

Kol Rina  
*An Independent Minyan*  
Parashat Terumah  
February 21, 2026\*\*\*4 Adar, 5786

Terumah in a Nutshell

[https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/1311/jewish/Terumah-in-a-Nutshell.htm](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1311/jewish/Terumah-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

The name of the Parshah, "Terumah," means "Offering" and it is found in Exodus 25:2.

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 the 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 Nutshell: I Kings 5:26 – 6:13

[https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/632637/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm](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

### Two Narratives of Creation by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l 5767

<https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/terumah/two-narratives-of-creation/>

The Torah describes two acts of creation: God's creation of the universe, and the Israelites' creation of the Mikdash, or Mishkan, the Sanctuary that travelled with them in the desert, the prototype of the Temple in Jerusalem.

The connection between them is not incidental. As a number of commentators have noted, the Torah invokes a series of verbal parallels between them. The effect is unmistakable. The latter mirrors the former. As God made the universe, so He instructed the Israelites to make the Mishkan. It is their first great constructive and collaborative act after crossing the Red Sea, leaving the domain of Egypt and entering their new domain as the people of God. Just as the universe began with an act of creation, so Jewish history (the history of a redeemed people) begins with an act of creation.

The Universe (Bereishit)

“And God made the sky” (Gen. 1:7)

“And God made the two great lights” (Gen. 1:16)

“And God made the beasts of the earth” (Gen. 1:25)

“And God saw all that He

The Mishkan (Shemot)

“They shall make Me a Sanctuary” (Ex. 25:8)

“They shall make an Ark” (Ex. 25:10)

“Make a table” (Ex. 25:23)

“Moses saw all the skilled work

had made, and behold it was very good.” (Gen. 1:31)

“The heavens and earth and all of their array were completed.” (Gen. 2:1)

“And God completed all the work that He had done” (Gen. 2:2)

“And God blessed” (Gen. 2:3)

“And sanctified it” (Gen. 2:3)

and behold they had done it; as God commanded it, they had done it.” (Ex. 39:43)

“All the work of the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting was completed” (Ex. 39:32)

“And Moses completed the work” (Ex. 40:33)

“And Moses blessed” (Ex. 39:43)

“And you shall sanctify it and all its vessels”  
(Ex. 40:9)

The key words - make, see, complete, bless, sanctify, work, behold - are the same in both narratives. The effect is to suggest that making the Mishkan was, for the Israelites, what creating the universe was for God.

Yet the disparity is extraordinary. The creation of the universe takes a mere 34 verses (Bereishit ch. 1, together with the first three verses of Bereishit ch. 2). The making of the Mishkan takes hundreds of verses (Terumah, Tetzaveh, part of Ki Tissa, Vayakhel, and Pekudei) - considerably more than ten times as long. Why? The universe is vast. The Sanctuary was small, a modest construction of poles and drapes that could be dismantled and carried from place to place as the Israelites journeyed through the wilderness. Given that the length of any passage in the Torah is a guide to the significance it attaches to an episode or law, why devote so much time and space to the Tabernacle? The answer is profound. The Torah is not man's book of God. It is God's book of humankind. It is not

difficult for an infinite, omnipotent Creator to make a home for humanity. What is difficult is for human beings, in their finitude and vulnerability, to make a home for God. Yet that is the purpose, not only of the Mishkan in particular but of the Torah as a whole.

A Midrash puts it graphically:

“It came to pass on the day that Moses finished erecting the Tabernacle” [Num. 7:1] - Rabbi [Judah HaNasi] said, “Wherever it says ‘and it came to pass’, it refers to something new.” Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said, “Wherever it says ‘and it came to pass’, it refers to something that existed in the past, and was then interrupted, and then returned to its original situation.”

This is the meaning of the words “I have come into My garden, My sister, My bride” (Song of Songs 5:1). When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the universe, He desired to have a dwelling place in the lower worlds, as He has in the upper worlds. He summoned Adam and said, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil” but Adam transgressed the command. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: “This is what I wanted, that just as I have a dwelling-place in the upper worlds, so I wished to have a dwelling place in the lower worlds. I commanded you one thing, and you did not keep it!” Immediately, God withdrew His Presence to the heavens. . .

[The Midrash then lists the subsequent sins of humankind, each of which caused the Divine Presence to withdraw one

more level from the earth. Then came Abraham and his descendants, each of whom brought the Divine Presence one stage closer...]

Then came Moses and brought the Divine Presence down to earth. When? When the Tabernacle was erected. Then the Holy One, blessed be He, said: “I have come into My garden, My sister, My bride” - I have come to that which I desired [from the outset]. This is the meaning of “It came to pass on the day that Moses finished erecting the Tabernacle” - the source of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai’s statement that “Wherever it says ‘and it came to pass’ it refers to something that existed in the past, and was then interrupted, and then returned to its original situation.” Tanchumah [Buber], Naso, 24

The Tabernacle, small and fragile though it was, was an event of cosmic significance. It brought the Divine Presence [the Shechinah, which comes from the same root as Mishkan] down from heaven to earth. How, though, are we to understand this idea? It is contained in one of the key words of the Torah, namely kadosh, “holy”.

As the Jewish mystics noted, creation involves an act of self-limitation on the part of the Creator. The word olam, “universe” is directly related to the word ne-elam, meaning “hidden”. For there to be the possibility of a being with freewill, choice, and moral responsibility, God cannot be a ubiquitously tangible Presence. When the Israelites heard the voice of God at Sinai, they said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen, but let not God say any more to us, or we will die” (Ex. 20:16). The direct, unmediated Presence of God is overwhelming. The infinite crowds out the finite. God is like a parent; and

unless a parent lets go, the child will never learn to walk. Letting go means that the child will stumble and fall, but not forever. Eventually it will learn to walk. So it is with other forms of learning-by-doing. At various stages a parent must progressively withdraw to leave space for the child to grow. So too God must withdraw if humanity - made in His image - is eventually to become His “partner in the work of creation”. Creation is an act of Divine self-limitation.

This, however, creates a paradox. If God is perceptible everywhere, there is no room for humankind. But if God is perceptible nowhere, how can humanity know Him, reach Him, or understand what He wants from us? The answer - already hinted at in the account of creation itself - is that God reserves, in several dimensions, a domain that is peculiarly His. The first is in time - the seventh day (and eventually, the seventh month, the seventh year, and the jubilee at the end of the seventh cycle of sabbatical years). The second was among the nations after their division into multiple languages and civilisations - the covenantal people, the children of Israel. The third was in space - the Tabernacle. Each of these is holy, meaning, a point at which the Divine Presence emerges from hiddenness to exposure, from concealment to revelation. As Shabbat is to time, so the Tabernacle was to space: kadosh, holy, set apart, God's domain. The holy is the metaphysical arena where heaven and earth meet.

That meeting has specific parameters. It is where God rules, not humankind. Therefore it is associated with the renunciation of the autonomous human will. There is no room for private initiative on the part of humankind. That is why, later, Nadav and Avihu die because they bring a fire-offering that “was not commanded.” Just as chol (“the secular”) is where God practises self-limitation to create space for

humankind, so kodesh is where human beings engage in self-limitation to create space for God.

That is why the creation of the Tabernacle by the Israelites is the counterpart of the creation of the universe by God. Both were acts of self-renunciation whereby the one made space for the other. The elaborate detail with which the Torah describes the making of the Mishkan is to show that none of it was done at the initiative of Moses, or Betzalel, or the Israelites themselves. Hence the lack of parallelism at one crucial point. Whereas after the creation of the universe we read, “And God saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good” (Bereishit 1:31), after the making of the Mishkan we read, “Moses saw all the skilled work and behold they had done it; as God commanded it, they had done it.”

When it comes to the holy, “as God commanded it” is the human equivalent of the Divine “it was very good”. Chol is the space God makes for man. Kodesh is the space we make for God.

### [A Symbol of Peace - Terumah by Daniel Nevins \(2017\)](https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/a-symbol-of-peace-2/)

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The Arch of Titus in Rome is simultaneously one of the saddest and most exciting places for a Jew to stand. It is but a short distance from the Colosseum, the stadium made famous by its cruel sports, built with money plundered from the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE. Titus’s Arch celebrates the destruction of our Temple, a building designated by Isaiah to be a house of prayer for all nations. A bas-relief sculpture on the arch’s inner walls depicts a sickening scene: the triumphant display of the Temple’s sacred objects, the

Menorah most prominent among them, along with a pathetic procession of enslaved Jews.

I once visited this spot with a group of Christian clergy and found myself suddenly weeping over this ancient tragedy. A Catholic deacon named Mark asked that we all embrace and pray together in order to repair some of the hatred and violence of that scene with our friendship and respect. I appreciated his instinct, and it helped. And yet, the image of the Menorah above our heads reminded me of the destruction of our Temple and the two millennia of exile and oppression which followed the sack of Jerusalem.

Sad as the sight of this arch is, I must admit that it is also fascinating. After all, this is the closest that we can get to an eyewitness account of the design of the ancient Menorah, at least as it appeared in the Second Temple. The Torah's description of the seven-branched lamp stand in our portion (Exod. 25: 31-40) is extremely detailed. It is to be fashioned of beaten gold, with a central shaft and six branches, three on each side. There are almond blossoms and lily cups, all made of pure gold. How radiant it must have been when its lamplight played off the blossoms of beaten gold!

For all of this detail, important dimensions are absent. How large should the Menorah be? Are its branches curved or straight? Are its seven lamps of identical height or not? It would be impossible from the Torah text alone to recreate the Menorah built by Moses. This led to the idea that the Torah is not providing details to build from scratch, but only an allusion to a prior model of Menorah. But where would that have been found?

Ancient Jews imagined that not only the Menorah but indeed the entire Tabernacle was already created in heaven, and that

the terrestrial one was meant to be a copy. So for example, a work written shortly after the destruction of the Second Temple, but set before the destruction of the First Temple, reads:

*[The true temple] is not this building that is in your midst now; it is that which will be revealed, with Me, that was already prepared from the moment I decided to create paradise. I showed it...to Moses on Mount Sinai when I showed him the likeness of the tabernacle and all its vessels. (2 Baruch 4:3,5, as in James Kugel, The Bible as It Was, 420)*

According to the Midrash, Moses struggled greatly to discern how to make this brilliant object. In the Talmud (BT Menahot 29a), Rabbi Yosi b. Rabbi Yehudah is quoted saying that a menorah made of fire descended from the sky to illustrate the design, which Moses faithfully copied. While this Midrash sounds fanciful, it relates to a close reading of the text which emphasizes that Moses built according to the image shown him on Mount Sinai (Exod. 25:9, 40 and 26:30).

The medieval rabbis confirmed this account, with Rashi stating that a menorah of fire was shown to Moses—although Rashbam prefers a less spectacular reading, that Moses was able to see it “from himself,” apparently through inspired imagination. The consensus of ancient and medieval interpreters seems to be that the Menorah, and indeed all of the Temple vessels, were not originals but rather copies of the celestial Temple and its objects. This reading is suggested by the Torah’s emphasis that Moses “was shown” models on Mount Sinai.

Although the image of a heavenly hologram is quite appealing, perhaps the Menorah made by Moses is not the first to take

solid form. After all, the Menorah is basically an illuminated tree. It alludes back to the Tree of Knowledge described in Genesis 2, and perhaps also to the burning bush described in Exodus 3. The burning bush, too, is a tree that is on fire, yet it is not consumed, just as the golden Menorah is on fire and is not consumed. These images of burning trees are rich and resistant to simple interpretation. They seem to be associated with a special form of intelligence—the flow of secret knowledge from heaven to earth.

When the Tabernacle—and then the Temple—stood, golden trees in their sacred precincts symbolized the possibility of enlightenment. The eroded marble sculpture of a menorah on the Arch of Titus symbolizes the extinguishing of that light, which was a tragedy not only for the Jews, but for the world. And yet, just as the Menorah was not an original but a copy of the divine model, so too are we able to recapture the experience of enlightenment through our own efforts.

We live in a time of division and hatred and violence. The vulgar parade of Titus, intent on replacing a house of peace (symbolized by the Menorah) with cruel entertainment (symbolized by the Colosseum) is a reminder of how far humanity can fall. It is our responsibility to look clearly and discern our ideals so that we too can build an enlightened religious culture. *(Daniel Nevins is a JTS Rabbinical School Alum, Former Pearl Resnick Dean of the Rabbinical School and the Division of Religious Leadership and Adjunct Assistant Professor at JTS)*

[Terumah: Holy Fragmentation by Rabbi Eli Weinbach](https://truah.org/resources/eli-weinbach-terumah-moraltorah_2026_/)

[https://truah.org/resources/eli-weinbach-terumah-moraltorah\\_2026\\_ /](https://truah.org/resources/eli-weinbach-terumah-moraltorah_2026_/)

Recently, I attended an anti-ICE protest near my home. Our government's recent methods of terrorizing immigrants feel deeply at odds with the democratic values that I want my country to live by. As I approached, the first thing I saw was a large Palestinian flag; closer in, several protest leaders were wearing keffiyehs. In the wake of October 7, these symbols tread on a frightened and fragile spot in my heart. The horrific videos of Hamas taking hostages flashed through my memory. I walked along the outskirts of the rally and wondered to myself, why do these issues need to be conflated in a way that makes it hard for my loved ones to be in this coalition? Can I take a spot in a crowd of people wearing keffiyehs without betraying my family?

But what if I don't show up? What will I say when my daughter asks me what I was doing while America's democratic norms were being eroded? What will I say when God asks me what I was doing as the stranger in my land was being oppressed?

There are times that I have shown up to protests feeling whole — fully present as a Jew and as an advocate for social justice. But at this protest, I noticed my presence as a Jew was fragmented. The symbols I saw there left me confused and worried. Is there truly space for me in this coalition?

Jewish tradition provides a guide for navigating moments where a clash of values leaves parts of us broken. In the chapter describing the construction of the Ark of the Covenant in Exodus 25:10-22, we are commanded to place the luchot (the tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments) inside the Ark. The Talmud, in Bava Batra 14a-14b, tells us that the Ark, our holiest artifact and the seat of God's resting place on earth, contained not only the luchot but also the fragments of the first set of tablets.

It would have been easier to leave the fragments behind. But our ancestors went out of their way to gather them and place them in the holy Ark of the Covenant, right next to the unbroken luchot. Keffiyehs at rallies, and the images of October 7 that they summon, leave the Jew in me fragmented. The Ark teaches me that I must bring the pieces along with me. They don't detract from the holiness or power of the sacred project.

This is not to say that I leave behind my love and support for my Israeli family when I arrive at the protest. Our tradition doesn't affirm fragmentation as the ideal. It does, however, embolden us to show up to meet the current moment with the full force of Judaism's moral teachings, even in the face of profound and fundamental tensions. I deeply disagree with some of the people at these rallies, and I believe there is a time and place to leverage my relationships to foster productive dialogue. But in this holy moment of protest, the Ark reminds me that my pain and fear are welcome. The fragments of the tablets are not merely tolerated; they are honored.

I joined the rally that day. I chanted alongside the crowd, confident that in this moment I was in the right place in the right way. I showed up as the luchot, both fragmented and whole at the same time, taking my place in the Ark of holy protest. Unfortunately, the attacks on our civil liberties continue, and it seems as though there will be more protests to come. Let's heed the call as Jews, both fragmented and whole, and step forward into coalition. *(Rabbi Eli Weinbach is the director of student well-being for Hillel at Stanford. A graduate of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, he has worked in a rabbinic capacity with Adamah, ICNY, and Uri L'tzedek. He has been a fellow at FASPE, JOFFEE, UJA, T'ruah, and Hadar.)*

## Terumah: Divine Order by Jennifer Zukerman

<https://www.yeshivatmaharat.org/post/parshat-terumah-divine-order>

This week, as we prepare for the festive anarchy of Purim, we read in Parshat Terumah about the precise and exacting construction of the Mishkan. It seems an unlikely pairing, but the fact that a parsha is always read at roughly the same time as a particular holiday invites us to examine what the parsha and the chag can teach about one another. In this case, the comparison provides insight into the power of discipline and divinely established order as HaShem's prescription for bringing moral structure to our world.

Parshat Terumah includes lavish descriptions of the materials used in constructing the Mishkan:

As for the tabernacle, make it of ten strips of cloth; make these of fine twisted linen, of blue (techelet), reddish-purple (argaman), and crimson woolen yarns, with a design of cherubim worked into them (Shemot 26:1).

You don't have to go very far into Megillat Esther to find a similar description:

[There were hangings of] white cotton and blue (techelet) wool, caught up by cords of fine linen and reddish-purple (argaman) wool to silver rods and alabaster columns; and there were couches of gold and silver on a pavement of marble, alabaster, mother-of-pearl, and mosaics (Esther 1:6).

Two similarities immediately become apparent: first, the lavish color terms techelet and argaman, and second, the surprising feature of shatnez, wool and linen woven together.

The terms techelet and argaman are used very rarely in Torah, and they appear only in connection with the holiness of the

Mishkan. Shatnez, the combination of wool and linen, is explicitly forbidden for Jews to wear in their garments, except, again, in the Mishkan and when required for tzitzit.

But whereas the terms techelet and argaman are spelled out very clearly and “shesh” is used in both contexts to mean linen, neither source has a word that unequivocally means “wool.” Fortunately, Rambam spells it out in Mishnah Torah (Vessels of the Sanctuary 8:13), even tying together for us the colors with the wool and flax:

Whenever the Torah uses the word shesh or bad, it is referring to flax, i.e., linen. Whenever the term techelet is used, it refers to wool which is dyed sky-blue, i.e., lighter than dark blue. The term argaman refers to wool that is dyed wine-colored.

Medieval commentator Rabbeinu Bachya, in his commentary on Vayikra 19:19, gives us some clues as to why this is important. He explains that wool comes from the dimension of the animal spirit and linen from the vegetative dimension.

Circumventing that order, the order of the universe put in place by Hashem, is dangerous business, and the interweaving of the two can be accomplished only in the service of Hashem. Tzitzit are rare exceptions to the prohibition against shatnez, as are the garments of the Kohanim performing service in the Mishkan, showing us that holy garments can bear this coupling of the animal and vegetative kingdoms.

Interestingly, as Rabbeinu Bachya points out, the Eshet Chayil (women of valor) is described as seeking out wool and flax and working with them enthusiastically (Proverbs 31:22). She is virtuous specifically because she can handle the holy job of reconciling the animal and vegetable spheres. As he says in his commentary, “[When the entire orientation of a person is to fulfill the will of the Creator, as is the orientation of the Eshet](#)

Chayil described by Solomon, then, and only then, joining these symbolically diverse characteristics is permitted or even commanded.” Just as the interplay of these colors and textiles creates the garment, the beged, of a Kohen serving Hashem in the Mishkan and Beit HaMikdash, so too the woman of valor labors to properly configure and interlace the elements of diverse realms.

Given the rich commentary around techelet and argaman and flax and wool, we now come back to the palace of King Achashverosh. If those elements we talked about could create a beged for holiness and virtue, those very same letters can be re-vowelized to refer to the king who betrayed, or bagad in Hebrew, those ideals.

The palace of Achashverosh was the anti-Mishkan. In contrast to the seven-day initiation period for Aaron and his sons into the priesthood, Achashverosh mandated a seven-day bacchanal. He hosted the masses in the gardens of his palace, surrounded by opulent tapestries of linen and wool and techelet and argaman, offering exotic treif food and drink being served in the very vessels plundered from Beit Hamikdash. Whereas the Kohanim wore their vestments to enter the Holy of Holies on Yom HaKippurim, King Achashverosh paraded his riches in a display of human vanity.

The Megillah’s depiction of the kingdom of Achashverosh stands as the first and most detailed depiction of life in exile, representing our temporal lives as a distorted mockery of the spiritual lives we can attain. Exile has torn us away from Beit HaMikdash, and the exile experience tosses us aimlessly between the competing ideals of the nations. Queen Esther typified the Eshet Chayil in harnessing the trappings of exile to the will of Hashem, and between the chag and the parsha we

find an exhortation to all of us to do the same.

*(Jennifer Zukerman's bio can be found here:*

*<https://www.yeshivatmaharat.org/post/parshat-terumah-divine-order>)*

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## Yahrtzeits

Mel Zwillenberg remembers his father Nathan Zwillenberg on Wed.  
Feb. 25th