

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 21

Teruma, Sicha 1

The Question:

The name of a parshah encapsulates the main theme of the parshah. Why is the parshah called Terumah when a) the main content of the portion is the building of the Mishkan; and b) Terumah generally refers to the gifts given to a Kohen, not to the specific donations given to the Mishkan spoken of in the beginning of the portion?

The Explanation:

G-d's presence is drawn down to this earthly reality in two ways: 1) By G-d imposing His presence on this world, and 2) by humankind refining their material selves and drawing G-d's presence down into their limited human consciousness.

When G-d imposes Himself on creation, the revelation is total, but it is fleeting; it has no staying power because it is not inculcated

within the world. When humankind strives to incorporate G-d within their reality, the revelation is limited, but it is closer to realizing the purpose of creation, which is the recognition of the G-dly reality within the human reality.

Terumah encapsulates this central theme of the human initiative in drawing down the Divine. Terumah means to separate and uplift, referring to the process of separating from one's possessions and uplifting it to a higher purpose. "Separating" from one's possessions implies that there are distinctions in our spiritual growth, we are limited human beings and we cannot declare a wholesale devotion to G-d. We are splintered individuals who slowly dedicate one piece of ourselves at a time to G-d. "Uplifting" implies that we sublimate ourselves to a higher purpose, but not that we obliterate our sense of self. As human beings in the beginning of our spiritual journey, we are unable to eradicate the base of our ego, but we can sublimate it to G-dly purposes.

This is why the parshah is called Terumah, because it evokes the project of the Mishkan itself — building a piecemeal home for G-d even while inhabiting a spiritual “desert.”

This is why the Torah dedicates so much space to discussing the details of the construction of the Mishkan even though it is no longer practically applicable. Because

this alludes to the our primary spiritual objective, to build a home for G-d within the human realm.

Even if at times we feel that our lives resemble a “desert,” uninhabited and barren, we are told that we can and must build a home for G-d with whatever materials are available to us at that moment.
