

**Date:** 1 Adar 5786 (February 18, 2026)

**Torah Portion:** Terumah

**Topic:** Norm in the World

As written (Exo. 25:2), “They take for Me an offering.” This is to be understood in light of what is written (Prov. 4:2), “For I gave you good instruction: Do not forsake my Torah.” How are they related? The Midrash explains: It is the norm in the world that when a person sells an item in his home, he is saddened about parting from it. However, the Kadosh Barchu gave the Torah to Yisrael and is happy to have given it. This is the meaning of Hashem’s statement, “For I gave you good instruction: Do not forsake my Torah.” Now, the verse is not clear how happy was Hashem when He gave the Torah to Yisrael at Mount Sinai. The Talmud (Berachos 5a) explains that Hashem was happy He was because He was anxious for the “buyer” to prize the acquisition – cautioning Yisrael not to abandon it and even praising it as a “good instruction” – even after having given it.

Alternatively, the verse begins by describing the Torah as an acquisition, but then goes on to say, “I have given.” This indicates that although the Torah is described as a “sale,” Hashem was as content and wholehearted as one who gives a gift.

It is also the norm in the world that when a person acquires an item, he takes pains to protect it from harm or theft. However, with the Torah the opposite is true: It protects its owners, as it states (Prov. 6:22), “As you go forth, it will guide you; as you recline, it will guard you. And when you have woken up, it talks to you.”

Is it perhaps the norm in the world that when a person buys an item from the marketplace he is able to acquire the owner of the item along with the item itself? Of course not! However, the Kadosh Barchu did just that, for He gave the Torah to Yisrael and said to them, “You are acquiring Me, as it were, along with the Torah!” This is the meaning of “and let them take for Me a portion.”

The Gemara (Megillah 19b) teaches that Moshe was shown at Sinai even the analyses of Sages. Elsewhere (Chagigah 3b), Ran explains the “analysis of the Sages” to refer to the points that the later Sages would disagree upon. This means that although Moshe was taught all the laws of the Torah, when it came to laws that would later be the subject of a dispute among the Sages, he was not taught what the final ruling should be. Rather, he was told the guidelines according to which the Sages were to arrive at a decision in such matters and that the decision of the Sages was to be the accepted law. Thus, when Hashem gave the Torah to Yisrael, He meant it to be fulfilled according to how the Sages of the Torah would understand and interpret it. The Torah was in the ideal form in Heaven. However, once it was given to mankind, the Torah was to be decided and implemented according to the wisdom of the Torah Sages.

Elsewhere in the Midrash, Hashem said, “I am unable to part from it, but I am also unable to tell you, ‘Do not take it.’” Hashem would not tell Yisrael not to take it for He had already given it over to their jurisdiction. However, He did not wish to part from it, for a human can err, and they were liable to distort the Torah. Therefore, the Midrash there concludes, Hashem told them to build a Sanctuary for Him to dwell in among them; that is, through Divine Presence manifested in the Temple, they would merit Divine assistance in their rulings, so that they would not err.

In what way has Hashem “sold” the Torah and made it no longer His, just because He gave it to Yisrael? This also refers to the fact that the law no longer depends on the “Heavenly Torah” but rather on the decision reached by the Sages of Yisrael. Indeed, Hashem has “given the Torah away.” And He is happy to have done so.

The verse, “For I have given you a good teaching, do not forsake My Torah,” to mean that Hashem said, “Do not forsake the acquisition that I have given you.” That is, it is true that I have given you My Torah to decide its laws according to your understanding. But do not be careless with this charge. Those who decide the laws of the Torah must invest all the necessary effort and toil, and attempt to arrive at the truth for the sake of Heaven, so that they do not “abandon the Torah,” so that they do not deviate from the way they are meant to rule. Only then will they indeed merit that the ruling in practice will indeed follow their understanding of the Torah, and that their decision will become the Torah that Hashem wishes us to fulfill.

Shalom.