

Parshas Terumah

This week's Parsha is Terumah, the parsha where the Jews are solicited for donations to help build the parts of the Mishkan. 13 items in total were required to be donated by the people. For the precious metals (gold, silver, copper), the silver was collected in the form of ½ shekel, for which no one could give more or less than half a shekel. This silver was primarily used as the foundation of the pillars of the Mishkan.

This is not by coincidence. The donations received were a level playing field for all Jews and were the foundation of the Mishkan. This ties into the fact that 13 items in total were collected. The numerical value of 13 is Echad, which is "one." We know from Chassidus that "Echad" is a term of unification and amalgamation into a unit instead of using the word for singular or only "levad." The Freidieker Rebbe explains this on the Mamer on lengthening the term Echad in the Shema prayer, which will merit a person to have lengthened days. Because when one contemplates the word, one considers the unity of G-d. G-d transcends time and space and is a composition of all that was, is, and will be. So, when we contemplate and lengthen Shema's last word, we acknowledge G-d's rulership and accept His kingship and mastery over the universe. Just as the word Echad, one, is a composition of all parts of the universe, so too, the 13 items represent the coming together of all the Jews. But that is not enough; the foundation (of silver) is predicated on when we are all level with

one another, as we are viewed this way in the eyes of HaShem. In this way, a foundation can be built to support the pillars of the Mishkan. According to Midrash Rabba, the Mishkan is a metaphor for the universe (and in other places, the 13¹ types of items are metaphorically used to describe a human. For example, the purple and blue cloths, as blood and veins, or the heavens, the gold is the sun, the silver is the moon² etc.) Because the specific commandments of what to build parallel the creation as written in Bereishis.

The commandment in the second posuk is a portion, which Rashi explains, must be set aside. Rashi stated this to say that if you make a promise of a donation, you should know whether you can deliver, and therefore the best strategy to deliver on a promise is to set the gift aside. The contribution must be voluntary, which Rashi explains is an expression of goodwill. Rashi also explains in 25:3 that the donations came in voluntarily, except for the silver, which, as stated above, was used for the foundation of the Mishkan.

The commandment to give out of goodwill is interesting, as it entrusts us with the power of intent. The Talmud in Nazir 22-24 discusses scenarios where a person's plan, even if the person were to do something wrong, could be construed as positive if the outcome is in the service of Hashem (the Talmud there lists examples of the incestuous relationship between Lot and his Daughters, or Tamar and her father in law, where the act is prohibited, but the people

¹ There are 15 individual items listed, but because the fabrics were the same material, they are considered one, but with distinct colours.

² This is interesting, as the Jews are like the moon according to the Gemara. We reflect the source of light, G-d, just as the moon is a reflection of the source of light, the Sun.

acted on the information that was available to them at the time). The Talmud tells us the expression of *Mitoch She Lo Lishma, Ba Lishma*; even without proper intent, it can eventually lead to purpose. The *pesukim* here and the Torah guide us on how to be intentional and donate. That is, ensure you have the money to deliver on it. More than this, a donation can be beyond the physical requirements and can be (as we will see with Betzalel, such as lending expertise) contributions in other ways. But the donation to build the foundation needed to be equal to ensure no one gives more or less and differentiates themselves, even inadvertently, from their neighbor. In acting in accordance with the Torah, we merit as the *Shaloh* says on the *posuk* 25:8, make a sanctuary, and I will dwell in them, not in it. Because we are the sanctuary, and the purpose of creation, as the Alter Rebbe explains, is to create an abode on the lower realms for Hashem. This comes about in two methods. From gifts of the heart, which are subjective, and from the core equalizing foundational skills.

On that note, may the merit of our gifts bring closer a time when Hashem will rest in this abode. Good Shabbos