

We have just entered the month of Adar, the 12th month of our liturgical year. It is a unique and auspicious month of increasing joy, reversed fortunes, and concealed holiness. And it is the only month that doubles to keep our holidays in their assigned seasons. Its Hebrew root אדר forms words for powerful, strength, nobles, grandeur. But this name, which does not appear in the TaNaKh, is most likely an adaptation of the Babylonian month *Addaru*, a name with a host of meanings: *adru/adaru* – dark, cloudy, gloomy (late winter), threshing (agricultural cycle), or mighty, glorious (cognate with Hebrew *adir*). In the Talmud, Adar is widely discussed for its special significance. Tractate Ta’anit 29a teaches, “Just as when Av begins one decreases rejoicing, so too, when Adar begins, one increases rejoicing.” Indeed, the polarity of danger and deliverance, concealment and disclosure, is another aspect of Adar. The many reasons to rejoice during this liminal time slowly emerge, accompanied by astonishment and renewed hope. Tractates Megillah 13b and Kiddushin 38a teach that Moses was born and died on Adar 7, and Megillah 13b mentions this in context with Purim: “Once the lot fell on the month of Adar, he [Haman] greatly rejoiced. He said, ‘The lot has fallen for me in the month that Moses died.’ But he did not know that ... he was also born on the 7th of Adar.” Purim is based on concealment. HaShem is never mentioned, but works in the background, orchestrating a whole array of upending “coincidences.” And when Rosh Chodesh Adar aligns with Parashat Terumah, the hidden energy of Adar turns to practical application as the people begin to build a vessel for HaShem’s hiddenness. The parashah opens with HaShem’s command to “take a contribution for Me from every man whose heart prompts him to give.” (25:2) Like joy, true generosity must come from the heart. The *mishkan*, Moses’ final legacy, cannot be built unless the people are completely invested. “And they shall make Me a sanctuary (*mikdash* - מקדש) and I shall dwell in their midst (*v’shakanti betocham*). According to all that I shall show you, the pattern of the *mishkan* and the pattern of all its vessels; and so you shall do.” (25:8-9) It is noteworthy that HaShem first calls it *mikdash*, from the root קדש – holy/sanctified, denoting set aside/designated. The *mishkan*, from שכן (to dwell/reside/be located) is to be a place separated from daily life and entirely devoted to grateful worship of HaShem. *Shechinah* (Divine Presence, i.e., how we experience HaShem) derives from the same root. The word *betocham* does not indicate physical presence. It derives from the root תוך, which forms words such as among/in the midst of/within/to be present. HaShem will dwell/be present within the people, sensed but intangible. Later, HaShem tells Moses, “I will arrange My meetings with you there, and I will speak with you from atop the ark cover from between the two cherubim that are upon the Ark of the Testimony ...” (25:22). HaShem communicates in those empty spaces between them, not in the objects themselves, and not even in the *kaporet*, the ark covering out of which the cherubim are formed. HaShem cannot be contained in any human-made structure. This is a radical departure from ancient Mesopotamian worship with its rituals of *mīs pī* and *pīt pī*, which imbued their cultic statues with the ability to speak, hear, eat, drink, and smell. Psalm 115, which we chanted on Rosh Chodesh, roundly disparages idols that are believed to have exactly those abilities. In short, the *mishkan* is a meeting point crafted by human hands, where HaShem’s presence is felt, but never seen. Reading this parashah before Purim is especially meaningful. The architecture of the *mishkan* with its outer courtyard, curtains, veils, nested chambers, and inner sanctum that no one but the High Priest enters is the epitome of concealment. Only in its innermost chamber is HaShem’s “voice” perceived, emerging from thin air. In other words, its holiest point is emptiness, teaching us that holiness manifests through relationship, not visibility. Purim is the narrative of this concept, turning the *mishkan* inside out with an incongruous story of political intrigue, royal decrees, beauty contests, courtyards, and veils, while HaShem, Whose Name is never mentioned, works in the background to ensure a positive outcome. The month of Adar and Parashat Terumah offer insight on how to navigate our own increasingly chaotic and dangerous world. Megillat Esther’s account of corrupt leadership, random decrees, vulnerable minorities, opaque bureaucracy, and unexpected danger, countered by human courage based on unshakable faith in Divine power is a recurring theme in human history. It describes a world where leaders are impulsive, egoistic, and fickle, where decrees are arbitrary, minorities are endangered, truth is manipulatable, and justice depends on who has access to power. Sadly, too many people still ignore the lessons of history. The Esthers and Mordechais who rise to the occasion and effect change never wait for divine intervention. They act with courage and ingenuity based on the conviction that even when things look hopeless, an unseen Divine Force is still in control. Megillat Esther shows us the world as it all too often is, and Parashat Terumah shows us how to negotiate it by working with others to build sanctuaries of stability, integrity, and presence. Together they teach us not to confuse chaos with purposelessness and not to mistake hiddenness for abandonment, but rather, to summon the courage to stand upright while the world turns upside down. Adar’s increasing light dispels winter’s gloom, and Purim is the fulcrum on which our world turns toward Pesach’s redemption, Sinai’s revelation, and the joy of building for the future.

Shabbat shalom!