

פרשת תרומה

LIFELINE

“Let them take for Me a portion; from every man whose heart motivates him you shall take My portion ... gold, silver, and copper; turquoise, purple and scarlet wool; linen and goat hair; red-dyed ram skins, tachash skins; acacia wood; oil for illumination; spices for the anointment oil and aromatic incense; shoham stones and stones for the settings of the Efod and the Breastplate” (*Shemos 25:2-7*)

The Or HaChaim comments on the variety of materials listed in the Torah in descending order of their value that Bnai Yisroel needed to donate for the building of the Mishkan. He points out, though, that the precious stones required for the Efod and the Breastplate were the most valuable and costly items, as we learn in the Talmud (*Kiddushin 31a*) that when the delegates came to Dama ben Nesinah they offered to buy his costly jewel for 600,000 silver dinarim. Yet, says the Or HaChaim, those are listed out of order, at the very end of the inventory.

The Or HaChaim presents a fundamental concept. These invaluable gemstones were contributed by the Nesi'im who had them delivered to the doors of their houses by the Clouds of Glory (*ananei hakavod*). There was no personal exertion in any way on their part to attain them or earn them. A contribution that did not require any hard work did not merit to precede all the others and therefore it was enumerated last.

This is similar to the concept expressed in the Talmud (*Bava Metzia 38a*), “A person prefers a smaller quantity grown by himself than a larger quantity produced by another.”

HaGaon HaRav Chaim Shmuelevitz further analyzes the *pasuk* and notes that the donations were to be taken “*mei'eis kol ish asher yidvenu libo* -- from every man whose heart motivates him.” He explains that when one contributes from his possessions with *nedivas halev* that is the highest level of giving. It indicates that the individual expended great effort and exertion to acquire his wealth and it is very dear to him; yet, he is willing to bequeath a certain amount of this valuable commodity to the Mishkan. It is the giving of the heart that brings a person to a high level in *avodas Hashem*.

We find similarly in the *parsha* of *bikurim* (the offering of first fruits). The *pasuk* says (*Devarim 26:10*): “...and you shall lay it [the *bikkurim*] before Hashem and you shall prostrate yourself before Hashem.” Our sages note that there is no other *mitzvah* in the Torah that requires one to bow before Hashem, except when one brings *bikkurim*. *Bikurim* represent the product of one's intense toil and labor. The individual tilled and plowed the ground, fertilized it, planted the seeds, and nurtured the plants. When one brings *bikurim*, the first and choicest fruit of his land, before Hashem there is no greater act of *nedivas lev*. It is a true act of *mesiras nefesh* for the honor of Hashem. The genuflection demonstrates one's humility in serving Hashem.

We also learn in *Pirkei Avos* (5:26), “*L’fum tzaara agra* – according to the pain so is the reward.” Meforshim explain that although generally one is not rewarded for his performance of *mitzvos* in this world, if a person did *mitzvos* despite hardships and difficult challenges, there is a measure of reward for him in this world.

It is known that during the years of the Holocaust, under the most adverse and difficult situations, Jews continued to observe *mitzvos* and meticulously followed the Torah to the best of their ability. Several books of responsa have been written concerning halachic queries of the *kedoshim* regarding observance of *mitzvos* in ghettos and concentration camps.

At end of WWII the Allied forces entered the death camps and announced to the prisoners that they were liberated. The people were emaciated from hunger, exhausted beyond description. They were not even able to completely fathom the concept of liberation and freedom. The American general informed the prisoners, “You are now under the protection of the American Army. You will be in our charge and receive food. You will be settled in a secure and safe place, and you will not lack anything.”

The *shearis hapeitah* looked at each other in wonderment and disbelief. Among this group of liberated prisoners sat the great *tzaddik*, the Klausenberger Rebbe. In response to the general’s proclamation, he rose and said: We give tremendous thanks to the Army that has freed us. I ask you to please consider the following. I want you to know that some of the people here today are Jewish and follow the laws of their religion. They can only eat food that conforms to their dietary laws of kashrus. The food must be kosher.”

The *tzaddik* was clear. There was no question. He knew what Hashem expects from His people – the observance of *mitzvos* even under the most trying conditions. However, some of the people gathered did not share this feeling. They disagreed with the Rebbe and argued, “Who needs to eat kosher? We have just been liberated and you’re already starting with your craziness.”

The *tzaddik* smiled serenely and answered them gently: “The horrors have ended. We will now become human beings again. We are Jews and each one of us has to heed the cherished laws of the Torah which include not eating that which is forbidden.”

Surrounded by the group of followers who had been with him throughout the entire war, he continued, “We have to always remember that we are Yidden, and a Jew is obligated to worry about kashrus at all times.”

Approximately an hour passed and the Army brought in a tremendous amount of food. Most of the former inmates ran and grabbed whatever they could until there wasn’t even a morsel of food left. Some Jews fell into despair and cried that it would have been better if they had already died.

However, a little bit later in the day the news spread through the camp that a new kitchen had been established that would have kosher food. Upon hearing this news, the

Klausenberger Rebbe, who had survived untold tortures and was ill and weak, rose and proclaimed in a strong voice: “We are living today because we are Jews. It’s written in our Torah (*Devarim 4:4*), “But you who cling to Hashem, your G-d – you are all alive today.”