



# Likkutei Sichos

Volume 16 | Terumah | Sichah 2

## Three Pillars

---

Translated by Rabbi Eliezer Robbins  
Edited by Rabbi Y. Eliezer Danzinger

A note on the translation: Rounded parentheses and square brackets reflect their use in the original *sichah*; squiggly parentheses are interpolations of the translator or editor. The footnotes in squiggly parentheses in this translation are those of the translators or editors, and do not correspond to the footnotes in the original. Great effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the translation, while at the same time striving for readability. However, the translation carries no official authority. As in all translations, the possibility of inadvertent errors exists. **Your feedback is needed — please send all comments to: [info@projectlikkuteisichos.org](mailto:info@projectlikkuteisichos.org)**

## 1.

### THREE TERUMOS

At the beginning of our *parshah*, the Torah repeats the commandment to take “*terumah*” {a donation} from the Jewish people (for the Temple service) three times:<sup>1</sup> “Let them take for Me {li} *terumah*,” “you shall take My *terumah* {*terumasi*},” and “this is the *terumah* that you shall take.” Regarding this {repetition}, our Sages comment:<sup>2</sup>

Three offerings are mentioned in this *parshah*...: “Let them take for Me *terumah*...” — this is the *terumah* for the sockets;<sup>3</sup> “From every man whose heart motivates him, you shall take my *terumah*” — this is the *terumah* of the *shekalim*;<sup>4</sup> “This is the *terumah* that you shall take from them” — this is the *terumah* for the *Mishkan*.<sup>5</sup>

There are differences in the way the Torah words these three *terumos*: The first two *terumos* are mentioned in general terms by way of allusion (their details are only explained later, in the subsequent *parshiyos*),<sup>6</sup> while the *terumah* for the *Mishkan*<sup>7</sup> is explained here in detail and at length.

All three *terumos* were designated to support the service in the *Mishkan*.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Vayikra* 25:2-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Jerusalem Talmud*, “*Shekalim*,” ch. 1, par. 1, quoted by Rashi in his Torah commentary on *Shemos* 25:2.

<sup>3</sup> {All male twenty years of age and older were required to donate a half-shekel for the sockets that supported the beams of the *Mishkan*.}

<sup>4</sup> {All male adults were required to donate a half-shekel annually for the communal sacrifices.}

<sup>5</sup> {All Jews were required to donate toward the construction of the *Mishkan*.}

<sup>6</sup> The *terumah* for the sockets — “as explained in *Eileh Pekudei*.” (Rashi’s commentary on *Shemos* 25:2. See *Shemos* 38:25 ff.); The *terumah* of the *shekalim* — *Shemos* 30:13 ff (and in Rashi’s commentary on *Shemos* 30:15).

<sup>7</sup> {The *Mishkan* is the temporary sanctuary which travelled with the Jews in the desert.}

[Even the *terumah* of the *shekalim*, used for {the purchase of} communal sacrifices,<sup>8</sup> served this purpose. As Rambam rules,<sup>9</sup> the *mitzvah* of building the Temple was (not only) to construct “a house for Hashem” (but rather to construct an edifice) “**prepared for offering sacrifices therein.**” This indicates that the command that “they shall make a Sanctuary for Me”<sup>10</sup> includes making the necessary provisions for the sacrificial services, including disbursement of the *terumah* of the *shekalim* for the purchase of communal sacrifices.]

We need to clarify: Since all three *terumos* were designated to support the service in the *Mishkan*, Scripture in *our parshah* should have explained explicitly, in detail, all three *terumos*!

True, the *terumah* of the *shekalim* was not ultimately used for the building of the *Mishkan* (in actuality), and had only served as preparation for the *Mishkan* service. Even if we could posit, on this basis, that this (*parshas Terumah*) is not the place for the Torah to explain the details of the *terumah*, a {similar} difficulty remains regarding the *terumah* for the sockets, which were part of the structure of the *Mishkan*: Why are the details of *this terumah* not explicated in our *parshah*?

## 2.

### WORDED THREE WAYS

There is an additional distinction between these three *terumos*, based on the Torah’s wording in our *parshah*:<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Rashi’s commentary on *Shemos* 25:2, 30:15; *Shekalim*, beg. of ch. 4; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Shekalim*,” beg. of ch. 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, beg. of “*Hilchos Beis HaBechirah*”; similarly, *Sefer HaMitzvos*, Positive *Mitzvah* 20; see at length *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 11, end of p. 120 ff.

<sup>10</sup> *Shemos* 25:8.

<sup>11</sup> In contrast to *parshas Ki Sisa*, where all three *terumos* are alluded to (*Jerusalem Talmud*, “*Shekalim*,” ch. 1, par. 1; Rashi’s commentary on *Shemos* 30:15), and the phrase, “a *terumah* for Hashem,” or, “the *terumah* of Hashem” is applied to each.

Regarding the *terumah* for the sockets, the Torah says, “Let them take for Me {*li*} *terumah*”; regarding the *terumah* of the *shekalim* — “you shall take My *terumah* {*terumati*}”; and regarding the *terumah* for the *Mishkan* — “this is the *terumah* that you shall take.” That is, regarding the first *terumah* (for the sockets), the Torah stresses the connection between this *terumah* and Hashem by using two separate words: “***li terumah***”; regarding the second *terumah* (of the *shekalim*), the Torah implies this connection to Hashem in the word “*terumah*” itself: “***terumati***”; and regarding the third *terumah* (for the *Mishkan*), no mention is made that it is for Hashem. Rather, the Torah writes without qualification: “**this is the *terumah*.**”

### 3.

#### FOUR KINGDOMS

We also find a wondrous idea in the *Midrash* on our *parshah*:

On the verse, “This is the *terumah* that you shall take... gold, silver and copper,” our Sages say:<sup>12</sup>

Gold corresponds to the Babylonian kingdom... silver corresponds to the Median kingdom... copper corresponds to the Greek kingdom... and red-dyed {*me’odamim*} ram skins corresponds to the Edomite kingdom....

This is perplexing: How are these four kingdoms connected with, and related to, the *terumah* for the *Mishkan*? On the contrary — these four kingdoms brought about the four exiles {of the Jewish people} and the the Holy Temple’s **destruction** — contrary to the idea behind the *terumah* for the *Mishkan*: “They shall **make** a Sanctuary for me”<sup>13</sup> (building and erecting the *Mishkan*)!

---

<sup>12</sup> *Midrash Tanchuma*, “*Terumah*,” par. 7; see *Shemos Rabbah*, ch. 35, par. 5.

<sup>13</sup> {*Shemos* 25:8.}

## 4.

### THREE PILLARS

This issue will be clarified by prefacing as follows: The spiritual *avodah* of *making a sanctuary for Hashem* (i.e., making a dwelling-place for Hashem in the *lower realms*)<sup>14</sup> is divided into three categories — pillars {upon which the world stands}:<sup>15</sup> Torah, worship,<sup>16</sup> and kindness.

As such, the underlying idea of the *Mishkan* clearly alludes to these three categories.

Conceivably, their allusion to these three categories is the deeper reason why the donations for the *Mishkan* were divided into three separate *terumos*, rather than **one** (general) *terumah* that could have financed all of the *Mishkan's* needs. For these three *terumos* correspond to the three pillars of Torah, worship, and kindness.

The foundation and source of **all** *avodah* is (the pillar of) “**Torah.**” All of the detailed levels in, and methods of, *avodah*, achieved by performing *mitzvos* and good deeds, are founded upon the Torah. For Judaism’s source and point of departure is the Torah. This is alluded to in the *terumah* for the **sockets**, the sockets being the foundation of the *Mishkan*.

The *terumah* of the *shekalim*, from which funds the public sacrifices were purchased, is associated with the pillar of “divine service” (that is, the

---

<sup>14</sup> {As opposed to the *physical avodah* of building the Temple, this verse (*Shemos* 25:8), as explained in *Chassidus*, adjures us to transform ourselves and the entire world into a place permeated by awareness of the Divine, by *spiritual avodah*.}

<sup>15</sup> *Avos* 1:2.

<sup>16</sup> {In the original Hebrew, “*avodah*”; lit. “service.” Originally, it referred to Temple service, and later, to the service of prayer, which was instituted to substitute for the Temple sacrifices.}

sacrificial service,<sup>17</sup> and prayer, which the Sages established in place of sacrifices).<sup>18</sup>

The *terumah* for the *Mishkan* was used for the purchase of all the materials (gold, silver, and copper, etc.) from which the *Mishkan* was built. This *terumah* corresponds to the *avodah* of *mitzvah* observance (fulfilled with gold, etc.), generally classified under the rubric of *kindness*<sup>19</sup> [as known,<sup>20</sup> bestowing *kindness* encapsulates “the entire corpus of the *mitzvos*”].

By clarifying the distinctions between these three modes of *avodah*, we will understand the rationale for the above distinctions (mentioned in section 2) between these three *terumos*.

## 5.

### THE ADVANTAGE OF THE THIRD “PILLAR”

The distinction between these three pillars — Torah, worship, and kindness:

The underlying idea of Torah is expressed in the verse,<sup>21</sup> “I was a nursling **beside** Him... a delight... before Him...” Torah is Hashem’s hidden delight<sup>22</sup> that preceded the world by 2000 years.<sup>23</sup> Meaning, Torah had existed for 2000 years before it was studied by man. (In contrast, *mitzvos*, by definition, require someone to be commanded. *Mitzvos* (commands) are commanded to **people**). Even after the Torah descended into our world and began to be studied by people, it still retained the quality

---

<sup>17</sup> The commentaries of Rashi and *Bartenura* on *Avos* 1:2.

<sup>18</sup> *Berachos* 26b. See Rabbeinu Yonah’s commentary on *Avos* 1:2.

<sup>19</sup> {The last of the three “pillars.”}

<sup>20</sup> *Likkutei Torah*, “*Re’eh*,” p. 23c; See *Iggeres HaKodesh*, ch. 32: “The entire body is **included** in the right side {emblematic of *bestowing kindness*}.”

<sup>21</sup> *Mishlei* 8:30.

<sup>22</sup> *Shabbos* 88b.

<sup>23</sup> *Midrash Tehillim*, ch. 90, par. 4; *Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 8, par. 2; *Midrash Tanchuma*, “*Vayeshev*,” par. 4; *Zohar*, vol. 2, p. 49a.a

of (in the words of our Sages),<sup>24</sup> “My word {which} is like fire” (Hashem’s fire); it is unchanged when it is en clothed in human intellect and speech. Torah remains Hashem’s wisdom, incomparably loftier than the person who studies it.

The underlying idea of “worship” (sacrifices and prayer) is expressed in the verse,<sup>25</sup> “a person who offers from {among} you” — a person must offer himself to Hashem. As known,<sup>26</sup> “*korban* {sacrifice}” is etymologically related to the word *kiruv* {bringing close}: “Why is it called a *korban*? Because it draws close” — “drawing a person’s abilities and faculties close” to Hashem. And the worship of Hashem that is prayer (which the Sages established in place of sacrifices) is a service **of the heart**<sup>27</sup> by which a person ascends (by **his own** effort) to G-dliness, to the extent that “his head reaches Heavenward.”<sup>28</sup>

Since this divine service is performed by **a person**, he can only ascend to the degree possible for a **created being**. Nonetheless, such *avodah* enables him to **unite** with the Divine Light of holiness at the level he has reached.

These two types of divine service — Torah and worship — share a common denominator: In performing each of these, a person works with (and by) **himself**. Similarly, they only affect the person himself (**his** mind is united with the intellect of Torah — Hashem’s wisdom; and **he** is elevated “Heavenwards”). However, neither of these *avodos* transform physical items into holy articles, which embody sanctity; they do not convert mundane items into *mitzvah* items infused with the *light* of holiness.

---

<sup>24</sup> *Yirmiyahu* 23:29; *Berachos* 22a.

<sup>25</sup> *Vayikra* 1:2; see *Likkutei Torah*, “*Vayikra*,” p. 2c ff.

<sup>26</sup> *Sefer HaBahir*, ch. 46, p. 109. See also *Zohar*, vol. 3, 5a (top); *Shelah*, “tractate *Taanis*” 111b; *Pri Eitz Chaim*, “*Shaar HaTefillah*,” ch. 5; *Bechayei*, “*Vayikra*” 1:9; see *Ramban*, loc. cit.; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5709, s.v. “*Taamah*,” ch. 2 ff.; *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5710, s.v. “*Basi LeGani*,” ch. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Beg. of tractate *Taanis*.

<sup>28</sup> *Bereishis* 28:12, referring to sacrifices (*Bereishis Rabbah*, ch. 68, par. 12) and to prayer (*Zohar*, vol. 1, p. 266b; *Zohar*, vol. 3, p. 306b; *Tikkunei Zohar*, *tikkun* 45).

[Even the actual sacrificial *avodah* — offering a physical animal on the altar — did not entail offering the physical *per se*; the animal had to first be **sanctified** (sanctity connotes *separation*).<sup>29</sup> Meaning, it had to be detached and **elevated** from its lowly state. Only then was it suitable to be offered on Hashem’s altar.]

This is the advantage of the third “pillar” — kindness, which encapsulates the performance of all the *mitzvos*: It acts (primarily) upon a physical item (with which the *mitzvah* is performed), which by its (outward) appearance is a mundane, physical object, transforming it to a *mitzvah* object.

For this reason, *mitzvos* expressly involve measure and limitation,<sup>30</sup> in contrast to Torah, regarding which Scripture says,<sup>31</sup> “Its measure is longer than the earth...” Similar, the consummate level of prayer is achieved when it raises a person “heavenward,” that is, *avodah* using “all your resources”<sup>32</sup> — giving over one’s soul,<sup>33</sup> beyond measure and limitation. Because *mitzvos* are en clothed in material, physical objects, they are subject to limitations. [Even *mitzvos* known as *duties of the heart* must be fulfilled in a way that a person’s physical heart gets excited with an emotional love and fear, etc., of Hashem, and so much so, these emotions are expressed in the heart’s **flesh**.]

## 6.

### PRECISE WORDING

This explains the above mentioned differences in the Torah’s wording:

---

<sup>29</sup> *Tanya*, ch. 46.

<sup>30</sup> *Iggeres HaKodesh*, ch. 10.

<sup>31</sup> *Iyov* 11:9.

<sup>32</sup> {*Devarim* 6:5. In the original Hebrew, “*bechol me’odecha*.”}

<sup>33</sup> {“*Mesiras nefesh*,” in the original Hebrew.}



“Let them take for Me *terumah*” alludes to the “pillar” of Torah,<sup>34</sup> as above. For this reason, the Torah writes, “**let them take for {to} Me *terumah*,**” and not “let them give me *terumah*,” which would imply a terrestrial person giving to what is Above, to “**Me**,” to Hashem, so to speak. Rather, the Torah writes, “let them take.” This wording implies that a terrestrial person *takes* what he has been given from Above, *from* “**Me**,” so to speak.

This is because the *avodah* of Torah {study} is (not an upward flow, but rather) a downward flow — by {studying} Torah, we *take* G-dliness (Hashem’s wisdom), drawing it downward.

The *avodah* of Torah entails “taking” (and drawing) G-dliness downward — “let them take.”

Since Torah and Hashem are completely one,<sup>35</sup> the Torah uses the nuanced wording, “let them take for **Me**,” which refers to Hashem’s Essence.<sup>36</sup> For through {studying} Torah, we “take” Hashem’s actual Essence. In the words of our Sages,<sup>37</sup> “It is Me that you take.”

On the other hand, although a Jew “takes” Hashem’s Essence by {studying} Torah (this is not primarily a function of the **person** studying, but rather), it is **Hashem** who makes it possible. He does so by “investing” Himself, so to speak, in the Torah (in a way that “My Word is like fire”).<sup>38</sup> As such, a person’s ability to draw Hashem’s Essence to himself through Torah study is limited — and what is elicited remains as if detached from the person who is studying.

---

<sup>34</sup> For an explanation of this concept, see *Tanya* ch. 47; *Or HaTorah*, “*Terumah*,” p. 1351, 1359 ff.

<sup>35</sup> Cited in *Tanya*, ch. 4, beg. of ch. 23, in the name of the *Zohar*. See *Zohar*, vol. 1, p. 24a; vol. 2, p. 60a; note also *Tikkunei Zohar*, *tikkun* 6, 22.

<sup>36</sup> See *Or HaTorah*, “*Terumah*,” p. 1381.

<sup>37</sup> *Midrash Tanchuma*, “*Emor*,” par. 17; *Vayikra Rabbah*, ch. 30, par. 13. See *Shemos Rabbah*, ch. 33, par. 6; *Midrash Tanchuma*, “*Terumah*,” par. 3; *Yalkut Shimoni*, “*Terumah*,” *remez* 364; see *Tanya* ch. 47.

<sup>38</sup> {*Yermiyahu* 23:29. Even as invested in the Torah below, the Torah’s words reflect their fiery, Divine quality.}

[This holds true to the extent that Torah could be studied, conceivably, by a {ritually} impure person, yet **even then** such a person also *takes* “**Me**” — he draws Hashem’s Essence to himself through his Torah study. However, this person is in no way worthy that this “Me” — Hashem’s Essence — radiates within him manifestly.]

This is also why the Torah writes “*li terumah*” in two separate words — it hints that “*li*” (drawing Hashem’s Essence from Torah) and “*terumah*” (the *avodah* of Torah study) do not comprise a single word — a single entity,<sup>39</sup> because Hashem’s Essence remains detached from the person studying Torah.

In contrast, regarding the *terumah* of the *shekalim* — the “pillar” of “worship” (sacrifices and prayer) — the Torah writes, “My *terumah*.” For a physical sacrifice ascends and is subsumed within its spiritual source Above, in G-dliness. Similarly, prayer elevates a person “heavenward,” as mentioned above, enabling him to perceive Divine *light* in a revealed way. Thus, the Torah writes, “My *terumah*,” connoting the connection between the “*terumah*” (a person’s *avodah*) and “Me” (drawing G-dliness to the person by means of *avodah*) such that is perceived, revealed, and felt in the person’s *avodah*.

In contrast, regarding the third *terumah* — the *terumah* for the *Mishkan*, involving the *avodah* with material items in their **physical** state — although this *avodah* draws G-dliness from Above, it remains concealed. Thus, the Torah writes “*terumah*” unqualified; it does not mention explicitly that this is a *terumah* for Hashem, since in this *avodah*, the connection to Hashem is imperceptible.

---

<sup>39</sup> Notwithstanding that a person’s mind merges with the Torah’s intellect, and on the contrary, it experiences a cohesiveness with the Torah’s intellect that is wondrous and has no parallel... *Tanya*, ch. 5.

## 7.

### PRIMARY VS. PREPARATORY

Although the *mitzvos* are en clothed in physical objects, only through this *avodah* {with physical objects} is Hashem's intention in creating the world realized: "The Holy One, blessed is He, desired to have a dwelling place in the lower realms."<sup>40</sup> As the Alter Rebbe emphasizes,<sup>41</sup> Hashem wanted an "abode" in this physical world, the lowest of worlds, "there being none lower than it."

But in order for **this** *avodah* to be appropriate and perfect, a person must also employ the medium (and foundation) of Torah, and in the medium of "worship."

Since all elements of *avodah* are found in the *Mishkan*, as mentioned, this too is hinted at in the construction of the *Mishkan*: Our *parshah* only deals with the *terumah* for the *Mishkan* explicitly, because constructing the *Mishkan* is Hashem's primary goal and intent. The other two *terumos* are only mentioned generally, and by way of allusion, because (with respect to Hashem's primary intent) they are meant to serve as the preparation for and the prelude to (and final steps in) making Hashem's dwelling place.

## 8.

### TRANSFORMING EXILE

This also explains the above-mentioned *Midrash* (section 3) that "gold and silver..." correspond to the Four Kingdoms:<sup>42</sup>

Since the primary intent of the *terumah* for the *Mishkan* was to make a dwelling place for Hashem in the lower realms (meaning, to transform

---

<sup>40</sup> *Tanya*, ch. 36, based on *Tanchuma*, "Naso," ch. 16.

<sup>41</sup> *Tanya*, *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> See *Or HaTorah*, "Terumah," p. 1408 ff.

physical items into a sanctuary and a *Mishkan* for Hashem), the perfection of this intent is fulfilled through our *avodah* during *galus* (and to a lesser degree through the building of the *Mishkan*, where our physical eyes saw the *Shechinah* revealed in these elements {i.e., gold and silver, etc.}). At a time of exile, when the physicality of the world is at its peak, our *avodah* is also able to transform this level of physicality, to refine the lowest of worlds, “there being none lower than it.”<sup>43</sup>

The virtue of this *avodah* will be revealed in the Future Era, when the advantage of “action” will be unveiled.<sup>44</sup> As known, at that time {we will recognize that} “action is superior {to study}” [and thus the Temple (which was “akin to the World to Come”)<sup>45</sup> was made primarily from the **inanimate**].

As explained regarding Yosef and Yehudah — Yehudah alludes to *avodah* involving action (Yehudah is etymologically related to *hoda’ah* {acknowledgment}, an expression of *bittul*, similar to the inanimate, “emblematic of a high level of *bittul*”).<sup>46</sup> In the Future Era, Yehudah will spiritually surpass Yosef — “and my servant David will be their leader forever.”<sup>47</sup>

-Based on the *maamar* entitled, “*Veyikchu Li Terumah*,” 5735 (1975)

---

<sup>43</sup> {Tanya, ch. 36.}

<sup>44</sup> Regarding the next passages of the *sichah*, see at length *Torah Or*, *Toras Chaim*, and *Or HaTorah*, beg. of *parshas Vayigash*.

<sup>45</sup> Wording of *Torah Or*, “*Vayigash*,” p. 43d.

<sup>46</sup> Wording of *Torah Or*, “*Vayigash*,” p. 44a.

<sup>47</sup> *Yechezkel* 37:25; See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 15, p. 413, fn. 12.