

INVEST IN YOURSELF

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

"And G-d spoke to Moshe, saying: Speak to the Children of Israel, that they should take a gift for Me, from every person whose heart moves him you should take My gift... And let them build Me a Sanctuary, and I will dwell in their midst." [25:1-2,8]

The Torah obligates us to do many things. Parshas Mishpatim, which we read last week, describes 53 of those obligations (according to the Sefer HaChinuch) - only three other readings contain more Mitzvos than Parshas Mishpatim.

This week, on the other hand, the call goes out to those of a generous heart, to go beyond their obligations. The first Mitzvah in our parsha concerns the **result** of the donations - to build the Sanctuary. There was no commandment to give. The beginning of our parsha does not say "Speak to the Children of Israel, that they shall give..." - rather, the Abarbanel says that the verse is speaking to the Gabbai, the collector, who was to take the gifts of those whose hearts moved them. The gifts themselves were completely voluntary.

The verse uses the expression "asher yidvenu libo," which we translated as "whose heart moves him." Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch says that the word "yidvenu" means to inspire, or even to prod (actually, the translator from German used the word "incite," but its connotations are usually negative). This, according to Rabbi Hirsch, denotes the highest level of free will and choice.

The Ohr HaChaim says that when we know a person is a "Nediv Lev," that he (or she) has a generous heart which moves him to give, we cannot argue with him or try to determine the amount which we will be given. On the contrary, when we know a person is generous, we know that he will do what he can. G-d Himself testifies that this is "My gift" - this is what the person can do.

According to the Ohr HaChaim, the verse is also telling us that something can only be called a "Trumasi," My - G-d's - gift, if it comes from the heart - from the internal motivation of the heart to give. And the Bais HaLevi tells us that no one profits from the giving, more than the giver himself or herself. The Bais HaLevi says the verse uses "take" rather than "give" because the donor is the one who benefits. All the money and the worldly possessions which we gather for ourselves, we pass on to others - while the money which we give to charity, to support the poor and needy, to support Torah learning and Jewish growth, this is money which we invest in ourselves. The Tzror HaMor says

the same thing - and this, he says, is why the verse says to "take," because the donor is really receiving as much as he or she is giving.

Good Shabbos,
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