

THE FINAL HEADLINES

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 172, The Complex Issue of Child Custody. Good Shabbos!

Rashi's Comment Contained Within the Verse Itself

Yosef dreamt that the sun, moon, and eleven stars all bowed down to him. The symbolism of this dream was obvious to Yaakov -- the sun and moon were Yosef's father and mother, and the eleven stars were his brothers. Yaakov chastised Yosef, saying, "What is this dream that you dreamt (mah haChalom hazeh ASHER CHALAMTA) -- will I and your mother and your eleven brothers come and bow down to you to the ground?" [Bereishis 37:10].

Rash"i explains that Yaakov was not criticizing the entire dream. Rather, he was pointing out that the dream could not possibly come true, because in fact Yosef's mother was no longer alive.

Rash"i's comment can be derived from the words ASHER CHALAMTA (that you dreamt). If we look carefully at those two words (and reposition the space that separates them) we will find the words RACHEL MEISa (Rachel, Yosef's mother, died).

Reuven, Aharon, and Boaz All Had Their Doubts

Reuven intervened to save Yosef. He did not want to participate in the killing of his brother. According to the brothers' judgement, Yosef was a Pursuer, one who "runs after" someone with intent to kill him. They believed that Yosef was attempting to cut them out of the Jewish people. Yet even though Chaza"l tell us that the brothers judged Yosef as a Pursuer, deserving of death, Reuven did not want to have any part of that. Reuven devised a plan and told the brothers to throw Yosef into a pit (rather than kill him). Reuven hoped to eventually come back and rescue Yosef from the pit.

The Medrash in Ruth says that had Reuven known that G-d would eventually write that 'Reuven went and saved his brother', Reuven would have unashamedly carried Yosef on his shoulders all the way back to his father. Since he did not realize that this narration would appear in the Torah, he devised a clandestine plan which was not completely successful.

The Medrash also says there that had Aharon known that his greeting to Moshe upon Moshe's return from Midian would be recorded in the Torah, then he would have gone out to greet Moshe with musical instruments and dancing.

Finally, the Medrash says that had Boaz realized that G-d would publicize his generosity to Ruth, he would have provided her with a fully catered meal, rather than feeding her a few kernels of grain!

This Medrash always bothered me. It seems to be saying that Reuven, Aharon and Boaz were publicity hounds. Had they known that "The Press" was going to be there, then they would have done a better job. But since they did not think it would make the front page, they did less than they could have.

The Medrash obviously wants to praise these individuals -- they were all doing good things. So what is the meaning of that statement that "Had they known... they would have done it on a grander scale"?

The interpretation of the Medrash is as follows. They were not interested in publicity. They were not interested in the front pages. However, each of these individuals had a lot of doubt whether what he was doing was correct. They did not know -- in each case -- whether they were doing the proper thing at all.

Reuven was going up against his brothers -- a Beis Din of the Tribes of Israel. Ten brothers paskened, ruled, that Yosef was a Pursuer who was guilty of the death penalty. Reuven was in the minority. Maybe the brothers were correct, and Yosef deserved to die. For this reason, Reuven was hesitant. Had he known that G-d appreciated and agreed with what he did, Reuven would have 'gone all out'.

When Aharon went to greet Moshe Rabbeinu, he also had his doubts. "People will say I am crazy. I am the older brother. The younger brother should pay respect to the older brother; not vice versa." Had Aharon known that G-d would look favorably upon this act, he would have gone without any embarrassment and without any hesitation.

When Boaz gave the food to the young maiden Ruth, he was afraid that perhaps people would raise their eyebrows and snicker and say "Hey, what's going on over there with Boaz and Ruth?" He was therefore concerned about what people would say. Had he known that G-d in fact would agree with him, he too would have 'gone all out'.

The Medrash continues, "In days gone by a person would do a mitzvah and the prophet would record it. Nowadays when a person does a mitzvah, and people scorn, who writes down who was right?"

The Medrash answers its own question "Eliyahu will write it down and the Messianic King and G-d Himself will sign it in affirmation. Concerning this it is written [Malachi 3:16] "Then the G-d fearing men spoke to one another and the L-rd listened and heard it. And a book of remembrance was written

before Him for those who feared the Lord and for those who valued His Name highly."

The prophet Malachi is speaking of a period -- just prior to the coming of the Messiah -- when everyone would laugh at those who observed the Mitzvos. Everyone will say "these guys are behind the times; they are not modern; they are not 'with it'". It will appear that the other forces are the ones that are prevailing.

Perhaps in those times, people will also be reticent and hesitate to take a stand. People will again think "we are in the minority; maybe they are right and we are wrong." Malachi talks about a time when people will perhaps be ashamed to do what they think is right, like Reuven and Aharon and Boaz.

So G-d testifies that at the end of the days, before Moshiach, "You do what you know is right. Keep the Torah; keep the faith; keep the flame burning. I and Eliyahu the prophet and the Moshiach himself are going to write about you that you were right all along."

Glossary

paskened -- issued a halachic (Jewish legal) ruling

Moshiach -- the Messiah

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