

USE TIME CAREFULLY / HOW YOU ASK MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: CD #991 – The Shabbos Bar Mitzva in the Good 'Ole Summertime. Good Shabbos!

The Message of the Leveyims' Five-Year Training Program

The Torah says in this week's parsha that from the time a Levi is twenty-five years old, he enters into service in the *Bais Hamikdash* [Bamidbar 8:24]. However, as Rashi points out, there is a contradiction between this *pasuk* and another *pasuk* earlier in the sefer [Bamidbar 4:3], which states that the age of service for the Leveyim [Levites] begins at thirty, not at twenty-five. Rashi reconciles the two *pesukim* by explaining that the Levy comes to the *Bais Hamikdash* at age twenty-five to begin a five-year training period. Then he in fact begins to serve at age thirty, as is says in Parshas Bamidbar.

The Shemen HaTov (volume 5) asks an interesting question: How long does a Kohen need to train? A Kohen's service in the *Bais Hamikdash* is seemingly much more intricate and involved than a Levi's service. However, we do not find anywhere in the Torah that the Kohanim had a five year training period. The Torah does not even mention them having a one-year period of learning before they could start participating in the *Avodah*. Why is that?

The Shemen HaTov suggests a very interesting idea. A Kohen can perform the *Avodah* from the time he is Bar Mitzvah until the time he dies. He could be serving in the *Bais Hamikdash* for sixty or seventy years. A Levi's service is only for twenty years. As soon as he turns thirty, the clock starts ticking and once he becomes fifty, he is out of there. When someone has such a limited period of when he can do the *Avodah*, he wants to hit the ground running. He cannot waste any time. He needs to be ready on day one! He does not have the luxury of puttering around with on the job training.

A Kohen, who potentially has sixty or seventy years of service ahead of himself, can take a couple of years "to get up to speed." However, a Levi, whose time is so limited, needs to know clearly, what he is doing from the first day on the job. Therefore, a Levi trains for five years before the clock starts

ticking for him.

This thought conveys a message that I believe we should impress on our children while they are in their Yeshiva days. Boys enter Yeshiva when they are in high school at age 14. They look at their time as if they are going to be in Yeshiva for a very long time. It seems like forever. For most people, however, the time is limited. There is four years of high school then maybe three or four years of time in *Beis Medrash*. Then they get married and if they are lucky enough they can learn three, four, or five years in Kollel. Eventually, they have to face the reality of earning a livelihood. So how long is this very long time in Yeshiva for a Yeshiva *bochur*? For most people, it is 8 years, 10 years, or maybe 12 years and then it is over. When someone has such a limited amount of time and opportunity, one must make the **best** use of that time.

The most important thing we can impress on our children is "Don't waste your time while you are in Yeshiva." I was looking through some old notes of mine and I found on the back of my notes what I told one of my sons on the day he started ninth grade in Yeshiva. I told him he should try to learn sixty minutes an hour. That is the definition of a *masmid* [a diligent student]. A *masmid* is not necessarily someone who learns 18 hours a day. A *masmid* is someone who learns sixty minutes an hour, for however many hours a day he is able to devote to learning. Do not waste your time. That is a lesson we need to impress on our children.

When only a limited amount of time is available, we must make maximum use of it. Just as the Levi needed five years of preparation so that when he began his service at age 30, he would not need to "waste time" with on the job training, we need to be just as careful with the limited time that is available to us for our learning.

The Way A Question Is Posed Determines Half The Answer

The Parsha relates the one and only time that *Klal Yisrael* brought a Korban Pessach [Paschal sacrifice] during their forty year sojourn in the Wilderness [Bamidbar 9:1-5]. Then the Torah says, "There were men who had been made impure by a human corpse and could not make the Pessach-offering on that day; so they approached Moshe and Aharon on that day." [Bamidbar 9:6] This group of *tameh* individuals were upset that they did not have the opportunity to participate in the *mitzvah* of *Korban Pessach*. They approached the leaders of the community and presented them with their problem: "...Why should we be left out by not offering Hashem's offering in its appointed time among the Children of Israel?" [Bamidbar 9:7]

Moshe consulted with the Almighty and was taught the laws of the "Second Passover". *Pessach Sheni* is a unique concept whereby one who was impure or remote from the location of the *Bais Hamikdash* on the fourteenth of Nisan, which is the proper time for bringing the Pessach offering, has a chance to offer a "make-up Pessach sacrifice" a month later.

There seems to be somewhat of a redundancy in the *pesukim* describing this incident. Scripture

already told us in *pasuk* 6 that "there were men who had been made impure by a human corpse." Why then was it necessary for the people to also say in *pasuk* 7 "we are impure through a human course?"

The sefer Yismach Yehudah from a Rabbi Yehudah Jacobowitz in Lakewood, NJ addresses this question. In Parshas Emor there is the story of the Blasphemer, who cursed the Name of G-d. There are different interpretations as to what exactly prompted this person to perform such a heinous crime. One of the interpretations is that this happened because of a "*Din Torah*" [civil dispute]. This man had an Egyptian father and a Jewish mother. He was thus "Jewish" but he did not belong to any Tribe (one's Jewish identity is based on matrilineal descent while one's Tribal identity is based on patrilineal descent). Consequently, he did not know with which camp to travel. Since his mother was from the Tribe of Dan, he went to that tribe and insisted that he was a Danite who had the right to travel in their camp.

He took the elders of the Tribe to a "*Din Torah*" over the matter and lost. He heard the verdict; he became upset and blasphemed the Name of G-d.

We must ask a question here: Chazal tell us that Dan was called the "*m'asef l'chol ha'machanos*". For lack of a better translation, Dan was the caboose. He brought up the rear. The Tribe of Dan took care of all the stragglers. First of all, when there are a couple of million people travelling together in the desert, they are bound to drop things -- Dan picked up the articles that were dropped on the way. When sick children caused people to fall behind -- Dan picked them up. When, for whatever reason, a person became lost or could not keep up with the pace of everyone else -- Dan picked them up. Shevet Dan, the "*ma'asef l'chol ha'machanos*" was the barrel for everyone to come into.

In this case, this person came to them with an apparently valid complaint: "I do not have a place; my mother is from *Shevet Dan*." The elders should have said, "Sure. Join the crowd. We have a whole club back there at the end of the line with our tribe." Their reaction apparently was just the opposite. "This is not our problem. You are not from *Shevet Dan*, go somewhere else!"

Why is this fellow different from everyone else? The answer is that everybody else who came to *Shevet Dan* said, "Listen, I fell behind. My child was sick. I did not feel well. Can we travel with you?" The answer in those cases was "Fine." However, when someone justifies joining the group by saying, "I am a Danite, I belong here, and you **need** to let me in because this is my **right**!" then they say, "Sorry my friend, do not tell me this is your right. You do not belong here; we are not going to take you in!"

That is what the *pasuk* is telling us here. We know that they were impure, but if their complaint was, "It is not fair! We missed bringing the Korban Pessach, you need to do something for us!" then we answer "Sorry. Life is not fair." However, if they come and say, "We know that the problem is ours, we know it is we who were impure, but give us a break because *nebach* we were impure" then it is a different story. When the approach is not a demand but a request, the response is completely

different.

Just as Shevet Dan rejected him when he made a demand, but when asked for a favor, granted the favor, the same thing is true here by Pessach Sheni. The answer might have been different if they had come to Moshe and Aharon with demands. However, since they emphasized that the problem was their own "We were impure from contact with the dead" and therefore "why should we have to be excluded?" then Moshe Rabbeinu brought their case to the Almighty and the Almighty said, "Yes, in truth, we will do something to allow you to participate." That is why they received the right to bring a Pessach Sheni.

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