



Shabbat Table Talk Page

Overview

- **Parashah: Terumah (תְּרוּמָה, "Contribution")**
- **Chapters: Exodus 25:1-27:17**



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְעִסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה

– Torah Study Blessing –

Synopsis

Last week's Torah reading (Mishpatim) explained how the Israelites entered into covenant with the LORD at Mount Sinai. The terms of the covenant were written down in *Sefer HaBrit* ("the Book of the Covenant"), which contained a variety of laws to govern the people in the Promised Land. When the people agreed to obey the terms of the covenant, Moses took sacrificial blood and threw it on them saying, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." Moses then re-ascended the mount to receive the tablets of stone inscribed with the Ten Commandments, and to learn additional Torah from the LORD.

In this week's reading, God asked for help "from every man whose heart moves him" to provide materials for making a portable sanctuary called the Tabernacle, a tent-like structure that would symbolize God's Presence among the Israelites. Gold, silver, brass, red and purple yarns, fine linens, oils, spices, precious stones, etc., all were needed. God said to Moses, "Let them make me a sanctuary so that I may dwell in their midst. Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the Tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it."

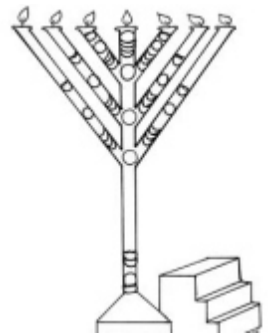
God then showed Moses "the pattern" according to which the Tabernacle and its contents were to be made. First an ark of acacia wood was to be overlaid with pure gold inside and out. The ark was to be fitted with gold rings and gold covered poles to make it portable. The two tablets of the law were to be stored inside the ark. Two cherubim (angel-like figures) were to be placed facing each other over a cover of the ark called the *kapporet* (i.e., "Mercy Seat"). The ark was to be housed within an inner chamber of the tent called the Holy of Holies. Adjacent to the Holy of Holies was a second chamber called the Holy Place. This chamber would contain a table overlaid with pure gold that held twelve loaves of bread along with a golden, seven-branched menorah. The Holy of Holies was separated from the Holy Place by an ornamental veil called the *parochet*.

God then described the pattern of the tent along with its exact dimensions. The tent was designed to be portable, with a wooden frame covered by richly colored fabric and the hide of rams and goats. The outer court was to include an altar with horns of copper at each corner. The dimensions of the outer court were given, and the entire court was to be enclosed by a fence made with fine linen on silver poles with hooks of silver and sockets of brass.



Basic Questions

1. What was the first thing God said to Moses when he ascended Sinai for 40 days and nights? ¹
2. Whom did God suggest should make an offering? ²
3. Can you name some of the items to be offered? ³
4. Why did God ask for these things? ⁴
5. What special requirement was Moses given regarding constructing the Tabernacle? ⁵
6. What was the first item that was to be made? ⁶
7. What was to be put inside the Ark of the Covenant? ⁷
8. What was the second item to be made? ⁸
9. Give two reasons why the kapporet (mercy seat) was so special. ⁹
10. What were the names of the two chambers of the tent of the Tabernacle? ¹⁰
11. What three items were placed in the Holy Place? ¹¹
12. What was placed on the table in the Holy Place? ¹²
13. How many lamps were on the Menorah? ¹³
14. There were to be three cups on each branch in the shape of what kind of blossom? ¹⁴
15. What were the curtains of the tent made of, and what was embroidered on them? ¹⁵
16. What was the outer part of the tent covered with? ¹⁶



¹ To give *terumah*, a donation, for the building of the portable sanctuary called the Tabernacle (25:1).

² From every man whose heart was moved (25:2).

³ Gold, silver, bronze; blue and purple and scarlet yarns; fine line and goat's hair; ram and goat hides; acacia wood; oil for lamps; spices for anointing oil and incense, precious gems, etc.

⁴ He wanted the people to create a sanctuary (*mikdash*) for Him so that He could dwell (*shakhan*) in their midst.

⁵ That he would make it exactly according to the pattern that God revealed to him on Sinai.

⁶ The ark. It was to be made of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold measuring 2.5 cubits x 1.5 cubits wide. It was surrounded by a "crown" (*zer*) or border. It had four loops made of gold for carrying by means of poles.

⁷ The two tablets with the Ten Commandments written on them. Later, manna and Aaron's rod were added.

⁸ The Kapporet ("Mercy Seat"), a cover of pure gold upon which were to be fashioned two cherubim (i.e., angel-like figures with the faces of children) that would face one another with their wings spread on high. The eyes of the cherubim would look toward the cover, suggesting the "things angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. 1:12).

⁹ God would manifest His Presence above it, from between the two cherubim, and speak to the people. It was also the place where the sacrificial blood was to be offered during the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). Note that the word used in the Greek Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word *kapporet* ("cover") is *hilasterios* (ἱλαστήριος) which is used describe the "propitiation" given in Yeshua (Rom. 3:25).

¹⁰ The Holy of Holies (kodesh hakodashim) and the Holy Place (kodesh).

¹¹ The Table of Showbread (shulchan), the Menorah, and the Altar of Incense (mizbe'ach ha-ketoret).

¹² Twelve loaves of bread stacked upon separate plates. This is called the "Bread of the Faces" (lechem panim).

¹³ Seven. The lamps were to all face the central lamp.

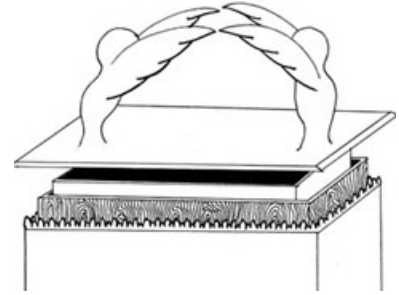
¹⁴ An almond. The branches of the Menorah were to resemble branches of the almond tree.

¹⁵ Fine twined linen and blue and purple and scarlet yarns. Cherubim were embroidered on the curtains.

¹⁶ Badger skins and then ram's skins (these covered the inner curtains of goat's hair and fine twined linen).



17. Where did the wood for the frames come from? ¹⁷
18. Where did the other materials come from? ¹⁸
19. How would God speak to Moses in the Tabernacle? ¹⁹
20. How was the menorah to be made? ²⁰
21. How were the wicks of the menorah to be placed? ²¹
22. What was the parochet (veil) of the tent used for? ²²
23. Describe the altar of burnt offering in the outer court. ²³
24. What does the word “mishkan” (מִשְׁכָּן) mean? ²⁴
25. (Bonus question) How many times did Moses ascend Mount Sinai? ²⁵



Discussion Topics

1. The account of creation is given in just 34 verses (Gen. 1:1-2:3), but the description of the Tabernacle is described in over 250 verses. Discuss the significance of this.
2. The commentator Rashi thought that the commandment to create the Tabernacle was given *after* the Sin of the Golden Calf and functioned as a means of “repairing” the breach caused by that sin. Do you agree or not?
3. The purpose of the Tabernacle was to allow people to draw close to God by means of a sacrifice (the word *korban* [“sacrifice”] comes from a root that means to draw near). Discuss how the principle of “life-for-life” represents the means for drawing close to God. How does the sacrifice of Yeshua create an “exchange” for your life before the Father?

¹⁷ Midrash: Jacob planted trees when he first arrived in Egypt and the Israelites cut them down before leaving.

¹⁸ From the Egyptians and from despoiling the Egyptian army at the Sea of Reeds.

¹⁹ He would stand by the veil of the Holy of Holies and God would speak from between the cherubim on the kapporet.

²⁰ From one piece of gold. Midrash: Moses did not know how to make it so God threw some gold into the fire and it was immediately formed.

²¹ All the wicks were to face the middle branch (25:37).

²² To separate the Holy of Holies (kodesh ha-kodeshim) from the Holy Place (kodesh).

²³ A square wood frame covered with bronze with horns on its four corners. It included a grating of bronze. It was portable and included rings and poles for carrying. It had a ramp leading up to it. Note that the word *mizbe'ach* (altar) is said to be an acronym for *mechilah* (forgiveness), *zechut* (merit), *bracha* (blessing), and *chayim* (life). According to midrash, the fire would not be extinguished if it rained, and the smoke would ascend in a vertical column from the altar, regardless of the wind. The flames of the fire were also said to resemble a lion.

²⁴ “Dwelling place,” from a root (*shakhan*) that means “to dwell.” The word *shekhinah* (שְׁכִינָה) comes from this verb.

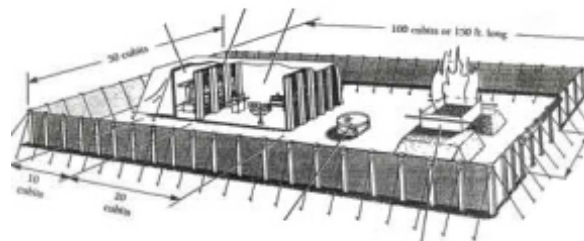
²⁵ Eight: 1. Before the Exodus (3:1-10); 2. After the Israelites arrived at Sinai (covenant offer; 19:2); 3. When named mediator of Israel (19:7-12); 4. Just before the 10 Cmts were uttered (19:20-25); 5. When he received the “book of the covenant” (20:21-23:33); 6. When he ate the ratification meal with the elders (24:9-11); 7. 40 days/nights to receive first set of tablets (24:15-18); 8. 40 days/nights to receive second set of tablets (34:1-38).



4. The origin of the word *cherubim* is uncertain. Some say it derives from the Hebrew word “ki” (like) and the Aramaic word “rabbi” (a child), which may explain artistic depictions of cherubim as winged little children. The cherubim are first mentioned guarding access to the Tree of Life in the garden (after the sin of Adam and Eve), and next appear as statues mounted on the Mercy Seat over the Ark (Exod. 25:18). God is said to be “enthroned over the cherubim” (1 Sam. 4:4; Psalm 80:1, etc.). The Second Commandment, says that we are not to make “a sculptured *image* (פְּסֶלֶל), or any *likeness* (תְּמוּנָה) of what is in the heavens above” (Exod. 20:4). In light of this, how can we explain God’s commandment to create cherubim for the Ark?
5. The sages say that the word “altar” (מִזְבֵּחַ) is an acronym for 1) *mechilah* (מְחִילָה) – “forgiveness” which can be sought by sacrifice; 2) *zechut* (זְכוּת) – “merit” gained from obedience to the ritual; 3) *brachah* (בְּרָכָה) – “blessing” that comes from trusting in God’s provision for sin; and 4) *chayim* (חַיִּים) – “life” that comes from God’s grace. How do you understand the Cross of Yeshua in these terms?
6. When God told Moses to ascend Mount Sinai to receive the Tablets of the Ten Commandments, he said, “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, *with the law and the commandment*, which I have written for their instruction” (Exod. 24:12). Since the narrative records only the instructions for creating the Tabernacle, however, the sages wondered what this meant. How central do you think the idea of sacrifice and worship is to the idea of Torah?
7. The word *terumah* means “gift from the heart” which is sometimes contrasted with the word *tzedakah*, which is considered the moral duty (“righteousness”) to give to those in need. The Hebrew phrase *gemilut chasidim* means “the bestowal of kindnesses,” or the practice of *chesed* (i.e., love). The gift of the heart is regarded as greater than *tzedakah* because love anticipates the needs of others and acts from a sense of compassion. As an old Jewish proverb states: “Tzedakah awaits the cry of distress; benevolence anticipates the cry of distress.” Discuss how you express love for God in your life....

For Next Week

- Read parashat **Tetzaveh** (i.e., Exodus 27:20-30:10)
- Read the Haftarah (Ezekiel 43:10-27)
- Read the New Testament (Hebrews 13:10-7)





A Closing Thought: Sanctuary of the Heart



In this week's Torah portion God asked the people to offer "gifts from the heart" to create a "place" for Him: "Let them make for me a sanctuary that I may dwell in their midst" (Exod. 25:8). The Hebrew word for "sanctuary" is *mikdash* (מִקְדָּשׁ), which comes from the root word *kadash* (קָדַשׁ), "to be set apart as sacred." A mikdash is therefore a "set apart space," or a "holy place" that represents something treasured - a place of beauty and worship, a refuge, a place of rest. Other words that share this root idea include *kedushah* (holiness), *kiddushin* (betrothal), *kaddish* (sanctification), *kiddush* (marking sacred time), and so on. When God said, "Let them make for me a mikdash," then, he was inviting the people to make a sacred place within their hearts for His Presence to be manifest.... The "material" required to make this place was ultimately the heart, expressed in free-will offerings given to God.

The purpose of *mikdash*, this "set apart space," was for God to "dwell" in their midst. Note that the word "dwell" comes from a root (יָשַׁב) meaning to "lodge together" or to "lie down with someone," and therefore the Tabernacle was called the *Mishkan* (מִשְׁכָּן), a "set apart place" intended for rest and intimacy. Inviting God's Presence within our hearts gives us communion and fellowship with Him. The sages note that the phrase, "that I may dwell in their midst" could be translated as "that I may dwell within them," suggesting that the point of the Tabernacle was to bring God within the hearts of His people... We must create a place within our hearts, in other words, for God to dwell within us... Yeshua likewise told us that we would experience peace and joy when we would "abide in Him."

Some of the sages have said that the physical Tabernacle (and later, the Temple) was given as a *concession* to the frailty of man. After all, when the people had the opportunity to encounter God without a mediator at Sinai, they shrank back in terror. The Tabernacle, then, presented a form of "mediation" that provided symbols to help bring "heaven down to earth." The physical presence of the Tabernacle attempted to convey a sense of the immanence of God in the world. "Holy holy holy is the LORD God of hosts; the whole world is filled with His glory" (Isa. 6:3). The Scriptures plainly teach, however, that there is literally no "place" where God can physically dwell. When King Solomon dedicated the *Bet Ha-Mikdash*, the Temple in Jerusalem, he rhetorically prayed: "Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built! (1 Kings 8:27). Likewise the prophet Jeremiah reports the word of the LORD: "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" (Jer. 23:24) Understood in light of this truth, it is clear that the Tabernacle was meant to symbolize a deeper, spiritual reality of the heart. As Yeshua said, "The Kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:21).



The deepest message of the Tabernacle, however, has to do with *sacrificial love*. The entire reason for the sacrificial system was to draw us close to God. The sacrifice of an innocent animal for the sake of a sinner provided tangible hope that a holy and perfectly righteous God made a way for love and acceptance to prevail. Indeed the idea of “sacrifice” is *korban* (קָרְבָּן), a word that means to draw near (*karov*) to God. The various sacrificial rituals were “examples” (ὑποδείγματα) and “shadows” (σκιᾶς) of the heavenly reality that was given in the sacrifice of Yeshua, the Lamb of God (Heb. 8:5; 10:1). Because of Yeshua, God draws near to us so that we can draw near to Him.... He is the ultimate “Korban” that brings us into eternal fellowship with God. Yeshua is the Father’s “gift of the heart” given for you. The love of God put the blood of his son on the cross, just as the love of God provided the altar at the Tabernacle. Both in the sacrificial rites of the brazen altar and in their later fulfillment in the crucifixion of Yeshua, the heart needs to trust in God’s personal love. Yeshua stands at the door and knocks, ready to eat a “covenant ratification meal” with all who are trusting in Him (Rev. 3:20).

May you find courage to open your heart to Him now...