

Good Shabbos Everyone. In our Torah portion this week Nasso, the Torah tells us how Hashem commands Moshe to count the Jews. When commanding Moshe to count the Jews, the Torah uses the word "Nasso." The word "Nasso," can also mean "to uplift." It is therefore possible to understand the verse in the following spiritually uplifting way: Hashem is giving Moshe Rabeinu (our teacher) the power to uplift the Jews. Since the time of Moshe Rabeinu, Hashem has appointed in every generation Tzadikim (the exceedingly righteous) to lead Klal Yisroel. Just as Hashem gave Moshe Rabeinu the power to uplift the Children of Israel, so too does Hashem gave the spiritual leaders of every generation the power to uplift Jews. The following story will inspire us to believe in the power of Tzadikim.

In a certain area of Jerusalem many years ago, some Jewish stores were open on Shabbos. Rabbis and lay leaders tried to convince the proprietors to close their stores before sunset Friday afternoon. Eventually they were successful with all the storekeepers except one -but no amount of pleading or pressure could get this particular Jewish grocer to close his store. Business was good, and to his mind, profits outweighed any regard he may have had for Shabbos observance.

Reb Aryeh Levin, of blessed memory, heard about the stubborn grocer and was pained that a fellow Jew would willfully desecrate the Shabbos. One Friday afternoon, R' Aryeh dressed early for Shabbos, donned his shtreimel (fur hat worn on Shabbos), and went to the store. It was well before sunset when R' Aryeh entered the shop.

He walked quietly through the store, eyeing the goods on the shelves and watching the brisk flow of customers and purchases. He sat down on a chair near the back of the store and observed the activity.

The owner recognized R' Aryeh but didn't say anything to him, thinking that perhaps the elderly rabbi was resting and would soon be on his way to shul. As sunset drew near, however, the grocer wondered why R' Aryeh made no effort to go. He began to feel a bit uncomfortable at the great rabbi's presence in his store so close to Shabbos. The proprietor was busy with his customers, but every once in a while he would steal a glance at R' Aryeh, who seemed to be sitting there for no apparent reason. Finally the grocer approached R' Aryeh and said, "Rabbi, I see you have been sitting here for a while already. Can I do something for you? Are you feeling all right?"

R' Aryeh stood up and, after exchanging pleasantries, said to the grocer, "I heard that you keep your store open on Shabbos. I know that others have spoken to you about it, but I wanted to come and see for myself how difficult it is for you to close for the holy Shabbos. Now I know without a doubt how hard it is for you to close and give up so much business. Honestly, I feel for you - but what can I say? Shabbos is Shabbos!"

The grocer was silent for a moment, and tears welled up in his eyes. He said, "My dear Rabbi, you are the only one who took the time to come over here to see the situation from my point of view. It means so much to me that you came to my store. Everyone else just criticized me from a distance." Warmly, he shook R' Aryeh's hand and said, "I promise you that I will do what I can to see if I can close the store on Shabbos." R' Aryeh wished the grocer, "Good Shabbos."

Within weeks, the store was closed by sunset every Friday afternoon. Only after R' Aryeh was in "the grocer's shoes" did he undertake to reprimand him, and even then he did so only with great sensitivity. No wonder people listened to R' Ariyeh's words. (Along the Maggid's Journey, R. Pesach Krohn, p.113)

Throughout the millennium, Tzadikim have led the Jewish Nation: the Kohanim Gedolim (high priests), the Prophets, the Kings and the Sages have all served as spiritual conduits to funnel holiness and wisdom from heaven. Our current generation also has its Tzadikim which lead Yisroel. Many of us have the merit to live in close proximity to some of the biggest Tzadikim active today. Hundreds of thousands of Jews flock to Tzadikim yearly for advice on everything from business concerns, medical issues, family issues, marriage proposals, and suggestions on spiritual growth.

It can be very time-consuming to seek the counsel of a Tzadik. In addition, the time we are allotted to speak with the Tzadik may be limited to a few minutes. However, it is well worth the wait. Because, a few minutes with one of the Tzadikei HaDor (the spiritual leaders of the generation) is worth much much more than hours and hours with less qualified people. This is because the words of a Tzadik are the closest thing to divine inspiration that we have today. In other words, the best chance we have to receive heavenly inspired answers to life's issues is by asking Tzadikim.

Therefore, when we go in to ask a Tzadik for advice, it is important to listen very closely to his holy words. As we mentioned, the advice the Tzadik gives is the closest thing to coming directly from Hashem. Why then should we be so foolish as to contradict this heaven-sent advice? By seeking the advice of Tzadikim we are guaranteed to live happier, less worrisome lives. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**