

Parashat Terumah 5778

P'SHAT

Ex. 25:1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ² Tell the Israelite people to bring Me gifts; you shall accept gifts for Me from every person whose heart so moves him. ³ And these are the gifts that you shall accept from them: gold, silver, and copper; ⁴ blue, purple, and crimson yarns, fine linen, goats' hair; ⁵ tanned ram skins, dolphin skins, and acacia wood; ⁶ oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the aromatic incense; ⁷ lapis lazuli and other stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. ⁸ And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them. ⁹ Exactly as I show you—the pattern of the Tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings—so shall you make it.

Ex. 25:10 They shall make an ark of acacia wood, two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. ¹¹ Overlay it with pure gold—overlay it inside and out—and make upon it a gold molding round about. ¹² Cast four gold rings for it, to be attached to its four feet, two rings on one of its side walls and two on the other. ¹³ Make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold; ¹⁴ then insert the poles into the rings on the side walls of the ark, for carrying the ark. ¹⁵ The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark: they shall not be removed from it. ¹⁶ And deposit in the Ark [the tablets of] the Pact which I will give you.

¹ וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ² דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ־לִי תְרוּמָה מֵאֵת כָּל־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִדְבְּנוּ לְבוֹ תִקְחוּ אֶת־תְּרוּמָתִי: ³ וְזֹאת הַתְּרוּמָה אֲשֶׁר תִּקְחוּ מֵאֲתָם זָהָב וְכֶסֶף וְנִחְשֵׁת: ⁴ וְתַבְּלֵת וְאַרְגָּמָן וְתוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי וְעֹשֵׂי וְעֹזִים: ⁵ וְעֹרֹת אֵילִם מְאֻדָּמִים וְעֹרֹת תְּחָשִׁים וְעֹצְזֵי שִׁטִּים: ⁶ שֶׁמֶן לַמָּאָר בְּשָׂמִים לְשֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה וְלִקְטֹרֶת הַסַּמִּים: ⁷ אַבְנֵי־לִשָׁה וְאַבְנֵי מְלֵאִים לְאַפָּד וְלַחֲשׁוֹן: ⁸ וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשִׁכְנָתִי בְּתוֹכָם: ⁹ כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵרְאָה אוֹתְךָ אֵת סִבְיַת הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְאֵת סִבְיַת כָּל־כְּלָיו וְכֵן תַּעֲשׂוּ: ¹⁰ וְעָשׂוּ אֲרוֹן עֹצְזֵי שִׁטִּים אֲמֹתִים וְחָצִי אַרְכּוֹ וְאַמָּה וְחָצִי רֶחֱבוֹ וְאַמָּה וְחָצִי קִמְתּוֹ: ¹¹ וְצִפִּיתָ אֹתוֹ זָהָב טָהוֹר מִבַּיִת וּמִחוּץ תִּצְפְּנוּ וְעָשִׂיתָ עֲלָיו זָר וְזָהָב סָקִיב: ¹² וַיַּצַּקְתָּ לוֹ אַרְבַּע טַבְּעוֹת זָהָב וְגַמְתָּה עַל אַרְבַּע פְּעֻמָּתָיו וְשָׂמִי טַבְּעוֹת עַל־צַלְעוֹ הָאֶחָת וְשָׂמִי טַבְּעוֹת עַל־צַלְעוֹ הַשֵּׁנִית: ¹³ וְעָשִׂיתָ בְּדֵי עֹצְזֵי שִׁטִּים וְצִפִּיתָ אֹתָם זָהָב: ¹⁴ וְהִבַּאתָ אֶת־הַבָּדִים בְּטַבְּעוֹת עַל צַלְעוֹת הָאֲרוֹן לְשֵׂאת אֶת־הָאֲרוֹן בָּהֶם: ¹⁵ בְּטַבְּעוֹת הָאֲרוֹן יִהְיוּ הַבָּדִים לֹא יִסְרוּ מִמֶּנּוּ: ¹⁶ וְנָתַתָּ אֶל־הָאֲרוֹן אֵת הַעֲזוֹת אֲשֶׁר אָתַן אֵלַיךְ:

KEY KOSHI: Why do we make Space for the Sacred? And HOW?

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לַעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה.
 Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'czivanu laasok b'divrei Torah.
 Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to engage with words of Torah.

REMEZ

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם׃ – *And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.*

RASHI – Let them make to the glory of My Name a place of holiness.

RASHBAM – The word implies a place set aside for meeting, “I will sanctify and prepare Myself for them, to speak from within it.” See 29:43, “There I will meet with the Israelites, and it shall be sanctified by My Presence.”

MALBIM on “among them” – in *them*, the people, not in *it*, the sanctuary. We are each to build a Tabernacle in our own heart for God to dwell in.

CAROL MEYERS on “that I may dwell among them” – This statement articulates the purpose of the Tabernacle. The verb comes from the root *sh-k-n*. The usual word for “dwell” (*y-sh-b*) means to inhabit or live someplace. In contrast, the root *sh-k-n* indicates a moving, dynamic presence, not one tied to a fixed location. “Among them” – or “in the midst of” the people. Such language helps negotiate the tension between the freedom of God to be everywhere and the need of humans to have tangible evidence of God’s immanence and accessibility.

FRANZ ROSENZWEIG: The building of the Tabernacle was in fact the high point—the goal and pinnacle—of the Pentateuch: in Egyptian slavery Israel had made buildings for the pharaohs, now they were privileged to expend their labor for God’s sake. This more than anything concretized their freedom. For even as God “made” the world, so Israel now “makes” the sanctuary in a new act of creation.

CASSUTO: In order to understand the significance and purpose of the Tabernacle, we must realize that the Children of Israel, after they had been privileged to witness the revelation of God on Mount Sinai, were about to journey from there and thus draw away from the site of the theophany. So long as they were encamped in the place, they were conscious of God’s nearness; but, once, they set out on their journey, it seemed to them as though the link had been broken, unless there were in their midst a tangible symbol of God’s presence among them. It was the function of the Tabernacle (literally, ‘Dwelling’) to serve as such a symbol.

כָּכֵל אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְרַאֶה אוֹתְךָ׃ – *Exactly as I show you.*

ABARBANEL – This implies that the construction of the Tabernacle alludes to the form of the world. It is implausible that all of this could be specified for the sake of ornamentation...

DRASH

Midrash Rabbah [as told by Rabbi Harvey Fields]: The Israelites start explaining to God that all human rulers have beautiful palaces, rooms where offerings are brought to them and where the people can demonstrate their loyalty and love. The people say to God, “Shouldn’t you, our Ruler, have such a palace?” Then God responds, “My children, I have no need for such a place. After all, I do not eat or drink. Obviously, however, you have a need for such a place. It will help you experience Me. For that reason, build me a sanctuary and I will dwell in your midst.”

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks: Unlike the Temple in Jerusalem, the Tabernacle had no fixed address. It was erected wherever they made camp, and dismantled and carried when they moved on. It became a symbol of Israel’s journey as an ever-moving people, and of the fact that wherever Jews went, the Divine Presence went with them. The Tabernacle at the center of the camp defined Israel as *the people in whose midst is the space we make for God*.

Abe Mezrich: In every encampment, the people rest around the Mishkan. The Cloud is right there, so close the people can see it with their own eyes. And then, when it’s time to move, the Cloud rises up. And because the Mishkan is modular, the priests deconstruct the structure to carry it on its way.

One moment, God’s presence is within arm’s reach. The next, we’re alone and lost and exposed in the Desert. The people’s whole world comes apart, over and over throughout the course of forty years. This is the kind of trauma that could fill a people with despair.

But the people don’t fall into despair. They do something else. They watch to see where the Cloud will go next. And they follow it. Because they know that sometimes, when your world ends, it’s God’s sign to seek Him in a place you couldn’t have foreseen.

Here’s the point. Making room for God on earth is more complicated than building a space we can go to and sit back and receive Him. It’s building a framework for seeking Him out. And sometimes that means embracing the end of your world. And sometimes that means being willing to upend your life, over and over, as you radically change your perspective of where God might be—of where you need to be to find Him.

That’s not sacred space. It’s something much more difficult. It’s a sacred journey. And that is what the Mishkan stands for.

SOD → R' Amichai Lau-Lavie [Feb '14]: So: Why synagogue? to carve out a spacious safe space deep within our busy lives, making room for mystery to dwell, for compassion to blossom, human vulnerability to echo and a deeper connection celebrated with all of our body, all of being, and all of our soul.

Lab/Shul is just a kid – starting out – proud to sit on the shoulders of giants and be part of a growing network of spiritual innovators worldwide who are busy reconfiguring the sacred. My friend Dan and Rabbi Cosgrove are but two of many more who are taking this challenge head-on – each in a different way. Exciting conversations about these new realities take place in interfaith settings as well, as brave leaders of all faiths are finding ways of not only upgrading their own religious narratives but share, care, and find meaning and solutions in the riches of each other's legacy and treasured paths. The collective wisdom of our past attempts to make life holy and healthy offers new and noble ways to bless our present and help us create a beautiful and better future.

Is this a good enough reason to keep synagogues open or start-up new ones? I guess time will tell but I'm betting on it. The mobile tent of our ancestors morphed into a marble temple, holy huts and grand cathedrals of every imaginable human design. Like the concept of God, the synagogue is also a work in progress. It's time for new labs that will ask different questions, try new replies, and re brand that old time religion, makeover style, to resonate radically in the here and now.

About R' Sara Luria's Beloved [Feb '18]: As soon as Libby Lenkinski entered the foyer of the Clinton Hill row house, she started to cry. It was the music. Rabbi Sara Luria and about a dozen social justice activists were singing a Hebrew prayer. "Tears started pouring down my face. I couldn't stop them ... for the whole two-and-a-half hours" of the gathering, she said.

"I understood as soon as I heard the voices that I would be able to just listen, or sing if I wanted to, but that I wouldn't have to have answers or explain ... or be 'on' in any way," she added by.

Lenkinski, vice president for public engagement at New Israel Fund, was at the inaugural meeting of the Beloved circle for Changemakers, held in late December. It is one of several circles that Rabbi Sara Luria — of ImmerseNYC fame — runs out of her home. And it is part of a growing trend of small-batch, pluralistic Jewish start-ups that is expanding the definition of worship and belonging.

For Lenkinski, 39, the circle was a place where she could stop being a social justice organizer and focus on herself...The Beloved circle, she said, is "a place where I can go and talk about how I'm doing and sing and actually feel like I can sing at the top of my lungs and not worry about it. ... Where you can get some strength back, get some light back and take a step out of ... organizing at every turn."