

Volume III Issue #19
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On the Parsha

“Speak to the Bnei Yisroel, and they shall take for Me, Terumah, from every person whose heart is so moved...” (Exodus 25:2)

The words “take for Me, Terumah” would appear to be the incorrect words to use. The correct words to use would be “give to me, Terumah”.

Rav Eliyahu Dessler ZT”L in his Michtav M’Eliyahu explains that the best way that one can become close to another individual is to give something to him. When one gives to another, one forms a close bond with that person. Based upon this Michtav M’Eliyahu, perhaps we can say that when one gives Terumah to Hashem, one becomes close to Hashem and there is no greater gift that one can receive from Hashem than becoming close to Him. Therefore, when Bnei Yisrael were enjoined to give Terumah to Hashem, the correct term to use was “take” because Bnei Yisrael were taking from Hashem far more than they were giving Him, because of the benefits that they would be receiving by becoming close to Him.

The benefits of closeness to Hashem are manifold. Rav Nosson Wachtfogel ZT”L, the Mashgiach of the Lakewood Yeshiva, explains that Hashem has generously provided each person with vast amounts and various forms of wisdom, qualities, and capabilities. To access all that Hashem has bestowed, one must achieve closeness to Hashem – Deveikus. This closeness is contained deep within the soul of man and is part of the nature of man. However, one does not readily feel and cannot readily achieve closeness to Hashem because there are barriers that stand in the way.

The essence of our service in this world is to remove these barriers. One of the barriers that stands in our way is caused by dishonesty. Working on our honesty and integrity is a sure way to remove this barrier and become closer to Hashem.

Perhaps this is also alluded to in the verse we quoted above, “... take for Me, Terumah, **from** every person whose heart is so moved...” The word in Hebrew for the word “**from**” in this verse is “מאת”. The Kabbalistic

works say that this word refers to truth, because if you unscramble the letters, you get “אמת”. In other words, the verse could be read to mean that one should come close to Hashem by giving Terumah (as in our first thought above – giving creates a close bond between the giver and recipient) or through “מאת” which is “אמת”.

Chizuk - Inspiration

Rav Shlomo Zalman of Volozhin (1756-1788), was the younger brother of Rav Chaim of Volozhin. He knew Shas Bavli, Yerushalmi and the entire Mishna Torah of the Rambam by heart. Rav Shlomo Zalman was also an Ish Emes – a man of truth, who scrupulously followed every word of Chazal. Once, a Rav and Rav Shlomo Zalman entered the home of a very poor man who was a friend of the Rav.

The poor man offered the two of them to join him for a meal. Rav Shlomo Zalman who was aware of the poor financial circumstances of the host responded, “Unfortunately, my doctor warned me to be very careful of certain foods. I apologize, but I must listen to my doctor and cannot join you for a meal.”

After they left the host’s company, the Rav asked Rav Shlomo Zalman how he could have said such words, as he knew that no medical doctor had warned Rav Shlomo Zalman against eating any type of food.

Rav Shlomo Zalman responded. “The Rambam [who was a doctor] writes in Hilchos Teshuvah 4:4, that one who eats from a meal of a poor man who does not have enough to eat himself is guilty of a “shade of theft.” This is because the poor man doesn’t freely give the food to his guests, because he really needs the food for himself. [Since I suspected that this was the case here] the Rambam, my doctor, essentially had told me not to join the Rav for a meal.”

The Halacha is clear that one may not eat food where it is certain that the owner offering the food cannot afford it. Telling the owner this, however, would be offensive and embarrassing. To avoid embarrassing someone – it is permitted to lie. At the same time, Rav Shlomo Zalman did not wish to lie if there was an alternative.

For this reason, he used the term “my doctor” to describe the Rambam – so that he would not have to lie even though lying was permitted in this case to avoid embarrassing the poor man.

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: We left to the airport

for a flight before it was Halachically time to daven Mincha and the flight arrived late at night and we were not able to daven Mincha with a Minyan unless we would have arranged for a Minyan at the airport. If we would have asked the airline customer service agent to let us make an announcement over the loudspeaker that we needed 10 Jews to make a Minyan for Mincha and that all who were interested should come to Gate 17, he would have probably said no. The agent would have probably allowed us to announce “Mister Mincha, please come to Gate 17.” Would this have been permitted, or is this a lie and would have been prohibited because of MiDvar Sheker Tirchak (distance yourself from a false matter)?

ANSWER: Believe it or not, this is not a simple question. There is a leniency that many Halachic authorities say that one may lie to perform a Mitzvah if what one says can be interpreted in another way (so what was said is not an outright lie). For example, in our case, one can say, “Missed a Mincha (which sounds like ‘Mr. Mincha’), please come to Gate 17.” However, it is unclear whether that leniency would be valid because in this case, you may have been able to get a Minyan on your own if you tracked down enough people yourself – getting on the loudspeaker just made it easier to get a Minyan and do the Mitzvah.

My personal view is that this should not be done. Rav Yeruchem Olshin Shlita advised that it is a problem of Sheker (telling a lie) and should be avoided. He further stated it is somewhat disparaging (a Bizayon) to refer to the Mincha service as “Mr. Mincha.” Rav Dovid Shustal Shlita advised that it would technically be permitted from the perspective of MiDvar Sheker Tirchak because it is lying for the sake of a Mitzvah, but it would not be in keeping with “Dover Emes Bilvavo – one should speak truth in one’s heart” and should therefore be avoided. To be certain, one should ask his or her local Orthodox Rabbi on how to proceed.

Mussar – Introspection

We continue with our translation of the

fourth chapter of the Chofetz Chaim’s Sefas Tamim. In last week’s Parsha sheet, we began a parable that the Sefas Tamim uses to illustrate what it would be like to have to be reincarnated and come back to Earth to pay back what one had stolen, rather than be allowed to stay in the Olam HaEmes. The parable continues below.

“After seven months elapsed, the scheduled day arrived and his entire household and the members of his family went to the city’s outskirts, to the wall that surrounded the city and separated it from the ocean, to meet their father and greet him joyfully as he arrived from the ocean voyage. They waited there many hours and became weary from the expectation of his imminent arrival. Just then, they saw a boat arriving from an ocean voyage to the port just outside the wall. They were very happy because they thought that at any moment now, they would be reunited with their father. However, their happiness suddenly turned to dismay upon seeing the surrounding wall of the city close.

They heard the voice of their father pleading with the immigration officers to give him permission to allow him to enter the city and return to his home. The authorities responded to the father that in the interim during his return voyage, they received notice from the country he had just left, that 10 years prior, he committed a financial crime against someone there and this crime was recorded in the annals of that country. This incident took place on one of the islands of a country that had no mail service which could have afforded him the ability to return the value stolen by mail. Now, against his will, he was being forced to return to that island in person and repay his debt, and only then would he be able to return back here to his home.

When the man heard this, he began to cry profusely and begged the authorities that it had been more than 10 years since he last saw his family and that he would be willing to pay the immigration officers 10 times what he had stolen if only they would permit him to return to his home. However, they refused to listen to him, and they said that since it would not benefit the victim of his theft, what would be the point of imposing a fine on himself. The authorities further rebuked this person harshly and told him that they knew he had been warned that he would not be permitted to disembark if he had debts to repay.”

(Parable to be continued next week...)