



## Making Up for Lost Time

The sidra starts with a general meeting. "Vayakhel Moshe et kol adat b'nei Yisra'el", "And Moses assembled all the congregation of the Children of Israel" (Sh'mot 35:1).

General meetings of course have an agenda. The agenda of this meeting was not argument but education - a summary of the laws of Shabbat.

The purpose was to ensure that the whole congregation got the message and they all learned that whatever the important tasks they were engaged on, nothing was so important that it could not be pushed aside for Shabbat.

Those who keep Shabbat are well aware of this rule and it gives their lives a great deal of benefit.

But there are others who haven't the time or patience for Shabbat, or, more probably, they have never tasted the serenity and sanctity of the day and don't know what they are missing.

That is one of the drawbacks of the Jewish education system with which so many were brought up - it tried to teach Hebrew, but it failed to give us a taste of Jewish life.

Now of course we are grown up and some of us argue that it's too late

for us, but please teach our grandchildren - and we couldn't be more wrong. We can always make up for lost time. What you didn't start when you are four can still begin when you are forty.

In some ways the adult experience of Judaism is even more valuable because we come to it with a mature mind and the ability to choose what we want.

True, it needs humility. We need to be able to admit that there are things we don't know. It also means that we will make mistakes along the way.

So what? It is the sincere effort that matters.

When the sages say that there are questions we all face when we seek to enter Heaven (Shab. 31a), they do not say we will be asked, "Were you a great scholar? Were you super-froom?" but "kavata ittim laTorah", "Did you spend time on Torah?"

Spend the time, make the effort, and whether you become a great scholar or super-froom or not, you will enrich your life and find so much joy, stability and meaning.

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