



Zealous and Rewarded

Parshas Vayakhel Pekudei

Leilui Neshmas Meira Chaya Nechama Bracha A"H

Bat David Mordechai V'Zelda Shaindel Sheychu

Rabbi Baruch was one of the old residents of Jerusalem; his father, Rabbi Fishel was a regular guest in my father's home. One day Rabbi Fishel fell ill and was confined to his bed, his doctors all but gave up on him. Rabbi Baruch sought out advice on what he could do, and decided that only the Rebbe of Ger could help him.

However, at that time the Rebbe was away on Mount Carmel and was very difficult to reach. He knew that while the Rebbe was away he would not like to be disturbed, and as such Rabbi Baruch requested the assistance of my father, Rabbi Yisrael Grossman OB"M to help him and write him a letter of recommendation, since he was very close with the Rebbe.

Rabbi Baruch ascended the narrow steps to my father's home and knocked gently on the door. My mother OB"M opened the door and invited him in. My father was immersed in his studies, and a long time passed until he looked up and saw that he had a guest, whom he warmly welcomed.

After hearing the story, my father hurried to the closet, took his jacket and declared, "Come, we are going." "Where?" Rabbi Baruch inquired. He had expected only to receive a letter to present to the Rebbe's assistants to gain entrance.

My father was determined, "When a mitzvah comes to your hand, do not let it slip away", my father said over and over. They left the house and went to the bus station, taking the 405 bus to Tel Aviv, then another to Haifa, and from Haifa till they came to Mount Carmel just before sundown.

The Rebbe was very excited to see my father supposing that he had a personal matter to discuss with him, but father pointed to Rabbi Baruch and told him about Rabbi Baruch's situation.

My father was a person of tremendous personal character, who worked for many years to refine himself and always acted with a sense of urgency, never delaying even for a second. Every mitzvah that he did, he did it to its fullest; he simply did not know any other way. Following his passing I read from our Parsha "And the tribal leaders brought the Shoham stones and filling stones for the Ephod and for the Choshen."¹ On this our sages said: "The leaders were slacking, and therefore a letter is lacking from the spelling of their name in this verse."

One may question this and ask why the leaders were considered lazy. After all, their calculation was correct. They thought that they would bring what was lacking after the public made its contribution.

On this another question can be raised. When the Torah counts the contributions in the previous Parsha, it counts the Shoham stones and the filling stones, the contribution made by the leaders last, significantly after the oil for the lamps, the hides and the beams for the Tabernacle. This is odd, for the stones of the Choshen were of much greater value, which is known from the story of Dama Ben Netina, when the Kohen Gadol lost one of the stones of the Choshen and the sages paid an astronomical sum to acquire a new stone.

Now think of it, an astronomical sum for one stone of the Choshen. Is this not a worthy contribution? Why were they mentioned last? What indolence is there here? Rather, we learn a fundamental concept in the worship of G-d. Something which is acquired without toil and effort is not truly acquired and internalized. G-d requires zeal and dedication, which indicates a desire to fulfill the Creator's commandments. The leaders' complacency seemed like laziness, and that caused them to miscalculate and make their contribution after everyone else. The leaders certainly made a worthy contribution, but they lacked the fervor. In days to come, in one of the future Parshas, they were the ones to come first and contribute the wagons which carried the Tabernacle and its utensils. In that instance their contribution was mentioned first: "The chieftains of Israel, the heads of their fathers' houses, presented their offerings. They were the leaders of the tribes. They were the ones who were present during the counting. They brought their offering before the Lord: six covered wagons and twelve oxen, a wagon for each two chieftains and an ox for each one."²

Father never delayed anything. In his ethical will which he left us, his offspring, he testified about himself that he was always one of the first ten to arrive to the synagogue, and in most cases was the first. Even during his tenure as Rosh Yeshiva, he was always one of the first ten to come to the study hall. All his actions were executed with zeal and meticulousness in order to fulfill the mitzvah in its fullness. His name was Yisrael, and it is of significance since we are taught in the Tanya that the name Yisrael denotes steadfastness. It is stated about Iyov "Thus does Iyov"³, the commentators explain that his actions were continuous and unending, "Thus does Iyov" - all the days.

When my father got engaged to my mother his teacher and Rabbi, Rabbi Dushinsky, was inquired about his character. He replied: "When Reb Yisrael commences his morning prayers he has already set his pace for the entire day, planning everything until he retires to sleep."

¹ Shmot, 35,27

² Badmidbar 7,2
³ Iyov 1,5