

Parshat Terumah: Torah as the center of our life – February 16, 2013

This week we read in the Torah the instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle, the portable Sanctuary which the People of Israel built according to God's request.

One of the elements of the Tabernacle that is mentioned in our Parsha is the Menorah, the well known Jewish symbol of seven branches. Different interpretations were given about the meaning of this symbol, but from all of them I really like the one that says that each branch of the Menorah represents a different discipline of knowledge in the world.

The center branch represents Torah and Jewish tradition. Each of the other branches could be representing other disciplines of knowledge, be it Mathematics, Science, Music, etc. Each of these other branches face the Torah perspective, the Torah in the middle.

As Jews we live our life through the paradigm of our Jewish tradition, understanding each discipline and enriching it with the perspective of the Torah. There is no contradiction between Judaism and science; we can live a full Jewish life enjoying arts and music, and understanding the world through the knowledge of science. But the challenge here is an additional one: Looking the world with "Jewish eyes" also means taking from the rich resources we have inherited from the Torah and trying to put them at the service of the general community. That is what we pray every day when we sing the Alenu: "Letaken Olam VeMalchut Shadai" – To fix the world through the word of God and His Torah.

Shabbat Shalom!