



The Parasha with Rabbi Dweck

Highlights for

Parashat Teruma: Are You Getting Old?

SUMMARY

Following the acceptance of the Covenant, God presents the project of the *Mishkan*—a sanctuary where His presence can dwell. Central to this project is the *Aron Haberit* (Ark of the Covenant), crowned by golden cherubs fashioned as children. This imagery serves as an eternal reminder that the heart of our relationship with the Divine is not found in rigid certainty, but in the youthful curiosity and exploration that allows us to be constantly surprised by God.

A House for a Neighbor

The term *Mishkan* shares its root with *shakhen*, the Hebrew word for a neighbor. This highlights that the sanctuary is not just a building, but a dwelling space for a mutual relationship.

The *Shekhinah* (Divine Presence) is something that occurs *in relationship*. When we remove obstructions and create space, God rests within us. This sanctuary is meant to be a home for that shared presence, ensuring that God is not a distant concept, but a neighborly reality in our daily lives.

The Childhood of the Kerubim

Sitting atop the Ark are the golden *Kerubim* (cherubs). Notably, these figures are depicted as children. This design signal is crucial: relationship with God requires the attributes of youth—curiosity, exploration, and a thirst for new knowledge.

Children are famous for their constant “whys.” They test the world to see what bounces and what breaks because they want to know how everything ticks. They do this so that they can have a good working map of reality. In contrast, many adults stop exploring once they have a working framework of life. In the

Torah’s view, once we stop being curious and open to discovery, we have become “old.”

“The youthfulness in Torah... is their openness to curiosity and exploration and the joy and enthusiasm that a person has towards that, like any child.”

Curiosity vs. Control

A major obstruction to any meaningful relationship is the attempt to control the other. When we care about someone, we watch them out of love and curiosity, not apprehension.

If we approach God or our fellow human beings with the attitude that we already know what they think and what they will say, we effectively stop listening. This rigidity leads to extremism and fundamentalism, which are often just masks for self-preservation and the fear of the unknown. A true covenant requires the vulnerability of being surprised.

The Rods on the Move

In a unique commandment (Exodus 25:15), the poles (*badim*) used to carry the Ark were never to be removed from their rings, even when the *Mishkan* was stationary. Unlike other vessels, the Ark was essentially always “on the move.”

This represents the nature of Torah study and

our relationship with God. We must never say, “I have seen this already.” Whether we are thirty or sixty, we must revisit what we have learned with fresh eyes. In Tehilim (Psalms 92:15) it says: עוֹד יְנוּבִין בְּשִׁיבָה דְּשָׁנִים וְרַעְנָנִים יְהִי. The *Tzaddikim* (righteous) are described as being fruitful and fresh (*ra'ananim*) even in old age, because they maintain the youthful spirit of enthusiastic discovery.

Questions for the Table

1. **The Spirit of Youth:** “Old age” can be described as the moment we stop being curious. In what areas of your religious or personal life have you settled into comfortable certainty?
 2. **Neighborly Presence:** If the *Mishkan* makes God our “neighbor” (*shachen*), how does that change the way we behave in our own homes and private spaces?
 3. **The Fixed Rods:** Why is it important to treat the Torah as something that is always “on the move” rather than something we have already arrived at or fully understood?
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