

The CHASSIDUS PERSPECTIVE with Reb Yoel Kahn



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NOT A WAGON MORE

EVERY INCH FOR HASHEM

The purpose of the Mishkan was to serve as a dwelling place for the *shechinah*; it was a place where one could feel Hashem's presence.

When one feels Hashem's presence, one recognizes that the entire world only exists to reveal Hashem's glory, and that the only reason a person exists is to serve Hashem. For this reason, every single detail must be utilized to serve Hashem. If there is even one detail that stands apart and is not being used for this objective, it runs contrary to the whole purpose of the Mishkan—to serve as a dwelling place for Hashem.

Now, the wagons' measurements were perfectly suited to carrying the beams and pillars of the Mishkan. If a fifth wagon would have been added, or if the wagons would have been

a bit larger, that would mean that an empty spot remained on the wagon that was not being used to carry the Mishkan.

This was not possible. In the Mishkan, there was no such thing as a useless entity, as that would go against what the Mishkan was all about. If four wagons were *able* to carry all the beams—as the Gemara indeed calculates—then there *could not* be another wagon (or larger ones).

The same is true with the oxen. Since eight oxen were *able* to haul the four wagons with their huge load, they *could not* donate an additional ox to assist in the pulling. If they would do so, that would mean that not all the oxen's capacities were being used for the Mishkan. Everything used for the Mishkan needed to be fully accounted for—every inch of space in the wagons, and every ounce of strength in the oxen.

QUALITATIVE BITUL TORAH

This teaches us a powerful lesson in our *avodas Hashem*.

Parshas Naso concludes with a description of the donations and *korbanos* brought by the *nesi'im* to initiate the service in the Mishkan. The Torah relates that the *nesi'im* donated six wagons and twelve oxen: each two *nesi'im* joined in giving a wagon, and each *nasi* donated an ox.

This begs for an explanation. Couldn't the *nesi'im* have been more generous by each one donating a full wagon? Why did each two *nesi'im* only give one?

A SPARING GIFT?

This question is even stronger when we consider the motivation for their gift. Earlier, when it was time to donate for the building of the Mishkan, the *nesi'im* said, "Let the Jews give whatever they can, and we will fill in the rest." However, the Jews supplied all the materials necessary, and nothing was left for the *nesi'im* to give. To rectify this, the *nesi'im* decided to offer gifts for the Mishkan's initiation. If the *nesi'im* were trying to fix their previous mistake, why were they so sparing?

Furthermore:

Of these six wagons, two were given to the family of Gershon to carry the curtains and drapes, while four were given to the family of Merari to carry the beams, sockets, and pillars. The beams and pillars were quite heavy, and the family of Merari had a tremendous load to carry, all on just four wagons. In fact, the Gemara in Maseches Shabbos provides the exact width and length of each wagon and calculates exactly how many beams lay on each one, one layer above the next. The wagons were so fully burdened that the *leviyim* needed to follow them to ensure that nothing would fall.

Couldn't the *nesi'im* have donated an extra wagon, or wagons that were a bit larger, so that the task would be a bit easier?

Couldn't the *nesi'im* have been more generous by donating an extra wagon, so that the task would be a bit easier?

The *possuk* says *Veshachanti besocham* in the plural, teaching us that each one of us must be a Mishkan for Hashem. How do we accomplish this? By making sure we use all of our time and abilities to serve Hashem.

This idea is expressed in multiple ways. First of all, let's take a person who has many *shiurim*, spending many hours a day studying Torah. He then finds himself with a few spare minutes. He may say, "I've already spent so much time studying. What's the big deal if I use these few minutes for something else?"

The wagons teach us that no; every spare moment must be used to learn Torah.

Let's take another case. In the previous scenario, refraining from studying would have involved *bitul Torah*. But someone might say: "Fine, I understand that I must learn every moment. However, who says I need to learn in depth? Who says I must use all of my *kochos*? I'll learn superficially!"

The problem with this is that although no *minute* remains unused, there is still a *koach* that remains unused. A person's mental capacities consist of various layers. When one studies superficially, he has only used his external *kochos*, and not his inner ones. From the perspective of these unused *kochos*, it is *bitul Torah*.

You may ask, "Why is this *bitul Torah*? Every minute is being used to study Torah!" The answer is that only the external layer of his mind is studying, while the inner layer of his mind is having a break.

LEAVE NOTHING UNUSED!

Say one has studied for twenty-three hours but wastes his twenty-fourth hour. He might say, "What's the big deal? I

learned for twenty-three hours!" However, since the last hour of the day was idle, it is considered *bitul Torah*. Just as this is the case regarding quantity (the time of the day), so is it true regarding quality (his *kochos*): if one does not use all of his *kochos* to study Torah, it is considered *bitul Torah*.

The Gemara states, "One should take off time from Torah study to listen to the *megillah*." Why does the Gemara refer to this activity as taking off time from Torah study? Doesn't listening to the *megillah* also constitute learning Torah?

The answer is that typically, when listening to the *megillah*, one doesn't delve into the subject matter. Since he is not exerting all of his energy and faculties into Torah study, it is a form of *bitul Torah*.

This is what the oxen teach us. In addition to using all the *space* in the wagons, it was necessary to harness all of the oxen's *power* to carry the Mishkan. Similarly, in addition to using all of one's time, one must use all of his *kochos* to study Torah.

Furthermore, not only must we study Torah and do *mitzvos*, but the rest of our activities must also be *lesheim shamayim*. If we want to make a Mishkan for Hashem, nothing can remain futile; all of our activities must be devoted to serving Hashem. This is how we make our personal Mishkan for Hashem, which will lead to the building of the third Beis Hamikdash.

For further study, see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 28, pp. 40ff.

If one only uses his external *kochos* to study Torah and not his inner *kochos*, it is considered *bitul Torah*.



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