

Outside In

Parshat Terumah begins the story of the Sanctuary with God's request for gifts of materials so that artisans might *make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them* (Exodus 25:8).

The God of the Red Sea and of Sinai wants a house in which to dwell. The way that we think about God in the world prompts us to say it was Israel, not God, who needed an inner space.

And yet, weaving his reflection into the words of the Bible's great love song, an ancient teacher imagines God, the lover, pleading to be let inside:

Let me in, my sister, my darling (Song of Songs 5:2). *How long shall I continue without a house? For my head is drenched with dew* (ibid.). *Make me a sanctuary so that I will not be outside.*

The Vastness yearns to be contained, to be brought inside, away from the elements.

The Israeli poet, Yehuda Amichai, also reflects upon the implications of turning the outside in. His poem relies not on the Song of Songs, but upon the simple and profound perspective of his child:

*I remember a stern warning that I gave [my children]
not to stick a hand out of the window of a moving bus
and once we were traveling and my little daughter yelled, "Abba
he stuck his hand into the outside!"*

*This is how it should be: To stick a hand into the unending outside
of the world and to turn the outside inside out,
the world into a room and God into a tiny soul
within the unending body.*

The ancient teacher and poet, the Song of Songs and the child agree: To bring the outside inside is to appreciate depth and unending possibility. Enthusiasm, *en-theos*, is a sign of *the God within*. Only if such Vastness is inside can it be manifest outside.