

THE FRUITS OF OUR ACTION

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This week's parsha, Vayeshev, contains many fascinating events and concepts. Yosef, having been sold into slavery, was brought down to Mitzrayim [Egypt] and sold to Potiphar, one of Paroah's officers. When Potiphar saw the success that Yosef brought to his household, he appointed Yosef in charge of all his dealings.

"And it was after these things and the wife of his master lifted up her eyes to Yosef. [39:7]" Yosef rejected her advances but she was persistent. "And... she spoke to him every day" [39:10]"

What gave Yosef the strength to resist this unrelenting temptation?

"And he didn't listen to her to lie next to her, to be with her. [39:10]"

The Talmud [Avodah Zarah 5A] explains: To lie next to her--in this world; to be with her--in the World to Come.

This explanation is actually part of a broader statement made by Rabi Yonasan: Anyone who performs a mitzvah [commandment] in this world, that mitzvah precedes him and goes before him to the World to Come. And all who transgress, that sin envelops him and leads him to the Day of Judgment. Rabi Elazar adds: And it (the sin) is tied to him like a dog, as it says: "And he didn't listen to her to lie next to her, to be with her." To lie next to her--in this world; to be with her--in the World to Come.

The Maharsha explains that every one of our actions creates a spiritual entity--a malach [angel]. The Nefesh HaChaim writes that the spiritual world that awaits a person is the spiritual reality that was created throughout a lifetime of actions.

But Rabi Elazar is adding a very powerful point. These spiritual entities don't just lead us into the World to Come that we have created. They actually become an added part of the person himself--tied to him like a dog.

With this idea, Rav Dessler explains the concept of 'kaf ha'kelah'--a punishment where a neshama is thrown by angels from one end of the 'world' to the other. He explains that the desires that a person attaches to in this world become part of that person. So much a part that even upon death, one still has those desires. Those angels that do the 'tossing' are the ones created by those sins. They are there with the person after death as he, in the most frustrating situation imaginable, pursues the physical desires that don't exist in the spiritual world. He is 'tossed' by these angels that he created

from one end of the world to the other, searching for that which can never be found...

(After the painful events of these past few days here in Israel, I tried but was unable to understand the mindset of a person who actually believes that by murdering and maiming innocent people, he will find special grace in the eyes of Hashem and will be rewarded with blissful eternity. I couldn't help but think of 'kaf ha'kelah' a person who has incorporated the desire to kill others as a part of himself and must spend eternity trying to fill that desire in a realm where physical bodies and certainly murder have no place.)

As Yosef was being tempted by the wife of Potiphar, he understood what was at stake. He understood the far-reaching ramifications of one's actions. He realized that "to lie next to her" in this world would ultimately cause him to "be with her" in the World to Come. To be with that desire that could never be satisfied. He withstood the temptation.

In this case, the ultimate outcome of his refusal resulted in bracha [blessing] even in this world. Her wrath had Yosef sent off to prison (granted, not a very auspicious beginning) that enabled him to meet and interpret the dreams of Paroah's two officers. This led to his being recommended to interpret Paroah's dreams after which he was appointed the number-two man of Mitzrayim [Egypt]. This paved the way for the nation to be molded in the furnace of Mitzrayim, preparing itself for nationhood and the receiving of the Torah.

Whether we merit to see it in this world or not, those are the fruits of our actions--the spiritual reality that they create. When one performs a mitzvah he is immediately surrounded by a pure holiness. The Nefesh HaChaim explains the verse: "These are the mitzvos that a person will fulfill v'chai ba'hem [and live in them] [Vayikra 18:5]." Literally in them! Tied to the person. Surrounded by their holiness, and incorporating them into oneself.

Good Shabbos,
Yisroel Ciner

Warmest wishes of mazel tov to Akiva Distenfeld and Rachel Bienenfeld on their upcoming wedding. May they merit to build a home of holiness, happiness and bracha.

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