

"This is the portion that you shall take from them: gold, silver and copper ... Shoham stones and stones for the settings, for the Eiphod and the Choshen." (25:3,7)

Various means may be employed to establish the value of a given item. Obviously, not all items have the same value to everyone. Supply and demand increase or decrease the market value of most items. The *Torah* has its own unique measuring stick for determining the value of an object. Let us explain: The *Ohr Ha'Chaim Ha'kadosh* questions the sequence for enumerating the various gifts to the *Mishkan*. The *Torah's* arrangement seems to imply that the most valuable item is cited first, followed by the other gifts in order of their decreasing value. After all, the *Torah* first enumerates the precious metals, beginning with gold. If this is the case, why does the *Torah* mention the *Avnei Shoham* and *Avnei Miluim* last? These stones were priceless. Therefore, they should have been detailed first!

The *Ohr Ha'Chaim* offers three answers. First, these stones were donated by the *nesiim*, princes, after everyone had already offered their own contribution. Since the princes were not in the forefront of the contributors, the *Torah* sensed a tinge of indolence on their part. Thus, their gift is quoted last. Second, since these stones were earmarked for the *Bigdei Kehunah*, priestly vestments, the *Kohanim* were permitted to have benefit from them. This practical application decreased their spiritual worth, thus, they are listed last. Third, according to one theory in *Chazal*, the Clouds of Glory had delivered these precious stones. Because no *ameilus*, toil, was involved in bringing forth this contribution, they are listed at the conclusion of the inventory.

The *Ohr Ha'Chaim* seems to imply that the criteria for precedence in the donations were not determined by value, but rather by other factors. These factors include the amount of toil and energy which were expended in preparing and bringing the donation. *Horav Baruch Eizrachi, Shlita*, posits that a much deeper insight can be gleaned from the *Ohr Ha'Chaim*. Undoubtedly the sequence of the donations was based upon the value of the object contributed towards the *Mishkan*. The question is, how do we determine value? What were the criteria for establishing the value of something to be used in the *Mishkan*? The *Torah* does not establish the spiritual worth of something commensurate with its market value. The value of something is contingent upon the amount of effort, tenacity and devotion to the cause one has exerted in preparing the object for use in the *Mishkan*.

The *Torah's* assessment of an object is different from ours. The *Torah* takes every aspect of the object's preparation into consideration before rendering its value. If a slight taint of indolence was detected by the Heavenly microscope, then it was no longer considered as precious as before. If there was a stigma of complacency, a lack of effort demonstrated by the *nesiim*, then the stones were no longer considered to be "worthy" of precedence. The *Torah's* value system has much more lofty criteria for establishing the value of a specific object.