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AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

# תשובה



אור ישראל

Self Inspired

PARSHAS  
KI SAVO

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## SLOW AND STEADY

**P**arshas Ki Savo records the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim* — the requirement to bring the first ripened fruits to the *Beis Hamikdash*. Once there, the farmer would recite a passage that is familiar to many of us, as we find it in our *Pesach Haggadah*. This passage would recount the story of our forefathers, how Yaakov went down to *Mitzrayim*, and how the Egyptians enslaved the Jewish nation.

When reading this account, it would appear that one day the Egyptian populace rose up and enslaved the Jewish people. However, the *Ritva*,<sup>1</sup> (R' Yom Tov ben Avraham Asevilli, 1260–1320) based on the *Gemara*<sup>2</sup> weaves a different picture.

He writes that the Jewish subjugation did not befall them in one fell swoop. Rather, they were enticed with arguments and entreaties, to join with the Egyptians in bettering their country. The Egyptian arguments made sense — “Pharaoh has graciously hosted you as guests, you and your forefathers. Join with us out of gratitude, show the ruler you appreciate his favor.”

Moreover, Pharaoh himself joined in the construction, galvanizing his subjects as they labored under the hot sun. Yet, as the days wore on, the entreaties turned to threats, and their erstwhile coworkers became their taskmasters.

What purpose was there in tricking the Jewish people, slowly bringing them under the subjugation of the Egyptians? Why not enslave them from day one?

The answer, of course, is that it would not have worked. Had the Egyptians announced that the Jews were henceforth slaves, there would have been a rebellion and a battle. Perhaps the Egyptians would have won, but perhaps they wouldn't have. But why *did* this work? Why did the Jews not revolt once they realized what had befallen them?

Human nature is such that once we get used to something, it is difficult to change. Even something as drastic and horrifying as slavery is difficult to resist once one sees themselves in that role.

Sometimes we think that a particular act will be of no consequence, and therefore it is harmless, or worthless. However, we find it is quite the contrary — a small act of kindness, or an extra five minutes of learning Torah can be the start to an amazing career of *avodas Hashem*.

1 *Ritva* on the *Haggadah*, s.v. ויענונו

2 *Sotah* 11a-b

**Human nature is such that once we get used to something, it is difficult to change.**

### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

There is a tendency to think that our actions are of little consequence. Our *aveiros* are ‘harmless,’ and our *mitzvos* don't really change us. It can sometimes be difficult to see the long-term impact of our small actions. How, then, do we give importance to our day-to-day activity?

We can play a mental trick on ourselves — our actions may seem small, but that's because we look at them against the backdrop of our entire lives. But what if this particular action is the one that will put us over the top, good or bad?

Better yet, what if this is the one action that tips the scales of the entire world? If we were to envision the world in perfect balance, and this one action will decide whether humanity is righteous or not... perhaps we would give more value to our actions.<sup>1</sup>

1 *Kiddushin* 40b, *Rambam Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:4



**Create an organization that seeks to inculcate Mussar and Tikkun HaMiddos within Klal Yisrael.** - The response of R' Chaim Kanievsky shlit"a, when asked by family members how to best perpetuate the legacy of his late wife, Rebbetzin Batsheva a"h. Introduction to *Messilas Yesharim*, *Orchos Yosher* edition, pg. 8

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# NO TIME FOR PAIN

"Welcome back," said the hygienist as she led Mrs. Aviva Feig\* to the dentist's examination room. "What are you here for today?"

"I made an emergency appointment, I am in so much pain," Mrs. Feig was barely able to mumble, as she pointed to the left side of her face.

Aviva settled into her seat, and waited for Dr. Fogel. Moments later Dr. Fogel appeared, concern written on his face. After some gentle prodding, and one x-ray later, Dr. Fogel realized Mrs. Feig would need a root canal, right away.

"Root canal? Now? How long will it take, I need to be home by four!"

"Well, it takes about ten minutes for the novocaine to work, and for a root canal we usually wait closer to twenty to be sure. They can be pretty painful. And then about forty five minutes or so, for the actual procedure."

"It will take too long..." Mrs. Feig sat there, mulling her options. Suddenly, "How about this — can you start without novocaine? If it really starts to hurt, I'll tell you, and then give me the anesthetic. But this way we can save some time."

Dr. Fogel stared at her. He had known Mrs. Feig for decades, but something like this had never come up. "I'll do it, but please tell me the moment you are in pain."

Dr. Fogel went to work. Mrs. Feig sat back, closed her eyes, and mentally started to say Tehillim. The pain came, and boy was it painful. She winced, and even groaned. Every so often Dr. Fogel would stop and ask if she wanted anesthetic. But she kept insisting that he continue, which he did.

Amazingly, he finished the entire procedure, and was done in about half an hour. Mrs. Feig thanked him profusely, gathered herself together, and went home.

"But how did you do it?!" asked Tzvi, when his mother recounted the tale.

"Well, I knew he would be done soon. I just kept telling myself, I can hold on one more minute, just one more minute. And look at that! You can endure a lot if you break it up into small steps."

*\*Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

**"How about this — can you start without novocaine? If it really starts to hurt, I'll tell you..."**

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Habit is one of the most powerful forces that a person can use to acquire good *middos*.<sup>1</sup>
- Despite their freedom from Egypt, and the amazing miracles that occurred to them in *Mitzrayim* and beyond, the Jewish people still had a hard time seeing themselves as free people.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Kochvei Ohr*

<sup>2</sup> *Yoma 75b*

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