

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת תרומה

דבר אל בני ישראל ויקחו לי תרומה מאת כל איש אשר ידבנו לבו תקחו את תרומתי

“Speak to the Children of Israel and they shall take to Me a portion, from every man whose heart will motivate him you shall take My portion” (25:2)

What is the connection between Parshas Mishpatim and Parshas Terumah? The Bais HaLevi writes that before a person gives money to tzedaka, he has to know the laws of Parshas Mishpatim in order to ensure that the money was obtained properly. Hashem only desires charity from money that is earned honestly. The idea of Robin Hood is not a Torah concept.

Kanfei Elisha (R' Elisha Rosenfeld) poses another question to arrive at an explanation of this connection. Chazal tell us that Moshe did not understand Hashem's command regarding the half-shekel donation so Hashem showed him a coin of fire so that he should know what Hashem intended. What was so difficult for Moshe to understand about the half-shekel? The answer is that the fiery coin signifies that Hashem wants the burning desire of a person more than anything else. It is not the coin itself or the amount that the person gives but the way in which he does the mitzvah that serves as a credit for the person. That is also why Hashem asked that people donate half-shekels rather than whole ones. The amount is not as important as the mindset behind it.

With this we can understand the connection between the two parshiyos. The end of Parshas Mishpatim describes the appearance of the Divine Presence as a burning fire to show that Hashem wants people to have a burning desire to come close to Him and to do mitzvos. This theme is continued with the command to donate to the Mishkan. While people may give as much as they like, it is important to keep in mind that the desire and passion is what Hashem wants from a mitzvah.

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Why did Hashem ask the people to “take” a donation for the Mishkan rather than to “give” a donation? When one gives, he is really taking as well. Chazal tell us that the donor benefits more than the recipient does from an act of charity. When one performs such a tremendous mitzvah, he earns a great deal for himself. Many times a person gives of his time, effort and/or money and feels that he has given so much. It is important for this person to realize that he is taking as well and that all his efforts will not only be repaid by Hashem but will also help him improve himself. Any mitzvah that involves giving of oneself makes one a better person.

שמן למאר בשמים לשמן המשחה ולקטרת הסמים

“An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot” (25:6)

Birkas Ish (R' Avraham Yitzchak Shein from the Yeshiva of Staten Island) asks: Why does the Torah mention the oil and spices here if they were not used in the actual construction of the Mishkan? He answers, based on the Sefer HaChinuch, that the menorah was lit for the honor of Hashem rather than for its light. Likewise, the ketores was only offered for the honor of Hashem, to infuse His sanctuary with a pleasant smell. Therefore, they are listed here along with all the materials that were used for building a beautiful Mishkan, the purpose of which was to honor Hashem. On the other hand, flour and animals for korbanos served to atone for people rather than to honor Hashem. Therefore, these items were excluded from this list.

ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם

“They shall make Me a sanctuary so that I may dwell among them” (25:8)

The Dubno Maggid told the following parable to explain the role that the Mishkan is meant to play in Jewish society: There was once a rich man

who bought his son a special expensive wallet. The son showed his new wallet to his poor friend and the friend was immediately jealous. He decided to save up his pennies until he could afford just such a wallet for himself. When the friend's father heard of this plan, he told the boy that this was a foolish idea. Even if he would eventually save enough to buy the wallet, he would have no money to put inside it.

The lesson of the story is that the Jewish people can build a Mishkan, but it is pointless to do so if we are not worthy enough that Hashem should dwell among us. We must earn the right to have Hashem dwell in our midst. Building a beautiful edifice without beautifying ourselves is not constructive.

ועשית שנים כרבים זהב מקשה תעשה אתם משני קצות הכפרת

“You shall make two cherubim of gold - beaten shall you make them - from both ends of the lid” (25:18)

The Mechilta writes that all the vessels in the Mishkan could be made from other metals if there was no gold available. The lone exception is the keruvim, cherubim, which must always be of gold. Rashi explains that the keruvim had the faces of small children. R' Meir Shapiro writes that the placement of children on top of the Aron HaKodesh in the Holy of Holies teaches us the importance of educating Jewish children. This is a task that stands in the holiest place. The education of children must be the best, the "gold" standard, at all times, regardless of the circumstances. A child must be educated properly in the manner that he needs, both at home and at school. He cannot be given a second-rate education. The Gemara writes that a person's income is set on Rosh Hashana with the exception of what he spends on Shabbos, Yom Tov, and on teaching one's child Torah. This expense is not a loss, but an extra stipend that does not affect the rest of a person's income. It is also important not to settle for a mediocre Torah education for our children but to give them the gold standard. The children are our future. Chazal tell us that when the time comes for the building of the Third Beis HaMikdash, everyone will go to help with the construction except for the children, who will remain learning Torah. What a child learns in his youth will remain with him forever. Chazal tell us that this is because

the world is maintained by the Torah study of young children. Similarly, the Tzror HaMor writes that the keruvim had their wings spread over the Aron just as the children protect the Jewish people. The Baal HaTurim writes that the keruvim serve as a reminder of the merit of the avos. If so, why do they have their faces those of children? The answer is that Hashem promised Avraham that he and his descendants would be Hashem's chosen nation because Avraham would teach his children to follow in his footsteps (see Bereishis 18:19). The education of children is the foundation of the Bris Avos through which we became Hashem's people.

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Written by Michael Gutmann