



## DIVREI MENACHEM

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# Surprisingly? - Leaders Can Be Leaders

On Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the day the Mishkan was sanctified, Aharon Hakohen blessed the people for the first time. Furthermore, the tribal leaders brought voluntary offerings for the Mizbe'ach, even though they were not so commanded.

In that light, Moshe was hesitant to accept the gifts. After all, he recalled the demise of Aharon's sons, who had brought uncalled-for incense before Hashem (Midrash).

Hashem, however, recognized the leaders' motives were pure, perhaps because these individuals had suffered at the hands of the Egyptian taskmasters to protect the weary Jewish slaves. Or because these were the same tribal leaders who accompanied the tribal families during the recent census, further demonstrating their care and concern for their charges.

We highlight the leaders' attributes on this auspicious occasion because not always did the elite exhibit meritorious behavior. For example, when Moshe ascended Har Sinai, the nobility stayed at the bottom of the mount to eat and drink – not a very fitting way to attend a life-changing event in our people's history (cf. Shemot 24:11). And we have only

to recall the upcoming saga of the spies to wonder at the leaders' exemplary actions described in this Parsha.

Beyond their sacrificial gifts, the leaders' put aside their egos and brought the wagons and oxen for the Leviim to transport the Mishkan's parts. Here, too, Moshe demurred (believing that the Leviim should carry them). Once again, Hashem "sided" with the leaders (Ohr Hachayim).

Even if the intrinsic motives for bringing the sacrifices on behalf of their respective tribes were unique to each tribal leader, the offerings of each tribe were identical. The overall effect was unity, albeit short-lived, but admirable and appropriate for the occasion.

The themes of unity, sharing, forgoing ego, role modeling, and voluntarism are just a few of the attributes we expect of our leaders – and perhaps of ourselves. There are, indeed, times when this sense of unity surfaces strongly, the result of tragedy (*Shelo Neida*) or experiences that generate euphoria.

The challenge is how we maintain that "Achdus." How do we avoid letting interne-cine struggles overwhelm us? When do we realize that events at home and elsewhere cry for our joint efforts? When do we recall the original functions of the sacrificial offerings? And how, in our times, can we make such "sacrificial" gifts for the betterment of our people and the entire world? ■

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