

Open the Door

By Rabbi Pinchos Lipschutz

In this week's parsha of Pekudei, the posuk states, "All the work necessary for the Mishkon was completed, as the Jewish people did everything Hashem commanded through Moshe. They then brought the Mishkon to Moshe, the tent and all its utensils..." (Shemos 39:32-33).

Rashi (ibid.) quotes the Medrash Tanchuma, which explains that the people brought the Mishkon and all its keilim to Moshe because when they had finished constructing everything, they were not able to set up the Mishkon. The keroshim were too heavy to be lifted into place.

How was this accomplished? Hashem told Moshe that he should lift the heavy wooden beams. Moshe demurred, saying that it was physically impossible to stand them up. Hashem told Moshe, "Get to work with your hands. Act as if you are lifting them and they will lift themselves."

The Medrash, in essence, is answering an enduring question. Often, we see a completed enterprise, a difficult plan that is realized, and we marvel: How could one person, or even a few people, manage to erect such a massive organization or building? From where did they get the strength to erect that edifice? Who was bright enough to devise that plan?

Chazal reveal the answers to these questions. When man accepts responsibility, rolls up his sleeves, and is prepared to do the work that is necessary, Hashem enables the impossible to happen.

Hashem completes man's efforts. We start with good intentions and He brings our efforts to fruition.

Learning this Rashi led me to contemplate the wonderful work of so many individuals and organizations that have impacted our world more than anyone thought possible.

The visionaries blazed trails, setting for themselves very high goals. Upon seeing their commitment, the Ribbono Shel Olam assisted them in completing their visions.

A community rov went to the Chazon Ish looking for encouragement. He wanted to build a mikvah and was about to embark on a campaign giving speeches around town about the importance of having a local mikvah. He wanted the Chazon Ish's brocha for his speeches to go over well.

The Chazon Ish told him instead that a thousand drashos about the importance of mikvah don't accomplish as much as a beautiful, spacious mikvah.

"Get to work," he told him.

The Chazon Ish instructed the rov to start building and promised to help, sending a representative to America to raise funds. They began construction, but the project dragged on.

Neighborhood residents went to the Chazon Ish, asking if they could begin using the facility before the construction was completed.

He answered in the negative and explained his reasoning. "This mikvah isn't only for you and the other frum families in the area," he said. "This mikvah is being built for the future as well and for families who are not yet religious. We need to make sure that the building will be done right, so that it will be attractive to them."

Towards the end of his life, a weakened Rav Avrohom Pam told a Shuvu parlor meeting audience how a group of parents from Acco had heard about Shuvu and wanted a school for their children. Shuvu was having a hard enough time keeping up with its existing schools, and the administration wondered how they could undertake the opening and maintenance of yet another one.

The elderly rosh yeshiva banged on the shtender and said, "One-hundred-and-fifty parents want a Torah school for their children! How can we say no? There is no cheshbon in the world that can allow us to say no to these parents."

Rav Pam was extremely frail. That night, he was quiet, gentle and soft, but he displayed the force and determination that have helped us persevere in golus. With all the strength left in his ailing body, Rav Pam emphatically declared, "There will be a Shuvu school in Acco and the Shechinah will be in that school."

It breaks your heart to see the masses of kids out there waiting for us to reach them. There are so many people who will never know the brocha of a Torah way of life simply because there isn't enough money to open additional schools and spread the Shechinah further. With pennies, their souls can be saved for eternity.

The Torah recounts that prior to selling him into slavery, Yosef's brothers threw him into an empty pit. The posuk tells us that the pit was empty of water. Rashi famously adds that although the pit was empty of water, "mayim ein bo, aval nechoshim ve'akrabim yeish bo," it was filled with poisonous snakes and scorpions.

The Vilna Gaon explains that this is the rule in life. In the absence of mayim, positive forces, nechoshim ve'akrabim, negative forces, take over.

Moshiach, we know, is rapidly approaching. But his arrival is up to us and how hard we work to rid the world of nechoshim ve'akrabim, all negative forces out there. There is much we can do on our own, but a most productive way to bring about the necessary changes is to join with others who seek to fill the world with an ocean of mayim, a sea of emunah and yedias Hashem. The opportunities are everywhere.

The world is like a desert, bare and parched, but a little bit of water can cure a long drought. Millions of Jews are dying of thirst. We have the water. Why aren't we giving it to them? Why don't we care about the people who lack the water of Torah? Why don't we do more to help organizations and people who dedicate themselves to bringing them bottles of water to whet their appetites and satiate their thirst for meaning.

Rav Pam's message is as valid now as it was when he delivered it so many years ago. This past Sunday, Shuvu held its annual dinner. Hundreds of people gathered to demonstrate that Rav Pam's message still rings in their ears and motivates them to help Shuvu introduce more children and families to Torah.

But the problem back then is the same problem now. Money.

During the war years, Mike Tress would go around begging people for money. He would tell them, "All it costs to save a Jewish life is \$100. Please help me help them." Some people responded generously to his request, and he was able to save many lives. He brought them to these shores and set them up and helped them go on to lead fine, productive Yiddishe lives, giving birth to generations of ehrliche Yidden.

As an outgrowth of the terrible attack on October 7th, secular Jews are looking for tangible ways to connect to Hashem and His Torah. People who never davened or kept any mitzvos have accepted upon themselves to wear tzitzis, put on tefillin, learn Torah, observe Shabbos, and bring themselves closer to Yiddishkeit.

Tiny embers flickering in thousands of lost souls have begun igniting small flames. It would be a great tragedy if we allow them to flame out.

We may not know why Hashem brought the terrible tragedy upon us at the end of Sukkos, but we can be sure that Hashem wants us to help those lost people find their way to Him.

There is a unique opportunity now to do just that.

In the days before electric door openers, a school bus driver and bus supervisor went to Rav Bentzion Abba-Shaul for a din Torah. They were fighting over whose job it was to open the door to let children on and off the bus.

The driver said that he had to concentrate on driving and couldn't be busy getting out of his seat to open the door each time to let on a boy and to let him off at yeshiva.

The supervisor said that he had to make sure that the children were in their seats, and every time he went to open the door, the children moved around.

The chacham listened to their arguments and asked them a question: "How much does the honor of pesicha for Ne'ilah go for in your shul on Yom Kippur?"

"Thousands of shekolim," they answered.

"Know this," Rav Abba-Shaul said to the disputants. "Every time you open the door for a boy going to learn Torah, you are opening the aron kodesh. And you don't have to pay for the honor. You should each want to be the one to open the door and get the zechut."

If people who get inspired and begin performing certain mitzvos don't send their children to a Torah school, the inspiration will likely be short-lived, as they revert to their previous behavior. When a child attends a Torah school, the child is changed, his neshomah comes alive, and he goes home and educates the family about what it means to be a Torah Jew.

Thanks to outside support, all it costs now to register a new child to be educated in the Shuvu school system is \$1,200 a year. For most of us, that is a lot of money, but in the greater scheme of things, it's a bargain, besides the fact that a Jewish neshomah is worth a lot more than \$1,200.

The guarantee of a Jewish future for a child and their family is worth a lot more than \$1,200.

We don't have to give the full amount. Each person can give what they can afford and know that they didn't miss out on an historic opportunity. Each Jew has a responsibility to other Jews. We are all obligated to do what we can to help each other spiritually and physically. Right now, we have a historic opportunity to help people who were perhaps previously unreachable make their way to lives of Torah and mitzvos. Let us not miss our chance.

There are other ways that we can help people. Read the Yated's Chinuch Roundtable this week and feel the pain of good boys and girls who are not accepted into yeshivos, schools and seminaries for reasons that have nothing to do with them not trying their hardest and doing their best to live blessed lives. Feel the pain of their parents, who are shattered along with their children. Who are they to turn to? They need us to feel their pain and to help them push on so that they and their children can continue to live happy, wholesome Torah lives.

Life is so complicated these days and so many people have difficulty dealing with the many challenges. We need to be there for them, whether by listening, guiding or motivating them. We can inspire them to bring Hashem into their lives and think about how Hashem wants them to react to what is bothering them. We can encourage them to learn the sefer Chovos Halevavos, which teaches us how to live happy, proper lives. And if the Hebrew is too hard for you, there are plenty of translations available. And if you want one with extra spice that you can relate to, try the one with the commentary of Rav Avigdor Miller in English.

Good people feel empty and deep down are unhappy. Speak to them, cheer them up, and give them ideas of how they can introduce meaning and a sense of fulfillment into their lives. It will help them and it will help you.

The list of good causes is endless, and although we each have our own issues and are quite busy, we can help.

Show that you care and Hashem will help you with the rest.

Look at the great people of our nation and what they built and accomplished. Each one of them could have said that the hard work involved was not for them. They were too old or burdened, or didn't have what it took to undertake such responsibility. But Hashem was part of their life, and they did what they knew He wanted them to do. They ignored the naysayers and the reasons to say no, and they did what had to be done to help and to build Yiddishkeit.

One of those heroic builders of Torah was Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, the Ponovezher Rov. Old and weighed down by the tragedy of the Holocaust, he went to Eretz Yisroel determined to recreate the world that was destroyed. He traveled the world raising funds to build and then maintain the yeshiva.

When Rav Chaim Leib Auerbach needed a speaker to motivate people to donate money to stave off the closure of his yeshiva, Shaar Hashomayim in Yerushalayim, he turned to Rav Kahaneman.

The rov made a special trip to be at the yeshiva's emergency dinner and delivered a rousing speech about emunah, bitachon and love of Torah. The directors of the yeshiva were very upset. "For this we brought you all the way here to speak?" they told him. "We are desperate for money. We were expecting a moving appeal from the master fundraiser."

The rov answered them, "I am not a good fundraiser. I do not know how to raise money. What I have is emunah that Hashem will help me maintain the yeshivos I established. The love of Torah that burns in my soul motivates me to travel from one end of the world to the other. These are my fundraising tools, so I shared them with your crowd."

In all that we do and all that we accomplish, in good times and not such good times, the secret to survival and success is emunah, bitachon and the siyata diShmaya they engender. Let us all strengthen ourselves in those areas and display true achdus by showing that we care about others, so that we can each do our part in preparing the world for the coming of Moshiach speedily in our day.