Jewish Tribune – Re’eh

**Holy Electricians**

In a city in Israel, a group of people decided to expose certain electricians who were dishonestly inflating their prices at the expense of unsuspecting customers. They secretly wired a home with hidden cameras and instructed the women of the house to plug a sabotaged appliance into an electric outlet, thereby short-circuiting the entire electrical system of the house. Then she called several electricians to fix the “problem”.

The first two electricians did not even bother inspecting the house, instead announcing that the entire system would have to be rewired, to the tune of two or three thousand shekels.

But the third electrician, a religious Jew, carefully inspected the house, discovered the appliance that was the source of the problem, and quickly repaired it. He charged a mere 120 shekels for his services.

In front of all three electricians, the instigators of the scheme emerged from their hiding place and confronted the fraud of the first two electricians, demanding an explanation for their outrageous quotes. The electricians tried to deny that they had quoted such prices, but to no avail; they had been caught on video camera.

Then the men turned to the frum electrician and asked why he had not inflated his price as his colleagues had done.

Thunderstruck, the electrician replied simply, “Hashem is watching me, and He will know if I lie! Besides my parnossah is decreed on Rosh Hashanah, and I cannot change it by being dishonest.”

In Aleinu L’Shabei’ach, where the above story is related, he adds an interesting postscript.

A prominent kiruv professional related that when the story was made public, the frum electrician’s integrity and emunah moved an entire family, with whom he had been working for months with little success, to become religious.

Sefer Devorim is possibly the longest speech in history. Moshe Rabbeinu sets out to the Bnei Yisroel our national and personal objectives. Namely, to remain loyal to HKBH by living a life of Torah and Mitzvos.

Interestingly, the Chizkuni in our Sedra, (Devorim 11:26) notes that although sefer Devorim repeats many mitzvos, it is not until parshas Re’eh that the repetition of individual mitzvos appear. Before this, Moshe Rabbeinu first clarifies our mission statement. He speaks to Beni Yisroel about yiras Shomayim which is the base for Torah and mitzvos.

Just like a string of pearls. You can have the most precious and beautiful pearls but if the string snaps, the pearls will scatter and become dirty or lost. Yiras Shomayim is the string that holds all the Torah, mitzvos and middos tovos together. If the yiras Shomayim goes, the Torah, mitzvos and middos tovos will disappear.

Indeed, this is how HKBH ordered proceedings at Har Sinai. First the thunder and lightning to instil us with awe and yiras Shomayim and then we receive the mitzvos. Even the mitzvos we got before Har Sinai were preceded by yirah inspiring yetzias mitzrayim and yam suf.

The Gemoro in Berachos (33b) describes yiras Shomayim as an “oitzar” – a storehouse. Perhaps the analogy is that just as a storehouse contains merchandise, and without a container, the goods will be ruined, so too a storehouse is needed to hold the Torah and mitzvos that a person accumulates. Without first building this framework of yiras Shomayim, the Torah and mitzvos will not endure.

That is why Moshe Rabbeinu stresses the importance of yiras Shomayim and spends the first three sedras of sefer Devorim doing so. It is only after that, in the beginning of our sedra, that Moshe Rabbeinu begins the repetition of individual mitzvos.

This critical message of our sedra, taught by Moshe Rabbeinu, sometimes takes an honest and holy electrician to remind us of.

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