

perspectives

on the Parsha



פרשת ויקהל-פקודי/החודש

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The בעלי מוסר teach us that there are factors we may not be aware of, which often color our judgment and cloud our vision. They can be bad מדות, such as laziness or arrogance, or self-interests, such as monetary gain or honor. These unconscious "נגיעות" can be quite dangerous, because they lurk in the background of our thought processes and cause us to make mistakes in judgment.

This week's פרשה describes the building of the משכן. The משכן was an exciting opportunity for בני ישראל to come closer to Hashem by creating an earthly dwelling for His שכניה. בני ישראל were particularly motivated by this opportunity to achieve this closeness with Hashem because this would elevate their encampment in the desert to a spiritual oasis where Hashem's שכניה could rest.

All of בני ישראל stepped forward to donate materials for this special project. Some donated precious metals such as gold and silver, while others brought fine fabrics, skins and wood. The Torah relates that people who were skilled in craftsmanship donated their expertise and assistance in building the משכן. It was a project in which the entire community was enthusiastically and joyfully involved. The generation of Jews who left Egypt and received the Torah at הר סיני was very close to Hashem, and these people felt truly privileged to build a place where Hashem could dwell among them.

The נשיאים were the leaders of the tribes of בני ישראל, and they generously donated the precious gemstones that adorned the breastplate of the גדול. Rashi tells us that

they had committed themselves to make up any shortfall that might remain after all the other members of בני ישראל made their donations. This seems like a clever - and generous - plan to guarantee that there would be nothing lacking in the campaign to build the משכן. The generosity and enthusiasm of בני ישראל, however, was greater than the נשיאים expected, and the only items left for them to donate were these precious stones.

Surprisingly, Hashem found fault in their plan. In the פסוק which describes this incident, the word נשיאים is spelled "נשאם," without the two *yuds* that are normally used. Rashi explains that this was a rebuke for their laziness in waiting to donate to the משכן until the very end.

These נשיאים were not lazy men! They were people who were selected to serve as the tribal leaders of the great generation of Jews who left Egypt and received the Torah. They postponed their donation because they wanted to see what would be needed after the rest of the nation finished donating, to make sure there would be no shortfall. How can the Torah attribute their plan to laziness when it seems to have been motivated only by the best intentions and boundless generosity?

The answer is that the Torah is referring to an unconscious laziness that colored the judgment of the נשיאים. Even though they intended to do only good, and were most enthusiastic to join the cause of donating to the משכן with the rest of בני ישראל, a נגיעה of laziness influenced their decision and caused them to wait until the rest of the Jews had finished donating.

Science tells us that an object at rest tends to remain at rest, and resists a force that tries to move it. People are naturally the same way. There is a certain heaviness we must all struggle with that makes it difficult for us to accomplish things.

Even the great נשיאים were subject to this מדה, which is part of our very essence. In their greatness, they would never consciously act in a lazy manner. They served Hashem every day of their lives with great זריזות and passion, and became people who were seemingly purged of any vestige of the

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impediment of laziness with which they were born. Yet the natural heaviness and resistance remained, and distorted their decision in a way which they did not realize.

The lesson we must gain from this episode is to constantly check ourselves and our decisions. We can ask ourselves, "Am I being lazy? Is arrogance motivating me? Perhaps I am being driven by lust and desire!" By performing these internal audits we can work to make sure that our unconscious נגיעות are not preventing us from serving Hashem as best as we can. ■

*This week's Perspectives on the Parsha is by
R' Shimson Gewirtz, member of Kollel Ner Dovid,
based on ספר חרשי הלב.*

Many people have joined our effort to learn Sefer Chofetz Chaim as a זכות for a רפואה שלימה for our friend Rabbi Yosef Kalter. The calendar for March is printed on the back to help you stay on track. Please continue to have יוסף בן רות in mind in your תפילות.

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