

Parashat Terumah

Exodus 25:1-27:19

FEBRUARY 28, 2020



SUMMARY

In *Parashat Terumah* G'd asks the Israelites to give gifts from their hearts--voluntary gifts. These gifts are to be used to build the (*mishkan*) מִשְׁכָּן--a portable, holy place for G'd to dwell. G'd says:

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשִׁכְנֹתִי בְתוֹכָם

“Build me a holy place and I will dwell within them.”

This מִשְׁכָּן (*mishkan*) will travel with the Israelites through the wilderness and will even serve as a model for the future Temple to be built in Jerusalem. Some of the items that G'd asks them to use in building the מִשְׁכָּן (*mishkan*) are gold, silver, copper, gemstones, and even skins from *tachashim*.

At the center of the מִשְׁכָּן will be the אֲרוֹן הַקֹּדֶשׁ, the holy ark, containing the tablets on which the עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדִּבְרוֹת, the Ten Commandments, are written. On top of the Ark are two winged creatures of gold called כְּרוּבִים. God promises to speak between the faces of these winged creatures. *Parashat Terumah* also describes the gold *menorah*, as well as the woven pictures and the poles that create the body of the מִשְׁכָּן.

From Our Commentators:

Sfrono 25:2

מאת כל איש צוה שלא יגבו
בזרוע כענין שממשכנים על
הצדקה, אבל יגבו מן
המתנדבים בלבד

מאת כל איש, G'd commanded that the procedure should not be like the imposition of every person's contribution for the public charity fund which was treated as a tax. Contributions were to be accepted only from volunteers.

FOR DISCUSSION:

1) There are a lot of details in this *parasha*. It tells us a lot about how to build the *mishkan*--the portable desert sanctuary where G'd will live amongst the Israelites. It is specific about materials to use, about sizes of things, and about colors. Why do you think G'd would be so specific about all of these things?

2) One of the materials that G'd tells the Israelites to use to build the *mishkan* is skin from a תַּחֲשׁ--a dolphin, or a dugong. Dugongs, or “sea cows” are vegetarian and live in warm ocean waters. The Israelites are in the middle of a desert wilderness. Why might G'd tell them to use the skin of an underwater, vegetarian animal like this as part of building the *mishkan*?

3) G'd tells the Israelites that they should put *keruvim* on top of ark, then tells them that G'd will talk to them from between the כְּרוּבִים. *Rashi* says that they looked like babies. *Rashbam* says that they looked more like birds. Why do you think G'd would tell the Israelites to put כְּרוּבִים on top of the ark that would carry the 10 Commandments and from which G'd would talk to the Israelites?

