

Parshat Vayakhel, *Mah Nishma*, Leffell School Newsletter

What does it mean to give with a generous heart? And more importantly, how do we model it, cultivate it, and build it in our children? How do we build generosity of spirit?

In Parshat Vayakhel's description of the donations to the Mishkan (Tabernacle), one phrase seems essential:

כָּל נָדִיב לְבֹו יְבִיֵּאֶה (Exodus 35:5)

Anyone who is “*nediv libo*,” with a generous heart, should bring the gifts for God, gold, silver, and copper.

According to the *Ha'Amek Davar*, the 19th century commentary by the *Netziv* from Volozhin, there was a special kind of giving that had to happen in the building of the Mishkan, indicated by the singular verb “*yevi'eha*.” Each individual had to give his gift singularly and individually, with no agent or middleman in the way.

לא ישלח איש נדבתו ע"י שליח אלא יביאה בעצמו. וזה כדי שיראו המקבלים אם נותן בנדיבות:

“A person should not give his generous gift by means of a *shaliach*, an agent, but he should bring it himself, so that the receivers will see if he is giving in true generosity...”

This is surprising, especially for those of us who know the basic rules of *tzedakah*. Isn't the best *tzedakah* given anonymously? So many of us have learned that gifts should be given through another person, so we never shame the poor by highlighting the gap between giver and receiver.

But according to the *Netziv*, gifts to the *Mishkan* were different, meant to be given in full view, with no screen between the giver and the receivers. Giving to the *Mishkan* was not fulfilling anyone's personal needs; it was about building a communal space for God. When we gave to the *Mishkan*, we were supporting the artisans and craftspeople who would build this sacred space. The generosity of the givers was meant to be seen and celebrated, so that generosity could be modeled, and hopefully, practiced by all of the people.

There are moments when giving publicly matters, and we push for every individual to give without a middleman. We give our children coins to put into the *tzedakah* box, and we celebrate publicly those who give of themselves to the community. If a *Mishkan* is going to represent all of us, every individual will ultimately want to give of himself. Until then, we model, out in the open, what we hope for each member, a generosity of spirit that deserves to be imitated.