

Moshe took his wife and his sons... and returned to the land of Egypt... it was on the way, in the lodging, that Hashem encountered him. (4:20,24)

Seven days elapsed while Hashem maintained His dialogue with Moshe *Rabbeinu*, attempting to convince him to go to Egypt to serve as the first leader of *Klal Yisrael*. Moshe demurred for various reasons; his unparalleled humility and consummate respect for his brother, Aharon *HaKohen*, were his primary reasons. Ultimately, Hashem said, "Either you lead them out, or they will remain forever slaves to Pharaoh." Moshe relented and agreed to go. The Torah relates that Moshe fetched his wife and sons and set out for Egypt. Along the way, they stopped to rest at an inn. It was at this inn that an angel was dispatched to kill him for not circumcising his son. It is not that Moshe harbored any negative thoughts about circumcision. He was simply delaying the *Bris Milah* because of a dilemma that confronted him. If he were to perform the circumcision before he left for Egypt, he would be putting the life of his infant son in danger; for the first three days after the *Bris*, travel could cause a serious health issue. To delay Hashem's agency for three days was not an alternative. One does not delay Hashem. He planned on doing the circumcision en route, at the inn, but, he tarried while making arrangements for his lodging, rather than immediately arranging for the *Bris*.

Imagine, Moshe was the one selected to lead the Jews out of Egypt – no one else! Without Moshe, there was no liberation. Yet, because he tarried at the inn, thereby pushing off his son's *Bris* for a few moments, he was about to lose his life. What about *Klal Yisrael*? What about the Redemption? If there is no Moshe – there is no redemption. This is incredulous!

Apparently, *zerizus*, alacrity, in executing a *mitzvah* is much more than a good quality. It is an inherent component of the *mitzvah*. A *mitzvah* carried out with indolence – with complacency, or at one's convenience – is not a *mitzvah*. One is not serving Hashem. He is serving himself. *Zerizus* means that a person takes charge of a situation. He is not bogged down by place, circumstance, or person. Our world is filled with countless excuses for acting indolently. We are subject to the whims and fancies of others. This is true, however, only if we allow ourselves to fall prey to the curse of a "situation" or matters "beyond our control." A *zariz* neither seeks alibis, nor does he permit the act of deflecting blame to deter him from overcoming the challenges in life. Whenever we push off until tomorrow what we should be doing today, we are deferring to the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination. We are no longer carrying out Hashem's command; rather, we are serving the *yetzer hora*.

Horav Yechezkel Abramsky, zl, related a story concerning **Horav Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor, zl**, one of the greatest Torah luminaries of the previous generation. The young man who was destined to be the *Rav* of Kovno and the *gadol hador*, preeminent Torah leader of his generation, lived in abject poverty. He was so poor that he could not even afford a pair of shoes. Without something to cover his feet, he was relegated to sit at home and study Torah. One of the students of the *yeshivah* was about to get married. He hailed from a well-to-do home, whose parents certainly

outfitted him properly for his wedding day. Since he was the same age, height and build as *Rav Yitzchak Elchanan*, the budding *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, asked the *chassan* if he could have his old shoes. The young man looked at *Rav Yitzchak Elchanan* with derision and said, “If you would get a job and earn some money, you would not have to beg from others. You would be able to purchase your own shoes.”

Years elapsed, and that poor *yeshivah* student became one of the generation’s greatest *halachic* arbiters. *Rav Yitzchak Elchanan*’s fame spread throughout Europe and beyond. One day, he took a trip to Vilna. In his valise, he carried the manuscript from one of his volumes of Torah responsa, which he was about to print. When word spread that the distinguished *Rav Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor* was visiting Vilna, the town came out in force. Businesses closed; everything came to a standstill. According to historical reports, twenty thousand Jews came forth to greet him. Indeed, the mayor of Vilna prohibited *Rav Yitzchak Elchanan* from returning to his city. Apparently, the honor accorded to the Torah giant exceeded even that bestowed on the Czar – which did not speak well of the Czar. Among those who came to pay homage to the *Rav* was that *chassan*, who was now one of the wealthiest men in Vilna.

When the wealthy man heard that *Rav Yitzchak Elchanan* sought a sponsor for his volume of responsa, he offered to cover the entire cost of printing, binding, and dissemination. When *Rav Yitzchak Elchanan* took one look at the would-be benefactor, he immediately recognized that he was none other than the *chassan* who years earlier had refused to give him his old shoes. The *Rav* said to him, “My friend, you came too late. Twenty years ago you could have had the privilege for a pair of old shoes!”

Horav Ronen Abitubul, Shlita, quotes an incident recorded in the *Sefer Rosh Golas Ariel*. In the city of Lodz, a dispute developed between a renter and his landlord. Apparently, the renter was unable to carry out his end of the contract. He was broke, and he could not pay the rent. The landlord said, “Nothing doing.” He wanted the rent that was due to him. It happened to be that both men were *Gerrer Chassidim*. *Shavuos* came around, and they presented themselves before their revered *Rebbe*, the **Imrei Emes**.

The *Rebbe* looked at the landlord and declared that it was prohibited for him to evict the renter from his house – even if he did not pay up his rent. The man asked the *Rebbe*, “Why should I have to carry this load?” There are other *Chassidim* in *Gur* who are quite capable of taking such a loss. Why me?” The response of the *Imrei Emes* should catalyze for us how to think about our own daily challenges: “If *Hashem Yisborach* has caused events to occur, so that you were availed the *mitzvah* of helping another Jew – do not allow it to become leaven – fulfill it immediately!”

Events occur in our lives, to which we immediately ask Hashem: “Why me?” While we do not know the answer, we do know one thing: Hashem is availing us an opportunity for spiritual growth. It is a challenge from which we can grow immensely. It is not a punishment; rather, it is a privilege.