

THE CURE FOR SOMETHING

by Rabbi Dovid Green

Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, "Speak to Aaron and say to him: When you kindle the lamps, toward the face of the Menorah shall the seven lamps cast light." Aaron did so; toward the face of the Menorah he kindled its lamps, as Hashem had commanded Moshe. (Bamidbar 8:1-2)

Aaron did so: To tell you the praise of Aaron that he didn't deviate. (Rashi)

Live as if you were already living for the second time and as if you had acted the first time as wrongly as you are about to act now. -Victor Frankel

Is there something so supremely difficult about lighting candles? Why is Aaron worthy of being praised for not deviating from explicit heaven sent instructions?

Amongst thirty profound suggestions of things to contemplate the Chovos Halevavos (Duties of the Heart) recommends meditating on the following. Imagine a prince who is sent on a mission to a dangerous territory, by his father, the king. He is granted everything he needs for the project including a huge entourage of responsive servants. They follow his every cue. They care for his every need when he is awake and while he yet sleeps.

How will the attendees of the prince behave when they perceive the prince himself is ignoring wishes of the king. If the prince violates curfews and sleeps long then the supporting staff will certainly begin to act in a lazy fashion. If he is utterly indiscriminate in his behavior how strong will the immunity system of the surrounding community be?

What we think, say and do has an impact on worlds; high and low, local and global. Each of the 60,000 thoughts we think daily in the privacy of our minds sends signals to the 16 trillion cells in our bodies about how to behave or misbehave in response. We even teach people around us how to treat us. We advise nations on their foreign policy towards us. We invite respect or criticism love or suspicion.

When people are in positions of leadership the consequences are greatly magnified. When authorities such as parents, presidents and police are seen as lawless, or to the extent that they are lawless their constituents will cave in to the chaos. Errors of commission and omission large and small public and private create waves of reactions that ripple through the universe till the last syllable of recorded history.

Aaron, The Cohen, the representative of the Jewish People, on a national stage, did something

simple and yet sublime when he lit the Menorah. He did what he was supposed to do. He did as he was told to do. This is not as surprising as it is significant.

There need be nothing creative or original in a deed to be valued in the light of ultimate truth. Lighting a Shabbos candle, smiling at a child, sharing quality time with a friend, or learning quietly may not catch the attention of the media as when a man bites a dog but it sure is the cure for something.

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