

תרומה

THE ART OF THE DEAL

ויקחו לי תרומה מאת כל איש אשר ידבנו לבו...

“That they take for me an offering; of every man that gives ה' willingly with his heart” (*Shemos* 25:2).

“Take for me” seems to be grammatically incorrect. A more appropriate statement would be “give to me.” This expression crops up again in the request made by Eliyahu *Hanavi* when he asked for sustenance from the widow:

קחי לי מעט מים

“... please take to me a little water” (*Melachim* I 17:10).

Again, it would have been more appropriate to ask “... please give me a little water.”

Mishlei writes that when Hashem gave the Torah to *Klal Yisrael* it was “a good taking.”

כי לקח טוב נתתי לכם

“For a good taking have I given you ...” (*Mishlei* 4:2).

This is interpreted by the *Gemara* (*Berachos* 5•) to be a unique type of sale; one that is beneficial to both the buyer and the seller. For in this instance, Hashem is very satisfied that *Klal Yisrael* accepted the Torah, and vice versa. Similarly, in the episode involving Eliyahu and the widow it seemed as though Eliyahu was simply taking water from the widow; the reality of the situation was that the widow received much more from this enterprise than Eliyahu did. She rescued the life of her son in exchange for some victuals.

The expression “take for me an offering” can also be understood in this same vein. The building of a *Mishkan* was a much greater opportunity for *Klal Yisrael* than it was for Hashem. For although *Klal Yisrael* had to contribute materials for the building of the *Mishkan*, the end result — that Hashem dwelt among them — was certainly of greater advantage to *Klal Yisrael*. Therefore, “take for me an offering” is a very appropriate description of this event — for after all, the ultimate “taking” was by *Klal Yisrael*.

This line of reasoning makes good sense until we encounter the Ibn Ezra (*Shemos* 29:46), who states that the sole purpose of the exodus from Mitzraim was for the *Shechinah* to find a resting place among His nation. The Ramban (ibid.) further states: “There is in this matter a great secret. For in the plain sense of things it would appear that [the dwelling of] the Divine Glory in *Klal Yisrael* was to fulfill a need of *Klal Yisrael*, but it is not so. It fulfilled a need above [of Hashem], being rather similar in thought to that which the *Navi* states, ‘Israel, in whom I will be glorified’ (*Yeshayah* 49:3).” *Rabbeinu* Bechaya (*Shemos* 20:1) further states that the *Shechinah* needs *Klal Yisrael* at least as much as *Klal Yisrael* needs the *Shechinah*.

This idea is very elegantly expressed in the beginning of the Torah.

ורוח אלקים מרחפת על פני המים

And the spirit of Hashem hovered over the face of the waters (*Bereishis* 1:2).

This statement must be understood; the Al-mighty, the omnipotent Creator, the designer, architect and builder of this universe was lacking for a resting place? He had to hover on the water because He could not find a landing site? Moreover, why did He not just land on the water? What this metaphor is actually declaring, is that Hashem had to locate an appropriate receptor site for the ultimate symbiotic relationship. Of course, Hashem could have landed anywhere He pleased, but He chose to wait until He found the proper spiritual partner — *Klal Yisrael*.

Hence, the above mentioned *Gemara* (*Berachos* 5•) is now much more understandable. The episode of *Klal Yisrael's* accepting the Torah, as well as the building of the *Mishkan* is a unique buyer-seller transaction. It is the special situation in which both the buyer and seller happily benefited from each other.

So central is this concept to the Hashem-*Klal Yisrael* relationship that the expression of “take” is immediately reiterated twice more in the ensuing two *pasukim* (*Shekalim Yerushalmi* 2:1). Correspondingly, Hashem states

לי הכסף ולי הזהב

“The silver is mine, and the gold is mine” (*Chaggai* 2:8).

Everything in this world belongs to Hashem! Obviously, the gifts that *Klal Yisrael* contributed to the building of the *Mishkan* were Hashem's property. The expression “take for me” actually means, “although you are actually only contributing that which is already Mine, nevertheless I consider this transaction to be mutually beneficial.”

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