

Parshas Vayakhel

Rabbi Avi Metchik

This weeks Parsha deals primarily with the construction of the Mishkan, the house of Hashem in this world. As we know, the building of the Mishkan called for a large amount of precious metals. Where did these come from? The Torah says in our Parsha (Shemos 35:32) "The men came with the women; everyone whose heart motivated him brought bracelets, nose rings, rings, body ornaments- all sorts of gold ornaments". So we see that much of the precious metals were donations of jewelry from the women.

Targum Onkelos translates this possuk "The men brought [the donations] on the women". This would seem to suggest that the women came to donate their jewelry while still adorned in it. Only when they reached the collection point would they remove the jewelry and make the donation to the Mishkan.

When we read this story in the Torah there are two questions that come to mind. Firstly, why is it that the precious metals were donated from jewelry? Was it just for practical reasons, or is there perhaps a deeper message that lies here. Secondly, what is behind the symbolism of not removing the jewelry until the very last second when they reached the collection point?

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l explains that there is indeed a deeply profound message for all eternity that we can learn from this seemingly simple story. He says that the donors were emphasizing that they were not giving something of little value to them. It wasn't that they simply had no appreciation for money, gold, or silver. The opposite was true; they loved their jewelry, yet they loved Hashem more.

This is why they wore the jewelry until the very last second. They were showing how hard it was to give it away. Their jewelry was special to them, but Hashem and the building of His House was even more special.

Rav Moshe continues, the lesson here is that we must inculcate this thought process into our daily performance of mitzvos. For example, when we put aside time to learn Torah, it's not with the attitude that I have nothing better to do now with my time anyways. Rather we should say, I value my time tremendously, and I could be at work making money or at home spending time with the family. However, I am choosing to give up something valuable to me, because the Torah learning I am going to do is even more valuable! This should be our attitude to all of the mitzvos we perform and chessed activities we take part in.

Rabbi Yechiel Spero tells over a fascinating story which beautifully illustrates this message. He relates the story of seven year-old Rivka Soloveit-

coming closer to the city. He made the decision to flee immediately. Everyone in their family was given five minutes to pack their most precious possessions. Rivka packed clothes and of course her beloved bracelet.

The family boarded a boat which would ferry them across the river. The Brisker Rav asked the captain when they would reach their destination. He was informed that it would be ten minutes after the start of Shabbos. He told the family that Halacha dictated they could walk off the boat with only the clothing on their backs. Everything else would have to remain on the boat until after Shabbos. Of course, the chances of their belongings not being stolen was next to nil.

Rivka would have to abandon her most beloved bracelet on the ship. Under-

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chik, daughter of the famed Brisker Rav, Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik. The year was 1940 and the setting was war-torn Europe, specifically the city of Vilna. Rivka's mother and three sisters had already passed away, the family now consisted of Rivka, her two remaining sisters and five brothers, along with their father the Brisker Rav.

One can imagine the mental anguish and difficulties a young girl must have gone through during the war years. All the more so for Rivka who had additionally lost her mother. Before her mother died she had taken a bracelet off her hand and given it to Rivka. This was the only memento she had of her mother. This became her most precious possession. Every morning she would wake up and say "Good morning, bracelet", and every night before she went to sleep she would kiss the bracelet and wish it good night.

One Friday morning word reached the Brisker Rav that the Germans were

standably she broke down crying. The Brisker Rav approached her and said "My dear daughter. I know how precious this bracelet is to you. However, you must know that Shabbos is even more precious."

Rivka stopped crying and gave her bracelet a kiss. She said "Bracelet, you are my most prized possession and you remind me of my mother who I miss so much. But Shabbos is more important to me than anything! From now on my reminder of my mother will be the holy Shabbos itself. Who knows? Maybe I will see you after Shabbos and maybe I will not, but the Shabbos I will always have." With these words Rivka turned and walked off the boat.

Rivka never did find her bracelet, but she did find within herself a new appreciation for Shabbos and mitzvos in general. Perhaps this is what propelled her to become the great Rebbetzin Rivka Schiff, wife of the legendary Rabbi Yaakov Schiff shlit"l. *Good Shabbos!* ♦