

THE SWEET TASTE OF VICTORY

by Rabbi Label Lam

And now if you will heed My voice and you will keep My covenant - you will be to Me a treasure from amongst all the nations for the earth is Mine. (Shemos 19:5)

And now: If now you will accept upon yourselves, it will be sweet for you from here and further, because all beginnings are difficult. (Rashi)

Prior to the event of the giving of the Torah the Jewish Nation was strongly encouraged to be in a ready and accepting mode. Like a strong sales pitch they were pressed to commit now and guaranteed that later everything would be great. What is it that creates the urgency and the need for such a pressured approach? What does Rashi mean when he says, "all beginnings are difficult"? Which "beginnings" is he talking about?

At the end of a Talmud class in Queens we were just winding down from the learning and feeling good, when one of the fellows said something that sparked a lively discussion. He said, "Rabbi, I hate getting up in the morning to go to Davening!" I think he thought he was going to shock me with his rugged admission. Some of the other fellows started to stir in defense of prayer but I stayed still, because I agreed with him. I told him that I also hate to get up in the morning to go to Davening. "Who likes to go out from under warm covers to put on black boxes when the body is crying out for a little more slumber?"

Napoleon is reputed to have said, "When I'm awake I'm Napoleon but when I'm asleep I'm a horse!" The most powerfully motivated man on the planet is conflicted at that moment. It can be difficult for anybody. However, when already awake and in the midst of Davening almost nothing in the world feels as good. It also feels great to have Davened. Similarly, those who exercise formally may find it painfully difficult to get started each time but what gets one going sometimes is the feeling of accomplishment, the high that follows when the hard workout is done.

There's a story about a Rebbe and his son that were breaking a hole through an icy lake in order to immerse themselves for purity sake. The son entered the freezing waters first. As he braced himself for the entry cries of anguish could already be heard which grew in to shouts of biting pain. "Ouch!" When he exited the frigid lake he let loose an expression of relief, "AHHHHHH!"

His wise father who was yet to follow told him, "My son, you should always remember that that's how it is with Mitzvos! They start out "Ouch! Ouch!" and end up "Ooooooh Ahhhhhhhhh!" Aveiros-sins, on the other hand, usually start out "Ooooooooooooooh! Ahhhhhhhhhh!", but end up with the feeling

"Ouch! Ouch!"

Which "beginnings" are difficult? Rashi tells us straight, "All beginnings are difficult." At the beginning of each day and sometime hundreds of times a day there are new little beginnings that, in order to overcome that initial pinch of "ouch" require thinking about the "Oooooo! Ahhhhhhhh!"-that follows each minor accomplishment. It may yet become an acquired taste but that takes work and imagination. Once the great weight of inertia is overcome, anticipated is the sweet taste of victory. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).