

Devar Torah for Parshat Terumah
By Brian Dym

In this week's parsha, Teruma, the Jewish people start to build the first Temple, the portable Tabernacle or "Mishkan". G-d tells Moshe to raise funds for the project:

“תְּרוּמָה מֵאַת כָּל-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִקְרְבּוּ לְבּוֹ תָּקַח אֶת-תְּרוּמָתִי וְבָרְאֵל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְקַח-לִי”

“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.”

This is a weird way to say that G-d wants us to donate metals for the Mishkan. Aren't we "giving" to the Mishkan not "taking" to the Mishkan?

The following analysis is from Rabbi Moshe Alshich, the great 16th century scholar from Tzfat.

The Talmud in Tractate Kddushin page 7a discusses some unusual but effective ways for a man to betroth a woman. Normally, the woman must receive from the man an object of value (like a ring). One of the unusual cases is a woman who gives a gift to a man of special prestige. The Talmud maintains that the honor she feels when the prestigious man accepts her gift can be considered the "gift" that she receives, and the betrothal is valid!

Here too, Rabbi Alshich explains, the people who donated for the holy Mishkan received more than they gave.

This is not the first time the Torah uses the word "taking" when giving is taking place. In Parshat Chayei Sarah when Avraham's servant, Eleazar, gives Rivka a bracelet and rings, the Torah says:

וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּא-שֶׁר כָּל-הָגָמְלִים לְשַׁתּוֹת וַיִּקְחֵה אֶת-נָצְרָב וְהַב בְּקֻע מִשְׁקָלוֹ וַיְשִׁגְנֵי אֲמִידִים עַל-יִרְקָה עַשְׂרָה וְהַב
מִשְׁקָלוֹם:

*"It was, when the camels had finished drinking, [that] the man **took** a golden nose ring, weighing half [a shekel], and two bracelets for her hands, weighing ten gold [shekels]."*

Isn't he giving the rings to Rivka and not taking them from her? Here too, Rabbi Alshich explains, Eliezer was so delighted that he had the opportunity to give a gift to the next Matriarch that her acceptance of them was a gift to him.

A final example in the Torah is when Avraham had surprise guests come to his tent. He was so happy that he could help them, he told them:

"וְאֵת הַהִיא פַת-לְקָחֶם וְקַצְצָרֶוּ לְבָכֶם אַחֲרֵי מַעֲבָרוֹ כִּי-עַל-כֵן עֲבָרָתֶם עַל-עֲבָרָתָם"

"And I will take a piece of bread, and sustain your hearts; after[wards] you shall pass on, because you have passed by your servant."

Avraham considered the opportunity to help others a great gift for himself. He always wanted to be like Hashem and help all the time.

A good example in life is when you are giving your wife (or husband) a gift. She (or he) is a very important person in your life so when they 'love' your gift you feel great. Who got the better gift? Depend on whom you are asking. The giver is sure it was him even though it was a really nice necklace.