

This was the dedication of the Altar, on the day it was anointed, from the Princes of Yisrael. (7:84)

The Torah has just enumerated in detail the offerings of each Nasi, Prince/leader. Twelve Nesiim each brought identical offerings. Yet, the Torah chose to detail each Nasi - offering separately. The Rambam explains that while each Nasi brought the same offering, his machshavah, thought - process and reasoning, for arriving at the decision to bring this specific korban was distinct from that of any other Nasi. Their conclusions were identical; their machasvos, however, were different. Thus, the Torah follows the thought process. Why? Does it make a difference how they all arrived at the same decision concerning what to offer? As long as they are all similar, it is not necessary to record each of the twelve korbanos.

Horav Yaakov Yitzchak HaLevi Ruderman, zl, derives from Ramban's words a powerful lesson in mitzvah observance. The essential mitzvah is not its external, extrinsic aspect, the part that is displayed publicly. The essence of a mitzvah is the penimiyus, intrinsic machshavah, behind it. Each Nasi had his own individual kavanah, devotion and intention, behind his actions. Although all of the actions of the Nesiim were similarly manifest, their intentions were individually unique. Thus, insofar as the atzmuyus, essential aspect, of each korban was disparate from that of the others, the Torah felt it necessary to record each one separately.

The Rosh Yeshivah derives from here that, although on the face of it, two men perform what appears to be the same mitzvah, if their intentions are different, their mitzvos are different. Thus, two men may be sitting on the same bench of the bais hamedrash, both learning, but one studies with fire and passion, while the other studies dispassionately, with an insipid attitude; we have before us two complete different examples of limud haTorah. The two may not – and cannot – be compared to one another, because they are intrinsically disparate.

The Rosh Yeshivah quotes the Ramchal (Derech Eitz Chaim) who explains that it is by design that the Torah is compared to fire. When one observes a dark coal, he may not see flame, but the flame is within it, waiting to be stoked. When the stoking occurs, the entire coal lights up, as the flames spread throughout. Likewise, to the unobservant eye, the Torah appears cold, detached, dank, its words and letters impersonal and lifeless. All this might be the case until one takes the time to make the effort to learn Torah. Suddenly, the letters and words take on a new life, a new and vibrant meaning, as the Torah comes alive. The fire has been kindled and is beginning to spread throughout. One who has not experienced the vibrancy of Torah study cannot possibly understand the elixir of life that is Torah. Without the experience, one has no idea what he is missing.