



BADERECH

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Terumah: Doing Our Part

Beloved for his righteousness, generosity and Ahavas Yisrael, Rebbe Meshulam Feish HaLevy Lowy of Tosh zy'a lived a life of unending dedication to the Jewish People.

The Rebbe asked a devoted Chassid, Reb Yisrael Moshe, to write out a sizeable check to someone whose home was at risk of foreclosure. When Reb Yisrael Moshe agreed to give the tzedakah, the Rebbe added a request: "Reb Yisrael Moshe, I want you to go mail the check now, while I wait on the phone. Please tell me when it's done."

"I can call the Rebbe back, he doesn't have to wait on the phone," Reb Yisrael Moshe offered.

The Rebbe thanked him and said he would wait. Reb Yisrael Moshe wrote the check, signed it,

placed it in an envelope, headed down the street, and dropped the envelope in a mailbox. Several minutes later, he lifted the receiver and told the Rebbe, who had been waiting, that the check was en route to its destination.

"Wonderful, Yasher Koach," said the Rebbe, "now I want you to do something else. Please go to the corner of the room and say, 'Ribbono Shel Olam, did I really do something so special? After all, I simply took some of the money You blessed me with and shared it with a brother of mine who is in need. Ribbono Shel Olam, You gave me this money and allowed me the *zechus* of sharing it... so Ribbono Shel Olam, thank You for letting me do my part.'"

Then the Rebbe added: "Reb Yisrael Moshe, say, *Ribbono Shel Olam...ich hub gurnisht ge-teen*, I did nothing at all."

In preparation for building the Mishkan, our sedra begins with Hashem commanding Moshe to collect funds for the necessary materials: "Speak to the Children of Israel, *v'yik-chu li Terumah*, "And have them 'take' for Me a contribution," *me'eis kol ish asher yidvenu libo*, "from every person whose heart inspires him to generosity...." (25:2)

The *Meforshim* address the language of *v'yikchu* — "Take for Me." It means 'Dedicate to Me;' it does not say 'Give to Me.'

The Mishnah in *Avos* (3:7) instructs us, "Give Him from what is His, for you and yours are His." Rabbenu Yonah explains: when we give of our money or possessions, we part with nothing that is actually ours. Everything belongs to HaKadosh Baruch Hu;

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all we possess belongs to Him, and at best we are custodians of His property. *L'Hashem HaAretz Umlo'oh*, "The earth is Hashem's, and its fullness."

The recognition that we enjoy no proprietary interest over anything physical in this world is a cornerstone of our Emunah. Everything we have, all that we've achieved, accumulated, built and accomplished, is from Hashem alone. *Li hakesef, li hazahav ne'um Hashem*, "The silver is Mine, the gold is Mine, proclaims Hashem" (Chagai 2:8).

Rebbe Chananya Yom Tov Lipa Teitelbaum, the 'Kedushas Yom Tov' of Sighet, zy'a, (father of the *Atzei Chaim* and Rebbe Yoilish, the first Satmar Rebbe), pointed out that our *pasuk* specifically uses the term *ish*, "a person", in describing the one who contributes. Only when 'our heart inspires us to generosity' are we truly worthy of being considered an *ish*, a human being.

A ‘human being’ naturally gives without expectation of reward or a feeling that he or she has done “something so special”. He or she recognizes that Hashem is the source of all that we are and have, and that our money and possessions are really His. Hashem has merely called on us to redistribute His resources according to needs. And Hashem ‘waits on the line’ to confirm the success of our *shlichus*.

Yankeleh Kamtzan, the most notorious miser in town, would not give even a single ruble to anyone, ever. No poor person could get through to him. No project or cause moved him. Yankeleh would never give. One day while he was crossing the river, his boat capsized. Struggling desperately to keep his head above water, Yankeleh thrashed his limbs.

A passerby called out to him. "Give me your hand! Give me your hand!" Sputtering,

Yankeleh managed to shout back, "No way! I won't give you anything!"

Again, the rescuer tried to help: "Give me your hand! Let me save you!" Yankeleh, on the verge of drowning, gasped, "Never! You'll never get anything from me!"

Finally, in desperation, the rescuer cried out: "Please, just take my hand!" Yankelehr suddenly relaxed and held out his hand: "Oh, you want me to 'take'? Sure!"

Giving Tzedaka is both a mitzvah and a *zechus*, a privilege. The Midrash (*Rut Rabbah*, 9) testifies that more than the receiver gains, the giver benefits. Parshas Terumah reminds us that when we give generously from that with which we have been blessed, we are really receiving, ‘taking’ so much more.

As the Tosher Rebbe said, in giving, *gur-nisht geteen*, “we have done nothing at all.” We are simply doing our part, ‘taking’ from what Hashem has given us and sharing it with others.

Let us take a moment to reflect on Parshas Terumah on the privilege of giving. *Ribbono Shel Olam*, thank you for letting us do our part! 

A movie poster for the film 'Talking to God'. The title is at the top in large, yellow, hand-drawn-style letters. Below it is a subtitle 'the spiritual comedic film about what to do when you don't know what to do.' A central banner contains the text 'Watch Talking to God'. The background features a stylized town with blue-roofed houses on a hill under a blue sky. A small figure of a person is walking on the right, and another is running on the left. The bottom right corner has a QR code with the text 'or scan here to watch:'. The bottom left contains a quote from the Jerusalem Post. Several film festival awards are shown in the top corners: 'Official Selection - Sundance Film Festival', 'Official Selection - Toronto International Film Festival', 'Official Selection - Berlin International Film Festival', 'Official Selection - New York City Film Festival', and 'Official Selection - Monte Carlo International Film Festival'.