



Rabbi Silvers'

Shabbat Message



Good Shabbes...

This week's Torah portion, *Terumah*, deals with the construction of the *Mishkan* (the Tabernacle, or portable Temple) and the various vessels to be placed in it or in front of it. Most of the vessels were to have rings built on their sides through which rods or staves would be inserted that would allow for the Priests or the Levites to transport them easily from one encampment to another during the sojourn of the Israelites in the Desert. In particular, four vessels were to have these rings adjoined to them: the Holy Ark (Ex. 25:12-15), the Table of Show-Bread (Ex. 25:26-28), the Altar for Sacrifices (Ex. 27:4-7), and the Incense Altar (Ex. 30::4-5).

Of the above vessels, only one had a special instruction that applied to it and to none of the others, namely, that the staves must remain in the rings permanently. That vessel is the Holy Ark. Indeed, the Torah expresses this requirement in rather strong terms, as a prohibition -- "The staves shall be in the rings of the Ark; *they shall not be taken from it*" (Ex. 25:15). Indeed, this is considered one of the 613 commandments of the Torah and listed as such by Maimonides. This prohibition applies only to the rods that were used for the Ark - those rods must remain in place even when the Ark is stationed in the Holy of Holies, which is where its place was. For the other vessels, this does not apply, and the rods can be removed from them when they do not need to be transported.

My favorite explanation for this mitzvah - to keep the staves in place - is a contemporary *drash* (interpretation) that rabbis use to emphasize the importance of the **supporters** of the Torah. Just as the Ark is a symbol of the Torah contained therein, the rods that carry the Ark represent those who carry and support the Torah. Just as the Torah itself is never to be removed from the Ark, so too those who help support the Torah and Torah institutions, whether through their time or money, should never be removed from the Ark.

It is commonplace for rabbis to use this text in the portion of *Terumah* (literally "heartfelt giving") to fundraise. The lessons in this portion of how our ancestors gave willingly and with joy to the point that Moses had to ask them to stop giving, should inspire and reinforce for us all the importance of giving wholeheartedly to the synagogue and in support of Torah and Learning.

Please know how it is always greatly appreciated when our community gives to CBI, but on this Shabbat I would ask that you consider the plight of a sister Reform congregation in Netanya Israel. On January 27<sup>th</sup> Congregation NatanYa was vandalized. This is the congregation of our dear friend, Rabbi Edgar Nof who has been here at CBI many times and whose congregation hosts our students and adults when we travel to Israel. Please see the attached article (<https://wupj.org/news/2019/01/10748/vandals-kehilat-natan-ya/>) and consider giving whole-heartedly to help them recover from the damage and destruction that was done to their synagogue. Thank you!

Shabbat Shalom,  
Rabbi Bob Silvers