

## Moshe saw the entire work, and behold! – they had done it... and Moshe blessed them. (39:43)

Blessing an individual who was involved in the creation and successful completion of a project is more than a token of encouragement. It ratifies his work and shows that it is appreciated. When *Klal Yisrael* completed the *Mishkan*, Moshe *Rabbeinu* blessed them. *Rashi* quotes the text of the blessing. “*Yehi ratzon*, may it be Hashem’s Will that the *Shechinah* rests upon your handiwork. As you successfully completed the *Mishkan*, so should you merit to go on to build the *Bais HaMikdash*.” *Ralbag* writes that it is appropriate for the pre-eminent leader of the generation (or any other spiritual leader, for that matter) to bless the people whenever they follow his instructions by carrying out the mission he had given them. By doing this, he will ensure an alacritous response the next time he calls upon them.

Blessings make an enormous difference. *Horav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita*, posits that a *brachah* can catalyze good fortune – if the petitioner believes that Hashem will respond favorably as a result of the blessing. He believes in the merit of the *tzaddik*, righteous person, to intercede with Hashem, and he believes that the Almighty will listen. Indeed, when the Jews of Dvinsk would petition the *Rogatchover Gaon, zl*, for a blessing, he would instruct them to “go to the *Kohen*,” a reference to the “other” *Rav* of Dvinsk, *Horav Meir Simchah HaKohen*, the *Ohr Sameach*. *Rav Meir Simchah* was known to greet anyone who would solicit his blessing with a pleasing countenance and offered abundant blessing. He was wont to say to the petitioner, “Since you believe that my blessing will have efficacy – then be blessed, my son.”

Even the most efficacious blessing must be affirmed by the petitioner, or else it remains lacking. The following episode underscores this idea: A well-known *segulah*, omen, for success, salvation and good fortune is the purchase of *Maftir Yonah* on *Yom Kippur*. The Torah reading for *Minchah* on *Yom Kippur* is auspicious, and the *Haftarah* is equally so, serving as a symbol for *teshuvah*, repentance. One year, the *Zichron Moshe Shul* in Yerushalayim was the scene of a bidding war between two congregants – each wanting the *z’chus*, merit, of *Maftir Yonah*. The price kept rising quickly, until it was beyond the reach of the man who had been its fortunate annual beneficiary. He turned to the venerable *Rav* of the *shul*, *Horav Yisrael Yaakov Fisher, zl*, and asked, “What should I do? I cannot go any higher.”

*Rav Fisher* replied, “So you will not have it one year. Allow the other person to have it.”

“No, it is a *segulah* for *arichas yamim*, longevity. That is something that I will not forego,” the fellow replied.

“If that is the sole reason that you are bidding for it,” *Rav Fisher* said, “Then I bless you with all my heart that you live a long time.” *Rav Fisher* repeated the blessing a number of times. The other fellow bought *Maftir Yonah* for the first time. Everybody went home happy.

Sadly, the man who was *mevater*, complied with Rav Fisher's request, did not even live out the coming year. His family was grief-stricken, especially inconsolable concerning the awareness that had their father not given in, he might quite possibly still be alive. When Rav Fisher visited the family during the *shivah*, seven days of mourning, he was immediately questioned accusingly, "The Rav convinced our father to 'take the money and run.' Had our father hung in there, he quite possibly would still be alive. What happened to the Rav's blessing?" the family asked.

The Rav replied, "The blessing was a good and proper blessing. Indeed, I reiterated it a number of times. There was, however, one hindrance: your father did not answer *Amen*. A blessing which is not affirmed is restricted and stunted."

Who has the ability to offer the blessing? Does it have to be a distinguished scholar, Torah leader or *tzaddik*, righteous person? Normally, one would suggest that all of the above are criteria for establishing one's credentials to grant blessing. The following story indicates otherwise:

A couple in Yerushalayim had been married for seventeen years, and, while they were blessed with a wonderful, loving, harmonious marriage, something was missing in their lives: Children. After seventeen years of marriage, and many trips to great *Rebbes* – both to the living and to those who had passed on – with countless visits to the greatest fertility experts, personal supplication and attempting every *segulah* known to man, their marriage had not produced a child. Needless to say, they were heartbroken. Indeed, the fellow had done everything – except give up hope. He still believed that one day they would have a child. He decided to petition *Horav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita*, for help.

After relating everything that the couple had done in the last seventeen years, Rav Chaim replied, "After all that you have done, how can I help you? You have done it all." The young man, whom we will call Reuven, was relentless. He was not giving up that easily. "Please, *Rebbe*," he wailed, "help me! Take pity on me!"

Finally, Rav Chaim said, "*Chazal* teach in *Meseches Chullin* 89a, 'The world exists only on account of one who muzzles himself at a time of provocation and refrains from acting.' *Chazal* apply the *pasuk* in *Iyov* 26:7, '*Toleh eretz al blimah*, He suspends the earth on nothingness.' *Chazal* take the word *blimah* and separate the syllables, creating two words: *bli – mah*, referring to someone who does not respond to someone who is *bolem es piv*, muzzles his mouth." Rav Chaim added, "If one who restrains himself during a dispute, refusing to respond to humiliation, has the power to sustain the world, surely such an individual can effectively bless you with a child."

Easier said than done. Yet, Reuven needed no more. This was his one last thread of hope. Regrettably, locating that rare individual who was so selfless that he would never stick up for himself – one who would accept shame with dignity – was more difficult than he could imagine. Finally, one night as he entered a wedding hall, he noticed his good friend, Moshe, in a dispute with

another man. The other man seemed to be winning what appeared to be a one-sided argument, since he was the one who was throwing all of the verbal punches. Moshe had not yet had the opportunity to respond, as this other fellow was heaping scorn upon scorn on him.

This was the moment for which Reuven had been waiting. He immediately ran over to Moshe and pulled him aside. "Please do not respond to his diatribe," he said to Moshe. "Ignore him, and he will eventually stop."

"That is easy for you to say," Moshe told Reuven. "You are not the one who is being disgraced."

"Nonetheless, please do not reply," Reuven begged. Meanwhile, the accuser was having a field day. After all, Moshe's lack of response to his accusations proved that they were true. This added fat to the fire, as the accuser began to berate and humiliate Moshe even more strongly than before.

"Please do not permit him to get to you," Reuven entreated. "Moshe, you are bigger than this. Do not allow a little humiliation to take you down to his level." Moshe listened, and, after a few more minutes, when people saw that the name-calling was nothing more than that, that there would be no fight, they left. Reuven immediately asked Moshe to bless him with a child.

Moshe was incredulous. "Are you out of your mind? Me? How can I grant you a blessing? I am far from righteous. At best, I am a simple Jew." Reuven was adamant and stood his ground. He would not leave until Moshe blessed him, and he did. Reuven answered with a resounding "*Amen!* May it be Hashem's Will!" Reuven truthfully felt that his wait was over. He and his wife would soon be blessed with a child.

Moshe asked Reuven for an explanation, a request to which Reuven readily complied. "I never thought I could be the address for blessings," Moshe said, "but, if so, I bless you wholeheartedly that a child should soon grace your home." Less than a year later, his blessing was fulfilled.