

FOR G-D'S SAKE

by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch

"Hashem spoke to Moshe saying, 'Speak to the Children of Israel and let them take for Me a portion...' Rashi explains that the apparently extraneous "for Me" - given the maxim that the Torah contains no superfluous words - indicates that the gifts given for the Tabernacle should be given exclusively for the glory of G-d. Implicit is the notion that if not for the warning, people would not donate with the noblest motivation.

How could that possibly occur? This is the generation that not only witnessed the Ten Plagues in Egypt and the Splitting of the Sea, but just experienced the national prophetic encounter of the Giving of the Torah. Now, this spiritually elevated and experienced people had the opportunity to derive pleasure from a constant intense Divine presence in their midst, and they were requested to bring the requisite materials to build G-d's home. Is it possible they would lose focus that the purpose of the gift was exclusively for a holy objective?

Chidushei HaLev (1) elucidates that even the most pious, spiritually attuned Jew is ultimately a creature of flesh and blood. Even our forebears who achieved such spiritual heights were challenged to develop the sense of focus and concentration requisite for a mitzvah (Divine command) to be fulfilled completely and absolutely for the sake of Heaven. But it is possible.

In Megillas Rus (Ruth), Boaz credited Rus for her self-sacrifice to sustain and provide for her mother-in-law, Naomi, even after the death of Rus' husband, and for forsaking her parents, birthplace and faith system to embrace Torah and become part of the Jewish Nation. Boaz advised her of his prophecy that in the merit of these two acts she would be the mother to kings and prophets (2). Rus was not just "a convert"; she was the daughter of Eglon, King of Moav. She relinquished her prominence and fantastic wealth for a life of poverty in a strange land to enable her becoming one of the Children of Israel. But the provision of sustenance for another, especially a mother-in-law, is an act of kindness undertaken by many. Why did Boaz equate the two as equal factors in Rus' greatness?

Chidushei HaLev explains that Rus was unique in the purity of her motivation in helping Naomi; it was performed only for the sake of the glory of G-d. Thus, it equaled her great sacrifice in conversion to Judaism.

Serving G-d with the purest of intentions is very, very difficult. But so is a healthy marriage, raising children and all the other pursuits of worth in life that we readily undertake. Indeed, contemplating

the impact - on our own spirituality, as well as that of the generations that follow - of achieving such service, makes the decision to pursue it very, very simple.

Have a Good Shabbos!

(1) the ethical discourses of Rabbi Alter Henach Leibowitz, Rosh Yeshiva/Dean of Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim of Kew Gardens Hills, New York

(2) see Targum to Rus 2:11

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