

These are the reckonings of the Mishkan. (38:21)

Building a “home” for the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, here on earth was apparently top priority for the nascent Jewish nation. They had received the Torah at Sinai amid a Revelation unparalleled in history. The *Mishkan* was to be the continuum of that Revelation, a place where Jews could relate to Hashem “dwelling” in their midst. Hashem commands us to make a Sanctuary for Him, after which He will reside within us. If our lives outside the Temple environs are consecrated by the understanding, purity and devotion taught within the Sanctuary, then the Mishkan serves as the source for the Mishkan within ourselves. In this manner we seek the presence of Hashem not only in the Temple but among and within us wherever we go. Having said this, basking in Hashem’s Presence would seem to be the apex of spiritual achievement in this corporal world. *Chazal*, however, inform us that the *mitzvah* of *hachnosas orchim*, hospitality to those in need, takes precedence over receiving the *Shechinah*. Indeed, Hashem was in the midst of visiting Avraham *Avinu*, when he was compelled to excuse himself to attend the guests that had arrived at his tent. The question is obvious: What is so special about hospitality that it overrides receiving the *Shechinah*?

Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl, quotes the *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos* (4:2), “One hour of repentance and good deeds in this world is worth more than a life of eternity in the World-To-Come.” This teaches us that Hashem places us in this world for a purpose: to serve Him. Service means action, and action supersedes any spiritual revelation to be attained in this world, or even in the next. If an opportunity to fulfill a *mitzvah* presents itself during a period that we have dedicated to Torah study, or in which we are involved in any other spiritual endeavor (other than active *mitzvah* performance), one must take off from his present endeavor/experience and hasten to perform the *mitzvah*.

The bottom line is: All spiritual ascendancy encounters have one ultimate goal: action. Revelations are wonderful only if they lead to performance. *Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl*, was once reciting *Krias Shema* when he heard two men disputing which one of the two was obligated to bury a deceased. *Rav Yisrael* removed his *tallis* and *tefillin* in middle of *Krias Shema* – and scurried to bury the deceased. It was not his responsibility; he was wearing his *tallis* and *tefillin*; he was in the midst of reciting *Krias Shema*, but a *mitzvah* had surfaced and he, being a man of action, jumped at the opportunity to serve his Master.

Action, pro-activity, applies to all areas of Jewish life. We live with a purpose; we are a people on a mission. While our goals may vary – some focus on erudition, others on goal-oriented, financial success – our ultimate goals are Torah dissemination and acts of lovingkindness. Yet others devote themselves to the arena of Jewish education or the rabbinate. They all have one principal recipe for success: action. The premier architect of Torah *chinuch*, education, in America was *Horav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, zl*. A complete treatment of his life and legacy would require a volume (of which we have a well-written one) just to peruse his daily schedule. His life story is an inspiration which should galvanize us to action.

Rav Shraga Feivel arrived in the *Bais Hamedrash* each morning before *Shacharis*. He followed this with a breakfast of hot cereal and a cup of milk at home. He would return to the *Mesivta* with exuberance, having thought of new approaches he wanted to try. He would then stand by the door, with his pocket watch in hand, to greet each student. When a boy arrived late, *Rav Shraga Feivel* stared at his watch in disbelief (so to speak). His *gut morgen*, good morning, rendered curtly, was all the rebuke the student required. He had conveyed his message. *Rav Shraga Feivel* could not fathom how anyone, student or *rebbe*, could be late for Torah study. He would declare to his students, "If we are striving to build *Yiddishkeit*, how can we afford to waste a minute?" Time was very important to him, and he communicated his feelings to his students. He would admonish his students to learn, and, if they did not want to learn, they should at least play ball – anything but sit around doing nothing.

Rav Shraga Feivel visited every classroom daily, always issuing carefully chosen comments to encourage or subtly rebuke the students. When his words went over the students' heads; they were directed towards the *rebbe*. He set aside part of each day for private discussions with individual boys. He spoke to each student at least twice annually. He maintained an extremely close relationship with his *rebbeim*, lauding their achievements and encouraging them to grow to even higher heights.

Late afternoon was when *Rav Shraga Feivel* taught his select *shiurim*, lessons. On most nights, he returned for night *sefer*, evening study programs. His day did not end with his classes. When he went home, he began anew his work on behalf of the *klal*, community at large. He was a man who did not live for himself. This was his recipe for success.