

IT'S ALL WRITTEN DOWN

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This week we begin the Sefer [Book] of Shemos--The Book of Exile and Redemption.

Hashem spoke to Moshe from the burning bush and told him: "I will send you to Paroah and you will take my nation, Bnei Yisroel [the Children of Israel], out from Mitzrayim [Egypt]. [3:10]"

Moshe was quite reluctant, deeming himself unworthy of the task, and a seven-day discussion/debate ensued. As a last ditch effort, Moshe asked Hashem: "Please, send the one that you will send! [4:13]" Meaning, send my older brother, Aharon, who is worthy and able to perform this mission [Ohr HaChaim]. Furthermore, Moshe was concerned that he'd be stepping on Aharon's toes by assuming the position of leader and redeemer of Israel.

Hashem assured Moshe that Aharon would come out to greet him upon his arrival at Mitzrayim and "v'samach b'libo--he will rejoice in his heart. [4:14]"

This expansive, unselfish and caring heart of Aharon would ultimately wear the breastplate of the Kohen Gadol [High Priest] and serve as the conduit for Hashem's messages to His nation. Yet, the Medrash finds something lacking in Aharon's response.

Rabi Yitzchak [Medrash Rabbah Ruth:5] teaches that when one performs a mitzvah, it should be done in a wholehearted manner: Had Reuven known that Hashem would write that he had saved Yosef from his brothers, then he would have carried Yosef back to his father instead of suggesting that he be thrown into the pit. Had Aharon known that Hashem would write that he'd go out and greet Moshe, heâ€™d have gone out with dances and drums. Had Boaz known that Hashem would write that he gave Ruth grains, he'd have fed her fattened calves.

This Medrash seems to be a bit strange. We know that these spiritual giants were not interested in honor. If so, why would they have acted differently and in a more wholehearted manner had they known that it would be written down in a passuk [verse]?

The Yaffe Anaf (one of the commentators on the Medrash) explains that there are issues that hold us back from performing a mitzvah in full regalia. At times we're concerned that others will actually attempt to stop us. Reuven didn't carry Yosef back to his father because he was afraid that the brothers would stop him. But had he known that he would be written down to serve as an example for all generations, he would have disregarded that concern and done the mitzvah in a fuller way.

Another concern is what people will say. Had Aharon realized that he'd be written down to serve as an example for all generations, he would have allowed that joy in his heart to spill over into a full orchestra, clearly and fully showing Moshe his joy about his being appointed leader and ignoring what others might say.

Lastly, we're often concerned that people will misinterpret our actions. Had Boaz realized that he'd be inscribed in the passuk, he'd have fed Ruth royally, ignoring what people might say about his intentions with this young lady.

The Medrash concludes that the actions of the earlier generations were inscribed as passukim [verses] by the prophets. Nowadays, when a person performs a mitzvah, the passuk is written by Eliyahu HaNavi [Elijah the Prophet], with Moshiach [Messiah] and Hashem signing on as witnesses.

This morning I attended the funeral of a dear student who passed away suddenly and tragically. His sincere smile, warm heart and sharp mind enabled a meaningful fulfillment of mitzvahs and study of Torah. May his many passukim illuminate his path and lead him to his place in Olam Habah [the World to Come].

Good Shabbos,

Yisroel Ciner

Dedicated to the merit and memory of Oren Yaakov ben Daniel Brandt-Rauf. TNZB"H

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