

# A MITZVAH GAINED IS ETERNITY GAINED

*by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner*

This week we read the parsha of B'ha'a'loscha, which begins with Aharon being commanded to kindle the lights of the Menorah. "Dabare el Aharon v'amarta ailav b'ha'a'loscha es hanairos... (speak to Aharon and tell him: 'when you will kindle the lights...') [8:2]."

The previous parsha ended with the offerings brought by the leaders of each tribe. What is the connecting flow between those offerings and Aharon's kindling of the menorah? Rashi explains that Aharon was troubled that his tribe, Levi, did not bring an offering along with the other tribes. Hashem comforted him by telling him that his share is greater than theirs -- he kindles the lights.

The Ramban is troubled why the specific service of the Menorah brought comfort to Aharon. Many of the services in the Mishkan were performed only by Aharon in his capacity of Kohen gadol (high priest). Furthermore, his entire tribe were the leaders of the divine service!

The Ramban explains that the kindling of the Menorah that is being discussed here is not referring to the Menorah of the Mishkan but rather, to the Menorah that is kindled to commemorate the miracle of Chanukah. The offerings will temporarily cease with the destruction of the Temple. However, the kindling of the Menorah, celebrating the miracles brought about through the mesiras nefesh (dedication) of your tribe - they will always be kindled.

From this episode we can see the profound desire of Aharon to have a part in every mitzvah, even though, as the Kohen gadol, he had many special mitzvos and responsibilities far beyond those of the rest of Klal Yisroel. With his clear understanding of each and every mitzvah's priceless value, he was troubled by the thought that he and his tribe might be missing out on any one of them.

Chaza"l refer to this as 'ohev kesef lo yisva kesef' -- one who loves silver is never satisfied with silver. When it comes to financial gain, we understand very clearly how a person who has a lot still wants a more. However, when it comes to mitzvos our attitude changes quite drastically... 'Why be so fanatical?' 'Let's not get carried away!' 'Chill out a bit.' 'Just be normal!' Chaza"l, therefore, used terms that we can relate to and, at the same time, pointed out the ridiculous distortion of our priorities.

This clear understanding of a mitzvah's value and the desire not to miss out on it comes up again later in our parsha. Bnei Yisroel were bringing the korbon Pesach (Paschal sacrifice). "Va'y'hee anashim asher ha'yu tmayim l'nefesh adom v'lo yachlu la'a'sos ha'Pesach (there were men who were ritually impure from having come in contact with a corpse and were therefore unable to bring a korbon Pesach) [9:6]." They approached Moshe and Aharon, stated the fact that they were ritually

impure and asked why should they miss out on the korbon Pesach. Moshe responded that he'd have to take their question to the 'Higher Authority'. He told them, "wait until I will hear what Hashem will command".

Their complaint to Moshe seems somewhat strange as they apparently answered their own question! They had to miss out on the korbon Pesach because they were ritually impure! What more did they want from Moshe? Furthermore, why did Moshe feel the need to bring this question to 'the Boss'?

There are different opinions as to the source of their impurity. Some say that they removed the bodies of Nadav and Avihu after they had died bringing an 'aish zarah' -- a strange uncommanded fire offering. Others say that they were the bearers of Yosef's coffin. Still others maintain that they had come in contact with a 'mais mitzvah' -- a person with no one to tend to his burial. According to all of the opinions, their impurity came about as a result of their involvement in a mitzvah. That was their claim to Moshe. There is a concept that 'mitzvah goreres mitzvah' -- the performance of one mitzvah pulls along and leads to the performance of another mitzvah. If so, they asked, how could they be missing out on the mitzvah of korbon Pesach as a result of another mitzvah that they had performed? Moshe couldn't answer that on his own and had to ask Hashem.

Hashem's response was that, in fact, they shouldn't miss out. As a result of their question, the entire parsha of Pesach sheni -- the 'second' Pesach which takes place one month after the first, whereupon those who were ritually impure or simply out of town on the first Pesach can bring their korbon Pesach -- was revealed.

This parsha of Pesach sheni could have been taught to Moshe in the same way that the rest of the Torah was taught to him. Why did it come about as a result of their question? Rashi explains that in the merit of their intense desire not to miss out on a mitzvah, this parsha was revealed through them.

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l makes a fascinating observation -- their names aren't mentioned! Why didn't the Torah share with us who these great people were? Wouldn't that be properly 'paying' their merit? He explains that anyone who truly wants and loves mitzvos deserves to have those mitzvos revealed through them. They weren't commanded. They should have felt 'off the hook'. No pressure. No hassles. Free. Yet, they thirsted to fulfill the mitzvah out of love for Hashem. Had their names been mentioned, one might have made a mistake and said that they merited this parsha because they were great people -- tzadikim. Their names weren't mentioned. They merited this solely because of their love for mitzvos.

Rav Moshe continues and applies it to us. The Torah has already been given -- we can't merit that it be given through us. But, if we perform our mitzvos with love and happiness, we will be considered worthy of having had that mitzvah given through us. If it is hard for us to completely fulfill a certain mitzvah, we should try to do as much of it as we can. 'Ohev kesef lo yisva kesef' -- one who loves silver is never satisfied with silver. I have yet to meet a person who will say that if he can't receive a

full 500% profit on his investment, then he doesn't want to be bothered with a mere 250% profit. By money it's so clear, by mitzvos it's so elusive...

There are 248 'aivarim' (parts of the body) corresponding to the 248 positive commandments in the Torah. We are a composite of a spiritual entity and a physical entity. Ultimately, both will have an eternal existence. How can the eroding, physical body have eternity? The Torah serves as the link between us and Hashem. Through the observance of the Torah, we connect to Hashem and His eternity. Each mitzvah corresponds to a specific part of the body. In order for that part of the body to have its eternity, it needs to connect to the illumination of the light of its mitzvah. Adam Harishon disobeyed the word of Hashem and ate from the tree of knowledge -- disobedience brought death to himself and to the world. "Eitz cha'im he lamachazikim bo (it's a tree of life for those who hold on to it)." By attaching ourselves to the Torah, to the tree of life, we gain eternity. A mitzvah gained is eternity gained -- light. A mitzvah squandered is eternity squandered -- darkness. 'Ohev kesef lo yisva kesef' - one who loves silver is never satisfied with silver. Eternity. 'Ohev kesef lo yisva kesef'.

Once when a Jerusalem woman came to draw water from a well, Rav Zundel of Salant was standing nearby. As he was dressed very plainly, the woman thought he was a pauper and offered him a few cents to fill her buckets with water. He happily drew the water for her but refused any payment, explaining that she could pay him next time. When she later realized that the person she had asked to do the menial task was none other than Rav Zundel, a famous tzaddik, she came to him pleading forgiveness. He smiled and explained that there was certainly no need for any apologies. "On the contrary", he said to her, "I owe you thanks for enabling me to fulfill this mitzvah of doing chessed (acts of kindness) with my body".

'Ohev kesef lo yisva kesef'.

Good Shabbos,

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