

Real Generosity (Vayakhel)

What seems to be generosity is often no more than disguised ambition, which overlooks a small interest in order to secure a great one. -Francois De La Rochefoucauld

There are at least three types of charity givers; those who are forced to, pressured to, or shamed to give to something that they would really rather not. Those that don't mind giving, but want to get something out of it, fame, recognition, connections or to satisfy some internal desire. Finally, there are those who want to give because it is the proper thing to do, because it is good use of the money he was blessed with, don't even consider the money 'theirs' and have no other considerations or ulterior motives.

All charity is good, though there are different levels in the intentions behind the giving.

Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Prague, the *Kli Yakar* (1550-1619), on Exodus 35:5 determines, the different levels based on the different languages that are used for different contributions for the building of the sanctuary. Two terms are: "take from yourselves" and "the contribution of God."

"Take from yourselves," indicates someone who believes the money he has is his, gained by his own efforts. He is loath to part with it and does so either only when pressured or when he sees an advantage.

"The contribution of God," indicates someone who recognizes that whatever he has is a gift from God and is only in his hands for safekeeping, to determine if he will use it to further God's interests wisely.

May we realize the gifts we have; realize they are on loan to us and that there may be an accounting as to whether we used God's resources wisely.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

Dedication

To the Prince of Wales, on his important visit to the Western Marble Arch Synagogue in London.