

Creating Closeness- Parshat Terumah

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Parshat Terumah begins with Hashem commanding Moshe to tell Bnei Yisrael to “take for Me (*veyikchu li*) a portion” so that Bnei Yisroel will contribute to building a Sanctuary for Hashem in their midst. Through this building, the commentators explain, we are bringing Hashem into our midst rather than giving Hashem our donations. However, since the Torah used the strange terminology “to take,” rather than “to give,” when asking for donations, our commentators link this verse to the verse in Proverbs 4:2: “For I have given you a good acquisition (*lekach*, from the same root), do not forsake My Torah.”

This juxtaposition raises several questions. First, what is the connection between building the Beit Hamikdash and the command not to leave Hashem’s Torah? Further, how could something be both a gift (“I have given you”) and an acquisition which requires effort?

Let us begin with the connection between the Sanctuary and Torah. The Ktav Sofer focuses on the purpose of the Beit Hamikdash. This was the place where Bnei Yisrael came to purify themselves, especially if they had sinned. In this context, it is possible that they would be lax in Torah observance, reasoning that they can always go to the Beit Hamikdash to be absolved from their sins. But Hashem cautions us, don’t build the Beit Hamikdash and worship there at the expense of observing My Torah!

The juxtaposition of these verses is also the basis for the beautiful medrash that explains the relationship between Hashem, Bnei Yisrael and the Torah. Hashem is the King, Father of a special daughter, the Torah. When Hashem offers this gift to Bnei Yisrael, they

immediately agree and the wedding takes place. But the Father cannot so readily part from His beloved daughter. So He asks His son-in-law to build Him a little room in the distant castle so that He can always have a place to visit His daughter. This is the Sanctuary.

Unfortunately though, strife can develop between husband and wife, and they may separate. In that case, cautions the Be’er Yosef, the Father will leave the son-in-law’s home. Hashem may remove Himself from Bnei Yisrael, and stay with His beloved daughter. “If you want Me to stay with you,” Hashem tells us, “do not forsake My Torah, My daughter.” Each morning in our liturgy we bless “He Who teaches Torah to His nation Israel.” Hashem continues to teach us today so that we may understand His Torah as He once taught it.

Chazal say that Hashem wanted to bring merit (*le’zakot*) to Bnei Yisroel, so He gave them the Torah and mitzvot as a means of earning and acquiring merit. The Tosher Rebbe in Avodat Avodah offers an alternative interesting interpretation of *le’zakot*, which he explains also means to purify. Hashem gave us the Torah so that we could purify ourselves. The Torah contains 613 mitzvot that correspond to the 248 bones and 365 sinews in the body, and to the 613 parts of the soul. Just as food is necessary to sustain the body, we must also sustain the spirit with its appropriate food, the Torah. Just as the Tabernacle and the Sanctuary were meant to purify us, so is the Torah meant to purify our souls.

Rabbi Friefeld, in In Search of Greatness, paints the glorious portrait of Adam. Upon his creation, the angels were so in awe of his

spiritual and physical perfection, they almost mistook him for God Himself. But when Adam sinned, mankind was corrupted. The spiritual essence, although still an integral component of Man, was hidden. When we stood at Mount Sinai and accepted God’s gift of the Torah, we again reached that state of perfection. God descended to the mountain and Moshe went up, and upon his return to the nation, his face shone with that primal light that had infused Adam before the sin. The Torah, the gift from Hashem, is the path through which we can subdue our physical form and regain our true essence. Both the Torah and the Beit Hamikdash provide a path back to that original form of Man.

We are, unfortunately, not in a position now to build a Sanctuary for Hashem. But the Netivot Shalom teaches that we may build mini sanctuaries to help us in our quest for our spiritual essence and our relationship with Hashem. Carve out a small space within our lives, he teaches, that will become an island of connection with our Creator. Commit to one small area that will remain inviolate as an island of sanctity. Perhaps we can sanctify our speech, or commit to absolute faith in Hashem no matter what transpires in our lives.

Halekach Vehalibuv note that the month of Adar can be understood as an acronym **A**looph **D**aR, the Exalted One lives (with us during this month). How? When we retain our humility, when we see ourselves as **D**ALed and **R**ESH, when we counter the evil and physicality of the arrogant Amalek whom Hashem defeated for us in this month of Purim, with humility and joy.

The Power of the Month of Adar

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

After the splitting of the Red Sea, all the nations were terribly afraid of the Jews. Then Amalek came and attacked the Jews in Refidim. Rashi explains, “*Rafu yedeihem min haTorah*.” The Jewish people’s hands were weakened from the Torah. This enabled Amalek to fight against them. Yehoshua took a group of Jews to fight them and Moshe went

up on a hill together with Aharon and Chur. When Moshe lifted his hands, the Jews too raised their thoughts and prayers to heaven and Hashem helped them win over Amalek. When Moshe’s hands fell, Amalek triumphed.

Rabbi Akiva Eiger discusses lifting one’s hand to heaven as a form of prayer. This leads us

back to Yaakov and Esav. Yitzchak said, “the voice is the voice of Yaakov and the hands are the hands of Esav.” Hands symbolize action in this world. Hands develop and create. Esav signifies practical accomplishments. Yaakov’s strength is his voice as manifested in prayer and Torah study. Hands are capable of creating things that will stand on their own



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independently. Halacha states that a person must wash one's hands before prayer, because they are constantly busy touching things and perhaps unconsciously one may have touched an impure place. This indicates that hands act on their own. When man acts with his hands he doesn't necessarily express his inner essence. This opens the possibility of disconnecting action from Hashem, who is the source of all creation. Esav was a man of accomplishment, but he attributed it all to himself. In contrast, voice expresses one's inner essence, thoughts, and feelings. It exists only as long as the person is alive. This signifies Yaakov's constant attachment to Hashem.

Chazal say that the verse, "*Vahaya emunat itecha,*" hints to the first order of the Mishna, Sedar Zeraim (the laws of agriculture). Seeds, if ground into flour, can be made into food. Why should a farmer put it in the ground to rot

and disintegrate? It can only be that he has faith in Hashem who will make the seeds grow and give him more than he invested. If I apply for a job and I do everything necessary to get it, in reality there's no link between what I did and the results. Hashem made me get the job, although it may not be so obvious. But with planting it's all quite obvious. Only Hashem can make the seeds grow. Therefore, Chazal considered planting a paradigm of faith.

Esav sees his accomplishment as the fruits of his own labor. Yaakov sees Hashem creating something for him unrelated to what he did. Esav lives for momentarily pleasure, while Yaakov pursues a greater goal. When a Jew plants, he has in mind the fruit that will grow in *Gan Eden*. In contrast, Esav's prime interest is the fruit in this world.

Our way of life tells Esav that his life is meaningless. Hitler wrote that the Jewish

people are our conscious and we must destroy them. Chazal say that when the Torah was given at Sinai, "*Sinah yardah l'olam.*" (Hatred came down to this world.) Our very existence gives vexes the nations. Lifting our hands to heaven symbolizes the admission that our ability to accomplish is from Hashem.

When the Jews were in Refidim they asked, "*Hayesh Hashem b'kirbeinu.*" (Is Hashem among us?) When their hands weakened and did not study Torah, when they felt weak in their connection to Hashem, Amalek was strengthened. When they turned to the Almighty, Amalek grew weak. Moshe hands were heavy, because he had to lift the hands of the entire nation. He had to engender the *teshuva* that would raise every Jew's hands to Hashem. Chazal say that when the Jewish people submitted their hearts to heaven, when they recognized that ultimately it was all up to Hashem, Amalek fell.

Parshat Teruma: The Mishkan Within Us

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

When people hear the word *teruma* they automatically think it means a contribution. The accurate meaning is to uplift. Everything in the physical world can be elevated and connected to its source. The thirteen different possible contributions to the Mishkan, as listed in the Torah, are all significant. Thirteen is the numerical equivalent of the words *ahava* (love) and *echad* (one). This implies that the way to become one is through giving. Ultimately this is how things are uplifted.

People often say, "I have no relationship with Hashem. I don't know how to develop one." They erroneously think that Hashem does not listen, because when they talk to Him they

don't hear an answering voice. Elevating the world and ourselves is the way we make a real connection with Hashem.

After the collection for the Mishkan was completed, Hashem said, "*V'asu li mikdash v'shachanti b'tocham.* Make a sanctuary for me and I will dwell in them." Rashi comments that the verse does not say "in it," but rather "in them." Each person has a distinct individual way in which he can uplift the world and himself. The result is that Hashem dwells within us.

The very first thing the parsha discusses is the Aron where the Torah was placed. This is not coincidental. The ultimate gift we can give

Hashem is ourselves, our *penimiut*. The deepest part of our selves is our minds. The aron was made of gold covered with wood and then another layer of gold. Rav Hirsh explains that our *penimiut*, on the most profound level, is pure. This is the symbolic meaning of gold. We are supposed to cover this with wood, which signifies life and growth, in order to achieve the ultimate gold, i.e. purity, on a higher level.

If we want to give something to Hashem, to come closer to Him and to love Him and feel beloved by Him, we need to offer our pure selves, our deepest selves. This will only happen through growth.