



# REBBETZIN SHIRA SMILES

FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER

## Deep Desire

The book of Bamidbar opens with the command to take a census of the people. The section concludes, “*Vaya’asu bnei Yisrael kechol asher tziva Hashem et Moshe kein asu* — And the children of Israel did according to all that Hashem had commanded Moshe, thus did they do.” (*Bamidbar* 1:54) Why the repetition — “they did, thus did they do”? What is the relevant message here?

The *Alshich Hakadosh* finds a fundamental lesson. Chazal teach that Hashem links a good thought to an action (*Kiddushin* 40a); if one has a good thought he is credited as if he actually accomplished what he intended to do. Therefore, by accepting Hashem’s command, they are credited with doing it. Once they actually implemented the command, it is recorded as well.

What is a “good thought” that is considered as an action? Rav Weissblum in *He’arat Derech* understands that these thoughts are one’s *ratzon*, his positive intention to do a mitzvah. One’s sincere desire is the foundational spark of the mitzvah; its actual fulfillment is solely in Hashem’s hands. Yet, if one is willing to be *moser nefesh*, to go to any extent to do a mitzvah, he will have the Divine assistance to succeed.

“*Bederech she’adam rotzeh leleich bah molichin oto* — along the path a person wishes to proceed, one leads [and assists] him.” (*Makot* 10b) The commentators note that *molichin*

is expressed in the plural form, meaning, each determined effort, every step one takes toward achieving a mitzvah, generates angels that help and assist him to overcome any obstacles that may lay in the way of his goal. The essence of a mitzvah lies in one’s internal commitment and dedication to its fulfillment.

It is important to be honest about one’s desire. How far are we willing to go? At what point might we give up and blame outside circumstances? If we really want to do a mitzvah and can envision all possible challenges, **and** are nevertheless ready to push forward, that desire is credited as a fulfillment of the mitzvah. This was the great declaration of *Am Yisrael* at Har Sinai, “*na’aseh v’nishma*.” Their burning desire to align with Hashem’s Will expressed itself in the word *NA’ASEH* — we will do even before we hear anything at all!

The *Shelah Hakadosh* teaches that Shavuot is a day of judgement. Just like on Rosh Hashanah, Hashem decides our material success, on Shavuot, Hashem judges one’s commitment to mitzvah observance to determine one’s overall success in Torah learning for the coming year. Hashem calculates how much a person will be inspired in his *avodat Hashem*, how one’s Torah learning will affect change and how successfully he will develop his middot. Dovid Hamelech declares, “*Pote’ach et yadecha u’masbia lechol chai ratzon* — You open Your hand and satisfy every living thing [with] its **desire**.” (*Tehilim* 145:16) The *He’arat Derech* explains

that Hashem fulfills one's spiritual desires depending on his *ratzon*, his level of sincerity. It is no wonder that we spend seven complete weeks in preparation for Shavuot, developing and refining our deep desire to serve Hashem.

The Tosher Rebbe *zt"l* in *Avodat Avodah* teaches that Elul, which is known as an "*et ratzon*," is not solely about adding and committing to do more and more mitzvot. It is about strengthening one's *ratzon*, engaging one's drive to do the mitzvot that he is already doing with heightened resolve. Similarly, as we prepare for Shavuot, we can focus on our ultimate desire, to passionately fulfill the Will of Hashem. This genuine yearning will merit us the most positive judgement on Shavuot to have a year filled with spiritual growth, Torah learning and continued inspiration. ■

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