

UPS AND DOWNS

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

"Every man whose heart [nesa-oh] inspired him came; and everyone whose [nedavah roo-ho] spirit motivated him brought the portion of Hashem" Shemot 35:21

Parashat Vayakhel tells of the actual construction of the Mishkan (Tabernacle) in the desert. The first step in the process was the collection of the materials needed for the structure and its utensils. Moshe Rabenu a'h requested precious metals and jewels, special hides and wools and all the other raw materials needed to complete the task. The verse cited above describes the enthusiastic generosity with which the people came forward. The Ben Ish Hai zt'l points out that the word "nesa-oh" is translated as enthusiasm and that is the same meaning as the words "nedavah roo-ho". This makes the verse unnecessarily redundant atypical of the Torah's language that is always terse and economical. What should we learn from this?

The verse is brought to give valuable advice to everyone, in order that one may overcome the wiles of the Yeser Hara (Evil Inclination). When one is approached to perform a misvah [commandment] that involves cost - like charity - if one has \$100,000 dollars one should imagine that he has \$100,000,000. This little fabrication will enable the person to look at his donation as a small sum of little value to one as rich as he and he will thereby overcome his adversary - the Yeser Hara - who constantly tries to prevent the performance of good deeds. Even if the Evil Inclination is somewhat successful in arousing selfishness in the end the amount given will still be substantial when compared to his actual net worth. The second benefit of this "white lie" is that he will not become haughty as he would if he considered his contribution a hefty sum.

However, continues the Ben Ish Hai, when one is considered a purchase of one of his worldly desires he should reverse the process. If he has \$100,000 he should feel as if he has only \$10,000 and that should make him hold back and limit his purchase. In this way he will not succumb to material temptations. In Devarim 4:8 Moshe says: "In the Heavens above and on the Earth below." This is a hint to the fact that one should increase one's view of one's wealth when considering an expenditure for Heaven -- i.e. go "above"; and when dealing with the temporal one should decrease one's estimate of one's net worth --on the Earth -below!

There was once a financial crisis at the Yeshivah in Volozhin. The Rosh Yeshivah, Rav Hayim Solovetchik, zt'l, traveled to the city of Minsk where there were two men who regularly raised funds for the institution. He approached one and told him of the large amount of money needed. The man

told the rabbi that he would begin to work on it immediately. Over the next two weeks the Rabbi spent his time learning in the Bet Midrash. He then approached his host and asked how the fundraising was progressing.

"Not bad", said the man, "I actually have raised 1/2 of the amount needed". Rav Hayim continued his study schedule for another few weeks and then asked about the progress again.

"We have reached our goal", smiled the fundraiser, as he handed the check to the scholar. The Rav happily returned to Volozhin and cleared up all accounts with the creditors.

It was long after that the two fundraisers from Minsk came to Volozhin to adjudicate a case between them. The one who was not involved with the successful drive claimed that he was always partners with the other in all charitable efforts and that it was not fair that when an opportunity as great as helping sustain the greatest Yeshivah in the world came along that his adversary had grabbed the misvah for himself by giving all of the money from his own personal funds. He wanted to pay 1/2 the sum in order to get credit for 1/2 the misvah. The outcome of the trial is not important but what happened when Rav Hayim became aware of the dispute is.

The Rav called his benefactor to see him. Then he asked the obvious question.

"If you gave all the money yourself why did you make me spend almost 5 weeks away from the yeshivah?"

The man's answer is a lesson for all of us.

"Does the Rosh Yeshivah think it is so easy to overcome one's innate selfishness and give such a large amount of money to charity? It took me two weeks to win the battle and give 1/2 the amount needed. It then took about 3 more weeks to build up the strength to donate the balance."

Everyone is created with a sense of selfishness and the trait of greed. For some it is very strong and for others not so much so --but it exists in everyone and it is not a simple matter to give generously. One should keep in mind the lesson of the Ben Ish Hai zt'l,-- for Heaven - ABOVE - build up what you have so that when you give it seems small.

Moshe Rabenu put out the word throughout the camp that skilled craftsmen and artisans were needed for the construction of the Tabernacle and its ornate utensils. The skills needed varied from gold and silversmiths, embroiderers and engravers to those expert in working on woodcarving and construction. From where did all these expert craftsmen come?

Ramban explains that the people who came had the attitude "Whatever Hashem wants done -- I am here to do it!" There is a story told about a King who challenged his subjects to climb a 100-story building. A great reward was offered to the one who could successfully complete the challenge. Many came to try their best to capture the royal reward. After climbing 30 stories the weak dropped out of the competition. Others were able to scale to the 50th floor and a very few even completed

the climb to the 5th story. Only a select few were able to get as high as the 75th level before giving up and returning to the bottom.

One man reached the 75th floor but refused to give up. "I think I can still go higher," he said to himself and pushed upward. After getting to the eightieth floor he was totally exhausted and fell flat on the landing of the stairs. He caught his breath and said, "Even if I can't get to the top, I think I can still climb one more flight. He gathered his strength and struggled step by step until with his last ounce of power he reached the 81st floor and collapsed flat on his face. At that moment -- miraculously -- an elevator door opened just a few feet from our exhausted hero. He rolled on the floor into the elevator car and the door closed behind him and the elevator carried him up to the 100th floor and the royal prize.

Our sages say "Yagata U-Masata Ta-amen" if you struggle and you find you may believe." When one finds something there is usually no struggle involved -- what do the rabbis mean by struggle? The lesson is that one who accomplishes after toiling should know that it is not his or her toil that produced the successful result. Our job is to put in the effort and to want to succeed. G-d produces the positive result. In fact you will be taken higher than you imagined you could reach.

The artisans who built the Tabernacle were not artisans at all. They were just-freed slaves who had the desire and the willingness to toil to perform whatever G-d asked. If we were to accept our Torah responsibilities with the same attitude we too are promised the Heavenly assistance to reach a royal prize that we cannot imagine.

TABLE TALK -- QUESTION FOR THE SHABBAT TABLE

The verse says "Six days work shall get done and on the seventh day it will be a Shabbat for G-d." Why does the Torah say work shall get done in a passive tense? Wouldn't it be better to say "Six days you shall work"?

One of the tests of faith is to observe the Shabbat according to all of its laws. Reality convinces one, that if one were to work on Shabbat one would accomplish more and earn more than one who ceases from labor on the Sabbath. In order to truly enjoy the Shabbat --one must turn off one's involvement in the world of business and commerce during the Shabbat. This task is difficult -- if not impossible -- if one actually believes that HE produces the business and the profits during the week. Only a person who truly believes that G-d has pre-determined what one will earn during the year in the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur can enter the Shabbat peacefully and enjoy the holy day without concern for material losses incurred by HIS lack of involvement in his business. The verse hints to this by saying "Six days work shall be done"--but you really do not produce the results. The bottom line is produced by G-d-- believe it and then on the seventh day it will be a true Shabbat as you enjoy your lack of involvement without concern but rather in peace of mind derived from knowing G-d produces my sustenance both during the week and on Shabbat. "Six days work will get done".

DID YOU KNOW THAT

It is forbidden to set up a microphone before Shabbat for use during Shabbat -- even for a Misvah [e.g. for a speaker or reader to be heard in a large synagoguel].

It is also forbidden to set a tape recorder on a timer in order to record on Shabbat. A person should not have a tape player ready from before Shabbat in order to listen to songs or lectures on Shabbat. It is forbidden to listen to a radio on Shabbat even if it was prepared before Shabbat on a timer. [Source Yalkut Yosef, Shabbat volume 5,page 197/98]

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