

And the Nesiim offered up a dedication of the Altar on the day it was consecrated. (7:10)

Chazal (Midrash) teach that even though the offerings of the twelve *Nesiim* were identical, each individual offering alluded to the singular mission of its tribe; thus, the offering of each *Nasi* represented a unique spiritual message. Indeed, the Torah could have saved much “ink” by including all the *korbanos* of the *Nesiim* under one collective banner: “This is what all of the *Nesiim* offered.” Actually, why did the *Nesiim* choose to offer identical *korbanos*? One would think they each wanted to express the uniqueness and individuality of his own tribe.

The *Ramban* quotes the *Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 13:13)*, which (in an alternative exposition) explains that each and every tribe had a *mesorah*, tradition, from Yaakov *Avinu* concerning all that would occur in the *yemos ha'Moshiach*, Messianic era. Accordingly, Nachshon ben Aminadav, of the tribe of Yehudah (the tribe of *malchus*, monarchy), led the dedication ceremony and offered a donation that reflected the succession of monarchy with *kearah*, bowl, and *mizrak*, basin, corresponding to the two Kings (Shlomo and *Moshiach Tziddkeinu*) who were destined to issue from him, who would reign on sea and on land. Thus, he brought a (round) bowl to correspond to the sea which encircles the entire world, fixing the weight the bowl at 130 *shekel*. Since on the third day of Creation, Hashem gathered all the waters of the world into one place and called them *yamim*, which *b'gematria* (whose numerical equivalent) is 100, Shlomo *Hamelech* added one *yam*, sea, which is numerically equivalent to 30, totaling 130. (This refers to Shlomo *Hamelech's Kiyor*, which, because of its huge size was called the *yam*, sea: its circumference was 30 *amos*; thus, the numerical value of the seas and Shlomo's laver is 130, equal to Nachshon's *kearah*.)

Ramban teaches us that each tribe had its own individual reason and intention for the offerings they brought. While they all totaled the exact same number, their spiritual intentions were distinct and different from one another. Nesanel ben Tzur of the tribe of Yissachar represented Torah knowledge. Thus, his *korbanos* reflected and alluded to Torah. This idea applied to each and every *Shevet*, Tribe. Therefore, from a Divine perspective, the *korbanos* of the *Nesiim* were totally distinct from one another.

Horav Tzvi Kushelevsky, Shlita, derives two important lessons from here. First, external impressions do not represent the internal essence of a subject. These are superficial viewpoints which, to the casual onlooker, may appear identical, but essentially, intrinsically, they are quite different from one another. Two subjects may project an image analogous to one another; this only represents, however, an external façade in which they are akin to one another. When we dig beneath the surface, we see a different story.

Second, we derive from the *Nesiim* that an incredible opportunity exists for individual expression – even when, on the surface, everyone is doing the same thing. It is how one does it that makes his actions stand out. Externals can be deceiving. Reality is in the inner image, essence of a subject,

for it is where the truth lies.

We often form opinions of people based purely on what we observe on the surface. When we take the time to take a deeper, more penetrating look, the person may be very different than we originally expected. We are guilty of “judging a book by its cover.” How often do we take into consideration the challenges that a fellow is going through? Imagine a meeting with someone, who, for obvious reasons, explodes and abruptly storms out of the meeting. The first reaction is (for those who lack character refinement) to disparage the person. How dare he act in such a manner? Who knows what happened that morning in his home: what bad news he heard; what difficult challenge he must overcome? We do not stop to think, to ask; our reaction is immediate – to judge. I recently saw a very powerful and inspiring quote: “At any given moment, we are all doing the best we can, given who we are and what we know at that moment.” In other words, if we would just pause for a moment to think, our reaction would be different.

How often do we judge a person by the clothes he wears? There cannot be a more accurate example of judging a book by its cover than that. The following story speaks to this common judgmental flaw. Rabbi Abraham Twersky, *z*, relates the story of Herschel, a *Kohen*, with whom his family was friendly. He was an eastern European Jew who immigrated to this country and eked out a meager living selling *shmates*, rags, out of a pushcart. After he experienced some success in this endeavor, he graduated to a horse and wagon, and collected and sold scrap metal, clothing and paper. Not very learned, reading Hebrew was the extent of his Jewish education.

He was, however, devoutly observant, ethically and morally correct, adhering to whatever he was taught by his *rav*. Integrity in every facet of his life was his signature attribute. Thus, he executed every religious activity in a wholesome manner to the best of his understanding and ability. On *Shabbos* morning, he would come to *shul* early to recite *Sefer Tehillim*. His only complaint was that he had to feed his horse before *davening*. “What can I do?” he asked. “The Torah says that you cannot let your animal go hungry.”

As a *Kohen*, Hershel was often called upon to officiate at a *Pidyon Haben*, Redemption of the First born, during which he received five silver dollars from the father of the infant. Life does not go on forever, and Hershel was no different. One day, we will all eventually be called to stand before the Heavenly Throne. Thus, when Hershel became seriously ill, he called for his son and told him, “As soon as I leave this world, open the top dresser drawer. In it, you will find a little cloth sack. Open it and follow the instructions that are written there.”

Immediately after Hershel breathed his last, his son went to the dresser drawer and removed the cloth sack. In it were silver dollars and one gold coin. They were accompanied by a note:

“All my life, I tried to earn an honest living. I never knowingly cheated anyone, but who can say that he never overcharged or shortchanged anyone? Unfortunately, I have assembled over my lifetime a pithy of *mitzvos* which would serve in my merit when I stand before Hashem. While I do not have

much positive merit, I would like to at least be dressed properly. After all, they say that nice clothes help a person make a favorable impression.

“The only truly honest money to which I can attest is the coins that I received through *Pidyon Haben*. I know that it rightfully belongs to me, because the Torah assigned them to me as a *Kohen*. My father was a *Kohen*; so am I. Therefore, this money represents integrity in its most pristine form.

“I would like you to take this money and purchase my *tachrichim*, shrouds, and also cover all my burial expenses with it. This way, I will be dressed nicely with honesty-acquired shrouds. As a result, I am hoping that Hashem will look favorably upon my soul.”

I am certain that when people saw Hershel in *shul* or wherever he went in the community, their opinion of him was: “nice guy”; “sweet fellow”; “good man.” How many realized what kind of *tzaddik* he was? This man’s idea of “judging a book by its cover,” was to be dressed in *tachrichim* that represented the ultimate in integrity. When a “book” has such an impressive “cover”, one may be certain that the book is truly worth reading.