

CHIZUK & IDUD

Rabbi Yerachmiel Roness

I once overheard someone remark: "I can't understand why Nefesh B'Nefesh make such a big deal about those who come on Aliyah." This fellow, who never experienced firsthand the difficulties of uprooting one's family and beginning life anew in Eretz Yisrael, continued his argument: "After all, this is what is expected of every Jew! Do we shower public praise on all those who don Tefillin or safeguard the Shabbat?"

A similar question could be asked of a passage of the Midrash Tanchuma on our Parsha. In relation to the detailed and exact accounting Moshe provides for the funds donated to the Mishkan, the Midrash notes that Moshe fully embodies the description of an "Ish Emunot, Rav Brachot" (Mishlei 28:20) - a man of integrity who will receive many blessings. Here too the question arises: "Do we not expect that the upright ethical person to provide such an accounting? Why then all the acclaim and admiration? The Rashash, Rabbi Shmuel Strashun, replied to a similar query raised in a different context, in regard to the common practice of praising the Kohanim after the priestly blessing - are they not simply fulfilling the divine command of Ko T'vor'chu Et

Bnei Yisrael?

The answer, he writes, can be found in a disagreement between Beit Shamai and Beit Hillel regarding the fruit of the Shmita year. When one partakes of the fruit should he consider this to be a favor bestowed upon him by the owner of the orchard? Beit Shamai do not consider this to be a favor since all the produce of the 7th year is considered Hefker (ownerless) by divine command, whereas Beit Hillel rule otherwise (Mishna, Shevi'it 4:2). From this we understand that we should always be grateful even when the other, like the Kohen, is fulfilling a Divine imperative.

This explains why Moshe, too, is worthy of being extolled for providing an exact accounting, even if such behavior would be required of anyone placed in a similar situation. The fulfillment of one's requirements is never to be taken for granted. (Especially if one learns like the Tiferet Yisrael at the end of Kiddushin, that Moshe invested a great deal of effort in order to perfect his character traits which by natural inclination were far removed from those of the Ish Elokim he became).

So too regarding Aliyah. Yes, making Aliyah is a mitzva; a great mitzva at that. Yet, those who have chosen to

come on Aliya are to be highly commended for their choice.

We can only hope that their example will persuade others that "the time is NOW!"- For, "If not now, when?"