

A GENEROUS DOSE OF ENCOURAGEMENT

by Rabbi Label Lam

And **they went and they did**, the Children of Israel, just as HASHEM had commanded Moshe and Aaron so they did! (Shemos 12:28)

They went and they did: The verse credits them even for their going, giving reward for their going as well as for the doing. (Rashi)

We learn here from the extra words, "and they went", that they were credited for going to get the sheep for the sacrificial lamb- the Korban Pesach. Otherwise why would the Torah have to furnish us with that extra information that they had gone to do. Of course they went! The sheep are not presumed to come to them. Very nice! Now we have a great lesson to contemplate upon and realize in our lives. There is reward in the going, not just in the doing. Every step of the process is also part of the total accomplishment. However, the question lingers, "Why here and now?" Why at this first baby step when the Jewish Nation is waking up to the responsibility and risks involved with doing Mitzvos, do we learn this particular point?

Years back when I was making a Bris for my oldest son I found myself wondering, as the date was approaching, about the idea of celebrating a Bris. It's not just the cost of catering that concerned me, but the joy involved. People were coming from far away, leaving at early hours to be there on time. We do a surgery on the little fellow and everyone shouts "Mazel Tov!" If you were coming out of the hospital from surgery for an ingrown toe nail, you would not expect to be greeted at the hospital with white fish. The covenant part I think I get but where is the kindness in this act that requires some brute force, pardon me? Avraham Avinu was the paradigm of kindness and yet he launched this generational program all according to the Commandment of HASHEM, the ultimate source kindness. Even if we want to say that Avraham was being tested in an area not his speciality, and that going against his nature was the biggest part of the accomplishment, then why celebrate?

Where is the kindness embedded in this seeming unkind cut? At the Bris I attempted to give expression to the question in the following way:

The Talmud (Shabbos) tells us that when King David went to the bathhouse he became anxious in one moment. He was painfully aware that no Mitzvos accompanied him there. No Mezuzah, no Tefillin, and no Tallis are on display in such a place. One is not permitted to learn Torah or even think Divrei Torah in the Mikva. Then when he was comforted when he realized that he was affixed since his earliest days, with a permanent Mitzvah, a Bris Milah. That calmed his nerves. What was the

source of his terrible fear? There is an inertia factor in Mitzvos. Violations invite violations. Mitzvos inspire more Mitzvos. There's no such thing as just standing still. One is either climbing or sinking like the angels on Yaavov's ladder. Traffic is going either up or down. No one is parked in his place!

A seminary teacher of my wife told the girls before they came back to America, that they should learn for at least five minutes each day because, "a bird that stops flapping its wings does not stay in the same place!" David had to assume he was falling! How does one reverse course? How does one get started? When there's a blackout, you need a light to find a-light. When broke, one needs money to make money, and so too, to do a Mitzvah one needs the merit of a Mitzvah. That's what consoled David. He had that first Mitzvah, he realized to launch him onto a career of Mitzvos. That could be the Chessed, the ultimate kindness of the Bris. A Jewish child with a Bris has the first Mitzvah to get the inertia moving in that direction of moving closer to HASHEM through Mitzvos.

It makes sense that this idea of a reward "going" is learned where the Jewish People are getting started, when they were "naked"-void of Mitzvos. It is usually in these beginning stages that the need for a reward for any initial movement is so critical like **a generous dose of encouragement**.

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