

# MORE OR LESS

*by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky*

In a magnanimous show of unity, men and women of all tribes of the nation converge their hearts, minds, and pockets to complete the Mishkan. In the next two Torah portions, the Torah summarizes the accomplishments of the nation by detailing the work that was done by Betzalel and his host of artisans and craftsmen who were filled with Heavenly spirit.

Moshe declares the success of the campaign and the generosity of the donors by announcing, that "the work (and contributions) had been enough for all the work, to do it -- and there was extra" (Exodus 36:7). Not only was there enough for the completion of the task there was extra.

But many commentaries are concerned about Moshe's seemingly strange expression of completion. "There was enough, and there was extra." After all, if there was enough, then there was not extra. And if there was extra then it should not be called enough! The Torah could just well have stated, "There were extra contributions of work and material for the work that was needed."

It seems that only by having more than enough, by only having extra gifts, there was actually enough. Is that possible?

President John F. Kennedy loved to tell the story of a political battle for the mayoralty of the small manufacturing city of Fall River, Massachusetts.

The candidates scoured the industrial community for support, each pledging prosperity, growth, and increased productivity. But general promises would not persuade the voters. The candidates scoured the community, talking to citizens as if each vote would truly decide the election. They were right.

It was the tightest race in Massachusetts's history. During the vote counting the candidates sat nervously with their supporters awaiting the final tally. It took days to declare, and weeks to finally confirm, that the winner of the mayoral race was actually decided by one vote! But the winner's jubilation was muted only days after the results were declared.

You see, everyone in the town reminded him, "It was my vote that got you elected!"

The Sichos Tazdikim explains that Moshe wanted the proud accomplishment of building the Mishkan combined with humility, despite the enormity of the accomplishment. Had there been exactly enough gold, silver, copper, and other materials contributed in order to complete the construction, then perhaps a false sense of pride may have crept in.

If it were not for me, some may have thought, "there would be no Mishkan!" "I gave the contribution that turned the tide!" Everyone would have pinned the success on his or her copper or silver or gold.

The only way this false pride could be avoided was if there was a bit more given to the cause than actually was needed. Only then, would you have not only a Mishkan, but an edifice bereft of individual haughtiness. Therefore, only when there was more given than was actually needed, did Moshe feel that he truly had enough!

When we face extreme situations, and we contribute to their positive resolution, it is important to realize that we are only messengers. If Hashem wants success it will come without us as well.

In that vein, our contribution will be even more pure, for it will have every good attribute and will only be missing only one ingredient. It will be missing a false sense of conceit. It will not only be enough, it will be more. Good Shabbos © 2000 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

*Dedicated by Heshie & Bonnie Schertz in memory of Moshe Schertz of blessed memory L'luy Nishmas Reb Moshe Ben Reb Zvi o"bm 27 Adar*

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