

אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה

מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל

Shmuessen from
Harav Moshe Rabinowitz zt"l

פרשת תרומה

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לעילוי נשמת
דינה רחל בת
ר' בנימין יצחק רבינוביץ ע"ה
לכבוד היארציית א' אדר
נתנדב ע"י משפחתה

פרשת תרומה

דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִקְחוּ לִי תְרוּמָה (שמות כ"ה ב')

Speak to the Bnei Yisroel, and let them take for me a portion

It's All About the Heart

The second *pasuk* in Parshas Terumah requires some clarification. When the *pasuk* says לִי ויקחו – **and let them take for me** – what exactly is being added with the “and”? Nothing else was mentioned before the topic of *Terumah* that would call for the *vav* in ויקחו!

The Ohr Hachaim asks this question, and amongst his many *me'halchim*, he provides the following *p'shat*: the *vav* is coming to teach us that the act of giving any form of *tzedakah* must be preceded by a different kind of giving. Prior to the physical donation, a person must do a נדבה בלב – a donation within his heart. In other words, a person must come to the conclusion mentally and emotionally that he really wants to give the money before he actually gives it.

Applying this Idea to All of Areas of Avodas Hashem

This *yesod* is not just true for *tzedakah*; it applies to many other areas in *Avodas Hashem* as well. When we do an action, there are two ways to go about it. One way would be to jump right into it, either because we know that as *frum Yidden*, we ‘have to’ – or we feel obligated to do so for some other external reason. Doing *mitzvos* in this manner lacks depth and devotion; they are simply being done by rote. The other way to carry out a good deed would be to first focus on the task at hand, contemplate its eternal value and importance, and then follow through with the act wholeheartedly.

Rav Elya Roth *zt"l* used to give the following *mashal* to elucidate this concept:

There was once a king who wished to invest a large sum of money in a grand infrastructure project. Not only did he hope to improve his land through this endeavor, he also intended to make large profits as a result. He decided to summon two of the most talented businessmen in his country and tasked them each with carrying out 50% of the project. He provided them each with a large sum of money, and asked them to return two years later to discuss the progress they have made – and the profits they have accrued.

Well, two years came and went – and both halves of the project turned out to be total disasters. The businessmen each made some foolish mistakes right at the outset, and these blunders had ruinous consequences. When the day came for them to return to the king, they both arrived at the palace with empty pockets.

The first businessman was summoned into the throne room, and the king began questioning him about his project eagerly. “Y..your m...majesty,” the man began to stammer nervously, “I’m so sorry to inform you that... the project was a failure. I really tried my hardest, but the location I chose turned out to be a mistake. And the business model could have been devised in a smarter way. I apologize, but... so far I have not brought in any profit.”

The man’s voice was quivering with shame and remorse, and the king could sense that he felt badly about his performance. “Hmm... that is very disappointing. At least give me whatever you have,” the king said.

“Your majesty, I... I only have ten silver coins left on me,” the man responded in a tiny voice.

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The king was able to sense the man's deep shame and regret for how things had turned out. "Ten coins will suffice for now," he replied, and instructed the man to go back home and try his best to salvage the project.

The second businessman saw his counterpart exiting the throne room with a look of relief on his face. "What happened?" he asked, as the guards began ushering him into the throne room.

"I gave him ten silver coins, and he accepted my apology," the first man replied.

The second businessman breathed a sigh of relief as he entered the throne room. Before the king could even start talking, the man pulled ten coins out of his pocket and handed them to the king.

"What is this?" the king asked.

"It's the money I owe you," came the response.

"Ten coins? I gave you ten million!" the king cried. "How dare you show such disregard and disrespect to my wishes? Lock him up!"

After saying this *mashal*, Rav Elya Roth used to conclude as follows: You walk into shul, and you speed through a *shemoneh esrei*. Then someone asks you what you just did, and you say, 'I *davened*'. You think that was considered a *shemoneh esrei* by Hashem? There was no emotion, no preparation – no cognizance of what was taking place. How can we compare that to *davening*? In truth, *davening* is a real *avodah*; it requires mental and emotional preparation! You're walking into the throne room of the *Melech Malchei Ha'melachim*, where you will be having a personal one-on-one meeting with him. No cabinet members or advisors are welcome at this little conclave; it's just you and the Ribono Shel Olam. If you just walk in, rattle off a few words from a *siddur*, and stroll out of the room – do you think that 'prayer' will accomplish anything? After all, how would you expect a *melech bassar va'dam* to react in a situation like that?

The same goes for every area of our *Avodas Hashem*. Before we make the contribution, before we take the step forward in our relationship with the Ribono Shel Olam – we must prepare ourselves thoroughly. We must try our best to internalize and become one with our decision before we act on it. We must be 100% invested and interested in the step forward; otherwise, it will be far less effective in the long run, and it won't have the same resonance in *Shomayim*.

This is the lesson from the extra *vav* in the word ויקחו. If we want our actions to take us to the next level, we must first make a *נדבה בלב* – a contribution from deep within our hearts. Only then will we be fully prepared and equipped for the physical contribution.

This reminds me of another point. We have mentioned a number of times with regard to *Shalom Bayis* that when our spouse asks us to do something, we must make sure to at least make it seem as though we are glad to carry out their wishes. The moment we start pulling our feet and frowning as we comply with their requests, we're sending a message that we're not interested – and that's not a message that is easily taken. The response will very often be: "You know what? Forget about it! I'll do it myself!" Rav Moshe Rosenstein *zt"l* used to say that the same applies to our relationship with the Ribono Shel Olam. If we show that we are not enthusiastic about His commandments and directives, then why would He want to accept our service?

The Mitzvos Are for Our Own Good

In fact, the Sefer HaChinuch on this week's *Parsha* says that all of the *mitzvos* that Hashem has presented us with are לטובתנו ולהנאתנו – for our good and our pleasure. If we would only appreciate these words, then our mental preparation, investment, and enthusiasm for *mitzvos* would all ascend to a far higher level. We would think to ourselves every time we walk into a *Beis Medrash*: "Hashem, how can I ever thank You enough for making me among the יושבי ביהמ"ד, as opposed to the יושבי קרנות – the ones who sit around all day, wasting away in frivolity and baseness!" If we truly recognize that every single letter in

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the Torah is a tremendous privilege – the greatest privilege in the universe – then we would make our *avodah* so much more real.

I was once speaking at a fundraiser for a school in Toronto. During my speech, I told those assembled that I didn't see any point in trying to persuade them to give more money to the school. After all, it was a small community, and practically everyone had either children or grandchildren learning there, and they will surely give whatever they were capable of.

"But there's one thing I will ask of you," I said. "When you write out that check for the school – write it with kavanah. Put your soul into it. Have in mind that you are giving the money to help support Yiddishe Kinder to continue going in the Derech Hashem. Say a short tefillah that your children should grow in Yiddishkeit. Your kavanos will make all the difference; the נובה כלב is an integral factor of the mitzvah."

Minds that Drift During Davening

Let's take a look at Rabbeinu Bechaye at the beginning of Parshas Terumah, where he discusses the importance of *davening* with *kavanah*. Rabbeinu Bechaye says at one point that one who allows his mind to wander during *shemoneh esrei* and chooses to ponder mundane and trivial matters rather than the words of the *tefillah* is in the same category as one who transgresses the prohibition of "לא תעשון איתי" – *You shall not make [images of what is] with Me; gods of silver and gods of gold shall you not make for yourselves*. Terrifying as it may seem, Rabbeinu Bechaye drew a moral equivalence between daydreaming during *davening* and worshipping idols¹.

I would like to cite the words of the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh (*Shemos, Perek 20, Pasuk 20*) on this *pasuk* as well. The Ohr Hachaim says as follows: we see that the *pasuk* begins with the words "לא תעשון איתי", but then concludes with the words "לא תעשו לכם". These two *leshonos* are referring to two individual categories of idol worship, which can also be applied to many other transgressions in the Torah. There are people who sin when they are under extreme duress – for example, the Yidden who came to America after the war. They needed to support their families, and the only jobs they could find required them to work on Shabbos. Every Shabbos morning, with a heavy heart, many of these Yidden folded up their *taleisim* and made their way over to the subway; they didn't want to sin, but they felt as though they had no choice. The Ohr Hachaim describes these people as the ones who cry, "אני מחרף ומגדף עבודה זרה זו" – *I despise and blaspheme this form of idol worship* – yet, they carry out their sins due to immense pressures. This form of sin is alluded to in the *pasuk* with the words "לא תעשו לכם" – you may not fashion, even for your own basic necessities, any form of idol worship.

The second category of sin is when the person actually believes in the powers of the idol he is worshipping, or that he actually believes it is permissible or correct to sin. This form of sin is alluded to with the words "לא תעשון איתי" – do not fashion idols that you identify with Me, the Ribono Shel Olam, *ch"v*. In other words, do not commit sins in a manner that you believe that the crimes you are committing are morally correct or that they are the will of Hashem.

Perhaps we can put the aforementioned words of Rabbeinu Bechaye together with this Ohr Hachaim as follows. According to the Ohr Hachaim, a person can either sin without being in sync with the despised behavior, or by incorporating the sinful behavior as his partner in crime. The latter, which is included in the words of "לא תעשון איתי", is similar to one who *davens* the words of *shemoneh esrei*, standing in front of the King of all Kings – but at the same time, he is perfectly comfortable with his mind drifting from topic to topic, as though it were acceptable practice while in the midst of a private meeting with the

¹ וז"ל והוא הדין והטעם בענין התפלה אם התפלל ולא כוון את לבו בתפלתו אלא שהוא מחשב בהבלי הזמן בסחורתו וכספו וזהבו, הגה זה חוטא, וכמעט שעליו נאמר (שמות כ, כ) "לא תעשון איתי אלהי כסף ואלהי זהב", כלומר כשאתם אתי ועומדים בתפלה לפני אל תחשבו בכסף וזהב אשר עמכם, כי המתפלל העושה זאת מתנכר במחשבתו אל המלך ה' יתברך, ולפני מלך בשר ודם לא היה עושה כן, עכ"ל.

king. This is only possible when the person has become so familiar with his callousness towards *tefillah* that his mid-*shemoneh esrei* daydreams have become his partners – a true transgression of “לא תעשון איתי”.

You’re Doing the Mitzvah Anyway!

I often think about what a shame it is that people do so many *mitzvos* and *ma’asim tovim* on a constant basis completely devoid of *kavanah* and focus. Think about it: most of the time, you're doing the action *anyway*; why not double the *s’char* and the potency of the act by placing yourself in the proper frame of mind?

Let’s say a fellow is very busy at work in his office, and he notices that the time has come for his Mincha minyan. He really doesn’t want to go; he’s in the midst of some very important tasks. But... he knows that he’s gotta daven Mincha. So, he musters all his strength, wrenches himself away from his computer and dashes over to the conference room where the minyan is just getting underway. Now, he would like to focus on his davening... but he has way too much on his mind. The various tasks at hand are gnawing away at his feeble grasp on his concentration – and before long, his mind has scampered off, making its way right back to the office desk.

Wouldn’t that be such a shame? He was doing the mitzvah anyway. He listened to his Yetzer Tov and pushed himself to go daven. But then – he squandered those precious moments of tefillah thinking about work? Had he focused on clearing his mind and preparing himself for davening for just a brief moment before entering the conference room, he would have walked out with tremendous s’char. But instead, the opportunity was wasted.

This happens all too often. A person could spend a significant amount of time preparing delicacies for Shabbos or Yom Tov – but instead of designating his actions leshem shomayim and carrying out his preparations with the intention of honoring Shabbos, he just thinks about how good the food is going to be. Wow, are we going to have good food tonight, he keeps thinking in his head. That’s such a shame! All he has to do is complete the thought with “and it’s all going to be Lekovod Shabbos”. That’s all – and then he gets so much more s’char!

The Importance of the 100 Brachos We Recite Each Day

The Sfas Emes on this week’s *Parsha* says that the 100 *adonim* (silver sockets) that held up the *krashim* (beams) of the *Mishkan* were כנגד the 100 *brachos* that a Yid is supposed to make each day.

Let’s give some background information about the *inyan* of reciting 100 *brachos* every day. The Gemara in Menachos derives this Halacha from the *pasuk* that says “מה ה’ אלוקיך שואל מעמך כי אם ליראה את ה’”; the Gemara *darshens* from these words that the word “מה”, *what*, can also be read as a *remez* to the word “מאה”. In other words, the *pasuk* can be translated as follows: “What does Hashem want from you other than 100?” – i.e., the 100 *brachos* that are to be recited each day.

Now, the Gemara in Brachos says that if a person chooses to eat prior to making the required *bracha*, then he is considered like a person who committed *me’ilah* – temporal usage of property that was dedicated to the Beis Hamikdash. The moment the *bracha* is made, the usage of the food no longer falls under the category of *me’ilah*. The Sfas Emes explains that the reason for this is simple: for instance, blood that was supposed to be sprayed on the *mizbe’ach* only retains a prohibition of *me’ilah* as long as the *mitzvah* was not yet done; once it was sprayed, then the blood no longer maintains the Halacha of *me’ilah*. So too, any form of food that a Yid intends to consume has a *mitzvah* attached to it: the *mitzvah* of reciting a *bracha*. Once the *mitzvah* is carried out, then the prohibition of *me’ilah* disappears.

There is a very deep lesson to be learned from this Gemara. It was no coincidence that the *pasuk* that tells us to have *Yiras Shomayim* is the same one that teaches us about making 100 *brachos* each and every day. The relationship between the two is a concept that we discussed many times: a person needs constant and recurring *chizzuk* in his *Avodas Hashem* on a regular basis if he wishes to succeed. Every car battery needs an alternator, as we have mentioned in the past. I recently heard that the Chasam Sofer

asserted that any day that he doesn't learn any *mussar* – he experiences a certain amount of coldness in his *Yiras Shomayim*. *Kal vachomer* little people like us!

Rav Elya Roth *zt"l* told me that the same goes for our discussion. The 100 *brachos* we recite each day are frequent reminders to stop, focus on, and appreciate the fact that there is a Ribono Shel Olam watching us all the time and tending to our every need. He would also repeat this idea with regard to walking past a *mezuzah*; each time a Yid does so, he must stop and contemplate the greatness of the Ribono Shel Olam for a brief moment.

When the Chazon Ish would make a bracha, his entire body would tremble in trepidation and awe of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. By him, there was no such thing as a bracha being mumbled without intense concentration. Each bracha was like a mussar seder.

At one point, after going through a serious health issue, the Chazon Ish's doctor (who was a frum Yid) instructed him to refrain from making any brachos for a period of time. He felt that the Tzaddik's physical excitement and exertion while reciting a bracha could potentially have been detrimental to his health. At some point during that short period, someone witnessed the Chazon Ish lifting up an apple and saying, "The same Ribono Shel Olam that instructed me to make a bracha prior to consuming this apple is now telling me to eat it without a bracha." He then proceeded to eat the apple without making a bracha.

One may wonder: why couldn't the Chazon Ish just make a simple bracha and avoid the vigorous expressions of enthusiasm and animation that usually accompany his recital? But the answer is that to the Chazon Ish, doing a basic mitzvah – such as making a bracha rishona – was synonymous with expressing passion and vigor with every bone in his body. If he wished to refrain from such exertion, he had no choice other than abstaining from reciting the bracha.

Why Is the Torah so Repetitive with Regard to the Meleches HaMishkan?

In Parshas Chayei Sarah, the Torah recounts the story of Eliezer and how he found Rivka – and it seems to do so quite verbosely. The story itself is told very descriptively, and when Eliezer meets with Rivka's family – the Torah repeats the entire conversation, even though it had already recounted all of the details in the previous *pesukim*. This is an atypical occurrence in the Torah; generally, the words of the *Torah She'bichsav* are extremely limited. (Just think about how we learn the Halacha that the blood of a *sheretz* is *tamei* from an extra *vav*.) The Midrash famously states regarding this: "יפה שיחתן של עבדי אבות לפני" – "הקב"ה מתורתן של בנים" – *The Ribono Shel Olam prefers the conversations of the servants of the Avos over the Torah of the children.*

Now, we find a similar phenomenon in this week's *Parsha* and the ones that follow it. The predominant topic at hand in the *Parshiyos* of Terumah, Tetzaveh, Ki Sisa, Vayakhel and Pekudei is the construction of the Mishkan and its vessels. Many of these chapters are actually repetitions of ones that were already delineated in previous *Parshiyos*. Well, the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh in Parshas Vayakhel took note of this – and explained it by referencing the aforementioned words of Chazal: "יפה שיחתן של עבדי אבות" – "לפני הקב"ה מתורתן של בנים".

Seeing How the Torah Changes Us

This needs some clarification. What did the Ohr Hachaim mean by bringing this *maamar Chazal* into this discussion? I'm sure there are many ways to explain what he meant, but I would like to suggest the following *mehalech*.

Why does Hakadosh Baruch Hu love the conversations of the servants of the *Avos* so much? Perhaps one of the reasons is that there's a big difference between learning about *middos tovos* and actually seeing them play out. The Torah teaches us many timeless values – but facts can be seen as technical information, as opposed to relatable realities. When we read stories about simple servants of great people reaching such elevated heights in their *middos tovos* and *Emunah*, it changes our perspective

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on life. We see from stories like these that the Torah can really change a person and make him so valued and adored by Hashem that He chooses to describe him at length – something He doesn't normally do in the Torah.

Perhaps we can say a similar thought regarding the *Melech HaMishkan*. Chazal teach us in numerous places that every single facet of the Mishkan and its holy vessels represented very deep concepts of the Torah, and each generated an abundance of השפעות טובות onto the entire nation. Now, these concepts are all hidden in the words of the Torah, indiscernible to the untrained eye – but the actual, physical construction of the Mishkan and its vessels is described at length. Perhaps this is because the devotion, the alacrity, the precision of the Yidden who dedicated themselves to erecting the Mishkan in the most perfect way possible is far more important to the Eibishter than the *sodos* of the Torah. It shows us all, throughout the generations, how Yidden were so excited to make physical and heartfelt contributions to the holy service of the Mishkan, down to the last detail – even though these details may have seemed diminutive and insignificant to some people at that time. It shows us how clinging to every word of the Ribono Shel Olam – whether we fully understand them or not – is far more beautiful than anything else.

With this idea in mind, let us try to take the words of this *shmuess* seriously, and commit ourselves to always make a בלב נדבה before any act of *Avodas Hashem*. Let us try to devote ourselves to Hashem emotionally and physically in every way possible, and recognize that our dedication is more valuable to the Ribono Shel Olam than anything else.

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This *shmuess* was adapted into writing
by:

R' Yitzchok Schwarz

732-930-4619

writeitall246@gmail.com