

Parashat Naso: Gold and Silver are not enough for building a Sanctuary – May 18, 2013

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Parashat Naso tells about the gifts that were brought by the heads of the tribes of Israel as a present for the inauguration of the Sanctuary. Each of them gave his respective gift, and through that action they gave us an important lesson, not only in terms of generosity and personal example but also in terms of the content of the gift.

All the Princes of the tribes gave the same present: *“One silver dish weighing 130 shekels and one silver basin of seventy shekels, both full of fine flour mixed with olive oil for a grain offering; one gold pan of ten shekels, full of incense; one young bull, one ram, one male lamb in its first year as a burnt offering, one male goat as a sin offering, and, for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats and five male lambs in their first year”*. (Bemidbar – Numbers 7:13-15)

It becomes clear for us, after reading the text, that these gifts were very important and valuable objects for the Tabernacle. As many presents that people use to give to Synagogues and institutions, these objects also have the potential to perpetuate the name and generosity of the donors. But there is something very interesting about what the princes of the tribes did that I learn from one of my teachers:

The princes included in their presents not only the concrete utensils for the Sanctuary, but also the materials needed for their operation!

Unlike utensils like dishes and basins, materials like incense and flour disappear after they are used, they don't last forever. The heads of the tribes could have thought: *“Why to worry on donating them?! After using the incense and the flour nobody will remember that we gave them as gifts?!”* But they realized that if you want to support the Sanctuary with a full heart, it is not enough to donate beautiful utensils of gold and silver: You also need to worry if in the future the community will have the means to use them permanently.

The princes of the tribes were very wise: They taught us that is not enough to create structures, buildings or projects if the community will lack the resources to sustain them over time. That is why they decided to give the gifts “filled”: They didn’t care about the name that was going to be “engraved” in the gold and the silver; they were worried about the continuity of the Sanctuary and the future of the Jewish people.

May we can follow their example of wisdom and generosity!

Shabbat Shalom!