

Pekudei 2014

1.

Optionally stepping up to the plate

Nachlas Tzvi page 253

(39, 32)

"ויעשו בני ישראל ככל אשר צוה ה' את משה כן עשו."

"The children of Israel had done everything that Hashem commanded Moshe, so did they do."

Why does the pasuk say twice "so did they do"? Moshe and Yehoshua and the whole tribe of Levi didn't worship the golden calf. They therefore didn't need to be involved with the avoda (service) of the Mishkan; because the purpose of the Mishkan was to atone for the sin of the golden calf. We might come to incorrectly assume that they were not involved with the Mishkan at all; the pasuk therefore clarifies and states a second time "so did they do". Meaning, Moshe and Yehoshua and the whole tribe of Levi were still nevertheless involved with the Mishkan. The former part of the pasuk that states "had done"; refers to the Jews. However that later part of the pasuk that states "so did they do"; refers to Moshe and Yehoshua and the whole tribe of Levi. We can derive an important lesson from this explanation; **we should become involved with good endeavors even if we are not obligated to do so.**

2.

Dying al Kiddush Hashem

Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein (Aleinu L'shabayach pages 559-560).

"the glory of Hashem filled the Mishkan (Tabernacle)." (40, 35)

"וכבוד ה' מלא את המשכן."

There is a very important but yet morbid shila (question) regarding dying al Kiddush Hashem (sanctifying Gods name). If a goy (gentile) forces a Jew to worship idolatry and the Jew decides (as the Halacha necessitates) to die al Kiddush Hashem. ((סנהדרין עד.)) Is it better to die slowly or quickly? Meaning **if one has the option of dying fast or slow, which way is more optimal?** The logic of running to one's death quickly (such as running into a gas chamber at the time of the holocaust) demonstrates an endearment towards the mitzvah of dying al kiddush Hashem. (Also this will be fulfilling the statement of being quick when it comes to performing mitzvos as stated in Pesachim (4a). (זריזין מקדימין למצות.)) Or perhaps it is better to go slower in order to live longer. A proof to this would be from sefer Yona (1, 12). "Pick me up and throw me into the sea." The question arises, why didn't Yona just jump into the sea himself? The sefer Chasidim answers that Yona wanted to gain several additional moments of life. So which is better, dying slowly or quickly? There was a story with the Graf Potocki or Rebbi Avraham ben Avraham. He converted to Judaism and the goyim (gentiles) took him out to kill him because of

his conversion and adamant decision not to convert back to christianity. Prior to killing him, they walked him around the city in order to discourage others from converting. They attempted to scare others away from converting to Judaism. The Jews, out of fear, hid in their homes behind locked doors and closed the shades of their rooms. When Rebbi Avraham ben Avraham passed the house of the Gra, the Gra opened his window wide and called out ‘Rebbi Avraham, go quickly.’ What is the explanation of the Gra’s statement? Rebbi Avraham wasn’t sure if it was better to go slowly or quickly as stated above. **The Gra informed Rebbi Avraham that it is better to go fast.** However, Rabbi Zilberstein asks that logically it is seemingly better to go slower because it increases the likelihood that the death sentence might be annulled in the meantime? This concept is similarly stated in the Machina Yisroel (written by the Chafetz Chaim) regarding a soldier who needs to perform melachah (forbidden work) on Shabbos. Is it better for him to perform this melachah ben hashmashos (twilight) rather than on Shabbos itself (halachically this would seemingly be more logical)? The answer is, no, he should not perform this act ben hashmashos because maybe they will change their minds and not make him perform that malacha. Furthermore, Rebbi Avraham’s mother pleaded with him to convert back to christianity in order to be saved. To which he responded ‘mother, you are very dear in my eyes; however, the truth is dearer in my eyes. I’m not going back to Christianity.’ Subsequently, she ran to the Caesar and asked him to overrule the execution order. She actually ended up successfully convening the Caesar and got the approval that her son should live. However, by the time they reached the location where Rebbi Avraham was being burned to death, it was too late, he was already killed. The question arises; if he would have gone slower then he would have been saved. So seemingly it is better to go slower. How, then, can we understand the Gra’s instruction to Rebbi Avraham to go quickly? We can explain the aforementioned statement of the Gra in two ways; **if Rebbi Avraham would have gone more slowly then perhaps he would have regretted his decision to die al kiddush Hashem and change his mind by deciding not to die, but rather to convert back to Christianity. (According to this answer and explanation; in a typical case of someone dying al Kiddush Hashem, he should go slowly.)** Additionally the mitzvah of dying al Kiddush Hashem is too important to be delayed, even if delaying it might result with the decree being countermanded. (According to this answer and explanation; in a typical case of someone dying al Kiddush Hashem, he should go quickly.)

It seems like the ‘custom’ is to go slow. This is the natural response because people don’t want to die and perhaps the decree will be rescinded.

(This should just be Torah and never needed to be applied, amen.)