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Wow..... You really understand me!

The power of asking good questions

By: Shlomo O. Tauber

I was sitting with Yossi for the first time and approximately 45 minutes into the session he all of a sudden stopped me and said *"Wow... You really understand me!"*

Yossi is a young 21 year old man who just got married to a girl from a very similar background. With his whole life in front of him he was waiting for the moment to start realizing all his dreams that he had so much looked forward to. But then came the painful realization that it was all a dream, and he started to panic: "How do I wake up from this dream and turn it into realization?"

I asked him, "Would you mind sharing your dream with me?" He didn't mind.

His dream was to start a business of selling certain items on Amazon and EBay right after he got married and got his own life. On my question to him, "What's holding you back from getting started?" His reply was, "I don't know."

"So why do you feel it's only a dream? Who and what is stopping you? Do you have the financial resources to start?" He said, "Yes. I have more than enough."

"Can you think of something, that if not there would enable you to start?"

"Not really", he replied.

"Can you think of something you don't have, that would enable you to start?"

"Not really", he replied.

"Please tell me a bit about your background", I asked. He started giving me his life history.

After a couple of more questions I felt that I knew a bit of where he is coming from so I asked him, 'Where you controlled on a daily basis, with statements like, do this or don't do that? You will be punished if you do this and you will be rewarded if you do that?'

He was quiet. No response.

So I moved on to different questions until he suddenly said *"Wow, you really understand me"....*

No one ever asked him the question whether he was controlled, nor did he notice it on his own. Even after me asking him it took him a while to grasp it and when he did, he subconsciously without even knowing why said *"Wow... you really understand me"*.

It later turned out that Yossi almost never had a chance to do or not do anything on his own. He was rewarded for his good deeds and punished for the bad. The only thing that would stop him from doing

something bad was the fear of being punished and the only thing that would make him do something good was to get the reward he was promised.

Yossi learned that doing or not doing something is all based on reward and punishment and never got the chance to learn that the only person to benefit or bear the consequences of his actions was Yossi.

Now he finds himself in a situation where he is on his own. No one stands over him and tells him do this or don't do that. He is not promised a reward if he will do it nor threatened with punishment if he won't. So why should he do it?

The fact that he will earn money from it is not reason enough to take action right now for two main reasons.

1. He really doesn't need the money now. He learns in Kollel and his wife is a teacher and they have more than enough income for what they need at the moment. So that is not a reward.
2. The money that will eventually come in is way too far away for him to get him motivated. He is used to get instant pay for all his actions.

After a good few hours of explaining to him the whole "control theory" and after he realized that now he is in control of himself and only himself, he became so enthusiastic about "controlling himself" and started the business and is now selling a fairly large amount of merchandise in only 2 hours a day.

Whenever he sees me, he will tell me "*I am in control now*".

On my question to him why he felt that "I really understand him" he couldn't really answer me. All he said was: "I felt from your questions that you really want to know me and want to help me." And indeed I did!

Take any person no matter how smart and powerful and place him under constant "control". It will ruin his way of thinking to an extent that may even cost him his life.

Following is the proof.

There is a fascinating story in Melochim (1.2.8). Before King Dovid passed away he called his son Shlomo his successor and gave him a list of instructions to do, as well as a list of people that needed to be killed for various sins they did. The Posuk states on how he get rid of all these people.

One of them was Shimi ben Geiro. With Shimi, King Shlomo made a special deal and told him that he should build himself a house in Yerushalayim and commanded him to stay in Yerushalayim all his life. "The day you leave Yerushalayim you are a dead man" he warned him.

It only took 3 years and two of Shimi's slaves to run away from him to the city of Gaas for the drama to unfold. Shimi woke up in the morning and found out about the runaways. He took his donkey, chased the runaway slaves to the city of Gaas and brought them back. King Shlomo found out that Shimi had left Yerushalayim, called him and confronted him for not keeping his command. He accused him of being a Mored BeMalchus who needed to be killed. He also reminded him of his sin to his father Dovid. Shimi was killed.

The questions are obvious. Why didn't king Shlomo kill him immediately after the passing of his father like all the others? What was the point of locking him up in the city of Yerushalayim? Is that called death? His father instructed him to kill him and not to place him under city arrest? And even more so

why in the world did Shimi risk his own life to chase two slaves? Didn't he know that he was playing with his life?

King Shlomo of which Chazal tell us was the "Chochom Mikol Odom" the wisest person in the world understood so deeply the way a person will react to "control" and that he will rather die than be controlled.

He had to kill Shimi being so instructed by his father. But instead of just killing him for his old sins he set him up so that he would do something that he himself knew would be punishable by death. But even with this knowledge he would still do it. And what was that? He placed him under "control". Even though he had the whole city of Yerushalayim to move around in, but was prohibited to leave the city boundaries, that was too much control for the powerful Shimi ben Geiro to handle and he chose to rather die than to go on living like this under "control".

As Jews we have 613 Mitzvos that control our lives. The Mitzvos however must be done out of our free choice with an understanding of what and why we do it. The person who performs Mitzvos by force, without knowing and feeling the benefits of them, lives a miserable life. That's why it's so important for us to learn with and explain to our children the "benefits" of keeping Torah and Mitzvos and doing them out of free will. That is called in Chazal doing it M'Ahavo. Out of love and not out of fear. The Mitzvos we have are 613 venues to live a quality and happy life in this world and in the world to come. If someone instead has 613 "problems" then he lives a "controlled" life and the consequences show rather fast.

The best gift we can give our loved ones is to teach them to understand what they do and why they do it. If the reason for doing something or not doing something is based on punishment or reward then it's doomed to failure. It took Yossi many hours of coaching to start realizing that "he" is now in control and that no one will benefit or suffer from his actions more than he himself. Once he got the hang of it, it transformed his life and he is now a thriving and healthy young man.

As a Student of Refuah and Professor Ritchie in particular I was fortunate to learn among many other things, how to ask the proper questions and how to really understand and connect to the client. The statement Yossi made "*wow... you really understand me*" was the best compliment I can get from a client and is an even bigger compliment to Refuah!!.