

INSIGHTS

Into The Weekly Parsha

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Arnold Meyer. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

3 SHEVAT

Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

PARSHAS BO

Seeing is Believing

And Bnei Yisroel went and did as Hashem had commanded Moshe and Aharon, so they did (12:28).

Rashi (ad loc) is bothered by the seemingly repetitious conclusion of the *possuk*. In other words, the beginning of the verse clearly states that Bnei Yisroel did as Hashem commanded Moshe and Aharon; so why did the Torah find it necessary to conclude with the words "so they did"? Rashi explains that the words "so they did" is referring to Moshe and Aharon: they too, did the *mitzvah* of *Korban Pesach*.

Maharal in the Gur Aryeh (*Shemos* 12:28) wonders; why is it assumed that Moshe and Aharon would not have had to bring a *Korban Pesach* thus making it necessary for the Torah to tell us otherwise?

Additionally, if the Torah meant to tell us that "so they did" is referring to Moshe and Aharon, then why doesn't the Torah state it expressly and leave no room for confusion?

Very often, when telling our children to do something that we feel will improve their lives greatly (e.g. they should commit to studying Torah an hour a night), they silently wonder (and sometimes not so silently) why we ourselves are not modeling that

very same behavior.

Of course they don't realize all the obligations that we are under (work, business meetings, school board meetings, home repairs, etc.), so how can they possibly understand why we aren't able to make that very same commitment to Torah study?

But, in fact, our kids are actually right. Certainly, there are myriads of excuses we can make as to why we ourselves don't do what we are asking our kids to do, but that's exactly what they are – excuses. When one has many responsibilities there are conflicts that cannot be avoided. But our kids aren't fooled; they know when we are serious about an ideal and when we are merely paying lip service to one. Our kids also know that we have unavoidable conflicts, but they will absolutely judge what we consider to be important in our lives by how we choose to spend our free time.

Leadership follows some of the same rules. Obviously, a leader has many responsibilities and obligations, after all, that is what leadership is all about – taking



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responsibility to get things done. Yet some leaders see themselves as above following certain laws that everyone else must adhere to. They forget that they too have a responsibility to follow the rules.

The Torah is teaching us a remarkable lesson about what kind of leaders Moshe and Aharon were. On the night that Bnei Yisroel left Egypt, undoubtedly, there were a multitude of things to do and Moshe and Aharon could have easily been forgiven for not fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *Korban Pesach*. But that's not the type of leaders they were; they led by example and did exactly what everyone else was supposed to do. That's what the Torah is telling us by not mentioning their names: They fulfilled the *Korban Pesach* like everyone else – as ordinary members of Bnei Yisroel about to leave Egypt.

Contend or Pretend?

And you shall guard the matzos [...] (12:17).

Rashi (ad loc) explains that guarding the *matzos* entails being very meticulous in their preparation in order to prevent them from becoming *chometz* (leavened). Rashi goes on to quote the Mechilta (*Bo, parsha 9*), “R’ Yoshia says – Do not read the word ‘*matzos*’ rather read it ‘*mitzvos*’ (although vowelized differently, the word *matzos* is spelled exactly the same as *mitzvos*) – just as people do not allow the *matzos* to become *chometz* (by delaying the process to completion), so too they shouldn’t allow *mitzvos* to become “leavened.” Rather, if an opportunity to do a *mitzvah* presents itself, do it immediately.”

In other words, just as we have to be meticulous in our process preparing dough to become *matzo* (eliminating all unnecessary delay), so too we must have the same attitude of immediacy toward fulfilling *mitzvos*.

Yet the analogy seems flawed; if one delays doing a *mitzvah*, he can do it a little later or, at the very worst, he lost an opportunity. But if one fails to prepare the dough for *matzos* properly, he has created a far worse

situation: he now has *chometz* on his hands, which on Pesach is a serious transgression. How are these two ideas analogous?

Generally, people delay or push off doing things they wish to avoid doing. Procrastination is usually not a problem of time management or of planning. People simply delay doing things they don’t want to do. If we ask our children to clean up their room, even if they finally acquiesce, getting them to actually do it is often a battle. Imagine if after finally getting them to pick up their room we now ask them to set the table, and then clear and wash the dishes. Pretty soon they will resent doing things we make them do and begin to object.

Unfortunately, doing *mitzvos* can fall into the same rut. If one doesn’t perceive *mitzvos* as opportunities, but rather as onerous obligations, one will begin to resent doing them. Pretty soon one will delay and push off fulfilling them. Eventually, those delays will become noncompliance, which leads to nonobservance. When we force our children to get up, wash their hands, *daven*, make *brachos*, and

the like, we are actually well on our way of getting them to resent doing *mitzvos*. That is to say, we are on the *derech* of getting them “off the *derech*.”

We must slowly educate our children that *mitzvos* are really opportunities. Chazal tell us exactly how to do this; give them incentives every step of the way. Show them that learning Torah and doing *mitzvos* can be rewarding. When it comes to doing things like studying Torah and *mitzvos* the Gemara (*Pesachim 50b*) teaches, “*Metoch shelo lishma ba lishma* – if one begins by doing things for a selfish reason he will eventually come to do it for the proper reason.”

After a while a person begins to realize how meaningful it is to begin the day off with a conversation with Hashem, or how intellectually stimulating and enjoyable studying Torah can be. There are very few *mitzvos* that aren’t accessible to the emotions or intellect.

This is what Chazal mean by we should not delay fulfilling *mitzvos*. We should perceive every *mitzvah* as an opportunity for ourselves; not merely as something we have to do.



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