

TORAH SHMOOZE TERUMAH

Scriptural Context

- And they will make a sanctuary for Me that I may dwell among them. (Exodus 25:8)
- And you shall put into the ark the testimony that I shall give to you. (Exodus 25:16)

Commentary & Midrash

- “. . . Building a Temple for the Eternal Lord, there to offer up our prayers . . . would be entirely to prepare our hearts for His worship . . . —not because He needs to dwell in a house of human beings and come under the shelter of their roof. . . . In truth, blessing and holiness would increase according to the good actions that people would do. . . .” (Sefer haHinnuch)
- “The message is that the concept of sanctity in its various levels of intensity is independent of measurements” [i.e., sanctity is unrelated to the dimensions or proportions of a sanctuary]. (Or Hachayim)
- “It is significant that the Torah does not describe God’s presence as dwelling בתוכו, ‘within it,’ but as dwelling ‘amongst them’ [בתוכם].” (Or Hachayim)
- “. . . The בתוכם ושכנתי [“that I may dwell among them”] of our verse extends far beyond the mere presence of God in the Temple, but . . . means the proximity of God in our midst, showing itself in accordance with the covenant, in the whole happiness and prosperity of our private and national life. . . . But also that this blessing and protecting Shechina—proximity of God—is not brought about by the mere erection and upkeep of the Sanctuary, but can only be won by consecrating and giving up our whole private and public lives to carrying out the Divine Torah.” (S.R. Hirsch)
- The ark [aron] was at the center of the Mishkan. “The word aron comes from the Hebrew word for light, ‘ohr.’ The aron was the light of the Mishkan for it contained the Holy Torah, which is the light of the world. Without the aron, the Mishkan would have been merely a shell, merely a dry faucet—without the living waters of the Holy Torah.” (U. Milevsky)
- “The Torah was given not merely for private inspiration but for the public weal” [i.e., the prosperity, happiness, and the general good of the community]. (Nehama Leibowitz)
- The meaning of the Tabernacle is to be found in “. . . the covenant-relationship between God and Israel, brought about by the giving and acceptance of Torah.” (S.R. Hirsch) That is, we fulfill the vision of Torah and, in turn, we receive the spirit-protecting, blessing presence of God, which is played out in the fulfillment of our personal and communal life.
- In effect, the testimony that was to be put into the ark was God’s law, which was to reside at the physical and spiritual center of the community—it was to be the focal point of all life. Its place, within the ark and the Mishkan, was created from the heartfelt offerings of each woman and man. The testimony itself, the Torah, occupying the place of honor in the life of the people, was to be a witness for all time—because it would be denied in every age—that God

has “commanded you in the commandments that are written in it.” (Rashi)
And that these commandments are the means to raise up the commonweal.

Questions

- Do you have an experience of *sanctity* in our Temple and, if so, how do you account for it? If you do not have such an experience, why do you think that’s the case?
- What might it mean to say, God has “commanded you in the commandments”?
- What might it mean to give up our private and public lives to carry out the Torah?
- How might God protect our spirits when we live out the vision of Torah?