ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Revenge. Though the Torah warns us against acting on our emotions, it's hard to control the desire. In fact, a dogma of modern society preaches to us not to get mad, rather to get even.

But Yoseph discloses his real identity in this week's portion, and despite a 22-year backdrop filled with excuses for anger, revenge, and retribution, he stays calm and fulfilled. Surely, we should expect to find harsh words of criticism if not acts of payback. But we don't. After Yoseph reveals his identity, and the brothers are shocked, rather than chastising his brothers, Yoseph appeases them! "Come close to me if you please, and they came close." And he said, "I am Joseph your brother -- it is me whom you sold into Egypt. And now, be not distressed, nor reproach yourselves for having sold me here, for it was to be a provider that G-d sent me ahead of you"(Genesis 45:4-5). He explains to them that the entire scenario was not even their doing but part of a Divine plan to contend with the world-hunger. "Thus Hashem has sent me ahead of you to insure your survival in the land and to sustain you for a momentous deliverance. And now -- it was not you who sent me here, but G-d; He has made me father to Pharaoh, master of his entire household, and ruler throughout the entire land of Egypt" (ibid v6-7). What type of man has the capacity not only to ignore horrible injustice totally, but to revel in it, saying that it was all meant to be, without the slightest display of bitterness or animosity? It takes an unique attitude about life.

Joel Mandel and Julius Rosenzweig have a large electrical supply house in Long Island City, NY. Their vast warehouse occupies over a million cubic feet of space containing thousands of different electrical components, from transformers as large as the average-size garage to tiny cathodes that could dance on the head of a pin.

It was a couple of years ago when some electrical doo-dad, that seemed to be a vital organ of one of my children's battery-operated what-nots, went on the blink. With zero electrical know-how, I decided to bring the component to my friends at Globe Electrical Supply and maybe they could find me a replacement.

Weaving my way through a labyrinth of shelves, boxes, and drawers, I climbed some metal steps and made my way to the old office that appeared out of a 1950s Hollywood set. An old wooden desk was the pedestal for a dusty computer that probably strained harder than their human principals to maintain the vast inventory. I showed the part to Joel, who looked at the tiny part and smiled. He called over one of the workers, "Warren," he said, "please get the rabbi a..." I couldn't make out the exact name, but it sounded like flux-capacitator, though I highly doubt that my kid's

toy was dying for lack of a lack of a flux-capacitator!

Like a Tomahawk missile directed toward a predestined mark, Warren took the injured electrical component, weaved through the myriad rooms, the barrage of boxes, and an almost unlimited array of electrical paraphernalia.

Homing in on the exact location, Warren scaled a ladder that looked as if it could have been used to wash the windows of a Manhattan skyscraper, and about 30 feet off the ground, with amazing agility and precise guidance, he reached for his target -- a small cardboard box. Its edges were yellowed with age, but I knew it had not been touched in five years. He placed his hand into the box and plucked out a component, which exactly matched my broken one.

As if he had rehearsed this scene from the day he started working, he held the component between his thumb and forefinger, then smiled, opened the human vise, letting the piece drop into my palm. "Here's the sucker!"

Stunned at both the accuracy and speed of the retrieval, I reacted as if I had just seen a minor miracle. "Warren!" I exclaimed, "how'd you do that?"

"Do what?" he asked with a shrug.

"Do what?" I repeated with an air of incredulity. "You just found a microscopic part hidden like a needle in all the hay in Kansas! And you knew exactly where it was."

Warren just shrugged. "I didn't do nothin' special. That's my job!"

When a person understands his mission, no portion of its fulfillment merits undue emotion. In Pirkei Avos, 2:9 Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai tells us, "If you have learned much Torah, do not pride yourself in it, for this is the purpose for which you were created." If a person thinks "that's my job" about his every good deed, if his mission is clearly mapped in front of him, then all obstacles become insignificant pittances, easily overcome and able to be ignored because after all, they are in fact all in a day's work.

In memory of Joseph K. Miller -- Reb Yoseph ben Reb Ahron Shmuel z"l H"yd 14 Teves by his children Mr. & Mrs. Geoffery Miller

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