

Rabbi Yisroel Weinberg
 Director,
 Kiruv Activism
 Department
 Project Inspire
 (646) 961-4961
 yweinberg
 @projectinspire
 .com

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MONTHLY PARSHA SHEET

Parshas Yisro
 פרשת יתרו
 2011 / 5771
 Volume 2
 Issue #4

In The Merit of Nashim Tzidkaniyos

By Rabbi Moshe Zionce

“**A**nd Moshe ascended to Hashem, and Hashem called to him from the mountain, saying ‘so shall you say to the Bais Yaakov and tell it to the Bnai Yisroel’ (שמות י:ט:ג) Rashi comments that “Bais Yaakov” is a reference to the women, and “Bnai Yisroel” refers to the men. Moshe was instructed to teach the women first and only then to teach the men. Since the beginning of time, all of creation was building towards this crescendo on Har Sinai. The giving of the Torah is at the very summit of our journey through history. At this extraordinary moment, the women were to be taught first.

The Ramban in his introduction to Sefer Shemos refers to Shemos as the Sefer HaGeulah - the book of redemption. It is imperative to understand the crucial role the women play throughout Shemos and in particular, their integral mission in the redemption of the Nation.

“Miriam...took the tambourine in her hand and all the women went forth with tambourine and dances.” (שמות טו:כ:ז) This was the women’s ecstatic response to the miracle of the splitting of the sea and to the subsequent demise of the Egyptians. Rashi comments on that “The righteous women... were certain that Hashem would perform miracles for them, so they took tambourines out of Egypt.”

The Gemarah explains that it was in the merit of the *Nashim Tzidkaniyos* that we were redeemed in Egypt. At that time, the women ensured that the nation prospered even in the midst of the Egyptian servitude (יסוטה יא). Similarly, Chazal teach that all of our great redemptions occurred in the merit of righteous women - on Chanukah, it was Yehudis and on Purim, the redemption transpired through Esther.

What was the particular merit through which redemption occurred? Perhaps, if we could understand the one common thread of greatness, exemplified by all of these extraordinary women, light will be shed on the process of OUR imminent redemption.

“...אני מאמין באמונה שלמה בביאת המשיח...” I believe with a complete faith in the coming of the Moshiach...” Are we confident that our redemption is imminent? We live in a generation where an unprecedented 90% of our fellow Jews do not have a meaningful connection to their Father in Heaven. They are disappearing every hour, seemingly forever. This ominous fact is coupled with the knowledge that the redemption is dependent on a generation that will do *teshuvah*. How can our redemption transpire under these circumstances? If the redemption is dependent on *teshuvah*, how can we insure that all of our brothers and sisters will return?! It seems impossible. Perhaps the solution lies in the secret of the women’s remarkable resolve.

The answer to our question, “Because of which particular merit did the redemption transpire”, seems obvious from the above Rashi. Simply, the women at the splitting of the sea always had tremendous *bitachon*. They

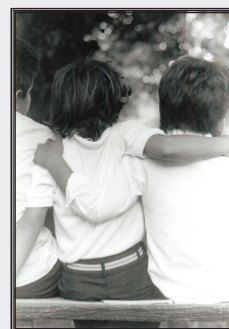
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The Power of Reaching Out With Love

By Rabbi Brian Thau

People think that in order to do kiruv they must be experts, equipped with a ready supply of answers to all the questions that come up. As someone who has been involved in kiruv for over 20 years, I can attest that this assumption is completely untrue. I will demonstrate my point with a personal story.

In 1993, I was the Associate Rabbi at Ohab Zedek in Manhattan. It was just after Simchas Torah davening and I was delivering a speech at the pulpit. I remarked to my audience, “I have never seen this shul so empty.” The congregants looked at me like I was crazy. At the time, our shul members numbered close to one thousand.



I was quick to explain. “I am not looking at how many Jews are here; I am looking at how many Jews COULD be here if everyone would take a second to knock on the door of an unaffiliated neighbor and invite the person to come to shul.”

I continued, “In a few weeks we are having a Friday night dinner program called “Turn Friday night into Shabbos.” I am asking everyone to knock on the door of a neighbor’s apartment and extend an invitation.” I realized that, for many, this would mean going far outside their comfort zones. However, I firmly believed that, in addition to the impact this gesture would have on the less-affiliated Jew, it would have a strong effect on the congregation’s overall level of Avodas Hashem and Ahavas Yisroel.

I hoped that the congregants would become motivated and follow my advice.

A few weeks passed. On Friday, October 29, 1993, the day of our Friday night dinner, a man walked into shul and asked to speak with me. I ushered him into my office where he introduced himself and said, “Rabbi Thau, my name is David, and I live around the corner from your shul. Here is the check for the Friday night dinner tonight; however, I will not be attending.”

I asked David to take a seat. I began by telling him that in all my years as Rabbi, I had never met someone who was willing to pay for a meal that he knew he would not eat. Then, I boldly asked him why he couldn’t attend. He

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knew unconditionally that, if need be, Hashem would send the salvation even in the darkest hour. However, I would like to suggest that the redemptions always occurred as a result of an even greater merit...

"And Paroah's daughter went down to bathe by the river... She saw the basket among the reeds and she sent her maidservant, and she took it." (שמות ב:ה). The Medrash says that the words, "She sent her maidservant" is superfluous. Therefore, according to the Medrash, the word *Amusa* is interpreted to also mean "arm". The *passuk* is alluding to the fact that Basya sent forth her arm to rescue Moshe. The Medrash continues to explain that the daughter of Paroah made the impossible attempt of stretching out her arm to retrieve the infant. The basket was far from reach, yet Hashem miraculously extended her arm and she saved Moshe.

Chazal teach, "אין סומכין על הנס / One is not allowed to rely on miracles." My Rosh Yeshiva of Ner Israel Toronto, Rabbi Gavriel Ginsburg, זצ"ל, taught a profound message on the above Medrash. Basya did not intend that her arm should miraculously extend to save the child. She simply did the very best she could – and Hashem completed the task.

This, I believe, is the secret of the women's messianic power of redemption. It is not simply that the *Nashim Tzidkaniyos* believed that Hashem could do the impossible. They endeavored to make a supreme effort in the face of impossibility. The great women that brought the redemption exerted their deepest resolve, never knowing how it would materialize in salvation. Hashem saw their unwavering commitment and extreme fortitude, and He completed the task. Indeed, Basya, unbeknownst to her, enabled the redemption of the Jewish people as it transpired through Moshe, the child that she attempted to save.

A woman of valor attempts to make a difference, even amidst a world of hopeless distress and extreme need. Expanding on the significance of Basya stretching out her hand, I would like to suggest a deeper meaning in the *passuk* of *Eishes Chayil*:

"כפה פרשה לעני, וידיה שלחה לאביון / She spreads out her palm to the poor, and extends her hands to the destitute." *Eishes Chayil* continues: "צופיה הליכות ביתה, ולחם עצלות לא תאכל / She perceives the ways of her household, and partakes not of the bread of laziness." Perhaps Shlomo HaMelech put a hint in the text to the greatness of Basya and to her dedication to make a difference. The word ביתה / house in the *passuk* contains the exact letters as בתיה / Basya. Therefore, the *passuk* could read: She (the woman of valor) perceives the ways of Basya, which are not to partake of laziness (but action).

Throughout the millennia, Jewish women have risen to the challenge in the face of apparent hopelessness. As in the time of Basya and the *Nashim Tzidkaniyos* of old, Hashem is watching, waiting for us to care enough about our fellow Jews to simply attempt our best effort to "reach out." Just as we were redeemed in Egypt and merited the Torah, may our final redemption come imminently through love and unity. It will be a time when the entire Nation will display tremendous devotion and care for each other. It will be a time of "כאיש אחד בלב אחד" / Like one man with one heart. In this merit our Father in Heaven will undoubtedly respond in kind. **PI**

Good Shabbos,
Moshe Zionce
Director, Project Inspire Toronto

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explained that he was raised in Alabama and had never attended an Orthodox synagogue before. Over the past three weeks, however, he had received numerous visits from his neighbor, Moshe Smith, inviting him to the Friday night event at the shul. He finally decided to tell Moshe "yes" just to get him to stop asking. Still, he felt uncomfortable going to an Orthodox shul and decided that he would pay for the meal without actually attending.

I don't know what possessed me, but I did something that I had never done before. I got out of my seat and walked to David's side of the desk. I put my arm around him and told him, "David, I promise you that you will have a night you will never forget. You will thank me for the rest of your life that I convinced you to attend." Although my words sounded confident, I wondered if I would convince him to change his mind.

David did, in fact, attend. Not only did he enjoy the Shabbos dinner immensely, he also decided to attend my beginners' service for 10 weeks in a row AND be my Shabbos guest for those 10 weeks. This was soon followed by his decision to purchase tefillin, kasher his kitchen, and, ultimately, become fully committed to Yiddishkeit.

Rabbi Allen Schwartz and I were privileged to be under David's chupah and witness his marriage to a wonderful woman, with whom he had committed to raise a family according to Torah. Today, David lives in a large, Orthodox community and has four beautiful children, who are all attending Jewish schools and living a Torah lifestyle.

Somebody once asked David what it was that made him decide to attend that Shabbos dinner. He replied that it was the arm around his shoulder that swayed him. He truly felt that I cared about him and, Baruch Hashem, he was right. I used the secret weapon of loving all Jews regardless of affiliation or commitment. It wasn't an inspiring Torah lecture or a lightning bolt from Hashem. It was the effect of one Jew loving his brother like himself.

This story taught me two important lessons. I realized from my encounter with David just how scared and threatened our disconnected brothers feel about "Orthodox Jews". But I also learned that a simple gesture of genuine love for a fellow Jew can cause all of that discomfort to disappear. **PI**



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