

Parshas Vayakhel - Pekudei 5772

AD D'LO YADA REVISITED

AN INCOMPLETE PACKAGE

In this week's *parshah*, which details the contributions provided by B'nei Yisrael toward the construction of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) and its accoutrements, the gift of gems submitted by the *nesi'im* (tribal chiefs) is recorded in a curious way. The verse states: וְהַנְּשִׂאִים הֵבִיאוּ אֶת אֲבְנֵי הַשֹּׁהַם וְאֶת אֲבְנֵי הַמְּלֵאִים “and the *nesi'im* brought the onyx stones and the filling-stones...” (*Shemos* 35:27). The unusual aspect of this passage is the incomplete spelling of their name, which appears here to be missing the letter “*yud*.” Rashi explains that the incomplete rendering of their title alludes to the nature of their donation. When the call for contributions was issued, the *nesi'im* made a collective determination: they would wait and see what the Jewish people would donate, and then – in the end – the *nesi'im* would provide whatever had not yet been given. The Torah considered such an offer to be somewhat lacking and reflected this sentiment by punctuating their deed with an incomplete title.

Many commentators, however, struggle with this notion; after all, they assert, the *nesi'im*'s plan does appear to be sensible. What exactly is wrong with a pledge to make up the shortfall of the communal contributions?

Perhaps the following teaching of Chazal may shed some light on the issue. Referring to a related mitzvah involving contributions, the Mishnah in *Avos* (5:13) states:

אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּנוֹתְנֵי צְדָקָה: הַרוֹצֵה שְׂתִיתָן וְלֹא יִתְּנוּ אַחֲרָיִם, עֵינּוֹ רָעָה בְּשֵׁל אַחֲרָיִם. יִתְּנוּ אַחֲרָיִם וְהוּא לֹא יִתֵּן, עֵינּוֹ רָעָה בְּשֵׁלוֹ. יִתֵּן וְיִתְּנוּ אַחֲרָיִם, חֲסִיד. לֹא יִתֵּן וְלֹא יִתְּנוּ אַחֲרָיִם, רָשָׁע.

“There are four (varying) characteristics amongst dispensers of charity. One who desires that:

1) he himself should give, but not others – such a person displays a grudging eye toward others' possessions; 2) others should give, while he should not – (such a person) is stingy with his own resources; 3) he should give, as well as others – this is a pious individual; 4) neither he nor others should give – this is (the mark of) a wicked man.”

While the entirety of this Mishnah is deserving of analysis, we focus here, for our purposes, on the second item: “Others should give, while he should not.” How, exactly, does this aspect fit in over here? Our Mishnah details the attitudes of those who *dispense charity*, while this individual appears not to give at all! He just wants other people to do all of the giving!

A MATTER OF ATTITUDE

The *Medrash Shmuel* explains that this, in fact, is not the case; the subject of the Mishnah's second item is also a contributor to *tzedakah*. To be read properly, the Mishnah's opening phrase of “one who desires that...” refers to all aspects of the listed items. In other words, this individual's lack of giving reflects only his desire: he *wishes* that he would not have to give but ends up giving anyway. That is, he hopes that others would do all of the giving so that his contributions will be unnecessary. Alas, the needy still come to his door, and he begrudgingly opens his wallet.

Perhaps this attitude could account for the Torah's treatment of the *nesi'im*'s gift in this week's *parshah*, as well. These were noble and upstanding people, and their deeds, overall, were of extremely high caliber. To some extent, though, the Torah identified a trace of deficiency in this particular instance. While the idea to make up the shortfall appears grounded, it does seem somewhat reminiscent of the attitude eschewed by the Mishnah in *Avos*. The insinuation of such a

לזכר נשמת ברוך בן משה ע"ה

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plan could be that there exists an underlying hope that their plan may never come to fruition. Sure, if need be, they'd fill in what was missing, but – if all of the *Mishkan's* needs are supplied by the first donors – they might be spared from parting from their precious possessions.

One instance where this attitude could tend to manifest itself is amongst the increased donations that take place during the Purim season. In fact, the *Yalkut Hagershuni* utilizes this phenomenon to explain one of the puzzling Purim rituals with a most brilliant exposition.

WHO'S WHO

A few weeks ago, we addressed the issue of *ad d'lo yada*, a popular yet perplexing aspect of the Purim observance. Through this mitzvah, one is enjoined to become inebriated through drink to the extent that he can no longer differentiate between “cursed is Haman” and “blessed is Mordechai.” Previously, though, we focused on the notion of drinking itself, specifically, on its appropriateness and relation to the sacred nature of the day. What was left unexplained, however, is the other half to this most curious mitzvah: what is the idea behind confusing the cursedness of Haman with the blessedness of Mordechai?

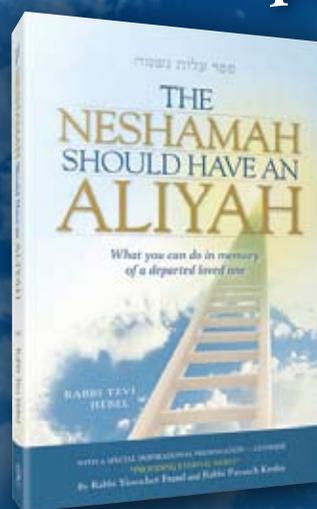
When Purim rolls around, it may be experienced and appreciated differently – based on one's economic situation. The beggars are ecstatic at this time, for they know what it entails: a substantial increase in charitable contributions. On the other hand, the wealthy – upon whom the burden to supply these stepped-up handouts generally falls – may not be as excited. The results are revealed through the utterances of these respective groups. The paupers – so happy and thankful for their Purim windfall – bless Mordechai for his part in the Purim miracle and the institutionalized charitable gifts that have come in its wake. On the other hand, the well-to-do – as they reach for their checkbooks – may be cursing Haman under their breaths for being the cause of this sudden influx of solicitors...

As stated above, this attitude is not the most pristine when it comes to giving. A generous spirit is much preferred over a reluctant resignation to one's role as a provider. And so, the

correction is supplied by none other than the *ad d'lo yada* ritual. In a sense, wine is “the great equalizer.” As Shlomo HaMelech states: “When a man drinks, he forgets his poverty” (*Mishlei 31:7*). When inebriation sets in, a person no longer focuses on his station; for the moment, he ceases to care if he's rich or he's poor.

“A person is obligated to drink on Purim until he can no longer differentiate between ‘cursed is Haman’ and ‘blessed is Mordechai’” (*Megillah 7b*). The intent of this injunction is to bring out one's best and reverse the tendencies discussed above. Through the medium of wine, the poor will also curse Haman and even the wealthy will bless Mordechai for providing the wondrous opportunities that Purim brings.

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