



Pikudei – Answering the Call

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It is the end; the end of the book of Exodus and the end of a narrative that has spanned four and a half *parshios* (Torah portions). So much time, so many words have been devoted to describing every last detail of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) and its sacred utensils. Why? Why spend so much time describing a structure that was to serve the spiritual needs of our people for a relatively short amount of time. The *Mishkan* accompanied us in the desert and was to be replaced by the *Beis HaMikdash* (Temple). Why does the text devote so much time to every last detail? Why must we know every last cubit? Why must we know the final collection amounts of gold, silver and jewels? God is exceptionally measured in what He decides to include in His sacred text. What are we to learn from the inclusion and repetition of the *Mishkan* details?

When describing the craftsmen who would work with the precious metals and stones the Torah states, “*Every man whose heart uplifted him came, and everyone whose spirit inspired him to generosity brought the offering of the Lord for the work of the Tent of Meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments (Exodus 35:21).*” What is the meaning of this phrase “*N’sao Libo, whose heart uplifted him?*”

The Ramban (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, 1194-1270) writes: “*There was no one among them (the people) who learned these skills from a teacher. They received no formal training. Rather, they found within themselves (their nature) that they could perform these tasks and they came before Moshe and said, ‘We will do whatever the master requires’.*”

The creation of the *Mishkan* and fabrication of the utensils required great skill. An individual would have to fully devote himself to learn proper techniques and apprentice under a master teacher. The Ramban explains that our ancestors did not possess any of the requisite skills to build the *Mishkan*. For two hundred and ten years they were slave laborers and beasts of burden. They never apprenticed nor were they trained to perform these specialized tasks. But when the call came, they answered it. When Moshe said he needed people to build the *Mishkan*, these “craftsmen” stepped forward. What training did they have? None. What skills did they bring to the table? None. But deep down they felt they could do it. They felt that if they reached inward they would find the necessary abilities and skills to accomplish the required tasks. This is the meaning of “*N’sao Libo, whose heart uplifted him*” – their hearts lifted them above their current realities to allow them to believe they could do and be more.

Perhaps, this is why the Torah goes into such great detail regarding the *Mishkan*. When we see the intricacies and details associated with this temporary structure we are amazed. When we try to imagine a huge block of gold being hewn into an *Aron* (Ark of the Covenant) or Kohanic vestments where each thread is made of twenty four smaller threads, we are overwhelmed by the skills and talents required to produce such magnificent results. Only a team of experienced artisans could have undertaken such a task. Yet we know that this *Mishkan* was produced by our ancestors, men and women forged in the pit of Egyptian slavery. Men and women who knew they had to answer the call when they were needed. Men and women who believed they could be more. When Moshe needed their help, they stepped forward and believed that somehow, somehow they would rise to the occasion and meet the challenge.

There are times when we find ourselves in circumstances that seem daunting and overwhelming. We feel that we are in over our head and we stand ready to throw our hands up in the air and admit defeat. Sometimes, God places us in challenging circumstances because He wants us to step forward, dig deep and find the tools, abilities and talents that until now have remained unknown and dormant. If I find myself in the midst of a particular challenge it means I have the ability to meet it. We each must find the strength to be an *Ish Asher N’Sao Libo*; we must believe in ourselves, believe in our abilities and answer the call of life.