

LAZINESS MAY BE LURKING IN NOBLE DECISIONS NOT TO DO SOMETHING

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Vayakhel

Laziness May Be Lurking In Noble Decisions Not To Do Something

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 717, One Hundred Brochos A Day. Good Shabbos!

There is a pasuk in Parshas Vayakhel, which reads: "And the Princes brought the Shoham stones and the Miluim stones for the Ephod and the Choshen" [Shemos 35:27]. Rashi cites a teaching of Chazal -- "What prompted the Nesiim [Princes] to contribute first at the inauguration of the Mizbeach [altar] [Bamidbar 7:1-2], while they did not contribute first at the construction of the Mishkan [Tabernacle]? The answer is that by the Mishkan, they took the attitude 'Let the public contribute whatever they contribute and we will complete any shortfall.' Since the public contributed everything that was needed, the Nesiim said 'What is left for us to do?' The only things not yet contributed were the Shoham stones and the Miluim stones for the Ephod and the Choshen and so that is what they brought. Therefore, they made sure to be the first to contribute by the dedication of the Mizbeach. Since they were somewhat lazy in contributing to the Mishkan, the spelling of the word Nesiim is defective in this pasuk (without a yud between the sin and the aleph)."

Rav Simcha Zissel Brody questions Chazal's assertion that the Nesiim were lazy. Offering to make up any deficit in the Mishkan building campaign does not sound like laziness. It seems very generous! Perhaps it was a mistake or a miscalculation, but why is it described as "laziness"?

Rav Simcha Zissel says that we learn from here something that we should all take to heart. Namely, whenever we have an opportunity to do something or not to do something and we decide to delay, even for the most noble of reasons, we should realize that such an attitude is really based on laziness and inertia. Rav Simcha Zissel quotes Rabbeinu Bachye Ibn Pakuda's preface to his classic work Chovos HaLevovos [Duties of the Heart]: "When I first decided to write this work, the thought crossed my mind that I was not worthy to write such a sefer. Therefore, I changed my mind and decided not to write it. The decision not to write it brought me some sense of relief and leisure, but I ultimately decided it was only laziness that caused me to come to the conclusion that I should not

write it. "Therefore, he did write the sefer and the rest is history. Klal Yisrael is so much richer for that final decision of Rabbeinu Bachye Ibn Pakuda to write and publish Chovos HaLevovos.

Rav Simcha Zissel's point is that regardless of the nobleness of the reason or justification for not doing something, a person must always carefully introspect and truly consider the possibility that the noble justification was only a fig leaf for a not so noble character trait - namely, laziness.

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei are provided below:

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