

Who, Me?

By: Dr. Leah R. Adams

There's a children's game-song involving missing cookies that many of us sang as children. See if you remember it. The refrain goes, "Who me? Yes you. Couldn't be. Then who?" While the song is about apprehending a cookie thief, this refrain gets used by so many people in different situations in life. Oftentimes we assume that we are not capable enough to do the task (whatever it is) and so we decline. We never know what opportunities we have in our lives to impact others and often underestimate our power to do so. The other day my children and I went to a skilled nursing facility to visit a relative. They had brought costumes and smiles with them and, at one point, we wandered around the unit stopping to sing or shmooze with residents. We then sat in the relative's room visiting for about an hour and finally made our good-byes. On our way out we passed a woman who stopped us to talk. Although we had not approached her earlier or even noticed her for that matter, and, although she could not hear the singing from the distance she was at, she had noticed our presence. She felt connected to us merely from this distance. We had impacted her life without even trying. Had she not stopped us, we never would have known. Perhaps a ten minute conversation ensued about her family history and recollection of her Jewish roots. All of which she shared with much pride.

In "Faith Under Fire: 33 days of Missiles and Miracles" Chana Besser presents stories of struggles and miracles evident during Israel's Northern War in 2006. At one point she is asked by some fleeing friends to feed their chickens in their absence. Having experienced the terrifying fear of hearing the explosives shriek by and having already run for her life to the bomb shelter on more than one occasion, one might think that she would almost find this request comical. Instead, amongst the fear of both the known and the unknown, she stops to contemplate her role as a baalas chesed. She recalled a lesson learned from Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller to choose chasadim that are within our comfort zone but to be open to opportunities outside this zone if they happen upon us. While having had no experience whatsoever in fowl farming, Chana steps out of her city kid mentality and accepts the challenge of tending to the chickens.

How often are we asked to help out with something and decline because "we are not good at that"? Sometimes we are so overwhelmed by the incredible competence and confidence of others, that we are genuinely afraid to even try to be helpful. I remember several years ago there was a local production of a movie called "The Chairlady". In it the main character suffers from this above described insecurity and hides in the shadows of others. It is only when she is thrust into a job that is outside of her comfort zone that she actually rises to the occasion. At first she does not realize her capacity to make a difference and impact others.

By the time she is done organizing the affair in the movie, even she is forced to recognize her ability to do just that.

Around two months ago, I received an unusual phone call. It was from Rabbi Shaul Gromer regarding a new internet “radio” station called JewishTalkRadio.com. Having seen my work in The Front Page, he decided to offer me the chance to host a talk show called “Dr. Leah and You” geared toward women’s issues! While flattered, I was also quite shocked. I am an experienced public speaker, but internet radio seemed like a big jump. Thoughts of, ‘what do I have to offer?’ and ‘will I make a fool of myself?’ resonated through my head. Then I sat back and reflected on the opportunity. A program like this would give many women a platform from which to express their views and share their professional and personal projects. Ideas that could really impact others would have a voice. I was being given this opportunity to help it all fall into place. Within several days I accepted the offer and the program has become a reality. Tune in on Wednesdays from 1-2 via the internet or by phone at 832-225-5371 and tell me what you think. You can even call in live at 845-613-2525 to give your input as the show is running.

Think of examples from your own life when you got involved in something “small” and later discovered that its impact was further reaching than you could have imagined. Have you smiled at the mail carrier lately? Have you thanked a cashier? Perhaps you put a smiley sticker on your child’s lunch bag. Maybe you invited a friend to join you at a shiur or a Tehillim group “just one time” and the two of you kept going regularly. Maybe that friend even then told another friend that the shiur was too good to miss. Do you realize that by doing these things you have the power to impact not only the person intended, but others as well? Like the woman in the beginning of the article who benefitted from a distance, there are many people even on the sidelines of your life who are affected positively by you.

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