



קונטרס

The Ways of My Heart



נתיבות לבי

Adapted from the shiurim of

R' Dovid Steiman shlit"א

How Do We Build the Beis HaMikdash Today?



The Beis HaMikdash · The Three Weeks



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THE WAYS OF MY HEART · WEEKLY SERIES

נתיבות לבי — The Ways of My Heart

A WEEKLY MAAMAR · ADAPTED FROM THE SHIURIM OF R' DOVID STEIMAN SHLIT" A

ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

Nesivos Libi — *The Ways of My Heart* is a weekly maamar on emunah, bitachon, and avodas Hashem, adapted from the shiurim of R' Dovid Steiman shlita in the derech of the *Nesivos Shalom*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

R' Dovid Steiman shlita teaches emunah, bitachon, and avodas Hashem in the derech of the *Nesivos Shalom*, and for nearly two decades has shared his Torah — in English and Russian — with talmidim and readers around the world. He taught at Ohr Somayach and today teaches at Yeshiva Toras Dovid, both in Monsey, New York. He is the author of the sefer *The Ways of My Heart* / נתיבות לבי.

DEDICATION

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How Do We Build the Beis HaMikdash Today?

Every Jew builds his own Mikdash — and the terumah of the heart that makes it beautiful

Parshas Terumah opens with a passage that is a foundation of the whole avodah of Hashem. We all know the words — ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם — "Make Me a Mikdash, and I will dwell among them."¹ Think about what that means. I heard it said like this: the Ribono shel Olam created the whole world — this galaxy, and another galaxy inside another galaxy, worlds without end — and out of all of it, from every place there is, He wants to be *here*, with us, with Klal Yisrael. The Creator of everything wants to dwell together with us. That alone should show us what we are to Him.

Now, the rest of the parshah goes on about the vessels of the Mishkan — the Aron, the Shulchan, the Menorah. And we have a rule: noth-

ing in the Torah is only for then and not for now; it is for every generation. So let me ask it plainly: how do we build the Beis HaMikdash today? We don't have a Mikdash. We don't have a Shulchan or a Menorah. What can we take from this parshah for our own avodah?

Here is the passage I want to bring out. The Torah says, ויקחו לי תרומה² — take for Me a *terumah*, from every man whose heart moves him. You give something of yourself, and from that you build the Mikdash. Simple enough — today, to build a yeshiva or a beis medrash, you make a campaign, you collect, and you build. So why do we have so many sefarim — *Chovos Halevavos*, *Mesilas Yesharim*, *Derech Hashem*, *Chovos HaTalmidim* — all speaking about the heart,

about the avodah of the heart? You have a Shulchan Aruch, you have the halacha; do it. Why the heart? What is the heart doing here?

..... **Every Jew builds his own Mikdash**

Here is the answer, and it is short and breathtaking. Every Yid is obligated to build the Beis HaMikdash — his own Beis HaMikdash. And why? Because — as the Baal Shem HaKadosh teaches — the Ribono shel Olam looks at every single person as a *ben yachid*, an only son. Not one of a crowd — the only one. Imagine it: you are the only son of the Ribono shel Olam, and He takes care of you from the beginning to the end. Of course He has all of Klal Yisrael — but He looks at you as if you are the only son. And that is the only way it can be. Sit at a table with a house full of children all shouting at once, and you cannot concentrate on any one of them; but look at each one as an only child, and suddenly you have a real connection to every one. That is how Hashem looks at each of us.

..... **The terumah is what is dear to you**

So how do you build your Mikdash? It begins in the heart — the moment you are ready to give away something that is very, very dear to you. What is the *terumah* you are giving to Hashem? Something close to you, something you are not ready to part with. It is different for each person. One man has to know the news — all the news, all the time. Giving it away means: I am not going to check; there is no news. That is hard for him — and that is his *terumah*. For someone else it is something else entirely. This is how a person builds his Mikdash: by handing Hashem the dearest thing he has.

And this is the foundation of avodas Hashem. Each of us came into this world to fix one thing that is his alone. There is a broken link in the chain of the world, and no one else — no gadol, no big rav — can mend that link. Only you. Why it is yours we do not yet know; when Mashiach comes we will know. But do not say, "Who am I? I'm nobody,

I sit here and I don't know anything." That is not how Hashem looks at you. Every person has his link in the chain, and no one in the world can mend it but him. When he hands that over — "Ribono shel Olam, I will hold myself back from this" — that is the *terumah*.

..... **The beauty of your
Mikdash is what you gave
up**

This is the bottom line of the *Nesivos Shalom*: the beauty of our own Beis HaMikdash depends on how much we are ready to give away from ourselves. That is how beautiful it looks from the outside. So we are not doing mitzvos merely because it is the law — "it's a halacha, I have to." No. You are building your own Mikdash, and it shines from within. How much do you want it to shine?

..... **Why it's hard — and
how bittul brings
simcha**

But there is more. How much are we really ready to give? Making something big is not all sunshine;

things get hard, and you can push for a little while, but not for long. So why is it so hard? Because we are not ready to nullify ourselves completely to Hashem. We give — but we want to keep just a little. "I'll give it away, Ribono shel Olam, of course — but one second, don't take it completely; let me hold onto it a bit." And then how do you ever come out of yourself? That is the whole avodah. And when you do come all the way out, that is exactly where the *simcha* begins — because the *bittul* itself is what brings the *simcha*. That is how Hashem built the world to work.

There is a war here, between the *seichel* and the *lev*, back and forth, and it can go on a long time until a person gives up — it happens. I read in the *Divrei Shmuel* about one of the sons of tzaddikim who once came to the beis medrash and was not b'*simcha* — it happens even to tzaddikim. He said: Ribono shel Olam, I am giving away this whole olam haba for You, I don't need it; I only want to be b'*simcha*. And still it did not help. So he said: then I give away the olam haba itself — I

don't need it either; I only need to be b'simcha. And that is when the simcha came. From here I understood: to be truly b'simcha, we have to nullify ourselves completely to the Ribono shel Olam. And believe me — if you give yourself over to Him, He will not take anything away from you. Everything we have is a gift; that is what He wants us to understand. The only thing in the way is a small fear that will not let us let go.

..... **Take from the heart,
then give**

Let me stay on the same idea. *Terumah* — the word means "to take," yet we are the ones giving. So the Torah should have said "give Me a *terumah*." Why "take"? Here is a deep point. There are two parts to giving: first you take, and then you give — you cannot give without first taking. But take it from your heart, and then give it to Me. Don't just hand Me *tzedakah* — Hashem does not need the *tzedakah*, and He does not want a Mishkan built from money alone. He wants a Mishkan built from what you took out of

your own heart. That is why the Torah says "take."

..... **One heart can open
another**

I heard a story from Rabbi Shapiro. A bochur in yeshiva was learning a sugya and had a question — really, a question on the answer he had found. He searched the library and found a sefer that dealt with it, written by someone living today, with a phone number in it. He wanted to clarify the point, so he called; the man's mother answered — he's not home, she doesn't know when he'll be back. So the bochur decided to go to the house. He got there by bus and train, and a broken mother opened the door: you don't understand, my son left, he left the whole life behind; I don't know where he is. Where can I find him? Think of it — this bochur, over a question on a *teretz*, is ready to travel who-knows-where. Look how far the heart can carry a person. Ask yourself honestly: for a question in learning, would you get on buses and trains to find the one who could answer it?

He found the apartment. The door opened — a young man with no yarmulke, no tzitzis, tattoos and rings. The bochur froze; he wanted to run. But he was already standing there, so he said: I found your sefer, you answered such-and-such, and I wanted to clarify it. And the fellow began to answer — this Rishon, that Rishon — back and forth, standing there without a yarmulke, until it was all clarified; the bochur thanked him and left. A few days later the mother called the yeshiva to thank him: her son had come home — back with a yarmulke, back with tzitzis. What happened? My conclusion is this: when a person has a *cheshek*, a burning desire to give away for Hashem something that is hard for him, it does not only bring *him* closeness and yeshuos — it can reach someone else entirely. You are not only building your own Beis HaMikdash; you are building someone else's too. Every Mikdash is connected to every other Mikdash. When we hold ourselves back from the yetzer hara, it gives another person the strength to hold himself back too. It is all connected.

..... **Decide**

So how do we do it? The *Nesivos Shalom* gives a simple answer: we have to decide. Not "I can never reach such a level" — the moment you say that, you have pulled away the ladder, and now you truly cannot get there. No: I can get there. Hashem wants me to get there, so I will get there. When it comes to money, a person is ready to jump into fire — he sees it, he wants it, he feels the power in it. Turn that same certainty toward this: from now on I am going to work on it, and I will get there. That decision is itself a *gevurah*.

And remember — Hashem looks at you as a *ben yachid*. You may not hear that from anyone else, so say it to yourself.

..... **He knows you are here**

I want to close with a story I heard, because it shows how Hashem looks at us. A boy grew up in Brazil, where the streets were dangerous and the family mostly stayed home; he had few friends and never really

learned how to connect. His parents promised that at fourteen he would go to the Rebbe. He came, he saw the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and he was overwhelmed — but he still could not connect to the other boys; different country, different language, everything from scratch. So he decided: if the Rebbe is truly such a holy tzaddik, let him give me a sign that he knows I exist. And he begged Hashem for it every day — a month, two months, three.

One night at Kiddush Levana, the Rebbe was saying "Shalom Aleichem" — to one Yid, to another — and then he stopped, and began searching the crowd. No one knew whom he was looking for. People moved aside, and moved, and moved, until there stood that fourteen-year-old boy from Brazil whom

nobody needed — and the Rebbe looked at him and said, "Shalom Aleichem." The next month, again. For a whole year, every Kiddush Levana, they already knew to bring the boy to the front, and the Rebbe said it to him: Shalom Aleichem.

That is how the Ribono shel Olam looks at each of us — as a *ben yachid*. And if you are searching for your own sign that He knows you are here: you woke up healthy this morning, Baruch Hashem — that is sign enough. So let us decide, from today, to give Him the *terumah* — the gift of the heart — even the thing that is hardest to give. It is all right that we are not yet happy about it; we will get there, and Hashem will help us get there. Because our work, in the end, is to be b'simcha.