

Terumah Rabbi David Mahler

The opening command in our *parsha* uses a rather curious expression which seems to bother many of the *Torah's* commentaries. In commanding *Am Yisrael* to donate a portion to the construction of the *Mishkan*, *Hashem* tells Moshe (25:2), “Speak to the *B'nei Yisrael*, and they should take to Me (*v'yikchu Li*) a portion, from every man whose heart will motivate him shall you take My portion.” The question is that, given the fact that people are being asked to **give** a portion rather than **take** a portion, the *pasuk* should say “**v'yitnu Li terumah**” rather than “**v'yikchu Li terumah.**”

There are varying approaches given to this question. Some *mefarshim* base their answer on *Chazal's* advice regarding the *mitzvah* of tithing and *tzedaka*, about which the *Torah* commands “*aser, t'aser...*”(Devarim 22:20). The Rabbis homiletically expound on this double language, and interpret “*aser*” (give 10%) “*bishvil she'tisasher*”, so that you should become wealthy (*Shabbos 119a*). The idea is that if a person gives charity — in particular “*ma'aser*” — he will not become poor from that; on the contrary he will become wealthy as a result. So too, here, when a person contributes to the *mishkan* campaign, he will not be on the short end of matters (as if he had “given”), but he will profit from the matter (as if he had “taken”).

Others explain that when a person gives to a poor person, he is giving him something physical and material (*gashmiyus*). However, by giving the poor person money, the donor performs a *mitzvah*, which is spiritual (*ruchniyus*). In the “real world,” *ruchniyus* is eternal; material things are transient. Thus, the donor receives a better deal than the recipient. He took the *mitzvah*, while the poor person only received a few dollars, which will be quickly spent. Therefore, every time a person gives *tzedaka*, it is not a matter of giving, it is a matter of taking.

However, there is another approach I find absolutely scintillating.

There is a phenomenon in psychology that has been exacerbated by social media and technology. It has been around forever, yet the uptick that has been witnessed recently is real. I am unsure of the clinical term but FOMO, the Fear Of Missing Out, refers to the feeling or perception of others having more fun, living better lives, or experiencing better things than you are. It causes much stress and anxiety in some people who constantly think that life is happening without them. FOMO is not just the sense that there might be better things that you could be doing at this moment, but it is the feeling that you're missing out on something fundamentally

important that others are experiencing right now. It can apply to anything from a party on a Saturday night to a promotion at work. It always involves a sense of helplessness that you're missing out on something big.

However, like with all *middos*, no *middah* is all good or all bad.

There are two types of people who give *tzedakah*.

There are some who give *tzedakah* because they see a poor person or a yeshiva in need and their sensitivity compels them to assist that person or institution. They see a need and step in and they very nobly fill the void by giving money to the poor family or by giving the yeshiva that which it needs. This is obviously a wonderful attitude.

However, there is there is a second attitude with respect to giving *tzedakah*. This second approach revolves around the idea that something important is happening and I want to be part of it. There is a yeshiva in *Eretz Yisrael* that has 5,000 *talmidim* and I want to have a piece of it. I want to have a little bit of it. I want to be part of it. This person participates, not because he sees a need, but because he feels he doesn't want others to have the *zechus* without him. He doesn't want to be left out, but not because of negative FOMO but rather because he feels that something special is taking place, something magical is being built, and he wants a piece of it. This donor doesn't want to be left out of something great.

There is a very big difference between the two.

The first person who sees a need and gives is a giver. He is giving. The second one, the person who sees a *Davar Shebekidusha*, a holy endeavor, and wants to have a piece of it, is a *mekabeil*, a receiver. When he gives the money he is actually not giving because he sees a need but rather because he wants to receive a *cheilek*, a portion, in that which is taking place. Certainly, this is a high level of nobility, of holiness. He wants to be associated with and to be present at holy things.

According to Rav Avraham Pam, *Hashem* wanted those who were planning to donate to the *mishkan* to donate not because there was a need but because they wanted to build a physical "home" for *Hashem* as they traveled through the desert. People said to themselves that there was a *mishkan* being built and we want a piece in its construction. When people give to such an endeavor, because they see the importance of the institution you feel fortunate to be receiving. When you give, you are actually receiving.

What we associate with defines us. What we strive to be a part of shows what we truly value and who we are.

May we merit to take part and play significant roles in many holy projects and ventures.