

The Great Power Of Yearning To Perform A Mitzvah, And Of Performing Part of A Mitzvah Even If One Is Unable To Complete It In Its Entirety!!!

» *The Power of "The Voice of Yaakov"*

The verse states (9:7): "Those men said to him, "We are impure from a dead person, why should we be excluded so as not to bring the offering of Hashem in its appointed time, with all the children of Yisroel?"

Rashi cites the words of the Sifri: "This portion should really have been said through Moshe, like the rest of the Torah, but these people merited that it be said through them, for merit is brought about through the meritorious."

We may ask an obvious question: Moshe Rabenu was the leader and teacher of the nation, and was certainly the most meritorious person in the generation. If the Torah seeks to have the merit of having this portion brought through the meritorious, why is it not said through Moshe?

The verse states earlier (ibid:1) "And Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Sinai desert in the second year from their exodus from the land of Egypt." Rashi states: "The portion at the beginning of the book (of Bamidbor) was not said until Iyar. From this you learn that there is no chronological order in the Torah. But why did it not begin with this? For it is a disgrace to Yisroel that throughout the forty years the children of Yisroel were in the desert, they brought only this Pesach offering alone."

Tosfos (Yevamos 72A, D.H. Mishum, and Kidushin 37B, D.H. Ho'il) explains that the nation did not bring any other Pesach offering because they were uncircumcised (and there is a rule that one who is uncircumcised may not bring such an offering). The reason they were uncircumcised is because the northern wind, which heals one after a circumcision, did not blow in the desert. Since this wind did not blow in the desert, it would have been life-threatening to perform circumcisions.

{ לעילוי נשמת הרה"צ אלחנן יוסף בן שמואל זצ"ל }

This leads to the question: Why was it considered a disgrace to the nation that they did not offer any other Pesach offerings when it wasn't their fault – they could not have brought the offerings because the northern wind did not blow in the desert?

The Rashba (Sukkah 25A, D.H. V'ha Meihacha) asks: Why did the people complain to Moshe and say 'Why should we be excluded'? Didn't they know that people who became impure through contact with a dead body are may not offer a sacrifice?

» *Love Of Mitzvos Spurs One To Do Whatever He Can To Have A Part In Them*

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (in his Sefer Darash Moshe) writes that the complaint of those who were impure was: "Since offerings cannot be brought in an impure state, have pure kohanim sprinkle blood upon us and feed the meat to the people." Rav Moshe asks that the Gemara (Pesachim 61A) states if someone sacrifices a korban Pesach in the place of one who is impure the korban is invalid. If so, how could they ask to have others offer their korban for them?

The Gemara states further that it is possible to sacrifice a korban Pesach for a person who is impure if he partners with people who are pure and incorporates himself together with them in one korban. However, even if we were to say that such was the case in this instance, they would gain nothing – for even though the korban is valid the people who are impure still do not fulfill their obligation to bring a korban Pesach.

Rav Moshe answers that, yes, according to the law they could not fulfill the commandment of korban Pesach. However, they had such a burning desire to perform the mitzvah that they

yearned to at least have some connection to it. They requested that at the least the kohanim should spritz the blood of the korban for them – even if they would not actually fulfill the mitzvah with this act – because it would allow them to partake of the offering and at least have some part in it.

This can be compared to Moshe's act of designating three "cities of refuge" outside of the land of Israel. Even though these cities did not gain their status as cities of refuge until the nation entered the land and designated three cities within its borders – and Moshe, therefore, fulfilled no mitzvah by designating them – he still wished to have a share in this mitzvah even though he could not completely fulfill it.

Rav Moshe adds: We learn from here that even if one cannot completely perform a mitzvah, his love of the mitzvah should lead him to immerse himself in it as much as he can. For example, if one's health proscribes him from eating a full measurement of maror, he should taste a bit. If one cannot sit in a sukkah because of his health, he should at least erect a sukkah.

We see how much the nation loved mitzvos and yearned to perform them from the fact that Hashem Yisborach gave them the mitzvah of separating terumos and masros in a manner that left a loophole that would allow them to avoid this obligation completely - as the Gemara (Brachos 35B) states that one who brings his crops into his house through an opening in the roof is exempt from this obligation. Still and all, Hashem Yisborach relied on the nation to fulfill this commandment to such an extent that He gave no portion in the land to Shevet Levi and relied on the nation to sustain them with these tithes. This concept does not solely apply to the loftiest individuals of a generation. Rather, it applies to every member of Klal Yisroel. This love of mitzvos was tremendously great in earlier generations, and they utilized all their energy and resources to obligate themselves to perform mitzvos, and not to avoid them.

Rav Moshe continues: This seems to be the reason we bless a baby to "grow to Torah and good deeds". It would seem that Torah includes good deeds as well, for one cannot know how to perform good deeds without learning Torah. Why do we list the two separately? The answer is that this is a blessing to love mitzvos to such an extent that one performs them even he could exempt himself from them. For example, one could bring in his crops through the roof or one could exempt himself from tzitzis by never wearing a four-cornered garment. The blessing is that one should yearn to perform mitzvos so greatly that he never tries to avoid them.

The Drisha uses this concept to explain the words of a Rabenu Yona. He states:

The Rabenu Yona (Brachos 8B in the dafim of the Rif, D.H. Lo) writes about the rule that one may not recite Birkas Hamazon in his heart (he must recite it out loud): One who is obligated to recite a blessing and cannot do so because his hands are not clean or he is in an unclean place where one is forbidden to utter words of prayer should think the words of the prayer. Even though one only fulfills the mitzvah by reciting it aloud, he should still think it in his heart. "Hashem sees into the heart" (I Shmuel 16:7) and will give him reward for his thoughts. This is stated in the Medrash (Socher Tov Tehilim 5:2): "Give ear to my words, Hashem, consider my meditation." Dovid said: Master of the World, at times when I am able to speak "Give ear to my words". And at times when I cannot speak "Consider my meditation".

The Bais Yosef (Siman 85) asks that there is a rule that one may not even think holy words in unclean places. He answers: Perhaps it is not referring to places that are filthy. Rather, it is talking about a place that is not completely clean or hands that are not completely clean – but they are not filthy. If one would be able to, he would be obligated to wash his hands or the place in order to recite the blessing aloud. However, because he is unable to do so, he cannot recite it aloud. But he can still think the words because it is not totally filthy.

The Drisha asks that the Bais Yosef seems to be making a distinction between "filthy" and "not clean". If a place that is not clean is not considered as bad as a place that is filthy, why can one not recite a blessing or prayer in it? If it is as bad, why can one think words of prayer in it?

The Drisha, therefore, says that no such distinction exists, and Rabenu Yona is referring to an unclean place where one may neither utter nor think holy words. He explains that Rabenu Yona does not mean that one should think the actual words of the blessing, for that is certainly forbidden. Rather: One should think and meditate in his heart that his yearning and desire is to recite this blessing or this prayer with his entire heart and his entire soul, but he cannot because his hands are not clean, then the Holy One Blessed is He will consider his good thoughts like an action and the Torah considers it as if he did it. This is the meaning of the Medrash that Dovid said when he cannot speak "Consider my meditation" – my good thoughts that all of my desires and yearnings are to perform mitzvos, which I cannot do at this time, should be considered as a substitute for the actual deed.

» *Why Hashem Will Test The Nations Specifically With The Mitzvah of Sukkah*

The Gemara (Avodah Zara 3A) relates: In the future, the nations will plead: Offer us the Torah anew and we shall obey it. But the Holy One Blessed is He, will say to them: You foolish ones among people, he who prepared on the eve of Shabbos can eat on Shabbos, but he who has not prepared on the eve of Shabbos, what shall he eat on the Shabbos? Nevertheless, I have an easy command which is called sukkah. Go and carry it out. And why does He term it an easy command? Because it does not cost a lot of money.

Straightaway will every one of them take himself and go and make a sukkah on top of his roof. But the Holy One Blessed is He, will cause the sun to blaze forth over them as at the Summer Solstice. And every one of them will kick his sukkah and go away... But it is stated that The Holy One Blessed is He, does not deal imperiously with his creatures? True. But with Yisroel, too, it occasionally happens that the Summer Solstice extends until the holiday (of Sukkos) and they are bothered. But does not Rava say: He who is in pain is exempt from dwelling in the sukkah? Granted, they would be exempt, but would Yisroel they kick it? Thereupon, the Holy One Blessed is He, will laugh at them.

We may ask why Hashem Yisborach will choose to specifically test the nations with the mitzvah of sukkah. We can answer by stating that He wishes to test their love and desire for mitzvos by choosing the only mitzvah that has an exemption for those who are pained by it. He will then send the sun to blaze upon them, thus exempting them from the mitzvah, in order to see if they truly love and desire the mitzvah. Thus, Hashem will “laugh” when it is proven that the nation of Yisroel truly loves the mitzvah, while the nations do not love it and merely wish to perform it as a means of acquiring reward.

» *“Why Should We Be Excluded” Is Not a Complaint. It Is A Primal Scream That Erupts From Deep Within The Heart*

The Chidushei Harim (quoted in Bais Yisroel, Emor 5729) explains that the statement, “Why should we be excluded” was not a question. Rather, the people

cried out from the depth of their hearts: We know that we impure. But we still yearn to have a part in this offering to Hashem.

This yearning on their part led to a new portion to be added to the Torah – something that had never before been done. It is stated that a new rule was instituted for the daughters of Tzlofchod. However, Chazal (Sifri Bamidbor 134, D.H. Vayomar) tell us that Hashem stated: “This portion was already written before me in the Heavens.” However, in this instance, a completely new portion was instituted because of their yearning. This yearning led to the only instance when a new mitzvah was inserted into the Torah.

The Imrei Emes uses this lesson to answer the question of Tosfos. It is true that the nation was exempt from the mitzvah of circumcision because of the danger. However, if they had been truly pained and had cried out “why should we be excluded?”, they would have found some way to fulfill the mitzvah even in the desert. The fact that they did not do so was considered a disgrace for them.

The Sifri states that this portion “teaches us that these people were righteous and trembled for mitzvos.” From this story, we see that they didn’t merely complain because they were excluded. Rather, we see that they were righteous and yearned for mitzvos to such an extent that they could not take it and cried out from the pain of being excluded from one mitzvah.

» *Even If One Is Exempted, He Still Loses The Merit Of The Mitzvah*

The Gur Aryeh (9:1) answers Tosfos’s question by stating that even if they were exempted from the commandment of circumcision, it still was considered a disgrace for them because, after all, they did not fulfill the mitzvah for many years. Even if one is exempt, it is still a disgrace for him. The rule that one who is unable to perform a mitzvah is exempt only means that he will not be punished for failing to perform the mitzvah. However, he still lacks the merits and rewards of the mitzvah. Therefore, it is considered a disgrace.

According to what we have stated, we can understand the intent of the Gur Aryeh. The mitzvos are our life, and we cannot live without them.

“... This is a great lesson for every person. We must learn from the people who were impure but still yearned to bring a Pesach offering. They did not find excuses for themselves because of their impure status and resign themselves to being exempt...”

Therefore, the nation should have cried out in pain for being excluded from this mitzvah.

This is a great lesson for every person. We must learn from the people who were impure but still yearned to bring a Pesach offering. They did not find excuses for themselves because of their impure status and resign themselves to being exempt. We must learn from them to yearn for mitzvos and to desire to draw nearer and nearer to Hashem Yisborach. If we do so, Hashem will stretch His hand out to us and accept our cries.

» *Why We Must Call Out To Hashem Before He Comes To Our Aid*

Rav Yeruchim Levovitz zt"l (in his Sefer Daas Torah, Parshas Balak) states: "Search for Hashem and His might; seek His presence constantly. (I Divrei Hayamim 16:11)" Why must we search for Hashem? Why doesn't He help us without searching for him? The verse also states (Tehillim 145:18): "Hashem is close to those who call to Him." Why must we call to Him? He knows our needs. Nothing is concealed from Him. Why does He not help us unless we call to Him?

We must answer that this is the way it is. Hashem does not provide anyone with anything unless he first asks for it on his own. One must first toil and exert himself, and then Hashem assists him.

Chazal tell us (Tanchuma Eikev 11) that the luchos were six tefachim tall. Two tefachim were in Moshe's hands. Two tefachim were in Hashem's hands. And two tefachim were in the middle. Moshe strengthened himself and grabbed the two tefachim from Hashem's hands – bringing the entire luchos into his hands.

We tend to believe that Hashem Yisborach gave the Torah to Moshe as a gift, with no action needed on Moshe's part. That is a big mistake. Hashem only gives things to people if they ask for them. If Moshe had not grabbed it, Hashem would not have given it to him. The Torah is only given to those who ask for it. If the people who were impure had not asked, "Why should we be excluded?", they would never have gotten the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini. Only after they asked for the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini did Hashem issue this commandment. This is the meaning of "the merit is brought about through the meritorious". What merit did they have? The merit of their crying out and asking for the mitzvah. When one asks for something good, he is never turned away emptyhanded. If one says, "I tried but did not succeed", do not believe him.

There is a sefer from a certain Rishon that is called "Boruch She'amar". It is called this name because he was orphaned from both parents as a youth, and all he

knew was the prayer of Boruch She'amar. He entered the bais medrash and opened the Aron Hakodesh and recited this prayer – the only prayer that he knew. And Hashem heard his request and made him into a great Torah sage.

On the other hand, if someone is lax in performing any mitzvah, Hashem will, Heaven forbid, come and take it back from him, denying him the ability to perform it. For example, someone who does not recite Kriyas Shema in its proper time, the mitzvah will be taken from him and he will no longer have the ability to perform it.

We can now understand the statement of the Sifri that "merit is brought about through the meritorious." This does not mean that the most meritorious person is sought out to have the mitzvah done through him. Rather, the meaning is that if the people had not cried out from the depth of their hearts this mitzvah would never have been given at all. Only after they cried out to Hashem because of their love for mitzvos did they become the most meritorious people and the most auspicious people to have a completely new mitzvah given to Klal Yisroel through them.

» *Every Entity Yearns For Its Own Kind*

In the same vein: The Mashgiach Rav Yechezkel Levenstein zt"l (in a Maamer for the year 5720) explains the words of the prayer: "And He implanted eternal life within us."

He explains that there is a rule in nature that every living entity longs for its roots. This is the explanation of the Mishnah (Avos 4:1): Who is wise? He who learns from everyone. The meaning of this is that if someone is a wise man he longs for wisdom. Therefore, he desires to learn whatever he can from every person he encounters.

So too, one who longs for life will always seek to find more life. Since Torah and mitzvos are the definition of eternal life, a human being who has an inherent longing for life will be drawn towards the eternal life of Hashem's Torah.

The Alter of Kelm would say that it is possible to test every individual to discern if he possesses this ideal of eternal life within him. This can be done by viewing how a person lives his life. If a person is lazy and does not exert efforts to strive for Torah and mitzvos, it is a sign that "eternal life" is not strong within him - for, as we explained, life longs for life. But if a person longs for Torah and mitzvos and exerts efforts to attain them, it is a sign that he possesses eternal life within him, and he therefore desires more and more life wherever and whenever he can.