

PARSHAT VAETCHANAN
DEUTERONOMY 3:23-7:11
HAFTARAH ISAIAH 40:1-26
11 AV 5784/15 AUGUST 2024



White Painting (seven panels)
Oil on canvass by Robert Rauschenberg

NOTHING FROM SOMETHING

1. “I pleaded...” (Deuteronomy 3:23)
2. Do not make for yourself a *pesel* (idol/image)... (Deuteronomy 5:8)
3. “I stood between God and you.” (Deuteronomy 5:5)
4. The *I* stands between you and God. (Menachem Mendl of Kotzk)

Your ego stands between you and God. Normally not even an iron barrier can separate Israel from God, but self-love, egotism will drive them apart. (Mordecai HaKohen)

5. Wisdom comes forth from nothing (*ayin*). (Job 28:12)
6. It is a great achievement to make something out of Nothing; even greater is to make Nothing out of something. The goal of a spiritual life is to rearrange *ani* (“I”), spelled *alef-nun-yud* into *ayin* (“nothing”), spelled *alef-yud-nun*. For the ego to dissolve into the undifferentiated Nothing.
7. ...they are not Art because they take you to a place in painting art has not been....They are large white (1 white as 1 GOD) canvasses organized and selected with experiences of time and presented with the suspense, excitement, and body of an organic silence, the restriction and freedom of absence, the plastic fullness of nothing, the point a circle begins to end....It is completely irrelevant that I am making them – Today is their creator. (Robert Rauschenberg to Betty Parson, from Black Mountain College, October 1951)