

## Speak to Bnei Yisrael and let them take for Me a portion (25:2)

The *Yalkut* (*Remez* 363) relates: Hashem said to Moshe *Rabbeinu*, "Speak to *Klal Yisrael* in a manner of *pious*, apologetic." When one asks for money, it is important to take into consideration everyone's feelings. It is not easy for one to part with his money, regardless of the size of his bank account. The *Baalei Mussar*, Ethicists, take note of this. After all, the Jews were sitting on all the gold and silver which they removed from Egypt. Here Hashem was asking them for a comparable pittance. Indeed, whatever reluctance and pain they might have manifested, it was miniscule. Yet, even for such a small amount, Hashem wanted Moshe to consider what they were "going through." Everyone's feelings play a role, regardless of whether those feelings are justified or not.

We wonder why it was so important to delay the building of the *Mishkan* until everyone had been acknowledged and the feeling of separation from the few pieces of gold and silver assuaged. Feelings are important and it is important that we take these feelings into consideration, but dealing with the feelings was interfering with the building of the *Mishkan*. *HoRav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro, zl* (*Beer Yaakov*), derives a powerful lesson from here. Even when one is undertaking to build an edifice as crucial as the *Mishkan*, regardless of how important or crucial the endeavor, institution or program is for the future of *Klal Yisrael*, we must be sensitive to the needs of all Jews. Even if the consensus of opinion is that this one man has no right to delay such an important communal project- wait until all feelings have been mollified. We do not want to hurt anyone.

*Chazal* (*Kesubos* 8a) teach that we do not recite the blessing *She'ha'simcha biMiono*, "That the joyful celebration is in His palace." (A blessing which is recited during *Sheva Berachos*, seven days of nuptial celebration) at a *Bris Milah*, because as important as it is, it nevertheless causes pain to the infant. When someone, regardless of age, suffers-we do not celebrate.

*HoRav Sholom Schwadron, zl*, was an extraordinary orator who could captivate his audiences for hours on end. He made them laugh, as well as cry, and they came back for more. He once sought the sage advice of *HoRav Yechezkel Levinstein, zl*, *Mashgiach* of Ponovez. A group of lay people proposed a position for him to fill in for the *Rav* when the *Rav* had to take a short sabbatical. He had done his *proba*, trial speech, and the people were very impressed, so impressed that they intimated that they would love to have him fill the *Rav's* position even after he would return. In other words, taking this temporary position could quite possibly undermine the *Rav's* position. What should he do? He had an incredible opportunity for outreach, knowing full well that he could mesmerize the community with his pearls of wisdom. On the other hand, it might hurt the *Rav's* tenure at the *shul*.

*Rav Chaszkel* replied, "It is an accepted tradition, hailing back to *Eliyahu HaNavi*, that it is better that the *Beis HaMikdash* not be rebuilt than to, Heaven forbid, cause any ill will or embarrassment to a fellow Jew! Can we imagine how many tears of sorrow we have wept during the last two

thousand years of yearning for a return to the *Bais HaMikdash* and an end to all of our tribulations? Yet, if this return will in some minute manner to cause pain to another Jew, we should delay the rebuilding of the *Bais HaMikdash*.

This issue will more often than not surface when undertaking a large project, one that affects communal spaces. It is crucial to consider, not only the logistic or esthetic goals, but also the impact on the people who have, over the years, formed connections within those spaces. This is especially germane in the case of an edifice redesign, such as a *shul* that has outgrown its space. In the large picture, and from a practical perspective, the issues concerning moving around some of the old members seem minor. These issues, however, may be minor to the planning commission of the *shul*, but tell that to the elderly, lonely members who have relied on this coveted space to provide their sense of belonging and stability. Some people identity with their seat and displacing them from their little corner and resettling them in an open space surrounded by many people, will hurt them emotionally. (We forget that, for some people, the seat they have in *shul*, their little old-fashioned *shtender* and their worn-out Hebrew Publishing *siddur* comprise their identity.) To make these people move is likely to disrupt their sense of comfort and stability. This does not mean that one should halt the project in response to them. We do, however, make every effort to consider their feelings and assuage them. These are people who are vulnerable to feelings of isolation, and they deserve that their dignity be upheld. We do not believe in hindering progress, just in adding a sense of heartfelt sensitivity to those who need it most.