

And let them take for Me a portion, from every man whose heart motivates him you shall take My portion. (25:2)

The *Yerushalmi Terumos* 1:5:5 states that five individuals are excluded from giving *Terumah*, the designated tithe of grain given to the *Kohen*. They are a: *cheresh*, deaf – who speaks but does not hear; *shoteh* – imbecile; *katan* – young child; *toreim es she'eino shelo* – one who contributes from funds that are not his; *oveid kochavim* – idol worshipper/gentile, even if he is giving money which belongs to a Jew. I was perusing through some old *seforim* and came across a volume of *drashos*, homilies, from *rabbanim* written some fifty years ago. From a homiletic perspective, they were quite good. One lesson that I learned from them was that the problems confronting the American Jewish community have not changed. They have just become more “state of the art.” The issues are the same; the terms of description have changed. There was a homiletic rendering of the above *Yerushalmi* that was informative and inspiring. I take the liberty of citing it here, adding my own embellishment.

Chazal's statement *Lo yitromu*, “these five should not give *Terumah*,” in the literal sense means that these individuals should not set aside their tithe of grain for the *Kohen*. It can also indicate a foreboding concerning the potential of a certain breed of individual whose contribution to the Jewish community we can do without.

Let us begin with the *cheresh*, someone who has great difficulty controlling his oral expression, but, for some reason, hears nothing that anyone says. Always prepared to present his ideas for the improvement of the community, he has no problem articulating his disdain for present policies and procedures. In other words, he questions the validity of hallowed rituals and customs, impugns the character and ability of those in present leadership positions, but adamantly – and with extreme indifference – ignores any rebuttal or deference. He talks, but refuses to listen.

There is, of course, a clear difference between the *cheresh* whom *Chazal* disallow from giving *Terumah* and the *cheresh* who plagues every community – large or small. *Chazal* address a *cheresh* who is a victim of circumstances, whom Heaven has incapacitated. He would give anything to listen, but, sadly, he cannot. Our *cheresh* refuses to listen. Regardless who makes the attempt to reach him, to get his attention, to calm him down – he deliberately, maliciously and obstinately rejects any appeal to common sensical listening. Such a person should be neither expected – nor allowed – to contribute to the community.

According to *Chazal*, the *shoteh* is an individual who squanders that with which he has been entrusted. He is a frightened person, overly insecure, and ever self-conscious. His self-esteem is obviously at an all-time low. He will, therefore, do anything for attention – regardless how much a fool he makes of himself. He cannot be trusted, because he would even turn his back on his best friend if he thinks that it would advance his own prestige. Pride is a word that is foreign to his lexicon, and loyalty is equally so. In order to garner attention and acceptance, he attempts to usurp

tradition, while simultaneously claiming his allegiance to the *Mesorah*. While declaring his fidelity to *Halachah*, he distorts and denigrates individuals who stand at *Klal Yisrael's* helm, as well as their decisions. He, too, is another individual whose *Terumah* is unacceptable.

The *Talmudic katan* is, physically, a child. We can apply the childish characteristics to those adults who manifest infantile tendencies. A child thinks small; likewise, the *katan* of our community is small-minded, maintaining a bucolic, narrow-minded, unsophisticated perspective – just to be different. He is often a hypocrite whose personal lifestyle is self-serving, reflecting opulence and modernity; he feels that his *shul*, *yeshivah* and the lifestyles of those who devote their lives to the spiritual and physical maintenance of both of these institutions should be supported according to the welfare scale.

Chazal refer to the *katan* as someone who is *samuch al shulchan aviv*, perpetually relying on his father's support. Our *katan* is quite similar, in that whenever it comes to communal forward and upward growth, and especially when it demands serious contributions on his part, he responds, "What was good for my father is good for me!" He certainly neither drives a car nor lives in a house like his father did. He sees nothing wrong with maintaining the old ghetto lifestyle for others, but never for him. Indeed, can we ever expect a contribution from this *katan*?

The last two types of individual whose contribution to the Jewish community are eschewed began to rear their ugly heads fifty years ago, as the Orthodox Jewish community was picking up steam. There were those who feared an insular lifestyle. They feared being cut off from the newfound friendships they had made and their acceptance into American society. Rather than take pride in their heritage, they began to incorporate *she'eino shelo*, that which was not theirs, into their celebrations and social affairs. Contemporary music became the sound track for the "lyrics" which David *Hamelech* used for *Sefer Tehillim*. Observances included gentile flavor and anything that would convey the message: "We are not the old-fashioned Jews from Europe. We are like you. We are Americans." Yes, this Jew seeks to inject *she'eino shelo*, that which is not his, into what Hashem wants to be only ours.

Akum she'toram, the gentile who seeks to contribute, represents the external forces that have pervaded the Jewish mindset. The illness of "keeping up with the Joneses" used to be an intra-Jewish-community issue. Now, we see that this scourge has spread, as Jews try to impress their non-Jewish neighbors. Our buildings must compete with theirs; our general studies curricula must contend with that of private schools; our *shuls* must be modern basilicas; our demands of our spiritual leaders are that they be politically correct, secular-minded intellectuals whose proficiency in the non-Jewish disciplines exceeds their Torah erudition.

Chazal saw that *akum she'toram* can present serious issues for the Jewish community. We neither have a need to impress anyone, nor should we judge ourselves and our success based upon the values and morals of the outside world. If this renders us as being insular, then we have something else of which to be proud.