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***"And it came to pass on the day that Moses had finished setting up the Sanctuary..."***

We read in this week's Torah portion, Naso, that after the Jewish people finished constructing all of the Sanctuary's different components, they brought them to Moses so he could erect it. The massive wooden planks were just too heavy; even working together, the Jews were unable to build the Sanctuary by themselves.

Recognizing this dilemma, Moses asked G-d how human beings could be expected to perform such a difficult task. In response, G-d instructed Moses to put his hand on the enormous boards, whereupon they rose by themselves. The Sanctuary was thus erected in a miraculous manner.

But why was it necessary for G-d to perform a miracle? According to historians, it was the Jewish slaves who built the pyramids in Egypt. Indeed, the Torah tells us, "They built treasure cities for Pharaoh, Pitom and Ramses." Each individual stone of the pyramids weighed several tons. And yet, as depicted in ancient hieroglyphics and paintings, the slaves somehow managed to drag these tremendous weights and build the colossal edifices that continue to exist even today.

The wooden planks of the Sanctuary weighed far less than these stones. Why then did the Jewish people find it impossible to lift them? Why was it necessary for the Sanctuary to be erected by means of a miracle?

The answer lies in the fact that the pyramids were built by slave labor, by avodat parech (back-breaking, rigorous work). The only reason the Jewish slaves were able to move the stones was because Pharaoh compelled them to. The Jewish people had no choice; they obeyed Pharaoh's commands out of fear. This fear motivated them to tie themselves together with rope (as seen in the paintings) and perform the seemingly superhuman feat.

Building the Sanctuary, however, involved an entirely different type of work. The Sanctuary was an edifice to be erected willingly, with joy in being able to execute G-d's command. However, the wooden planks proved too heavy for the Jews to lift.

G-d didn't want the Sanctuary to be built out of a sense of compulsion. Its erection was a happy event, not a sorrowful one. He therefore made a miracle to express this concept, and the Sanctuary was erected with a feeling of true freedom and liberation. This same principle applies to the erection of our own individual "Sanctuaries" through the performance of G-d's mitzvot. Observing the Torah's commandments should never be considered "back-breaking labor"; rather, we must strive to carry out G-d's commands willingly and joyfully, secure in the knowledge that G-d grants us His full assistance. (Adapted from Hitva'aduyot 5745, L'CHAIM - ISSUE # 570, 1999)

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***This is the law of the Nazir, on the day that the days of his abstention are completed... (6:13)*** Why does the Torah section dealing with the laws of the Nazir follow immediately after the section dealing with the laws of the Sotah? To tell you that whoever sees a Sotah's ruin should forswear wine. (Rashi)

Once, in the early days of Chassidism, a learned Jew happened upon a farbrengen (a Chassidic gathering). Taking in the sight of half-empty vodka bottles on the table, of Jews singing and dancing instead of studying Torah, he cried: "Jews! The Holy Temple is in ruins, Israel is in exile, and you dance and drink?!"

Present at the farbrengen was Rabbi Dovid Ferkus, a senior disciple of the Baal Shem Tov. "I have a question for you," said Rabbi Dovid to the visitor. "In one place, Rashi writes that a Nazir's vow to abstain from wine is an appropriate reaction for one who witnesses human susceptibility to corruption by physical appetites. But only a few verses later, Rashi quotes the Talmudic opinion which regards the Nazir's abstinence as a sin. Which is it? Is drinking wine a positive or a negative thing to do?"

"I'll tell you the difference between the two cases," continued Rabbi Dovid. "The first statement by Rashi is addressed to one who 'sees a Sotah's ruin.' A person who is capable of seeing the negative in a fellow Jew, had better not drink wine. Wine will agitate his heart, and he'll probably be roused to discover more failings and deficiencies in his fellows. But someone who is blessed with the ability to see only the good in his fellow—for him to avoid getting together with other Jews for a lechaim! is nothing less than sinful. An infusion of wine into his heart will stimulate it to uncover the hidden good in the hearts of his fellows." (Reshimat Devarim) chabadonline.com

***And when Moses would enter the Sanctuary to speak with [G-d], he would hear the voice speaking to him from above the cover of the Ark of Testimony... and it spoke to him (7:89)*** One might think that this (the fact that only Moses heard the voice of G-d) was because the voice was low. So the verse stresses that it was the voice -- the same voice that spoke to him at Sinai. But when it reached the doorway it stopped, and did not extend outside of the Sanctuary. (Rashi)

A basic tenet of the Jewish faith is that man has been granted the freedom to choose between good and evil, between adherence to his divinely ordained mission in life and rebellion against, or even denial of, his Creator. As Maimonides writes, "Were G-d to decree that a person be righteous or wicked, of if there were to exist something in the essence of a person's nature which would compel him toward a specific path, a specific conviction, a specific character trait or a specific deed...how could G-d command us through the prophets 'do this' and 'do not do this'...? What place would the entire Torah have? And by what measure of justice would G-d punish the wicked and reward the righteous...?"

This is the deeper significance of the "short stop" made by the divine voice at the doorway of the Sanctuary. At Sinai, the words "I Am G-d your G-d" resounded throughout the universe, permeating every creature and creation. At that moment, there was no possibility of doubt in G-d's reality or of nonconformity to His will. But then the world fell silent, and the voice retreated to hover over the "Ark of Testimony" that contains G-d's Torah and confine itself to the four walls of the Sanctuary that houses it.

The volume was not lowered---the voice is no less infinite and omnipotent than it was at Sinai. One who enters the Sanctuary hears a voice that penetrates and permeates all, a voice that knows no bounds or equivocations. But one can choose to remain outside of the domain of Torah, to deny himself the knowledge and the way of life in which G-d makes Himself heard. One can choose to remain outside, in the field of G-d's self-imposed silence. It is this choice that creates the challenge of life, making our every moral victory a true and significant achievement. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe) - chabadonline.com

***"Regard them both as guilty" (Pirkei Avos, Mishna 8, perek 1)***

Reshaim—translated as "guilty", also means "wicked". The very fact that two people are involved in a dispute severe enough to bring them before a judge, appears to indicate that both possess a certain measure of wickedness. When two people cannot resolve their differences without arbitration, both need to increase their love for their fellow man. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe, In the Paths of Our Fathers by Eliyahu Tauger (Kehot), www.ascent.org.il)

FROM MY FATHER'S TALKS: "THE AVODA OF SERVING G-D ACCORDING TO CHASSIDUS COMPRISES ALL KINDS OF LEVELS... THE LEVEL OF "CORPSE" DOES NOT NEED MUCH ELABORATION; BUT, THANK G-D, THERE IS ALSO "REVIVAL OF THE DEAD" IN SPIRITUAL AVODA. A CORPSE IS COLD; THERE IS NOTHING AS FRIGID AS NATURAL INTELLECT, HUMAN INTELLECT. WHEN ONE'S NATURAL INTELLIGENCE COMPREHENDS A G-DLY CONCEPT, AND THE EMOTIONS LATENT IN INTELLECT ARE ENTHUSED AND MOVED BY THE PLEASURE-WITHIN-INTELLECT - THAT IS TRUE REVIVAL OF THE DEAD. (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM, SIVAN 11)

***Adam was the direct handiwork of G-d. No other human being could ever be as magnificent. Yet he had only one temptation to resist and he gave in. Which teaches us that the greatest challenges in life are those that are closest to one's purpose of being. To the point that if you wish to know your central purpose in life, you need only look at where your greatest challenges are. From: "Bringing Heaven Down to Earth" by Tzvi Freeman***