

HARMONIZING WITHOUT HOMOGENIZING

by Rabbi Label Lam

HASHEM said to Moshe, One chieftain each day, one chieftain each day, shall present his offering for the dedication of the altar. The one who brought his offering on the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadav of the tribe of Yehuda. And his offering was one silver bowl weighing one hundred and thirty [shekels], one silver sprinkling basin [weighing] seventy shekels according to the holy shekel, both filled with fine flour mixed with olive oil for a meal offering. One spoon [weighing] ten [shekels] of gold filled with incense. One young bull, one ram and one lamb in its first year for a burnt offering. One young he-goat for a sin offering. And for the peace offering: two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs in their first year; this was the offering of Nahshon the son of Amminadav. (Bamidbar 7:11-17)

This verse records the details of such a nice inaugural gift from the tribe of Yehuda. The perhaps miraculous fact is that each of the next eleven tribes independently brought the very same offering. It's almost too hard to believe that each arrived at the identical conclusion without any collusion or cooperation. Oddly, each tribe which is blessed with varying native talents and differing roles to play in the nation, somehow formulated with perfect uniformity. How is this possible? If this is not a testimony to the unity of purpose that the Tabernacle- Mishkan, represented I don't know what is! Where is the diversity, the inherent, individual identity of each tribe? We know that the Jews then and even now are not a homogeneous group! When so many act alike where is there room for individuality?

Reb Klonymous Kalman of Piasezno writes, "There is a type of prophetic revelation that comes when one looks into a holy book. Not knowledge of the future, for that ceased when the Temple was destroyed. Rather, it is guidance and a call to service of G-d and the holiness of Israel. At times, we have all experienced looking into a holy book and suddenly becoming extremely moved by a certain idea. A word pierces our heart and gives us no rest for years, until it can transform us into a different person and sanctify and uplift us. What is going on? We have already heard this idea from others and seen it in books, yet we remained untouched. Yet now, the matter suddenly penetrates our heart and mind. This is a form of looking into the Breast Plate worn by the High Priest. There too, all the letters were written, yet only some of them would shine into the eyes of the Kohen; and only a Kohen with divine inspiration. Another Kohen could stand beside him and not see a thing."

Let's say I would distribute to 50 people a Sefer Tehillim, and along with that everyone would receive a highlighter pen and a well-defined assignment. Each person is requested to carefully

review and learn and recite those Tehillim over the course of a year and carefully search out only 50 verses. Those that zing them or sing to them they should highlight. If after one year I would collect that Sefer Tehillim and inspect the pages, I wonder what the chances are that any two of the 50 fifty people highlighted the same 50 verses?!

I do believe the statistical odds are nil and not because of something mathematical but rather due to something mystical. Amazingly, everyone can be reading the same book or listening to the same lecture and each person experiences something completely different. One person decides to make great changes while the other goes home unaffected. What's happening here? Everyone finds his "portion in Torah" that we ask for 3 times daily, amongst wishing for the Temple to be rebuilt, when stepping back from our prayers.

Although each tribe miraculously acted in uniform fashion, our sages tell us that each one had a completely different intention to their gift. People may look and dress in uniform fashion but their uniqueness is securely found inwardly. Sure we all wear the same black square Tefillin or learn the same Daf. Each one mines out his hidden vitamins. In this way we can act coordinated outwardly,

harmonizing without homogenizing! DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.