

Fascinating INSIGHTS

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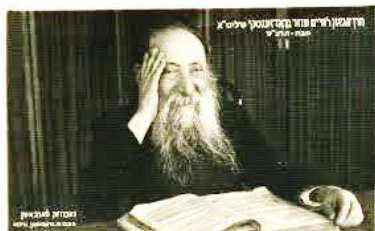
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The Unexpected Rosh Yeshiva of Stollen

In his younger years R' Elazar Shach served as a Rosh Yeshiva in Stollen. How did a Litvish gadol become a Rosh Yeshiva in a Chassidish yeshiva?

There was once a rabbinic conference in Lithuania, where gedolim, Admorim, and others were gathered. Suddenly, Rav Shach, who was a young avreich then, charged in. He had been closely connected with R' Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, and in their final exchange a question had remained unresolved. Now that Rav Shach had developed a clear answer, he felt compelled to share it with Rav Chaim Ozer immediately.



Some of those present protested, questioning the appropriateness of interrupting such a formal assembly. But Rav Chaim Ozer responded after hearing from Rav Shach and explained the situation: this young man, he said, is someone for whom nothing else exists in the world when he is engaged in Torah. The Stollener Rebbe, who was present, remarked that if this is his level of absolute immersion in Torah, then Rav Shach should serve as a Rosh Yeshiva of my yeshiva.

The Secret to Commitment

Sometimes, the only way a person truly accomplishes what he deep down wants to achieve is when he feels that there is no other option. As the saying goes, "There is no motivation like having no alternative."



With this we can explain why although the Jewish people declared *naaseh vnishma*¹ ("we will do and we will hear") willingly, there was later an aspect of coercion at Har Sinai, *kafah*

HKB"H aleihem es ha'har k'gigis, Hashem covered them with a mountain...² On a deeper level, perhaps this teaches that true commitment requires more than inspiration; it requires a binding sense of obligation.³

As long as a person feels that something is optional, he leaves room for hesitation, excuses and retreat. But when one places himself in a situation where he must follow through, where turning back is no longer an option, hidden strengths emerge. People often discover that they are capable of far more when they are fully committed. When there is no "Plan B," dedication becomes far more powerful.

For example if a person wants to quit smoking, he may do this by fining himself \$100 for each cigarette he smokes. Another example is someone who wants to learn Torah consistently. Giving a shiur can give him the dedication necessary.

Strengthened by a Spark

Yechezkel Hanavi is called Ben Adam.⁴ This alludes to the idea that his soul is rooted in Kayin, the first son of Adam. In fact, an allusion in the name קין itself, as it serves as an acronym for יחזקאל ניצוץ קין, Yechezkel is a spark of Kayin's Neshama.

About Kayin, the Midrash⁵ says he was תלוי ברפיון, he had been hanging in suspension and the mabul came and swept him away. The word רפיון means weak. Yechezkel came to rectify this as is implicit in his name יחזקאל which is rooted in the word חזק, strong. He rectifies and strengthens.⁶

The hint to this is found in ויהי בהיותם בשדה ויקם קין אל הבל אחיו ויהרגהו, and it happened when they were in the field that Kayin rose up against his brother Hevel and killed him,⁷ where the word ויקם has the same gematria as יחזקאל, 156, referring to that Kayin got up (which is the meaning of ויקם) and was strengthened after the sin through Yechezkel.⁸

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of Rabbi Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years and received semichah from Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written thousands of Torah articles on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of eleven fascinating and popular books. His writings, many of which have been translated into Yiddish, Hebrew, German, Spanish and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. His shiurim can be found on various websites including Kol Halashon's. Rabbi Alt lectures, writes and teaches, and is passionate about inspiring Jews of all levels of observance. He can be reached at valt3285@gmail.com or on WhatsApp at +972 54 849 5217.

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¹ Shemos 24:7.

² Shabbos 88a.

³ R' Daniel Glatstein.

⁴ As in Yechezkel 2:1.

⁵ Breishis Rabba 32:5.

⁶ Moreover the ויקם of יחזקאל also signifies strength as in יש לאל די, It is in my power (Breishis 31:29).

⁷ Breishis 4:8.

⁸ Mishnas Hagilgulim, pp. 155-156.