

Parsfiat Terumaf 5771

GIVE AND TAKE

Let's face it; many of us have a hard time giving.

When the Volozhin Yeshivah hit upon hard times (having incurred massive debts), R' Chaim Soloveitchik was dispatched to Minsk for an emergency fundraising campaign. He stayed at the home of Reb Baruch Zlotowitz, a local resident who aided the Volozhin Yeshivah. Reb Baruch undertook the gargantuan task of raising the necessary sum, enabling R' Chaim to remain immersed in Torah study.

After a few days, R' Chaim inquired how the fundraising was proceeding. "Baruch Hashem," R' Baruch told him, "so far, half of the amount has been collected." R' Chaim returned to his learning. About a month later, R' Chaim checked up on the situation. This time, R' Baruch informed him that the goal had been reached: the full amount was obtained. Gratified, R' Chaim returned to Volozhin and settled its debts.

Some time later, R' Baruch had occasion to visit Volozhin itself. It was then that R' Chaim learned the truth: the entire sum had come straight out of R' Baruch's own pocket.

"Tell me something," R' Chaim said to R' Baruch. "If you were supplying the entire amount from your personal fortune, why didn't you simply present the money right away? Why did you keep me waiting in Minsk for over a month?"

R' Baruch's response was candid and edifying: "The truth was, it was hard for me to part with

my money. It took me a few days just to be able to relinquish half the sum. I then had to battle with my yetzer hara (evil inclination) for the better part of a month in order to hand over the other half!" (Oznaim L'Torah, Shemos 25:2).

In truth, R' Baruch is a few steps ahead of many of us. He, at least, was honest with himself about where he was holding, and he invested time and effort to rectify the situation!

Why do many find it difficult to give, or to give with a full heart? It appears that a certain misconception may be responsible for this. A vital lesson emerging from this week's *parshah* may help to clear away the mistaken notions.

G-D'S TREASURERS

One of the "going" questions on the *parshah* concerns a linguistic matter. The *parshah* begins with a call to B'nei Yisrael to donate the precious metals and materials necessary for the construction of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). The verse (*Shemos 25:2*) states: **דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ לִי** תְּרוּמָה, which (roughly) translates into an exhortation to the Jews to supply a gift (of gold, silver, scarlet thread, etc., as delineated later in v. 3-7). Technically speaking, though, it almost appears as if the wrong word was used. The term employed by the *passuk* – **וַיִּקְחוּ** – literally means "they shall *take*." Wouldn't it have been a lot more appropriate to use the term **וַיִּתְּנוּ** ("they shall *give* a gift") instead?

The *Tzror Hamor* clarifies the issue by introducing a Mishnah in Avos (3:7), which states:

רַבִּי אֱלֵעָזָר אִישׁ בִּרְתוּתָא אוֹמֵר, תָּן לוֹ מִשְׁלוֹ, שְׁאַתָּה וְשֶׁלְּךָ שְׁלוֹ. וְכֵן בְּדוֹד הוּא אוֹמֵר כִּי מִמֶּדָּה הַכֹּל וּמִיָּדָּה נִתְּנוּ לָךְ.

נדפס לזכות ר' אברהם יצחק נ"י בן פיגא ריזא ע"ה
ברכה והצלחה ברוחניות ובגשמיות

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of
שׂיינא אסתר בת נחום לייב ע"ה, a fellow Jew who passed away with
no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of her neshamah.

“R’ Elazar of Bartosa says: Give Him that which is His, for you and yours are His. And so it was said by David [Hamelech] (*Divrei Hayamim I 29:14*): ‘For all has come from You, and what they have given You originated from Your Hand.’”

Although initially sounding somewhat like a tongue-twister, the meaning of this passage is actually quite clear. R’ Elazar comes to remind us of the simple fact that we are not the true owners of our possessions; everything that we have was given to us – on loan – by Hashem. One of the most fundamental errors a person tends to make, as he contemplates his holdings, is to assume that they were acquired through his own efforts and are “rightfully” his. The Torah provides the proper perspective: “Beware for yourself, lest you forget Hashem your G-d... when you acquire much gold and silver... and your heart becomes haughty... and you will say in your heart: ‘It is through my own strength and abilities that I have achieved such

success’; Remember about Hashem your G-d, that He is the One Who gives you the ability to amass a fortune” (*Devarim 8:11-18*). And when a person adopts this Torah perspective, he will utilize his gifts for their intended purpose.

In other words, one who thinks that his wealth is his own will be loath to give it away. “*Why should I part with my hard-earned money?*” he may think. But someone who is blessed with wealth and recognizes that, in essence, he has been appointed as a treasurer over G-d’s funds, will dispense with those funds in accordance with the instructions of their true Owner. This is what R’ Elazar seeks to convey in his few words: “Give Him what is His.” When approaching the mitzvah of *tzedakah* (charity), supporting Torah institutions, or any other mitzvah pursuits involving expenditures, one should not do so begrudgingly. After all, whatever wealth he possesses really belongs to Hashem anyway; by using it to fulfill His Will, one is merely giving back to Hashem that which is His.

YOU CAN TAKE THIS WITH YOU

We have uncovered a monumental truth, one which, hopefully, can go a long way in removing the “pain” from the giving experience. Since the money belonged to Someone Else, having merely been entrusted to us for appropriate dispersal, the giver essentially has lost *nothing*. But the matter really goes one step further.

Material wealth is never guaranteed; all too often, one’s fortunes can change. Even someone who retains his riches has only limited usage; one day, he will have to leave them for others. The only type of gain that is truly eternal is the reward one acquires for serving Hashem. And so, when our resources go toward fulfillment of Hashem’s Will, that “treasurer” is duly paid for his efforts. The giver himself has received the greatest gift and is now in possession of wealth that he can truly call his own.

This is the meaning of *וְיִקְחוּ לִי תְרוּמָה* – “They shall take for Me a gift.” By fulfilling Hashem’s desire to donate to the Mishkan, the givers became the takers.



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