

B”H

ACTION PACKED WITH G-DLY LIGHT AND GIMMEL TAMMUZ

BEGIN WITH A GRIN

What's the difference between the morning in bed and the morning at work?

In bed, you close your eyes for five minutes and it becomes five hours.

At work, you close your eyes for five minutes and it's five seconds.

ACTION AND REACTION

This Shabbos we will read parshas Korach which falls out on Gimmel Tammuz. We all know that there is a deep connection between the parsha of the week and the time it is read. If so, we ought to examine the connection between parshas Korach and the day of Gimmel Tammuz, a day when we are all searching for meaning, particularly regarding Moshiach and Geula.

Much ink has been spilled and many pages or articles have been written on this intriguing parsha, about the connection between the dispute of Korach and his men and the time we are in. There are those who lean to the right and those who lean to the left, some connect it this way and some the opposite way. In order to provide a suitable answer and food for thought from a slightly different angle, we will focus on an interesting point in the story of Korach.

Korach gathers the people with a claim against Moshe and Aharon. He wants equal rights and a just division of authority. He demands, on behalf of the nation (of course), the kehuna gedola for all and sundry. “The entire congregation is entirely holy and G-d is among them!”

How does Moshe respond? What should be the “comeback” of the greatest of all the prophets?

Moshe answers with a seemingly blase response, difficult to comprehend, that sounds more conciliatory than assertive. “In the morning, G-d will let it be known who is His ...” as though to say, “Come tomorrow morning and we'll see what will be ...”

What kind of answer is that? What is the message here? Maybe G-d will change His mind tomorrow morning?! Moshe can't find something more definitive to say?

This can be understood with the Chassidic explanation of what Korach was really complaining about and the reason that he waited until now with this dispute.

Korach's claim began only after the episode of the spies. The spies claimed that we need to be apart from the world. They wanted the Jewish people to remain in the desert so that the world would not disturb them in cleaving to the Creator through Torah study. Moshe responded that Torah study is not the ultimate. G-d wants mitzva observance. “Action is the main thing,” and the ultimate elevation of a Jew is specifically when he fulfills mitzvos. In other words, the spies saw Torah study as the ultimate in life while Moshe maintained that the true, ultimate purpose is mitzva fulfillment (of which Torah study is one, the most important one).

Korach heard this and this set all the lights flashing in his mind. He knew that there is an essential difference between Torah study and mitzva observance. When it comes to grasping the Torah there are various levels. One knows and understands more, and another knows and understands less. But when it comes to mitzva fulfillment, all Jews are equal! The mitzva done by a simple Jew is equal to that done by Moshe Rabeinu!

Korach knew that Moshe is an entirely different league but if "action is the main thing," Korach wanted to know what's the difference between him and Moshe and Aharon? We all do mitzvos equally and therefore, "Why should you raise yourselves above the congregation of G-d?"

Moshe knew precisely with whom and with what he was dealing with. He saw the point that Korach was missing here and he answered succinctly and to the point, "In the morning, G-d will let it be known."

ACTIONS THAT SPEAK G-DLINESS

True, the ultimate objective is mitzva fulfillment but mitzvos need to be done from a place of "morning," infused with light and G-dly energy, from a place of "G-d will let it be known" - awareness and consciousness of G-dliness in a tangible way! The reason that "action is the main thing" is because by doing those things we bring about the goal of a "dwelling down below." A dwelling down below means an absolute revelation of G-d's essence in this lowly world. A G-dly revelation on this level happens through an action that combines the material and spiritual. On the one hand, a physical action, an action-based commandment as per the will of G-d, which serves to sanctify the material. On the other hand, a spiritual arousal and soulful expression that penetrates deeply into the neshama of man.

An analogy would be a precious stone, the diamond in the crown, which is supposed to gleam brightly, to light up the room or the darkest place. However, if that diamond is cast into the mud, if it's lying in shame in a pile of refuse, it is obvious to all how much it light it would (not!) give off. The same is true regarding doing mitzvos. It is possible to do mitzvos without kavana, even without "morning," without light, even without "G-d will make it known" - the awareness and consciousness of G-dliness. However, these mitzvos do not illuminate and do not bring a revelation of G-dliness to the world.

Another example to illustrate the same point: A mitzva done by a wicked person or for ulterior motives, a mitzva devoid of a G-dly drive, can (externally and only temporarily) add energy to the forces of impurity and kelipa. Instead of illuminating the world, it adds darkness to the world! The only way to achieve mitzva fulfillment in a correct and proper fashion is through absolute bittul to the Nasi HaDor, absolute bittul to Moshe Rabbeinu. Moshe Rabbeinu, who pours forth from his mind and heart, from his Torah and avoda, from his power and soul to every Jew, in every place and every time. He gives us the "morning," the light through which we can illuminate the entire world and bring it to its desired purpose.

This is a clear lesson for us, now, and mainly on this day - Gimmel Tammuz. On the one hand, action is the main thing; on the other hand, bittul to the Nasi HaDor. A winning combination of action and intent, of pnimiyus and chitzoniyus, of body and soul and of spiritual and material. It's not enough to do; we also need to know how to do! We need to combine lots of neshama, lots of ruach, lots of avoda pnimis, built on a foundation of Chassidus, in order to achieve the goal of the coming of Moshiach. The Rebbe MH"M show us, through his teachings, actions, approach and activities, the path that leads to the true and complete Geula.

TO CONCLUDE WITH A STORY

We will end with a story about a girl who never saw the light of day and the Rebbe who saw only her! Rabbi Chaim Gutnick related:

I was contacted by the Jewish community in Adelaide. The high holidays were approaching, and their shul had no Rabbi. The Chief Rabbi of Sydney sent them to me, but I could not see leaving my wife and four young children alone for the holidays.

I soon received a special delivery letter from the Rebbe, expressing surprise that I did not consent, and advising me to spend the High Holidays in Adelaide. At the bottom of the letter, the Rebbe added, 'While in Adelaide, concern yourself with the needs of Egyptian Jews living there.'

I arrived in Adelaide the day before Rosh Hashana and went to the shul. As I was surveying the sanctuary, a woman entered and asked me, 'Where is the most sacred part of the synagogue?' I was surprised by her question. I pointed to the Aron Kodesh ('holy ark' containing the Torah scrolls).

Before I could say another word, she rushed out, led a blind teenage girl straight to the Aron Kodesh, and then departed. The girl kissed the curtains of the ark and burst out in tears. She remained there for several minutes; after which the woman came back and escorted her out.

I described the entire baffling scene to the shul secretary. 'Don't give it another thought,' the secretary said. She's one of the Egyptians. They don't get along with our community. Her parents don't even come to shul on Rosh Hashana, so she probably decided to visit before the holiday.'

I tried to ignore the secretary's degrading tone. All I could think of was the Rebbe's words 'concern yourself with the Egyptian Jews.' I rushed out to find the girl, but she had disappeared.

On Rosh Hashana, I felt the gulf between the local community and the Egyptian Jews. I tried to befriend some of the Egyptian Jews, and asked about the blind girl. After the holiday, she too tried to contact me. The phone in my room rang. "Hello, I'm Betty, the blind girl." But an abrupt click assured me that someone was determined to keep her from speaking to me.

On the night before Yom Kippur, I was finally able to obtain her address and phone number. My calls were fruitless, for as soon as I identified myself, the line went dead. I would not give up. Despite the late hour, I took a taxi to her home. Her family was reluctant to allow me in. "Please," I said, "I have traveled a great distance, and I would like to speak with you."

The door opened, and I was invited to enter. Slowly, I earned their trust. After a while, the rest of the family left, and I gently asked Betty to tell me what was troubling her. In an emotional tone, she told her story:

"My family arrived in Australia last year. They sent me to the only school in this city for the blind, a Catholic school. The people in the school are very nice, and my parents were pleased, because I had been given a full scholarship. After five months, the local priest began lecturing me about Christianity. I ignored him until he told me bluntly that I must convert. At the same time, my parents received a letter from the school: Due to lack of space in our school, we are forced to turn away prospective students of our own faith. We will agree to provide free schooling for your daughter only if she converts to Christianity.

"One day, I overheard my agitated parents discuss the issue. They had reconciled themselves to the harsh reality that I must convert. Although I know very little about our religion, I know that I am Jewish. I know that there is a G-d and I decided to pray to Him for guidance. I also knew that the Jewish holy days were approaching. On the day before Rosh Hashana, I told my mother that I did not feel well and could not go to school. When I was alone in the house, I knocked on the door of my Gentile neighbor.

"'Tomorrow is the Jewish New Year,' I told her. 'My parents do not attend the synagogue so I would like to ask you a favor. Please take me to the synagogue today so I can pray. I will only stay for a few minutes.' My neighbor agreed. In the synagogue, I cried and prayed to G-d to give me a sign. I returned home and waited.

"Guests joined us for the holiday dinner. One of them laughed at me: 'Betty! What have you been up to lately? A Rabbi from Sydney came to Adelaide and he is asking about you. How do you know him?'

"I immediately ran to my room and burst into tears. I knew this was a G-d-given sign to me. I tried to call you, but my mother didn't allow it. She was afraid that you would convince me not to convert and that I would have to leave school. But somehow, I knew that you would help me.'"

The girl's parents then came in and tearfully and told me, "We really don't want her to convert, but we have no choice. We are concerned about her welfare." I promised to do my best to help them.

Rabbi Gutnick arranged for her to be able to attend a Jewish school and for her tuition to be fully covered. The end of the story was, in his words:

"The girl continued writing to me over the years. She graduated high school with honors, went on to study in Jerusalem, married, and now leads an exemplary Jewish life in Israel."

Good Shabbos!