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נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
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Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel MORDECHAI MALKA, Founder & President of Institutions "Or Hamelech"



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Parashat Terumah

The Torah's Perspective on Torah and Mitzvot – Man is a Receiver and Not a Giver

Our *parasha* states (25: 1-3), "And Hashem said to Moshe saying: Speak to *Bnei Yisrael* and take for Me (*va'yikchu li*) a donation (*terumah*). From every man whose heart is generous, you shall take My donation (*tikchu et terumati*). And this is the donation that you shall take from them – gold, silver, and copper."

Questions:

- 1- The *sefer Toldot Yitzchak* (*Shemot* 25:1) asks that instead of the *pasuk* stating "take for Me" (*va'yikchu li*), it should have said "give to Me" (*vayitnu li*).
- 2- Once the *pasuk* stated "take for Me," why does it repeat itself by saying, "you shall take My donation?"
- 3- First the *pasuk* does not mention that it is Hashem's donation; it simply states "donation" (*terumah*). Yet afterwards it states, "My donation (*et terumati*)," in other words, that it is Hashem's donation. What is the reason for this discrepancy?
- 4- We can also ask on the words of Shlomo Hamelech (*Mishlei* 4:2), "For a good acquisition (*lekach tov*) I have given to you; My Torah do not leave." Why does the Torah use the expression *lekach*, which connotes taking; aren't we giving Hashem the Torah that we study?
- 5- Similarly, we can ask on the words of Shlomo (*ibid.* 10:8), "The wise of heart will take (*yikach*) good deeds, but the foolish one's lips will become weary." Once again, the *pasuk* implies that the wise man takes mitzvot. However, isn't the opposite true, that man gives with his mitzvot?

Man Thinks that He is Performing a Kindness by Observing Torah and Mitzvot

When we think about it, we will realize that man's perspective is that when he observes Torah and mitzvot, he is benefitting Hashem, as it were, by performing His Will. It can be compared to a child whose father begs him to eat, and the boy thinks that he is benefitting his parents by eating. Therefore, man acts lazily when it comes to observing Torah and mitzvot. This sometimes expresses itself by man's lack of energy and alacrity. Take the mitzvah of honoring one's parents for example: A mother requests her sons to help her in the house. But they feel that this is a burden and therefore look for ways to get out of it. Another example is the performance of only "half" a mitzvah. Take prayer for example: An individual is already praying, but suffices with praying only half the prayer. Sometimes it is expressed when it comes to spending money on a mitzvah item. An individual will look for the cheapest item he can find, even though by doing so, he is compromising on the *kashrut* standards of the item. He has no problem relying on individuals without knowing their true character. On the other hand, the opposite is true when it comes to items that are related to his physical needs. Then he will not easily rely just upon anyone; rather, he will investigate the quality of the product. All the more so does this apply when it is relevant to his physical health. Then he investigates and clarifies to the utmost degree. This is all due to the fact that he thinks that his mitzvah performance is benefitting Hashem, as it were. However, our holy Torah teaches us to recognize and understand that everything man does in his performance of Torah and mitzvot is to benefit himself. Hashem wants our good deeds only so that He can benefit us. This is why He gave us the Torah and mitzvot, to enable us to amass merit and receive endless reward. With this, we can now explain the *pesukim* in the *parasha*.

Teaching of the Midrash About Hashem's Acquisition (*Mekach*)

The Midrash states (*Shemot Rabba* 33:1) on the *pasuk*, "Take for Me (*va'yikchu li*) a donation (*terumah*)" – "This is as it states, 'For a good acquisition (*lekach tov*) I have given to you; My Torah do not leave.' Do not leave the acquisition that I have given you. There is an individual who acquires an acquisition, which has gold but not silver. Or it has silver but not gold. But the acquisition that I am giving has silver, as the *pasuk* states (*Tehillim* 12), 'The words of Hashem are pure words, refined silver.' It has gold, as the *pasuk* states (*Tehillim* 19), "Dearer than gold and much fine gold.'" It furthermore states in the Midrash (*ibid.* 33:6), "The custom of the world is that when man



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sells an item from his house, he is sad about it. However, Hashem gave the Torah to Israel and He rejoiced ... the custom of the world is that when man buys an item from the market – is it possible to acquire its owner? But Hashem gave the Torah to Israel and said, 'You are acquiring Me,' as it were. This is as the *pasuk* states, 'Take for Me (*va'yikchu li*) a donation.'" **You see from here** that when man does a mitzvah, he takes, but is not giving, for it is all for man's benefit. Furthermore, everything he has in his possession is from Hashem. This can be compared to a bank clerk who is requested by the head of the bank to transfer him a sum of money. The clerk thinks that he is benefitting the head of the bank by doing so. However, the money he is transferring certainly does not belong to the clerk; rather, it belongs to the owners of the bank. The clerk is not doing the owner a favor by giving him the money; rather, the opposite is true – the owners of the bank are doing him a favor by paying his salary for carrying out these, as well as other, tasks. So too, man must know and feel regarding everything he has in the world – he is simply a clerk in the bank of Hashem. When he is requested by Hashem to perform an action, he is not doing it for Hashem's benefit; rather, Hashem benefitted him by giving him the resources to do it and to even receive reward for it. This is why the Torah refers to the *terumah* as *vayikchu*, "take," and not as *vayitnu*, "give." So it is explained in *Masechet Berachot* 5a.

The Giver Actually Receives – Explanation of the *Toldot Yitzchak*

Indeed, this is how the matter is explained by R' Yitzchak Karo in his *sefer, Toldot Yitzchak*. He explains that the expression of *kicha* in the *pasuk* implies an "acquisition." In other words, Hashem was saying, "Take a donation from the Jewish Nation, because I will greatly repay them for it – for they will make a sanctuary in which I will dwell. Alternatively, he explains that sometimes the giver is actually considered to be a receiver. For example, this is the case when the receiver is an important individual, and the giver receives gratification by giving to him [see *Kiddushin* 7a]. Therefore the *pasuk* states, "Take for Me a donation." In other words, it is as if Hashem was saying, "Take *terumah* from Me' – because those who give Me *terumah* actually receive from Me. I am the giver and they are the receivers." The reason that the *pasuk* first states only *terumah*, "donation," and afterwards specifies "*terumati*," "My donation," is because a wealthy man is only the guardian of the money; for in truth, everything is from Hashem. If he handles the money properly – giving *tzedakah* and the like – then the money is his; otherwise it belongs to Hashem. This is the reason for the double expression in the *pasuk*; it alludes to when man acts properly with his money and when he doesn't. The *pasuk* furthermore states that the *terumah* is given by "every man whose heart is generous." There are limbs which receive but do not give; then there are those which give but do not receive; then there are those that give and receive; there are also those that neither give nor receive. The heart gives and does not receive, as the medical experts wrote. This is why a philanthropist is referred to as having a "generous heart" (*nediv lev*), because he gives but does not receive.

After We Said "Naaseh Ve'Nishmah," We Were Commanded, "Take for Me a Donation"

With this we can understand the words of the *Tanna D'bei Eliyahu Rabbah* (17) which states that when the Jewish Nation happily accepted the Majesty of Heaven and said (*Shemot* 24:7), "All that Hashem speaks we will do and we will hear (*naaseh ve'nishmah*)," Hashem immediately said to Moshe, "Speak to *Bnei Yisrael* and take for Me (*va'yikchu li*) a donation .. and this is the donation..." On the surface it is not understood – what is the connection between the Jews saying, "we will do" before "we will hear" and the commandment of "Take for me a donation?" In the *sefer Lekach Tov*, I saw an explanation cited from the *sefer Apiryon*. He writes that placing "we will do" before "we will hear," was a sign that the Jewish Nation reached a level of understanding that all that Hashem would say to them was only for their benefit. They realized that they were not benefiting Hashem by fulfilling the mitzvot; rather, the opposite was true.

Parable of the Dubno Maggid on *Tzedaka*

I saw that the Dubno Maggid explains with a parable why Hashem allows us to test Him specifically with the mitzvah of *tzedakah*. This is as the *pasuk* states, "*U'vechanuni nah be'zot*, Please test Me with this." He writes that it can be compared to large fabric seller who only sold complete rolls of fabric. He went to the fair, and when a merchant expressed interest in buying, he said that he sells complete rolls, and every roll has at least 100 meters.



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This was the approximation according to which he was willing to sell. Understandably, since it is impossible to measure all the rolls, the merchant took the smallest roll to measure. This way, if this roll would have 100 meters, certainly the larger ones would have more. Similarly, Hashem said to the Jewish Nation, "All of the mitzvot are for your benefit. Not only do you not lose, but you also gain." Therefore Hashem chose *tzedakah* to serve as an example of a mitzvah with which one could test Him. For with the mitzvah of *tzedakah*, one gives money but his wealth is nevertheless blessed instead of decreasing. All the more so, does this apply to the other mitzvot of the Torah.

Why "Free" Mitzvot are Worthless According to the Zohar

The *Zohar* in our *parasha* teaches that a mitzvah item that one does not pay for has no value. This is because anything that one does not pay for is ownerless and a spirit of impurity resides upon it. As a result, instead of doing a mitzvah, he achieves the exact opposite and connects with impurity. However, when he pays for a mitzvah and displays the proper regard for its importance, a spirit of holiness resides upon him. Furthermore, by doing so, he gives power to Hashem, as it were, for he empowers holiness over impurity. The same thing applies to anything over which man invests physical or financial sacrifice – it strengthens the power of holiness and the honor of the Divine Presence. Therefore an individual who helps others repent and brings them beneath the Wings of the Divine Presence, empowers the power of holiness and the honor of the Divine Presence, and merits many great things.

How the Arizal Fulfilled the Mitzvot

It is told that when the Arizal went to buy a mitzvah item, he never argued over the price. Rather, first he would choose the most beautiful item and then pay the seller his asking price. He did not ask how much it cost and certainly did not argue that the price should be lower. He wanted to show that mitzvot are priceless and that it is worth paying any price for a mitzvah. Therefore, if the seller would say how much it cost and then he would begin to bargain with him, he would be expressing how much the true value of the mitzvah was to him. But by not asking and not arguing, it would prove that the value of a mitzvah is without limit.

Why Something is Valueless Unless it is Paid For

R' Dessler, in his *sefer Michtav Me'Eliyahu (Yom Kippur 550)* explains that the five restrictions we observe on Yom Kippur are afflictions of repentance. He cites R' Yitzchak Meltzan as stating that the five afflictions atone for us in place of having to undergo suffering as atonement. How does this form of atonement help to rectify a soul that has been contaminated? From this we can learn an amazing thing about the nature of man's soul – **something is not ingrained into man's soul unless he actually pays for it from his physical being or from his property.** He writes that he saw in the writings of R' Simcha Zissel of Kelm (*Beit Kelm* 1, pg. 242) that he required his students to pay a significant price for each one of his lessons and then give the money to *tzedakah*. By doing so, they would feel the importance of the lesson to a greater degree. So too, did our Sages teach (*Bava Kama* 85a) that even if the doctor is skilled, the ill will not rely on him if he does not charge for his services. In other words, the physical side of man will not appreciate the value of the item he receives unless he gives something in return; either from himself or from something that he owns. This is the reason for our Sages statement in *Kohelet Rabbah* (2:12), "The wisdom that I learned in difficult times remained with me." This is also the meaning of what it states in *Masechet Berachot* (63b), "The words of Torah are preserved only by those who kill themselves over it." There are many more examples of this from our Sages. He writes that the same thing applies to repentance. Since man is a physical being, all of his introspections and thoughts will not take effect. His regrets and disappointments will not help unless he pays the price for his sins with his physical body. This is true to an even larger degree after death. Since the soul is still attached to physical desires, it is impossible for him to be entirely purified from them unless he undergoes suffering, such as the suffering of *Gehinom* and those in the grave, etc.

How Gedolei Yisrael Were Meticulous About Paying

R' Mordechai Reisman z"l grew up in Yerushalayim and was previously the Rav of Lakewood. He related that Rabbi Uri Li zt"l suffered from terrible pains in his eyes. He travelled to Lemberg to be cured by a famous eye-



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doctor. The doctor checked his eyes, gave him medicine, and R' Uri was cured. However, when the *rav* wished to pay, the doctor refused, saying that he does not accept payment from rabbis. However, R' Uri was adamant, stating strongly that our Sages say that if a doctor does not accept payment, the ill will not rely on him, and he will lose his credibility. Nevertheless, the doctor refused. So R' Uri said to him that if he will accept payment, he guarantees that on the day of his passing, he will carry him on his shoulders to the gate of *Gan Eden*. The doctor laughed at this statement and ignored it. However, years later, on the same day that R' Uri passed away, so did the doctor. Only then was the truth of his words revealed.

Words of Mussar

We have learned just how much an individual can err on his path in life and in his life perspective. He can mistakenly think that he is the one in control, and that any mitzvah he does is benefitting Hashem. However, the wise man will understand that the exact opposite is true. Any mitzvah he merits performing is benefitting himself, for Hashem, in His kindness, will reward him for it. He must therefore be happy with any mitzvah opportunity that comes his way and grab it, as our Sages have said, "Do not let a mitzvah opportunity grow stale." This means that he should not hesitate to perform the mitzvah and should certainly not give it up entirely – because it is like winning the lottery. This is as our Sages have stated, "Grab and eat, for tomorrow we will die." This is as the Vilna Gaon said before he passed away; he grabbed his *tzitzit* and said that as long as he is in this world, he can give coins to fulfill the mitzvah, and his reward is limitless. Hashem should help that we should happily merit fulfilling the mitzvot of the Torah as much as possible, so that we should merit being blessed with all the Torah's blessings. *Amen ve'amen.*

Shabbat Shalom U'Mevorach,
Rav Mordechai Malka