

## ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDEST

**P**arshas Yisro's very first *passuk* tells of how Yisro heard all that Hashem had done for *Klal Yisrael*. Inspired, Yisro traveled from his home in *Midyan*, and decided to join the Jewish nation, as its very first convert.<sup>1</sup> What, specifically, did Yisro hear that motivated him so?

The Gemara<sup>2</sup> records a three-way dispute, either *Krias Yam Suf*, *Matan Torah*, or the war with *Amalek*. While we can understand how the splitting of the sea, or the giving of the Torah would cause one to join *Klal Yisrael*, how can one claim that those two events were not inspiring, rather, the war with *Amalek* was the catalyst?

Furthermore, Reb Yechiel Mordechai Gordon<sup>3</sup> (1882–1964) points out that the Gemara does not say the inspiration was caused by the victory over *Amalek*, rather, the **war** with *Amalek*. Wouldn't the victory be the impetus to join *Klal Yisrael*?

R' Gordon clarifies, of course Yisro was moved by the amazing miracles and salvation of Hashem at the *Yam Suf*, or the awesome and wondrous relationship revealed at the giving of the Torah. Nevertheless, it was not enough to galvanize his departure from *Midyan*. Perhaps, given Yisro's previous experimentation with the multitude of idol worshipping cults and sects, he was hesitant to jump into yet another religion without properly thinking it over.

However, once Yisro saw *Amalek's* reaction, how they attacked *Klal Yisrael* as if the Creator of the universe wasn't personally involved with this nation, he fully grasped the temporary nature of inspiration. If *Amalek* could ignore the miracles that shook the entire world, who is to say that I will wake up inspired tomorrow?

This being the case, Yisro resolved to join the Jewish people without delay. In short, the war with *Amalek*, the fact that *Amalek* could divest themselves of any effect from the amazing miracles *Klal Yisrael* experienced, is what put Yisro over the edge, sealing his decision.

If the greatest miracles can fail to move a person, it is crucial to act when inspiration strikes. The difference between action and inaction can change the destiny of oneself and of one's progeny forever.

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### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

There is a fine line between acting with urgency and acting with carelessness. Furthermore, it is often difficult to motivate ourselves to act with immediacy. It's so easy to think that we will feel the same, and have the same motivation later, as we do now.

The solution to both of these challenges may be the same. When something is important to us, we not only want to see it get done, but we want to see it get done well.

One suggestion is to spend time to focus and appreciate the great goodness in our lives.<sup>1</sup> Hashem has given us so much, there is no being that has not benefited from His beneficence.

When we realize how much Hashem loves us, how He cares for us, and how much He does for us, the natural response is a desire to do what we can for Him.

Thus, when the opportunity for a *mitzvah* comes up, we will be motivated and inspired, not just to do it promptly, but to do it properly.

<sup>1</sup> *Mesillas Yesharim*, Chap. 8

<sup>1</sup> *Shemos* 18:1-5

<sup>2</sup> *Zevachim* 116a

<sup>3</sup> Cited in *Darchei Mussar*, pg. 117

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**The sole purpose of an individual on this planet is to change their base nature.** - HaTzeitil HaKatan, R' Elimelech of Lizhensk, the Noam Elimelech

# A SMART DECISION

"But what about your business? What if your clients need to reach you?"

"Like I said before, I'm in front of a computer for most of the day anyway. They can reach me like they always do."

I was sitting upstairs, listening at the stairwell. My parents were disagreeing over something, and though I knew I wasn't supposed to, I was listening in.

"Ten years ago we didn't need this. There's no reason that we need it now."

"The world has changed, people expect you to be available when they need you." I could hear something in my mother's voice — she wasn't upset, just... concerned.

"Exactly, Shulamit. That's exactly why I need to do this. Remember two weeks ago, when we went to the zoo? Remember how excited Chaim was when he saw the monkeys? Well, I don't!

"Or worse, remember Tzvi's face, when he was so thrilled about the new *tzitzis* he made with his *rebbe*, and how I reacted? Or, rather, didn't react?" Tzvi? That was me! Sure I remembered what happened. I came home with my new pair of *tzitzis*, we had spent months on the laws of *tzitzis*, and how to make them. I was so excited to show it to my father, but, well, it didn't really work out the way I had hoped.

"I just want to spend more time with my family," I could hear my father say. "Or at the very least, I want the time I spend with my family to be meaningful."

Silence. My mother was probably thinking. "Look, you're right. Believe me, I know you're right. I'm just nervous about the future. What if someone needs you? What if I need you?"

My father laughed. "I'm going to be accessible, just not with this! Look, it's not set in stone, and if we see it's a terrible idea, we can always go back. But for now, I think this is the best decision for me and for the family."

I simply could not figure out what they were talking about; I went to sleep with this mystery in my head.

The next morning, I came to breakfast to see my father and siblings all sitting at the table. Something was off — what was my father doing at the table? He was usually sitting on the couch, on his phone.

"Good morning, how're you doing Tzvi?" Then I saw it, there was a flip phone sitting on the table near my father's plate. Noticing my eyes, my father smiled. "Surprised? I finally had enough — yesterday was *Yom Kippur*, and it hit me how much time I spend on my phone. I knew if I didn't act right after *Yom Kippur*, I would lose my nerve. So I got rid of my phone, and got this. Nice, no?"

The phone was not nice. It was old, it actually looked used, and you couldn't play games on it. But do you know what was nice? Being able to speak to my father.

*\*Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Part of acting on inspiration is making sure that your course of action is correct. Moshe spent seven days clarifying his mission to redeem *Klal Yisrael* before heading out.<sup>1</sup>
- If one's natural approach includes procrastination, they will do so even when their life is on the line.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Drashos U'Pirushei Rabbeinu Yonah Al HaTorah, Bamidbar*

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*