



## **Minyan Ma'or Dvar Torah Parshat Terumah Feb. 25, 2023**

### **Robbie Fein**

In times of tzurus, our tradition teaches us to turn to the Psalms. Turn to page... in Siddur Sim Shalom, page .... In deSola Pool, page ... in Siddur Lev Shalem and immediately after the Chatzi Kaddish of Shacharit in any traditional Siddur. We'll say Psalm 130 responsively.

#### Kaddish Shalem

I normally think of myself as an exceptionally decisive person. I don't find that to be true today. Please bear with me.

The original idea was to unveil the new Parochet today and celebrate an amazing piece of art. Terri Eisenberg as going to give the Drash and these source materials that I passed out today would just provide some context that was not part of the Drash.

That's not possible so we'll learn some Torah together by studying how the text provides a a form of literary engineering to give us an image of what the Mishkan was like without the aid of visual images. This sense of literary engineering gives us a way of understanding what could be evoked with the image of the Mishkan

Read Part A. The Torah teaches us ...

In fact, we are to build a kpporet of gold in one piece with Chruvim on top to cover the Torah.

The word Kapporet comes from two different verbs that both have kaf-peh-reish as their Shoresh – their root. The simple form of the verb means cover. The other meaning means atonement or purging like in Yom Kippur.

Everett Fox in fact translates it in both ways as a Purgation Cover.

The modern term we use – Parochet – is translated in dictionaires first as Masach (mask – or masechot as we say on Purim). This mask I'm holding in my hand.

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What's the key to it? It's the membrane that filters out Covid and allows air through it for us to breathe. I believe that the purpose of the Kapporet/Parochet is to serve as a screen – a membrane.

If we look at source B, we see the use of the term *Khipper* as atonement. And, in fact, last week we had the term *cofer nefesh* – pruing of the soul in which we can make a payment in exchange for unintentional manslaughter. And, in a couple weeks at the beginning of *Ki Thissa* we have the use of the term again in connection with the war memorial that is built with the contribution of half a shekel by each person going off to war – a payment in exchange for the horrors of war to build a war memorial before we ever go off to war (a recognition of the ultimate horror of war).

In Rabbinic literature, we also see the connection of the parochet to the Golden Calf of *Parahat Ki Thissa*. Rashi teaches us that *Ein Mukdam v'Ein M'uchar BaTora* – There is no before or after in the Torah. Thus, the Golden Calf episode actually occurred before *Teruma*. Thus, the use of the *Ch'ruvim* on top of the *Kapporet* evokes the Golden Calf, but for a different purpose – to keep the evil of the Golden Calf away from the holiness of Torah.

Similarly, if we look at *Parashat B'reishit*, the *Ch'ruvim* at the Gates of Eden separate the perfection of Eden from the imperfection of our world.

What are all these screens? They are, in fact, membranes (a *krum* in both Mishnaic and Modern Hebrew) that separate the holy from evil.

One more reference. I won't go into this in detail. Last week in four sentences of *Parashat Mishpatim* we see the Covenant Ceremony at Sinai. If you look at Section E of the Source Materials, on the right-hand side you'll see how the Sinai experience of the Covenant ceremony plays itself out literarily in the same way in the building of the *Mishkan* and its use. If you've been to the *Sistine Chapel* in the Vatican, you see the iconography that depicts at its center the role of the priests on the altar. We present the *Mishkan* differently through texts that evoke our foundational text at Sinai.

If we return to the *Parochet* itself, let's talk about what the screen – the membrane means in our current situation. For the mourner, the membrane serves as the key to screen out the memories that are too painful for us to carry on, but allow us to keep in the memories that we want to carry with us.

And, for our community the membrane says that we can put aside our personal needs and allow us to focus on those in our community who need our help most right now.

We'll conclude with the song *Bilvavi* by *Alkabetz* who wrote *Yedid Nefesh*.