

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 מֵאֵת כָּל-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִדְבְּנוּ לְבָבוֹ תִקְחוּ אֶת-תְּרוּמַתִּי דִבַּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ-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 Kaddushin 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 for 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:

“וַיְהִי כִּאֲשֶׁר כָּלוּ הַגַּמְלִים לְשָׂתוֹת וַיִּקַּח הָאִישׁ גִּזְזִים וְזָהָב בָּקָע מִשְׁקָלָו וּשְׁנֵי צַמִּידִים עַל-יָדֶיהָ עָשְׂרָה זָהָב מִשְׁקָלָם:”

*"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:

"וְאֶקְחָהּ פֶתֶלֶת לֶחֶם וְסַעֲדוּ לְבָבְכֶם אַחֲרַי תִּזְכְּרוּ כִּי־עָלִינוּ עַבְדֵיכֶם"

"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.