

THE TRUE TERUMAH

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Friday Night:

Speak to the Children of Israel and take to Me a t'rumah . . . (Shemos 25:2)

TAKE TO ME: The letters are "mem" and "Torah" because the Torah which was given in forty days is for those who eat t'rumah. When it says that Torah was only given to those who eat manna it should be changed to those who eat t'rumah. This is what it means when it says "Take to Me - for My sake," for anyone who learns Torah is like one who has taken Me because The Holy One, Blessed is He, only has the four amos of halachah in this world. Therefore, this section about taking a t'rumah follows the section about Torah. (Ba'al HaTurim)

The word t'rumah, spelled tav-raish-vav-mem-heh, means "elevated-offering." We are about to begin the section dealing with the construction of the Mishkan, and the Jewish people are being asked at the beginning of this week's parshah to make voluntary contributions of all types of materials to be used in making the implements to be used in the Mishkan in the daily service.

However, as the Ba'al HaTurim is teaching, this is about more than a simple fund raising drive for a holy cause. The word "t'rumah" is comprised of two parts, the letter "mem" whose numerical value is forty, and the remaining letters, tav-raish-vav-heh, which conveniently spell the word Torah when rearranged.

Thus, on a Pshat-level we are talking about bringing voluntary gifts for the construction of the Mishkan. However, on the level of Remez, there is a hint in the word t'rumah to a different level of understanding and undertaking, namely the need to learn Torah. Drush teaches us that when one does this he is said to be "taking G-d," that is, developing the ultimate relationship with Him.

What about Sod and the Kabbalistic explanation of the verse? Perhaps this is one such explanation of what is being hinted to by the word t'rumah itself:

The tikun of Ruach of Yetzirah comes from learning Torah altruistically, specifically the Oral Law such as Mishnah and Talmud, etc. The tikun to the Neshamah results from the knowledge of Kabbalistic ideas and secrets of Torah from the Zohar. (Shaar HaGilgulim, Page 41)

Sounds simple enough, no? Perhaps if we define some terms we will be able to understand the profundity of this simple but very deep statement, and how it relates to this week's parshah.

Last week we compared life to an onion. This week we will compare life to a ladder, one that stretches between us and Ain Sof, the name we give to G-d's light at a very high level. This would make the purpose of life to climb the ladder and come close to G-d, and if this sounds vaguely familiar to the ladder that Ya'akov dreamed of in Parashas Vayaitzai it is because it is the same thing.

There are only five rungs on this ladder and their names are Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah, Chiyah, and Yechidah - the five levels of soul. They have other names as well: Asiyah, Yetzirah, Beriyah, Atzilus, and Adam Kadmon and thus, to "climb" from Nefesh to Ruach is to climb from Asiyah to Yetzirah; to climb from Ruach to Neshamah is to climb from Yetzirah to Beriyah, and so forth.

It sounds simple enough. After all, how long can it take to climb a ladder that only has five rungs? Well, that will depend upon how tall you are, or in this case how spiritually tall one is. If the rung above you is out of your reach then you will need another smaller ladder to climb up and reach the next rung and perhaps, a ladder within that ladder to get you to its next rung in order to get to the second ladder's next rung on your way to the next rung of the first ladder. There may be more smaller ladders, but I think the point is clear.

When the Arizal speaks about a rectification to the Ruach of Yetzirah, he is talking about a spiritual means to climb this spiritual ladder. For, when one climbs this ladder it is not an issue of physical movement, but one of spiritual movement, as we will now discuss.

Shabbos Day:

... Each person according to the generosity of his heart ... (Shemos 25:2)

Different mitzvos, by their very natures, affect the one performing them and the world in general, differently. To begin with, they may use different parts of the body. For example, the mitzvah to visit the sick entails physically going to the infirmed person, whereas the mitzvah to wear Tefillin doesn't require much movement at all. On the other hand, it does directly "touch" the body of the one putting on the Tefillin, whereas visiting the sick does not.

Some mitzvos, such as praying only involves speech and should also involve the mind. Since different parts of the body have their own level of importance from a spiritual point of view as well as from a physical point of view, they affect the person and the world on different levels.

Likewise, the five rungs on the spiritual ladder also correspond to areas of Torah learning, at least the four bottom "rungs" do. They are: Mikrah, Mishnah, Talmud, and Kabbalah. Mikrah refers to the

learning of the Written Law on its most obvious level, whereas Mishnah already represents a discussion of the idea on a deeper, less obvious level. Talmud is the elaboration of the Mishnah which is usually quite terse, and Kabbalah represents the deepest and most profound explanation of the idea.

Hence, when a person graduates from learning Torah on the simplest level and begins to study Mishnah, he is entering a whole new world. According to the Arizal:

"The tikun of Ruach of Yetzirah comes from learning Torah altruistically, specifically the Oral Law such as Mishnah and Talmud, etc."

To begin with, there is the nature of the Oral Law itself, which is said to contain the Hidden Light of creation. However, the fact that the Oral Law is meant to be learned out loud, means that it involves speech in the process that is a function of a higher level of soul. As well, the Oral Law is very instructive and engaging, particularly the Talmud and so much so that one must first learn how to learn it before being able to even turn a page.

There is really nothing in the world like the Talmud, and when one learns it consistently and thoroughly, one can feel a change of being. The Talmud tends to cause those who learn it to spiritually develop in ways, and at rate that no other work can seem to match, at least in terms of revealed Torah. This is because, as the Arizal explains, one is actually acquiring a whole new higher level of his own soul, and the more spiritually whole one becomes, the more complete he is going to feel and act.

However, it is the words of the Arizal that explains the power of Kabbalah, and what is commonly referred to as Sod:

"The tikun to the Neshamah results from the knowledge of Kabbalistic ideas and secrets of Torah from the Zohar."

If you asked someone who is already familiar with these ideas if it is imperative to learn Kabbalah, they might answer no. However, if you asked that person if it is crucial to "acquire" one's own Neshamah, without a doubt they would answer in the affirmative. A contradiction? It is more like a misunderstanding where the person does not know about the connection between learning Kabbalah and the acquisition of the one's soul, or the Neshamah part of it.

What is that connection? The following explains the connection, though it too will need some explanation.

... This is the main rectification of learning Kabbalah more than any other section of Torah. For, the rest of Torah is clothed in matters of this world as opposed to Kabbalah - and specifically the words of the Arizal which are built upon the Aderos and Safra d'Tzniusa (sections of the Zohar), and the depths of the secrets of the Holy Zohar - which only deals with matters of Atzilus and the worlds of the light of Ain Sof. Therefore, the wisdom of Kabbalah is called "nistar" (hidden) because it deals

with matters of the Upper Worlds which no creature can achieve or grasp; they are hidden from everyone. (Drushei Olam HaTohu, Chelek 1, Drush 5, Siman 7, Letter 8)

In other words, Kabbalah deals with the upper "rungs" of the spiritual ladder, which correspond to the upper levels of one's soul. Or, to bring it more down to earth, Kabbalah is the "program" that runs the entire system whereas the other areas of Torah are the "results" of that program; Kabbalah is the cause that God - the FIRST Cause - created, and the rest of Torah is the effect.

Likewise, the higher the level of soul the more it is the "cause" for the lower levels of soul under it. This is why the second highest level of soul is called "Chiyah," which means "living," because it is said to give life to all the levels of soul under it: Neshamah, Ruach, and Nefesh. With each subsequent level of soul the light becomes filtered, weaker, and less independent.

Simply put, the higher the level of Torah one learns, the higher the level of soul one rectifies, and the greater the level of perfection one attains. This is what brings a person to higher levels of spiritual sincerity, to a greater level of desire to give to G-d until one reaches the level described by one of the greatest lovers of G-d ever to live, Dovid HaMelech:

One thing I asked of G-d, that I shall seek -- that I dwell in the House of G-d all the days of my life, to see the sweetness of G-d . . . (Tehillim 27:4)

This is the ultimate t'rumah, as we shall now explain, G-d willing.

SEUDAH SHLISHIS:

. . . Take for Me My t'rumah. (Shemos 25:2)

These are the final words of the posuk. The t'rumah of the first part of the posuk has somehow become "My t'rumah" - G-d's personal t'rumah - at the end of the posuk. The ultimate Elevated-Offering is the person himself, after he has climbed the spiritual ladder and taken advantage of his spiritual potential to come close to G-d, something that can only be achieved through the Torah that was given in forty days.

Thus, on a Pshat-level, this posuk is a commandment to begin collecting the necessary elements to construct a physical edifice within which the service of G-d can be performed on a daily basis. However, on a deeper level it is a commandment for every Jew to begin building himself or herself so that G-d can dwell within the actual individual.

The greater the rectification the individual performs, the more the Divine Presence can dwell within the person. The higher the level of Torah learning, the greater the rectification, and people sense this which is why they often run to learn Kabbalah even before they have learned to "walk," let alone

"run" in the world of Torah - like people who try to put a well-tuned and expensive engine in the body of a beaten up car.

However, at Mt. Sinai we learned that there are no short-cuts and that trying to make some only leads to self-destruction:

G-d said to Moshe, "Go down. Warn the people in case they break through to see G-d, and many die. Let the priests, who approach G-d, also sanctify themselves, to avoid G-d punishing them." Moshe told G-d, "The people cannot come up Mt. Sinai because You already warned us to set up boundaries around the mountain and to sanctify it." G-d answered him, "Go, go down, and come up later, you and Aharon with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to approach G-d. Otherwise, I will have to punish them." (Shemos 19:21-24)

Think of the bottom of the mountain as the bottom of the spiritual ladder of five rungs. Think of the Divine Presence hovering over the mountain as Level Five on that ladder. With the top of the ladder apparently so close and tangible, would the Jewish people not thirst to run up the mountain and grasp it - warning or no warning? Moshe thought no; G-d said yes.

However, doing so was desirous even as it carried the death penalty with it. Only Moshe who had properly traversed all levels as much as was humanly possible was allowed to enter the cloud and Heaven. Aharon and the Elders, who came close to spiritual perfection could not enter the cloud and were denied access to Heaven, though they were allowed up the mountain. The rest of the nation had to wait below at the foot of the mountain and view the top from the bottom.

Nevertheless, in life, if one spends the time and energy to move from rung to rung along the ladder of Torah, thoroughly rectifying each level of soul before climbing higher, then he will be allowed to enter new heights with G-d's blessing. More importantly, he becomes "t'rumasi" - G-d's own personal Elevated-Offering - the ultimate gift man can give to G-d, and the ultimate fulfillment of our reason for living.

MELAVE MALKAH:

Chanukah & The Wonderful World of Thirty-Six

Installment #11, Chapter Eight, Part One: Why Thirty-Six?

You wouldn't believe how many thirty-sixes there are in Tanach, from the beginning to the end, and throughout various different writings, and just where they should be. For some, it might appear as if the idea of thirty-six is being taken too far, while for others it may be nothing more than merely amusing.

However, understanding what the number thirty-six really represents makes it much easier to

appreciate just how powerful all the allusions to the thirty-six really are. For within the number thirty-six is the very purpose of our existence, and within it is the most important clue we'll ever need to understand about what our role is.

To have this discussion necessitates an introduction to the Kabbalistic concept of Sefiros, of which there are ten, what they are and what role they play in the history of mankind. Their names are Keser, Chochmah, Binah, Chesed, Gevurah, Tifferes, Netzach, Hod, Yesod, and Malchus, or Crown, Wisdom, Understanding, Kindness, Strength, Beauty, Dominance, Glory, Foundation, and Kingdom.

They sound more like character traits, which is why they are also called "Middos," or "measurements," a word that is also used for "character traits." After all, one's character traits are the measure of one's spiritual greatness and their true accomplishments in life.

They have also been defined as spiritual emanations of G-d's light, but we can also refer to them as filters for G-d's light. As G-d told Moshe:

No one can see My face because no man can see Me and live! (Shemos 33:20)

Why not? Because G-d's light is far too powerful for man to behold, at least in man's physical state. Exposure to such a high level of light would pull the soul right out of a person's body and result in instant death, to say the least. Levels of G-d's light far less in intensity can also deny a person free-will if it is clearly discernable, as in the case of an obvious miracle such as the splitting of the Red Sea.

Creation was made so that man, through his free-will choices, could achieve spiritual completion and earn a portion of the World-to-Come and eternal bliss. Therefore, G-d filters His light to the point that its presence isn't so noticeable except to those who have become spiritually sensitized to it. The system through which G-d's light is filtered and simultaneously veiled is called the Sefiros, of which there are ten, as we have already mentioned.

However, creation and history are extremely detailed. Therefore, just as in the case of a sophisticated computer there are many parts, some exceedingly tiny but still quite precise, so too do the Sefiros have subsections, and subsections of the subsections, until there is a spiritual counterpart for all that spiritually and physically exists.

Each of the ten Sefiros have ten Sefiros of their own, and those ten have ten of their own, and so on until the general system is duplicated and mirrored on countless specific levels and in countless worlds to a degree that only G-d could fathom and appreciate. However, for our discussion purposes it will be enough to deal with only one subset of the general system of the Ten Sefiros, of the sefiros Chesed through Yesod, specifically.

Man: G-d's Partner

Life is no picnic. It started out rather pleasant in the Garden of Eden, but took an abrupt turn for the

worst when Adam made the fateful mistake of eating from the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Then there was expulsion into a world that has been far less than a paradise, and the rest has been history.

Creation is not perfect, evident by the fact that Adam sinned and man can do evil. In fact, doing the right thing often seems like an uphill battle, which has made many question the presence of G-d in history throughout the millennia.

However, a careful reading of the classic Torah texts reveals that this is creation's perfection, inasmuch as it allows man to become a partner with G-d in creation. G-d's work was complete and perfect as always; any perfection He left over to be completed was purposely given over to man to bring about. Man was made to become a partner with G-d in bringing creation to perfection, whether we realize it or not, or whether we like it or not.

We are not unlimited in what we can accomplish, but we can do much. However, nothing we can do, say, or think can affect the upper three sefiros, Keser, Chochmah, and Binah. They are said to be perfect already, the handiwork of G-d's creating. Any perfection they might be said to lack is only because they exist to benefit the lower sefiros that may be denied such assistance due to our own sins.

It's like a parent who yearns to give to his or her child. Nothing gives the parent greater pleasure than benefiting the child. Nothing gives the parent a greater sense of self-fulfillment than to help his or her child to the best of the parent's ability. This is the true nature of a truly loving parent.

However, what if the child is too foolish to realize this? What if the child is too immature to appreciate what his parent can do for him, and why it is important to be a fitting receiver of such help? Surely the parent will stop giving when doing so is a better giving than the giving itself, what we call discipline for the child's sake.

The child's imperfections are not the parent's deficient. Nevertheless, the fact that the parent cannot continue to benefit the child when that is the parent's natural instinct, hurts the parent to some degree. The parent denied the opportunity to do that which fulfills his or her reason to exist, experiences a level of incompleteness.

It is also the case with the upper Sefiros when the lower six Sefiros - the ones which gave rise to the six days of creation and the six millennia of history of which we are a part - are not in a position to receive all the light ultimately intended for the lower sefiros. That is because mankind has yet to rectify them to the point that they have become fitting vessels for such light, something the Jewish people specifically are supposed to do through the learning of Torah and the performance of mitzvos.

Being the light unto nations that we were redeemed from Egypt to be, through the wisdom of the Torah we are supposed to elevate the spiritual consciousness of the entire world. This results in

more light coming down from the upper sefiros that causes the lower sefiros to "mature" and become able to handle an increased capacity of G-d's light. All that we affect and are affected by is by way of the Sefiros, which in a sense are the place that G-d encoded His master plan for creation.

Obviously, there is much more to understand regarding such a holy concept as the Ten Sefiros. Nevertheless, this is as Kabbalistic a definition of redemption as you will find, for as long as these six sefiros remain spiritually underdeveloped and are denied the light of the upper three sefiros, then exile is the result. The more light these specific six sefiros can handle and receive, the more redemption the world can enjoy and the less evil can exist.

This is all by way of introduction, but it will help us to understand the meaning and importance of the number thirty-six. Remember it well. More importantly, it will help us to build an important foundation to help us better understand our role within creation. It may take a few sessions to do all of this, but when it will be all said and done, it will have been worth it.

Have a great Shabbos,
Pinchas Winston

This week's parshah sheet is in the merit and loving memory of Chaim ben Yitzchak, z"l, by his son and family, whose many acts of chesed and support of Torah causes will surely bring great honor to their father's soul and elevation after elevation.