

TorahFax: Terumah

Rabbi Zalmen Marozov

Friday, Adar 3, 5783 (Hakhel Year) / February 24, 2023

We are now in the month of Adar.

Adar is a very happy month in the Jewish calendar. Our sages instruct us, "When Adar comes, we increase in happiness." Although, it is a mitzvah to be happy every day of the year, during the month of Adar we increase in happiness more than other months of the year.

Remembering the great miracles which G-d did for us over the past three thousand years and the daily miracles which G-d does for us each day, is good enough reason to be happy and joyous on a daily basis. True, we had many bumps along the way, but the fact that we are here calls for daily happiness. This is especially true during the month of Adar when the great Purim miracle happened.

This week's Parsha, Terumah, is about the building of the Mishkan (Tabernacle) and its contents; the Aron (ark), the Kaporet (ark cover), the Shulchan (table), the Menorah (candelabra) and the Mizbe'ach (altar). The Torah details the materials, measurements of each component of the sanctuary.

The Torah states, "And they shall make an ark...and you shall overlay it with pure gold from within and from without... And you shall put into the ark the testimony (two Tablets). And you shall make an ark-cover of pure gold... And you shall make two Cherubim of gold at the two ends of the ark-cover... And the Cherubim shall be spreading their wings on high covering with their wings over the ark-cover and their faces one toward the other."

The ark contained both sets of Tablets; the first Tablets, which Moshe broke coming down Mount Sinai, when he saw the Jewish people worshipping the Golden Calf, as well as the second set of Tablets.

The ark was made of three boxes. The inner and outer boxes were made of gold. The middle box was made out of wood, which comes from a tree. The Torah is called, "A Tree of Life to those who cling to her and those who support her are fortunate."

Lesson: Studying and supporting Torah brings life and blessings. When looking at the ark, one would see gold on the interior and exterior. This teaches us that a person must be the same on the inside (in one's heart and mind), as on the outside.

Due to the gold content and the Tablets which were inside the ark, the ark was extremely heavy! Yet, when traveling, only four people carried the ark. How was that possible? Our sages say, "The ark carried its carriers!" It was the ark in which were the Two Tablets which gave them the strength to carry it.

Lesson: Studying Torah and performing the mitzvot should not be a burden, for in fact, it is the Torah which carries, uplifts, and gives energy to those who study it and adhere to its mitzvot.

Tuesday, Shevat 30, 5783 (Hakhel Year) / February 21, 2023

Today (Tuesday) and tomorrow (Wednesday) are Rosh Chodesh (of the new Hebrew month) Adar. When there are two days Rosh Chodesh, the first day is actually considered the last day of the previous month. The second day Rosh Chodesh is the

first day of the new month. When there is only one day Rosh Chodesh that day is the first day of the new month.

Adar is a very special and joyous month. Our sages tell us that when the month of Adar enters, we must increase in simcha-happiness, because the great miracle of Purim happened in the month of Adar. Although the miracle happened on the 14th and 15th of the month, it affects the entire month and every day of the month is a joyous one.

This Shabbat we read Parshat Terumah, which speaks about the contributions which the Jewish people were told to give for the construction of the Mishkan (Tabernacle).

The Parsha begins, "And G-d spoke to Moshe saying: 'Speak to the Children of Israel, that they take for Me an offering; of every man whose heart makes him willing to give you shall take my offering.

The Torah enumerates the various articles which the Jewish people were to donate toward the construction of the Mishkan. G-d tells Moshe the purpose for constructing the Mishkan: "And they shall make Me a sanctuary so that I shall dwell among them."

The sages note that it does not say, "I shall dwell in it," i.e. in the Mishkan. Rather, "I shall dwell among them," for through the Mishkan and Holy Temple, G-d rests, and dwells within every Jew.

A heathen once asked the Talmudic sage Rabbi Gamliel, "Where does your G-d dwell?" Rabbi Gamliel replied, "I do not know."

The man asked, "You pray to your G-d every day and you do not know where He dwells?"

Rabbi Gamliel answered, "You asked me about something which is thirty-five hundred years away from me (referring to the number of years since creation). I will ask you about your soul, which abides within you day and night. Tell me where exactly it dwells within you?" "I have to admit that I do not know!" answered the man.

"You do not know where your soul is, how do you expect me to tell you where G-d resides?" Rabbi Gamliel concluded.

The man continued, "We, idol worshipers, are better off, for we worship to the works of our own hands (idols) thus, we can always see them. But you cannot see your G-d!"

Rabbi Gamliel said, "Just the opposite is true. You see the idols, but they cannot see you. Our G-d, blessed be He, although we cannot see Him, He sees us and sees everything we do."

Monday, Shevat 29, 5783 (Hakhel Year) / February 20, 2023

The five Parshiot, beginning with this week's Parsha, Terumah, until the end of the Book of Exodus, describe the instructions and the building of the Mishkan - the Tabernacle which the Jewish people built during their first year in the desert, after receiving the Torah on Mount Sinai.

Parshat Terumah describes the gifts and materials which the people of Israel were commanded to donate toward the construction of the Tabernacle. It specifies the

materials and the instructions for the Mishkan and its contents. It gives us the measurements for the Mishkan and its components.

The Parsha begins, "And G-d spoke to Moshe saying: 'Speak to the Children of Israel, that they shall take for Me an offering; of every man whose heart makes him willing, you shall take my offering.'"

Q. The Parsha speaks about the contribution which G-d commanded the people to donate toward the building of the Mishkan. Why does G-d tell Moshe to tell them, "Take for Me an offering"? G-d should have told Moshe to tell the people, "they shall GIVE for Me an offering?"

A. Our sages explain that the Torah teaches us here the proper attitude and approach to giving charity. When we give charity, we should know that in reality we are not only giving, but more than that, we are "taking." For, we TAKE much more in return from G-d than what we give to Him.

The Talmud puts it as follows: "The poor man, who receives charity, does far more for the rich man than what the rich man does for the poor one!" The blessings which result through giving charity are worth much more than the amount which we give.

Q. The Torah uses the word "Terumah" as "offering." The word "Terumah" usually means "to elevate." Why does the Torah use the term "Terumah" when speaking about contributing for the Mishkan-Temple?

A. When we perform a mitzvah, we "lift" the physical matter with which we perform the mitzvah from physical into the realm of the spiritual. By contributing

their gold, silver and the other various items for the construction of the Mishkan, they "elevated" it to a higher level – from the physical to the realm of

G-dliness. So too, when we perform a mitzvah, we "elevate" the physical object and become elevated ourselves through connecting to a higher realm.

According to the Midrash, when Moshe heard G-d's request to build for Him a "dwelling place," he couldn't understand it. Moshe said, "You fill the entire heaven and earth! How can we build a structure which can contain you? How can a mortal being build a dwelling place for You?"

G-d replied, "I do not ask that you build a sanctuary according to My ability, but rather according to your capability. If you do the best you can. that will suffice and I will rest my glory amongst you." This teaches us that each one of us has the capability to make this world a dwelling place for G-d's presence.