

As Hashem commanded Moshe. (38:22)

Nineteen times (actually eighteen, with a slight deviation in the nineteenth), the Torah makes a point of emphasizing the peoples' dedication to prepare the Mishkan and all of its appurtenances in accordance with Hashem's command, as conveyed through Moshe Rabbeinu. This teaches us, explains Horav Mordechai Illan, zl, that, even concerning the Mishkan, which is totally imbued with Hashem's Presence and is the essence of kedushah, sanctity, it is possible to be penetrated with a machasheves pigal, an unacceptable, deviated thought, as was evinced with the construction of the eigel ha'zahav, Golden Calf, so close following the Giving of the Torah. Nothing is protected. Thus, it is vital that concerning each and every area of labor, the Torah underscores that it was carried out, kaasher tzivah Hashem es Moshe, "as Hashem commanded Moshe."

In the beginning of Parashas Beha'alosecha, the Torah writes concerning the kindling of the Menorah, Vayaas kein Aharon, "And Aharon did so." Rashi teaches, melamed shelo shinah, "This teaches us that he did not deviate one iota from that which he was commanded." He did not add anything of his own. This was unlike his two sons, Nadav and Avihu, who, due to their overwhelming zeal and passion to serve, went beyond the initial command.

All too often we have well-meaning people who just want to "do," to "help," to "create," to "make," to the point that they act in accordance with their emotions, despite the fact that there are greater, more knowledgeable, and far-seeing individuals who disagree. Their insight includes the larger picture, to which these novices are not privy, specifically because of their intellectual inexperience.

Horav Yaakov Yitzchak HaLevi Ruderman, zl, derives from here the overriding significance that each detail plays in the scheme of the larger spiritual picture. The Shemoneh Esrai was established to coincide with the eighteen, "kaasher tzivah Hashem es Moshe." The Rosh Yeshivah reiterates that it is a grave error to suggest that it is sufficient to perform a mitzvah on a general basis, even if one does not pay much attention to all of its details. If a detail is missing, the mitzvah is deficient. We observe that when Avraham Avinu served the angels, the Torah makes a point of underscoring every point in the process, every detail. Indeed, for every detail which he himself executed, the Jewish nation, later in time, received Heavenly beneficence. For every detail that he performed, his descendants received the reward. Details, regardless of how small, are of supreme significance. Every detail, the minutae involved in every mitzvah, is all part and parcel of the entire mitzvah. It is very much like a large orchestra that is missing one instrument. To the intelligent ear, it is off-key, since it lacks perfect harmony.

Each individual Jew is important, and everything that he does, regardless of its impact, is a contribution to the collective Klal Yisrael which Hashem holds very dear. There is a well-known story, made famous by Rabbi Paysach Krohn, but well-worth repeating, due to the powerful message that it conveys.

Arturo Toscanini was an Italian maestro whose life spanned both the end of the nineteenth century and a good part of the twentieth century. During his professional career, he led concerts throughout the world. Known as an absolute perfectionist, he had few peers. He had a biographer who would interview him periodically, as part of a book he was writing about the iconic conductor. One evening, he called Toscanini and requested, since he would be in town the next night, that he come

over to spend some time interviewing him. Toscanini responded in the negative, saying that he would be doing something important which required his total concentration. Hence, he could not be interrupted. The writer was not one to be rebuffed. “Maestro, what is it that you are doing that is so important?”

The maestro explained, “There is a concert being played overseas. I just happened to have been the conductor of that symphony orchestra, but, this year, I could not make it. I am going to listen on short wave radio to the new conductor lead the orchestra. Now you understand why I cannot be interrupted.”

“Maestro, I would never interrupt you. Indeed, it would be my greatest pleasure simply to watch you listen to a concert played by an orchestra which you once led. I will be on the side in a corner of the room, and I will not utter a sound.”

“Well, if you promise to be perfectly still, I will allow you to stay.”

The next night, the biographer arrived a bit early, took his seat, and prepared to listen to the orchestra. It was truly a magnificent rendition, one hour of amazing brilliance, both on the part of the orchestra and of its conductor. “That was exceptional! Absolutely magnificent!” the writer exclaimed at the end of the concert.

“Not really,” Toscanini said.

“Why not?” the writer asked.

“There were supposed to be 120 musicians, amongst them 15 violinists. There were only 14 violinists who played,” he responded.

The writer was floored. How could the maestro be so sure that one violinist was missing? He was not there. He was listening by short wave radio. He had to check this out. The next morning, the writer put in a call to the music director who confirmed Toscanini’s claim. Apparently, at the last moment, one violinist became ill and could not play!

The writer called Toscanini and said, “Sir, I owe you an apology. I doubted you when you said that one musician was missing. I was wrong. You were right, but how did you know?”

“There is a great difference between you and me. You are a spectator who is a part of the audience. To the audience, it all sounds the same. I am the conductor, the maestro who knows every note that has to be played. Every note has its unique sound and function as part of the total harmony. I can tell when a note is missing.”

The lesson is obvious. Every Yid has a role in the scheme of Hashem’s world. While some make more “noise” than others, and the role played by some individuals is “perceived” as being greater than that played by others – we are all part of the master orchestra, choreographed, directed and conducted by the Supreme Conductor, Hashem. He knows when a note is missing. He even knows why the note is missing. If one is part of the orchestra, he must play.