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AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

בְּשִׁיטְיָחָה



אור ישראל

Self Inspired

PARSHAS
VAYAKHEL

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GENEROUSLY LATE

In the beginning of *Parshas Vayakhel*, Moshe rallied *Klal Yisrael* to open their hands and bring gifts for the building of the *Mishkan*. The people responded generously, and soon Moshe was inundated by gold, silver, skins, jewelery, and the list goes on. Their response was overwhelming, to the point where Moshe had to ask the people to cease their gift giving!¹

In the midst of this amazing outpouring of generosity we find a subtle rebuke to some of the greatest people of the generation. The *Nesi'im* brought the precious stones necessary for the *Choshen*, a valuable gift indeed. Yet, the letter *yud* is missing from the word *Nesi'im* when describing this lavish gift.² Why is their name written in shorthand?

Rashi³ explains that the leaders of the *Shevatim* promised to supply anything that was not given by the rest of *Klal Yisrael*. However, the response was overwhelming, leaving the *Nesi'im* with nothing to bring. The only gift left were the stones of the *Choshen*, and because of their negligence, their name was not written in full.

Reb Chaim Shmulevitz⁴ (1902–1979) points out what seems to be an unfair response to the generosity of the *Nesi'im*. They were so magnanimous, had *Klal Yisrael* not provided anything for the *Mishkan*, they were willing to fill the entire void. The fact that the *Bnei Yisrael* was generous themselves should not diminish in any way the great act the *Nesi'im* did; why, then, were they punished?

Reb Chaim points to the source of their generosity. Rashi states that at the core, what drove them to wait until the last moment was a certain slothful, perhaps even lazy, attitude towards this amazing endeavor. Thus, there was a negative trait as the foundation of their charitable act, and for this they were reprimanded.

There is no doubt that this trait must have been subtle, and the *Nesi'im* truly thought they were doing a wonderful thing. Nevertheless, even subtle traits can change a person's actions, and impact their overall behavior.

How important it is for us to recognize and understand the force behind our actions, and why we are choosing to do what we do.

1 *Shemos* 36:5-6

2 *Shemos* 35:27

3 *ibid.* s.v. והנשאים הביאו

4 *Sichos Mussar* pg. 209

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Once one uncovers one's deeper motivations, the next step is not always automatic. It is important to 'speak to the desire,' that is, address the point head on.¹

One can mentally review, "Is this really what I want? Is this really what Hashem wants me to do?"

And if it is indeed the right thing to do, a person then must question if their course of action will truly lead them to the desired outcome, or if it will only lead to some sort of short-term achievement, but undermine their long-term goal.

An example would be someone not going to a *shiur*, "Because I have to take care of my family." 1. Is that the real reason, or just an excuse? 2. Even if this is what Hashem wants, and the proper thing to do, in general, perhaps it is best for the family to have you go to the *shiur*?

Directly addressing the desire will bring a person's *avodas Hashem* to another level.

1 *Chidushei HaLev, Bereishis* 37:26

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The truth is, it is extremely necessary in our generation to inspire hearts in Torah and Mussar through the depth of learning Chazal... - Chidushei HaLev, Bereishis, Haskama from R' Henoch Leibowitz, zt"l

THE SMARTEST KID IN TOWN

I've* always been a pretty smart kid, and people recognized that. It came as no surprise that I skipped a grade, or two, or maybe three. Despite my young age, I made good friends, which explains how Chananya saved my life.

Maybe I'm being a bit dramatic, but the truth is, without Chananya, my life would be terribly different.

We were both in our senior year in high school, getting ready to graduate. I always had an affinity towards mechanical engineering, and was looking forward to going to college the next year. Though I was good at learning, and enjoyed *shiur*, engineering was my passion.

Chananya was going to *Eretz Yisrael* the next year, to one of the many *yeshivos* there. It was sad to me that we would be going our separate ways, but I suppose that was going to happen someday.

Throughout the year, though, Chananya would keep asking me to join him. Or at least go to a *yeshiva* in *Eretz Yisrael*. Or even not in *Eretz Yisrael*, just go to a *yeshiva*, try it out! I kept rebuffing him, "No, it's not for me, and it's not how I see myself. I want to become a mechanical engineer."

"You still can, but at least try learning Torah on a higher level!" And so the conversations went. Sometimes they were lighthearted, sometimes serious, but I never moved. Especially considering the fact that I was already accepted to a prestigious college, it was something that I did not want to give up.

One day Chananya brought up the argument again, but from a different angle. "Asher, if you go to college now, you'll be the youngest person there. You'll stick out like a sore thumb!"

"I know."

Chananya stared at me, intently. "That's it, isn't it! You want to be the youngest person there. You don't want to give up the opportunity to say you are the youngest person in college, is that right?"

Was it right? I was surprised, but as he said the words, I realized he was dead right. It was exactly what was motivating me. I was quiet for a few moments. "Let me think about it."

Chananya's eyes went wide. He recognized that I was serious, and I was. Well, after mulling it over for a long while, I decided to join him in *yeshiva*. And that decision changed the course of my life, and the person who I am today.

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

"That's it, isn't it! You want to be the youngest person there, is that right?"

DID YOU KNOW?

- Korach and Geichazi were of the greatest people in their generation, but because of a subtle negative trait, their end was terrible.¹
- A person's subtle desires can work against their own interest. In an effort to have immediate gratification, a person will give up long-term enjoyment, and not even be aware of what they traded!²

¹ *B'Derech HaChochmah*, Chap. 8-9

² *Chidushei HaLev Bereishis* 24:49

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