

DARCHAI NOAM

Its ways are ways of pleasantness - דרכיה דרכי נעם

(Mishlei 3:17)

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How can the Parsha help us grow this week?

Terumah – It's the effort that counts

In this week's Parsha, Hashem instructs Moshe about the making of the Mishkan and the special utensils to be used in the Mishkan – including the Aron, the Shulchan and the Menorah.

“And you shall make a menorah of pure gold. It shall be hammered out, its base and its stem, its cups, its knobs and its flowers shall all be one piece with it”.

(Sh'mot 25:31)

The Menorah had a very intricate design. It was required to be made from one solid piece of gold hammered into the correct shape. The Midrash¹ explains that Moshe struggled to understand Hashem's explanation of how the Menorah should be formed. To assist him, Hashem showed Moshe an image of what the Menorah should look like. Moshe still struggled to grasp the requisite form. Hashem then told Moshe that He would help. A piece of gold should be thrown into the fire and the piece of gold would miraculously fashion itself into the correct shape.

The difficulty of this Midrash does not lie in the fact that the Menorah would make itself in a miraculous fashion. This whole period was full of miraculous occurrences. Rather, it is hard to understand why Hashem tried twice to explain to Moshe how to make the Menorah. First He allowed Moshe to struggle to try to understand Hashem's oral instructions. Then Moshe was shown an image of the finished Menorah and he had to struggle to understand how to recreate that image in reality. Finally, when Moshe still couldn't understand what to do, Hashem told Moshe that He would help. Surely Hashem knew that Moshe would struggle to understand from the instructions how to fashion the Menorah. Why didn't Hashem tell Moshe at the outset that the Menorah would be made by itself?

Perhaps Hashem wanted Moshe to do his hishtadlut (personal effort) and try to independently reach the answer. Only after Moshe had put in the avodah (effort) did Hashem step in to assist.²

There is a very important lesson here for us. We first need to put in the effort and only then Hashem will assist us. The final result is not up to us, it is up to Hashem.

When we finish learning a masechet of Gemara we celebrate with a festive meal and recite special prayers of thanksgiving called the Hadran. As part of the Hadran we compare toiling in Torah with toiling in physical work:

“We toil and they toil. We toil and receive reward and they toil and do not receive reward.”

This comparison seems strange because people who toil in the physical world **do** receive reward. They receive payment for their work. A parable might help to elucidate the true meaning of this verse. Imagine going to tailor and asking him to make a suit. You pick out the material that you like and he measures you up. A couple of weeks later you turn up to pick up the suit.

¹ Tanchuma Behaalotcha 3, quoted by Rashi.

² This idea is brought in the Gur Aryeh.

Unfortunately, the tailor had made some drastic mistakes and he totally ruined the material. There is now no suit or material! The tailor apologises profusely. He explains that he put a lot of effort into making the suit according to your instructions and he deserves payment. Of course you refuse to pay him. You agreed to buy a suit. It is irrelevant how much effort the tailor put in. You only pay him for his results, not for his effort. This can be compared to work generally in the physical world – it is the results that we pay for, not the efforts or intentions alone. In contrast, in the spiritual world things work differently. Hashem rewards us for the **effort** that we put in, regardless of the results. Ultimately, the results of our effort are up to Hashem anyway.

R' Yitzchak states the following in relation to Torah study (Gemara Megilla 6b):

If someone tells you that they have worked hard and failed or that they have not worked hard and succeeded, don't believe them. Only if they tell you that they worked hard and succeeded can we believe them.

This seems difficult to understand. Some people are naturally intelligent. They understand difficult concepts with ease. Other people are not blessed with much intelligence. They can put in hours of hard work and still not comprehend. However this statement of R' Yitzchak makes sense in light of what we have learnt above. When it comes to the spiritual world we are not rewarded for our achievements but for our efforts. Only Hashem knows exactly how much effort each person puts in and the level of difficulty of each challenge for each individual. So of course only Hashem can truly and accurately judge the effort.

Consider the following story.

Reuven didn't have to work many hours to make a living. He was also quite intelligent and he naturally found learning enjoyable and easy. He would spend a lot of time sitting comfortably in the Bet Midrash learning. He didn't have to push himself very hard but he was able to cover lots of material. Reuven's neighbour Shimon had to work long hours to support his family. Each night he would come home exhausted. Before he collapsed into bed, he would take down a volume of mishnayot and try to learn for a few minutes. Often he would nod off to sleep before he made much progress. Whenever Reuven would pass by Shimon he couldn't help feeling a bit smug. He was certain that he was achieving much more than Shimon in the spiritual realms. However Shimon was earning a greater reward in the world to come because Hashem recognised the effort that Shimon was putting in to try to learn.

Let's try something this week:

1. Remember that when it comes to spiritual work, the effort we invest is of consequence, not the results. Let's make a genuine assessment – are we struggling to grow as much as we can or could we be doing more?
2. The results of all of our actions (spiritual and physical) are up to Hashem, not us. We may work very hard yet fail to achieve. As long as we are putting in the effort that is all that Hashem expects. He will assist us to achieve if it is the best thing in the circumstances. We have to be gentle on ourselves and on others if the results are less than expected.

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Ledder

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About Darchai Noam

The passuk in Mishlei (3:17) describes the Torah as follows: "Its ways are ways of pleasantness (Darchai Noam) and all its paths are peace". The Torah is our guidebook for life. It is packed full of good advice as to how we should live our lives.

The aim of the Darchai Noam weekly email is to examine an idea from the weekly parashah relating to good middot (character traits). It will focus particularly on treating each other with respect and how to interact with each other in a more peaceful and pleasant manner. It will also suggest some practical tips for implementing these ideas in our daily lives.

By learning together each week, and making an effort to regularly put the ideas into practice, with Hashem's help we can all gradually improve our character traits and our observance of 'v'ahavta l'reiacha kamocho' – loving one's fellow as oneself.

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