



**TORAH ACADEMY**  
of Bergen County

# קול תורה

**Parashat Terumah**

**Adar I 4 5776**

**February 13, 2016**

**Vol. 25 No. 20**

## NOT BY FORCE

by *Rabbi Yosef Adler*

Parashat Terumah begins with an appeal for funds for the Mishkan, as the Pasuk states, "VeYikchu Li Terumah," "And they shall take for me a donation" (Shemot 25:2). Virtually all Parshanim are troubled by the selection of the word "VeYikchu," "And they shall take," as the more appropriate phrase would be "VeYitenu Li Terumah," "And they shall give a donation for me." In fact, the Torah itself provides an answer to the question. The Pasuk concludes by stating, "*Mei'eit Kol Ish Asher Yidevenu Libo Tikchu Et Terumati*," "take a donation only from those inclined to give." There is no coercion to give for the construction of the Mishkan.

The question arises: Why is this Tzedakah different from all others? Every Jew, for example, was required to participate in the contribution of the Machatzit HaShekel, the half-Shekel. In general, we understand that Tzedakah is not really an act of Chesed but rather an obligation for all Jews. One is required not only to respond to the needs of individuals faced with economic problems but also to participate in the building of community institutions such as Mikva'ot, Batei Midrash, Batei Keneset, and Yeshivot. The Halachah states emphatically, "*Kofin Benei Halr*," "Coerce the people of the city" – the Beit Din has the right to compel members of the community to participate in such projects. Why, then, would contributing toward constructing the Mishkan be totally voluntary?

After concluding the building of the Beit HaMikdash, Shlomo HaMelech states, "*Hinei HaShamayim UShemei HaShamiyim Lo Yechalkeluchah Af Ki HaBayit Asher Baniti*," "Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have built!" (Melachim I 8:27). If the heavens themselves can't contain Hashem, certainly this Beit HaMikdash cannot truly contain Him.

The Mishkan and Mikdash are not really for Hashem's sake; they were constructed for us. Outside the Beit HaMikdash, one can experience only a reflection of His spirit. Through comprehending

the beauty of nature, one should be moved to sing the praises of Hashem. But one does not see Hashem Himself. During fleeting moments of history, such as Yetzi'at Mitzrayim, Keri'at Yam Suf, and Matan Torah, we have indeed experienced that which we call Gilui Shechinah, Divine Revelation. However, in the Mikdash – and specifically in the Ohel Mo'eid, literally, the meeting place – one always enjoys the opportunity to meet Hashem's Shechinah.

Hashem created the world to reside in it and not to be afar in a transcendental world. Unfortunately, man's sins often keep Hashem at a distance. The Mikdash represents a unique opportunity to restore a relationship, and for this reason there is no coercion. If man does not cherish the opportunity to have Hashem reside within his midst, we don't force him to do so. As such, the appeal is directed only to "*Kol Ish Asher Yidevenu Libo*," and only from such people, "*Tikchu Et Terumati*."

## THE ORIGINAL ISRAELI EMBASSY

by *Yehuda Koslowe ('17)*

In his introduction to Sefer Shemot, Ramban introduces two criteria which must be fulfilled in order for Bnei Yisrael to be considered a free nation. He writes that Bnei Yisrael will be considered free only if they return to Eretz Yisrael and to the heightened spiritual status of their Avot – Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov. Therefore, concludes Ramban, after the Jews experienced their revelation at Har Sinai and built the Mishkan, they were considered to be a free nation.

Certainly, the spiritual experience at Har Sinai and the holiness of the Mishkan were enough to restore the Jews to the spiritual status of the Avot; however, how can Ramban write that the revelation at Har Sinai and the building of the Mishkan justified the Jews' being considered a free nation if those events preceded the Jews' settling of Eretz Yisrael, one of the necessary prerequisites for the Jews to be considered free?

We can strengthen this question by noting Ramban's well known opinion that the settling of Eretz Yisrael is of the utmost importance for the Jewish people. In his commentary on Parashat Acharei Mot (VaYikra 18:25 s.v. VaTitma HaAretz VaEfkod Avonah Alehah VaTaki HaAretz), Ramban presents multiple arguments which demonstrate the importance of the Jews' settling Eretz Yisrael. Ramban writes that the reason why Jews perform Mitzvot outside of Eretz Yisrael is so that the Mitzvot will not be irregular and foreign to the Jews when they eventually return to

Kol Torah is a community wide publication which relies on the generous donations of our friends and family in the community for its continuous existence. To sponsor an issue in memory of a loved one, in honor of a joyous occasion, or for a Refuah Sheleimah, please contact: [business@koltorah.org](mailto:business@koltorah.org)

Eretz Yisrael. Ramban's comment, which implies that Mitzvot can be fulfilled perfectly only in Eretz Yisrael, highlights the importance which Ramban places on Eretz Yisrael. Additionally, Ramban quotes the Gemara in Ketubot (110b) – which states that “Kol HaDar BeChutzah LaAretz Domeh KeMi SheEin Lo Eloha,” “Anyone who dwells outside of Eretz Yisrael is like someone who does not have a God” – as proof to his belief that the relationship with Hashem is qualitatively diminished outside the geographic boundaries of Eretz Yisrael.

Therefore, we are left even more puzzled as to why Ramban considers Bnei Yisrael to be free after their revelation at Har Sinai and their building the Mishkan. How can Ramban consider the Jews to be free even before they entered Eretz Yisrael?

As Rav Daniel Fridman explained in one of his Chumash Shiurim at the Torah Academy of Bergen County, the importance of Eretz Yisrael is not a result of its geography but rather of its heightened spirituality. According to this argument, if Bnei Yisrael reached the heightened spiritual state which is normally contained only within Eretz Yisrael even before their settling of Eretz Yisrael, then Ramban would be justified in considering the Jews to be free even before they entered Eretz Yisrael. Therefore, if we can prove that the Jews reached a level of spirituality that is normally attainable only in Eretz Yisrael after their revelation at Har Sinai and their construction of the Mishkan, then we can resolve the seeming discrepancy within Ramban's commentary on the Torah.

Hashem's original commandment to build the Mishkan, given in this week's Parashah, refers to the Mishkan as a “Mikdash” (Shemot 25:8), apparently equating the Mishkan with the Batei HaMikdash. Since the Torah seems to compare the Mishkan with the Batei HaMikdash in its first mention of the Mishkan, we can justifiably argue that the Mishkan – whose original dwelling place was in the Midbar, outside of Eretz Yisrael – contained within it the same level of spirituality that was contained within the Batei HaMikdash, which dwelled in the heart of Eretz Yisrael, Yerushalayim. Therefore, even before entering Eretz Yisrael, the Jews reached the heightened spiritual level of Eretz Yisrael through their building of the Mishkan. As such, Ramban can justifiably claim that the Jews were free even before they settled in Eretz Yisrael.

Although the argument that the holiness of Eretz Yisrael can be felt even outside Eretz Yisrael appears to

be a radical one, two passages in the Gemara seem to support it. The Gemara in Ketubot (62b) quotes the aforementioned Pasuk (Shemot 25:8), which refers to the Mishkan as a “Mikdash,” and explains that the Mishkan was a resting place for Hashem's Shechinah. This Gemara supports the notion that in some respects, the Mishkan was like an Israeli embassy, providing Jews with the heightened presence of Hashem's Shechinah, which can normally be felt only inside Eretz Yisrael, despite their not being inside the borders of Eretz Yisrael.

The Gemara in Berachot (8a) similarly supports the notion that in rare circumstances, Hashem's Shechinah can have the same influence outside of Eretz Yisrael as it has inside Eretz Yisrael. The Gemara quotes the Pasuk from the second paragraph of Keri'at Shema – “Lema'an Yirbu Yemeichem ViMei Beneichem Al HaAdamah,” “so that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, upon the land” (Devarim 11:21) – and notes that the implication of this Pasuk is that for Jews living in Bavel, it should be physically impossible to live long lives. The Gemara responds by noting that Jews in Bavel were known to be found in their Shuls from morning to night, so they were able to live long lives despite their not living inside Eretz Yisrael. The implicit assumption within this Gemara is that since a Shul is commonly referred to as a “Mikdash Me'at,” “a small Mikdash,” it too carries the embassy-like status of the Mishkan. Therefore, concludes the Gemara, the Jews living in Bavel were able to live long lives, because the heightened spirituality which is normally found only within the geographical borders of Eretz Yisrael can be found in Shuls as well.

From this solution to the seeming contradiction within Ramban's words, it is apparent that the Kedushah of Eretz Yisrael can be felt, in rare circumstances, even outside of the geographic borders of Eretz Yisrael. This fact does not in any way detract from the inherent Kedushah of Eretz Yisrael, as the heightened level of Kedushah within Eretz Yisrael is permanent, whereas the heightened level of Kedushah can be sensed outside of Eretz Yisrael only in rare situations. We must appreciate this balance, recognizing that only Eretz Yisrael contains an inherent holiness, while simultaneously maintaining that through hard work, Jews living outside of Eretz Yisrael can feel that connection as well.

## THE CASE FOR RESTRICTIONS – PART THREE

*by Rabbi Chaim Jachter*

As we have demonstrated in our two previous issues, Hashem's commandments and prohibitions are aimed to make our lives more enriched and meaningful. Through Rav Soloveitchik's essay “Catharsis,” we presented the positive impact of restrictions and their purpose of refining mankind. We continue our

discussion on the importance of restrictions and begin with an analogy to owning a car.

### *Analogy between Restrictions and Car Ownership*

An analogy to car ownership is instructive. If one follows the manufacturer's instructions on how to drive and maintain the car, he will benefit and enjoy the car for a long time. One who does not adhere to the manufacturer's instructions will suffer the consequences in the long term and regret his decision. Hashem is our manufacturer, and the Torah is the manufacturer's user manual. Strict adherence to the manufacturer's user manual is not only the proper course of action, but it is also the prudent approach to life<sup>1</sup>.

Observance of all Mitzvot is beneficial, and surveying the benefits of all of the Mitzvot would require an entire treatise<sup>2</sup>. We will suffice with one example wonderfully articulated by Rav Efreim Goldberg<sup>3</sup>:

For years researchers have sought to understand, what holds families together? What are the ingredients that make some families united, strong, resilient, and happy, while others are in disarray, fractured, broken, and fragile? Why are some families functional and others utterly dysfunctional?

As it turns out, the single most important thing you can do for your family is to develop a strong family narrative. The New York Times (March 15, 2013) had a fascinating article entitled, "The Stories That Bind Us." It provides the background for how this conclusion was reached.

In the mid-1990s Dr. Marshall Duke, a psychologist at Emory University was doing research into the dissipation of the family. His wife, Sara, a psychologist who works with children with learning disabilities noticed something about her students. She told her husband, "The ones who know a lot about their families tend to do better when they face challenges."

Duke decided to test the hypothesis by developing a measure called "Do You Know," a test for children with questions about their family. Examples of questions were: Do you know where you grandparents grew up? Do you know where your Mom and Dad went to high school? Do you know an illness or something terrible that happened in your family?

Duke took the answers he received and compared them to a battery of psychological tests that the same children had taken and he reached an overwhelming conclusion. The more children knew about their family's history, the stronger their sense of control over their lives, the higher their self-esteem and the more successfully they believed their families functioned.

Psychologists have found that every family has a unifying narrative and they take one of three shapes. The ascending family narrative is exclusively positive: Son, when we came to this country, we had nothing. We worked hard, opened a store, your grandfather went to high school, your father went to college and now you..."

The second is the descending narrative: "Sweetheart, we used to have it all, then, we lost everything." Dr. Duke explains that the third narrative, the oscillating family narrative is the most healthful one. "Let me tell you we've had ups and downs in our family. We built a strong business, your grandfather was charitable, but we also had setbacks. You had an uncle who was once arrested. Your father lost a job. No matter what happened, we always stuck together as a family."

Duke and his colleagues concluded that the children who have the most self-confidence and resilience have a strong "intergenerational self." They know they belong to something bigger than themselves. Dr. Duke recommends parents pursue opportunities to convey a sense of history to their children. Use holidays, vacations, family get-togethers, or even a ride to the mall to tell your family stories and personal anecdotes. He recommends adopting rituals and traditions that can get handed down from one generation to another.

<sup>1</sup> This theme is emphasized throughout Sefer Mishlei. We neglect this Sefer, which is brimming with wise advice, at our loss.

<sup>2</sup> The Sefer HaChinuch is a wonderful example of such a work.

<sup>3</sup> This was posted on Rabbi Goldberg's blog,

<http://rabbisblog.brsonline.org/have-you-told-your-children-your-family-narrative/>. The only changes to the quote are minor transliteration ones.



Duke's bottom line is this: if you want a happier family, create, refine and retell the story of your family's positive moments and your collective ability to bounce back from difficult ones. When I saw this article and read about Duke's research, all I could think of is the Pesach Seder and the wisdom our sacred tradition. This new research simply affirms what we knew and have practiced for millennia. When we sit at the Seder and tell the story of our people, our children feel part of something larger than themselves. When they hear our personal stories of ups and downs, bitterness and sweetness, they feel part of something larger and greater than themselves<sup>4</sup>. They don't see their own circumstance in a vacuum or feel the need to face their challenges alone. When they see themselves as part of our collective history and our family's personal narrative, they are encouraged, strengthened and uplifted.

We don't just eat the Maror at the Seder as a prop in order to tell the story chronologically. It isn't just a function of reminding our children we were once slaves, but now we are free.

Rather, we eat the Maror to remind our children that our narrative is an oscillating one with ups and down, sweetness and bitterness, successes and yes, even failures. We become stronger, more resilient, more effective, more functional and more united when we don't hide the Maror part of our past but instead, we embrace the Maror as part of our oscillating narrative. We don't have Maror and then once we have matzah everything is smooth sailing from there. No, we have Matzah and then Maror and then Matzah and then Maror and thus is life.

Knowing our narrative is an oscillating one gives us each courage and strength and empowers us to confront the Marors we may face today. The Passover Seder teaches us

to be honest, direct and truthful in our conversations with our family. The more we share about both the Matzah and Maror moments, the stronger we will be, the more united we will feel and the greater our capacity to overcome whatever may come our way.

#### *Conclusion*

As we have emphasized in this issue and the two preceding it, all of Hashem's restrictions and commandments were put in place for our benefit. This claim, which holds true for all of Hashem's Mitzvot, was proven on a micro level by Rav Efram Goldberg in his analysis of the benefits of the Mitzvot associated with the Seder night. Although some Mitzvot, such as those which take place at the Seder, can easily be shown to be advantageous, some cannot. In our next issue, we will discuss Mitzvot classified as Chukim which are not obviously advantageous and demonstrate their importance as well.

**Editors-in-Chief:** Hillel Koslowe, Yehuda Koslowe

**Executive Editor:** Yosef Kagedan

**Publication Editors:** Moshe Davis, Tani Greengart,  
Binyamin Jachter

**Business Managers:** Zev Jarashow, Yehoshua Segal,  
Yosef Segal

**Publishing Manager:** Eitan Leff, Avi Roth

**Staff:** Shmuel Bak, Eli Englard, Avi Finkelstein, Gabe  
Greenberg, Zack Greenberg, Shlomo Kroopnick, Zach  
Lent, Meir Lightman, Shai Rosalimsky, David  
Rothchild, Yehuda Saks

**Rabbinic Advisor:** Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Questions, comments? Contact us at:

*Kol Torah*

*c/o Torah Academy of Bergen County*

*1600 Queen Anne Road*

*Teaneck, NJ 07666*

*Phone: (201) 837-7696*

*koltorah@koltorah.org*

To subscribe to Kol Torah via email, message [webmaster@koltorah.org](mailto:webmaster@koltorah.org)

---

<sup>4</sup> A Torah lifestyle certainly promotes one's sense of belonging to something larger and greater than himself. Torah Observant Jews see themselves as a chain in the link stretching back nearly four thousand years to Avraham Avinu and Sarah Imeinu and looking ahead to the Messianic age. We pray in the plural, as a collective entity. When one Jew suffers on the other side of the world, we feel as one. Jews described the three boys who were kidnapped in the summer of 2014 as "our boys," and they very sincerely meant what they said. Rav Shmuel Goldin eloquently presents the adventure of Torah study as an eternal conversation:

Many years ago I made the acquaintance of a young man who came to Talmud study late in his educational development. One day, he turned to me and said: "You know why I love the Talmud? Because when I begin to study Talmud, the boundaries of time

disappear. Suddenly I am sitting at a table, present at a discussion between Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yishmael, dating back to the beginning of the Common Era. "As the conversation continues, Rav Huna [third century] offers a thought; Abbaye [fourth century] makes a comment, only to be countered by Rava [fourth century], as Rav Ashi [fifth century] joins in. "Then Rashi [1040-1105] makes an observation and is immediately challenged by his descendants, the Tosafists [twelfth-thirteenth centuries]. Others soon join the discussion, including the Rambam [1135-1204] and Rabbi Yosef Karo [1488-1575], all making their positions known... "And I, I am there too, at the table, asking my questions and adding my thoughts to a dialogue that will continue long after I am gone, as well.