



Around the Shabbat Table

Terumah 5766
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Shalom!

Introduction

The Torah portion this week is Terumah. The word *terumah* refers to a gift or offering, and implies that something has been raised up (either physically or spiritually). In this parasha, the *terumah* discussed consists of offerings of raw materials that the Israelites are commanded to donate in order to construct the *mishkan*, the Tabernacle that will serve as their portable Temple during their travels through the wilderness.

Among the materials to be gathered are metals - gold, silver and brass, fabrics – animal skins and linens, ingredients for incense – oil and spices, and wood as a building material. The Torah describes how various furnishings of the *mishkan* are to be built: the Ark and its cover, a table, the menorah (candelabrum), curtains and walls. Also, those utensils that will be used for sacrificial offerings are mentioned: pans, bowls, and more.



Questions for Your Family's Discussion

- I. A mystery of the parasha was the source of the materials that the Israelites were to donate. Where do you think they came from? Consider the following possibilities:
 - They were part of the booty that the people of Israel took on their way out of Egypt

- They purchased materials from traveling caravans
 - The description of the building of the Tabernacle was not historically accurate, but in fact is a description in miniature of the permanent Temple built later.
2. Why does the Torah, which is a book of laws, teachings, and history, suddenly spend a great amount of emphasis on giving the details of designing and building the mishkan?
- Consider: The German-American architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe is often mentioned as the originator of the expression “God is in the details.” What did he mean? How might that apply to the details of the building in our parasha?
3. The Tabernacle was built through donations of materials by the members of the community. How do we build and maintain our Tabernacles/synagogues today?



Some Texts to Wrestle With

“And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.”

- Exodus 25:8

Many commentators point out that logically, this verse should read “And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell *in it*.” By stating instead that God will dwell “*among them*”, the Torah appears to indicate that it is through building a physical sanctuary that God’s presence will be manifest in among the entire community.

There is a Hasidic comment, ascribed to the past leader of the Lubavitch/Habad community that this verse implies that each individual must build a tabernacle within him/herself in order for God to live inside him/her.

- How does one “build a sanctuary” within him/herself?

“And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of beaten work you shall make them, at the two ends of the ark covering. And make one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim of the two ends of one piece with the ark covering. And the cherubim shall spread out their wings on high, screening the ark covering with their wings, with their faces one to another; toward the ark covering shall the faces of the cherubim be.”

- Exodus 25:18-20

There is considerable speculation about what these “cherubim” were. Among the possibilities suggested by scholars and by Jewish texts are that they were:

- Angels

- Beings with wings, and the body of either a human or animal
- The likeness of a boy and girl

Why would these be considered appropriate ornaments for the Ark?

Towards an Action Agenda

1. Much of the parasha describes the architecture of the Tabernacle. Learn about the architecture of today's synagogue at [My Jewish Learning on synagogue architecture](#)
2. A gallery of photos of the architecture of today's synagogue can be found at [Photos of synagogue interiors](#)
3. The contemporary Israeli artist Ya'akov Agam wrote an article about his vision of what a synagogue could look like. Explore his vision at [Agam's synagogue vision](#)



Shabbat Shalom!

Please join together in learning with other families by sharing your family's discussions and ideas by posting them on our web site. Simply respond with your thoughts and ideas to RavADS@bjeny.org

Around the Shabbat Table is a project of the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York Nassau/Queens Center. If there is any way we can be of service, please contact Rabbi Arnold D. Samlan at the BJE Nassau Queens Center, 516-876-6535, or see our web site: www.bjeny.org

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