

CHIZUK ^{AND} IDUD

*Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra
with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael -
Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim*

When the time came to make contributions towards the building of the Mishkan, the Nisi'im decided they would let everyone else contribute first, thinking that in the end they would be there as a back-up ready to provide what ever would be found lacking. This description, found in the Midrash quoted by Rashi (Sh'mot 35:27), explains why the contributions given by the Nisi'im themselves appear towards the very end.

This Midrashic picture has spawned a plethora of interpretations. Rashi writes that the Nisi'im acted out of laziness, they may have given over a plausible sounding explanation for their actions, but in truth they were simply lazy. Sitting back and waiting to see what everyone else would bring led them to miss their opportunity - this is why the word Nisi'im is written in an unusual manner - with the letter YUD missing. Having learned their lesson, though, Rashi continues, the Nisi'im came forwards first at Chanukat HaMizbe'ach.

Others have suggested different ways of evaluating their behavior. The Avnei Eizel (The author of the well-known Ma'ayana Shel Torah) writes that the Nisi'im had truly acted in good faith. They sincerely believed this would be a good way to help out, but nonetheless, something was wrong with their way of thinking. Their sin was that of being POREISH MIN HATZIBUR - of having separated themselves from the rest of the community. [Therefore, the letter YUD is missing since it transforms the

singular Nasi into the plural form.]

While all the others were busying themselves with the act of giving, the Nisi'im stood alone looking on from the sidelines.

To better understand this point, we might quote the story related about the famed Mashgiach, Rav Yechezkel Levinstein. Rav Levinstein planned a celebration in the Yeshiva, and asked all the bochrim to attend. One exceptionally studious student decided to skip the celebration in order to use the time to further his learning. The student had expected that the Rav would appreciate his dedication, and yet to his surprise he was notified that Rav Yechezkel was upset by his absence and had summoned him for a talking to. Rav Yechezkel explained that when one separates oneself from the tzibur, it detracts from the entire group's enjoyment and morale. Thus, said the Mashgiach, while the bocher thought he was doing a mitzva, it was truly his Yetzer Hara that was at work.

Rav Shternbuch highlights a very different point. The act of giving Tzedaka fulfills a two-fold purpose: On the one hand you are providing the poor person with that which he lacks, filling his physical needs. On the other hand, the act of giving is an act of spirituality - the performance of a divine mitzva. The Nisi'im did not understand that giving to the Mishkan is more than a merely functional act. They thought that if the necessary funds had been accumulated, then that was all that was needed. They missed the point of the YUD - representing the added level of spirituality accompanying our actions; they were focused on the here and now, and did not see how this was an opportunity to advance the divine program and express

their devotion to the Almighty. Had these thoughts entered their minds, they would have been the first to come forward and contribute towards this mitzva.

Similarly, regarding Eretz Yisrael it seems many people replicate the Nisi'im's unfortunate shortsightedness. They stand on the sidelines watching to see if they are needed. If anything is lacking they will be happy to extend a helping hand. As long as they are not needed they stay away. They believe that there are already enough Jews in Israel without them.

They - like the Nisi'im - are missing the point entirely! Aliyah is not a question of whether you are needed, but rather whether one wants to have the "eyes of Hashem" on them in Eretz Yisrael. It is a question of grasping the opportunity to perform a major Mitzva and take part in the building up of the Land.

The Almighty too is called the Boneh Yerushalayim. Come and join the Master builder and in the process you will be built up (Livnot U L'hibanot)!

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