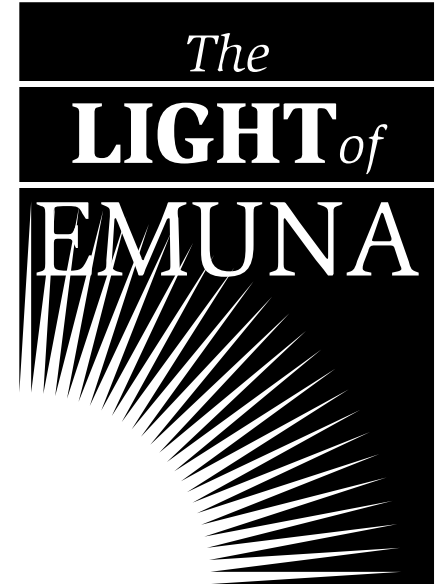


פרשת תרומה

This week's adaptation is dedicated in honor of:
my dear wife, Devorah.



Based on Harav Menachem Azolai's "Ohr Ha'Emuna"

"דבר אל בני ישראל ויקחו לי תרומה" (כה, ב)
"Speak to the children of Israel, and have them take an offering for Me"

Why did the *pasuk* have to mention "an offering" – would it not have sufficed to just command, "take for Me?" "Take for Me" really intends "take Me." Hashem is telling the Jewish people, so to speak, to take Him and He will sojourn within them, to be entrenched among them – as it says several *pasukim* later, "And they shall make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst."¹

"ויקחו לי תרומה" (כה, ב)
"And have them take an offering for Me"

Is an offering taken – an offering is given? The indication is that when we give, we immediately receive in return. What do we receive? We receive closeness to Hashem, which is all good. A person who is accustomed to giving always feels Hashem's Presence. Every step he takes in life – whether at home, at the store, at the bank, in shul, while learning, on a trip, during *davening* – he clings to Hashem. The path of influencing others and giving narrows expanses and results in amazing closeness to the Creator – it transforms a person into a close friend of Hashem's. When we influence and bestow we are similar to our Creator. Just as Hashem is compassionate, we act compassionately. Just as He is gracious, so are we. There is no greater satisfaction than when this *Teruma* elevates us – it lifts us off the ground, above physicality, uproots us from our base urges and distances us

from selfish desires. If things are not going well, if we feel disconnected, if we feel mired in darkness – we must find a way to do some small favor for someone else, with our last ounce of strength – and we will see how it revives us, how we begin to feel Hashem. If we are standing in line, we should allow someone who seems rushed to cut in front of us. When we are driving, there is no shortage of ways to be courteous to other drivers and pedestrians. Kind words, a bright countenance, a small smile aimed at someone we meet on the road – and we suddenly feel a positively altered state in our attachment to Hashem. Our parsha tells us, "The *cherubim* shall have their wings spread upwards ... with their faces toward one another."² One who wishes to ascend, to draw nearer to Hashem, cannot ignore his brethren. The joy of giving is the greatest kind of joy. Therefore, we implore Hashem for abundance so that we may provide for our children, our friends, for all those who need. How miserable is one whose affluence blinds him, who can no longer notice other people – he only sees money! How content is one who consistently begs of Hashem to enable him to give to others.

One must dispense kind words, ones that gladden hearts. We must confer love, warmth – we must be moved, support, encourage, utilize the flask of oil that remains from Chanukah and

¹ ויקרא רבה פרק ל', י"ג

² והיו הכרובים פורשי כנפיים למעלה... ופניהם איש אל אחיו(כה, כ)

grease things that squeak. We must utilize the *mishloach manos* that remain after Purim and distribute sweets – Hashem loves when we do so. This clears space to receive more and more wealth. In earlier times, our snacks ended with the sound *ach* (“for you”) – now they end in *li* (“for me”). We used to have *rugelach, kneidlach, kreplach* – today we have *bisli, karmeli, yugli*. Me me, me.

Hashem wishes us to look generously upon others. Hashem asked the Jewish people to donate gold, silver and copper – hinting at the positive aspects within every Jew. Our problem is that we are impressed with ourselves, not others. We are constantly thinking about how great we are. “I did such and such.” We must believe that others have good points as well. He is different than me, but that is also amazing. We must never forget that every single person was created in G-d’s image. There is G-dly light that envelopes him – G-dly honor. When we damage his honor, we are damaging his G-dly image. Consequently, we are damaging Hashem’s glory, G-d forbid. We must therefore be so careful with our friends’ honor.

A story is told of a man who married his daughter off. The wedding turned out to be a disaster. The caterer did not do anything that he had promised. At its conclusion, the father of the bride and the father of the groom went into the caterer’s office to settle up. They had several very legitimate complaints. Before the bride’s father could say anything, the father of the groom shook the caterer’s hand and exclaimed, “thank you so much for everything.” The bride’s father was surprised and asked his new in-law how he could be so forgiving. The groom’s father explained that he had learned to be this way from his grandparents. His grandparents had had three young children and supported themselves from a chicken coop. One day, his grandfather noticed that the coop was much quieter than usual. Upon inspection, he realized that ten of his chickens were missing. The next day, he was eleven short. A day later, another was gone. So, he decided to investigate. One night, it was the dead of winter; he donned his

coat and fur hat and hid behind the bushes to see what happened. It was bitterly cold, but he waited. Finally, after several hours, he heard a noise and noticed his neighbor sneak into the chicken coop and steal a chicken. He returned home, and while warming up, began to cry. His first reaction was to have the thief punished, make him return the stolen chickens – but then his anger turned to chills – he trembled at the thought of pointing an accusatory finger at a fellow Jew. He was terrified of embarrassing his neighbor. He refused to humiliate him, even if it meant a substantial monetary loss. Never!

But what would they do? They could not allow the current situation to continue. Their livelihood was slowly disappearing. The grandmother instantly decided that they had to leave the village – the village that they had both grown up in and raised their family. Without delay, they sold their house, their chicken coop and took whatever possessions they could and left their homeland to a completely foreign country. They set out for America. The journey was not an easy one in those days but they remained resolute and determined. Their ship turned out to be one of the last ships to escape Europe before the Nazis, may their names be erased, closed the borders and began their destruction. His grandfather, grandmother and their three young children managed to escape in the nick of time. Because they relinquished their rights so as to avoid embarrassing another Jew (even one who deserved it) – their lives and the lives of their family were spared.³

The Torah frequently reminds us that we are obligated to focus on the beautiful facets of every person, their qualities and not their deficiencies. During the battle with Amalek, so long as the Jewish people concentrated their attention upwards, they were successful. Why does the *pasuk* use the term “upwards” as opposed to “towards Heaven?” The Hebrew word for upwards (*מעלה*) is derivative of the term for “qualities” (*מעלות*). When the Torah says that the Jews encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai, it uses

³

משמרת השלום

the term ויחך – hinting to the fact that they recognized each other’s charm (חן). Having a generous outlook means loving another, as he is – to be happy for him, to judge him favorably, to consider that he is G-d’s creation. This is only possible if we attain humility. A humble person can always recognize qualities in others that he himself does not possess. All of the measurements of the Holy Ark contained halves (its length was two and a half *amos*, its width was one and a half *amos*, as was its height⁴). This alludes to the necessary trait a person must attain – to avoid arrogance, to see one’s self as incomplete. If we find someone to be distasteful – seek out his good attributes. There is no one who is all bad. Each of us has a pure and holy soul that Hashem takes pride in.⁵ The more difficult this task appears to be with any particular person – that is precisely where our correction is to be found. It is not happenstance that we were given this child, this son-in-law, this neighbor, this co-worker – they are in our lives for a specific purpose – we are required to apply ourselves – we are expected to alter our point of view.

The *Gemara* and *Chazal* are replete with the idea that Hashem desires vindications of His children. A father whose son misbehaves still wants him judged advantageously and will certainly be pained by someone who denigrates his son.

A person who habitually judges others sympathetically receives similar treatment from Heaven.⁶ That is not to say that we must justify bad deeds, rather we must assess the entirety of the person – for he definitely has meritorious features as well.

When a person is pleasant and accepted down here, he is also beloved above. What a marvelous trait it is to always greet others before waiting for them to greet us first. *Chazal* say that this demonstrates humility. It was said of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai that no one ever

greeted him first, not even a non-Jew in the marketplace.

Complimenting others for their good deeds is an act of *chesed*. The Zohar warns us that just as one is punished for saying negative words that are forbidden – similarly, one is punished for a missed opportunity to have said a kind word.

The second Beis Hamikdash was destroyed due to baseless hatred – the third shall be rebuilt because of baseless love – loving others for no reason other than the fact that he is a fellow Jew.

A person’s money and resources are a deposit that Hashem has entrusted to him so that he will support others in need, so that he will perform *mitzvos* and good deeds. When Hashem observes a Jew who acts appropriately with his deposits, he grants him more and more so that he may continue to accomplish. There is no greater joy that utilizing money for holy purposes.

“Charity saves from death.” We should be overjoyed when someone knocks on our door requesting charity. We should think about what we might be being saved from with this opportunity knocking. We must give charity gladly. We must not ignore the knock and let them move on to the next house. We must give of the best of our possessions. When we distribute portions of food to guests, we must allocate the choicest pieces to them.

Rav Eliezer Berland Shlita: Every day there are entirely new miracles that have never occurred before. So, why do we worry? If we are hesitant to give charity – we should give charity, give something, do not be afraid – everything will open for us, all of the gates of Heaven will open up (as the *pasuk* states: פתוחה תפתח). When a person gives *tzedaka* he throws open all of the gates – the gates of knowledge, the gates of wisdom, the gates of understanding, the gates of prayer, the gates of *shidduchim*, the gates of livelihood. When a pauper is sent our way, it is a sign that Heaven wishes to rescue us from some misfortune, from some tragedy. If a child is sick,

⁴ כה, י
⁵ ישראל אשר בך אתפאר (ישעיהו מט, ג)
⁶ שבת קכ"ז

G-d forbid, charity must be disbursed and miracles and cures can occur. Many *tzaddikim* had the custom of never dining alone. They recognized that the food was not theirs, they did not own it, it belonged to Hashem – it was to be shared with others, for it was a gift from Hashem. We do not own our money, we are merely trustees. When a person gives a tithe or a fifth – he ultimately witnesses its multiplication. When one gives away a hundred dollars, he receives a thousand in return. When he gives away a thousand dollars, he receives a hundred thousand in return. It is for this reason that money is called *zuzim* (זוזים) in Aramaic – we must move (להזיז) it. We must not leave it dormant in our wallets, move it. The more we

put it to good use, the more it proliferates.

When we forego, when we judge favorably, when we give charity, when we do *chesed* – we receive our hearts, we merit Hashem's love. We love you, Father, we love holiness, we love Torah, we love living among those who fear You, we love those wondrous moments in which we feel connected to You – no one can take those away from us. Even if these feelings are not consistent, even if they are mere fleeting moments – we love them nonetheless, we connect to them – how good those moments are for us, they are our reality, they are the entirety of our lives. In the secreted parts of our hearts – we all want this, even those who are so distant.

תפילה

Master of the World! I am already ashamed to discuss generous eyes and begrudging eyes – but I must. I need You to save me. When I hear that someone was successful, that things worked out for him – I am not happy for him. Often, I even hope to hear that things were not as lucrative or as good as initially reported. Why, father? Why am I so jealous? Why should it bother me if everyone were thriving, if everyone had it good, if everyone were happy?

Master of the World! Help me comprehend that I am not the center of the universe and not everything revolves around me. For example, when I observe two people meeting joyously and with love or learning together with joy and gratification – I resent them. Why must I always be the center of attention in attempts to garner the approval of others?

When someone who used to treat me with esteem suddenly ignores me – I get angry, offended, I ignore him, treating him the same way he treats me. Maybe it is just my imagination? Maybe he is dealing with certain challenges? Maybe he is a bit jealous of me and I should be more understanding?

Really, I should be grateful that his behavior has exposed my true nature and that I was never worthy of the respect that he had previously accorded me.

Master of the World! Help me not become confused when I am awarded some honor, when people say nice things about me.

Help me stop proceeding through life as if I am the only one here, as if I am the most successful and most important one here. Help me, Father, to look at everyone with generous eyes and not find myself again in my current situation in which there is so much that I cannot tolerate and, if that somehow improves, another “intolerable” situation quickly appears.

Master of the World! Save me from all of this because I know that in order to be close to You I must change my outlook and be happy for everyone, love everyone and wish them all success.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

Dov

Notice: The foregoing is based on my limited understanding of the Parsha Sheet, *Ohr Ha'Emuna*, disseminated by Harav Menachem Azolai *Shlita* and is not a complete or exact adaptation of *Ohr Ha'Emuna* and is not necessarily even a reliable interpretation of the ideas presented therein. *Ohr Ha'Emuna* is published in Hebrew; in translation, accuracy is always compromised. Rav Azolai has not reviewed this material - any inaccuracies, omissions or confusion should be attributed exclusively to me. I still hope you enjoy and it provides some *chizuk*.

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