

You shall make a copper Laver... for washing. (30:18)

The Kiyor, Laver, was a large, copper utensil filled with water, from which the Kohanim were required to wash their hands and feet prior to performing the service. This washing was not for purposes of hygiene, but for the sake of kiddush, sanctification. The Kohanim purified their hands and feet, representing the upper and lower parts of the body, symbolic of the Kohen's total devotion and the sublimation of his entire body to the service which he was about to perform. The Laver is not mentioned in the previous parshiyos (Terumah, Tetzaveh) together with the other utensils of the Mishkan, because, as Sforno observes, its function was different. While the other utensils caused the Shechinah, Divine Presence, to rest on the Mishkan, the Laver prepared the Kohanim for the service which they were about to perform.

The Kiyor was not made from the copper that was contributed as part of the Terumas HaMishkan. Its copper was derived from a unique source. Later (Parashas Vayakhel 38:8), the Torah teaches that the Kiyor was made from maros ha'tzovos asher tzavu pesach Ohel Moed, "Of the mirrors of the legions that gathered at the Ohel Moed." Rashi explains these legions were the nashim tzidkaniyos, righteous women, who came to contribute their copper mirrors to the Mishkan. This was in addition to the copper used for the Terumas HaMishkan. Thus, the copper which they donated was not counted in the original reckoning of materials contributed for the Mishkan.

The Kiyor was the only vessel not constructed of materials donated by all the people. It was uniquely the exclusive product of the women's contributions. The gathering of the women at the entrance to the Ohel Moed indicates to what extent the women sought to have a part in the avodas HaMishkan. Unlike those who would question ritual, impugn tradition, undermine Halachah, the women of old (I guess that is why they were called nashim tzidkaniyos) took their most prized possessions, their mirrors, which they used to adorn themselves (for their husbands), symbolizing the preoccupation with the mundane, and dedicated them to the service of the Mishkan. Sheker ha'chein v'hevel ha'yofi, "Grace is false, and beauty is vanity" (Mishlei 31:30), Shlomo Hamelech declares (at the end of his depiction of the true Aishes Chayil). That it is all about serving Hashem – not garnering attention for oneself. Are chein and yofi that bad? When that is all there is, if there is no yiraas Shomayim, then sheker and hevel reign supreme. Horav Yisrael Belsky, zl, further explains the women's relationship with the Kiyor. We must consider the purpose served by the Kiyor, its function in the Mishkan. As mentioned earlier, the Kohanim were enjoined to wash their hands and feet prior to approaching the Mizbayach or entering the Mishkan. This was a purification rite that prepared the Kohen for the Mishkan by purifying him. The Kiyor, which was used as the medium for this rite, was the focus of the women's contribution. These righteous women wanted to purify their neshamos, souls, by casting aside the mirrors that they had used for vanity and elevating them to serve the purification process of the Kohanim. The very act of giving up the mirrors was in and of itself a purification rite, and it imbued the shiny copper plates with a special ability to purify the minds and bodies of those who used the water within the Kiyor in preparation for the Priestly Service. To purify others, one must himself/herself be pure. The righteous women stood at the entrance of the Ohel Moed. They understood that parameters exist with regard to sanctity, parameters that are issued by the Almighty, not by man – or woman.

Perhaps we might suggest an alternative reason for the significance of the copper mirrors. If one

wants to know how he/she looks, he/she either asks someone (whom they trust) or peers into a mirror. Mirrors do not lie. What one sees is reality. In other words, the mirror provides the same function as does another person: each informs you how you look. Obviously, the fellow who has a mirror does not require the services of another person. The mirror diminishes the need for people. The nashim tzikdakniyos sought a way to increase the significance of people, the need of one for another, while at the same time contributing something of substance to the Mishkan. What is a more appropriate gift than the gift of friendship? Do away with the mirrors; rely on your friends. This was their message to the Kohanim. You serve Hashem as agents of the people. Please do not lose sight of those whose agents you are. As we rid ourselves of our mirrors, thereby expelling something that stands between us and the nation – so should you maintain the legacy of redifas shalom, pursuit of peace, which you inherited from Aharon HaKohen.