

Good Shabbos, everyone,

Thank you to the *drasha* sponsors:

- Barry and Barbara Bass, in memory of Barry's father, Max Bass, whose 53rd *yahrtzeit* is Rosh Chodesh Nissan.
- Fred and Janet Sunness, in memory of Janet's father, Morris Stoltz, Moshe Avraham ben Yosef Tzvi, whose *yahrtzeit* is the 28th of Adar.

May the *neshamos* have an *aliyah* and may the sponsors be rewarded for their generosity with *bracha* and *hatzlacha*, and good health!

Pesach is coming! Please look at the schedule for *Mechiras Chametz* times, beginning tomorrow morning. Also, the annual *Hilchos Pesach shiur* will be tomorrow night at 8:30 on Zoom. As always, feel free to contact me with any specific questions about Pesach. Also, on Wednesday night, I will be participating, along with several other community Rabbonim in an online program, sharing ideas on the *haggada*. Please join us!

Pesach is the Yom Tov where we emphasize the *midda* of *zerizus*...passion, alacrity, zeal.

דברים פרשת ראה פרק טז פסוק ג
לא־תֵאָכֵל עָלֶיךָ חֶמֶץ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תֹּאכַל־עָלֶיךָ מִצּוֹת לֶחֶם עֲנִי כִּי בַתְּפוּזוֹן יֵצֵאת מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְמַעַן תִּזְכֹּר אֶת־יוֹם צֵאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ:

Matza, the most noticeable symbol of the Yom Tov, is baked in a hurried fashion...to reflect the urgency and time pressure of the *Yetzias Mitzrayim* story.

Chazal famously expand the phrase *ושמרתם את המצות*, watch or guard the *Matzos* from becoming chametz—to the general principle, *mitzva habaa leyadcha al tachmtzena*...if you have an opportunity to perform a *Mitzva*, do it right away.

This concept is found, not surprisingly, in the beginning of Maseches Pesachim. *Chazal* say *מקדימין למצוות* the zealous perform *mitzvos* at the earliest opportunity. The **Tur** writes that each of the *shalosh regalim* are connected to one of the three *Avos*, and Pesach is the Yom Tov linked to Avraham Avinu. Indeed, the night Avraham welcomed the three *malachim* into his home, was Pesach night, and he served them matza. It is interesting to note that the *Pesukim* describing that encounter are filled with verbs describing the intensity of his encounter and his *chesed*—*va'yemaher, ratz, mahari*...

Laziness is greatly discouraged. As **Rav Hutner** writes in *Pachad Yitzchak* Maamar 1, the lesson from *Matza* is that in the same way that lethargy allows *Matzos* to turn into *chametz*, indolence allows *mitzvos* to become tainted as well. *Mitzvos* are affected by the apathetic attitude of the one performing them.

An surprising example of laziness tainting performance of a *mitzva* is found in this week's Parsha.

שמות פרק לה פסוק כז: **והנשאם** הביאו את אבני השהם ואת אבני המלאים לאפוד ולחשן:

And the Princes brought the Shoham stones and the Miluim stones for the Ephod and the Choshen.

Rashi cites a teaching of Chazal –

רש"י שמות פרק לה פסוק כז והנשאם הביאו - אמר ר' נתן מה ראו נשיאים להתנדב בחנוכת המזבח בתחלה, ובמלאכת המשכן לא התנדבו בתחלה, אלא כך אמרו נשיאים יתנדבו צבור מה שמתנדבין, ומה שמחסירים אנו משלימין אותו. כיון שהשלימו צבור את הכל, שנאמר (שמות לו ז) והמלאכה היתה דים, אמרו נשיאים מה עלינו לעשות, הביאו את אבני השהם וגו', לכך התנדבו בחנוכת המזבח תחלה. ולפי שנתעצלו מתחלה נחסרה אות משמם והנשאם כתיב:

"What prompted the Nesiim [Princes] to contribute first at the inauguration of the Mizbe'ach [Bamidbar 7:1-2], while they did not contribute first at the construction of the Mishkan? The answer is that with the Mishkan, they took the attitude 'Let the public contribute whatever they contribute and we will complete any shortfall.' Since the public contributed everything that was needed, the Nesiim said 'What is left for us to do?' The only things not yet contributed were the Shoham stones and the Miluim stones for

the Ephod and the Choshen and so that is what they brought. Therefore, they made sure to be the first to contribute by the dedication of the Mizbe'ach. Since they were lazy in contributing to the Mishkan, the spelling of the word Nesiim is defective in this pasuk (without a yud between the sin and the aleph)."

What was their great sin? Was it not generous that they contributed as much as they did? The Nesiim gave others a chance to contribute, and they committed to make up the shortfall. Is this laziness? Is this even wrong?

Mesilas Yesharim Perek 6 writes that the easier option must always be scrutinized to see if one's motivation is pure, or if he is being misled by the yetzer hara or the natural laziness inherent in humans:

שכל קולא צריכה בדיקה. כי אף על פי שיכולה להיות ישרה ונכוחה, אמנם, קרוב הדבר שתהיה מעצות היצר ומרמותיו, על כן צריך לבדוק אחריה בחקירות ודרישות רבות. אם אחר כל אלה תצדק, ודאי שהיא טובה.

Every leniency must be carefully investigated. For even though it is possible that it is justified and correct, nevertheless it is more likely to be the advice of the evil inclination and its deceit. Therefore, one must investigate it with much analysis and examination. If after all this it still stands meritorious, then certainly it is good.

כללו של דבר, חיזוק גדול צריך האדם להתחזק ולהתגבר בזריזות לעשות המצות, בהשליכו מעליו כובד העצלה המעכבת על ידו. *The summary of the matter: a man must greatly strengthen himself and fortify himself with zeal in doing the Mitzvot by casting off himself the weight of laziness which impedes him.*

The **Medrash** quoted by Rashi presents an incredible insight on their "laziness," by contrasting the Nesiim to the rest of Klal Yisrael.

במדבר רבה (וילנא) פרשת נשא פרשה יב סימן טז

אמר הקב"ה בני שנזדרזו יכתב שהביאו והותר והנשיאים שנתעצלו חיסר אות אחת משמם שכן כתיב והנשיאים חסר יוד

Hashem said: My children who acted with zeal brought more than was necessary, and the Nesiim who were lazy, lost a letter in their name...

This Medrash sets up the two options-- bringing more than necessary or not bringing at all. Why is the correct attitude to bring more and not just the correct amount?

I believe one answer is that the difference between laziness and pure intentions is present in the general attitude towards contributing. There is a world of difference between one who wants to make sure the minimum is accomplished, ensuring that everyone has just enough, as the Nesiim did, and one who gives because he believes in giving, as a value. The second person would not mind if the recipient ultimately receives more than absolutely necessary.

And the Torah testifies that, indeed, the rest of the Jewish people did give until there was a surplus:

שמות פרק לו (ז) והמלאכה היתה דים לכל המלאכה לעשות אתה והותר:

their efforts had been more than enough for all the tasks to be done.

קדושת לוי שמות פרשת ויקהל

והמלאכה היתה דים לכל המלאכה לעשות אותה והותר (לו, ז). והנה לכאורה האי 'דים והותר' הוא תרתי דסתרי אהדדי, דאם היתה 'דים' לא 'הותר', ועיין באור החיים.

The **Kedushas Levi** raises the obvious problem--was it enough or was there a surplus? These phrases are mutually exclusive!

I believe the answer is that when it comes to a relationship--and therefore to *Avodas Hashem*--there is not "enough" until a person is ready to give more than necessary. This is because the attitude means more than the gift itself. That is what *zerizus* adds to mitvza performance. In *Avodas Hashem*, responding to needs--a willingness to fill in the void with the absolute minimum, to do the least amount necessary, to fill in only the missing pieces--is not enough. That attitude--thinking about how to get away with the least amount of effort--

is motivated by a certain laziness and self-centeredness. This attitude flows, in turn, from viewing *Avodas Hashem* as a burden, instead of as a unique privilege to create a relationship with Hashem.

The *Mishkan* was designed to inspire in the Jewish people a relationship with Hashem so tangible that He could dwell among them—*ושכנתי בתוכם*. Therefore, attitude was everything.

Hashem did not need their gold and silver. However, He did want their giving spirit.

שמות פרק לה:ה) קחו מאתכם תרומה לה' כל נדיב לבו יביאה את תרומת ה' זהב וכסף ונחשת

Take from among you gifts to the LORD; everyone whose heart so moves him shall bring them—gifts for the LORD: gold, silver, and copper.

The Jewish people led the way with *zerizus*, they wanted to do more than was necessary, and provided a surplus. In contrast, the *Nesiim* wanted to provide the bare minimum needed, an expression of laziness.

The *Nesiim* learned their lesson—and they were the first to donate for the inauguration of the *Mizbeach*. At that point, they donated with *zerizus*, a sense of urgency and passion, which was missing before.

But as much as we stress *zerizus*, zeal, in Yiddishkeit, there exists a real danger in taking *zerizus* too far, as well. Sometimes, people want to be the first to give—for self-serving reasons. Sometimes, a job, or a chessed, could be done better by someone else. Sometimes hurrying indicates a lack of patience. The *midda* of *zerizus*, if misapplied, can lead to impetuosity and impulsivity.

The word *הפזון*, hurry, found in context of leaving *Mitzrayim* and baking *matzos*, is related to the word form *פחז* impulsive, impetuous, reckless.

שכל טוב (בובר) בראשית פרשת ויחי פרק מט פסוק כז

פחז כמים. כלומר חפז מלשון חפזון, כמו כשב כבש, כלומר נחפזתה כמים הניגרין מהר

Reuven was chastised by Yaakov Avinu for this *midda* of *פחז* impulsivity and recklessness.

בראשית פרשת ויחי פרק מט פסוק ג – ד

(ג) ראובן בכרי אתה פחז וראשית אוגני יתר שאת ויתר עז: (ד) פחז כמים אליתותר

To be commendable, *zerizus* must be balanced by patience and care.

Last week, we read about the *chet ha'egel*, a sin that was rooted in impulsivity and hastiness. Because Moshe did not return when he was expected, the people panicked and reacted sinfully to their fear.

שמות פרשת כי תשא פרק לב פסוק א - ה

(א) נראה העם כייבשש מנשה לרדת מרהקת ויקהל העם על אהרן ויאמרו אליו קום עשה לנו אלהים אשר גלכר לפנינו פינהו מנשה האיש אשר העלנו מארץ מצרים לא נדענו מהנהיה לו:

Aharon HaKohen's tactic to deal with the people, was **to stall**.

(ה) נראה אהרן ויבן מזבס לפניו ויקרא אהרן ויאמר תג ליקנק מקר:

He urged them to wait until tomorrow, to have patience. He hoped that, in the meantime, they would come to their senses. Sometimes hurrying is not the right answer.

How many careless and poor decisions have been made in haste?

According to many Rishonim, the *Mishkan* was Hashem's answer, a remedy for the *chet ha'egel*. The **Beis Halevi** famously says that the fact that every detail was carefully prescribed and followed was the antidote to the *egel*, which was explicitly against Hashem's wishes. But something else—an added dimension—can be learned from the *Mishkan* and its function as the remedy for the *chet ha'egel*.

Chazal say that construction of the *Mishkan* was finished on 25 Kislev, but it was not inaugurated until the first of Nissan. Why wait? They were ready!

I believe that making the Jews wait for the *Mishkan* to be operational taught them the lesson that true *zerizus* requires self-control and patience, consistency, steadiness--the remedy for the *chet ha'egel*.

Why did Hashem make them wait all the way until Nissan?

ילקוט שמעוני מלכים א רמז קפד: וכן אתה מוצא במלאכת המשכן, א"ר חנינא בכ"ה בכסליו נגמר מלאכת המשכן ועשה מקופל עד אחד בניסן, כמו שכתוב ביום החדש הראשון באחד לחדש תקים את משכן, והיו ישראל ממלמלין על משה לומר למה לא הוקם מיד שמא דופי אירע בו והקב"ה חשב לערב שמחת המשכן בחדש שנוולד בו יצחק דכתיב לושי ועשי עוגות ואמרו לו שוב אשוב אליך, ומעתה הפסיד כסלו שנגמרה בו המלאכה אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא עלי לשלם, מה שלם לו הקדוש ברוך הוא חנוכת השמונאי, וכן מרחשון עתיד הקדוש ברוך הוא לשלם לו:

The **Yalkut Shimoni** say that Hashem wanted to wait until the month of Yitzchak's birth. Yitzchak represents patience and consistency. Rather than leading his own revolution, Yitzchak solidified the traditions established by Avraham. If each successive generation continues to initiate change, then a tradition is never set in place, a movement cannot take shape. Only when the new steps reach a state of stability, of permanence, can we say that a long-lasting change has been affected. And so, Yitzchak must meticulously follow the path of Avraham, so that Avraham's life mission does not fall into decay.

Today, we read *Parshas Hachodesh* when Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon

הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֵאשִׁים חֳדָשִׁים רֵאשֹׁן הוּא לָכֶם לְחֹדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה:

This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you.
ספורנו שמות פרשת בא פרק יב פסוק ב

(ב) החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים. מכאן ואילך יהיו החדשים שלכם, לעשות בהם כרצונכם, אבל בימי השעבוד לא היו ימיכם שלכם, אבל היו לעבודת אחרים ורצונם, לפיכך ראשון הוא לכם לחדשי השנה. כי בו התחיל מציאותכם הבהירי:

From now on, the months will be yours to control. When you were slaves, you did not control your time, but were beholden to the whims of others...

Why did Hashem say “from now on,” when nothing significant was to happen until the tenth of the month, when they took the sheep in their homes. Why are they told that their control over time begins now?

I believe that this delay was Hashem's way of teaching them the need to balance *zerizus* with patience. Hashem was telling them that the time to leave will come soon, but for now you must **wait** and prepare...and be ready to leave--**at the right moment--without delay**. כִּם הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם was a lesson in balanced and patient *zerizus*. Doing things with passion, zeal, and alacrity, **at the right time**. But, your control over how you use your time begins today.

Finding the right balance between passion and patience, is extremely important in many aspects of our lives. It requires much contemplation, self-control, and restraint. As we “return to normal” this lesson is extremely important. It has been a long year since we closed our shul for a painful three months. We have slowly returned to shul, and throughout, we have chosen to err on the side of caution—putting safety first with all our protocols and policies. And although many people are filled with a sense of *zerizus*, and a desire for everything to return to normal, we will continue to be cautious and follow the best medical guidance and practices, even as more and more people get vaccinated, and many around us ease up on their protocols. We have seen, over and over again this past year, in the United States and Israel, that when we become impatient and become lax about following safety protocols, that we experience a surge in cases. As Jews, our priority is always the health and safety of the living. *Pikuach nefesh* — preserving life — is the most sacred of all *mitzvos*. When the time is right and in consultation with our medical experts, we will begin to change our protocols. The alternative to patience comes at great risk, as we learn from the *chet ha'egel*, and as we have seen time and time again during this terrible pandemic.

We all look forward to the day when we will emerge from this dark period, with a renewed sense of passion and energy, but also confident that we did our best to keep everyone safe. We will look back and realize how incredibly strong and resilient we have been this past year. This year on Pesach, we will utter the words לשנה לשנה with new feeling—of hope and yearning-- for an end to this *mageifa* and a more perfect world. May we merit to see this happen soon...*bimhera viyamenu*...amen.