

פרשת תרומה

Based on R' Menachem Azoulay's "Ohr Ha'Emunah"

דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִקְחוּ-לִי תְרוּמָה מֵאֵת כָּל-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִדְבְּנוּ לְבָבוֹ תִקְחוּ אֶת-תְּרוּמָתִי: (כה, ב)

What is the "לִי"? Hashem said to the Jewish people: volunteer, donate and make the *Mishkan* and do not say that you are giving anything from your own pockets, because everything is mine, as it says: (לִי הַכֶּסֶף וְלִי הַזָּהָב נָאִם יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת" (חגי ב,ח) - The silver is mine and the gold is mine, says Hashem. Hashem reminded the Jewish people you are donating what is already mine, do not be stingy, do not hold back - I gave it to you and now you give it back.

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם: (כה, ח)

It is such a powerful and amazing thing to cling to Hashem. That is what the soul wants. The soul needs nothing aside from attachment to Hashem. That is the essence of holiness.

Holiness is attachment to Hashem, to constantly long for Hashem. All of our *davening* and meditating is longing for our Father. It is not sufficient to long for Hashem one hour a day (the prescribed minimum amount of *Hisbodedus* in *Breslev* tradition), we must long for our Father all day. The one hour *Hisbodedus* (customarily in the fields) is for crying over the fact that we are so distant from our Father, but longing and craving for closeness to Him must occupy us all day long.

Our primary focus must be desire and longing. A person must accustom himself to yearn for, desire and long for Hashem at all times. We must strive always to have good strong holy desires. As Rebbe Nachman taught, this world is nothing, the main task in serving Hashem is the desire. As far as serving Hashem, it is unlikely that anyone can say that they served Hashem. Even an angel cannot boast that he is able to serve Hashem. The primary focus must be on the desire for Hashem. The important question is do we truly want Hashem.

Desire is attachment, connection and that is the highest level a person can reach. "Hashem, I want you. Hashem, I cannot do anything without you. Hashem, bring me close to you." If we have that, we are not missing anything.

Our entire purpose in life is to build a sanctuary in our hearts for Hashem's presence. At moments that the honor of Hashem rests on a person, the soul is filled with life and beautiful song and it understands that the world was created for this very purpose. From this feeling, a person draws strength and courage to work and toil in the service of Hashem. From this, he draws the ability to withstand the passions and the impulses, weakness and fatigue.

In this week's Parsha, Hashem asks us to participate in building the *Mishkan*, a place for His presence to rest. How can we participate? By giving! And what does Hashem want us to give? Gold, silver, copper, blue wool, purple wool, etc. Gold, silver and copper refer to the good points in every single Jew. For each and every one of us, even the least worthy, even the lowest of the low, there is no such thing as a "Jew" who does not have, at least, one good trait. If it is not a "golden" trait, then it is a "silver" one, and if not "silver," it is, at least, "copper" - but something good can be found in each and every Jew.

In this merit, the Mishkan was built. During the course of the day for each of us there can be found sparks of light - good thoughts, thoughts of *teshuvah*, overcoming the evil inclination. Each of these sparks is a wonderful contribution to the building of the *Mishkan*. Every good spark in our lives is another contribution to building the *Beis Hamikdash* - whether the communal one or the private one within each of us. Hashem said, build a *Mikdash* and I will dwell in them. Hashem did not say that I will dwell in "it," rather He said "them." The reference is not to the *Mishkan* or the *Beis Hamikdash* only but that Hashem will rest within each and every one of us. Each Jew, according to the purity and the merit of his heart, according to his contribution, he prepares a place for Hashem's presence. In similar measure, he feels the grace of Hashem. The final letters of each word of the *pasuk* "לחיות בנועם השם" "ולבקר בהיכלו" spell the word *t-r-u-m-ah*.

Holiness means to learn to submit. Three are said to have all of their sins forgiven: a bridegroom, a convert and someone who achieves prominence. The bridegroom receives forgiveness because he submits to his wife, a convert because he submits himself to the Jewish people and the one who achieves prominence because he submits himself to the public, the community.

Rus gave up everything to follow Naomi and she was rewarded with being the grandmother of *Moshiach*. Rochel gave up everything (in what is probably the greatest act of submission ever) and she was rewarded with being the mother of the Jewish people.

A person who desires holiness must attach himself to eternal matters. He must remember, at every moment, that everything is nonsense, only Hashem is truth. The body pulls us down. The body tells us, "there is time, Hashem is not going anywhere, what does it really mean to long for Hashem. Right now, what you need is a piece of cake, you need to taste something sweet, you need a little more sleep, five more minutes, otherwise you won't be able to get out of bed at all." The evil inclination seduces us and convinces us to see evil as good, pretending that he is good for us.

We can use the same tactic for good. Rebbe Nachman taught us that when a person is far from joy or excitement in *tefilla*, he should pretend to be happy and enthusiastic. He should imitate enthusiasm and joy until he will slowly be *zoche* to be inspired. When a person imagines himself a certain way and even tries to imitate *tzaddikim* and real G-d-fearing Jews, he becomes attached to holiness. He will see that imitation and imagination can be a powerful force to draw one close to good and to triumph in the monumental war with the *yetzer hora*.

When we are with Hashem, with the soul, everything is amazing and we are happy. When we are with the body, we are also happy, but only temporarily, the happiness dissipates. The war for holiness never ceases. If a person is not moving forward, he is moving backwards. He gets dragged after the temptations of this world. A person must infuse holiness into his home. A child must see his father things other than eat. A home is not a bar, the children must see their father learning *Torah* every day.

Holiness comes only when we act for the sake of Hashem. On the *pasuk* "וַיִּקְחוּ-לִי תְרוּמָה" - Rashi says, "for my name." While all *mitzvos*, must be done *lshem shamayim*, *tzedakah* has a stronger inclination towards ulterior motives, to gain personal honor. Therefore, the *Torah* specifically stresses the need to proper intentions here. *Mitzvos* done with the proper intent are far greater and more powerful than those very same acts performed with ulterior motives. The reward for a *mitzvah* done *lshem shamayim* is many times the reward for the same *mitzvah* done otherwise. The *gemara* in *Pesachim* (50:) says that a person should engage in *Torah* and *mitzvos* even with improper intent because by engaging with improper intent, he will come to proper intent ("מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה"). This statement is only

true for one who earnestly attempts and wants to do the will Hashem perfectly but for the moment it is difficult for him and he feels seriously tested and cannot, at this time, overcome. But, he knows the truth and he is working towards it - then we can say "מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה." But, for the person that acts exclusively for his own honor and glory, this *chazal* does not apply.

We have come to this world to serve our Creator, not for Hashem to serve us, G-d forbid. Our purpose is to seek what Hashem wants from us right now, not what we want from Hashem. For this reason there were *chassidim* that had the custom, after finishing their *hisbodedus* and their *tefillos*, to say to Hashem, "until now I made many requests from You, from here on out do as you please and I accept everything that you choose for me with love."

Another element of holiness is self-discipline. To set tasks and goals and adhere to them. A person who maintains self-discipline receives a lot of *siyata dishmaya*. When a person is busy, he feels alive and this gives him joy. He handles things diligently, not trying to force his own schedule, but with *tefillos* and supplication. He knows that ultimately, everything is in Hashem's hands.

Through all of these good traits, we build our *Mishkan*. With love, with generosity. It was purposely after the sin of the Golden Calf that they built the *Mishkan*. After the great sin, they had to seek good points within every Jew. I am darkened by the sin - but I am beautified by the building of the *Mishkan*.

The *Mishkan* still exists today, it is just hidden. It is impossible to destroy something that was built with generosity, good and pure desires and with purity of the heart. Those ingredients create an everlasting reality that cannot be interrupted.