



Parashat Terumah



English version

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A JEW'S SEARCH FOR SPIRITUALITY

I learnt the following truism from coaching Yeshiva Bachurim and frum people. The Torah Jew is concerned more about finding spirituality in the mundane than he is by anything else. This is an area left uncovered by the psychologists of the world.

No matter where the Bachur is holding, no matter how far he has fallen. Inappropriate behaviors, drugs, hurting himself, suicide attempt. Somehow, when I ask what he really wants, it always boils down to the issue that he wants - needs - to know one thing: What does it mean to believe that I can connect to G-d and bring Him into my life? What does it mean to pray, and know that G-d is right there in front of me? No matter how low a frum girl has fallen, she wants to know what it means for her to build a home into which she can bring G-dliness. The Torah Jew cannot live the carousel life of the Gentile and stay spiritually stable. Work to make money, make money to buy food, eat food to have energy, energy to go to work, etc... He needs to find, in every step of the way, not just a purpose, but a spiritual purpose.

One of the difficulties in understanding Shabbat is understanding how, specifically the 39 acts of building the Mishkan make up the acts that are forbidden on Shabbat. If we are supposed to rest on Shabbat, how does it make

sense that removing a black seed from a watermelon, tying a knot in a certain way, putting on makeup, can be considered desecrating the Shabbat, for similar acts were used in the making of the Mishkan, whereas there are so many tiring acts that a person might do on Shabbat that are not considered desecrating the Shabbat? Why should it make a difference if I cook with fire or with any other element? Why are the categories of "work" used to build the Mishkan the foundation and the definition of what is classified "not resting" on Shabbat?

In order to explain this, we need to understand a discussion between G-d and the Angels, in the beginning of Creation. G-d relayed to the angels that Man is smarter than the Angels, for Man knows how to name things according to their essence. Regarding himself, man called himself Adam for he was taken from the earth, the Adamah. What does this mean? Why is Man's being created from earth his essence?

The answer is that the whole essence of man is to take the earth, the physical, the mundane, and make it holy. Finding spirituality in the physical. When Moshe wanted to take the Torah, and the angels argued that it was theirs - **תנה הודך על השמים** Moshe won the argument. He told them that the Torah can show man how to make the mundane holy - to take



something physical and elevate it to a level of holiness. Angels are not expected to do such things. (Shabbat 88b)

That is why, out of all actions that can be considered work, it is those involved in the making of the Mishkan that define work that has importance to it, that is the foundation for all actions forbidden on Shabbat. Because the building of the Mishkan was unique, in that human beings created something spiritual from something physical. Any other type of manmade creation is taking something physical and reshaping it - into something that is also physical. (See Siftei Chaim Terumah) This is the uniqueness of man. An angel cannot take something physical and make it spiritual. But man is made with this intent in mind (Messilat Yesharim Chapter 1, Yalkut Yosef Hil. K. Shema 64/6/footnote 6).

It is much more difficult to live a life of balance than it is to live a life of extremism. It is easier not to speak than it is to communicate without gossiping. It is easier to stay in Yeshiva or Kollel and learn, than it is to learn while you are working or in Ben Hazemanim. G-d does not want us to rid ourselves of the Yetzer Hara, but to love Him with it. ואהבת את ה' אלוהיך בכל לבבך. Love G-d with both, your Yetzer Hatov and your Yetzer Hara. This is the whole life of a Jew. Facilitating peace between these two extremes is a constant challenge we all have to struggle with. It is such a serious challenge that we need to pray for success in it. 3 times a day. עושה שלום במרומינו.. יעשה שלום. Throughout the day, we ask G-d to grant us peace and to grant peace for all of His nation. What is the repetition? The first mention is about our coming to peace between the physical and the spiritual that we all have inside us. And when we do, G-d brings peace on all of His Nation.

This has ramifications to every minute of our lives. It is a mistake to say that life is time and

time is life. Because time is just a way to measure life. All of life is really a combination of three things. מחשבה מעשה דיבור. Thought, action, and speech. We need to make these as holy as possible. Making our thought, action and speech, holy.

To love G-d with your Yetzer Hara means to love Him even when you are down, because He always believes in you. It means to love Him, even if you have sinned, because He knows that you are human, and you needed some time to figure yourself out, and He understands you. It means to make Shabbat the most enjoyable day of the week, while keeping all the enjoyment very spiritual. If one needs to leave learning, that means that G-d wants him to bring G-dliness to the physical, materialistic and mundane, that he finds in his life. If someone needs internet access to live, G-d wants him to make it holy with the filters that keep him holy. This is the project of the month of Adar. Adar stands for אלהיך דר, or 'אלופו של דר', recognizing how the Master of the World lives among us.

This is one of the deepest, most fundamental principles of Judaism. Judaism is a religion of balance. Of harmony between physical, material and mundane with spiritual, meaningful and moral. This equilibrium has its ramifications in all life areas of a Jew. Jewish males start off their lives differentiating themselves from the people of the world by making a covenant with G-d, specifically on the part of the body that is so physical, because the uniqueness of the Jew is sanctifying the mundane. Women live *their whole lives* taking the physical and making it spiritual. Changing diapers 24/ 7, setting the table, clearing the table, etc. Making home a place for the spirituality of the man that lives there to soar, to open a Sefer, to bless G-d for the deliciousness of Shabbat, and to enjoy spending quality time with his own wife, alone. Men are איש, while women are אשה.

The man is about the letter ה, or Olam Haba, and the woman is about taking the letter ה which is Olam Hazeh, and making it holy. כִּי בִּיה־ה' צוֹר עוֹלָמִים, with the letter ה G-d made Olam Haba, and with the letter ה G-d made Olam Hazeh (See Menachot 29b).

So, ladies, change your child's diapers with love, because you are emulating G-d who

A BAD IDEA

People ask me how I manage to come up with an amazing article every week. Here is my secret. I don't. I come up with an article that is not so great. And then I change it. I tweak it 'til it's better. And then change it again. Each time looking for something that didn't seem right the first time. I never come up with a good idea the first time around.

Ask the *honest* shadchan. He'll tell you. "What percentage of your attempts make it to the chuppah?" The most successful shadchanim I know told me the secret recipe. "I fail 50 times so that the 51st might send me an invitation!" They are ready to fail before they start. They don't fear the "No, we're not interested."

This is the secret recipe of the successful. Fail 9 times, so that you will succeed on the 10th. The comedian needs to make 9 jokes so that the 10th might be funny. Then, he doesn't tell you those bad jokes, he just tells you the funny ones. In writing, or any other area where you need to come up with a good idea for something, if you need creativity, remember that your #1 enemy is fear of failure. As long as your child is afraid of falling, he will never learn how to ride a bike. One boy I coached was afraid to date, because he might get a no, or even worse, get married and then divorced. A young married fellow was afraid to open up emotionally, out of fear of rejection. Napoleon Bonaparte was quoted, *'He who fears being conquered is sure of defeat.'*

I specialize in coaching for effective learning. More than one person says he can't read Talmud on his own, and that he needs a tutor/superior study partner to explain the entire section of Talmud being studied. *Can you read a piece of Talmud on*

cleans us of our sins with love. Find G-dliness in the laundry, for you are dressing up your family to become the representatives of G-d to the world. Clean the dishes, set the table, make the best food you can, because you are making your home into your very own Mishkan.(1307)

your own? "No". *Okay. Let's see what happens when you try.* The student reads the Mishna out loud. After the first line, he says, "I don't know what its talking about." *What did you understand?* "Nothing". *Did you have 5 % comprehension of the text?* "No". *Is it talking about xyz?* "No." *How do you know?* "Because its talking about abc". *So you do understand 5%?* "Yes..." After a few more questions, we realize that he knows closer to 60 percent of the info! And the reason why he gives up trying to read on his own is that he is afraid to get a 60. I have found this to be a very common problem.

The ones who are the "geniuses" don't believe that you have to understand the info with a 100 percent comprehension the first time around. Somehow, they never assumed that one has to learn in such a way. This is many times the difference between those who make it in the study hall and those who don't. *A successful yeshiva student learns in percentages of comprehension.* The non successful yeshiva student wants to get 100 percent comprehension the first time around. In Talmud study, sometimes you need to read ahead, to get a picture of things, even if you don't understand 100 percent of what you are reading. You need to get however much of a picture you can, the best percentage you can for a rough draft, and then come back for a second and then a third round. The Talmud tells us this. You need to learn the text at least four times before you can say, "I got it". This is why the Torah scholar is called תלמיד חכם. He is always in the studying stage. He always sees himself at 50 percent comprehension. אין דברי תורה מתקיימים אלא במי שנכשל בהם תחילה. (Gittin 43a) He first reads the Gemarrah knowing that his initial understanding is not absolute.

The ארון הקודש, the Holy Ark, is symbolic of the Torah scholar. *Just as the Ark was gold on inside and on the outside, so, too, a Torah Scholar needs to be genuine on the inside, as he is on the surface.*(Yoma 72b) There are other allegories here between the Ark and the Torah scholar. The Ark had unique measurements. *2 and a half, by 1 and a half and 1 and a half.* It was different from the other vessels in the Mishkan, in *that all its measurements included halves. To teach you that a student needs to look at himself as if he is still at a partial percentage and has not reached תכלית ההכמה, 100 percent comprehension.*(Kli Yakar)

There is always room for another round, to get a higher percentage of comprehension than what you are up to now. This is a twofold lesson. If a student says “I got it”, and goes on thinking that he has reached maximum comprehension, this will stop him from advancing in his level of understanding and coming up with a new, creative thought. You need to be ready to come back to the text, to learn it for another round. “*I got the idea, but I need to think it over*”, is the frame of mind of those who come up with good questions, good answers, and new concepts. Take the telephone, for example. If you think that technology has reached its climax with the phones, you are in good company. With every new burst of technology, people think this way, that there is no more room for innovation. *Those inventors who come up with new ideas first believe that there is always more to go.* Just as there have been innovative ways of thinking since the time the Talmud was recorded, there continue

to be new ideas to come up with. This is the first side of the coin with learning in percentage, seeing yourself only halfway there.

The other side is being ready to fail, *to learn in percentages.* The *all or nothing student*, who says to himself, *If there are some words that I don't understand, if there is something not clear, then I didn't understand anything*, is prevented from even trying. Those who are successful in the study hall are not necessarily smarter, they just have a different approach. They are willing to fail the first time around, to reach just a 20 percent comprehension, and the second time around are ready to fail again, but with 60 percent comprehension. By the fourth time, they are at 90 percent comprehension. They never shut off the engine during the first time around. The first round is somewhat of a rough draft, quickly going through today's material, looking for what the text is generally talking about. In round two, we look for more detail, and the third round is putting it all together. It's not about speeding through the text, hoping to be the first or the fastest to finish. It's about getting the information in the most effective way. *Never getting stuck. Never saying “I don't know what it's talking about”.* Rather, saying, “*I don't know yet!*”

This is the mindset of the successful student. He aspires for the stars, and settles for whatever he gets. He is happy, even if he gets 20 percent. Because 20 percent of comprehension in learning is worth so, so much.(1250)

Does learning or reading cause you fatigue?
Do you wish you could triple your learning speed, and cover 3 books in the time it presently takes you to finish one?
Is your time in the Beit Midrash important to you?
Do you wish you could remember your learning better?
Do you wish you could improve your listening in class, and improve your listening in conversations?
Does your mind wander too often while praying?
Do you hate tests?
Do you wish you were more focused while reading a book or sefer, especially Gemarra and text books?

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF SONNY AND IRENE GINDI A”H