

"The princes brought the Shoham stones and the stones for the settings for the Eiphod and the Choshen." (35:27)

As soon as the *nesiim* heard that Hashem had commanded Moshe to build a *Mishkan*, they offered to supply all of the materials necessary for constructing this edifice. They believed that Hashem would rather repose in a *Mishkan* built of their donations than one constructed with the gifts of *Klal Yisrael*. First, they were not involved in the sin of the Golden Calf, as the other Jews were. Second, their motivation was pure and unblemished; they would contribute with a pure heart since they were outstanding in their wisdom and character. They believed that a *Mishkan* built with their contributions would possess greater spiritual distinction.

Moshe told them, however, that Hashem sought the donations of all Jews, not merely a select group. They replied that rather than donate

together with *Klal Yisrael*, they would supply whatever would be lacking at the end. They reasoned that if they were the ones who completed the *Mishkan*, Hashem would view it as if they had built the entire edifice.

The *nesiim* erred in underestimating *Bnei Yisrael*. The Jews all came forward to share en masse in this *mitzvah*. Alas, there was nothing left for the *nesiim* to do. The *Torah*, therefore, omits the letter "yud" from the word *otab* as an indication of the *nesiim's* failure to participate in the building of the *Mishkan*. The *nesiim* contributed by donating the precious stones for the *Eiphod* and *Choshen* as sign of their contribution.

After all is said and done, the *nesiim* were criticized for indolence on their part. Is this correct? The *Midrash* clearly says that whatever they did or did not do, it was with a *cheshbon*, calculation. Their intent was *l'shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven, to provide whatever would be missing. Is that a reason that a letter should eternally be missing from their name?

The **Brisker Rav, zl**, inferred from this concept that when there is a *mitzvah* to perform, one must act and not consider any *cheshbonos*. One's concern should be with the *mitzvah* at hand and not personal -- or even communal -- interests and calculations. Although the *nesiim's* objective was to make a more spiritually "correct" *Mishkan*, when Hashem commands us to perform a *mitzvah*, we should act and determine *cheshbonos* later.

Horav Reuven Grozovsky, zl, takes a slightly different approach towards explaining this *Midrash*. The Jew's focus in this world is to perfect himself, not find what is "missing" in this world and work towards alienating that deficit. When it involves one's own development, one should not waste time. Rather, he should confront the challenge and perform *mitzvos*. Alacrity is an integral component of *mitzvah* performance. When Hashem commanded *Bnei Yisrael* concerning the construction of the *Mishkan*, the underlying purpose was not the actual edifice. Hashem does not

need buildings, and surely He does not require our assistance in constructing them. The *Mishkan* was to serve as a medium for the individual Jew's self-development. It availed each person the opportunity to demonstrate his true conviction and readiness to serve the Almighty. The *nesiim*, regrettably, demonstrated a vestige of indolence. Unfortunately, this shortcoming on their part effected the loss of the letter from their name, implying a blemish in their spiritual character.

In support of his thesis, *Horav Grosovsky* cites *Tosfos* in the *Talmud Shavuos 3a* they posit that if the opportunity presents itself for one to perform a *mitzvah* at the expense of overriding a negative commandment, he should perform the *mitzvah*. The *halachah* clearly states "*Asei docheh lo sa'asei*," one should give precedence a positive commandment over a negative commandment.

One may not delay performing the *mitzvah* by waiting for a time in which a negative commandment will not be obstacle. One must perform the *mitzvah* immediately, without reservation, leaving the *cheshbonos* up to the Almighty.

Horav Shneur Kotler, zl, questions the sequence of the command to construct the *Mishkan*. First, Hashem tells the Jews to contribute willingly. The *Torah* places emphasis upon each individual contributing according to his heart's desire. Only after the *Torah* stresses the *nedivus ha'lev*, free will contribution, does it state the "purpose" of this contribution. "*And they shall make for Me a Sanctuary.*" Should the *Torah* not have first mentioned the goal - the *Mishkan* - and only afterward the medium for creating it - the contributions? This formulation implies, claims *Horav Kotler*, that the free-will contribution was an essential part of the entire plan. Hashem did not simply desire a *Mishkan*. He sought the *nedivus ha'lev* of the Jews.

Thus, we see that the "value" of the *Mishkan*, its character, was commensurate with each donor's *nedivus ha'lev* and personal commitment. Each person's donation created a "*mishkan*" which was the "size" of his free will and conviction. Some had larger portions than others. One thing was certain, however. The *Mishkan* was missing nothing. A small donation created a "small" *Mishkan*, while a large open-hearted donation created a "larger" *Mishkan*. The size of the *Mishkan* was commensurate with the free-will of the contribution. Hence, the *nesiim's* stipulation that they would supply whatever was missing was not valid, inasmuch as nothing was missing! A lesser contribution resulted in a smaller *Mishkan*, a complete *Mishkan*, albeit a smaller one. The critique against the *nesiim* was simple. Had they donated towards the *Mishkan*, the *Mishkan* would have been larger. Now that they waited until the end, the *Mishkan's* size was "stunted" accordingly.