

TO CHOOSE TO CHOOSE

by Rabbi Label Lam

There is nothing more dramatic in the entire universe than when, within a private moment, a person girds his loins (whatever that means) and make a decision. There, I said it. I realize that it doesn't sound all that eventful. Allow me to explain, please.

We usually think of decisions with a small "d". Those types of decisions are between Coke or Pepsi, Chinese or Italian food etc. They can really be categorized as preferences since they exist on a horizontal plane and can easily be reckoned by the family pet as well.

A real decision with a capital "D", for example, is something I observed by a friend of mine who used to smoke three packs of cigarettes a day for almost two decades. I don't know when he had time for anything else. It sounds like a full time job. One day, for some mystical reason, he decided to quit, and that was that. Since then he never touched a cigarette. That's dramatic!

Accompanying a sincere decision is a mini-power pack that gives the person the ability to withstand all the future consequences of that decision. The next day and forever more he'll have to find something new to do with his hands. He'll need some nifty social response when an old crony offers him one from his pack. He will need an awesome commitment to his principles and a superhuman energy to survive "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

When I began to understand the power of this single act of heroism I started to appreciate why we make such a big deal about weddings. I always wondered why everyone is so willing to cross the ocean or the George Washington Bridge. Why was so much money and man hours being spent on such a brief celebration; for harps, flowers, booze and some 400 chickens have to give their lives for the event!?

What is so extraordinarily appealing is simply that two people are making a decision. They are deciding to remain bound together forever. At that moment a huge power pack is available that will enable them to remain constant for fifty or seventy years in the face of millions of unforeseen variables. The economy, health, the in-laws, society around them, and the children will take them on a roller coaster ride that will test "whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated may long endure." The enormity of the energy available at that moment is staggering. People intuitively come to bask in the light as if it's a space ship launching.

Even the grandest of weddings is merely a faint echo of an original event 3312 years ago. No

romance or attraction could ever truly approximate the real magnetic pull that lured an entire nation out into the barren wilderness to forge an eternal bond.

We can only imagine the enormous superhuman energy that was endowed when the entire nation declared "in a singular voice saying; 'everything Hashem says we will do!'" (Shemos 24:3) That commitment unleashed an enduring force that has allowed us to remain through the gauntlet of persecution and expulsion "till the last syllable of recorded history", till the day when "Hashem will be one and His name one." (Zachariah 14:9)

All that abundance was buried in an initial challenge, "And now Israel if you will listen well to My voice and guard My covenant, I will make you a treasure from all the nations..." (Shemos 19:5) Rashi comments; "If you will commit yourselves it will be sweet from here and further because all beginnings are difficult". The hardest part is the initial decision, to move from zero to one. Afterwards there is a momentum of mitzvos and then the inertia compounds with each ensuing choice and reconfirmation.

Life is lived or lost in the millions of decisions we make or default on daily. While all creatures and entities in the universe are compelled to obey the will of their Creator only a human being has the option to experience Mount Sinai; wedding the ordinary to the sublime at each moment of life with a unique and profound ability to choose to choose.

Good Shabbos!

For a free tape of Rabbi Lam on Developing trust in G-d, Parenting, Happiness, or Belief in G-d, call Foundations at 800-700-9577.

Best wishes of Mazal Tov to Rabbi and Mrs. Lam on the birth of a daughter!

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