



MOTIVATION MATERIALIZED

Victorious and with their heads held high, the Jewish people witnessed the last of the Egyptians perish in the swirling waters of the *Yam Suf*. So many years of servitude vanished in a miraculous moment. Jubilation, elation, the joyous feelings burst forth and morphed into a song of praise to Hashem. Fraught with meaning and depth, each verse of the song speaks to the hopes, dreams, and realized relationship between the Jewish people and Hashem.

The explanations and commentaries on *Az Yashir* are endless, but perhaps one of the oldest and most well known is Onkelos, written in Aramaic.

Curiously, on the *pasuk*, "This is my G-d and I will glorify Him,"¹ Onkelos translates this as, "This is my G-d, and I will build for Him a *Beis Hamikdash*." According to Onkelos, the *Bnei Yisrael* were collectively agreeing to build a *Beis Hamikdash* at some point in the future. While we can understand *Klal Yisrael's* praises and recognition of Hashem, why would they discuss, at this point, the building of the *Beis Hamikdash*? Isn't that something that should wait until they reach *Eretz Yisrael*?

Reb Raphael Eliyahu Mishkovsky² (1917–1980) explains that the Jewish people were well aware of a simple principle in *avodas Hashem*. Inspiration is fleeting. Yes, the feelings coursing through their bodies must have been unimaginable. The things they saw, the miracles they experienced, should cause a person to cling to Hashem for the rest of their lives. Should — but it doesn't. Inspiration is fleeting, and if it's not accompanied by action, one is likely to simply remain the way they always were. In the moment it may feel like one's life is changed forever, but true change comes from real commitment, and anything less is unstable.

Thus, explains Reb Raphael, the Jewish people were not simply singing songs of praise. They were making concrete plans — what will we do with this inspiration, how can we make sure it lasts?

Inspiration is a powerful tool in our *avodas Hashem*, and extremely useful to those who know how to use it.

¹ *Shemos* 15:2

² Quoted in *Yalkut Lekach Tov*

Why would they discuss, at this point, the building of the *Beis Hamikdash*?

Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Inspiration can feel so good, and in the moment, it feels like it will last forever. However, it is transient, and that being the case, how can we make it more permanent?

Though inspiration is an amazing tool, it tricks us in a sneaky way. Since we feel so moved, and perhaps even changed, we don't feel motivated to act at that very moment. We may think about how we will be different, or feel assured that our past is behind us, and we are even confident that when the opportunity arises, we will be ready for it.

However, true change comes with work and action. Thus, the trick is to act as immediately as possible in reaction to the inspiration.¹ Every moment that passes by can weaken our resolve, until nothing is left.

By acting with alacrity, we concretize the inspiration, turning it into lasting change.

¹ *Chidushei HaLev* on *Megillas Esther* 9:27

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Growth through mussar doesn't necessarily change you, rather, it reveals a part of you that you never knew. - *Sefer Alei Shur, Introduction*

PARENTING IN PRACTICE

"Hey, read this." Tzviki* looked up as Avraham Barish dropped a book in his lap. "It's good, you might like it," Avraham said over his shoulder as he walked away.

Tzviki looked down at the book. It was a parenting book, which was odd, since Tzviki was not married. But Tzviki liked to read, and this book was as good as any, so why not?

A few days later, Tzviki felt like a new person. This book was not just about parenting, it was about *middos*, how to act, and interact, and so on. It was an eye opener on how a person's *middos* affect everything they do, and in particular, there was a stress on the way a person communicates. Never did Tzviki think he would gain such inspiration from a parenting book.

Time moved on, and Tzviki Zuckerman became Mr. Tzviki Zuckerman. Now parenting was no longer theoretical, but a very real way of life. However, the ideas he learned so many years ago had faded, and he was essentially parenting without guidance or perspective.

One night after the kids finally fell asleep, Binah Zuckerman sat down with a sigh. "I don't know what to do anymore. I feel like I'm just putting out fires — the children are wonderful, but I find they are constantly arguing. And it's so hard to get them to do the next task, homework, showers, and going to bed."

Tzviki nodded vigorously. "I know what you mean. I get so caught up in the day-to-day, I forget the role of a parent. Am I really doing *chinuch*, or am I just breaking up fights?"

The Zuckermans sat there in silence, each one wrapped up in their own thoughts. Suddenly, Tzviki bolted up, and ran to the bookshelf. "I bought this book so many years ago, before we even met. It was life-changing. Or so I thought. But maybe a bit of *chazara* wouldn't hurt."

Tzviki and Binah set aside time every evening to read the book, but now with a much more practical focus. They discussed, debated, and then put into practice what they were learning. Slowly, things began to change. The atmosphere in the house became calmer, and the interactions smoother. But Tzviki realized he was truly on to something when the cook at the school his children attend stopped him one day, "Are you Mr. Zuckerman? I just wanted to say, everyone in the school says, 'Those Zuckerman children have the best *middos*.'"

Tzviki was grateful, not just for the inspiration of the book, but the fact that he put it into practice.

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

DID YOU KNOW?

- Even the inspiration from something like *Akeidas Yitzchak* can be fleeting and transient.¹
- Sometimes the *Yetzer Horah* inspires a person to do *teshuvah* just so that the *Yetzer Horah* can bring him down again.²

¹ *Sifsei Chachamim* s.v. בקרניו *Rashi Bereishis* 22:13, s.v. *שהיה רץ*

² *Ya'aros Devash* 1