

An Inviting Concept: Thoughts for Parashat Naso, May 31, 2014

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By

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A Judeo-Spanish proverb advises: *Va ande te llaman y no ande te queren*. Go where you are invited, not where you are (or think you are) wanted. Wait for a formal invitation; do not assume that you are welcome unless you are invited. If one shows up without having been invited, this creates an unpleasant social situation that is embarrassing to host and guest alike.

This proverb reflects a sense of propriety and respectfulness. A person should not impose him/herself on others. Likewise, a person who wants someone present should take the trouble to actually invite him/her. Just as one should not assume he/she is invited, so the host should not assume that the person will attend without an invitation.

This bit of folk wisdom underscores the desirability of preserving the dignity of each person.

In this week's Torah portion, we read of the offerings brought by the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel at the dedication of the Mishkan/sanctuary. The Torah goes to the trouble to mention the leaders by name and to record the specific offering brought by each of them. Even though all of the leaders brought identical offerings, the Torah repeats full details for each.

Instead of lumping all of them together, the Torah puts the spotlight on each one of them separately. It is as if to say: You are not just one of a nameless, faceless group; you are not just bringing a routine offering that has no independent value. No, you are each very important and very distinctive. Each of your offerings matters in and of itself. Your presence matters. You are invited, not just wanted!

Professor Rene Girard, the literary and social critic from Stanford University, has lamented the breakdown in simple respect and communication that increasingly characterizes our society. "We live in a world where the very ease of communication has become the greatest barrier to meaningful communication. Instead of improving the situation, knowledge retrieval schemes and

computerized monstrosities can only make it worse.” (“Mimesis and Theory,” Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2008, p. 207)

In an increasingly computerized and technological world, human beings become reduced more and more to the category of “things” rather than dignified human beings who actually have thoughts and feelings. “Old-fashioned” manners and courtesies fade away.

The Torah reminds us to keep focused on the unique dignity of each person and not to take anyone for granted. Propriety and respectfulness are important for maintaining interpersonal relationships and the moral fabric of society.

[Angel for Shabbat](#)