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שבת

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HALACHA V'HALICHA... By Rav Chaim Schabes

והנשאם הביאו - Rashi writes that because the נשיאים, the princes, delayed in bringing their donations to the mishkan the two "yuds" are missing from the word נשיאים. This seems inappropriate, given that the reason for their delay was their desire to bring anything that would be missing, and they acted entirely לשם שמים. Rav Reuven Grozovsky, the Rosh Yeshivah of Mesivta Torah Voda'ath explained that although the נשיאים acted in a manner that would seem to be in the best interests of the mishkan, that was not their primary responsibility; a person's obligation is not to fix the world nor to complete whatever might be missing. Rather, he must complete himself, and that being the focus of his obligation, the most important thing is to apply oneself with all his might with זריזות. When B'nai Yisrael were commanded to build the mishkan, the main purpose wasn't the building itself, since Hashem does not need our structures; the building was a medium for the self improvement of every individual through their donations, and since the נשיאים were lacking in this respect, they were considered to have failed.

Although it is still three weeks before Purim, I thought it would be important to write about the proper way to go about the mitzvah of mishloach manos. Especially this year, when Purim comes out on erev Shabbos, and the time during the day is much more limited, I thought it would be important to set the balance straight, and before we start preparing an abundance of mishloach manos we should learn the priorities of the different obligations of such an important day.

The Shulchan Aruch writes about the halachos of matanos l'evyonim before the dinim of mishloach manos, although in the Megillah they are written in the opposite order, to teach us that the main mitzvah of the day is matanos l'evyonim. As the Rambam writes, "it is preferable to add to the matanos l'evyonim than to add to his se'udah and mishloach manos to his friends, because there is no greater simcha than rejoicing the hearts of the needy". The Shulchan Aruch writes (695:4) that the more mishloach manos you send to your friends, it is praiseworthy. There are two basic reasons brought for the mitzvah of mishloach manos. The Terumas Hadeshen (111) says that the purpose is so that all Jewish families should have all their needs for the Purim se'udah, so that they will be able to rejoice properly and with a good heart, and the reason we send mishloach manos even to our wealthy friends, is in order not to embarrass those who are truly in need. The Manos Haleivi (R' Shlomo Alkevetz) says the reason for the mitzvah of mishloach manos is to proliferate peace and friendship, the opposite of how Haman harasha described us, saying that we are "spread out and scattered", meaning that there was machlokes and lack of unity among us. According to either reason, to send four weeks before Pesach, candy and an assortment of goodies that are not even looked at, just "recycled" in order to be yotzeh with whomever comes to our door, and the attitude that we have to give something to everyone we know, etc. does not seem to go along with both the spirit and the reasons for the mitzvah. The mishloach manos should be an important gift, and one is not yotzeh by giving just one kezayis of food and one revi'is of drink; rather, it should be a nice portion according to the standards of importance of that place and time, since the word "manos" means an important gift (Aishel Avraham Butshatsh, Aruch Hashulchan 15). There is an opinion that the measurement for an important portion is 3 k'beitzim (one k'beitzah is approx. two oz. according to R' AC Naeh, while according to Chazon Ish it is over 3 oz.).

THOUGHTS ON THE HAFTARA ... By Rabbi Yaakov Shapiro

This week's haftara (Melachim I 7:40-50) is one that is rarely read. It is chosen from the section of the Navi that describes the building of the first Bais Hamikdash in Shlomo Hamelech's time. The choice is obviously meant to emphasize the continuity and similarities between the Mishkan and Bayis Rishon (see the L'vush). For example, Yalkut Shimoni (185) points out that in both cases the principal architects of the buildings came from the sh'vatim of Yehuda and Dan: Betzalel and Ahaliav for the Mishkan, Chiram and Shlomo for the Bais Hamikdash. But at the same time there are some interesting differences, too. One of these is the description of the persons chosen to be "chief architect" for each of the projects. When describing Betzalel, the Torah tells us (35:30-36) that he was designated by Hashem, and in fact prior to that designation had no experience in the delicate activities necessary to accomplish the designated tasks. In fact, the Gemara (Brachos 55a) describes him as "b'tzel Kel hayisa", a clear indication of his abilities originating directly from Hashem's intervention and not from years of training. Chiram, on the other hand, is described in our haftara as someone who came from a family of artisans and was already "in the business" before Shlomo Hamelech called him to lead the project. As we've mentioned several times, the Mishkan was never destroyed while the Bais Hamikdash was. Why? The answer is that despite the great kedusha that the two enjoyed, such as the miracles that occurred there on a daily basis, there were fundamental differences in how they were built. The Mishkan enjoyed a level of direct participation from Hashem as well as a pure Jewish participation. Shlomo's Bais Hamikdash on the other hand, starting with his choice of Chiram, as opposed to Hashem choosing the architect, as well as participation by non-Jews (in fact, some mefarshim say Chiram himself was not Jewish, but just married to a Jewess), put its foundation on a "lower" spiritual level, thus allowing the potential for its destruction.

LESSONS FROM OUR GEDOLIM: השבת... לא תבערו אש - R' Nachum of Chernobyl was the guest of a distinguished talmid chacham for Shabbos. They lit a large candle to burn all night so that they could wake up to learn while still dark. Early in the morning, R' Nachum awoke, but was observed stumbling around as if in utter darkness, to the point that he almost banged his head. R' Nachum asked his hosts, "why isn't the candle lit?" His hosts were dumbfounded, as the candle was burning brightly! They soon learned, however, the original light had gone out and was re-lit by the non-Jewish maid, and evidently, since it was lit on Shabbos, it was totally ineffective for the holy tzaddik.

A GIGANTIC LITTLE SECRET ... By Rabbi Yosef Schwab

תכלת - It is well known that the blue dye of the t'cheiles was from the chilazon, a non-kosher sea creature. To explain how something of non-kosher origin may be used for a mitzvah purpose, the Noda B'Yehuda writes that since the dye, once absorbed into the fabric, cannot be reconstituted, it loses its identity and no longer retains its status as a separate, non-kosher entity.

