

IT'S ALL IN THE HEAD

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This week we read the double parsha of Vayakhel-Pekudai, thereby concluding the Sefer [Book] of Shemos. Vayakhel begins with Moshe commanding Bnei Yisroel about the Sabbath. Pekudai, being the conclusion of the Sefer of Exile and Redemption, concludes with Hashem's holy presence filling the Mishkan [Tabernacle], the ultimate state of redemption.

"Sheishes yamim tai'a'seh m'lachah [Six days your work will be done] and the seventh day will be for you holy, a Shabbos to Hashem [35:2]." The wording of the passuk [verse] is very interesting. What is meant by "your work will be done"? Our frame of mind must be that our work is all completed -- only then can we enter the Shabbos properly.

How are we supposed to have such an attitude when we know that in fact our work is very far from finished? In fact, there's a pile sitting on our desk all ready for Monday morning. In fact, we're in the middle of many things whose outcome will impact greatly on our financial standing. Tai'a'seh?! Done?! Let's try to understand this.

We've discussed a number of times that our state of mind is not really based on what's going on around us but rather by the way that we perceive those events.

This past week I paid a visit to a very close friend of mine who was 'sitting shivah' [observing the seven day mourning period] for his father, a"h. At one point while I was speaking to his mother, she remarked that her husband was a person who was 'sameach b'chelko' [satisfied with his lot]. She then smiled and said that years ago, when she had mentioned that to someone else, that person had commented that it must have been relatively easy for him to be satisfied, being that they were financially comfortable and their lot was a lot! However, the truth is that you have many wealthy people who feel the need to broadcast their means to everyone and who are in fact very unhappy, unsatisfied people. Even a person who was financially comfortable can be properly praised as having been a person who was satisfied with his lot. Again, it's not what we have that shapes our attitude but it's our attitude that shapes how we view what we have.

Perhaps, that is the key to understanding our being commanded to feel that our work is all done. It's not the state of our work which will determine our ability to have such a feeling but rather our state of mind.

If a person is satisfied, or, even better, overjoyed with what Hashem has given, then he can go into a Shabbos with the feeling that all's well and all's done. However, when we view the glass as being

half empty instead of half full, our troubles begin...

Rabbeinu B'chayai in his Chovos Halevavos explains three reasons why people fail to appreciate all that Hashem has given them. Firstly, he states simply that people are always focusing on what they don't have as opposed to what they do have. What they've already obtained becomes insignificant in their eyes which are busy gazing longingly at what they don't yet have. Anything that others have is viewed as if those others took it from them! I can't appreciate Hashem for all He's given me if all of my thoughts are focused on what He's held back from me.

Secondly, he explains, we have no recollection of ourselves at the time of our birth when our control of our bodies was very limited. By the time we matured and could appreciate what we have, we had already made the transition from not having to having. We therefore, took what we had already for granted and didn't feel any real appreciation for it.

He compares this to a deserted infant that was taken in by a wealthy, benevolent man. He treated this child as his own, sheltering him, clothing him, schooling him and helping him develop into a fine young man.

When this boy was about twenty, his adopted father heard of a man who had fallen hopelessly into debt and was now being held captive and being tortured by his creditors. Overcome with compassion, he contacted the captors, gave them some money as an advance and convinced them to free this man and give him a chance to earn some money to repay his debts. When they freed him, he had him brought to his house. He had him bathed, gave him clothing, gave him a nice warm bed and by the end of two weeks, he was back on his feet and ready to go.

The man who received a mere two weeks of kindness felt a much greater appreciation toward this benevolent man than the young man who received a full two decades of nonstop kindness! Why is this? Simply because the infant went from not having to having before he was aware of it whereas the man made that transition when he was already aware of it.

The G-d-given ability to walk, the ability to see. Imagine if we couldn't see. Think of all of the things in the world that we wish we had. Weigh one against the other. Would you rather have every single one of those things on your wish list or would you rather see? In reality, the gifts that we have already gotten from Hashem far outweigh anything we wish we had...

If we're not cognizant of what's been given to us, it is hard to feel appreciation.

Thirdly, he explains, people don't feel appreciation to Hashem because of the pain and hardships they experience in life.

He compares this to a person who had two blind parents and always wanted to do things to help the blind. When he became a man of means, he decided to build a whole campus which would be tailor-made for the blind. No sharp corners, no sudden turns, doctors, nurses, therapists available for all of their needs. Carts which would transport them around by following their verbal instructions.

After months of building, the facility was ready and the first group was ushered into the auditorium to await an orientation. The people settled into their seats but quickly became impatient waiting for the speakers to arrive. Deciding to take things into their own hands, they tried to explore the campus on their own. Without knowing how things were meant to be used, that which had been designed to help them began to hurt and injure them. Things went from bad to worse until, by the end, they were cursing the sadist who had built this trap and lured them into it! They decided that he must have been hurt by a blind person when he was young and this was his revenge.

We too have an orientation; the Torah is an instruction manual on how this world is to be used. Unfortunately, we ignore the instructions, experience much pain without knowing how to deal with it, and then curse the builder...

When people are angry at Hashem for what's gone wrong in their lives, they can't feel love and appreciation for what's gone right.

"Sheishes yamim tai'a'seh m'lachah {Six days your work will be done}." If we'll be able to focus on appreciating what we have, then we'll feel that our work is done.

Pekudai concludes with Hashem's presence filling the Mishkan. Today we no longer have the 'makom', the place of the Mishkan but we do have the 'zman', the time of Shabbos, the time when Hashem's presence rests upon us.

Tai'a'seh! Done! Such an attitude will allow that Presence to grace our Shabbos.

Have a good one,

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