

NO SPECIAL TREATMENT

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

"And the Children of Israel went and did according to that which G-d had commanded Moshe and Aharon, so they did." [12:28]

Rashi tells us that our Sages wondered about the closing words of this verse. Why does it need to add, "so they did?" We already know that the Children of Israel followed the Commandment correctly, so we must wonder why the verse reemphasized this fact.

The answer provided is that Moshe and Aharon did likewise. All of Israel did the Commandment, and so Moshe and Aharon did as well.

This answer, though, is somewhat unsatisfying. As the Chassidic master, Rebbe Mendel of Warkaw, asks: "Could we possibly think that all of Israel did the Mitzvah of the Passover sacrifice, and only Moshe and Aharon did not do it?"

So Rebbe Mendel explains: the verse is telling us how well all Jews did the Mitzvah. Everyone, from the greatest to the smallest, did the Mitzvah properly. Not only that, but they performed the Mitzvah with pure intentions and with all of its particulars. They did the Mitzvah so well, in fact, that even "Moshe and Aharon did likewise" -- even Moshe and Aharon could do no better!

The Chasam Sofer says that there is a tremendous lesson to be learned from this verse. When it comes to the Divine service, there is no special treatment. We are working for G-d, and He is the ultimate Equal Opportunity Employer. No one is entitled to extra credit over anyone else. Whoever does the mitzvah with the greatest energy, strength and dedication, is the one who receives the richest reward.

In other areas, we know that this is not the case. The prayers of the righteous are more likely to be accepted, so we might think that their performance of Mitzvos is also more important.

This is a mistake. It is only logical that the prayers of the righteous have a greater impact. When a person spends his or her entire life making G-d's Will his or her own, then that individual's prayers are more likely to reflect the Divine Will as well. They are more likely to be "heard," as it were.

This is not so, however, regarding the performance of the Mitzvah of prayer, or any other Mitzvah. While a righteous person may have much more practice in doing Mitzvos properly, this does not mean that all of us are not afforded the same opportunity to do it right. The simplest of the Hebrew slaves, though they had descended to the 49th Gate of Impurity, were able to perform the Passover

sacrifice on the same level as Our Rabbi Moshe, who transmitted in the entire Torah from G-d's mouth.

It is especially appropriate that we learn this lesson in connection with Pesach, because so many Jews make a Seder even if they do not follow Jewish practices throughout the year. It is an invitation, as it were, to realize that every Mitzvah is a precious opportunity -- regardless of what we did yesterday or even five minutes ago.

Every Jew has the opportunity to perform a Mitzvah on the level of Moshe and Aharon. While we may not succeed in practice, there's certainly no loss in trying!

Good Shabbos,

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