

לעילוי נשמת
מרת עקא עדנה
צפורה ע"ה
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



ענין השבוע

ALAI DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"za of Gur

You & Yours Are His

R. Elazar Ish Birtusa says in Avos (3:7), *Give to Him from His own, for you and your possessions are His.* וכן בודד הוא אומר 'כי 'For all is from You, and from Your hand we gave (back) to You.' When one gives to *tzedakah*, he is just giving back what Hashem provided him. He is not

Hashem. *For you* – the *mitzvos* that you perform with your person, *and yours* – the *mitzvos* you perform with your assets, *are His*. Moreover, the Sfas Emes² explains that even the ability to decide to give – the choice itself – is also a gift from Hashem. *From Your hand we give to You*. The Sfas Emes said many times³ that even the choices that seem to be our own are really effected by Hashem; the point at which our choices are truly free and unscripted is so subtle that we cannot identify it with certainty. Our job is to make sure not to dampen the yearning for Hashem that burns deep within our hearts.

The Sfas Emes⁴ reads the *mishnah*, "for you and yours are His": that which you perceive to be *yours*, the assets, physical and spiritual, which you deem to be yours – *are His*. 'לי הכסף ולי הזהב.' 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says Hashem. This includes every devotion and every emotion, any ability and any nobility, it's all given to

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For by giving back to Him, whether money or whatever it is we do for Hashem, we are proclaiming that all of it is really his

referring only to material possessions; he is speaking of everything a person does 'for Hashem'; Torah, *mitzvos*, subjugating one's desires and emotions to Hashem, and dedicating them to him. All of this, too, is from

1 Concerning all of the preparations he had done for the building of the Beis Hamikdash, Divrei Hayamim I 29:14.
2 Avos ad. loc.
3 The Koznitzer Maggid writes the same on this very *mishnah*. *Avodas Yisrael*, Avos.
4 *Likutim*, beginning of Terumah.

Give and Take

The question is well-known. Hashem expresses the commandment to donate for the building of the Mishkan with the almost contradictory formulation: ויקחו – *They should take, for Me, a separation*. A donation is given, not taken. Even if we can understand that the taking refers to taking from your own and giving it to the Mishkan, why does the Torah not write simply, ויתנו – *they should give*?

The Sfas Emes⁷ relates an answer given by the Rebbe of Lublin⁸ which qualifies as *pshat*. *Chazal*⁹ have taught us that יותר ממה שהבעל הבית עושה עם העני העני יותר ממה שהבעל הבית עושה עם בעל הבית, the pauper does more for the *baal habayis* (householder) than the *baal habayis* does for the pauper by giving him a donation. We see this when Rus tells her mother-in-law, Naomi, האישי אשר בועז – *The man with whom I did today is called Boaz*.¹⁰ She didn't say 'who did with me', but rather 'with whom I did' as though to say, 'whom I benefited.' Therefore, the *pasuk* here expresses the donations to the Mishkan as *taking*, for when someone gives, he really gets; he is in essence *taking*.

The simple understanding of the Rebbe of Lublin's answer is to counter

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7 *Likutim*, beginning of Terumah.
8 Known in other circles as 'the Chozeh of Lublin'; *Divrei Emes*, Terumah s.v. כתוב.
9 Vayikra Rabbah 34:8.
10 Rus 2:19.

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you by Hashem, because He wishes for you to have it. *You and yours are His.*

Hashem willed that this should be hidden behind the cloak of the natural world. It's like a fantasy in which people imagine that they own their personality and property. Why did Hashem set it up in this way? Because when a person believes that something is his, it is difficult to give it up, and when he gives it up, this brings *nachas* to his Creator.

On an even deeper level, the Sfas Emes explains, this concealment is itself the vehicle by which the truth can be revealed. For by giving back to Him, whether money or whatever it is we do for Hashem, we are proclaiming that all of it is really his. If not for this concealment, if there were no construct of *you and yours*, it wouldn't be possible to express that everything is His by giving His things back to Him, because everything would be clearly *His*. When we give, we are revealing this truth – that *you and yours – are His*.

The Sfas Emes turns to our *parshah*. We have seen that by giving, we are clarifying and revealing that Hashem owns everything. We can now understand, in the *pasuk* (25:2) ויקחו לי תרומה – *They should take, for Me, a separation*, a deeper meaning in the word: *לי*. Our giving reveals and publicizes the attribute expressed by *הזהב לי הכסף ולי הזהב* – that everything is Hashem's.

Having learned this Sfas Emes, we can gain insight into the practice of the Tanna of this *mishnah*, R. Elazar Ish Birtusa. The Gemara (Taanis 24a) recounts:

When tzedakah administrators would catch a glimpse of Elazar Ish Birt[us]a in the marketplace, they would slip away from him, because he would always give them whatever money he had with him. One day he went to the market to purchase his daughter's trousseau. The tzedakah administrators saw him and tried to slip away. But he realized, and chased after them. He said, "I put you under oath. What are you collecting for?" They were forced to admit that they were collecting for the wedding of two orphans. He said, "I swear! They get precedence over my daughter." He took whatever he had with him and gave it to them, except one small coin. With it he purchased some wheat. He put the wheat in his silo, and returned to the beis midrash.

His wife came home and asked his daughter, "What did your father buy?" She said, "Whatever he bought he placed in the silo." They went to open the door of the silo, and they saw that the entire silo was filled with wheat. The wheat was popping out from under the door, and the door wouldn't swing open because the silo was so full of wheat!

His daughter went to the beis midrash and told her father, "Come and see what the One Who loves you did for you!" His response? "I swear! They are for paupers,

and you have no precedence over all other paupers!"

The Maharsha asks, why did he say that she has no precedence? The halachah is that one's relatives do have precedence: ענייך ועיי עירך, ענייך קודמין.⁵ But according to the Sfas Emes, we can understand why.

The Sanzer Rav (the Divrei Chaim) would give to tzedakah all the money he received from petitioners, on that same day, not leaving anything for his own family. He was asked why he did not give precedence to his relatives, as the halachah states. He answered that the halachah of 'aniyecha' applies only to the giver. The tzedakah administrator is not allowed to give preference to his own family, as the Shulchan Aruch⁶ writes.

The Divrei Chaim felt that the money was given to him by his petitioners in his capacity as an administrator, and not to keep for himself. R. Elazar Ish Birtusa went even further. He felt that even the money he was given miraculously was only for him to distribute to the poor, as he says in the Mishnah in Avos: שאתה שלך ושליך, *you and yours are His*. For people who feel that their money is their personal possession, the correct way is to give preference to family. But for one who feels, as did R. Elazar, that he is just an administrator — he cannot give his own daughter preference.

(סעודה שלישית תשפ"ג – מאמר א)

5 Bava Metziah 71a.

6 Yoreh De'ah 257:10.

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the conventional thinking that when one gives, one consequently has less. The Rambam writes in *Hilchos Matnos Aniym*¹¹ that a person never loses from giving *tzedakah*: לעולם אין אדם מעני מן הצדקה. On the contrary, Chazal teach here that one who gives will actually have more. He will be blessed with an abundance of material wealth, aside from the reward for the mitzvah. Some people even give *tzedakah* – על מנת שאזכה – *with the intent of thereby*

Whatever we do for Him, He has given us; even the choice we made to give

acquiring Olam Haba.¹² This person is in effect buying – taking – *Olam Haba* with his donation. For this reason the Torah writes ויקחו – *they should take*.

The Sfas Emes then writes: “I would add an explanation of this concept.” He goes on to develop the deep idea, expounded upon in ‘You & Yours Are His’ (in this *gilyon*). As we saw there, the Sfas Emes writes that when we give we are proclaiming that we recognize that everything we have comes from Hashem and belongs to Hashem.

Whatever we do for Him, He has given us; even the choice we made to give.

But the Sfas Emes writes that his words explain the deeper meaning of the words of the Rebbe of Lublin. What does this teaching of ‘You and Yours Are His’ have to do with the idea that the giver receives more than the receiver?

I believe the answer is as follows. The dynamic of the *baal habayis* getting more than the pauper, understood simply, is that while the pauper receives currency for use in this world, the *baal habayis* merits reward in the World to Come, of incomparably greater value; aside from the *brachah* of עשר בשביל שתתעשר – *tithe so that you will be enriched* (Taanis 91). But according to the Sfas Emes, the dynamic is so much deeper. It’s not that the pauper received *Olam Hazeih* and the *baal habayis* receives *Olam Haba*. Both are insignificant when compared to the merit of being able to proclaim with clarity, from within the obfuscating darkness of this world, that ‘לי הכסף ולי’ – *the silver is mine and the gold is mine*.

When the Lubliner Rebbe said that ויקחו refers to the advantage of the *baal habayis* over the pauper, says the Sfas Emes, he meant this great achievement of ‘לי’,¹³ of showing that *you and yours are His*. Certainly that achievement is more central to the act of *terumah* than the loss of his dollars; he is most essentially taking, and not just giving.

Perhaps it goes even further. The Chidushei HaRim said that the word אדר alludes to the parable of the Midrash,¹⁴ of the small room where the King could come visit His daughter: קיטון אחד עשה לי שאדור אצלכם שאיני יכול להניח את בתי *make a small room for Me where I can dwell (אדור) near you, for I cannot part with My daughter*. The Mishkan served as the ‘small room’ of the parable, in which Hashem will dwell among us.

How do we invite Hashem to dwell among us? The ד and ר of אדר allude to poverty and humility,¹⁵ and the א alludes to Hashem.¹⁶ We reveal that we have nothing of our own; it is all Hashem. We are the pauper; the *baal habayis* is Hashem.¹⁷ The *Baal Habayis* gives us sustenance, but we are doing more than that. By recognizing that we are being sustained by Hashem, we are proclaiming that the *Baal Habayis* is Ruler over all; that *we and ours are His*.

Therefore the Torah says ויקחו לי, as the only thing we can take for ourselves in this world is that merit of unveiling the concealment of *malchus Shamayim* in this world. When we give some of the money Hashem has deposited with us; when we dedicate some of talents He has endowed us with, acknowledging that everything we have is His; we are revealing just a little bit more of the ‘לי’ הכסף ולי הזהב. That *zechus* is ours.

(סעודה שלישיית תשכ"ג – מאמר א)

11 10:2.

12 Pesachim 8a.

13 See above, ‘You and Yours Are His.’

14 Shemos Rabbah 33:1.

15 קדמונים, עי' סידור תפלה לרוקח, ויברך דוד) רש, impoverished (Shabobs 104a), and דל is derived from the word דל, poor (Shabobs 104a), and דל"ת

16 דל"ת is related to אלוכו של עולם, *Master of the World*.

17 See, for example, Sotah 35a, “בעל הבית אינו יכול להוציא כליו משם”.

Slow and Steady – Reaching For the Skies

In Alei Deshe Terumah 5782 Vol. 31, Rabbeinu shlit" a mentioned two questions of the Shev Shmaatsa, as cited below. In Bneos Deshe, the weekly Torah anthology released by Machon Ibra D'dasha of our kehillah, Parshas Terumah 5782, Rabbeinu offered an answer to the questions of the Shev Shmaatsa, as we will see. The Terumah 5783 edition of Bneos Deshe, included a letter with a challenge to Rabbeinu's answer. At the kiddush that week, Rabbeinu addressed this challenge, and added an additional approach to answer the questions of the Shev Shmaatsa.

Hashem commands Moshe to call for donations for the Mishkan (25:1), ויקחו לי תרומה – *they should take, for Me, a separation*. Rashi explains the words for *Me*: purely for My sake, לשמי.

*Shev Shmaatsa*¹⁸ raises two questions on Rashi's comment. First, why is the construction of the Mishkan singled out as requiring *lishmah*? We know that every mitzvah should ideally be performed purely for Hashem. Furthermore, Chazal tell us (Pesachim 50b) that one should study Torah and perform mitzvos even if not with the purest motives, for by doing mitzvos even with ulterior motives, a person will eventually come to perform them with a pure motive. Why then must the donation to the Mishkan be purely for Hashem's sake?

It would seem to me that the answer to the one question lies within the other. For if the reason that one should study Torah and perform mitzvos even when not motivated purely by his desire to fulfill Hashem's will is so that he will eventually arrive there,

then that can only be said of Torah and mitzvos which one fulfills his entire life. It is sensible to encourage the performance of such endeavors even in a less than optimal fashion, in the anticipation that the *lishmah* will eventually be achieved. Each time he learns he will come a step closer to *lishmah*; each mitzvah he performs brings him a step closer to *lishmah*. He is on a path of progress.

Donating for the Mishkan, however, was a one-time opportunity. The day after Yom Kippur, Moshe Rabbeinu announced the collection, and two days later it was done. The next day they were no longer able to donate to the Mishkan. The Torah therefore had to warn that the donation to the Mishkan must be given *lishmah* from the outset, for (Avos 1:14) לא עכשיו אימתי – *if not now, when?* I have given this answer to the *Shmaatsa*'s questions in the past.¹⁹

Now don't suggest that here, too, one might bring oneself to *lishmah* by giving a bit of copper at first, and then after a few hours a little gold, and then a few hours later a bit of silver, until he reaches *lishmah*.²⁰ That's not how this process goes. Progressing from *shelo lishmah* to *lishmah* is a long, gradual process. It is not something that one can achieve with a few performances of a mitzvah.

Think about it: Someone sits down by a Gemara, opens it and learns a few lines, and then closes it; then he repeats the process a few more times in the same sitting. Do you think that he will thereby acquire the high ideal of *Torah lishmah*?

Similarly, bringing multiple donations to the Mishkan will not develop one's

lishmah in so short a time span. The only way for someone to donate to the Mishkan purely for Hashem's sake is to approach it with a deep conviction that he wants nothing out of it, and he is doing it purely for the right reason.

Returning to the questions posed by the *Shev Shmaatsa*, here is another possible answer. In the same Gemara (Pesachim 50b), Rava highlights a seeming contradiction between two *pesukim* in Tehillim. One *pasuk* (57:11) says: כי גדול עד שמים חסדך – *For Your kindness is so great, up to the skies!* A second *pasuk* (108:5) says: כי גדול מעל שמים חסדך – *For Your kindness is so great, above the skies!* Which is it, up until the skies, or above the skies?

Rava explains that there is no contradiction. In the second *pasuk*, the kindness of Hashem is in consideration for the performance of the *mitzvos lishmah*. In the first *pasuk* the kindness is given in consideration for the *mitzvos* that were performed *shelo lishmah*. That is, *mitzvos* performed with ulterior motives do not penetrate the heavens.

The physical Mishkan on this world draws its strength from its alignment with the spiritual Mishkan in the celestial realms. Were donations to be given *shelo lishmah*, the physical Mishkan would not be able to reach its heavenly counterpart; it would reach only up to the skies. Therefore it was imperative, more so than for other *mitzvos*, that the Mishkan be built purely *lishmah*.

(קידושא רבא תשכ"ג – ב)

18 *Hakdamah*.

19 *Shalosh Seudos Terumah 5780 Ma'amar 2, Ibra D'dasha p. 372*.

20 This challenge was posed in a letter to *Bneos Deshe*, as described in the preface. On various occasions Rabbeinu has made it evident that he is a regular reader of *Bneos Deshe*, which is a treasury of Chassidic thought and *divrei Torah* of the Rebbes of Pershischa, Kotzk, and Gur.