

ALSHICH

INSIGHTS FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

ספר שמות

פרשת תרומה

SERIES 1: ISSUE 19

THE GREAT MITZVAH OF GIVING TZEDAKAH

Chapter 25

1) God spoke to Moshe, saying:

(א) וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר.

2) "Speak to Bnei Yisrael and they shall take for Me a donation from with each man (מֵאֵת כָּל אִישׁ) whose heart makes him want to give, you shall take My donation.

(ב) דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ לִי תְרוּמָה מֵאֵת כָּל אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִדְבְּנוּ לְבוֹ תִקְחוּ אֶת תְּרוּמָתִי.

3) "This is the donation that you shall take from them – gold and silver and copper."

(ג) וְזֹאת הַתְּרוּמָה אֲשֶׁר תִּקְחוּ מֵאֲתָם זָהָב וְכֶסֶף וְנְחֹשֶׁת.

Consider the following questions:

1. Why does verse 2 say, "they shall **take** for Me a donation"? Surely it should say, "they should **give** Me."
2. Why does the verse say מֵאֵת כָּל אִישׁ instead of saying more concisely מִכָּל אִישׁ?
3. Having already mentioned "taking a donation" earlier in the verse, why does it repeat it at the end of the verse?
4. Why does it repeat the word *donation* a third time at the beginning of verse 3? It could have just said, "This is what you shall take from them..."

Before we can answer these questions, we must explain two important principles:

(1) If a simple person gives a gift to an important person, the giver is considered the recipient in the transaction, for the very fact that the gift is accepted gives him honor and lends him importance.

(2) Our Sages (*Vayikra Rabbah* 34:8) have also told us, "The receiver of *tzedakah* does more for the giver than the giver does for him." They learned this from the words of Rus after Boaz had allowed her to glean from his crops. On her return to Naomi, her mother-in-law, she said (*Rus* 2:19), "The name of the man for whom I did [things] today is Boaz." She should have said instead, "The name of the man who did things **for me** is Boaz." This teaches us that by accepting his offering of food, **she** benefited **him**. This is because a donor gives a poor person food or money to help satisfy his physical needs, but by accepting the *tzedakah*, the "recipient" gives the donor a spiritual reward that causes him to become illuminated with the light of the mitzvah. Moreover, as *Avos* 4:11 states, an accompanying angel is brought into being through the mitzvah. This is something worth far more than any silver or gold.

These two principles are nowhere more evident than in the mitzvah of the people donating to the Mishkan. If, as Principle 1 states, having one's gift accepted by a person who is more important than oneself causes the giver to

be regarded as the recipient, how much more so does this apply in our case, where the “recipient” is Hashem Himself, King of kings and Creator of the universe. By commanding us to donate to the Mishkan where His Presence will dwell, and accepting it from us, God bestowed upon us incomparable importance, for who are we that our donation should mean anything to Him? Clearly, it is we who are the recipients – all the more so since the materials we donated all belonged to Hashem anyway.

Secondly, without doubt Hashem was doing far, far more for us than we were doing for Him by contributing our silver, gold and other materials. We just gave Him physical things, while He was giving us an immeasurable spiritual merit.

Based on all this we can now explain the wording of the Torah in verse 2, “*Speak to Bnei Yisrael and they shall take for Me a donation...*” Hashem is saying: “By giving their donations, they will actually be **taking** more than giving, since it is to Me they are donating, and I am giving them importance by accepting their gifts.”

[This answers Question 1.]

“This is all the more so since everything belongs to Me, and the Jewish people’s contributions will be only *from with* (מֵאִתּוֹ) *each man*, i.e., from that which is ‘with each person’ to look after (in the manner that one guards a deposit) but is not actually his. **[This answers Question 2.]** Furthermore, see the extent to which I have given each of you importance: When a king receives a large gift from many different donors, he rejoices only at the combined gift, since what each individual gives is very small. But I am not like that with you, My people. Rather, *from that which is with each man ... you shall take My donation* – that is, the portion you will take from each and every individual will be considered before Me as *My donation*, i.e., as the entire amount needed for the Mishkan.” **[This answers Question 3.]**

In verse 3 it then says, *This is the donation that you shall take from them – gold and silver and copper.* God was emphasizing that the *donation* from the Jewish people was something purely physical – gold, silver, etc. Only this physical contribution is the donation that Moshe should take from them, not more than that.

[This answers Question 4.] But what He was giving them in return was something spiritual and immensely valuable, namely (25:8), “*They shall make for Me a Mikdash and I will dwell among them.*” What greater joy can there be for Bnei Yisrael than having the ability, even in this world, to be so close to Hashem that He dwells among them? We see here very clearly the principle we learned above that “The receiver does more for the giver than the giver does for him.” From the points of view of both principles mentioned above, it is clear why the donors to the Mishkan are considered the “takers” while Hashem is considered the real Giver.

THE ALSHICH AND HIS COMMENTARY

The Alshich (1508–1600), was one of only five famous rabbis in Jewish history universally known by the title “HaKadosh” (the holy one). He served on the same Beis Din as Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of the Shulchan Aruch. The Alshich is most noted for his monumental Tanach commentary.

The Alshich uses his creative insight and encyclopaedic knowledge of Tanach, Talmud, and Midrash to weave together his profound interpretations. He simultaneously focuses on the text as well as the context of a series of verses by listing a range of questions and then answering them all with one or two concepts.

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