

The Rebbe's Discourses

Basic Summaries of the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל

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ACCEPTING THE DIVINE

THE FOCUS OF THE SEDRA IS THE DESIGN OF THE SANCTUARY, AND IT BEGINS WITH THE DIVINE instruction that the Jewish people should donate silver, gold and other costly items which would be used in building it. The opening words of this instruction are 'they should take for Me an offering (Terumah)'². Then follows: every person whose heart prompts him, should give an offering. And then a third time again, the Terumah offering is mentioned.

The Tzemach Tzedek³ asks: why does the first request for an offering precede the idea that a person's heart prompts him? That is only mentioned in relation to the second offering.

Further, why does it say 'take for Me an offering'. Wouldn't it make better sense to write 'give Me an offering' ?

The crux of the explanation is that the first kind of Terumah is not about giving but about taking. G-d gives each individual an arousal from above, a sense of inspiration. After accepting this inspiration from above, the person who is now prompted by their heart is able to make an effort to respond.

Do we really feel this arousal from above? This relates to a comment the Baal Shem Tov made about the heavenly voice which announces every day 'return, wayward children'⁴. Does anyone hear this? The Bask Shem Tov explains that there are thoughts of repentance which occur to a person every so often. These are the effect of the heavenly voice.

¹ *Veyikchu Li Terumah* 5725, published in *Dvormalchus Terumah* 5779, 5782.

² Exodus 25:2.

³ In his *Or Hatorah*, Terumah, p.1359 ff.

⁴ See Chagigah 15a.

But one can still ask: the heavenly voice is said to be every day. How often does a person think of repentance?

The answer is that every day the essence of one's soul hears the heavenly voice. But one also has to be able to *receive* the inspiration from the essence of one's soul. When one does so, one is able to experience the thought of repentance.

Similarly, in terms of constructing the Sanctuary, the soul is potentially inspired by the divine arousal from above, mentioned in our Sedra in the words 'take for Me..'. But we have to receive and absorb this inspiration. Then it is not enough just to rely on the inspiration from above, which might fade. We have to respond to it. That second stage is when the words 'whose heart prompts him' apply. They describe our effort from below, responding to our acceptance of the inspiration from above.

This process can be seen in the word Terumah itself. The Zohar⁵ gives two interpretations of this word. One is that the Hebrew word Terumah תְּרוּמָה can be read as Torah Mem מ תורה - meaning the Torah which was given to Moses during his 40 days on Mount Sinai (the letter Mem has numerical value 40). The Torah comes from above to us: this is like the first stage: that G-d gives us inspiration, to which we have to try to be receptive.

The second interpretation from the Zohar of the word Terumah relates to the next stage, our response to G-d. The Zohar says 'Terumah - *trei mi-me'ah*' – תרי ממאה. The Aramaic words mean 'two of a hundred'⁶. The Zohar explains this in terms of one's spiritual dedication to G-d, when one says the Shema.

In Hebrew, the first line of the Shema, 'Shema Yisrael etc.', has 25 letters. The second line, 'Baruch Shem etc.', has 24 letters. They add up to 49. We say the Shema twice a day, morning and evening, so that adds up to 98. The remaining 'two of a hundred' are provided by our dedication with a sense of self-sacrifice to G-d, when saying the Shema, focusing on the word 'One'. This is our response to G-d with all our heart, the second kind of Terumah.

The discourse presents Torah as the inspiration provided by G-d from above, which might be through studying Chassidic teachings before prayer. Then comes prayer, which is the response from below, with heartfelt dedication. The discourse points out that after prayer, there is further Torah study, which has now been enriched by the prayer which precedes it. This is an extension of our sense of dedication to G-d, the second kind of Terumah.

⁵ Zohar III 179a.

⁶ As regards a different kind of Terumah, the levy of agricultural produce given to the Priests, this proportion is the average level of donation: one fiftieth of the yield of one's field. See Mishnah Terumot 4:3.

Then comes the third mention of Terumah in the Sedra: the Mitzvot that we carry out during the day, including activities which may seem mundane but which are carried out with a sense of dedication, as expressed in the sayings of the Sages: ‘all your actions should be for the sake of Heaven’⁷ and, even more profoundly, ‘in all your ways you should know Him’⁸. Through this we contribute to building the Sanctuary, which is what we are really striving to do though our workaday lives.

Then comes another point. The discourse discusses the fact that the term ‘for Me’ – in the phrases ‘take for Me an offering’, and ‘make for Me a Sanctuary’⁹ - is explained by the Sages as meaning something permanent¹⁰. How can it be considered permanent if both the First and Second Temples have been destroyed?

The Alsheich explains that although the physical Temple has been destroyed, the spiritual Temple still exists, eternally. A further point is that the Sages tell us that the actual Sanctuary built by Moses was never destroyed. It still exists, and is hidden somewhere in the tunnels under the site of the Temple¹¹.

Being aware that the Sanctuary is whole, and is merely hidden, just waiting to be revealed, helps us in our task each day to build our own inner Sanctuary, and this effort will contribute to the rebuilding of the physical Temple in Jerusalem.

**TORAH TEACHINGS ARE SACRED
PLEASE TREAT THIS PAGE WITH CARE**

⁷ Ethics 2:12

⁸ Proverbs 3:6.

⁹ Exodus 25:8.

¹⁰ See Yalkut Shimoni Terumah 364, Lev. Rabbah 2:2.

¹¹ Sotah 9a.