

Staying Inspired

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A few years ago I was shown a very interesting interview of a man who some call Rabbi Rambo. He is a former special ops soldier for the Israeli army who is now a Rabbi with a number of books to his name. His transformation began when on a particularly dangerous mission he had a brush with death, heard a heavenly voice and was miraculously saved. The story is a fascinating one and it highlights the power a singular event has in impacting the direction of a person's life.

It also highlights a critical question. Why is it that some people have these experiences and it changes their lives forever, while other people are inspired for a short while but with no lasting impact? In other words, why aren't all special ops soldiers in the Israeli army now rabbis?!

Thomas Edison famously remarked, "Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration." Inspiration is a critical catalyst, but it is the follow through which will decide if the project is a success or a failure. In our parsha we are told not to let the Matza become Chametz (leavened bread). The difference between the Matza we eat on Pesach and the Chometz we refrain from eating is purely the follow through. The same flour and water is added in either case, the deciding factor is how quickly the mixture will be baked in the oven.

Rashi quotes a Rabbinic play on words that we should not let Mitzvot (commandments) become Chometz either. It is not just the Matza which will suffer when it is left for too long, it is any divine command and truly any project. If the follow up work is not taken up quickly we may find the project has turned into Chometz. This lesson is present not just in the Matza but also in the exodus from Egypt.

There are many instruction the Jews were given in terms of how they were to eat the Pesach sacrifice which remained the manner in which the sacrifice was brought each year. Many of these laws even carry over to the way we conduct our seder today. The timing and even manner in which we eat the Matza mirrors the experience our ancestors had immediately prior to leaving Egypt. There is one seemingly important aspect of the way the Jews ate the Pesach sacrifice which does not carry over to the way the later generations brought the Pesach sacrifice. We are told that the Jews ate the Pesach lamb "*B'Chipazon*" – in a hurried manner. However, when later generations are instructed to eat the same Pesach lamb they are not required to do so.

Rav Tzaddok HaKohen explains that initially when a seminal event occurs and we are inspired we must rapidly funnel the experience into a concrete action or the experience will be lost. In Egypt we needed to immediately concretize the experience of being taken out of Egypt into a Mitzva of eating the Pesach sacrifice. In later generations there was no need for this aspect, once we had crystallized the experience into practice "*Chipazon*" wasn't necessary. This is a critical lesson for us as we try to inspire ourselves

and our families. Inspiration is only the first one percent. We must insure that the ninety-nine percent perspiration follows on its heels.