Jewish Tribune – Teruma

**Finding the Spark**

Which is worse? Sailing when there is no wind or sailing when the wind is against you?

Intuitively, most people would say that sailing against the wind is much harder. After all, it’s pushing you back, whereas no wind at least offers no resistance.

But that’s because most people haven’t heard of tacking.

To reach their target, sailors that intend to travel against the wind will need to zig-zag in order to reach their destination. This technique is known as tacking. Sailors can reach a point in any direction using the technique of tacking and will travel at angles closest to the wind direction.

Counterintuitively, this means that compared to having no wind, or even a weak wind behind you, it is always better to have the strong wind in the direction opposite your craft. Having no wind is the worst-case scenario.

A few weeks ago, we were privileged to host Rabbi Aaron Lopiansky in school. After speaking to students and parents, he held a question and answer session with Hasmonean Rebbes.

Unsurprisingly, it was a fascinating session and gave much food for thought. One of the many captivating points he made was his take on a moshol of the Ba’al Shem Tov on this week’s parsha.

The Ba’al Shem Tov tells of a king who has an indifferent and apathetic son. The son is interested in nothing, and the best teachers cannot stimulate his intellect and pique his intellectual curiosity. He is simply not interested in learning.

All the teachers give up apart from one. One day, the teacher notices that the prince sees a young lady and wants to marry her. The teacher is concerned and tells the king.

The king, however, is delighted. “At last,” he says, “I see some passion in my son. He is finally interested in something, and I can channel that to educate him.”

He instructs the teacher to tell his son that he can only meet the lady after he teaches him one subject. The son agrees and enjoys the learning and wants to learn another subject, and then another. Until he becomes wise and does not want to even meet this particular young lady.

So too, says the Ba’al Sem Tov, that is what is alluded to in the opening of this week’s sedrah. The possuk (Shemos 25,2) says:

דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְיִקְחוּ לִי תְּרוּמָה, מֵאֵת כָּל אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִדְּבֶנּוּ לִבּוֹ, תִּקְחוּ אֶת תְּרוּמָתִי

Speak to the children of Israel, and they should take for Me an offering; from every person whose heart inspires him to generosity, you shall take My offering.

Desire and passion are key. Harnessing the desire of the Bnei Yisroel in this week’s sedrah led to an outflow of generous giving and to the building of the Mishkan.

The Ba’al Shem Tov adds that every person should use this strategy to serve Hashem. This can be done in many ways. A person enjoys good food. He could incentivise himself to some gourmet cuisine on accomplishing a certain target in his avodas Hashem. And so too with all gashmiyus. The key is to find the spark, ignite it and channel it.

Rav Sadia Gaon is quoted as saying:

**ראוי לאדם לחשוק בכל הדברים הגשמיים, ומתוכו יבא לחשוק בתורה ועבודת ה'**

It is appropriate for a person to desire physical things, and through that he will come to desire Torah and avodas Hashem.

The same principle could be used in business. Imagine a man selling cars. The key is to talk to each customer in terms of what that customer is interested in. Some may be keen on speed, some on safety, some on comfort or just the economic value.

And it can be used in chinuch too. A good mechanech will find his talmid’s area of interest, cultivate it and channel it. The same is true for parenting.

A few months ago, saw the passing of the Badei Hashulchan, Rav Feivel Cohen. He was a towering Rov and posek and his seforim were classics in his lifetime.

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetsky tells a remarkable story of a young Feivel Cohen, all of 8 years old. One day his rebbe sees the 8-year-old Feivel davening in front of an open aron hakodesh.

“Is everything ok?” asked the Rebbe. “What are you davening for?”

The little boy explained to his Rebbe that the Yankees were playing that day and he desperately wanted them to win.

It may have been tempting for a Rebbe to rebuke his talmid, but the Rebbe instead put his arm around him and said: “Let me join you. Let’s daven together.”

And that began a special bond, and the Rebbe was then able to channel the huge potential of his talmid in a positive way.

Rav Hutner once lamented that he did not have as big an impact on a certain talmid as he had hoped. He commented: “If I could have just gotten him angry once, I would have succeeded!”

That is the message of אֲשֶׁר יִדְּבֶנּוּ לִבּוֹ. Harnessing the desire of the Bnei Yisroel in this week’s sedrah led to bountiful giving and the building of the Mishkan.

Apathy is dangerous. The key is to find the spark, ignite it and channel it.

It is better to have a strong wind in the direction opposite your boat than little or no wind. Having no wind is the worst-case scenario. Tacking is true for sailing, chinuch, parenting and life.

**Rabbi Golker is the Menahel of Hasmonean High School. To listen to his shiurim, go to TorahAnytime.com or JewishPodcasts.Org**