

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

בשבת



ROSH HASHANAH

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS
RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN

MOMENTARY MOTIVATION

The *mitzvah* associated with *Rosh Hashanah* is the *mitzvah* of *shofar*, which is reminiscent of the feat accomplished by our forefather, Avraham. All his life he waited for a child, a son to carry on his mission. And indeed, at the age of one hundred years old, Hashem granted him this wonderful gift.

Yet, despite Yitzchak being everything Avraham had longed for, when Avraham was commanded to give up his hopes and his dreams for his Creator, Avraham did not hesitate, and was willing to sacrifice it all, just for Hashem.

The story is thrilling, exhilarating, and should inspire all of us — which leads to a perplexing question once the details of what had occurred are understood.

Avraham took Yitzchak to the top of Mount Moriah, ready to carry out Hashem's will. Avraham carefully brought the knife down towards Yitzchak's throat. And then, in that very last moment, a voice rang out, "Avraham, Avraham!" Avraham froze, listening as an angel told him not to sacrifice Yitzchak. Imagine the feelings of Avraham Avinu at that moment. The focus, the dedication, the willingness to give up everything out of love for the Master of the universe. And thus, when Avraham noticed a ram caught up in the thicket, he immediately took it and sacrificed it instead, a physical manifestation of his total dedication to Hashem.

What was this ram doing, stuck in a bush? Rashi¹ explains that the *Satan* entangled the ram in the brush so as to prevent Avraham from retrieving the ram. Which raises the obvious question — with such inspiration, feeling, and emotion washing over Avraham at this point, was there a chance at all that after realizing the ram was tangled, Avraham would pack up and go home? Of course he would remove the ram from the underbrush, what was the Satan trying to do?

Reb Hensch Leibowitz² clarifies that the *Satan* was certainly not trying to prevent Avraham from slaughtering the ram. Rather, he was trying to lessen the emotional and spiritual heights that Avraham was at, so that when he indeed brought this sacrifice, it was not with the same zeal and focus that it would have been otherwise.

Inspiration can be so fleeting; a person can be at the height of their spiritual journey, and can lose that moment in seconds. The trick is to take that inspiration and make something concrete out of it, a commitment, an action, something that will truly catapult a person to greater heights.

1 *Bereishis* s.v. בקרניו, *Sifsei Chachamim ibid.* s.v. שהיה רץ

2 *Chiddushei HaLev, Bereishis* 22:13

**The trick is
to take that
inspiration and
make something
concrete out of it.**

Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Inspiration can make us feel good, get us motivated, and even have us seriously contemplate changing our ways. But if inspiration is fleeting, what can we do to have it make a lasting impact?

One idea is to make a commitment that is difficult to break. For example, if one is inspired to spend more time learning Torah, at that moment of inspiration, call a friend and ask if you can study together. Once that is set in place, it is difficult to renege on the commitment.¹

Of course, one should be very careful not to commit to something that they cannot reasonably expect to accomplish. Not only will it not work in the long run, it may do more harm than good, causing a person to have ill will towards that particular area of *avodas Hashem*.

1 See *Madreigas Ha'Adom, Bakashas Hashleimos*, Chap. 5



**There is a great obligation to learn
Mussar, no different than the obligation
to daven or to put on Tefillin...**

- R' Yoel of Amstislov, *Kuntres Imrei
Kodesh*, 11

Join Ohr Yisrael's Daily Clips!

Email info@ohr-yisrael.com to receive a 5 minute daily video.

Enhance your day, enhance your life!

To sponsor, or receive by email, please contact us at info@ohr-yisrael.com or call 732-451-GROW

THE ICING OR THE CAKE

Shimmy Lax and Yitzchak Bracha* were good friends, going back to their early years in school. They laughed at each others' jokes, knew their likes and dislikes, and were generally very close. They had both attended the same high school, and after graduating, they both wanted to do their 'year in Israel,' before moving on.

Luck had nothing to do with them winding up in the same place, they had made a pact to go to the same *yeshiva*. This *yeshiva* specifically catered to sincere boys with a weaker background, seeking to augment their Torah knowledge as best as they could in one year.

Shimmy and Yitzchak were both having an amazing time. They enjoyed the *shiurim*, the *rebbeim*, and the fact that they were in *Eretz Yisrael*. The land was gorgeous, the people were amazing, and they both felt like they found themselves.

As Pesach neared, though, it was clear that something was changing for Yitzchak. No longer did he speak about the classes he was planning on taking, or the difficulties he may face in college the next year. No, he was seriously considering staying in yeshiva for another year. Shimmy, though he liked his studies, did not entertain such thoughts. And, in fact, Shimmy indeed ended up returning home once the year was done, and he went on to the school of his choice.

Yitzchak remained, not just for one year, but for a total of three years. And though he ended up joining Shimmy in university, those three years changed the course of his life — the career path he chose, even the type of person he chose to marry.

Years later, the yeshiva had an alumni reunion, with their Rosh Hayeshiva in attendance. The room quieted when Rabbi Binyomin Boswell got up to speak. After some introductory remarks, Rabbi Boswell then launched into the main part of his speech. "As you know, I've been in our yeshiva for over twenty years, and I've seen many people walk through its doors. Some remain, they retain a connection to their *rebbeim*, they retain a connection to the Torah and *HaKadosh Boruch Hu*. Others, though very fine people, unfortunately do not take the *yeshiva* with them. They do 'their year,' and they move on. What, may I ask, is the difference?

"In my opinion, it is the difference between a *talmid* and a tourist. Both come to 'check out' the *yeshiva*, but the mindset is totally different. The 'tourist' comes in knowing that they will leave in a year. What are they here for? For inspiration. And that inspiration can only go so deep. The *talmid*, though, comes in to learn. For the *talmid*, inspiration is, well, inspirational. But it's the icing, it's not the cake. And that indeed makes all the difference."

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

DID YOU KNOW?

- If one is self inspired instead of relying on others, they will have a constant source of motivation for *avodas Hashem*.¹
- When a person is inspired to do what is right because of a deep recognition of the truth — that inspiration lasts. Anything else, however, dissipates.²

¹ *Rabbeinu Yonah* on *Pirkei Avos* 1:14 s.v. הוא היה אומר

² *Michtav M'Eliyahu*, Vol. II, pg. 246

info@ohr-yisrael.com

Ohr Yisrael is a global initiative seeking to energize, enlighten, and empower Klal Yisrael to make lasting personal change, using the profound systems and guidance that have been crystallized and in the classic Sifrei Mussar, presented in the language of today.