

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 4 Adar 5786, corresponding to February 21, 2026.

TORAH DIALOGUE

(p. 326 Hz) (p. 500 S) (p. 306 Hi) (p. 444 AS)

TERUMAH תרומה

Exodus 25:1

Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED)

1. The Torah states that the people should take unto Hashem a Terumah, a gift. (25:2). It doesn't say to give the Terumah, but to take. Many commentators deal with this question. One of the better answers that I read came from Rabbi Zvi Dov Kanatopsky. His answer is that before you can give a gift to Hashem, you have sanctify the object first. And that is done at home. As when you offer the Terumah from your produce, you separate a portion (about 1/40) from your produce. This act of Hafrashah, separation, is done at home. This separating it makes it holy. Then you may give it to the Kohen. This same act is necessary before giving a gift for the construction of the Mishkan, Tabernacle. Therefore using the verb "to take" is appropriate in this verse. Take the gift, separate it in your home, thereby sanctifying it, and then give it to the construction of the Mishkan.

2. Two words are used interchangeably here: Mishkan and Mikdash, the Tabernacle and the Holy Temple. After the Revelation of the Almighty at Mt. Sinai, each Jew felt that he was just anointed with the divine spirit, and each of their tents was the residence of Hashem. Of course, this feeling vanished with the debacle of the Golden Calf. Back in Parshat Chayei Sarah, when Yitzchak married Rivkah and brought her into his mother's tent, Rashi comments there, quoting a Midrash, that when Sarah was alive, a light was lit from Erev Shabbat to Erev Shabbat, and a blessing was in the dough, and a cloud hovered over the tent. When Sarah died, these miracles stopped. When Rivkah entered the tent, these miracles returned. When I looked up this Midrash, there was a fourth aspect to the tent that Rashi did not mention: that the doors to the tent were wide open. Rashi omitted this one because what Rashi wanted to present was the idea that Sarah's (and Rivkah's) tent represented the Mishkan. Very subtle, but nicely stated. Take home message: our goal is to create a Mishkan out of our homes.

3. When Moshe came down from Mt. Sinai carrying the Tablets of the Ten Commandments, he ended up shattering them when he saw the Golden Calf. What happened to the broken Tablets? Hashem instructed Moshe to build a wooden Ark which would house the broken Luchot and the second set as well until Betzalel built the permanent Aron (Ark). Rashi mentions that after the permanent Aron was built, the broken Tablets were stored in the wooden Ark. and the wooden Ark containing the broken Tablets would accompany the Jewish

army into battle. Ramban disagrees. He writes that everything in the wooden Ark was transferred to the permanent Ark, and the wooden Ark was buried. [RED's note: When I moved here in 1981, the Shul was in a house on the location of the current synagogue. In the house/shul, there was a wooden Aron, built by a member of the Shul, which housed the Torahs. When we built the new building, we could not just throw the wooden Aron away. It had to be buried. I worked with the contractor and had the wooden Aron broken into wooden slabs. It is buried under the Main Sanctuary of the current Shul.]

4. Rashi comments that the wooden Ark with the broken Tablets accompanied Klal Yisrael into battle. Why was that a good thing to do? The broken Tablets represented a terribly low point in our history. A mere 40 days after the Revelation of Hashem, the Jewish nation worshipped an idol. And this is what we want to remind Hashem as we enter a battle!! I can only offer this attempt at an answer. If the entire Jewish army were Torah observant, then they were entitled to take the permanent Aron with them into the war. But they are not fully frum. The army needed to demonstrate that they are Jewish, linked permanently to the Torah, but flawed with sin. Hashem should have mercy and compassion as they are now required to engage a bitter enemy who hate the Jewish people. We need Hashem to assist his flawed people in their time of need.

5. The building appeal in the desert was highly successful. The people responded with full hearts and they gave so much that a call was announced to have them stop giving. Yet to buy the required public sacrifices, Hashem established a half shekel annual tax in order to secure these necessary funds. It goes to the root of philanthropy. To build a building and to outfit the physical need, people will give. But to support the daily service within the Sanctuary, that requires additional convincing to gain the necessary funds. Tzedakah is a real concern in our day. Firstly it is wrong to translate Tzedakah as charity because in English charity is optional. In Hebrew the root of Tzedakah is Tzedek, righteousness which is obligatory. Tzedakah is a religious Mitzvah. Yet getting a solicitation in the mail can be ignored. A person coming to your door should be given. But the amount is up to the donor.

6. There is no illumination in the Holy of Holies. Reading the text leaves us the impression that it is totally dark in that room. When the High Priest enters the Holy of Holies once a year on Yom Kippur, he is carrying only the incense which is not a source of light. Holy sources record that there was a divine source of light, but I am not satisfied with the source. Another area of concern is the weight of the Parochet. It must have been extremely heavy. Too heavy for a one or two man job to lift and maneuver. Even being held in place is questionable. What I am left with is the strong conviction that Hashem ultimately maintains and safeguards every detail of the

Torah and everything described therein. Even the ability to create a Menorah from beating and shaping a large piece of gold would require expert precise craftsmanship.

7. In the desert, where did they get all these items necessary for the construction and maintenance of the Mishkan? We cannot assume that Bnei Yisrael brought these items with them from Egypt. The gold, silver, and copper could have come with them. I cannot assume that in packing, a person said to his wife: Dear, did you pack the olive oil? And what about the frankincense? Rabbi Steinsaltz zt"l wrote that they could have traded with caravans that were traveling in the desert, even the Techeilet- blue dye, which came from an aquatic snail-type of creature. And the Midrash claims that the colorful Tachash animal was divinely created to be in the desert, and immediately afterward became extinct. The truth is we do not have and never will have all the answers. All we have is our faith in Hashem: that He provided for every need while in the desert.

8. MIDRASH. Moshe had trouble figuring out how to build the Menorah. And yet Betzalel, much much younger than Moshe did know how to do it. Moshe said to Betzalel: your name is the answer. You grew up Betzail Eil, in the shadow of Hashem. I, on the other hand, grew up in a non-Jewish palace and not among Jews or Jewish culture. [RED's note: the Jewish education is so important!]

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT TERUMAH 5786

I. From the Text

1. What was the first utensil described in the Torah for the Mishkan? (25:10)
2. What forms were crafted for the top of the of the Ark? (25:18)
3. What was the Menorah made out of? (25:31)
4. What was the Outer Altar made out of? (27:1,2)
5. How tall was the Outer Altar? (27:1)

II. From Rashi

6. What is the meaning of the Hebrew word Terumah? (25:2. Rashi and Hirsch)
7. Where did the Techeilet (bluish dye) come from? (25:4)
8. What was the Tachash animal? (25:4)
9. What were the Spices needed for in the Mishkan? (25:6)
10. Where did Bnei Yisrael get acacia wood in the desert? (25:5)

III. From the Rabbis

11. The Ibn Ezra was an anti-Midrash commentator. According to him, where did Bnei Yisrael get acacia wood in the desert?
12. What is the root of the Hebrew word Aron (the Ark), and therefore what is its meaning? (Rabbeinu Bachya)
13. What is the meaning of coating the Ark with gold inside and outside? (Beit HaLevi)

IV. Midrash.

14. How thick was the gold Kaporet (covering) for the Ark? (Sukkah 5a)

V. Haftorah

15. How many people were involved in the construction of the Holy Temple?

VI. Relationships

16.
 - a) Dinah - Peretz
 - b) Yocheved - Gershon
 - c) Shimon - Shaul
 - d) Gershon - Livni
 - e) Elisheva - Nachshon

ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT TERUMAH 5786

1. The Ark
2. The two Cheruvim, childlike golden figures.
3. Gold
4. From copper plated acacia wood.
5. Three Amot, about 4.5 feet.
6. Rashi: Separation, separate some of your money to Hashem.
Hirsch: From the Hebrew ROOM, elevate. Elevate yourself by giving.
7. From the secretion of a rare amphibious animal called a Chilazon.
8. A beautiful multi- colored animal that existed only at that time and then became extinct.
9. For the anointment oil for the Mishkan, its vessels, and for kings and Kohanim, and the daily incense offering.
10. There is a Midrash that says that Yaakov knew through prophecy that Bnei Yisrael would need those trees in the desert. He transplanted acacia trees from Canaan in Egypt and told his descendants to take them with the Jewish people when they will leave Egypt.
11. There must have been a small acacia forest in the Mt. Sinai area.
12. The root of the word Aron is Or, Light, to tell us the Torah is the light of the world.
13. That the community should feel responsible to provide an adequate living to the teachers of Torah.
14. One Tefach, about four inches.
15. 30,000 men
16. Relationships
 - a) Aunt Dinah
 - b) Siblings
 - c) Uncle Shimon. And Stepfather Shimon
 - d) Father Gershon
 - e) Siblings

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