

"These are the accounts of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of the Testimony, as they were rendered according to the directive of Moshe, the service of the Leviim was by the hand (authority) of Isamar son of Aharon the Kohen. And Betzalel son of Uri son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah, made everything that Hashem commanded Moshe." (38:21,22)

The Sforno states four characteristics which enabled the perpetuation of the Mishkan, not letting it fall into the hands of enemies. First, it was "Mishkan Ha'eidus," the Tabernacle of the Testimony, in which the two luchos were deposited attesting to Hashem's covenant with Bnei Yisrael. Second, it was "rendered according to the directive of Moshe," the master of all neviim. It was, therefore, especially protected by Hashem. Third, it represented "the service of Leviim by the hands of Isamar." Isamar was a man of outstanding piety and integrity, whose contribution undoubtedly elevated the spiritual status of the Mishkan. Fourth, it was crafted by "Betzalel son of Uri son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah," an architect of sublime distinction. Combining his efforts with the work of craftsmen whose noble lineage was transcended only by their personal piety, he was able to create a Mishkan which was unique in spiritual splendor. The Mishkan reflected the creation of heaven and earth. Betzalel had been blessed with the unique ability to mirror Hashem's creative powers in building the Mishkan.

The Sforno adds that not only Betzalel, but all those who were involved in the Mishkan's construction were men of noble stature, great piety, and spiritual refinement. This, notes Sforno, is in contrast to the builders of the first and second Batei Mikdash who were workmen of other nations. They obviously did not possess the qualities of the Mishkan's craftsmen. This is a most remarkable statement! The sins of Bnei Yisrael could not effect the destruction of the Mishkan, because it was built by tzaddikim, whose intentions were sincere and whose every action was pure. If the foundation is established be'kedushah u'betarah, in holiness and purity, an endeavor will endure forever.

Let us expand on this idea. What is the meaning of sincere intentions? We suggest the following thoughts. Horav Yisrael Salanter z.l. used to say that those who undertake communal responsibility, those who are *ru'cm hfrmc exug* must do so *l'shem shomayim*, purely for the sake of Heaven. This statement is ambiguous. Is the mitzvah of communal endeavor any different than any other mitzvah in which *l'shem shomayim* is also an essential prerequisite?

Horav Reuven Grosowsky z.l. explains that other mitzvos are also required to be performed for the sake of Heaven. Nonetheless, if the individual does not maintain the proper intentions, he has still fulfilled the mitzvah. This is not true regarding *tzorchei tzibbur*, communal endeavor. One who undertakes to provide sustenance, to involve himself in helping the community at large, for the wrong reasons (i.e. to promote his image, to gain power, or for any personal interest) does not fulfill the mitzvah! This is not considered working on behalf of the community; rather, it is viewed as working against the community. If his goal was to sanctify Hashem's Name, he regrettably

succeeded in profaning it! If his supposed goal was to strengthen Torah observance, he succeeded in the opposite! The nature of communal work is that one's goals and intentions characterize the mitzvah. Perverted intentions distort the effect of the mitzvah. There is no room for conceding to personal vested interests when working on behalf of Klal Yisrael.

We may add another thought in describing the character necessary for any communal or humanitarian endeavor. The Mishnah in Meseches Peah 1:1 enumerates a number of meaningful humanitarian mitzvos which engender great reward in the World to Come. Included in these are such beautiful deeds as honoring parents, performing acts of loving kindness, providing for a bride, escorting the dead, and bringing peace and harmony among people. The Mishnah ends with a profound statement: *okuf sdbf vru, sunk,u*, the study of Torah is equivalent/goes above them. The rudimentary explanation of this Mishnah is that the study of Torah takes precedence over everything, even the most noble and humanitarian causes. This *p'shat*, explanation, is inconsistent with the definition of *sdbf*, which is translated as opposite -- or the Torah stands opposite all of them. The Mishnah should have stated that the study of Torah *okuf kg vkug*, goes over them. Horav Chaim Mordechai Katz, z.l., infers a different lesson from this *pasuk*. Although it is essential that one perform the above-mentioned mitzvos, the means adopted to carry out these mitzvos must live up to a demanding Torah standard. This is especially true in regard to mitzvos that are so well-intentioned that the individual seems to lose focus of the most important ingredient in any religious endeavor -- the Torah. Every "mitzvah," every undertaking, every act of "chesed" or communal endeavor, must be "stood up" opposite the Torah and analyzed to determine whether it is in accordance with Torah dictate. Only then does it achieve legitimacy. If we follow these guidelines in our religious endeavor, we will merit that our accomplishments will have everlasting endurance.