

PARSHAT TERUMAH
EXODUS 25:1-27:19
HAFTARAH I KINGS 5:26-6:13
2 ADAR 5786/19 FEBRUARY 2026



Persian Nightingales
Paul Klee

A TEXT THAT FLICKERS,
A DOT THAT WANDERS

1. “Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them (*b’tocham*).” (Exodus 25:8)
2. Earlier and later events are not presented in chronological sequence in Torah. The incident of the Golden Calf preceded the commandment of the work of the Mishkan by many days. (Rashi to Exodus 31:18)

“Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.” When was this passage about the Mishkan said to Moses ? They were spoken after the sin of the Golden Calf even though they appear written before the narrative of the Golden Calf. Said Rabbi Judah in the name of Rabbi Shalom, The order of the Torah narrative is not necessarily chronological, as it is said: “Her course meanders for lack of knowledge” (Proverbs 5:6). So do the paths of the Torah and its narratives meander. (Midrash Tanchuma).

3. “You shall make a menorah of pure gold.” (Exodus 25:31)

Three things gave Moses difficulty: the fashioning of the menorah, the laws of the new moon, and of insects. What was the problem in fashioning the menorah? When Moses ascended the mountain, God showed him how to fashion the Mishkan. When He showed him the construction of the menorah, Moses had difficulty. So God said, “Look, I am fashioning it in front of you!” What did God do? He showed him white fire, red fire, black fire, green fire, and of them fashioned the Menora, with its cups and knobs, its blossoms and six branches, and said to him, “*This* is the work of the menorah” – showing him with His finger. Nevertheless, Moses had difficulty. (Midrash Tanchuma)

An angel of God appeared to him in the very heart of the fire from within (*metoch*) the thorny bush. (Exodus 3:2). Moses said, “I must turn aside and gaze upon this wondrous sight.” (Exodus 3:3)

4. Fire is the ultra-living element. It is intimate and it is universal. It lives in our heart. It lives in the sky....It offers itself with the warmth of love. Or it can go back down and hide, latent and pent-up, like hate and vengeance. Among all phenomena, it is really the only one to which there can be so definitely attributed the opposing values of good and evil.
5. Fire and gold
Golden Calf and the Mishkan
6. A line is just a dot that went for a walk...an active line on a walk, moving freely, without a goal. (Paul Klee)
7. At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.
(from “Burnt Norton” by T. S. Eliot)