

Speak to Bnei Yisrael and let them take for Me a portion. (25:2)

When one contributes to a project, he assumes that he is the one who is giving. If so, why does the Torah refer to the donors to the *Mishkan* with the term *v'yikchu li*, "they shall take for Me"? What are they taking? The answer, which is reiterated by the commentators, is that spiritual entities play by different rules. When one contributes to the spiritual sphere, he is taking -- in the sense that whatever he gives will be stored away in his merit. Some people cannot deal with the concept of giving. They feel that they have worked hard to obtain their material assets, and so should everyone else. This is not only a flawed outlook, it also goes against that which we, as observant Jews, believe. We understand that Hashem gives one person more than the other, because He expects the one who is blessed to share with he who does not have. When one undermines this concept he risks losing what he has, or becoming Heavenly compelled to spend his money on unwelcome concerns and obligations.

Nonetheless, the only excuse some people have is, "I do not care." They are simply selfish tightwads whose impaired character dictates their spending. Some are givers, and others are takers. Such a person is one of the takers. A well-known folk tale is about "Yankel" who personified such a deficient attitude. The word "give" was not in his lexicon. Regardless of the cause, no one was able to get Yankel to open his wallet and share a little of his largess. He never gave excuses. He simply was not interested in parting with his money.

One day, Yankel was crossing the river in a small boat when, out of the blue, a powerful storm broke out. Yankel's boat was unable to withstand the strong gusts of wind and the powerful waves that battered it. Yankel's boat capsized, leaving Yankel with nothing to which to cling but a large wooden plank. Luckily, a rescue boat soon appeared. The sailor called out to Yankel, "Give me your hand! Give me your hand!" The noise of the howling winds blocked out part of the would-be rescuer's cry to save Yankel. Sadly, all Yankel heard was the word "give" – a term with which he refused to identify – even at risk to his life.

"No, no, I do not give!" The sailor cried out again, "Give me your hand." Yankel reiterated his position: "I do not give." Finally, in desperation, the sailor, who was as wise as he was benevolent, yelled, "Here, take my hand." "Oh, take, you say," Yankel countered. "I will be happy to take."

Obviously, the story is anecdotal, a metaphor describing how sick a person's mind can be, to the point that he would endanger himself if it meant giving to someone or something else. Thus, the Torah teaches us that one who gives to the *Mishkan* or to any worthy person or project is actually taking and adding to his Heavenly spiritual account.

Chazal (*Eiruv* 54a) quote the advice Shmuel gave to *Rav Yehudah*, his student, "Keen scholar, grab and eat, grab and drink, as the world from which we are to depart is like a wedding feast."

(The joy of a wedding feast is only temporary. One who does not take pleasure in it today will not be able to do so in the future.) Why is life analogized to a wedding? *Horav Dan Segal, Shlita*, explains that during the wedding, the banquet hall is filled to capacity with people enjoying the wedding. The music, the dancing, and the singing are loud and inspiring. The food is tasty and plentiful. The room radiates joy and good will. A short while later, however, when the wedding has ended, the hall is still, desolate, with no sound, no dancing, and no food. A visitor who walks into the hall after the wedding can hardly believe what the room looked like an hour earlier. What a shame! All that money, time and effort, and it is no longer noticeable. All this is obvious, but what one forgets is that *kiddushin*, a marriage between a young man and young woman, took place. Now, the couple is commencing on the journey to build a *bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael*!

This is the story of life. We live out our mortal allotment of years: eating, drinking, enjoying life. One day, however, it all comes to an end. No remembrance of the fun, the joy, the good times, remains. Gone – forgotten. What does remain? The *kiddushin*, the holy endeavors which we consecrated with the way we lived. They accompany us to *Olam Habba*, the World-to-Come.

The primary point that we should glean from the above is: When we contribute time, effort, material assets to a *davar she'b'kedushah*, holy endeavor, we “chalk up points” that accompany us on our Heavenly journey. In his *Sefer Hay She'arim*, *Horav Elyakim G. Schiff, zl*, records his memoirs of his experiences during the Holocaust (cited in *U'Matuk Ha'ohr*). From the very onset of the war, he, his family and other Jews were running from town to town, community to community, to escape the advancing Nazis. Alas, wherever they went, it was only a temporary reprieve, as the Nazis were always behind them. They arrived in a small town shortly before *Shabbos*. They spent *Shabbos* there. *Shalosh Seudos* was a very emotional experience, as they all sang together amid much weeping. Despite their travail, when they came to the *pasuk*, *Hashem Melech, Hashem moloch, Hashem yimloch l'olam va'ed*; “Hashem reigns; Hashem has reigned, Hashem shall reign for all eternity,” they loudly cried out the words over and over again, with overwhelming passion and fervor. It was their belief in Hashem's Supreme Monarchy that engendered the hope that energized them and kept them going.

They *davened Maariv* and lay down on the bare, hard floor to sleep. Despite their fear and trembling, exhaustion overtook them, and they were able to get some rest, despite the uncomfortable conditions. *Rav Schiff's* four-year-old daughter called out to him, “*Abba*, I am so afraid. Will you recite *Krias Shema* with me?” He did and fell asleep. Shortly before dawn, *Rav Schiff* dreamt that *Horav Eliezer Ezkari, zl*, author of the *Sefer Chareidim* on the laws of *Shabbos*, stood before him. He appeared to him in such a manner and visage that *Rav Schiff* conjectured that he was a Heavenly Angel. [*Rav Schiff* had never seen an angel, nor did he have any idea how the *Baal HaChareidim* looked. Something told him that this apparition was none other than the author. The end of the story suggests the reason for this.] In the dream, no dialogue ensued. He just saw the image of the *Baal HaChareidim* encircling the house where he was hiding.

Rav Schiff explains his attachment to the *Sefer Chareidim*. Prior to his *bar mitzvah*, he saw quoted

from *Horav Mendel, zl, m'Rimanov*, that learning the *Sefer Chareidim* will engender and increase one's *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven. As a result, he accepted upon himself to study from this *sefer* constantly. He placed it in his *Tefillin* bag and kept it with him always. Despite his awareness of this unique attachment to the author, he did not know the meaning of the dream. That Sunday afternoon, the Nazis arrived in the city. They immediately began searching for all men, while ignoring women and children. They went from house to house, searching, arresting and murdering. They stopped momentarily in front of the house where *Rav Schiff* was hiding, and, for no apparent reason, ignored it. At that moment, *Rav Schiff* and all those who were with him were miraculously saved. *Rav Schiff* attributed the miracle to the intervention of the *Baal HaChareidim*. He had spent many hours learning his *sefer*. The author had taken note of his dedication and had intervened on his behalf. What a person does for the Heavenly sphere remains with him as an investment that will reap enormous benefits.