

The Free Will Offering and Yeshua

This weeks reading is from Parashat Terumah (*Shemot / Exodus 25:1-27:19*), the Lord tells Moshe to speak to the Children of Israel to raise a contribution for the Lord (25:1) א וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ב דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ-לִי תְרוּמָה מֵאֵת, (25:1): asking them to give gold, silver, and bronze, linen materials, goat hair, rams skins, and acacia wood. The feminine noun *terumah*, (“*lifting up*”) comes from the verb stem, “*rum*” (רום) meaning “*high*” or “*to lift up.*” The tithe offering in Hebrew is “*terumat ha-maaser*” (תרומת המעשר) and is a rabbinical term based on the commandment in the Hebrew Bible to give a tithe *maaser* (מעשר) of 10% to the Levites. The term *terumah* occurs 76 times in the masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible. According to the Septuagint it is rendered “*afairema*” (ἀφάρημα), in the King James Version (1611) it is generally translated as “*offering*” but also sometimes as “*oblation*” and four times as “*heave offering*” (see *Strongs Concordance*). In addition to this, *terumah* is used in various contexts throughout the Hebrew Bible, including one usage in Proverbs denoting “*haughtiness*” (see *Mishley / Proverbs 29:4*, ד מְלֹךְ בְּמִשְׁפָּט, (עצמיד אָרָץ וְאִישׁ תְּרוּמוֹת יִהְיֶה כְּסֵנָה):). In most contexts in the Scriptures it refers to designating something for a higher purpose, lifting and setting apart something from a larger quantity, an example may be taken from the gifts offered by the Children of Israel for the inauguration of the Mishkan as is described here in Parashat Terumah. The reading for this week describes an obligatory offering (*Terumah*) that the Lord is asking the people to contribute for the specific purpose of the construction of the Mishkhan (Tabernacle). The Lord is asking that the Mishkhan be constructed with all of its instruments and altars that are to be made in the specific way He has shown Moshe (25:9-27:19). The Lord states that the sanctuary be constructed so that He can dwell among His people (25:8). This week’s Parashah is particularly interesting for us today, why do you think that is?

ספר שמות פרק כה *Shemot / Exodus 25:1-8*

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ב דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ-לִי תְרוּמָה מֵאֵת כָּל-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִדְבְּנוּ לְבוּ תִקְחוּ אֶת-תְּרוּמוֹתַי: ג וְזֹאת תְּרוּמוֹת אֲשֶׁר תִּקְחוּ מֵאֵתָם זָהָב וְכֶסֶף וְנְחֹשֶׁת: ד וְתֵבֶלֶת כְּלֵת וְאַרְגָּמָן וְתוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי וְשֵׁשׁ וְעִזִּים: ה וְעֹרֹת אֵילִם מְאֻדָּמִים וְעֹרֹת תְּחָשִׁים וְעֵצֵי שִׁטִּים: ו שֶׁמֶן לְמָאֵר בְּשָׂמִים לְשֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה וְלִקְטָרֶת הַסַּמִּים: ז אֲבָנֵי-שֵׁהָם וְאֲבָנֵי מְלֵאִים לְאַפֵּד וְלֹהֶ־שֵׁן: ח וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם:

25:1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 25:2 ‘Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My contribution. 25:3 ‘This is the contribution which you are to raise from them: gold, silver and bronze, 25:4 blue, purple and scarlet material, fine linen, goat hair, 25:5 rams’ skins dyed red, porpoise skins, acacia wood, 25:6 oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, 25:7 onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and for the breastpiece. 25:8 ‘Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. (NASB)

Most people would answer saying “*the tithe is why this is important for us today.*” However, that is not exactly what the Lord is trying to tell us regarding these Scriptures. The Apostle Paul told the people of his day in *Acts 17:24* ‘*The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 17:25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; 17:26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 17:27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 17:28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’* (NASB) In the text of the Torah, God asked for the people to make a sanctuary so He may dwell among His people. The Hebrew word for “sanctuary” is mikdash (מִקְדָּשׁ) which comes from the root word kadash (קָדַשׁ) meaning “to be set apart as sacred.” A mikdash is therefore a “holy place” a “set apart space” that is meant to be a place of worship and rest. Note also how these other words share this root word “kedushah” (holiness), “kiddushin” (betrothal), “kaddish” (sanctification), and “Kiddush” (a sacred time), etc. So when the Lord asked the people to make him a mikdash (מִקְדָּשׁ), he was asking the people to make a sacred place for His presence to manifest. It is interesting to note that the Terumah is one of the “free will” offerings that are given to the Lord and therefore the Lord was also asking the people to make a place in their hearts for the purpose of worshiping God that is expressed in the free will offerings that were given to the Lord. Note in *Shemot / Exodus 25:8* that the mikdash is what the Lord asks to be built. Note also that the Lord is asking the people to build this “set apart place” (מִקְדָּשׁ, mikdash) so that he can “dwell” there which comes from the root word shachan (שָׁכַן) meaning “to sit, dwell, or lie down with someone.” The Tabernacle was called the mishkan (מִשְׁכָּן) a set apart place that was intended for rest and intimacy with God. Therefore, we can conclude that within the command to build a place for the Lord to dwell, we are to invite God’s presence within our hearts that gives us communion and fellowship with Him. Note, Yeshua also said that we will find joy, rest, and peace when we “abide in him” (*John 15*). The end goal of the Mishkan was found in sacrificial love, that the life of the innocent was given for the sake of the sinner that provided for us a tangible hope of holiness and perfect righteousness that only God gives making a way for us to be acceptable in His sight. Because of Yeshua the Messiah, we are able to draw near to God because He is our korban (קָרְבַּן, sacrifice) that brings us into eternal fellowship with the Lord. In this week’s Portion, we read about the free will offering, the Terumah that God asks for the purpose of building a place to dwell among His people. As noted earlier, the various contexts within Scripture, including this weeks reading, has the terumah designating something for a higher purpose by lifting and setting apart something for the Lord (the construction of the tabernacle). Could one application of these Scriptures today be offering ourselves, giving of our lives, our hearts, all of who we are to the Lord so He can construct His tabernacle within us? According to the Scriptures, we must give our hearts freely to Yeshua the Messiah so the Lord can work in our lives and construct a place where he can dwell.