

# Torah Weekly

**PARSHAT TERUMAH**

28 Shevat – 4 Adar 5786  
15 – 21 February 2026

Torah Reading:  
Terumah: Exodus 25:1 - 27:19  
Haftarah: Kings I 5:26 - 6:13

**Psalms for our brethren in the Holy Land**

*Psalm 117*

1. Praise the Lord, all nations, laud Him, all peoples.

2. For His kindness has overwhelmed us, and the truth of the Lord is eternal. Hallelujah!

(Please say Chapter 20 daily)

PSALMS DAILY

**Negative Mitzvah 10: Studying Foreign Theologies**

We are forbidden to study or even dabble in idolatrous teachings. Such activity can lead an individual without sufficient intelligence or knowledge to stray after these false teachings.

Furthermore, it is forbidden to even gaze at an idol or idolatrous icon.

SEFER HAMITZVOT

**Religious Material**

**Aleph Institute**  
Hyman & Martha Rogal Center

5804 Beacon Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

412-421-0111

Fax:412-521-5948

www.AlephNE.org

info@AlephNE.org



**ALEPH INSTITUTE**  
No One Alone,  
No One Forgotten.

**WHERE DID ALL THE MATERIALS FOR THE TABERNACLE COME FROM?**

When the Torah states that one of the main materials the Israelites contributed to the construction of the Tabernacle was cedar wood, Rashi feels compelled to explain how they attained it:

*Now where did they have such wood in the desert? Rabbi Tanchuma explains that our forefather Jacob foresaw through Divine Inspiration that his descendants would one day construct a Tabernacle in the desert. He therefore brought cedar trees with him to Egypt [from the Land of Canaan] and planted them there. He commanded his children to take the wood with them when they left Egypt [as they would need it].*

What kind of question is this? Wood is a widely available commodity. Even in wilderness, trees grow. Beyond the wilderness, there would surely be traders or other suppliers who would quite readily provide construction materials for a fee. Indeed, many commentators assume that this is exactly what happened: The Israelites bought the wood or obtained it locally. What problem, then, is Rashi trying to solve by citing this Midrash? Why would Rashi need to resort to a rather far-fetched tradition to explain something that easily makes sense using simple logic?

Clearly, something is amiss and we need to know what it is.

The Rebbe makes a simple but surprising point, through which the entire matter falls into place. Check the wording of the verses about donations to the Tabernacle, says the Rebbe, and something striking will appear.

In each and every case, the Torah talks about “taking the donation.” We never seem to read about “giving a donation.” How unusual. If we’re talking about donations, shouldn’t the focus be on giving? We read that the people were told to “set aside” a donation, but then that someone was instructed to “go take it,” not that the person was to “go give it.” How can this be?

Here comes the twist: The assumption is that whatever was donated was readily available, so all that was required was to have it “collected” or “taken.” If you ask me for ten dollars and I have it in my pocket, you can have it then and there. But if you ask me for an amount I don’t have on the spot, I will need to first go and get it before I can give it to you. If the Torah were to use the word to “give,” this would imply that people had

to obtain the materials, rather than just hand them over.

Now we understand Rashi’s question. If all these items were supposed to be readily available for immediate collection, how would they have massive logs of cedar wood? Of course, there were ways to obtain wood, but that would have taken time. To solve this issue, Rashi cites Rabbi Tanchuma who tells us why the wood was available. Essentially, it was all planned in advance.

This clears up Rashi’s subsequent explanation regarding the other main materials donated. “Techeilet,” says Rashi, is “wool dyed with the blood of the chilzon fish and is a kind of green.” Regarding “argaman,” Rashi says that it is “a dyed wool in a color known as argaman.” As for “pishtan,” Rashi says that “it refers to linen.”

These three explanations do not seem to add much to anyone with a basic command of Hebrew. Even the explanation that pishtan is linen is obvious from several previous appearances of that word in the Torah.

True, we know that techelet is blue (greenish) dye, and argaman is purple, explains the Rebbe, but what Rashi is struggling to explain is why the Israelites would carry exotic dyes while traveling in the desert. And by the same token, why would they transport large quantities of flax, with which to spin and weave linen? They did not know there was going to be a Tabernacle. Yet we are led to believe that all these materials were readily at hand. How so?

Rashi explains that indeed they were not carrying around exotic dyes. Rather, they were carrying the wool already dyed in those colors, a very useful supply indeed. Similarly, they were not carrying pishtan – which normally translates as “flax,” but ready-made linen which most people would use on a daily basis.

With this awareness of why we must say that only ready-to-use materials were at hand, Rashi’s concerns and solutions fall right into place.

Adapted by Yossi Ives from Likkutei Sichot vol. 31, Terumah II (pg. 142-148)

**RABBI JACOB HALEVI MOELIN (MAHARIL)**

(5120-5187 - 1360-1427 )

It is just over 600 years since the celebrated Codifier of Jewish Law,

Rabbi Jacob ben Moshe Halevi Moelin, known as the Maharil, was born.

Rabbi Jacob was born in the city of Mainz (Germany), in the year 5120 (1360). Rabbi Moshe, his father, whose family name was Moelin, was Rabbi of the city. Rabbi Moshe also had other sons and daughters, who excelled in Torah knowledge, piety and nobility of character, but Rabbi Jacob outshone them all.

He learned at first under the instruction of his father, and also received instruction from his older brother, Rabbi Jekusiel. But at an early age, he wanted to observe the advice of the Sages: “Go into exile in order to learn Torah.” He longed to visit different cities to get to know the various Gaonim of his time, and to study at their feet. So he went to Vienna, where he studied under Rabbi Sholom ben Rabbi Isaac, who befriended the young scholar. He also studied under the guidance of other Rabbis in Vienna, one of whom, Rabbi Moshe Neumark, took him to be his son-in-law. Soon after his wedding, Rabbi Jacob left Vienna to study Torah away from home. He apparently learned for many years in various Yeshivoth, and became famous as a great Gaon (Torah giant).

Finally, he returned to his native Mainz, where he was chosen to fill the position left vacant by his late father. Rabbi Jacob was well loved by the community. When he was once ill in bed, and lay for three days almost lifeless, the entire community proclaimed a fasting period for every Monday and Thursday until Rosh Hashanah, to pray for his speedy recovery. When Rabbi Jacob was already well again, and came to the Synagogue, the community still kept up the fasting as originally decided, although a couple of months still remained to Rosh Hashanah.

Rabbi Jacob was the spiritual leader in a full measure. He devoted himself to the spreading of Torah learning and piety throughout the community. He headed a great Yeshivah, and he took care of the physical needs of his pupils who came to him from near and far. One of his famous disciples was Rabbi Jacob Weil, who later became known as a great Gaon and Codifier.

The Maharil took a fatherly interest in all the communal affairs, and especially in the conditions of the Yeshivah students. He was well liked as a Baal-Tefillah (Chazzan), and he

instituted many nigunim (tunes), especially for the Holy Days' Prayers. He had a beautiful voice, and when he led the Prayers on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, he elevated the congregation to a high spiritual plane, and inspired them to repentance.

The Maharil was Rabbi in Mainz, on the River Rhine, for about 40 years. Thanks to him, the community blossomed, and was known for its high level of Torah and good character, which it attained under the influence of their great spiritual leader. In his later years, the community of Worms turned to him to become their Rabbi, to help rebuild their old and famous community, where such great personalities as Rashi, Rabbi Elozor bar Rabbi Judah Rokeach, the Maharam of Ruthenberg, and other great Gaonim had lived and left their mark.

The Maharil acceded to their request, and was Rabbi there for over a year until his death, Motzoei Shabbos (Saturday night), the 22nd of Elul, 5187 (1427).

Many legal questions were directed to the Maharil during his lifetime, as he was considered a great authority, especially in the area of the Prayers and Customs throughout the entire year. The Responsa of the Maharil, comprising 233 sections, were published in Venice in 1549. Many of his legal decisions and customs were publicised by his disciples. His legal decisions were considered binding by the later Rabbinical authorities among the Ashkenazic Jews, especially in Germany and Poland. His work, "Minhagei Maharil" (Customs of the Maharil), printed in Sabunita in 1556, enjoyed tremendous popularity, and it has been reprinted many times. From his Responsa and his Book of Customs, a lot can be learned about the life of the Jews in those times, about the daily life in the ghetto, and the high level of the Shabbos life; how the Jews celebrated the Yomim Tovim (Holidays), and how they celebrated happy family occasions (Simchos), etc.

Whenever the Maharil used to walk among Jews, he used to carry a small Chumash with him, so that if Jews stood up in his honor, he could feel that the honor was accorded to the holy Chumash that he was carrying, and not to his own person. He was a very humble man, but was very particular about honor being shown to his students, and used to demand that the members of the community show them their due respect.

The material position of the Jews in Germany, Bohemia, Poland, Austria and other countries at the time of the Maharil, was a very difficult one. It was only a few years after the persecutions suffered on account of the "Black Death," when

the Jews were falsely accused of poisoning the wells. That brought about the slaughter of many Jews (in the year 5109/1349). Many of the legal questions in the Responsa of the Maharil and other Gaonim of his time dealt with Orphans and Widows, Agunos (wives who do not know the whereabouts of their husbands and thus cannot remarry), inheritance problems, mourning, forced conversions, etc.

At that time, there broke out in Bohemia the bitter "Holy" War between the followers of the Bishop Jan (John) Huss (the Hussites) and the clergy who remained true to the old way of the Christian Church. Huss, who was born about the year 1369 in Hussinetz in Bohemia, was, at about the age of 30, a professor of philosophy in the Prague University. A few years later, he became Rector (President) of the university, and at the same time, a clergyman. He started to attack the Church for mixing into political and worldly matters, and thereby degrading the church and the faith. The Pope and Cardinals declared Huss to be a heretic, and forbade him to preach his "heretical" ideas. He disregarded these orders and threats, and continued to preach his ideas. The Cardinals then fooled him into accepting an invitation to a debate in Constance. King Sigismund guaranteed him protection. But, when he came to the debate, the Cardinals pronounced the death sentence on him, and he was burned alive (in 1415). That was when his followers started a bitter war against the Pope and King Sigismund. At the beginning they won a series of battles against the armies of the Pope and the King, and they took revenge on the clergy with great cruelty. In many countries, including Holland and Belgium, bands of Christians were organized to fight against the Hussites, and at the same time, they persecuted the Jews. The Jewish communities on the Rhine, such as Cologne, Nuremberg, Erfurt, Neustadt, etc., lived in great terror. In certain places, the Jews were attacked despite the promises of the local rulers to protect them. The Maharil came forth with a letter that he sent from Mainz to all Jews in the various communities. He proclaimed a public fast, ordering all Jews over 20 years of age, except for sick people, to fast for three consecutive days, day and night, starting with the day after Shabbos Bereishis. The fast was to have the same degree of severity as Yom Kippur. Boys over 13 and girls over 12 were also ordered to fast these three days, only they were allowed to break their fast every night. He also announced what special Prayers were to be said, and how the people should act during the fasting period. Filled with compassion for his persecuted brethren, the Maharil strengthened and encouraged the Jews in their hour of need. He exhorted them not to lose

their faith in the Almighty, but at the same time, to be prepared to sacrifice their lives, if need be, for Kiddush Hashem. Special messengers delivered the Maharil's letter to the various communities in danger, and everywhere his order was carried out to the greatest detail, and brought courage and inspiration to the Jews.

Many Jews sanctified G-d's name in those troubled times, which lasted for about 20 years. Many communities saw real miracles take place before their eyes, as the Almighty saved them from destruction.

In such a manner, the Maharil took part in both the troubles and rejoicings of his brethren. His influence during his lifetime was immense, and up to the present day he holds an unforgettable position amongst the Jewish Great, who lastingly enriched the Jewish way of life.

By Nissan Mindel  
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### TERUMAH IN A NUTSHELL

The people of Israel are called upon to contribute thirteen materials—gold, silver and copper; blue-, purple- and red-dyed wool; flax, goat hair, animal skins, wood, olive oil, spices and gems—out of which, G-d says to Moses, "They shall make for Me a Sanctuary, and I shall dwell amidst them."

On the summit of Mount Sinai, Moses is given detailed instructions on how to construct this dwelling for G-d so that it could be readily dismantled, transported and reassembled as the people journeyed in the desert.

In the Sanctuary's inner chamber, behind an artistically woven curtain, was the ark containing the tablets of the testimony engraved with the Ten Commandments; on the ark's cover stood two winged cherubim hammered out of pure gold. In the outer chamber stood the seven-branched menorah, and the table upon which the "showbread" was arranged.

The Sanctuary's three walls were fitted together from 48 upright wooden boards, each of which was overlaid with gold and held up by a pair of silver foundation sockets. The roof was formed of three layers of coverings: (a) tapestries of multicolored wool and linen; (b) a covering made of goat hair; (c) a covering of ram and tachash skins. Across the front of the Sanctuary was an embroidered screen held up by five posts.

Surrounding the Sanctuary and the copper-plated altar which fronted it was an enclosure of linen hangings, supported by 60 wooden posts with silver hooks and trimmings, and reinforced by copper stakes.

## IN JEWISH HISTORY

**Sunday, February 15, 2026 – 28 Shevat, 5786**  
**Hasmonean Holiday (2nd century BCE)**

On Shevat 28 (134 BCE?), Antiochus V abandoned his siege of Jerusalem and his plans for the city's destruction. This day was observed as a holiday in Hasmonean times. (Megilat Taanit)

**Monday, February 16, 2026 – 29 Shevat, 5786**  
**Columbia Tragedy; Israeli Astronaut Perishes (2003)**

On the morning of February 1, 2003, the Columbia Space Shuttle, returning from its STS-107 mission, was destroyed upon re-entry, 16 minutes before its scheduled landing. All its crew members perished, including Ilan Ramon, a combat pilot in the Israeli Air Force, who was the first Israeli astronaut. Prior to his departing to space on Space Shuttle Columbia, where his mission included

the manning of a multispectral camera for recording desert aerosols, he arranged to take kosher food as well as a Kiddush cup, a Torah Scroll, and a dollar from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, of righteous memory.