

from “Why?” to “Why not?” puts things into perspective. It encourages you to identify obstacles and plan strategies to overcome them.

So ask yourself the right question and then follow your dream. Your passion can be your success! (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

On the Job

R’ Haim Mordechai Labaton served as the *Av Bet Din* of Aram Soba for many years. He was devoted to his community, and actually took upon himself not to eat in the morning until he’d answered at least one serious question of *halachah*. It is said that one day the morning had already passed, the noon sun was high in the sky, and still no one had brought a problem to him. Worried about her husband, R’ Haim Mordechai’s wife walked to the marketplace and asked two acquaintances to do her a favor. Would they please come up with a question for her husband, so that he could finally eat breakfast!

But that was the exception. Normally, R’ Haim Mordechai’s days were full as he answered the many questions posed to him by his people. Some needed his profound Torah knowledge, and he would spend hours poring over texts to reach an answer. Other problems, though, drew upon his deep knowledge of human nature.

For instance, when an impoverished scholar came to R’ Haim Mordechai desperate for financial help, the *Av Bet Din* promised to do what he could to find him employment. Not long afterwards, R’ Haim Mordechai sat down next to one of the richest men in the synagogue, whom he knew had several sons. When the poor scholar walked by, R’ Haim Mordechai gestured to him to approach. “I have a question that is disturbing me,” he said, making sure the rich man could hear every word he said. “Perhaps you can come and help me with it this afternoon.” The scholar agreed to discuss it with R’ Haim Mordechai and walked on.

“That man must be very learned,” the wealthy man then said, “if even the *Hacham* asks him for help.”

“Yes, he is,” R’ Haim Mordechai replied.

“As a matter of fact, I am looking for a tutor for my eldest son. If the *Hacham* feels this man is such a *talmid hacham*, perhaps he can persuade him to learn with him. I can pay him well.”

R’ Haim Mordechai smiled. His plan had worked!

“I have a feeling I’ll be able to persuade him to take the job.” (Stories of Spirit and Faith)

The Lorraine Gammal A"K Edition

לְעִילּוֹי נְשָׁמַת לָאָה בֵּת בְּהִיָּה

בס"ד

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שַׁבָּת מַטּוֹת-מַס'עִי * מִנְחָה - שְׁמוֹנֶה עָשָׂר

Haftarah: Yirmiyahu 2:4-28, 3:4, 4:1-2

JULY 17-18, 2020 26 TAMUZ 5780

Candlelighting: 8:05 pm

Morning Shema by: 8:25 am

Evening Shema after: 9:03 pm

Shabbat ends: 9:03 pm (R"Y 9:35 pm)

Watch for an email for full Shabbat schedule of minyanim

***Rosh Hodesh Ab* will be celebrated on Wednesday, July 22. No meat meals are permitted (except for Shabbat) from Wednesday night, July 22 until Friday night, July 31. It is also forbidden to buy or wear new clothing on these days.**

Condolences to Mr. Nissim Levy and his family on the passing of his wife, Roselyn.

A Message from our Rabbi

”לֹא יַחַל דְּבָרוֹ”

“He must not violate his word.” (Bamidbar 30:3)

Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein has an interesting *halachic* question, and the answer carries an important lesson: Joe had been overweight for most of his life. He had tried every kind of diet under the sun, but nothing worked. In the end, his hunger always got the best of him. One day he started another diet, but this time he prayed for Hashem’s help. He made a *neder* that if his diet would be successful, he would give \$500.00 to charity.

Over the next six months he lost forty pounds and got himself down to his ideal weight. Joe was so happy that he decided to celebrate with a festive meal. Now that he was skinny he could afford to help himself to a little nosh here and there. Before long he was on his way back up the scales, until he was heavier than ever before.

Was his diet a success? On the one hand, he had reached his ideal weight for a short time. On the other hand, he was heavier than he was when he started, so there was no long term success. Does he have to pay the money he promised to charity?

The Rabbi’s answer was, Joe’s diet was a success and he must pay his *neder* to charity. The fact that he regained his weight afterwards is a different problem, but it does not detract from his obligation to fulfill his *neder*.

Even in the long run, his diet can be considered a success. He saw that he was capable of reaching his ideal weight if he tried hard enough. Having done so once, it would be easier for him to do it again.

The *Gemara* tells us that before a baby is born, he is taught the entire Torah. Then, as he comes out into the world, an angel makes him forget everything. What is the point in teaching him everything, if he will then be forced to forget it?

Some explain that this is an encouragement to us. When we find our Torah study difficult and are tempted to give up, we should remember that we once knew the entire Torah. What we learned once, we can learn again. Another reason is that it is easier to learn something a second time, even if we already forgot it, since some subconscious memory remains.

The same can be said in our case. Since Joe managed to lose weight once, even though he gained it back, it will be easier for him to lose weight again. In this sense, his diet was a success, so he is obligated to pay his *neder* to charity.

Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Reuven Semah

Beyond Logic

When Moshe doesn't seem to be following G-d's instructions, you know something is going on beneath the surface. We find such a case in this week's reading, and a deeper look helps us understand the root cause of anti-Semitism itself.

In *Parashat Matot*, Hashem tells Moshe, "Achieve vengeance for the Children of Israel from the Midianites," but Moshe turns to Israel and tells them "to deliver the vengeance of G-d in Midyan" [*Bemidbar* 31:2-3]. G-d says it is the vengeance of the Children of Israel, and Moshe says it is the vengeance of Hashem! How can Moshe tell Israel something so different than what he was told?

The *Midrash* itself asks this question. And the *Midrash Rabbah* reminds us that after Balak of Moab convinced Bila'am, the Midianite, to curse the Jews, and Hashem prevented him from doing so, Bila'am told the Midianites to get the Jews to sin through immorality, causing Divine punishment. That was the way the Jews could be harmed. As we know, the scheme worked, until Pinhas stopped the Jews from sinning.

So the *Midrash* says: The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to them [the Children of Israel] that "this is only for your own justice, for they caused Me to harm you." Moshe responded, "Master of the Universe! If we were uncircumcised, if we worshiped idols or denied the Commandments, they would not hate us, and they would not pursue us. Rather, it is because of Torah and the Commandments that You gave us. Therefore the vengeance is yours, to "deliver the vengeance of G-d in Midyan."

Anti-Semitism is truly bizarre. It defies logic and reason. You don't need to look into history, either: just look at the common claim that Jewish refugees, chased from their homes across the Arab world after the formation of the modern State of Israel in 1948, are the perpetrators, rather than the victims, of genocide and ethnic cleansing. It is as insane as it is evil, and yet it is voiced constantly.

It is also not a new lie about the Jews. The anti-Semitic tropes remain precisely as they were — and this *Midrash*, which explains the actual root of the problem, predates modern Anti-Semitic expression by millennia...yet understands it perfectly. The Jews are not hated for what they do wrong. The Jews are hated for what they do right.

Think about it. There's only one country in the Middle East where a person can say what he wants about the government and not be thrown in jail. So it's not about human rights. Israel is the one country that keeps coming up with peace offerings, so it is not about peace.

The countries in that region which beat, jail and even behead those who oppose the government are not condemned. Syria and Iraq offer cogent examples of precisely how "peaceful" these countries become once all the Jews have been expelled. So it is not about human rights or peace... except it is.

That is why the Jews are hated. That is what the *Midrash* is telling us. We have Commandments that tell us how to follow a moral course — including to value every human life, and to prefer peace over warfare.

And as the Midyanites knew, the more the Jews are attached to G-d and His Commandments, the greater His protection. So anti-Semitism should never make a person want to be less of a Jew: on the contrary, it requires us to strengthen our connection to *Misvot*, to doing good and bringing blessing and light into the world. The *Misvot* attach us to G-d Who gave them, and Who has protected us throughout history. (Rabbi Yaakov Menken)

Join the Crowd

והקרייתם לכם ערים ערי מקלט... ונס שמה רצח מכה

נפש בשגגה

"You shall designate cities for yourselves, cities of refuge shall they be for you, and a murderer shall flee there, one who takes a life unintentionally" *Bemidbar* 35:11)

Undoubtedly, there were more people making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year, than slayers running to cities of refuge. Why were there signs on the crossroads showing the ways to the cities of refuge (see *Makkot* 10b) and no signs showing the way to Jerusalem?

One of the reasons why crime has become so rampant in our times is that the media continuously reports it. The constant publicizing of crimes plants in some people's minds the idea that crime is glamorous and exciting. If a "gag order" were imposed on reporting crimes and violence, and if the media would only report good deeds, undoubtedly, our society would be much safer.

Similarly, it is inappropriate for an unintentional murderer to continuously ask for directions while fleeing to a city of refuge, since people might begin to talk about having met a murderer. Talking about crime can encourage some feeble minded people to perpetrate crime; therefore, signs are put up to eliminate the need for the murderer to talk to people and the possible consequences which such conversation might produce.

Making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year, by contrast, is a very important *misvah*. Our Rabbis intentionally did not instruct the putting up of signs so as to make it necessary for the people to have to stop and ask directions and, thus, get into conversations about the *misvah* of *aliyah leregel* - pilgrimage. In turn, the people they had spoken to would tell their family and friends of their pleasant conversations with travelers going to Jerusalem to be close to Hashem. Such reports would arouse in the hearers the desire to perform *misvot* and become closer to Hashem. (*Vedibarta Bam*)

Why Not?

Once upon a time, young people would decide on a career path and pursue their goals, combating the ups and downs that inevitably confront success-oriented individuals. This was also a time when, upon reaching a certain age – a point of no return – switching fields of endeavor was not an issue that would even be considered.

There is a trend in the U.S.A today to change career paths at any age. It might be a result of the pressures of society or the idealism of a post-9/11 world, but people are more inclined today than ever before to chase their dreams.

Asking why you should pursue your passion leads to self-doubt, over-analysis, and questioning your ability to succeed. Instead, ask "Why not?" Changing the question