

The Nesiim brought the shoham stones and the stones for the settings for the Eiphod and the choshen. (35:27)

The *Nesiim* were the princes, or leaders, of every tribe. *Rashi* cites the *Midrash* which notes the word *Nesiim* is spelled in Hebrew without the two "yudin" that it would normally have. This defective spelling was deliberate - as a punishment for their not bringing their contributions together with everyone else. They had waited to see what would be lacking, so that they would fill the deficit. To their surprise and chagrin, the national response was so overwhelming that there was almost nothing left for them to give. *Chazal* note a taint of laziness on their part which caused their delay in giving. For this, the *Torah* spells their name incompletely.

It is important to preface the expositions of the various commentators with the obvious note: Regardless of the critique against them, the *Nesiim* erred unknowingly. Their conscious intention was clearly *I'shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven. How were they to know that *Klal Yisrael* would be so industrious and come forward immediately to fulfill the requirement completely? *Hashem Yisborach*, however, sees beyond what seems to be obvious. Incidentally, the *Kesav Sofer* points out that since a *mitzvah* is attributed according to the one who completes it, the *Nesiim* wanted to be the last ones to contribute for the *Mishkan*. While this idea is praiseworthy, it does not compensate for the lack of *zerizus*, alacrity, in *mitzvah* performance.

The question that confronts the commentators is: Why is the "yud" designated to be the letter deleted from the word, rather than any of the other letters? The simple answer which is given is that when one deletes the "yud," the sound of the word still does not change. In contrast, the deletion of any of the other letters would dramatically alter the *kriah*, reading, of the word. *Horav Zaidel Epstein, Shlita*, offers a novel reason. For most letters of the alphabet, the sum of the numerical value of the other letters is not equal to the letter itself when that letter is removed from its spelled out name. For instance, *aleph*: The letter *aleph* has a value of one, while the rest of the word, *lamed* and *fay*, equals 110; *bais* is equal to two, while the rest of the word is *yud*, *saf*, which equals 410. When the *yud*, whose value is ten, is removed the *vav* and *daled* still equal ten. This implies that the *yud* is *tocho k'baro*, its inner essence/value is equivalent to its external essence. In other words, "What you see is what you get." There is a consistency between the *chitzonius*, external, and the *penimius*, internal.

While the *Nesiim* thought they had introspected and had cleansed themselves of any vestiges of personal interests, the *Torah* implies that this was not true. There was an inconsistency; their actions were not motivated completely by a sense of *I'shem Shomayim*. There was a taint of indolence inherent in their delayed giving. *Horav Moshe Reis, Shlita*, cites the *Chidushei Ha'Rim* who says the "yud" denotes the *Yehudi*, Jewish essence, that was missing, characterized by their act of indolence. A Jew is excited, enthusiastic, energetic to serve the Almighty. He does not sit back and wait. He is filled with alacrity to go forward to serve Hashem. The *Nesiim* were not. Hence, the letter which symbolizes Jewishness was deleted.

Other commentators contend that the error lay in a different realm. The *Kesav Sofer* says that the "yud," the smallest of all the letters of the alphabet, implies the attribute of *anavah*, humility. The *Nesiim* sought to complete the *mitzvah*, in order to emphasize their contribution. This, regrettably, indicated a deficiency in their name. The *Beis Yisrael* supplements this by saying that the *Nesiim* chose to separate themselves from the *klal*, community, by deciding to donate on their own. This idea is implied by the missing "yud." The "yud" symbolizes the Jewish People who survive through *achdus*, unity. They chose to contribute on their own, not to unify with the others. Hence, they are missing the "yud" from their name.

The *Pnei Menachem* makes a similar comment, suggesting that their sin was in creating a distinction between "them"/ *Klal Yisrael* and us/*Nesiim*. They should all have worked together, sharing in their *avodas Hashem*. Last, the *Pnei Menachem*, citing a common theme in his *derashos*, lectures, places the blame on their lack of *ayin tova*, good eye. They declared that they would supplement what is missing. How did they know that something would be missing? What right did they have to underestimate the people's commitment to the Almighty? The purpose of a leader is to look for the best in his flock. Their vision of *Klal Yisrael* was unfortunately myopic.