

And the name of one was Gershom... and the name of one (the other) was Eliezer. (18:3,4)

The *Baalei Mussar*, Ethicists, exhort us to live on the bare minimum in terms of material needs. The *Tanna* in *Pirkei Avos* teaches us the recipe for Torah living: *Pas ba'melech tochal, u'mayim ba'meshureh tishte*, "Bread dipped in salt, and measured water"; *v'al haaretz tishan*, "and sleep on the floor." We can do without luxuries. When it comes to spiritual benefits, Torah achievements, one should not be *mistapek b'muat*, suffice with a little. We should be filled with a passion to achieve greater and even greater levels of erudition in Torah. *Horav Reuven Karlinstein*, *zl*, applies this rule to explain what seemed to be an inconsistency in Moshe *Rabbeinu's* behavior.

The Torah relates the names of Moshe's sons, listing them as "the name of one was Gershom – the name of one was Eliezer." Once it lists the name of the first one (the name of one), it should follow with, "the name of the second one"; rather, the Torah continues with "the name of one." Why? *Chazal* (*Midrash Tanchuma Parashas Chukas* 8) relate that when Moshe ascended to Heaven, he heard the voice of Hashem studying the *parsha* of *Parah Adumah*. Hashem was recalling a *halachah* in the name of Rabbi Eliezer: "Eliezer, *bni*, My son, says an *eglah*, calf (referring to *eglah arufah*, the axed heifer), is one year old, and a cow (referring to the *Parah Adumah*) is two years old."

Moshe asked Hashem, "The Heavens and earth are all Yours; yet, You relate a *halachah* in the name of a flesh and blood creation?" (Moshe was astounded that the Almighty would mention a *halachah* from a human source, if the entire Torah is all from Him). Hashem replied, "A righteous person (Rabbi Eliezer) will one day rise in My world and commence his lecture on *Parah Adumah* with these words" (distinguishing *Parah Adumah* from *Eglah Arufah* in their ages). When Moshe heard this, his reaction was: "Master of the world, may it be Your will that this *tzaddik* shall be one of my descendants." Hashem responded, "By your life (the language of an oath), he will be from your descendants". Thus, the name of that "one" is Eliezer, a reference to Rabbi Eliezer of the *Talmud* whom Moshe pleaded should be one of his descendants. This is the meaning of, "And the name of the 'one' – the specific one – for whom Moshe prayed".

Rav Karlinstein questions this *Midrash*. There is nary an individual in all of history who has greater *zechuyos*, merits, than Moshe. The entire Torah – written and oral – is attributed to his merit. For thousands of years we Jews have devoted ourselves to studying the Torah which he brought down from *Sinai*. Moshe has a portion in every *Yid's* Torah learning. Yet, this was insufficient for him. He insisted that he wanted one more merit: *Yehi ratzon sheyihei zeh meichalatzei*, "May it be Your will that Eliezer, who teaches the law concerning *Parah Adumah*, should descend from me." Is there no such thing as enough?

Rav Karlinstein derives a powerful lesson here – one that would serve us well to apply to our own Torah endeavor. Our quintessential *Rabban Shel Kol Yisrael*, *Rebbe* of the entire Jewish nation,

was never satisfied when it came to spiritual merit, to Torah achievement. Regardless of what he had accrued, if he could achieve more – then he wanted it, and he would do anything in order to garner for himself this added opportunity. Every bit of added honor for Hashem is an unparalleled opportunity. Who can say “enough”? We certainly would not want Hashem to say “enough” with regard to us.

Why would a person shy away from challenge, if, in fact, it could earn for him incredible merit? How many of us could have gone that “extra mile,” but, for various reasons which we suddenly cannot seem to remember, we have stopped short of our goals? How many of us have been satisfied with mediocrity, refusing to put forth the effort to go to the next level? I recently saw a profound thought attributed to *Horav Tzadok HaKohen, zl, m'Lublin*. He says: “Just as one must believe in Hashem, so, too, one must believe in himself. Hashem wants us to believe in our strengths, capabilities, ability to overcome evil and achieve greatness.”

We shy away from challenge because many of us do not believe in our ability to succeed. To serve Hashem properly, one must constantly traverse challenges. A fool gives up before he even starts. A bigger fool gives up midway. If he could make it this far, he can make it the rest of the way. Every achievement is ultimately the work of Hashem. He blesses our endeavor. If we do not bother to endeavor, however, what is He going to bless?

Furthermore, it is not all about reaching our goal. In the journey of life, even if we do not reach our intended goal, the mere fact that we “made the trip” earns for us immense reward. I read about a special woman, the mother of five children, who was tragically struck with a brain tumor in her early forties. She did not