

HE DID IT

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

"As Hashem commanded Moshe" Shemot 39:43

Motive and agenda lie behind all activities that a person performs. One buys and sells, gives and takes, goes and comes for reasons very often not known to the person them self. A person may attest to a very selfless purpose while actually working towards a selfish goal. Training oneself to be other oriented is part of the maturing process of life.

In our Parashah the Torah states that Moshe did as commanded by Hashem. This phrase is repeated with each of the many varied tasks necessary for the construction of the Tabernacle, tailoring of the garments for the Kohanim and the performance of the service of offerings in the new House of G-d. It could have been mentioned once and we would understand the loyalty of our leader to the commands of Hashem Our Sages learn different lessons from every extra letter of our holy book and this repetitious phrase is no exception.

Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman hy'd, who was killed by the Nazis in W/WII, would say: "What is the difference between previous generations and our generation? In our times a person cannot speak about anything he does without injecting a hint of ego into the conversation. In earlier periods it was quite different. When a person spoke about oneself the listener had difficulty discerning about whom the person was talking and did not sense that he was praising himself. In the parashah the Torah says "And Moshe did ... as Hashem commanded Moshe". Why doesn't it say, "As Hashem commanded him"? Answered Rav Elchonon "It is as if Moshe was standing on the side describing the virtues and good deeds of another person - not himself." It was", he explained, "as if G-d was using a certain Jew named Moshe to accomplish His holy mission. It was as if Moshe himself had no subjective gain in the matter."

It was said about Rav Elchonon that he did not ever take credit or brag about his accomplishments in Torah and good deeds. His attitude was that a person is a soldier in the army of Hashem and must do his job faithfully without any self interest at all. One must remove oneself from the picture as if there was another filling the role for which he was chosen.

One time he visited the home of the Mashgiah [spiritual mentor to the students of a Yeshivah] who was very ill. The Mashgiah's wife commented to Rav Elchonon that the Mashgiah kept saying that the young men of the institution of learning were doing "too much" on his behalf.

"For himself he can say they may not serve him", retorted Rav Elchonon, but for THEIR MASHGIAH the boys must work and serve and do all that they can to bring him back to good health. Even the Mashgiah must be concerned that the Mashgiah get well. After all - the Yeshivah does need a Mashgiah."

Learning to work l'shem shamayim - for the sake of Heaven - requires one to learn to remove self-interest from one's primary motivations. One must learn to speak about one's accomplishments as if another did them. It is not matter of I did it but one of I was chosen to do it.

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