

THE DIVINE EXPECTATION

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This week we read the parsha of T'rumah--the donations of materials that were given toward the Mishkan [Tabernacle]. After listing the materials that were needed, the passuk [verse] gives the general command of: "And make for me a Mikdash [a House of Holiness] and I will dwell in your midst. [25:8]"

The Medrash teaches that this was one of the three times that Hashem commanded Moshe to do something which Moshe thought was beyond his ability.

When Hashem told Moshe to make for Him a Mikdash, Moshe's entire body trembled in fear. How can a person make a dwelling place for Hashem if all the heavens can't contain Him? Hashem explained that His expectation is not that we do it according to His ability and standards but rather according to ours" Twenty k'rashim [upright beams that formed the walls of the Mishkan] on the north, twenty on the south and eight on the west--such a dwelling, well within the bounds of our abilities, is what Hashem was requesting.

And when Hashem told Moshe to bring karbanos lachmee [sacrifices as 'sustenance-bread'] Moshe responded that even if he'd gather all the animals of the world it wouldn't even be considered one proper offering. All the wood of the world wouldn't be considered a fire befitting the altar. Once again Hashem explained that He only asks us to perform according to our standards and abilities--one sheep be brought in the morning and one in the afternoon.

And when Hashem told Moshe that each member of Bnei Yisroel [the Children of Israel] should give a donation as redemption for their nefesh [soul] Moshe responded that no amount of money could possibly suffice. Once again Hashem told him that He only asks us to give according to our abilities--each person should give one machatzis ha'shekel [half of a shekel].

From this, the Chofetz Chaim points out, we see that Hashem only asks and expects us to do our best. One must try to measure up but only against oneself.

For many infractions there are different atonements that need to be brought based on one's financial standing. If a wealthy person would bring the sacrifice prescribed for a poorer person, not only wouldn't there be atonement but it would be considered chulin ba'azara [bringing ordinary animals into the courtyard of the Temple, which is, of course, forbidden].

Then of course there is the flip side of this concept. Some people ask themselves: since I do things

that are wrong, how important can my mitzvos [the commandments that are fulfilled] really be? If anyhow I'm not applying so much time to Torah study, why should I bother to go to a class when it's an inconvenience?

A religious cabdriver once had the merit of driving an extremely illustrious passenger--the Steipler Gaon, zt"l.

On this trip, the Steipler asked him if he had a set time for learning after he completed his arduous day at work.

This cabdriver explained that he does go to a shiur [Torah class] but, regretfully, right from the start of the shiur his mind starts to drift off and he soon falls asleep on his Gemara. He ends up sleeping through the shiur, only waking up to the sounds of the Gemaras closing about an hour later.

The cabdriver expressed how upset he was with his inability to stay awake and the deep pain he felt from the fact that he didn't understand the Gemara.

As the Steipler left the cab at the end of the ride, he shook the driver's hand warmly and told him the following. "You must realize, although in this world you feel that you're not amounting to much, I can assure you that in the World to Come you are a great general. You are doing all that you possibly can--you have no strength to do any more than that. Continue to attend the shiur, even if you fall asleep on the Gemara, because in the heavens you are viewed as a great tzaddik [righteous individual]."

The Torah obligates a person to support his family. This individual was able to do that by driving a cab and was understandably exhausted by the end of the day. His ability, his standard was to attend the shiur even though he'd fall asleep without understanding a word.

Not Hashem's standard and ability and not our neighbor's standard and ability.

Just our own.

Good Shabbos,
Yisroel Ciner

Copyright © 2002 by [Rabbi Yisroel Ciner](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

The author teaches at [Neveh Tzion](#) in Telzstone (near Yerushalayim).
