

Beha'alotecha

by Benjamin Gee - Tuesday, June 18, 2019

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Our efforts in one mitzvah will always help lead to another...

Why is this mitzvah different from others?

Throughout the Torah when Hashem presents a mitzvah, He commands Moshe to command the people to carry it out. But in parashat Beha'alotecha we are given the mitzvah of 'Pesach Sheini'. This was to be the first anniversary of the exodus from Egypt, and the first Pesach on record was going to be celebrated. However, some of the people came with a complaint. They said "L'ma nigara – why should we be diminished?" – why should we miss out? "Anachnu t'maim l'nefesh adam" – we are impure!

According to the Talmud, they may have been those who had been carrying the coffin of Joseph or perhaps they had been engaged in a 'meit mitzvah' – assisting somebody who had died and who needed burial – and as a result they were impure. They couldn't participate in the celebration of Pesach, so they said "why are we being diminished?" They were complaining about the fact that they were to be omitted.

Moshe was stumped, he didn't know what to say. Therefore, he said to them "imdu v'eishma", just please wait here – and I will ask Hashem. Isn't it amazing, how Moshe had that hotline to God?

And then Hashem replied, and He said 'these people have a point! We will establish a Pesach Sheini one month later for the sake of all those who will have been 'tamei' at the time at the first Pesach.'

Sforno explains that at the root of the people's complaint was their appreciation of the concept of 'Mitzva goreret mitzvah' – one mitzvah leads to the performance of another mitzvah! The enjoyment of one mitzvah prompts us to want to benefit from the enjoyment of other mitzvot. For sure Pesach is not amongst the easiest of mitzvot to perform, and yet the people were insistent – 'we want our Pesach, we don't want to be diminished!'

They also appreciated the value of mitzvot. They could easily have said 'We are exempt, - brilliant! Everybody else, you do what you have to – we are the lucky ones!' – not at all! They felt that they were seriously missing out. Therefore, the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini, and the manner in which it is presented in parashat Beha'alotecha by Hashem, teaches us how fortunate and privileged we are to be able to live a life of mitzvot. If ever we are not able to perform one, we feel seriously diminished.

Shabbat Shalom