Ark of the Covenant, the central element of the Holy of Holies, where the tablets of the Ten Commandments will be held and carried. The Ark has a covering of gold, inside and out, and a crown of gold. Four gold rings are attached to it, two to each side wall, and through these rings poles of acacia wood are inserted, which remain in place, even when the Ark is at rest. To what may this Ark be compared? To parents. How so?

The Ark provides a **home** for the precious items inside it. So too, parents provide a home for the central precious ones in their lives: their children.

The Ark provides **protection** for these items. So too, parents provide protection for their children, at least when they are young.

And the Ark is clad in **gold, inside and out**. How might this compare to parents?

The Talmud teaches, in the name of Rabbi Yohanan (BT Yoma 72b) that the detail of gold inside and out is analogous to the good student of Torah, who must be the same kind of person inside and out. In BT Berakhot 28b, Rabban Gamliel declares the importance of integrity to the serious student of Torah, that one’s inner life and outer life must be consistent (תוכו כבּוּרוֹ). Just as the Ark was covered, inside and out, with the same

precious material, the good student of Torah must have integrity, and may not practice hypocrisy. As parents know only too well, children see through parental inconsistency, lack of clarity, and lack of honesty with laser-like focus.

And what about the acacia poles? The Ark was designed to travel. Even at rest, it must always be ready to go. So too, parents are instrumental in **helping their children move forward**, giving them the training to one day make an independent life for themselves. Parents offer a home, protection, and a way forward. They do so most credibly when they are honest with their children and pure in their intentions, “golden” inside and out.

The Ark of the Covenant is also said by the Rabbis (in BT Yoma 72b and M. Avot 4:17) to represent one of the three crowns of Judaism: the crown of Torah. The Ark is described in Terumah as having a **זָרָהב זָרָהב**, a gold crown (Exod. 25:11), which was most likely a design feature of gold molding at the top. The other two crowns are also mentioned in this week’s parashah: the **מִזְבֵּחַ** (the altar, depicted with a gold crown in 30:3) and the **שֻׁלְחָן** (the table) where offerings were placed in the Holy of Holies (depicted with a gold crown in 25:24). Rabbi Shimon (in Pirkei Avot) analogized these three crowns to represent the crown of kingship (the table), the crown of priesthood (the altar), and the crown of Torah (the Ark).

The dimensions of these three sacred objects catch the attention of the Keli Yakar (Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz, 1550-1619): The altar’s specifications are given in whole numbers; the table in a mix of whole numbers and fractions; and the Ark in fractions.

The Keli Yakar (commenting on 25:10) interprets whole and broken measurements symbolically, calling fractions “**אמות שבורות**” (broken measurements). The altar, which is measured in whole numbers, possesses inherent wholeness or perfection, which finds its most elaborate ritual expression in Judaism in the service of God through the priesthood. The table has both whole and broken measurements, representing a mixture of wholeness and brokenness, of successes and failures, which the kings of Israel reflect. But what could it mean that the Ark, symbolizing the crown of Torah, is composed entirely of broken numbers? He answers this way:

שכל אדם ידמה בנפשו כאלו הוא חסר מן שלימות החכמה וצריך למדוד עדיין למלאת חסרונו “Every person should imagine himself as if he is lacking some element of wholeness of wisdom and he must still measure out some more, to fill in his deficiencies . . .”

Even the wisest among us, in the view of the Keli Yakar, is an imperfect vessel seeking wholeness. His own *nom de plume*, Keli Yakar, means “precious vessel”. Precious does not necessarily mean perfect. He reminds us to regard our tradition with the important attitude of **humility**.

A person who is truly suited to acquire Torah is a person without pretense or guile, whose inside is like their outside: that person is a truly capable recipient of important teaching. The person best suited to preserve Torah is the person of humility: that person upholds the process of learning because they know there is much yet to learn. The person who combines integrity and humility is truly “golden,” inside and out.

Another feature of the Mishkan (the Tabernacle) is essential to all who would pass on this tradition: namely, tender, devoted **care**. In parshiyot Terumah, Tetzavveh, Vayak-hel and Pekudei, we see how much meticulous attention is lavished on every detail of the sacred space. Why? Because of its intrinsic value as an object of worship?

No! Terumah is an architectural poetics of the inner life. When we are building something as important and sacred as the place where God and people will meet, or as wondrous as the inner spiritual life of a child, care must be taken, quality cannot be short-changed, time must be spent. When God says in Terumah, **וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשֹׁכְנֵי בְתוֹכָם**, “**Make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell within them**” (Exod. 25:8), we can think of this verse as referring to parents and children this way: **[Parents!] Make for Me a sanctuary [in your home], and I will dwell within them [in your children].**

[Trumah by Rabbi Shaul Rosenblatt](#)

<https://mailchi.mp/91cd3faf2725/weekly-davar-trumah-2020?e=e0f2ca6c0d>

This portion details the building of the Tabernacle. It's the first fundraising drive in Jewish history. No fancy dinners, no adverts and no matching campaigns – just a word from Moses and the money came in. Where is Moses when you need him?!

The Tabernacle was a structure in which God 'resided'. That obviously doesn't mean He was there and not elsewhere. It was simply a place in which one could feel and experience God's presence in a much more tangible way.

Whilst the Torah describes the creation of the Universe in thirty-one verses, it devotes twelve chapters to the building of the Tabernacle. I think the message is clear. God physically created the Universe, granted. But it is up to us to perfect it. And perfecting is by far the bigger job.

The Tabernacle was the building in the desert purpose-built for the service of God. It represented the human role in this world – that of being of service to a greater good; contributing to our world; becoming partners with God in his creation. And in that partnership, God's part is the less significant role – only thirty-three verses. Humanity's role is twelve chapters – and a whole lot more than that also.

The Torah states that God put human beings in the Garden of Eden 'to work it and take care of it'. God created a beautiful world – in potential. It is our job to 'work' it whilst 'taking care' of it. A very tricky balance.

I have recently come across the anti-natalist movement. Part of its argument is that having children is morally wrong in that one creates beings that cause harm to our planet. But Judaism rejects such a concept. A pristine planet earth without human beings would be utterly meaningless. We human beings build, develop and improve the world physically. But more importantly, we also build a spiritual experience for ourselves – something that rocks, flowers and even animals cannot come close to doing. We are the only beings that can be conscious of our own wisdom, strive for spiritual greatness, regret and correct our mistakes, make freewill decisions, understand and respect values and morals – and a whole lot more.

The world, nay, the Universe, was created for human beings. God created this Universe for us to build, develop, make beautiful and perfect. And to use it as a conduit through which we can turn ourselves into Godly beings. We are not the enemies of our world; we are its very purpose.

But it is 'to work it AND to guard it'. And in our times, it looks like we might have lost that balance. Whether our present situation is a crisis, an emergency or simply a pressing challenge, is something I will leave for scientists to work out. But it seems clear to me, as a layman, that we are polluting our world with plastics and poisons; we are cutting down swathes of forests and over fishing in many areas – and a whole lot more. We need to find a better balance. So that we can 'guard' as we 'work'. There is no reason for us to stop building, growing and developing; no reason for us to stop having children. We just need to find a balance. And, given my great faith that ultimately humanity has an abundance of goodwill, common sense and ingenuity, I am sure that we will.

[Experiencing the Mishkan by Dr. Devorah Schoenfeld](#)

<http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?m=1102506082947&ca=bcfba463-6e05-4ddc-9ce6-28edd23b0aa8>

There are many science-fiction novels, set in the far or not-so-far future, in which characters encounter a relic of the present. Walking in the ruins of what once had been a great city they might find a flat box with a screen, or a small metal and glass device. It is clear to these far-future characters that these strange items were once important, once treasured by their owners, but why? What did they mean?

Reading Parashat Terumah can feel like a similar experience. The utensils of the Tabernacle (Mishkan), so precisely and specifically measured, meant so much to our ancestors that they described them not once but twice, here and in Parashat Vayakhel. These utensils must have helped them connect to God in some essential and life-giving way. But it has been many centuries since my ancestors stood in the structure that

housed these utensils, and all we have is their descriptions. How can we know what they meant?

We find two ways of imagining how the Mishkan was built, one which imagines it as entirely miraculous and one that describes it as down to earth. One place these two possibilities are placed side by side is in a debate in Midrash Tanchuma Terumah 9.14 between R. Judah and R. Nehemiah about the tachash of Exodus 25:3. According to R. Nehemiah, this tachash ('seal') was a strange and wondrous animal whose very existence was a miracle and it was created only for that moment. And not only the tachash was miraculous but so were other components of the Mishkan, including even the wood, which came from trees planted by Jacob because he knew by prophecy that the Mishkan would be built from them.

If we imagine the Mishkan as a place of miracles, built of strange animals and prophesied wood, then we imagine the experience of being in the Mishkan as one of encountering God through miracles. It would be a place that could help one encounter God through its strangeness, through its completely unique materials that show the work that God did to help us create this particular space.

Or we could imagine the building of the Mishkan as much more down to earth. To R. Judah, the tachash was simply a desert animal. In Midrash Tanchuma Terumah 5.1 it states that the gifts used to build the Mishkan were spoils taken from the Egyptians at the Red Sea. These spoils were a kind of compensation for the work that the Israelites were forced to do as slaves. Imagined this way, the Mishkan is a product of human effort, and the experience of being in the Mishkan could have been one of awareness of human effort and historical experience.

And perhaps, Midrash Tanchuma suggests, the two are not opposed. Midrash Tanchuma Terumah 9.5-6 describes at length the wonders of God's heavens, and concludes with "Yet see how much I love you that I leave all of this because of my love for you to tell you: And thou shalt make curtains of goats' hair for a tent (Exodus 26:7)." The Mishkan was, in this reading, a place to remember God's wonders and miracles and also God's choice to dwell with us in a goats-hair tent.

Looking back, the experience of what it could have been like to worship in the Mishkan can feel difficult to imagine. Would it feel like being surrounded by God's miracles? Or did it feel concrete and physical, a place where what surrounded us is nothing other than the fruits of our own labor?

The distance between us and the Mishkan can be humbling because it reminds us that there is so much about the experience of being Jewish and loving God that can feel distant from our own experiences. This parashah and its interpreters allow us to enter imaginatively into the world of those for whom the Mishkan was the place where God lived and begin to imagine how that might have felt. (*Dr. Schoenfeld is a Conservative Yeshiva Alumna and Professor of Theology at Loyola University in Chicago, IL.*)

[The Miraculous & The Ordinary by Rabbi Mordechai Silverstein \(Conservative Yeshiva Faculty\)](http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?m=1102506082947&ca=bcfba463-6e05-4ddc-9ce6-28edd23b0aa8)

<http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?m=1102506082947&ca=bcfba463-6e05-4ddc-9ce6-28edd23b0aa8>

King Solomon was responsible for building the First Temple. Much of this week's haftarah focuses on the acquisition of materials and the work involved in bringing the building of the Temple to fruition. One verse of this description, in particular, caught the attention of the Sages: "And the House when it was built, of whole stones at the quarry it was built, and no hammers nor axes nor any iron tools were heard in the House when it was built." (6:7)

How could it be possible to build a monumental building, even a sacred building, without the din of building tools clattering and clashing one with another? Two sages from the period of the Mishnah take to trying to explain this phenomenon: "Rabbi Yudah said: What is the nature of the Shamir (a miraculous worm)? It is a creature from the six days of creation. When it was put on stones or on boards, they would open up before it like the leaves of a notebook. And that is not all, for when it was put on iron, the iron would burst

open and fall apart before it. And nothing can stand before it... And with it, Solomon built the Temple. As it said: 'and no hammers nor axes nor any iron tools were heard in the House when it was built.' These are the words of Rabbi Yehudah. Rabbi Nehemiah said: 'They sawed with a saw outside, as it said: 'all these were of costly stones... sawed with saws in the House and outside.' (7:9) Why does Scripture say: 'inside the house and outside'? Inside the House they were not heard, because they were prepared outside and brought inside. Said Rabbi: The opinion of Rabbi Yehudah seems preferable to me regarding the stones of the Temple and the opinion of Rabbi Nehemiah regarding Solomon's house." (Tosefta Sotah 15:1, Lieberman ed. pp. 238-9)

We are faced with two radically different explanations of this verse, one miraculous and one perfectly ordinary. The ordinary explanation requires no explanation. It is perfectly natural and rational. The story of the "Shamir", a mythical worm, requires the eyes of a poet for understanding. It is nothing short of fantastic and that is the point. It was unimaginable, for Rabbi Yehudah, that the construction of the Temple could be anything short of a miracle and the story of the "Shamir" fit the bill. It allowed for a sense of God's immediacy in the process. Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi (Judah the Prince, author of the Mishnah) shares this view and that is why he accepts the miraculous explanation for the building of the Temple while for the building of Solomon's house, he is willing to accept Rabbi Nehemiah's more rational explanation.

It is a shame that many of us have lost the "eyes of the poet" when we look at the wonders of the world. It would give us a new appreciation of the miracles in our lives. Perhaps, the Shamir can carve such a place in our hearts.

[Divine Fire in Our Homes: The Intimacy and Mystery of the Menorah by Rabbi Avi Killip](https://mechonhadar.s3.amazonaws.com/mh_torah_source_sheets/KillipTerumah5780.pdf?utm_campaign=Dvar%20Torah%205780&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=83774560&hsenc=p2ANqtz-9GKvmNdxMsDhapN1vCxcU2pBrHYQMzJqAl8ogXxyydWsp82IZjrH5xc6B0JDIZWBjidmRy9Ioz1nzKwb96uYMX6Y03A&_hsmi=83783878)

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If Parashat Terumah were a room, it would dazzle the eyes. It would be a room full of treasures made of copper and silver and gold, of carefully cradled curtains and wooden structures built to impress. If I walked into this room the grandeur and obscurity of the objects would likely overwhelm me. But out of the corner of my eye, I would spot something familiar. Standing tall, in glittering gold, I would recognize it—the menorah. Surrounded by unfamiliar objects, the menorah feels like home base. Finally, something familiar. Finally, an object I can picture. Of all of the images from the mishkan, the menorah has traveled through time and found a place in our modern shuls and homes—our modern mishkans. Since long before the Star of David, the menorah has been a central symbol for our Judaism. We can understand the menorah.(1) Moses, however, felt differently. Rashi tells us that for Moses, the menorah was an especially tricky assignment. In a parashah full of complicated and esoteric details, what feels most familiar to us seems to have been the most confusing object for Moses. Using two different verses, Rashi brings two alternative versions of the story of Moses's struggle to understand the menorah: **Exodus 25:31** And you shall make a menorah of pure gold. The menorah shall be made of hammered work; its base and its stem, its goblets, its knobs, and its flowers shall [all] be [one piece] with it.

Rashi explores the phrase "The menorah shall be made," in passive form. He teaches: **Exodus 25:31** "The menorah shall be made"—by itself. Since Moses found difficulty with figuring out how to form the menorah], the Holy blessed One, said to him, "Cast the talent [of gold] into the fire, and it will be made by itself." Therefore, it is not written "you shall make" [but rather "shall be made"]

In this midrash, Moses has so much trouble with the menorah that God takes over. Moses need only place the requisite amount of gold into the flame and the completed menorah will emerge. The fire will make the menorah. The second midrash presents a different, but equally fiery story: **Exodus 25:40**: Now see and make according to their pattern, which you are shown on the mountain. What is God referring to here? What was Moses shown on the mountain? Rashi explains: [This] informs us that Moses had

difficulties with the making of the menorah, until the Holy Blessed One showed him a [model] menorah of fire. . In this version, rather than using fire to make the menorah for Moses, God uses fire to create a model, a template for Moses to follow.

This is not the first time God has communicated with Moses through fire. In fact, God has a habit of taking otherwise mundane objects and making them holy with the addition of fire. What was just a bush becomes the famous burning bush from which God calls out to Moses.(2) What was just a mountain becomes the fiery mountaintop where God speaks to Moses and the people. And here, what may have been just a lamp becomes a fiery menorah. (3)In these stories the fire brings an element of excitement, inducing awe and wonder. When there is fire we are acutely aware of God's holiness and grandeur. We pay attention. These are the stories that start our blood pumping harder, and make us sit up straighter in our chairs. We associate the fire with the ecstatic experience of encountering God. In the mishkan God's words will find their way into the ark, but God's fire is here in the menorah.(4)There is also a midrash where God writes the Torah for Moses with letters of black fire on white fire. To people who love studying Torah, this midrash makes perfect sense—the (5) excitement of Torah, the encounter with the divine, is found in the letters and words. But Parashat Terumah is not about words, it is about symbols. By teaching Moses about the menorah through fire, God infuses the symbol with excitement and meaning. Symbols hold a different kind of power. Rashi, the ultimate lover of study, delves head first into this sea of images and symbols. The usually terse commentator writes generously and in great detail about the images found in this parashah, and brings not one, but two stories to infuse the menorah with the fire of God. Rashi is trying to explain to us with words what really should be done in pictures. The Talmud in Menahot 29a teaches us that of everything that God taught Moses on the mountain—the entire written and oral Torah—there were only three things that God showed with pictures, and among them: the menorah. Even in our very verbal tradition, there are (6) some things that need to be understood visually and viscerally. The same is true of our religious lives today. We could read Parashat Terumah every year forever and we may never feel God's presence as clearly as we do watching candles flicker in a golden menorah. Ritual can transport us, and this ritual transports us back to the moment of Sinai, of encountering God directly, in a unique and fiery way.

In his introduction to this parashah, Ramban tells us that that the true purpose of the mishkan is to maintain the experience of Sinai: **Exodus 25:1** And the secret of the mishkan is that the glory of God that dwelt on Mount Sinai [also] hiddenly dwells upon it... And the glory that was shown to them on Mount Sinai was always with Israel in the mishkan. "And when Moses came [to it]" (**Exodus 34:34**), the [divine] speech that spoke to him at Mount Sinai [came] to him. And as [Moshe] said at the giving of the Torah, "From the skies, He made you hear His voice, to discipline you, and upon the earth, did He show you His great fire" (**Deuteronomy 4:36**), so too about the mishkan is written "[Moses] heard the voice speaking to him from the ark cover between the two cherubim, and He spoke to him" (**Numbers 7:89**).

Moses can't understand the menorah without a divine pyrotechnic demonstration. No amount of explanation would have helped. There are some things God can only communicate through fire. Fire has the power to bring us back to the moment of revelation, and the menorah has the power to offer us fire. The next time you see a menorah, open your heart to the power and intrigue held in the image. Take a long hard look—as if the object had simply emerged, whole, from a fire. 1) Going as far back at least as the coins of the last Hasmonean king Mattityahu Antigonus 2) Exodus 3:2. 3) Exodus 19:18. 4) Exodus 25:16. 5) Rashi brings this on Deuteronomy 33:2. 6) "The school of Rabbi Yishmael taught: Three matters were difficult for Moses, until the Holy One, Blessed be He, showed him with His finger, and these are: the menorah, the new moon, and the creeping animals."

Yahrtzeits

Mel Zwillenberg remembers his father Nathan Zwillenberg (Natan Mordechai), Wed. Mar.4(Adar II 8).
Merna Most remembers her mother Mina Handleman (Merel bat Avraham) , Thurs. Mar. 5. (Adar 9)

