

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

Rashi notes that the word *terumah*, portion/donation, is mentioned three times. This teaches that there were three *terumos*: one was the *Machatzis HaShekel*, half-shekel, which was used for the *Adanim*, sockets, in which were placed the *Kerashim*, poles, which acted as the walls of the *Mishkan*; another half-shekel which was placed in the communal chest and designated for communal offerings; third was for the building of the *Mishkan*. Here, each person gave according to his heart's content.

The **Bostoner Rebbe, zl**, expands on these two approaches to communal involvement. The Jewish People form a community, all dedicated toward a common goal. Basically, people contribute in two ways. One way is to contribute as individuals – each person giving in accordance with his personal talents, qualities, attributes. Some offer “gold”; others bring “silver,” while others offer blue dyed wool. Although each one brings something disparate — together, they all meld to construct a *Mishkan* in which the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, will dwell.

The second way goes beyond the individual attributes of talent or character traits. On a deeper level, all Jewish souls are equal, emerging from the same spiritual source. This equality is personified by the *Machatzis HaShekel* offering in which each individual Jew-- all 600,000-plus members of *Bnei Yisrael* -- contribute an equal amount. In this instance, the Jew is offering himself. When a Jew offers not only the contents of his heart – but the heart itself - all Jews become indistinguishable sparks of the same Divine Flame.

A number of such *mitzvos* abound which focus on and underscore the significance of each and every Jew – regardless of his personal proclivity, talent, characteristics, nature, position, or demeanor. On *Succos* we bring together the *Arba Minim*, Four Species: *Lulav*, *Esrog*, *Hadassim*, *Aravos*. One contributes fragrance, while one gives taste; another offers nothing, and the last brings both taste and fragrance to the table. Together, they represent four general types of Jews. There are those who are learned, those who focus on carrying out acts of loving kindness; those who do neither – neither learning/nor acting nicely; and there are those who represent perfection: learning and *maasim tovim*, performing good deeds. Yet, the *mitzvah* of *Arba Minim* cannot be performed unless each one of the Four Species, representing all types of Jews, is included. Likewise, the eleven spices which comprised the *Ketores*: Incense requires the inclusion of the *chelbenah*, whose fragrance is far from pleasant. It symbolizes the Jew whose deeds do not represent the finest that *Klal Yisrael* has to offer. The community's incense may not be offered without the inclusion of the *chelbenah*/Jew, whose activities do not represent the finest moments of Judaism. When all is said and done, however, he is a Jew. He is one of us – and this is what it is all about – one of us.

Thus, we find that ten *Yidden*- even if some are distant, alienated, turned off, assimilated, self-

loathing – form a *minyan*, which is (ten men) the minimum community required in order to sanctify Hashem's Name through the recitation of *Kaddish* or *Kedushah*. This teaches us a powerful lesson: Everyone has his place, his contribution, his role; and the community can form a resting place for the Divine Presence only when all work together as one. The *Rebbe* notes that this goal is so important that Hashem is willing to facilitate this aggregate of Jews through the vehicle of the *Machatzis HaShekel* contribution.

The idea of total giving of oneself, self-abnegation-- to the point that whatever I am I relinquish in the service of Hashem -- is perhaps the underlying motif of a story the *Bostoner Rebbe* was wont to relate. Concerning the *pasuk*, "From every man whose heart motivates him," we derive that one type of giving is based upon the heart's impulse. Beyond the heart's impulse is indeed a higher, more carefully weighed and considered level of giving – whereby one gives not only what the heart motivates him to give, but he even gives up the heart itself. He throws all of himself into the service of G-d.

The **Kotzker Rebbe, zl**, was a uniquely holy person. His personality was bound up entirely in Hashem. He was like a burning flame: intense; passionate; sharp; demanding. He had neither patience nor tolerance for the utterly insignificant things people did with their lives. He could not understand how a person could waste a moment of time in which he could be serving Hashem. As a result of his utterly demanding nature, some of his closest disciples left him, feeling that his opposition to the mediocrity of ordinary life was too strong and beyond the point to which an ordinary person would find it possible to relate. Many of them charted their own *Chassidus*, becoming the progenitors of some of Poland and Galicia's largest and most dynamic *chassidic* courts. Ultimately, toward the end of his life, the *Kotzker* lived in solitude, closing himself off almost entirely from the "little men, the flatterers," whom he was unable to tolerate. During his years of seclusion, he would often refer to himself as *Der Heilige Tzap*, "The Holy Goat."

The *Kotzker Rebbe* would relate the following parable to explain the meaning of his statement. There was a man who would dole out strong snuff during *davening* in order to arouse the worshippers. More than one worshipper was indebted to this man for his "service," enhancing his prayer service by playing the vital role of keeping him awake. People in Europe worked long and hard hours, the warm *shul* often being the one place where they could rest their weary bones. Dozing during *davening* was for some not uncommon. The man kept his snuff in a beautiful, ornate silver snuff box. One day the box disappeared, leaving the man distraught and broken. True, it was only a snuff box, but, to him, it was his snuff box, with which he provided a meaningful service. As he was walking around grief-stricken, he met the "Holy Goat" outside the *shul*.

The Holy Goat possessed a great, holy and caring heart. Since he saw a Jew walk around dejected, he was prompted to ask him what was wrong. After hearing the man's tale of woe, the Holy Goat said, "Take out your penknife, slice off a piece from the tip of my long horns, and fashion a new snuffbox for yourself. The man proceeded to do this, and joy returned to his life.

The man's new *tabak pushkah*, snuffbox, made of the Holy Goat's horn became the talk of the town. Indeed, everyone wanted one for themselves. Whenever someone asked him how and from whom he had obtained such a unique snuffbox, he referred them to the Holy Goat – who obliged and also allowed them to cut off a small piece of horn. The end result was that everyone in town now possessed a snuffbox fashioned from the Holy Goat's horns, so that the Holy Goat soon had no horns left! The *Heilige Tzap* had given away his horns.

The *Kotzker* was referring to himself. He had used his powers to mentor and raise group after group of disciples who spiritually matured and went on to become *Admorim* in their own rights. Now, like the goat, he felt that he had nothing left to give. (Obviously, this is an analogy.) The *Kotzker* was an individual who was beyond holy. His mentoring abilities and personal sanctity never waned. This was clearly a figure of speech intimating that he was now ready to “retire” and work “on himself.”

It was at this point that the *Bostoner* would conclude with his own brilliant inspirational insight. Sometimes people give everything they have to their children, their friends, their community, to the point that they now feel spent, left out and hurt – very much like the *Kotzker's* fabled Holy Goat. If they would stop for a moment and reflect, they would realize that perhaps this is specifically what made him Holy.