



Around the Shabbat Table

Terumah 5765

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Mr. Beryl Kwitkin, Principal, Rabbi Nathan Rosenbaum Religious School of Temple Beth-El in Bellmore, NY and Mina Kwitkin, a former Jewish teacher, now an ESL Adult Educator at Nassau BOCES in Carle Place, NY.

Usher in the most unique day of the Jewish week by saying . . .

Shabbat Shalom! -- Ah Gutten Shabbos!

NOTE: This study guide can be used during the eating of any of the three special **Shabbat** meals or at any other time during **Shabbat**. You may also want to have a copy of a **chumash** (Five books of Moses) near you so that you might be able to refer to **Torah** text verses in Exodus chapters 25 - 27.

Introduction

Shalom!

Terumah is the seventh parasha (weekly torah portion) in Shemot (Exodus). The Torah narrative describes the construction of the Tabernacle. God told Moses to tell the Israelites to bring Him gifts “from every person whose heart moves him.” (Ex. 25:2) The items which comprised these gifts were given to the Israelites upon their leaving Egyptian slavery, and they included gold, silver and copper, blue, purple and crimson yarns, fine linen, goats’ hair, dyed sheep or goat leather, acacia wood, oil for lighting, spices for anointing oil and for aromatic incense, and semiprecious stones. These items were to be used as the Israelites constructed a sanctuary for God, according to His specific directions, so that He may dwell among them.

The first item of the Tabernacle to be constructed was the “ark” (into which the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, received at Mt. Sinai, were to be placed). It was approximately 3 ¾ feet long, 2 ¼ feet wide and 2 ¼ feet high. The ark was to be overlaid, inside and outside, with pure gold. Attached to each side of the ark were two golden rings through which wooden poles were placed to help carry it. On top of this portable ark was a cover and at either end of the cover, a cherub (angel) was hammered out of pure gold. These two cherubs faced each other with their outstretched wings turned upward. It was at the top of this golden ark that God’s spirit would descend and communicate with Moses.

In addition,

- 1) bowls, ladles, jars and jugs, all made of pure gold, were to be fashioned and used to offer libations (the pouring of wine for a religious purpose).
- 2) A table was also to be constructed upon which “show bread” was to be displayed.
- 3) A lampstand (menorah) of a specific design and made out of pure gold, with three branches on each side of a center shaft, was also to be constructed.

The top of the Tabernacle was to be covered with four different layers. The lowest layer consisted of a design of cherubim which was woven into fabric made from fine twisted yarns of blue, purple and crimson. Fifty loops of blue wool and fifty golden clasps on each edge of the woven clothes would help join together the main sections of this cover. A coarser second layer was comprised of 11 strips of goats’ hair joined together by fifty loops and fifty copper clasps. Ram skins and leather from sheep and goats comprised the two uppermost layers covering the Tabernacle.

The inside of the portable Tabernacle consisted of two unequal sections separated by a curtain (*parochet*), similar in design to the lowest covering of the Tabernacle described above. The innermost section, a 15 foot square, was the Holy of Holies, and it contained the ark. A larger surrounding area (15 feet wide X 30 feet long X 15 feet high) was the “Holy Place” in which was located a table, the menorah and the altar of incense. The courtyard of the Tabernacle contained a portable altar for burnt offerings. To maintain the sanctity of the Tabernacle an enclosure was built around it. This enclosure acted to separate the Tabernacle from the profane, outside space.



Questions for Your Family Discussion:

As your family shares Shabbat meals together, here are some questions for discussion and the sharing of ideas, opinions, values, attitudes, thoughts and feelings.

The questions below are designated into two categories:

- “A” questions are for adults to think about, and,
- “C” questions are suitable for children to think about.

“A” - 1. Why do you think God gave the Israelites very detailed directions for constructing His dwelling place? When are you given specific directions, would you rather follow directions or create your own plan? Why?

“A” - 2. When you give a gift do you give it willingly, out of a sense of obligation, or because it is expected of you? Explain your answer.

“C” - 3. How do you feel when you receive a gift from someone? How do you feel when you give a gift to someone? Is the wrapping of the gift important?

“A” - 4. When the Israelites left Egypt, the Egyptian people gave them many valuable gifts (gold, silver, linens). Why do you think that the Egyptians gave their valuable possessions to the departing Israelites?

“A” - 5. After the Civil War, the slaves in the American South were also freed. Did the plantation owners give anything to their former slaves? Why?

“A” - 6. How can you account for the difference in how the freed Israelite slaves and the freed American slaves were treated?

“A” - 7. When you see the Ark in a synagogue’s sanctuary, what significance do you attach to it?

“C” - 8. What do you think you will see when the doors of the synagogue’s Ark open up?

“A” - 9. Many of the objects found in the Tabernacle were constructed from, or covered, in gold. Why do you think this material was selected for use in the construction of objects found in the Tabernacle?

“C” - 10. What reaction do you have when you see something that looks like “gold”? Explain your answer.

“A” - 11. Why do you think that the two angels which decorated the top of the ark faced each other and had their wings turned upward?

“C” - 12. What was your reaction when you finally saw the ark in the movie “Raiders of the Lost Ark”?

“A” - 13. All of us have special, separate places where we put our very important possessions. Compare your special place to the special place of the Tabernacle. (hidden or in view, decorated or plain, portable or stationary, etc.)

“C” - 14. What separate places are there in your home, that are reserved for special occasions or for special people? Why do you think that is?

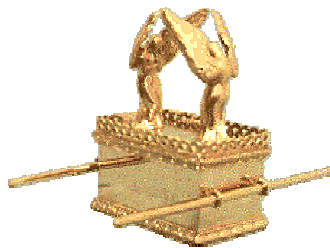


Texts to Wrestle With:

“And let them (the Israelites) make Me a sanctuary so that I may dwell among them.”

- Exodus 25:8

- 1) It appears that God wants a “physical place” constructed in the immediate geographic area in which Jewish people live. Why do you think God wants to live among Jews, His “chosen people”? How has that enabled / helped the Jewish people to survive?
- 2) How much time, effort and resources should be put into designing, constructing and furnishing a synagogue? What would you change, if anything, about how your family’s synagogue was designed? furnished?
- 3) The name of a synagogue often reflects what that synagogue stands for. The names “Temple”, “Congregation”, “Jewish Center” or “Community Center” reflects the values of a synagogue. What does the name of your family’s synagogue tell the Jewish community about the people who attend that institution?



Towards an Action Agenda:

Challenge #1 - If your family doesn't belong to a synagogue become involved in a local / community synagogue. In the metropolitan New York area, many established, Jewish neighborhoods, each contains a number of different synagogues.” Synagogue hop” until you find a synagogue which meets the needs of you and your family and then

- attend services, or a class, or a social or cultural event or program at that synagogue.
- join a committee of this synagogue - attend meetings, suggest programs.
- become an active member of this synagogue.

Challenge #2 -Locate for your family a copy of The Tabernacle: Its Structure and Utensils by Moshe Levine. This out-of-print book contains magnificent artistic renderings, stunning photographs, and written descriptions, about the Tabernacle, its sacred objects, and the priestly vestments. Look in your synagogue library or other Judaic resource center for The Tabernacle.

Challenge #3 - Make your home into a mikdash *m'at* (a small sanctuary). On Friday night transform the dining room table into an “altar” containing Shabbat ritual objects (candle sticks, kiddush cup, challah tray), say the appropriate Hebrew blessings, serve traditional foods (challah sprinkled with salt, gefilte fish, chicken soup, etc.), sing Shabbat songs, and study the weekly torah portion. Experience the special “family togetherness” that comes from reserving the time from Friday, sundown, to Saturday, sunset, as a time to leave the “outside world” outside your home, as you refocus upon the Sabbath and all that it is capable of giving to your family.

Todah rabah (a sincere “thank you”) for giving us the opportunity to share our thoughts and ideas with you this Shabbat.



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. If there is any way we can be of service, please contact Rabbi Arnold D. Samlan, project coordinator, at the BJE Nassau Queens Center, 516-876-6535, or see our web site: www.bjeny.org

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