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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

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ONE SMALL STEP IS ACTUALLY A GIANT STEP!

SPECIAL PESACH ISSUE

The German M42 machine gun was a feared weapon in WWII, cutting down Allied troops in swaths. The allied troops needed to land troops on a certain beach. The problem was that the Nazis had a machine gun "nest" guarding the beach. The Allied general asked for a volunteer to attempt to destroy the "nest" by throwing in grenades. The mission had little chance of success, but it had to be attempted. Private Warren volunteered for the mission. The other soldiers gave Private Warren a standing ovation for his determination to accept this dangerous mission. Before he left on the mission, the general promoted him to Corporal.

Rabbi Yitzchak Blazer zt"l, Rav Yisroel Salanter zt"l's student, says (Kochvei Ohr -6) that even if the concept of teshuvah, repentance, would not exist, once one realizes that he would

be punished for his sins, it would be natural for him to automatically feel bad and stop sinning. The concept of teshuvah would further obligate him to also confess his sins and accept upon himself never to repeat them. Apparently, confession and accepting upon oneself not to repeat the sin, is more difficult than regretting and stopping the sin.

HaRav Alter Henach Leibowitz zt"l says that this idea is also said by **Rabbeinu Yonah** (Shaarei Teshuva , Sha'ar 2:10). Accepting upon oneself never to repeat a sin is a much more difficult aspect of teshuvah. **Rabbeinu**

*"The Jewish People did as Hashem had commanded Moshe and Aharon."
(Shmos 12:28).*

Yonah says that as soon as one makes the commitment to accept it, "in an instant he goes from pitch darkness to great light". He literally becomes a different person. In addition, he acquires

reward **for all** the mitzvos of the Torah, even for those mitzvos which he did not yet learn! He reaches the same, high level as the Jewish People did when they said "na'ase v'nishma". The Jewish People said that they would do all the mitzvos even before hearing what the specifics were.

We see a similar idea mentioned in the Torah reading on Pesach. The Jews needed a special merit for Hashem to take them out of Egypt. On the first day of the month of Nissan, Hashem gave Moshe a directive, the first merit for the Jews (Shmos 12:3). The

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Jews were told to take a sheep, a god of the Egyptians and tie it to their bedposts. This was in preparation for the slaughtering of the sheep 4 days later. It was a scary directive since it involved taking and tying up the Egyptian god in full sight and letting the Egyptians know in advance that they would slaughter it. Yet the Torah testifies that “The Jewish People did as Hashem had commanded Moshe and Aharon” (Shmos 12:28).

Rashi asks, how can the pasuk say that the Jews had already followed Moshe’s directive to take the sheep? After all, the directive was given on Rosh Chodesh Nissan and it wasn’t carried out until the 10th, when they took the sheep, and the 14th, when they slaughtered it? **Rashi**, quoting a Mechilta, answers that as soon as the Jews had accepted upon themselves to do so, the Torah considers it as if it they already done it. The Jews had

accepted upon themselves only one mitzvah. Yet that transformed them to the level as if they had accepted the entire Torah!

Merely the acceptance to do a single mitzvah can cause a major transformation in oneself!

Rashi says later that Jews were praised because they did not omit a single detail of what Moshe and Aharon had said. Why are the Jews being praised for this if it was considered as if they had already done the mitzvah? **HaRav Alter Henach Leibowitz zt”l** said that even when one has good intentions to do something, he must maintain the total commitment to actually accomplish it. He must also daven to Hashem for siyata dishmaya, Heavenly assistance, so that nothing will prevent him from doing so.

Let us grab the opportunities that we each have.

Let us accept upon ourselves each single mitzvah opportunity.

May Hashem grant us the Heavenly assistance to fulfill that, and all the mitzvos!

Based on a dvar Torah by HaRav Alter Henach Leibowitz zt”l

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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