

The Nesiim/Princes brought the Shoham stones and the stones from the settings for the Eiphod and the Breastplate. (35:27)

Rashi quotes the *Midrash* in which Rabbi Nossan notes that the word *Nesiim*, Princes, is spelled without the two *yuds* that would normally be there. The defective spelling is sort of a subtle rebuke of the Princes for not bringing their gifts immediately when the call for contributions was made; rather, they waited until everything else had been donated. They had calculated that they would complete whatever would end up lacking. How surprised they were to discover that the nation had given overwhelmingly, leaving almost nothing for the Princes to give. Our sages indicate that their lack of an immediate response was due to indolence on their part. Apparently, their own dearth of fervor to the level which was manifest by the rest of the nation was also held against them. For them not to be like everyone else – or better – was a slight indication of laziness on their part.

Taking the above in perspective, we wonder why a defective spelling of their position would impact them. It is not as if the word *nesiim* is never spelled without the *yuds*. Furthermore, even if the misspelling is noticed, how does it connote punishment? It is almost as if we were to ask: So what if they are missing the *yuds*?

Horav Yosef Yehudah Leib Bloch, zl, attributes such a query to a misconception concerning the definition of a punishment. We are led to think that punishment is defined by what we feel or experience in this world. Veritably, the bodies of the *Nesiim* may be on their earthly sojourn; their minds, however, were traversing the pathways of Heaven. In Heaven, in the world of eternity, there is a great divide between a word spelled with an extra letter and one that is not. In Heaven, every letter counts significantly.

Our entire outlook must be focused on what Heaven thinks, how we appear on the Heavenly screen, on what our eternal image is. To concern oneself with his earthly image, while ignoring his Heavenly imprint, indicates misplaced priorities on his part.

I have always been bothered why both *yuds* were removed. One would have served sufficiently to make a statement of rebuke. Perhaps, we might suggest that a leader's missteps has a commensurate impact on those who look up to him. The lack of fervor on the part of the *Nesiim* might have had a cooling effect on the people's enthusiastic giving. A leader must remember that he does not live solely for himself. Everybody else is looking. His very action – or inaction – can either inspire or deflate. Thus, they lost two *yuds*: one is a personal rebuke; the other for the collective impact of their inaction.