

## Parashat Terumah

"The voice of God they heard Now walking in the Garden, by soft windes Brought to thir Ears, while day declin'd, they heard, And from his presence hid themselves among The thickest Trees, both Man and Wife, till God Approaching, thus to Adam call'd aloud. Where art thou Adam, wont with joy to meet My coming seen far off? I miss thee here, Not pleas'd, thus entertain'd with solitude, Where obvious dutie erewhile appear'd unsaught: Or come I less conspicuous, or what change Absents thee, or what chance detains? Come forth. He came, and with him Eve, more loth, though first To offend, discount'nanc't both, and discompos'd; Love was not in thir looks, either to God Or to each other, but apparent guilt, And shame, and perturbation, and despaire, Anger, and obstinacie, and hate, and guile. Whence Adam faultring long, thus answer'd brief. I heard thee in the Garden, and of thy voice Affraid, being naked, hid my self. To whom The gracious Judge without revile repli'd. My voice thou oft hast heard, and hast not fear'd, But still rejoyc't, how is it now become So dreadful to thee? that thou art naked, who Hath told thee? hast thou eaten of the Tree Whereof I gave thee charge thou shouldst not eat? To whom thus Adam sore beset repli'd. O Heav'n! in evil strait this day I stand Before my Judge, either to undergoe Myself the total Crime, or to accuse My other self, the partner of my life; Whose failing, while her Faith to me remaines, I should conceal, and not expose to blame by my complaint; but strict necessitie Subdues me, and calamitous constraint Least on my head both sin and punishment, However insupportable, be all Devolv'd; though should I hold my peace, yet thou Wouldst easily detect what I conceale. This Woman whom thou mad'st to be my help, And gav'st me as thy perfet gift, so good, So fit, so acceptable, so Divine, That from her hand I could suspect no ill, And what she did, whatever in it self, Her doing seem'd to justifie the deed; Shee gave me of the Tree, and I did eate. To whom the sovran Presence thus repli'd. Was shee thy God, that her thou didst obey Before his voice, or was shee made thy guide, Superior, or but equal, that to her Thou did'st resigne thy Manhood, and the Place Wherein God set thee above her made of thee, And for thee, whose perfection farr excell'd Hers in all real dignitie: Adorn'd She was indeed, and lovely to attract Thy Love, not thy Subjection, and her Gifts Were such as under Government well seem'd, Unseemly to beare rule, which was thy part And person, hadst thou known thy self aright. So having said, he thus to Eve in few: Say Woman, what is this which thou hast done? To whom sad Eve with shame nigh overwhelm'd, Confessing soon, yet not before her Judge Bold or loquacious, thus abasht repli'd. The Serpent me beguill'd and I did eate. Which when the Lord God heard, without delay To Judgement he proceeded on th' accus'd."

It was thus that John Milton, in his classic, Paradise Lost, retold the story of Adam and Chavah's fall from grace. Indeed, the Scriptural account upon which it is of course based is perhaps the most calamitous of all stories, a tale penned by our ancestors at a time when they too, like Adam and Chavah, had been exiled from a paradise of their own - from the Land of Milk and Honey. In fact, penning the story of the Fall no doubt helped these ancestors of ours to make some sense of what had happened to them. Distraught at the destruction of the Temple, the sacking of Jerusalem and of the loss of Eretz Yisrael, and cast

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out into the darkness and cold of the galut, living among the Torahless gentiles, these ancient Israelites saw reflections of what had happened to them in the story of the Fall. For these ancestors the Garden of Eden stood as a metaphor for all that they had lost, and all because, so the story instructs us, like Adam and Chavah they had turned away from God's wisdom - the Torah - and embraced man's folly. They explored the same paradigm and themes of connection and loss, of divine wisdom and human folly, in our present accounts of the revelation at Mount Sinai and of the Golden Calf. Thus the dispositions of God, priests and common people, when the divine presence descended upon the mountain, reflect that of the Garden of Eden. It was only the Torah-initiated, the chosen priestly few, who were allowed onto the mountain, the Garden of God's presence to eat and drink with Him, whereas the common people, the as yet uninitiated, had to stand outside and could only look on from afar, afraid even to touch the boundary of the mountain for fear of divine retribution. For as Hashem said to Moshe, "Come up to me on the mountain, and stay there. I will give you the stone tablets with the Torah and the mitzvot I have written on them, so that you can teach them." Moreover, as was said to the people, "You are to set limits for the people all around; and say, 'Be careful not to go up on the mountain or even touch its base; whoever touches the mountain will surely be put to death.'" These truths emphasise the fact that at the heart of any communion with the divine is Torah. The priests were not initiated into the Torah *because* they ate and drank with God; rather, it was the wisdom of Torah that they had embraced that facilitated their communion with God - and this is metaphorically represented in the text as eating and drinking. Our ancestors once again saw these ideas at work in the account of the creation of the Mishkan, which, it is made evident in the text, was created according to the pattern of the mountain. The Mishkan therefore had delineations just as the Garden of Eden and the mountain had delineations. Just as the Garden of Eden was guarded to prevent the uninitiated from accessing it, "So he drove the man out, and he placed at the east of the garden of 'Eden the k'ruvim and a flaming sword which turned in every direction to guard the way to the tree of life," the Mishkan too was guarded. Only the Torah initiated, the priests, who therefore symbolised God's wisdom, were allowed to enter the Mishkan. Indeed, these priests, like the later Roman Pretorian guard, protected the Mishkan's boundaries from the trespass of common (uninitiated) people. As we read in B'midbar 1:52-53, "When the tabernacle is to be moved onward, it is the L'vi'im who are to take it down and set it up in the new location; anyone else who involves himself is to be put to death. The rest of Isra'el are to set up camp, company by company, each man with his own banner. But the L'vi'im are to camp around the tabernacle of the testimony, so that no anger will come upon the assembly of the people of Isra'el. The L'vi'im are to be in charge of the tabernacle of the testimony." Moreover, the Levites are attested to have exacted mortal justice upon those who, like Adam and Chavah, chose human folly and worshipped the Golden Calf, instead of the divine wisdom of Torah: "Moshe stood at the entrance to the camp and shouted, "Whoever is for Adonai, come to me!" All the descendants of Levi rallied around him. He told them, "Here is what Adonai, the God of Isra'el, says: 'Each of you, put his sword on his side; and go up and down the camp, from gate to gate; and every man is to kill his own kinsman, his own friend and his own neighbor!" The sons of Levi did what Moshe said, and that day three thousand of

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the people died. Moshe said, "You have consecrated yourselves today to Adonai, because every one of you has been against his own son and against his own kinsman, in order to bring a blessing on yourselves today."

The parallels of the Mishkan with Gan Eden and Mount Sinai do not stop here though, for what was it that was being guarded? What actually lay within the Mishkan? God's presence, yes, but that presence in both previous iterations was associated with what? The Torah! in the Garden of Eden God's presence was associated with His wisdom, symbolised by the Trees of Knowledge of Good and Evil and of Life and similarly, on the mountain, God's presence was associated with the wisdom that He imparted, written on the tablets of stone. In the same way these same two tablets of stone resided at the heart of the Mishkan. As we read, "They are to make me a sanctuary, so that I may live among them. You are to make it according to everything I show you — the design of the tabernacle and the design of its furnishings. This is how you are to make it. They are to make an ark of acacia-wood three-and-three-quarters feet long, two-and-a-quarter feet wide and two-and-a-quarter feet high. You are to overlay it with pure gold — overlay it both inside and outside — and put a molding of gold around the top of it. Cast four gold rings for it, and attach them to its four feet, two rings on each side. Make poles of acacia-wood, and overlay them with gold. Put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark; you will use them to carry the ark. The poles are to remain in the rings of the ark; they are not to be removed from it. Into the ark you are to put the testimony which I am about to give you. You are to make a cover for the ark out of pure gold; it is to be three-and-three-quarters feet long and two-and-a-quarter feet high. You are to make two k'ruvim of gold. Make them of hammered work for the two ends of the ark-cover. Make one keruv for one end and one keruv for the other end; make the k'ruvim of one piece with the ark-cover at its two ends. The k'ruvim will have their wings spread out above, so that their wings cover the ark, and their faces are toward each other and toward the ark-cover. You are to put the ark-cover on top of the ark. Inside the ark you will put the testimony that I am about to give you. There I will meet with you. I will speak with you from above the ark-cover, from between the two k'ruvim which are on the ark for the testimony, about all the orders I am giving you for the people of Isra'el."

It is hard to understate just how important this passage is and these instructions are as we seek to understand the Torah's message. In all three paradigms God's presence is associated with His wisdom, His instructions. In the passage that we have just read it is even more specifically emphasised that "there I will meet with you." Where? "From the testimony!" "I will speak with you from above the ark-cover, from between the two k'ruvim which are on the ark for the testimony." You see, God's voice is heard from the testimony; His presence is One with the wisdom of His Torah. The Torah itself thus teaches that if one seeks to commune with God, as Adam and Chavah did in the Garden and not be exiled on pain of death, and as Moshe and the priests did and not be excluded from the Mountain experience on pain of death, one must take hold of the wisdom of God - His commandments - because God's presence is only to be found in His wisdom. The pursuit of divine encounter apart from the

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wisdom - the Torah - is thus revealed to be man's folly. Just as Adam and Chavah rejected God's instructions in favour of divinity and were exiled beyond the Garden to the deathly world outside, just as our people rejected God's wisdom, made clear in the tablets of the Law, and embraced the Golden Calf, symbolising man's folly, and died by the sword, so the message of our parashah is that divine encounter can only come through God's commandments. This may sound harsh, but I have to say that the tendency, for example, in contemporary charismatic Christianity to pursue an experience of God's presence apart from the embrace and practice of Torah, God's wisdom, is in some way parallel to the worship of the Golden Calf in our portion. Little wonder then that when Yeshua was asked, "Rabbi, what good thing should I do in order to have eternal life?" He said to him, "Why are you asking me about good? There is One who is good! But if you want to obtain eternal life, observe the mitzvot." The man asked him, "Which ones?" and Yeshua said, "Don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't give false testimony honor father and mother [e] and love your neighbor as yourself." I've always found Yeshua's response particularly interesting in view of evangelical/charismatic Christianity's practice of 'leading people to Christ.' We note that Yeshua did not tell the man that he needed to believe that he would die and be resurrected. Neither did He lead him in the so-called Sinner's Prayer and ask the man to invite himself into his heart. No, when asked what was needed to acquire eternal life, Yeshua reiterated that which we have heard from the beginning: "If you want to obtain eternal life, observe the mitzvot." You see, Yeshua understood, as our parashah instructs us, that there is no life outside God's wisdom, and that in the embrace and practice of that wisdom there is necessarily the experience of God's presence - a dwelling with God. Indeed, this idea isn't just found in the Torah or, as we have seen, in Yeshua's own teaching, but throughout the Scriptures. Mishlei, the great wisdom book, personifies God's wisdom as a woman of valour, and the wisdom of 'the world' as a woman of folly and enjoins us to seek out the former. "Wisdom calls aloud in the open air and raises her voice in the public places; she calls out at streetcorners and speaks out at entrances to city gates: How long, you whose lives have no purpose, will you love thoughtless living? How long will scorners find pleasure in mocking? How long will fools hate knowledge? Repent when I reprove — I will pour out my spirit to you, I will make my words known to you." See how here too, the divine presence is intimately connected with the embrace of wisdom. Here phrases such as "I will pour out my spirit" and "I will make my words known to you," which so many believers today regard as promises of spiritual experience that are to be delineated from Torah, are inextricably connected with the embrace of the commandments - God's wisdom. Again, as before with Gan Eden, Mount Sinai and the Mishkan, the embrace of God's wisdom is seen as fundamentally life-giving, while the rejection of it brings isolation from God's presence and some kind of destruction. "Because you refused when I called, and no one paid attention when I put out my hand, but instead you neglected my counsel and would not accept my reproof; I, in turn, will laugh at your distress, and mock when terror comes over you — yes, when terror overtakes you like a storm and your disaster approaches like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble assail you. Then they will call me, but I won't answer; they will seek me earnestly, but they won't find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of Adonai, they refused my

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counsel and despised my reproof. So they will bear the consequences of their own way and be overfilled with their own schemes. For the aimless wandering of the thoughtless will kill them, and the smug overconfidence of fools will destroy them; but those who pay attention to me will live securely, untroubled by fear of misfortune.” In fact, in a deliberate parallel to the story of the Garden of Eden Mishlei compares the wisdom of Torah with the Tree of Life. “Happy the person who finds wisdom, the person who acquires understanding; for her profit exceeds that of silver, gaining her is better than gold, she is more precious than pearls — nothing you want can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand, riches and honor in her left. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who grasp her; whoever holds fast to her will be made happy.” It was in recognition of all of this that, as we have seen, Yeshua said, “If you want to obtain eternal life, observe the mitzvot.” The Tree of Life and the wisdom of Hashem’s Torah are one and the same thing, and that is why it is this wisdom, symbolised as the Tree of Life, that stands at the centre of the New Jerusalem in Yochanan’s apocalyptic vision of the Olam HaBa. It is no coincidence that in this vision the Tree of Life stands alongside “the throne of God and of the Lamb,” because as we have seen God’s presence cannot be delineated from the embrace and practice of His wisdom.

It is in this context that we must strive to understand our faith in Yeshua. At the centre of the Garden, the Mountain and the Mishkan was God’s wisdom and it is in association with that wisdom that communion with God was to be found. And so it is with Messiah. If we seek present Messiah as a deviation from, or rejection of Torah, as has been so often the case with Christianity, then we shall be missing the point, for at the heart of the Yeshua story is the story of God’s wisdom made manifest. Yeshua is thus presented in the Messianic Writings as the latest and greatest iteration of God’s wisdom. First the Garden, then the Mountain, the Mishkan and the Temples, and now, finally Yeshua! He is presented as the Word made flesh and the Wisdom of God made manifest. And that is why those who embrace him and who properly understand his meaning are in complete symbiosis with what went before. For he is a tree of life to all who take hold of him.