



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 Avodah 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 **Alooph DaR**, the Exalted One lives (with us during this month). How? When we retain our humility, when we see ourselves as **DALED** and **RESH**, 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 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

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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's 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.

Collective Soul: Antidote to Lashon Hara

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

The Sichot Hitchazkut discusses a beautiful insight that the Bal Shem Tov heard from heaven. If we wonder why Mashiach is slow in coming, it is because we don't focus adequately on the *bracha* of Ahava Rabbah. When we concentrate on the tremendous love and mercy Hashem has for us as expressed in this blessing, we can bring the redemption closer. The Sichot Hitchazkut points out that if a Jew would only know how much Hashem loves him he would run after the Almighty like a roaring lion. Rav Shor, based on the teachings of the Sefat Emet, points out that the core sin of the spies was when the Jews said, "*B'sinat Hashem otanu*," (Hashem hates us.) When they turned Hashem's *ahava* into hatred, they brought destruction.

Even when Hashem chastises and punishes us, He does so out of love. Chazal say when *klal Yisrael* were righteous the *keruvim* atop the holy ark faced each other. When they sinned, the *keruvim* turned their backs. But at the final moments of the destruction, the *keruvim* were found embracing each other. The Sichot Hitchazkut explains that it was as if Hashem was telling the Jewish people, "Although the pain and suffering of exile may seem unbearable, know that I am still with you and it's all coming from my intense love."

The upshot of feeling Hashem's love is recognizing that the Creator has invested in us and that we have a unique mission that no one else can fulfill. Our souls transcend beyond what we can possibly understand. What is good for our souls is not necessarily what we can comprehend in this world. If we can move ourselves into that eternal zone we

can begin to appreciate that everything that happens to us is for our good. Rav Wolbe, quoting Rabbeinu Yonah, says that a primary factor in *avodat Hashem* is recognizing our inherent spiritual greatness. As long as a person has this feeling of self respect, his *yetzer hara* cannot get a foothold.

"*Vayipach b'apo nishmat chaim*. Hashem breathed into Adam's nostrils a living spirit." Targum Unkelos translates this phrase as *ruach mimalala*, the gift of speech. Just like an unseen puppeteer pulls strings that cause the puppet to move about, our actions pull strings that affect the world around us. Speech is one of the strongest aspects of *tzelem Elokim*. Rav Meizlish means when he says that *dibur* (speech) has the connotation of leading (as in, "*Yadber amim tachteinu*").

If we would be cognizant that Hashem gave us tremendous divine power through speech, we would understand what the prophet Amos said, "*L'hagid l'adam mah sicho*." Rav Chaim Volozhner explains that in the future world a person will be told his conversations to show him the far reaching effects his words had to build and destroy. Rav Chaim notes that *yirat shamayim*, fear of heaven, can include fear of what one can create with words. Words should be used with caution, especially in when speaking about employment, *shidduchim*, and teaching.

We can hear a thousand times that the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed because of unjustified hatred and that if we would be careful with *lashon hara* we would be redeemed. Somehow we don't believe it. The

first antidote to *lashon hara* is to recognize the far reaching ramification of our words.

The Arvei Nachal teaches that if you want to know where your soul is destined to go, examine your daily speech. Every time we speak a part of our *neschama* ascends. If our words are positive, the part will go up to *Gan Eden*. If our words are evil, it will go to *gehinom*. The Leket V'halibuv explains that we say *l'hodot l'cha* at the end of Ahava Rabba to remind us that the purpose of our speech is to use it for good. We must train ourselves to have *hakarat hatov* and to focus on the positive in others. The pasuk in Tehilim says, "*Ohev yamim lirot tov netzor leshoncha me'ra*." The person who loves life and sees good will keep his tongue from speaking evil. Rav Solomon notes that a good eye is not only necessary when giving but also when receiving. This means appreciating every kindness, saying thank you even if you pay someone for a job, and discerning the goodness in people's actions. Showing gratitude to people, leads us to thank Hashem who is the source of all goodness.

Chazal say *lashon hara* causes *tzora'at*. This can be interpreted as *tzora'at nafsho*, an affliction of the soul. Every time we speak *lashon hara* it creates a spiritual blockage that breeds *sinat chinam* and keeps us from accessing the sweetness of Torah. The Vorker Rebbe explains the verse, "*Vayichan sham Yisrael*," as an expression of *chen* (grace). When Klal Yisrael tried to find the grace in each other, when they looked for the positive qualities in each other, they were able to receive the Torah.

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