

TERUMAH
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

The portion which we read in shul last Shabbos was Terumah. It deals almost exclusively with detailed instructions on how we were to build the Tabernacle so that G-d may dwell among us. It is very strange to note that when G-d gave His instruction to Moses on how to build the Tabernacle He started with the Ark which contained the Ten Commandments and then described the Tabernacle proper. But when Moses began to build the Tabernacle he first started with the Tabernacle proper and then started on the Ark. Why? Also, it is very interesting to note we learn from the building of the Tabernacle the definition of work, that all acts which were required for the construction of the Tabernacle were considered work while those acts which were not required for the Tabernacle were not considered work. Why? It seems to me that these two things are related. G-d, when He related the instructions to Moses, started with the holiest object and then worked down to objects of less and less holiness. Moses, on the other hand, had the people begin on the less holy objects and then work up. This, I believe, teaches us the important lesson that when we begin to try to morally improve ourselves, we must always have fully in mind what our goal is, that the Ark and the Ten Commandments are the goals we are shooting for, but we must start with the problems and materials on hand, that we must

Man can't start with ideals - Ideas can't satisfy man, they must be translated into action - Nothing will stand which is not translated into action -

No work in which G-d can dwell can be considered work.

Terumah

10/1/20

THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING DISTINCTIONS
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

In life we must learn to make distinctions. Many people do not take the trouble to learn how to distinguish things. They are satisfied with broad generalizations. This Torah portion teaches us that this approach is wrong. We have all heard that Judaism is opposed to the visual arts. This, however, is a false statement. There was a statue in the Holy of Holies. We Jews were punished for fashioning the golden calf because the people worshipped the work of their own hands. They created their own gods and worshipped them. Within the Holy of Holies, itself, in the Temple there was a statue of two cherubim with the faces of children locked in an embrace with their wings soaring to heaven. This was allowed because they were not worshipped. They were resting on the Ten Commandments. They were symbols that children must be rooted in the Ten Commandments if Judaism is to continue.

The hallmark of the Jew has always been that he has been able to make distinctions between the Sabbath and the week, between light and darkness, between Israel and the nations, and between the holy and the secular as we say in the Havdallah ceremony every Saturday night. Many people today fail to make distinction between light and darkness. Many people fail to make the distinction between right and wrong. They say anything a person wants to do is o.k., is fine. They refuse to set standards. There is a right and a wrong in the world, and although it is true there are many gray areas, there are many times when it is clear what is right and wrong. Drugs are wrong. Alcoholism is wrong. Wife beating is wrong. Cruelty is wrong, etc. Today many parents do not want to set standards, and many young people give in to peer pressure and do things they should not do.

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There is also a distinction between the holy and the secular, between means and ends. In today's life we teach skills, how to arrive at different goals, but we never define goals. We seem to think that being moral, helping people, and being a Mensch is just something that is a matter of personal preference. Some people like to be a Mensch. Other people would rather not be one. It is like some people like to play the violin and other^s do not. We must teach people that the most important thing is to be a Mensch. Being a lawyer or a doctor or an accountant are just means to a goal. No one is supposed to sacrifice morality or being a Mensch in order to reach these goals.

We also must learn to make distinctions between holy and holy. Not everything has equal value. Sometimes when our family needs help we have to sacrifice learning opportunities, etc. We also have to learn how to make distinctions between the Sabbath and the week, between man the creator and man the meditator. We cannot just spend all our time creating without sitting back and relaxing and enjoying what we have. At the same time, we cannot be passive and not be creative. We also have to make a distinction between Israel and the other peoples. You cannot be a Jew and remain a Jew just because you like lox and bagels. There is no reason to stay a Jew unless you believe that Judaism still has ideas the world still needs. It is important for young people to know about these ideas, otherwise they will not stay Jews.

Learning how to make distinctions is essential in order to become a mature human being. A baby learns by learning how to make distinctions. We cannot make wild generalizations. We have to distinguish between

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the golden calf, which is worshipping the works of our own hands,
and the cherubim, which stressed the vital importance of implementing
Judaism's moral and religious ideas in our youth if Judaism was going
to survive. In life we must learn how to make distinctions, otherwise
we will never mature and never be able to live the just and moral
life.

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In the Torah portion, Trumah, we learn how G-d spoke to Moshe saying "speak to the sons of Israel and they should take from Me Trumah". All the commentators ask why should it say "they should take from Me Trumah"? It should say "and they shall give Trumah". They should give a donation. They are not taking it. Also, the language is different when it enumerates certain objects they give. When it enumerates the blue thread and purple thread, etc. it does not state what they were to be used for, but when it mentions the oil it says that the oil should be for the light, the spices for the oil of anointing, and also spices for sweet incense and the onyx stones for the breastplate. Why does it have to specify its use? We also have a text which says "and they shall make for Me a sanctuary and I shall dwell in them". What is the meaning of that sentence? Life is a difficult proposition. We human beings are limited. We cannot do everything we want. We cannot even do things in the order we want many times. We cannot put on our shoes before our socks. We cannot reverse time. We cannot decide one day to be old and one day to be young. Our minds may soar but we are limited to reality. Unfortunately, in life there are many people who want life to be what they want it to be and not what it is. In life we have to learn how to make distinctions. Unless we learn how to make distinctions we are in trouble. Certain things are right in one context but wrong in another context. It is all right to wear a swimsuit at the beach but you should not come to the Synagogue in one. This lack of realizing that we have to make distinctions in life is what causes the young people to constantly yell hypocrite, but in life we have to learn to make distinctions. At the end of the Sabbath we say a special prayer called Hamavdil. When we make Havdallah we make a special prayer. "Blessed are You our G-d, King of the Universe, Who separates between holy and secular, between light and darkness, between Israel and the nations and between the seventh day and the six working days of creation." Sometimes we also conclude it with a blessing "He who separates between holy and holy". On the Sabbath we learn to be man the appreciator, the meditator as well as man the creator. G-d has given us a special gift by allowing us to be His partner in creation. He has given us the gift of creativity, but we have to learn not to abuse it. G-d separates between

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light and darkness. In Hebrew the word for light also means to beam, to shine, to ventilate, and the word Chosech also means to be restrained. Sometimes in life we have to let it all hang out and other times we should learn to be quiet, to be restrained. Freud is wrong when he said that we always have to always let it all out. Sociologists and psychologists have found out that the happiest marriages are when there is an element of restraint in them. Sometimes we have to learn to shut up as well as to talk. Since we have followed Freud there are more divorces than ever. A person has to know when to talk and when to be quiet otherwise you are always going to be fighting over petty little things. Rabbis, too, have to know when to talk and when to shut up. Sometimes even I get into trouble when I talk when I should have shut up and when I keep quiet instead of talking. The Halacha tells us a Rabbi should not say anything when he knows the people will not listen. We also have to learn how to make distinctions between the holy and the secular. We have to know what are ends and what are means. In America everything is important and nothing is more important than football. We many times have our values screwed up. Not everything is as important as everything else. Values of commitment, of family, of morality, of charity must come first. Unfortunately, in America we have confused flashy cars and fancy houses for real values. We also must learn how to make distinctions between Israel and others. The Jewish people cannot survive unless we believe we have a message to give the world. We cannot say that choosing Judaism is like choosing chocolate ice cream instead of vanilla. It is not a matter of taste. We have a message to give the world. You do not have to be a Jew to be a good American. Abraham Lincoln was not Jewish, George Washington was not Jewish, and Thomas Jefferson was not Jewish, but they were very good Americans. Our young people are drifting away from us because they do not know the message that we have yet to give the world. This does not mean that Jews are superior. It means that we feel as America feels that we have a unique way of life that the world needs. As Abraham Lincoln said, "America is the last best hope of the world". We Jews, too, must feel that Judaism has things the world needs. Unless we teach our children the distinctiveness of Judaism they will leave us. We also must learn how to separate

between holy and holy. Not everything in religion is on the same level. Some people get ahold of a few practices and make them everything. What about being a mensch? What about ethical behavior? What about the saving of human life? These, too, are important. Our religion is not superstition. It is not composed of a few magical acts. We have to teach our children and ourselves how to make proper distinctions. If we do they can be happy and lead a moral and a decent life. We human beings are pulled by many conflicting impulses. If we put them in the right context they will aid and help us. If not, we will be in trouble. Where are our children to learn how to make these distinctions? Only through Jewish education. Unless we have a strong Jewish education we will not be able to make these distinctions. That's why in this Torah portion it says you take the oil for light. You have to learn how to make distinctions between light and darkness, between letting it all hang out and being restrained. It says that you must take spices for the oil of anointing. We have to learn how to make distinctions between secular and holy, the oil of anointing which made the vessels holy in the Temple. We also have to learn how to make distinctions between the oil of anointing and the incense. We have to learn to make distinctions between holy and holy. Also, the onyx stones for the breastplate teach us that we must make distinctions between Israel and the peoples. Only if we do this can we become holy. Holy has the connotation of being able to make distinctions. It says in the beginning of this portion "they shall take from Me Trumah". The Jewish people were commanded to give approximately 2% of their crops to the priests. There were two elements involved. There was Haphroscha and Netina. Before they separated Haphroscha, their crops, they could not use them. After they separated them they could use their crops. The Kohen would then come whenever he wanted to take the crop and he would be given it. In order for us to be holy, to have the traits we all need we must learn to separate, to make distinctions. If we do that then we are sure that we will be able to lead the holy and good life and G-d will dwell in us. That's why it says "you will make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in you". You learn how to make distinctions and then G-d will

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dwell in us. We will be able to be holy.

The story about the basketball team whose players were very lax about coming to practice. Finally before the last practice before the big game the coach singled out one of the players and said, "I want to congratulate you. You are the only one who came to practice on time and stayed to the last minute. You are an example to your teammates", at which point the fellow turned and said, "Thanks, coach, that's the least I could do since I can't make the game". Unless we learn to make the proper distinctions and put what is important first we will not be able to live the kind of lives we are all capable of living.

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In this week's Torah portion, Terumah, we learn how the Jewish people were to make a sanctuary for G-d. It says "and they shall make for Me a Mikdosh, a place of holiness and I shall dwell in their midst". What does it mean that they should make a sanctuary for G-d? After all, G-d's glory fills the whole world. G-d is all over. Why should He need a sanctuary and what are we talking about when we talk about a holy place? What is the whole concept of holiness? In Judaism when we talk about holiness we are really talking about separation. When the Jews are called a holy people it means that ~~they~~^{we} are ~~meant~~^{to be} separate from others. When we talk about the Sabbath being a holy day it is a day set aside from other days. When we talk about holiness of kashruth we are talking about separating ourselves from other foods. Holiness has a connotation of separation. In life we need both the holy and the secular. In fact, the Rabbis say that a person who ^{would} make a weekday Shabbos is just as wrong as if he would make his Shabbos a weekday. ^{The pure concept of the Holy} ~~Holy~~ stands for the ideal, ^{Something to which we all aspire but which do not exist fully in the real world.} In life we are to aim for ideals, but we believe we have to live in the real world. We have to make the world come closer to our ideals, but we know that that is a long process and a difficult one. What we say about Shabbos is that it is a taste of ^{Eden} ~~Gan Eden~~, a taste of the world to come, a world which we will eventually create, a world in which everyone ^{will be} ~~is~~ free and equal, a world in which we can concentrate on Torah study and our family exclusively. It is an ideal but it is not the real world. The real world ^{is} ~~is~~ the other days of the week. It is our job to make them come closer to Shabbos. In dealing with ideals there are two ways ^{usable} ~~to~~ handle them. One is to ~~make them~~ ^{things} handle ideals which ~~we~~ ^{we} know can never be realized ^{in the real world} and so ~~to~~ ^{we} give them lip service, ^{only} ~~but~~ ^{we} never try to achieve them. The other way is to pretend that ~~our~~ ^{our} ideals have already been realized in the real world even though we can all see by the injustice and inhumanity in the real world that they have not been achieved. Judaism's ^{deals with ideals in} ~~idea is~~ neither of these ^{ways.} Judaism says that the ideals are real and we have to spend part of the time learning about them and studying about them and even on Shabbos living them ^{while} ~~and~~ the rest of the week we must try to implement them, to bring them into practice. This means we have to deal with reality. We could be accused of being compromisers because we are living in the real world. However, we are not because we have never given up our ideals. We still return to them time after time and want to

continually implement them. In Judaism we are urged to learn how to differentiate. After Shabbos we make Havdallah. We learn how to differentiate between holy and secular, between Israel and the nations, between the seventh day and the six days of creation. We must learn to differentiate between the ideal and reality, between holiness and the secular. The Temple was meant to teach us the ideals, but we should never become discouraged because in the real world things are not perfect. We have to work slowly to bring them up to the ideal. We should not withdraw in a huff because the world is not perfect. We also must distinguish between light and darkness, between truth and falseness. Many times people play with the truth to give false impressions like the commentator I heard the other day who made the following analogy: "What would you say if President Nixon or John Mitchell were given a Cabinet post right after Watergate? Wouldn't that be a travesty? That's what Israel is doing with Sharon." Of course, the cases are not similar. They were crooks. They broke the law. They were directly responsible. Sharon had no direct responsibility or intent to harm the civilians. He was indirectly responsible. The cases are not at all similar. In life we must learn to make correct distinctions if we are to be able to implement ideals in the real world. We also have to distinguish between Israel and nations. Many Jews are opting out of Judaism because they say there is no reason to stay Jewish. All Judaism has already been implemented. We cannot agree with this. We still have much to teach the world. We must distinguish between the seventh day and the other six days. We must, on Shabbos, learn about our ideals and practice them so that we will be imbued with the enthusiasm necessary to implement them in the real world for the other six days. G-d did not need the sanctuary. We needed it as a separate place in which we could visualize and see His ideals so that we could implement them in practice. That's why many of the symbols refer to Israel, to truth, to holiness. It is important that we separate the world of ideals and the world of reality so that we can bring the world of reality up to our ideals. This reminds me of a story in which a man called a doctor in the middle of the night and said, "Doctor, you have to help me. I am very sick." The doctor said, "Normally I don't make house calls, but if I come tonight I will have to charge you \$50". The man said, "How much do you charge for an office call?" The doctor said,

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"\$20". The man said, "O.K., I'll meet you in your office in ten minutes".

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The story of a Jewish farmer in Eastern Europe who, for the first time in his life, was going to have a bumper crop. All of a sudden the Mashiach came and said, "I'm here. Let's go to Israel." The farmer said, "But I'm having a bumper crop. I don't want to go right now." The Mashiach said, "What happens if a Cossack comes and takes your farm?" The farmer thought a moment and replied, "Why don't you take the Cossack to Israel?" This, of course, illustrates the reluctance of many Jews to go to Israel and also the fact that Israel now is surrounded by Cossacks, by many enemies.

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In the Torah portion Trumah we learn about the construction of the Tabernacle. We learn how the Tabernacle was to be the center religious focus of the Jewish people. It is hard to understand why the Tabernacle was chosen to be the central religious focus of the Jewish people. We Jews have always believed in a closer relationship between G-d and man. We believe we need no intermediaries or interceptors to even go to G-d direct. We feel we have open access to G-d all the time. Of course, this is one of the underlying themes of "Fiddler on the Roof". When Teviah speaks to G-d he is speaking out of the Jewish tradition. G-d is close to us. Yet the Tabernacle we built seems to stress an altogether different concept. It seems to stress limits, that man cannot really approach G-d, that man really has to stay outside. After all, there were certain parts of the Temple man could not enter. The high priest could enter into the Holy of Holies only once a year. The ordinary people could not enter the holy part of the sanctuary. Only the Kohanim could. In fact, people were barred from coming closer than a little distance from the altar. They were not allowed to then enter the inner sanctum of the Temple unless they were ritually pure. If they dealt with the mitzvah of cleansing and preparing the dead for burial, they could not enter into the sanctuary. Why should this be? We Jews have always been a democratic religion, a religion which has always elected its rabbis, etc., one in which we feel close to man and G-d. Why should the Temple have been the focus of Jewish worship, and in our prayers we still long for the Temple and for what it stands for. Even in the Six Day War hardened secular

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soldiers broke down in front of the Western Wall and cried.

People, too, when they go to Jerusalem, to Israel, they visit the Western Wall. Why should the Tabernacle have been the central focus of Jewish worship?

The answer to this, I believe, is that it stresses something we all need to know in life, and that is that we are limited. We all need G-d's help. We cannot do everything in life that we want to do. In spite of the slogan that "nothing is impossible", things are impossible. We cannot know everything individually and even collectively. We are called upon all the time to make decisions upon limited knowledge. The Tabernacle was to teach us what our role was in the world and what was our fitting and right place in the world. We Jews believe that G-d helps those that help themselves. We have to act. We have to come forward. We have to do. Yet, when it comes to decisions we are limited. We are limited by the knowledge we have, and many times we strike out in the dark. We need G-d's help to make sure we made the right decision. That is why Jews pray because we know that many times we make decisions, in fact the most important decisions of our lives, based upon intuition and faith. After all, before we got married we didn't interview 3 billion women to find the right one. We didn't, before choosing an occupation, look at the 700 or 800 listings of occupations at the Department of Labor before intuitively choosing something we thought would be fitting for us. It happens that many times the decisions we make are wrong. We pray to G-d that if we made the wrong decision we will not be harmed at it. How many times have we made a mistake, not stopped at a stop sign or gone through a red light? Thank G-d, we survive and do not have to pay the penalty for our mistakes

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although some people do. Many times in life we make decision,
but we ask G-d that even if we make wrong decisions to let them
come out right and, G-d, let us make the right decisions. We
need help. Even modern science admits now that man is not all-
powerful, because we cannot know everything. By the very
definition, a black hole means that man is limited because light
goes in and nothing ever comes out and we can never know anything
about a black hole except very indirectly. The same thing
applies to scientific laws. There was a big argument between
Nils Boer and Einstein, both Jews, about the theory of light.
Nils Boer said light was both a wave and a particle. Einstein
said it was impossible, and this was when he made his famous
statement that G-d does not play dice with the universe. He
meant we have to understand it is impossible for something to be
both a particle and a wave. Nils Boer told Einstein that is all
we will be able to find out. We are limited. We cannot go
beyond this as far as our comprehension of quantum mechanics of
light. This, of course, is a hard thing to come up against. We
must make decisions in life based only on partial knowledge.
That's why we need G-d's help, and that is why we pray, and that
is what the Tabernacle was to teach us: how to pray. Really,
the essence of all Jewish prayer we find really in three words,
"G-d, help me." That, of course, is what we need. We need the
help of G-d and the help of our fellow human beings. We cannot
do everything alone. When it comes to knowledge, too, man cannot
know everything. He has to rely on others to supplement his
knowledge. When it comes to life, itself, a man cannot live by
himself. He needs a mate. You cannot do everything yourself.
You cannot procreate yourself. You cannot live a happy life
yourself. You cannot be fulfilled by yourself. You need a mate.