

Vayakheil - Rabbi Lerner - March 3, 2013

The Princes' Donation

The beginning of the parsha details how the people came through with their donations for the Mishkan with tremendous enthusiasm, bringing everything necessary to construct the building.

35:27-28: *The princes brought the shoham stones and the stones for the settings of the Ephod and the Choshen; the spice and the oil for illumination and for the anointment oil and the incense spices.* What catches the attention of the meforshim is the word *Nesi'im* which is spelled chaseyr - it is missing the letter yud twice. Most meforshim take this in a very derogatory way - Hashem in the Torah is insulting them; it is a put-down. **Rashi:** Rebbi Nassan said 'What did the Nesi'im see that made them contribute first at the dedication of the Mizbeach while they did not contribute first in the construction of the Mishkan? They were at the head of the line to bring the korbanos. With regards to the construction of the Mishkan, they did not donate at the beginning - they were the very last ones to donate. Their reasoning was that they would let the congregation bring first what they could, and then they would complete whatever was deficient. But their projection was off the mark - the people came through with enthusiasm, and there was very little left to bring - there was even a surplus. What was left was a paltry few things. That is why they donated the precious stones. And for this reason they learned from their mistake and brought their korbanos first, before anyone else brought anything at the dedication - at that time they wanted to be at the front of the line. But because they were lazy at the beginning, Hashem deleted a letter from their name as a punishment. But there are two yuds missing? Hashem took out one complete os, the letter yud. So, according to this interpretation, they were being rebuked openly for not bringing first. **Rabbeinu Bachya:** the problem with being a prince is that they thought they were royalty, and they had Gaayvah, arrogance, about their station in life; in a midah keneged midah, they brought these specific stones because the purpose of these stones in the Mishkan was to stop the Gaayvah of the heart - they are worn by the Kohen Gadol opposite the heart. The intent of the princes was to fill in the gaps of what hadn't been donated; and even though they thought it was a good idea, it was considered a sin, a deficiency; they intended to be big shots by coming up with the things that no one else could come up with; how did they know that Bnei Yisrael couldn't come up with everything and they would have been shut out completely? It was presumptuous on their part. Therefore, they were punished - this was the punishment for one who can precede others and doesn't - there is a public embarrassment. That is why their title is written chaseyr.

Kli Yakar: Why is the letter yud chosen? Because Hashem in Tehillim 101:5 says *One with haughty eyes and an expansive heart I cannot bear*; Hashem can't live in a world with arrogant people, they drive God away - they fill the world with their Gaayvah and there is no room for God. Their attitude demonstrated this Gaayvah - 'who of the nation can possibly fill in with what we can do?' Therefore Hashem takes out the letter Yud, because the only one of the letters of God's name that is in the word Nesi'im is the Yud - Hashem takes His letter out of their name - their attitude leaves no room for God.

Netziv: the yud is missing for another reason. At this point they had not been officially appointed as Nesi'im - this won't happen until after the Mishkan is completed; this is just the beginning of the process. Their choice as leaders was a result of a ground-swell from the people - they stood out in each of the tribes, but had not been officially appointed as yet; their status was

not yet confirmed; they were not given the title of Nessi'im until Hashem approves it later. So this word that is chaseyr is not because they were deficient.

Ba'al Haturim: Here the word is written chaseyr; in the end of sefer Yehoshuah (perek 22) it is written maley, with two yuds. At that point, the two and a half tribes on the other side of the Yardein had decided to build a large mizbeach in their territory. The rest of the nation was very upset, concerned that they were rebelling, breaking away from the rest of the nation; even if it was to be for Hashem, once the Mishkan was set up, all korbanos must be brought there; private bamos were illegal. It almost caused a civil war. Pinchas said they must first find out what their reasoning was before going to war, and he took a delegation of Nessi'im with him to go and find out their intent. They confirmed that they built this just as a symbol that they were also dedicated to Hashem, they were part of the nation, so that in the future no one should say they were going off on their own religion - it was never to be used for korbanos. They were outstanding Nessi'im who went out of their way for shalom bayis, with great tzidkus.

Ohr Hachayim: from 35:26 we see that the Nessi'im were so far behind, even the women gave of themselves before the princes - they wove special materials for the Mishkan from the hair on live goats.

Rosh: the Gemorrah in Yuma says that the word Nessi'im means Ananim, clouds. If you read it that way it means that when the manna came down everyday, it was like clouds descending, providing them with this miraculous food; together with the manna, the clouds periodically reigned down precious stones; this is why it says in 36:3 that they brought donations to the Mishkan in the morning, in the morning - baboker baboker; this same language is in Beshalach 16:21 in regards to the manna. It was the clouds that brought these stones. The real Nessi'im got these stones along with the manna; that is how the Nessi'im got the stones to donate to the Mishkan.

Ibn Ezra: they got the stones when they emptied out Egypt of all of its wealth; everyone asked Egyptians for items, but each person would ask on the basis of who they were; a lowly slave would not ask for something very expensive; each Jew would ask of something relative to their status; the princes could ask for more precious stones from wealthy Egyptians. That is why only they could furnish these stones; no one else had them.

Ramban: the preceding pasukim detail what Bnei Yisrael brought, out of the love of their hearts - kal ish asher nes'oh liboh (35:21). In addition to materials, specialized work of artisans was necessary. How did the Jews know how to do this - after all, they were slave laborers in Egypt, not artisans? Although there was specialized work that needed to be done, there were so many Jews who were so inspired in their hearts - even though they were not trained, were not apprentices, their hearts lifted them to want to do the work, and God miraculously filled their hearts with the knowledge of how to do it; if they really desired to do it, God helped them. The women were at the head of the line to do the work.

Abarbanel: after the Nessi'im brought their donations, in 35:29 it says every man and woman whose heart motivated them brought an offering. Why is this repeated again? To again draw the sharp line of contrast between the Nessi'im and the rest of the nation. While they decided to wait and fill in the deficiencies, all of the others gave generously with enthusiasm; this pasuk again highlights this deficiency.

Rav Hirsch: this opinion of the Abarbanel explains some of the language of the pasuk in 35:29 where it says *Every man and woman whose heart motivated them to bring for any of the work that Hashem had commanded them to make, through Moshe, Bnei Yisrael brought a free-willed offering to Hashem*. Why insert the words Bnei Yisrael in the middle of the phrase? It

stresses the contrast of the spirit of the people with that of the Nessi'im. The people all felt themselves as Bnei Yisrael, part of the nation, united; the Nessi'im stood apart in an attempt to outshine all the rest; they separated themselves because of their arrogance, and this pasuk is added to draw the contrast and to show the admirable mindset of the people as opposed to that of the Nessi'im.

This is a demonstration of the concept of zerizus - zealousness - when it comes to doing mitzvos. **Rav Simon**: the phrase **zerizim makdimim lamitzvos** means that they run to do mitzvos at the earliest moment; like a bris milah which is to be done first thing in the morning. There is tremendous backing for this concept in the mitzvah of bris milah - we are even mechaleyl Shabbos for this mitzvah. Tosafos on this issue says that once there was an incident where the scalpel was forgotten for a Shabbos bris - it was not brought to the baby's house before Shabbos. They ended up bringing it circuitously through back yards in order not to carry in the public domain, with only violating Rabbinic prohibitions. It was the wrong thing to do - they could have carried it through reshus harabim - by bringing it through the backyards they delayed the mitzvah. Had they brought it through Reshus Harabim, they could have done the mitzvah earlier - they made a mistake in Halachah. It is not only to be done on the eighth day, it should be done as early as possible on that day. Rav Simon quotes the **Maharal** that the source for this concept is from parshas Bo, where it says you must guard the matzohs, which we understand to be read as *Ushemartem Es Hamitzvos* - you should not delay the mitzvos, just as we do let the matzah rise. But, this commandment is more than just an issue of zerizus - you cannot allow the matzohs to rise because they become chametzdik - that is not just a delay, it is actually a pasool. Can this be the source of just zealously doing a mitzvah earlier? The message is that if you can do the mitzvah in a better way and end up doing it in a less than enthusiastic way, it is a deficiency in God's eyes - it creates a defect, almost as bad as making matzah into chametz. **Rav Simon** quotes several pesukim in Mishlei which talk about the midah of laziness. In 6:6 it says *Go and look at the ant, you lazy one - see her ways and become wise*. The ant is always so industrious, busy - never slow and lazy. The lazy person is told to always study the ant. 20:4: *Because of the cold of winter, a lazy man does not plow; when it comes time to harvest, there is no crop*. And in 26:13 it says *The lazy person says the young lion is on the road, a mature lion between the streets*. The lazy person will always find an excuse not to work. Regarding this pasuk **Rav Avraham Serutskin** says in Gevuras Yitzchak: The lazy one says there is a lion on the street, and he cannot go out; if he is not telling the truth, why is he being called a lazy person - he is actually a liar; therefore, he must be telling the truth -so why call him lazy? Because when you are wholeheartedly dedicated to a mission, you will find a way to do it; you will spend more time so that you can make it to your destination; there is no obstacle that is insurmountable. We can always overcome the obstacles.