



RABBI AARON Editor, Torah Tidbits

GOLDSCHIEDER

Each week this column will present an original idea and life lesson from the thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt"l.

Shlichut: Finding Our Purpose

The Talmudic description of the embryo learning Torah in the mothers womb offers us an unforgettable portrayal of the way each one of us begins life. Just prior to being and entering the world an angel slaps the child on the lip and it forgets the Torah that was learned in utero. (*Niddah* 30b)

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik took note of another detail in this memorable Talmudic passage. The infant, before birth, must make an oath that he will direct his life to being a person of righteousness (*Yemei Zikaron* p.10).

Whenever an oath or act of swearing is employed, an assignment of import is being undertaken. Two examples of this from the Torah: (a) When Avraham calls on Eliezer to find a wife for his son Yitzchak he has his trusted servant swear to him that he will loyally fulfill this charge. (b) Yaakov summons his son Yosef prior to his passing and Yosef makes an oath that he will bury his

body in the land of Israel in the family plot in Chevron.

In each of these cases one is assigned a crucial task and to act as a *shaliach* in fulfilling an essential deed on behalf of the nation.

Perhaps the individual assigned the most exalted *shlichut* was Moshe. In this case the Holy One Blessed be He Himself assigned him his duty.. "So now go, and I will send you (*ve'eshlachecha*) to Pharaoh, and take My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." The word *shlichut* is found in this verse. Moshe is assigned a task and he is given his marching orders that will in time shape the rest of his life on earth.

The Rav argued that Moshe Rabbeinu's *shlichut* serves as a paradigm for each of us. We are born into this world with the weight of an oath on our shoulders. This means that we are here for a purpose and to live righteously means that our lives must exhibit a dedication and commitment to fulfilling a unique task and mission.

In a rare instance where the Rav quoted from Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, the Rav brought proof to this notion from a memorable passage from the conclusion section of each Yom Kippur *Amida*. We state: "My God, before I was formed I was unworthy, and now that I have been formed, it is as if I had not been formed. I am dust in my life and will surely be so

in my death.” On face value this prayer sounds quite demoralizing.

Every single person has an assignment on earth, and for this reason we are each born in a specific era under specific circumstances. Rav Kook explained this passage in our prayers as follows: Hashem, You know know that had I been born in an earlier generation, in an earlier era, I would have been worthless, unable to accomplish my specific assignment. Before I was created, I had no place in the order of things and events. With the birth of every person at a given time and place, a situation is formed within which he can serve God via the specific assignments given to him. But thus far I have accomplished so few of my assignments that I am unworthy of having been born even in this generation . The miracle of my birth has been wasted; it is thus as if I have never been created (*Derashot HaRav*, pp. 50-51, Out of the Whirlwind, pp. 149-150).

There is a Divine call that we are meant to hear. If man disregards his assignment on earth he lives and dies in vain. There is great capacity in each person to achieve and attain great heights.

The Rav is articulating an idea that resonates deeply:

- A Jew lives life with gusto and enthusiasm; each of us has a great deal to achieve.
- Every person has a unique contribution to make that is singular.
- Apply your personal aspirations and talents toward addressing a greater need that provides for those around you and betters the world at large. ■



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Yoni thanks Hashem for having the opportunity of having Tziporah in his life, to learn of her caring, patience and happiness, to overcome her challenges. May Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world, in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem. With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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