

## So Avraham hastened to the tent of Sarah...Then Avraham ran to the cattle...and he gave it to the youth who hurried to prepare it. (18:6, 7)

There seems to be an unusual amount of “hurrying” and “running.” Also, did Avraham *Avinu* have to serve his guests personally? The **Alshich HaKadosh** writes: “Avraham teaches us two proper courses of action in carrying out *mitzvos*. First, *zerizus*, alacrity. Second, whatever one can do personally is preferred.” The Patriarch ran personally to serve his guests. *Zerizus* is one of the fundamental attributes listed by Rabbi Pinchas *ben Yair* as leading up to *kedushah*, holiness. Indeed, alacrity/enthusiasm is a fundamental step in *mitzvah* observance and toward leading a productive life. One who acts with *zerizus* does not defer to tomorrow what can be done today. To do something at the first possible chance indicates that one cares.

Furthermore, *zerizus* is transformative, having the ability to change a person who is by nature slothful into one who is excited and eager, who promptly carries out his responsibilities. In the seventh *perek*, chapter, of *Mesillas Yesharim*, the author teaches us about one of the extraordinary benefits of *zerizus*. Acting externally with *zerizus* transforms a person internally into an individual who loves his Master and is eager to serve Him.

*Ish L'Reiehu* cites two inspirational stories which reflect the attitude of our *gedolim*, Torah leaders, concerning the *middah* of *zerizus*. Once, a group representing the lay leadership of Bnei Brak came to the **Chazon Ish** to consult with him concerning a communal issue. The matter was discussed and the sage issued his ruling. He observed, however, that these men were in no apparent hurry to carry out the decision. They seemed to be procrastinating. The *Chazon Ish* looked at them with his penetrating eyes and commented, *Linu poh ha'laylah*, “Spend the night here,” was Bilaam’s advice to the elders of Midyan (*Bamidbar* 22:8). Decisions that are reached should be carried out immediately. Pushing it off until the next day is the way Bilaam and his cohorts work.”

A poignant lesson concerning the significance of alacrity is gleaned from the *Alter m'Slabodka*, **Horav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, zl**. When his son, the future *Rosh HaYeshivah* of Mir, *Horav Eliezer Yehudah Finkel, zl*, was learning in *Yeshivah* away from home, his father would write him a short letter at various intervals. While each letter was a profound pedagogical masterpiece, one comment remained the same in each correspondence. The *Alter* would write: “My dear son, Every subject that you confront; every question which you must answer; every issue that must be clarified – think how you would render a decision to this question if today happened to be the very last day of your life.”

What a powerful and meaningful suggestion. We offer advice without thinking through the issue rationally. We make statements that often are without foundation, that lack prudence. If this were to be the very last decision that we render, our attitude would change quickly. In this sense, *zerizus*

means aforethought, realizing the significance of what he is about to do. When one thinks before he acts, he acts differently. That makes all the difference.