

# SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

PARASHAT TERUMAH

Haftarah: Yehezkel 43:10-27

FEBRUARY 13, 2016 4 ADAR I 5776

**DEDICATIONS: In memory of Yosef ben Behiye - Mr. Joe Haddad A"H  
Yaakob ben Geraz - Jacob Jack Shomer A"H  
Eliyahu Haim ben Sarah - Elliot Hanan A"H**

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## Editors Notes

### Sasson Ve Simcha – Drawing Down From Heaven

VeAsu Li Mikdash, Ve'Shakhanti Be'Tokham - "Let them make a Mikdash for Me, that I may dwell among them"

Today is Rosh Hodesh Adar. We say that with the coming of Adar we increase our joy. This Adar is a bit different. Of course it's a leap year so we call it Adar Aleph. But this Rosh Hodesh also is the eleventh month yearzeit of the Sassoon children who were taken from us on Rosh Hodesh Nisan last year. All of us were and are affected by this tragedy.

A few weeks ago a principal in one of the yeshivot – Jewish Day Schools - texted, asking me to explain the word Areyat. An Areyat is a memorial service in the Syrian Sephardic community. We have an Areyat usually at the end of the shiva week. Another at thirty days and a third at the eleventh or twelfth month and sometimes one more in a leap year. I think part of the reasoning may be in giving those who couldn't make the funeral a chance to come at the end of the Shiva and those who were away for the Shiva can come for the Sheloshim and if you missed all of those, one can still come at the year. Additionally, each year on the yearzeit some also have an Areyat.

Typically we come to the synagogue where we read the entire book of Psalms, we pray together, give charity and then we hear one or more speeches. The speeches are meant to motivate us to make some positive change in our lives. Finally we end the evening with trays of cookies, fruits and drinks served not to satisfy a physical hunger, but first and foremost so that we can make the various blessings over the food. Our intent in the prayers, the Psalms, the acts of kindness, the charity, the positive changes and the

blessings is to give an Aliyah or an uplifting to the soul of the departed.

The rabbis teach us that during the first year after a person passes away, there is a potential for an uplifting of the soul each day. After that the soul is brought to be judged each year on the yearzeit. The question is asked. Isn't a person judged when they pass? How can a soul incapable of either sinning or fulfilling commandments be judged each year? Which deeds is the judgment based on? The rabbis answer that this court is coming to pass a new judgment based on the fruits of their labors which ripened over the past year.

Every action we do results in a reaction. Sometimes that reaction continues in a long chain like dominoes. One deed affects another, which affects another. We are judged based on those effects.

It can be monumental efforts like building a hospital or a school. Every patient helped and every student who is taught, year after year goes to the credit of the builder. But it can be small things too.

We invite a new neighbor who was never exposed to a Shabbat dinner to our home. The person enjoys it so much that he encouraged his child to go in birthright. The child returns and wants to know more and takes on the commandments. He marries and raises children who go to Yeshiva. The countless misvot being done are the fruits of one's labor.

It also works in the opposite direction too. A teacher sending a child onto the wrong path bears responsibility for all those resulting sins and more so, because those sins lead to more sins by others. That child may influence others onto the wrong path and they influence others. Chains can continue for a very long time if not forever.

Some incorrectly call the Kaddish the prayer for the dead. In fact, the Kaddish speaks only about praising the name of G-d. Yet parents want their children to recite kaddish. Why? Again the Rabbis explain that at the moment of a person's deepest pain; when perhaps he has some complaint against G-d; when he may want to yell at Heaven, he instead accepts Heaven's judgment and praises G-d. Hashem then

looks down in wonder and asks, "who raised this extraordinary child"? And the merits of the Kaddish go onto the parents account.

So as to support the soul being judged each year, we join together in prayers, Psalms, acts of kindness, charity, committing to positive changes, making blessings, and saying kaddish, all to add credits and give an Aliyah or an uplifting to the soul being judged.

But when it comes to these seven special souls, Eliane, Rivka, David, Yehoshua, Moshe, Sarah and Yaakov, I don't believe coming together is an Aliyah for their neshamot.

A riddle is asked in the Zohar on last week's portion. "Who is the beautiful maiden without eyes whose body is concealed and revealed, who comes out in the morning and disappears during the day, who is adorned with ornaments that never were?"

The maiden is the pure unsullied Neshama who cannot be seen.

I believe that these seven holy neshamot are already in a place we call Gan Eden HaElyon - the highest level of heaven. And before each dawn these hidden souls are dressed in a spiritual way and accompany Hashem as he descends to the lower worlds. And with the morning light – the day - they return with Hashem to this higher abode together with the holiest of souls who never were.

What is so amazing is that instead of us doing something to cause an Aliyah of their neshamot, it is the descent in the hours before dawn of these souls with the shechina which causes a spiritual uplifting in us. They are in many ways with us, drawing us higher allowing us the extra strength to pull upwards from our gasmiut- our lowly physicality, from our taavot-lusts, and our gaavah- pride.

To get this assistance, one must tune in to the spiritual side, one must make the effort to as we have said before, and wipe away the mud from the antenna. In these days we should all do our utmost and we pray that the souls of these Seven children will help to raise us spiritually and lead to the coming of the Mashiach, to days of sasson vesimcha - gladness and joy, bimhera beyameynu – Speedily in our days – Amen.

Shabbat Shalom,

David

## **Analysis: Saudi Arabia is bringing Iran to its knees**

**By MUDAR ZAHARAN 09 Feb 2016**

**The author is a Jordanian-Palestinian politician**

Iran's "sweet surrender" would never have been possible without the sophisticated and determined pressure of one country; Saudi Arabia, and one man; Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman.

On January 11, 2016, Iran's official media confirmed the state had filled the Arak nuclear reactor core with concrete. In short: Iran has killed its flagship nuclear site and its nuclear program is now limited to smaller projects, paperwork, research and, of course, propaganda videos.

But how could this have happened? While the US-Iran nuclear deal does dictate that Iran must reduce the operational capacity of the Arak nuclear reactor in particular, nobody could have believed Iran would have jumped to execute this part of the deal so quickly. Iran has been known to never give up anything except for handsome rewards.

Iran's "sweet surrender" would never have been possible without the sophisticated and determined pressure of one country; Saudi Arabia, and one man; Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman.

For years Saudi Arabia has been warning the West against the growing Iranian influence in the Middle East. What helps Saudi Arabia here is that it understands the region much better than many Western governments. When the revolution broke out in Syria in 2011, the West in particular dealt with it as local unrest, an armed revolution or a civil war at worst. Saudi Arabia understood clearly even then that Iran was on a mission to control Syria and turn it into terrorism export hub.

While the world was busy trying to negotiate Syria's future with both Syrian President Bashar Assad and Iran, Saudi Arabia was not wasting any time; it put up all the proper support for Syria's only secular opposition body, the Syrian Opposition Coalition (SOC).

Today, there seem to be no other moderate parties in Syria than the SOC, and on top of that the world is referring to Saudi Arabia for coordination with it on Syria as the only option left.

Saudi Arabia's effort to limit Iran's power did not end with Syria. In an effort to fight back, Iran tried to destabilize Saudi Arabia's southern borders by empowering the pro-Iranian Shi'ite militias in Yemen,

the Houthis. These militias had become too strong, to the point of taking over most of Yemen, and eventually controlled the capital, expelling Yemen's elected president.

However, the Saudis weren't having any of it – the Saudi crown prince and defense minister, Bin Salman, launched a fierce military operation to crack down on Houthis in Yemen.

In Yemen, Bin Salman was focusing on massive surgical air-strikes by Saudi's Royal Air Force – second strongest in the region – and avoiding sending in ground troops in order not to engage the Saudi army with the fluid and fast-moving Houthi militias.

Since then Saudi fighter pilots have been clocking more flight hours than any others in the world.

As a result Houthis have been scattered all over Yemen – an insult to Iran which had pledged earlier to support the Houthis to the end.

Iran's media even announced Iranian special forces and weapons were going to be flown to Yemen to support the Houthis – none of which happened as a determined Bin Salman ordered his fighter jets to impose an embargo on Iranian vessels and jets trying to enter Yemen.

Still, Iran's humiliation in Yemen was merely an introduction to what Saudi Arabia did next. It is no secret that Saudi Arabia is one of the world's largest oil producers and therefore has a major say on global oil prices. Saudi Arabia has increased oil production to the point of driving oil prices so low that Iran has begun suffering. The Saudis can easily stand the decrease in revenues; Saudi Arabia enjoys a catalogue of natural resources and minerals besides oil, and on top of that has a rather Westernized economic model capable of surviving such a painful drop in revenues.

For example, since the drop of oil prices Saudi Arabia began implementing social welfare programs for its citizens to create a safety net that secures them amid the economic downturn. Iran could not afford any of this, nor does it have a liberalized economy that could withstand such shock. In addition, Iran has been financing two major civil wars in Syria and Iraq, and supporting Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Recent Arab media reports confirmed Hezbollah militants have been complaining of their pay being slashed in half, and Assad's militias complaining about smaller government handouts.

In other words, Saudi Arabia has pushed Iran to the edge and moved it from the offensive to the defensive, forcing it to accept two public humiliations, one in Yemen and the other at home when Iran literally buried its crown jewel in cement.

Further, Saudi Arabia's intelligence services began a relentless crackdown on Iran's intelligence operatives in Saudi Arabia itself.

There have been several reports of arrests and uncovering of cells.

Crown prince Bin Salman didn't stop there: Saudi Arabia carried out long-standing execution sentences of convicted pro-Iranian terrorists as well as others including Islamic State affiliates. One of these was Sheikh Nimr Al-Nimr, dubbed the "Shi'ite bin-Laden". Nimr was a pro-Iran Saudi Shi'ite cleric who had been convicted of planning, financing, inciting and aiding terrorist operations on Saudi soil, in which several Saudis officers and civilians have been killed.

Before the execution Iran's media constantly warned Saudi Arabia it could "shake the ground under its feet" if Nimr were executed. Nonetheless, Saudi carried out the execution, and nothing happened, nor was Iran able to shake anything in the kingdom, adding another humiliation to the list.

A non-Saudi Arab diplomat told me: "For Iran, Saudi Arabia's execution of a Shi'ite terrorist godfather like al-Nimr is pretty much like the crucifixion of Jesus to his followers."

Saudi Arabia has been pressuring the Iranian bully politically, militarily and financially, as well as publicly humiliating it.

Saudi Arabia may never have a peace treaty with Israel, but it is wise enough to take on Iran and limit its ambitions for regional dominance.

Saudi Arabia follows Sharia law internally, but the outcomes of its foreign policy have been helping moderation and sanity in our troubled region.

Those bashing Saudi Arabia must understand: undermining Saudi Arabia is direct empowerment of Iran.

### Summary of the Perasha Terumah - A description of the mishkan and its kelim

Hashem tells Moshe to collect materials for the mishkan. A description of the aron.

2- A description of the kaporet (the cover of the aron which contains the cherubim) and the shulchan

3- A description of the menorah and the yeriot (the fabric and skin coverings over the mishkan)

4- A description of the kerashim (the beams that formed the walls of the mishkan)

5- A description of the parochet (the curtain that partitioned off the kodesh ha'kodashim) and the masach

6- A description of the copper mizbeyach (where the korbanot were brought)

7- A description of the courtyard (its walls and dimensions)

#### FROM THE JERSEY SHORE NEWSLETTER

**“You shall cover it with pure gold, from inside and from outside you shall cover it.”** Shemot 25:11

In this week's perashah we read how Hashem commanded Moshe to make the Aron, the Ark that contained the two tablets of the Ten Commandments. It must be covered with gold inside and out. The Talmud explains that the practical way of doing this is to make three boxes. A large one of gold, a smaller one of wood, and the smallest one of gold. The three are then placed one inside the other, so that the Biblical commandment is fulfilled. The Talmud (Yoma 72) derives from this that any Torah scholar whose inside does not match his outside is not really a Torah scholar, since it is written, “Cover it with gold on the inside and on the outside.” The level of spirituality that we display on the outside should match our true level of spirituality, that which is found on the inside.

Rabbi Yaakov Haber asks, if the Ark is supposed to represent a Talmid Hacham, why is it not made of solid gold? What is the wood doing there altogether? Should not the Torah scholar be pure, rather than veneered with spiritual beauty? The answer is that the wood represents the human aspect of the person. We must understand that as holy as we can become on the outside and on the inside, we nevertheless remain, and should remain, human beings. If we become so holy as to become totally spiritual, then we no longer have a place in this world, but only in the World to Come.

Once a Rabbi was sitting next to a Jewish person on an airplane and they started talking about Jewishness. He claimed to have tried out Judaism at one point in his life, but not to have felt comfortable

with it. “I must feel comfortable with it,” he said. “Otherwise it's not for me.” He went on to explain that even today when he is called upon to contribute to UJA, he refuses, because he does not feel really good about giving away his money. The Rabbi told him that in his opinion there is only one kind of person that feels good about giving away his money. A mesznoon! (A mentally imbalanced person).

If we were angels we would feel really good about giving our money away, but we are not. We may be gold inside and outside, but in between there is a layer of wood which is our humanness.

It's not that we don't want to give, but there is a part of our humanness which says no. It is exactly under these circumstances that we are required to do misvot. If we waited until we felt really good about doing misvot, we would have to wait until we have left this world. You can be sure that everyone, even a Rosh Yeshivah, will find it difficult to get up early in winter to go to morning minyan. But this is required of us, even though we would all rather be sleeping late. We are all human, even Rosh Yeshivot.

The truth is that one fulfills the misvah of hesed in a manner of greatness when one performs it against one's natural feelings. The wood of the Aron is the humanness within us, and is to be treasured. It is our job to sanctify it and cover it with gold.

Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

#### **“Cedar wood, standing erect” (Shemot 26:15)**

We were told to take cedar wood trees for use in the Mishkan as beams. The word “ohæisʒnæg” is taken by the Midrash to mean “standing forever”, that the beams and all components of the Mishkan will never fall into foreign hands. Even when not in use, they will be hidden until the great revelation, and they will then be put in use again! Why did these objects merit to be safeguarded from all our enemies while the two Batei Mikdash did not have this zechut?

The Rabbis tell us that to give for the Mishkan or the Temple is really not necessary since Hashem owns all the gold and silver in the world. He can construct anything He wants. In fact, the third Temple will come down from Heaven already built! The reason He wants us to build it is that He wants our hearts and souls behind the actual giving! Hashem desires to see if we will carry out His will and the attitude in the giving makes the donation last forever. Moshe and Bnei Yisrael were able to give with all their hearts and souls so their donations lasted forever.

We are a most generous community. We give and give, Baruch Hashem, for many causes. We have to make sure that if we're giving anyway, we should give with our hearts. Our attitude should be positive and we should especially not cause grief to the one collecting by making him wait and come

back again and again! If we're going to give anyway, let us give in a way which will make our donations last forever! Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

## ALL TOGETHER

Zev was getting on in years and his health was failing. One day, he called in his sons and gave each one a rod to hold. "Try to break your rod into two pieces," he directed them. Each of his sons succeeded in breaking the stick that he held. Then the father handed out small bundles of rods. "Now try to break the bundle in half," he commanded. Each man tried, and each man failed to break the bundle.

"I want you all to learn that if you are separate, you are vulnerable, and if you are together, you are indestructible," the old man taught. "In unity there is strength, because not only does the addition of more pieces make the group physically stronger, but the fact that Hashem is happy when He sees His children getting along brings a special protection to His people."

The Jews in the desert were commanded to bring a half-shekel coin for the census being conducted by Moshe. The commentators ask, "How come they brought a half shekel rather than a whole one?" The answer is that Hashem wanted to teach us that even the biggest and most important person – politically, socially, or academically – is not complete on his own. Nine men, no matter how illustrious, do not comprise a minyan. Yet even the poorest or simplest Jew can complete the quorum and turn the most important group of nine men into a minyan.

The secret is to stay all together. (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

## RABBI ELI MANSOUR The Way Torah Is Stored

In Parashat Terumah we read about the specifications of the Mishkan and its furnishings. The Torah is very precise in its description of the different aspects of the Mishkan, and presents the precise measurements of the structure itself as well as the individual furnishings.

In discussing the Aron – the ark, which contained the tablets brought from Sinai and a Torah scroll – the Torah informs us that the ark measured 2.5 Amot long, 1.5 Ama wide, and 1.5 Ama high. Interestingly, the Aron is the only part of the Mishkan that is assigned a half-measurement in every dimension. Its length, width and height are all half-Amot, and there are no complete Amot measurements associated with the Aron.

The Rabbis detected within these measurements an allusion to the importance of humility in the process of Torah scholarship – which is symbolized by the Aron, the ark in which the Torah was stored. A person can become knowledgeable in Torah only if he always sees himself as a "half," as incomplete, recognizing that he has more to learn and still needs to grow. The arrogant student, who sees himself as "whole," as a complete product, cannot grow in Torah. Arrogance repels Torah knowledge, whereas genuine humility attracts Torah. This is why the Gemara refers to Torah scholars with the term "Talmideh Hachamim," which literally means, "wise students." Even if a person is a "Hacham," he must see himself as a "Talmid," as a student, as somebody who must still learn, study and grow.

Torah is often compared to water. One reason is that it is indispensable for life, just as life cannot be sustained without water. But additionally, water always flows to the low-lying areas. It constantly searches for a lower place. Torah, too, is naturally concentrated among the "lowly," among the humble people. It cannot remain in the mind and heart of an arrogant, overly confident person. Torah can survive only in a person who recognizes the fact that he is only a "half," that he is not perfect.

The Talmud tells that the great sage Rabbi Yehoshua had an unattractive appearance. A Roman princess once asked him how God could allow such a precious warehouse of Torah knowledge to be contained in such an unbecoming utensil. Rabbi Yehoshua replied by asking the princess where her father stores his quality wines, and she said that they are stored in cheap, earthenware vats. "Surely," Rabbi Yehoshua said, "wine of such high quality deserves more elegant containers!" He advised the young woman to move the wine into exquisite gold barrels, and she complied. Soon thereafter, she came back to the Rabbi and reported that all the wine had spoiled.

Rabbi Yehoshua explained that the same is true of Torah. Like wine, it will spoil if it is placed in a fancy, ornate "utensil." Torah must be stored in simple "earthenware", in somebody who does not condescend, who recognizes his flaws and sees himself as a "half." If we want to become "receptacles" of Torah, to truly understand the Torah and what it demands of us, we need to humbly acknowledge our modest stature, and engender within ourselves the kind of honest, self-effacing humility that Torah knowledge requires.

**VICTOR BIBI  
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein**

**THE MESSENGER AND THE MESSAGE**

Recently, the Secretary General of the United Nations commented, at last, on all of the terrorism against Israeli citizens perpetrated by many Palestinians. In essence, he said that the Israelis had it coming to them since they have been unable to satisfy all of the outrageous demands of the Palestinians that would automatically bring peace and light to our troubled land.

Both the Prime Minister of Israel and its ambassador to the UN criticized him bitterly for his words and lack of a balanced assessment of the realities of the situation. Stung by the temerity to criticize him, the Secretary General responded with an op-ed piece in the New York Times (where else would it be treated with the proper respect and publicity that it deserved) saying that Israel should not blame the messenger (him) but should rather hearken to the message he delivered in his remarks.

Somehow he misses the point entirely. In this case, the messenger is the message. Does the Secretary General of the UN really expect that any official statements of any UN appointee will find constructive acceptance in the eyes of most Israelis and their elected government? After over more than six decades of anti-Israel rhetoric, resolutions, condemnations and hate speech emanating from the UN against Israel we are fairly immune to whatever it has to say about us. Ben Gurion already labeled it all as being "oom –shmoom." And so it was and so it remains.

There is no doubt that the United Nations can be a force for good and conciliation in the Middle East. It can be that necessary outside arbiter that can bring about positive pressure to change hardened positions and bring warring parties to moderation and compromise.

Such a role was truly envisioned for it when it was founded and formed from the international wreckage in the aftermath of World War II. It began hopefully for the Jewish people when the UN sanctioned the founding of the State of Israel. But almost immediately, the UN turned itself into a constant critic and enemy of the State of Israel. It helped facilitate the Arab refugee crisis and its unstinting support of

the Arab cause prolonged and deepened the Arab-Israel struggle.

It has also allowed anti-Semitism to be legitimized internationally. Willingly or otherwise the UN's secretariat and officialdom has transformed itself from being the messenger to being the message – a message of anti-Israel bias and blatant hypocrisy. As such, it has lost all influence on Israeli society.....and only Israeli society can influence Israeli governmental policies and decisions.

If the Secretary General of the UN has constructive advice for the Israeli government there is no reason or justification for it to do so in a nasty tone in an op-ed article in the New York Times. That is how the messenger becomes the message itself. And the message is unfortunately one of bias, one-sidedness and a lack of realistic assessment of the facts on the ground. Such a message understandably will not resonate well within Israeli society and its governmental leadership.

The question that stares Israel in the face is a basic and difficult one. It is: "Is the current status quo, tension-laden situation between Israel and the Palestinians sustainable in the short term and even in the long term or not?" Not being gifted with prophecy I cannot really venture an intelligent answer to this quandary. But my heart tells me that these types of situations eventually break down in war (God forbid), diplomatic sanctions or increased constant violence.

Now, it takes two to tango and we are dealing with a pretty intractable adversary. There is not much room for negotiation with a foe that has as its goal, stated and publicized, to completely eradicate your nation state. The UN could be of help in talking to the Palestinians about reality and what is truly attainable for them with a live and let live arrangement with Israel.

The Palestinians probably also realize that the current situation cannot remain static for long. But as long as they think that the UN or the American State Department or the New York Times will deliver Israel to them on a silver platter they are unlikely to reassess their options and make progress towards some sort of modus vivendi that will benefit all concerned.

That should be the message that is transmitted and the Secretary General can then be a welcome and proper messenger to deliver that message. But until then, discounting the messenger is certainly understandable and even justified

### Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The Gift of Giving

It was the first Israelite house of worship, the first home Jews made for God. But the very idea is fraught with paradox, even contradiction. How can you build a house for God? He is bigger than anything we can imagine, let alone build.

King Solomon made this point when he inaugurated another house of God, the First Temple: "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain You. How much less this house I have built!" (1 Kings 8:27). So did Isaiah in the name of God himself: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What house can you build for me? Where will my resting place be? (Is. 66:1).

Not only does it seem impossible to build a home for God. It should be unnecessary. The God of everywhere can be accessed anywhere, as readily in the deepest pit as on the highest mountain, in a city slum as in a palace lined with marble and gold.

The answer, and it is fundamental, is that God does not live in buildings. He lives in builders. He lives not in structures of stone but in the human heart. What the Jewish sages and mystics pointed was that in our parsha God says, "Let them build me a sanctuary that I may dwell in them" (Ex. 25:8), not "that I may dwell in it."

Why then did God command the people to make a sanctuary at all? The answer given by most commentators, and hinted at by the Torah itself, is that God gave the command specifically after the sin of the golden calf.

The people made the calf after Moses had been on the mountain for forty days to receive the Torah. So long as Moses was in their midst, the people knew that he communicated with God, and God with him, and therefore God was accessible, close. But when he was absent for nearly six weeks, they panicked. Who else could bridge the gap between the people and God? How could they hear God's instructions? Through what intermediary could they make contact with the divine presence?

That is why God said to Moses, "Let them build me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." The key word here is the verb sh-kh-n, to dwell. Never before had it been used in connection with God. It eventually became a keyword of Judaism itself. From it came the word Mishkan meaning a sanctuary, and Shekhinah, the divine presence.

Central to its meaning is the idea of closeness. Shakhen in Hebrew means a neighbour, the person who lives next door. What the Israelites needed and what God gave them was a way of feeling as close to God as to our next-door neighbour.

That is what the patriarchs and matriarchs had. God spoke to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah intimately, like a friend. He told Abraham and Sarah that they would have a child. He explained to Rebecca why she was suffering such acute pain in pregnancy. He appeared to Jacob at key moments in his life telling him not to be afraid.

That is not what the Israelites had experienced until now. They had seen God bringing plagues on the Egyptians. They had seen Him divide the sea. They had seen Him send manna from heaven and water from a rock. They had heard His commanding voice at Mount Sinai and found it almost unbearable. They said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die." God had appeared to them as an overwhelming presence, an irresistible force, a light so bright that to look at it makes you blind, a voice so strong it makes you go deaf.

So for God to be accessible, not just to the pioneers of faith – the patriarchs and matriarchs – but to every member of a large nation, was a challenge, as it were, for God Himself. He had to do what the Jewish mystics called tzimtzum, "contract" Himself, screen His light, soften His voice, hide His glory within a thick cloud, and allow the infinite to take on the dimensions of the finite.

But that, as it were, was the easy part. The difficult part had nothing to do with God and everything to do with us. How do we come to sense the presence of God? It isn't difficult to do so standing at the foot of Mount Everest or seeing the Grand Canyon. You do not have to be very religious or even religious at all, to feel awe in the presence of the sublime. The psychologist Abraham Maslow, whom we encountered a few weeks ago in these pages, spoke about "peak experiences", and saw them as the essence of the spiritual encounter.

But how do you feel the presence of God in the midst of everyday life? Not from the top of Mount Sinai but from the plain beneath? Not when it is surrounded by thunder and lightning as it was at the great revelation, but when it is just a day among days?

That is the life-transforming secret of the name of the parsha, Terumah. It means "a contribution". God said

to Moses: "Tell the Israelites to take for me a contribution. You are to receive the contribution for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give" (25:2). The best way of encountering God is to give.

The very act of giving flows from, or leads to, the understanding that what we give is part of what we were given. It is a way of giving thanks, an act of gratitude. That is the difference in the human mind between the presence of God and the absence of God.

If God is present, it means that what we have is His. He created the universe. He made us. He gave us life. He breathed into us the very air we breathe. All around us is the majesty, the plenitude, of God's generosity: the light of the sun, the gold of the stone, the green of the leaves, the song of the birds. This is what we feel reading the great creation psalms we read every day in the morning service. The world is God's art gallery and His masterpieces are everywhere.

When life is a given, you acknowledge this by giving back.

But if life is not a given because there is no Giver, if the universe came into existence only because of a random fluctuation in the quantum field, if there is nothing in the universe that knows we exist, if there is nothing to the human body but a string of letters in the genetic code and to the human mind but electrical impulses in the brain, if our moral convictions are self-serving means of self-preservation and our spiritual aspirations mere delusions, then it is difficult to feel gratitude for the gift of life. There is no gift if there is no giver. There is only a series of meaningless accidents, and it is difficult to feel gratitude for an accident.

The Torah therefore tells us something simple and practical. Give, and you will come to see life as a gift. You don't need to be able to prove God exists. All you need is to be thankful that you exist – and the rest will follow.

That is how God came to be close to the Israelites through the building of the sanctuary. It wasn't the quality of the wood and metals and drapes. It wasn't the glitter of jewels on the breastplate of the High Priest. It wasn't the beauty of the architecture or the smell of the sacrifices. It was the fact that it was built out of the gifts of "everyone whose heart prompts them to give" (Ex. 25:2). Where people give voluntarily to one another and to holy causes, that is where the divine presence rests.

Hence the special word that gives its name to this week's parsha: Terumah. I've translated it as "a contribution" but it actually has a subtly different meaning for which there is no simple English equivalent. It means "something you lift up" by dedicating it to a sacred cause. You lift it up, then it lifts you up. The best way of scaling the spiritual heights is simply to give in gratitude for the fact that you have been given.

God doesn't live in a house of stone. He lives in the hearts of those who give.

**AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL  
"And they shall make for Me a Mikdash, and I shall dwell in their midst." (25:8)**

The subject of the building of the Sanctuary occupies more space in the Torah than any other matter. It is described repeatedly in all of its minute details and yet the Mishkan did not continue for more than 39 years in its present form. And so, why does the Torah devote so much space to a passing phase of history which lasted such a short time?

The purpose of the Mishkan is clearly stated "And I shall dwell...And they shall know that I am Hashem their G-d that took them forth from the land of Egypt so that I dwell in their midst." The Mishkan was the means of imparting the True Knowledge, 'Daat Hashem', Sensory Perception. These are the vehicles we use to gain the objective of life, 'Yirat Hashem' which is Awareness of Hashem's presence, greatness/power and kindness which fill the world. "His greatness (gudlo) and His goodness (tuvo) fills the world."

When the Jews in the desert would see Moshe's tent they would point and say "Moshe Rabenu lives right there." And when they saw Aharon's tent they showed their children "Aharon Hacoheh lives over there." When they passed by the Mishkan they all said "Hashem lives there!"

By gaining this 'Emunah Chusheet', Sensory Perception of Hashem, they achieved the highest level of perfection and became the Greatest Generation of all time, 'Dor Deah'.

We have the opportunity to gain this Awareness in our prayers 3 times each day. When we say "You" (Hashem) about 100 times in the Amidah, paint the picture in your mind that you are standing in front of The King of Kings, your Father who loves you and can do everything for you.