



Volume III Issue #22
Written by Rabbi Yair Hoffman

Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei, 25 Adar, 5783
March 18, 2023

On the Parsha

“And the princes brought the Shoham stones and filling stones for the Ephod and for the Choshen.” (Shmos 35:27)

Rashi quotes a Midrash, that the princes (“Nesiim”), pledged to donate whatever would be missing after the rest of Bnei Yisrael finished giving to the construction of the Mishkan. They underestimated the peoples’ generosity and enthusiasm. The only things left to be donated were the precious gems needed for the Kohen Gadol’s breastplate and garments. These are the precious stones referenced in the Possuk above that were given by the Nesiim.

However, since the Nesiim were remiss in their enthusiasm to dedicate to the Mishkan and let everyone else go first, they were taken to task, and the word **Nesiim** is written defectively without a “Yud” between the “Aleph” and the “Mem” – והנשאם.

This Midrash requires some clarification, as the underlying rationale and intentions of the Nesiim seem to have been correct and noble. They were willing to donate whatever would be needed to build the Mishkan that was still missing after Bnei Yisrael had finished with their donations – they put themselves at risk of providing whatever was missing which could have been substantial and come at an enormous cost to them. And they did so, apparently, to ensure that there would be no delay in the building of the Mishkan. With such a generous offer and apparently noble intentions, why were they punished with the misspelling of their name?

Rav Boruch Sorotzkin ZT”L in his Eitz HaChaim, cites Rav Chaim Mordechai Katz ZT”L, the founding Rosh Yeshiva of Telze Chicago, and explains that we see a fundamental insight into human nature. It is possible to perform an action which, at first glance, appears to be correct and proper, and yet, nonetheless, if we delve into the matter further – we discover motivations that are not correct. In truth, the Nesiim’s offer of “You go first, and we will fill in the rest.” was not motivated by generosity, but rather by laziness. The Torah highlights that unfortunate motivation by

misspelling their name and that if they truly wanted to be generous and not lazy, they would have donated generously and **be the first ones to do so**.

In conclusion, when we decide on a course of action that appears to be correct and our intentions appear to be noble, we must be honest with ourselves and look for deeper, hidden motivations that may not be so noble. It may also be a good idea to discuss our motivations with a trusted friend which, as an unbiased third party, may be able to help us see ourselves in a more objective fashion.

Chizuk - Inspiration

It was Simchas Torah night in Yeshiva Torah Vodaas, and Rabbi Yisroel Reisman had a question for Rav Avraham Pam ZT”L that would be applicable for the next day. Rav Pam remembered that the answer to the question was provided by the Netziv in his Meishiv Davar (which was out of print at the time and not available in the Yeshiva), but he couldn’t remember the actual response itself.

After a few moments, Rav Pam remembered the Netziv’s answer and relayed the answer to Rabbi Reisman. Rabbi Reisman was satisfied with the answer and returned to his Simchas Torah dancing. A while later, Rav Pam invited Rabbi Reisman to walk home with him, so they could look up the answer together. Rabbi Reisman was so excited to have this personal experience with Rav Pam.

As they were about to leave, another member of the Yeshiva who had overheard Rabbi Reisman’s question, said that Reb Yaakov Kamenetsky ZT”L had been asked the same question and had given the same answer that Rav Pam had given to him.

Rabbi Reisman was disappointed to hear this, as he thought it meant that he and Rav Pam were no longer going home to look up the response together. However, to his pleasant surprise, Rav Pam still insisted that they walk home together to look up the response.

On the way back, Rabbi Reisman asked Rav Pam why he insisted on going home to look up the answer, even

though they were both quite certain what the response was. Rav Pam responded that just that afternoon, he had spoken about dedication to learning and that he had specifically mentioned Reb Zalman of Volozhin’s Mesiras Nefesh (self-sacrifice) in traveling a considerable distance to look up a particular response to a Halachic question.

Rav Pam continued that initially, this evening, when he could not remember the response to Rabbi Reisman’s question, he was not planning on going home to check for the response. This disturbed him, “I just discussed the importance of learning and of looking things up even if it means traveling a great distance. Yet here I was, hours later, unwilling to look up the response myself. So, I decided I had to go home to look up the answer. A person must always be honest with himself”.

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: I

just started work at a local school helping special needs students. “Rachel” the teacher who I replaced, left me Shaloch Manos to deliver to “Leah” a co-worker of hers that she became friendly with during her tenure at the school. The Shaloch Manos contained donuts and a few other items that needed to be refrigerated. I put the Shaloch Manos in my refrigerator with the intention of bringing them to school the next morning to give to Leah and then I went to bed.

The next morning, I opened the refrigerator and found that my husband had eaten half of the donuts. I was touched that my husband had left me with the other half, but I was in a quandary as to what to do now. Should I deliver the Shaloch Manos to my co-worker as is? Should I replace the donuts with something else? Do I have to tell Rachel or Leah what had happened? Ultimately, I decided to replace the donuts with cookies that I had repurposed from a Shaloch Manos that I had received, and did not tell Rachel or Leah what had happened. Did I do the right thing?

ANSWER: You did the right thing by not telling Rachel or Leah what had happened. Rachel may have felt bad that the Shaloch Manos that she intended to give were not delivered and one is allowed to deviate from the truth or in this case, withhold the truth to prevent hurt feelings. Same thing goes for Leah, she may have

felt bad if she was told that she did not get the donuts that were originally intended for her.

You may still tell Leah that the Shaloch Manos came from Rachel, even though the donuts came from Rachel and were swapped out for the cookies that you provided, since the cookies are a direct and substantially similar replacement to the donuts that Rachel had provided.

As an aside, there are two reasons that are cited for the giving of Shaloch Manos. The Terumas HaDeshen (Siman 111) writes that the giving of Shaloch Manos is to ensure that the recipients have enough food to eat for their Purim Seudah (the required Purim feast). The Manos HaLevi on Megillas Esther (9:19), written by Rav Shlomo Alkabetz and cited by the Chasam Sofer, writes an altogether different reason: to increase peace and brotherly love within Bnei Yisrael through the act of giving. This is to refute the characterization of the Jewish people by Haman as a nation that was “Mefuzar Umefurad”- spread apart and fragmented, on account of strife and discord among the people.

Mussar – Introspection

We continue with our translation of the fourth chapter of the Chofetz Chaim’s Sefas Tamim.

“This is what the Passuk means when it says, ‘And then I returned and saw all the oppressed people that are made under the sun.’ It means that they were robbed and became oppressed here, in this world, and they cried bitterly over this loss and had no one to comfort them. Shlomo HaMelech, however, states, that he perceived with Divine Inspiration that these moneys will eventually be removed from the oppressors, and more than that, the oppressors will experience tragedies and sufferings to the point where they will have no consolation. This is the meaning of the Passuk, ‘I returned and saw all of the oppressed people... and they have no one who can comfort them.’ Hashem then showed [Shlomo HaMelech] that the hands of the oppressors will lose their strength - i.e. their strength will be taken away as well. The cries of the oppressors themselves will be so great that they will also have no one to comfort them because of the multitude of worries that they will have.”