

Terumah (Uplifting)
Exodus 25:1-27:19
February 21, 2015

Parshat Terumah initiates the process of bringing the Divine Presence into the Israelite camp. The people are told to bring gifts of all kinds, building materials to precious gems, to build a space for God “to dwell among them.” The people give generously, plans are drawn up for the Tabernacle. It is clear that access to God will be limited. The priests are allowed to be in the Tabernacle, the Levites are allowed to carry it and the Israelites are instructed to observe without violating the border of the sacred. Who gets to be close to God and under what conditions? This is at the heart of the Torah portion.

Niggun

Introduction

(The Terumah commentary in the Zohar is 350 pages, with another 50 pages called the Book of Concealment, in which the secret teachings are deeply encoded.)

Statement of intent for the reading:

“rather than reducing the unknown to the familiar, one should savor the variety of possible meanings...”

([Zohar, Vol V](#), Daniel Matt translator, p. 533)

The Treumah commentary in the Zohar begins this way:

"Rabbi Hiyya opened, 'For Yah has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel as His own treasure. (Ps 135:4) How beloved are Israel to the blessed Holy one, who desires them and want to cleave to them and be joined with them? ...And they desired Him and linked themselves with Him as it is written: For Jacob has chosen Yah for himself. And it is written: For YHVH's share is His people (Deut 23:9)--He entrusted other nations to princely rulers appointed over them, while for His own share He took Israel."

([Zohar, Vol 5](#), Daniel Matt translator, p. 189)

The Zohar explores this relationship between God and His people, us, through the juxtaposition of two words:

The Hebrew word “*mi*” which means “who?”, and the Hebrew word “*zot*”, which means “this”. *Mi* and *zot*, who? and this.

"Rabbi Shim'on opened, "who is this looking forth like dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, awesome as bannered hosts? (Song of Songs 6:10). *Mi Zot*, who is this--mystery of two worlds joined as one, and this is world and world. *Mi*, Who, as we have established: a supernal rung above, a beginning susceptible to questions, called *Mi*, Who, as is said: Lift your eyes on high and see: *Mi*, Who, created these (Isaiah 40:26). *Zot*, This: a lower rung below, lower world. Both of them two worlds in a single bond, a single nexus, as one."

(Zohar, Vol. V, translated by Daniel Matt, p. 184)

Here we have a major teachings of this portion--

God chooses us and we choose God and God chooses us.... a continuous and eternal unity, each dependent upon the other.

And the mystery, as we look to God, and by necessity say, Who?, because Mystery continually calls for this question. And we look around us for the indwelling presence and say, This. *Mi*--Who, and *Zot*--This, and the mystery of faith that unites the two in one-ness, *ehad*. What is known and what is unknown is all one: Who is This.

Niggun

Section One

Take me for an offering

(Zohar, Vol 5, p. 189)

And they shall make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst

Have them take Me and I will dwell among you...it is Me you are taking...

Hearing the word *terumah* literally, to uplift, to rise...who rises through our contemplative prayer?

We raise the indwelling to unite with Who?

We make a sanctuary for the Divine and learn to raise up what has been given to us.

"Speak to the Children of Israel and have them take Me an offering; from every man whose heart impels him, you shall take My offering.

(Exodus 25:2)

How do we create this space, have this heart, which impels us to receive and raise up this offering?

Creating the space

(Zohar Vol 5, p.246-7)

A Midrash explains, with a parable, God's instruction to build a Tabernacle:

A king had only one daughter, who married another king. When the son-in-law of the king wished to return to his country and take his wife with him, the father king told him that he could neither part with his daughter nor tell her husband not to take her, as she was now his wife. The father king thus asked the son-in-law the favor--that wherever the son-in-law would go to live, he would have a chamber ready for the father king to dwell with them, for he could not bear to leave his daughter.

Thus, God told Israel, who is like that son-in-law, that God had given Israel a Torah, and the Torah is like the daughter, from which God could not part, and yet God also could not tell Israel not to take the Torah. Thus, God asked the Israelites to make for God a house wherein God might sojourn wherever the Israelites went, and it is written: "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them."

"They shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell among them"

(Exodus 25:8)

The verse does not say, "and I will dwell within it," but "and I will dwell within them"--within each and every one of them.

The essential space is the inside of the human heart.

The space that opens up is one of yearning. It is an awareness of unfilled space.

The desire to know the Divine is at the core of one's being.

Holding a space free for potential habitation by God requires great energy. When we forget to hold this space open, we condense, become inert, and that breeds a consoling sense of familiar density. Our world congeals and our hearts close. We forget the radiance within. We must exert the energy, the intention to feel the yearning, feel the space, to be receptive.

"From every man whose heart impels him, you shall take My offering."

(Exodus 25:2).

"Happy are the righteous who know how to focus the aspiration of their hearts on the Holy King, and whose hearts' intention is not at all directed to this world and its vain

desires; rather, they know and strive to direct their will and cleave above, drawing the will of their Lord to them from above to below."

(Zohar, Vol 5, p. 246)

We open this space within our hearts, here, now.

**Chant: Harpu ud'u ki Anochi Elohim
(Be still and know that I am God)**

Silence

Section Two

Awakening the heart

"I was asleep but my heart was wakeful. Hark, my beloved knocks! ...

(Song of Songs 5:2)

The space "in their midst" then, that God desires is, precisely, the space of desire. God desires human desire." Let them take Me gifts...taking Me...

(Zornberg, p. 336-7)

This space within the heart, desire, yearning, is the bridge between the transcendent and the immanent.

" every soul is a chamber for God, a vessel that contains the divine light....in our souls we light the lamp for God, set a table, raise up an alter. Truly God needs no intermediary. The divine light seeks only the soul and would be pleased to dwell directly within us. It is only our sin that makes us feel separate from God...."

(Sefat Emet, p. 119)

" In the midrash: 'I am asleep but my heart is awake.' [Cant.5:2] --I am asleep in exile, but my heart wakes that I be redeemed....I am asleep...but my Beloved knocks to awaken me."

(Sefat Emet, p. 119)

"Even when sin causes the bodily self to become distanced from this inwardness, from the soul, our root in heaven still defends us, seeking that we return to our place."

(Sefat Emet, p. 119)

"this... depends on our desire to cleave to our source; the source longs for us in the same measure that we long for it....the body and the garbing may be dark, but the inner self, the soul or the root, is glorious. 'Thus my heart wakes"-- this is the godliness that longs to dwell within Israel below. 'How long shall I wander without a home?' But this indwelling will come about through the longing within Israel's hearts."

([Sefat Emet](#), p.120)

Mi Zot

Who? calls to us through the *Zot*, the indwelling that lives in our hearts.
We are asleep, but the heart is awake, listening for the knock.

The mystery of faith

Listen:

Shema Israel, Adonai Elohanu, Adonai Ehud.

Elohim, our God, God the indwelling, This,

and YHVH, Who?,

become One.

These two names unite, "all becoming a complete Name in a single unity. Then YHVH is Elohim, for then all merges with one another, becoming one. Until each one unites on its own, they are not included in one another, becoming all one....

([Zohar. Vol 5. pp. 432-3](#))

We listen for the knock until all becomes One.

Chant: Ani y'shayna v'libi ayr; kol dodi dofayk
I was asleep but my heart was awake; Hark my Beloved knocks.

Silence

Section Three

Arousing the will in the right direction

"You shall love...

(Deut 6:5)

We will arouse love from the right side, in the symbolism of the Zohar, from our good inclination, from that part of our heart, which is stirred by loving-kindness.

"Beginning of the right, to love the blessed Holy one with the love of His cleaving. Who is that? This right rouses love. If one loves the blessed Holy One, He arouses His right toward him and receives him in love. All things in the world depend only upon will. Sprits draws spirit, bringing spirit, and the [we remember]-(~~mnemonic~~ is): If he sets his heart upon Him, he will gather in His spirit and soul (Job 34:14).

(Zohar, Vol 5, p. 437)

"If a person loves God with genuine intention, [loving-kindness] embraces him, his spirit draws the divine spirit"

(Zohar, Vol 5, p. 437, footnote 695)

The will is satisfied, sated by a morsel?

...our obligation for the blessing after the meal is a great teaching, a great opportunity. "When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless YHVH your God. (Deut. 8:10)...even if a person eats only as much as an olive, and his intention is upon it and he considers that food his essential food, it is called satisfaction...It is not written *and satisfy the appetite of every living thing*, but rather *the will*—the will that he focused on that eating is called satisfaction. For even if there is nothing in front of a person except a little bit the size of an olive and nothing more—he has set the will of satisfaction upon it."

"You shall love YHVH your God with all your heart"...both the right and the left sides of the heart. "Whenever the left arouses [judgment], right begins it first [with love], so left is included in right." All our judgments must be contained by love, and then there can be the will toward satisfaction.

(Zohar, Vol 5, p. 438)

"...by intense effort, by refining oneself, by purifying one's dwelling, by desire of one's heart and soul—oh that one can then attain [the Holy Spirit], that it will swell with him! "

(Zohar, Vol 5, p. 200)

"Love your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your very muchness." (Deut. 6:5)

"Surely, heart and soul are two, uniting into one. For heart, soul and wealth all unite with one another, and the heart is unification of all. This corresponds to what has been said: with all your heart—with two hearts, namely two impulses: one, the good impulse; the other, the evil impulse. Each one of these two is called heart: one is called good heart, the other evil heart."

Judgment without love becomes evil. Judgment needs love.

We work so the right contains the left. Judgment is called into the service of the love, and contained by love. They all are one.

(Zohar, Vol 5 pp. 440-1)

Our being can be become covered with a shell we construct out of all our judgments. Our judgments are like so many barnacles clinging to us, clinging to us so completely that there is no visible radiance from within. We no longer know the radiance. Those barnacles are made up of all those unworked, unconscious resentments and fears, and all those defenses, those habits of mind and heart, which close us off. We think they protect us. We need to remember what we have forgotten.

Our job is to lift those barnacles, with the help of love, to pry off those barnacles, to reveal the radiance, which is already present. The space that holds the Divine has been present all along. Reveal just the tiniest sliver, so that we know what is contained. So that we know there is Holy space within.

We practice moving the will toward satisfaction. In this moment, there is enough. And here is the space, and the opening to radiance.

We remember to listen, and know *Mi* and *Zot*, the multiplicity and the unity are all contained in the One.

Our love of God, and God's love of us, is all One.

**Chant: V'ahavta et Adonai Elohecha
(And you shall love Adonai your God)**

**Silence
Bell**

Niggun

