



RABBI GROSSMAN ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA



A Contribution to Yourself Parshas Trumah

I knew the small house in Flatbush well. I would stay there during my trips to the US, and the hosts were my close friends.

During one such visit I met parents in with ashen faces, I could hardly recognize them. They told me in tears that their son has become a Buddhist. I was moved by their story and felt their pain. It turns out that their son had become a Buddhist quite a while ago. They had recently learned that their son was going to return home for a visit, I requested to meet him. I prayed to G-d that He would put the correct words in my mouth.

When the son came, I hugged him and sat with him. I showed him slides of Migdal Ohr. In the pre-video era, I would carry slides with me to show potential donors.

The parents joined the show. I noticed that every time I said the words Migdal Ohr the son reacted with uneasiness. The room was dark, and only I noticed his sparkling eyes.

The son then asked to speak to me privately, and I listened to the story of his enlightenment with admiration, as if hearing it for the first time. He shared with pride about the meditation sessions they held.

I then realized why he was triggered by the words Migdal Ohr. Light is an essential component of Buddhism. Migdal Ohr means lighthouse in English, and therefore was of great significance to him.

I told him that I represent the light from the Land of Israel, and would very much like to meet his light in the US. He was shocked, and then became very excited. He felt he had scored an important convert. His monks would be delighted to host Rabbi Grossman.

In our weekly parsha we read of G-d's command: "The Lord spoke to Moshe saying: 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**."¹

The commentators note that the command is to **take** a contribution, not that it is **given** by the Israelites. However, the language seems awkward, doesn't a person give a contribution, not take one?

The Torah teaches us a fundamental principal – when one gives, he is actually receiving, receiving the opportunity to give charity. You are not giving, you are taking.

On the verse "Everyone's holy things shall belong to him; whatever a man gives to the kohen **shall be his**,"² the Chafetz Chaim notes that we are taught here that when one gives to G-d he receives, "**shall be his**."

Our Sages teach us that during a sale, the seller is sad, and the purchaser is happy. The seller is left without the merchandise he sold, but the purchaser goes home with a new acquisition. G-d is different, our Sages teach, he gave us the Torah and was happy about it.

On the verse "for the commandment is a candle and the Torah is light," our Sages explain that just as when one lights a candle from fire, the original fire is not lacking, so too with Torah and Mitzvoth, the more you do, the more light it creates in the world.

G-d commands us "have them **take for Me** an offering." Don't think you are giving to me, as G-d does not need our offerings. He is testing our generosity. We are essentially giving Him which is already His.

You are not giving, you are taking for yourselves, G-d says.

The next day I traveled with the son to meet his guru. He introduced me and told them we have an idea on how to share light in the world.

I asked the boy if he had other Jewish friends at the Buddhism center. He gathered them, and we spoke for three hours about the light they are experiencing. They shared a variety of odd ideas.

I shared my love for them, and it turns out that this was what they were seeking.

A year later, during my next visit to Flatbush, I was received by two gleeful parents. Their son, they told me, was on the way to return to the Yeshiva and very much wanted to meet the person who set him on the path of true light.

The parents thought they were contributing to Migdal Ohr, but in fact they received their dear son back. They received more than they bargained for.

I came to receive their contribution, but in fact, G-d gave them an offering.

¹ Shmot 25:1-2.

² Bamidbar 5:10.