



## Terumah: Temporary Structure, Eternal Message

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*"The Lord spoke to Moses saying: "Speak to the children of Israel, and have them take for Me an offering; from every person whose heart inspires him to generosity, you shall take My offering (Exodus 25:1-2).*

The time had come for God to build His (temporary) home. God's love for his children was so intense that He yearned to dwell within their midst and be an active part of their daily lives. But like most important life endeavors – a dream is not enough – dreams often require money. And so, the call went out to the Jewish people to donate gold, silver, copper, wool and an assortment of other precious metals and materials. All are to have a portion in the Mishkan; all are to have a place within the Home of Hashem. From the wording of the verse it would appear that giving to this holy endeavor was at the discretion of the individual. God tells Moshe to collect from *"every person whose heart inspires him to generosity."* Collect from every person who possesses this *"Nidivus Leyv, generosity of spirit."* The inference is that if a person *"feels"* generous they give and if they don't feel generous they are exempt. This seems to be strange dynamic given the fact that *mitzvos* (commandments) are usually obligatory and are not left to the discretion of the individual. We have 613 commandments which represent a set of Divine mandates to which we must adhere. Why was donating to the Mishkan left to the discretion of the individual?

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz (1902-1979) explains this dynamic with a beautiful insight. The Talmud (Kesubos 103a) quotes an amazing episode:

*"Rabbi Chiya said: I will make sure that Torah is never forgotten from the Jewish people. I will sow flax, harvest it and make it into nets. I will use the nets to capture deer. I will slaughter the deer, feed the meat to orphans and write the sections of the Torah on the parchment (skins). I will then go to a place where there are no teachers of Torah and I will assemble a group of children and teach each of them a section of Torah and I will then ask each of them to teach the material to one another."*

Why did Rabbi Chiya have to go through the trouble of making the nets and capturing the deer? Why not just purchase the parchment and write the Torah on it? Or better yet, purchase already written scrolls? Rabbi Chiya understood a very important and fundamental principle. To be successful in any spiritual life endeavor you must do it *"lishmah, for God's glory."* Rabbi Chiya knew that in order to impart Torah to the next generation, every step of the spiritual, educational process would have to be pure and holy. From beginning to end it would have to be done for the right reasons. Any ego or self-serving motivations would erode the spiritual foundation. In order to ensure the transmission of Torah to the next generation would be pure and good, Rabbi Chiya made sure that each and every part of the process was infused with holiness and meaning.

*Nidivus Leyv* does not simply refer to someone who is generous; it refers to someone who does the right thing for the right reasons – someone who lives his life *lishmah*. Hashem was saying to Moshe, *"I want everyone to give, but I want them to give for the right reasons. I don't want them to give for their ego, I don't want them to give for self-aggrandizement, I don't want them to give to gain honor in the eyes of the other; I want them to give for Me. I want them to give because they understand how much I yearn to be in their midst. I want them to give because they want to have Me close. I want them to give as an expression of their love for Me and out of recognition of My love for them. I want them to give lishmah."*

The Torah is conveying to us the need to be honest regarding our life motivations. There are times when we get involved in something meaningful – but for all the wrong reasons. Good deeds with self-serving motivations do not usually yield fruit. Often it is important to take a step back and ask ourselves – *am I truly serving the needs of others? Am I serving the needs of God? Or am I serving my own personal needs?* God asks us to be honest about our motivations. God asks us to be *lishmah* people. The *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) is not simply a Divine home; it is the symbol of love and *lishmah* between God and His people for all eternity.