

He became King over Yeshurun when the members of the nation gathered — the tribes of Yisrael in unity. (33:5)

Rashi explains that Hashem is Klal Yisrael's King in the most complete sense only when the people unite to do His will. Just as achdus, unity, prevailed at Har Sinai when all of Klal Yisrael accepted the Torah, so, too, does Hashem reign only over a nation that maintains a sense of harmony in belief and action. The Navi writes in Melachim I 3:3, "And Shlomo loved Hashem, walking in the statutes of David, his father; only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places." Rashi explains that while Shlomo acted in a manner similar to David Ha'melech, he deviated in one area from his father's practice: He delayed the construction of the Bais HaMikdash for four years, during which time he continued to offer his sacrifices in the "high places," a reference to the personal Bamos, altars, that each individual placed on top of his roof or in his yard. According to Rashi, Shlomo Ha'melech is criticized for delaying the construction of the Bais HaMikdash. This is not consistent with the pasuk that intimates that his only infraction was continuing to make use of the Bamos. Why do we have this apparent contradiction? As long as there was no Bais HaMikdash, offering sacrifices on a Bamah was totally permissible. If so, why does the Navi note the continued use of the Bamah, while it seems to ignore the primary dissatisfaction with Shlomo for having delayed the Bais HaMikdash?

Horav Shmuel Truvitz, zl, cites the Netziv, zl, in his commentary to Shir HaShirim, who writes that we would be wrong to suspect Shlomo of indolence concerning building the Bais HaMikdash. The reason that he took his time in building the Bais HaMikdash, is that as long as there was no Bais HaMikdash the people were free to use their personal Bamos, allowing for increased latitude of expression of one's love for, and gratitude to Hashem. The Bamah was available everywhere. Anyone could sacrifice in any place.

This is, regrettably, where Shlomo erred. While individual service is wonderful and meaningful, it is not the optimum that Hashem desires. Hashem does not want individual service, in which each person does his "own thing." He wants all of Klal Yisrael in perfect harmony and in total unity to worship Him collectively from one Bais HaMikdash through the medium of one service. As Moshe Rabbeinu told Korach, "We have one G-d, one Aron HaKodesh, one Torah, one Mizbayach, and one Kohen Gadol."

Hashem is one, and unity among His subjects is the precise manner in which He demands that we

serve Him. Everything in our lives focuses on bringing together the various parts into a single, consolidated unit. While there is strength in numbers, this strength reaches its apex when all of its parts act in perfect harmony together, as one. This does not demean individual expression. On the contrary, every individual's personal contribution is significant, as long as each is focused on the same goal. Horav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zl, notes that Hashem divided Klal Yisrael into individual degalim, banners, each depicting the singular traits of its shevet, tribe. This was done, however, only after the Mishkan was erected and placed in the middle of their encampment. They first had to all be focused on one unified goal — then, they were free to express themselves individually.