

ADAM REGRETS HIS GIFT TO DOVID

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Bereishis

Adam Regrets His Gift to Dovid

The Medrash teaches that the Almighty showed Adam the history of mankind --each generation and its leaders. In the course of this "exhibition," Adam was shown the soul of Dovid HaMelech [King David] and the fact that he was destined to live only 3 hours. Adam was very grieved at this loss of potential. He inquired whether he was allowed to bequeath some of his own years to Dovid. The Almighty answered that Adam was destined to live for 1000 years, but that he would be allowed to give up some of those years to Dovid. Adam then bequeathed 70 years to Dovid, so that Adam lived for 930 years and Dovid lived for 70 years.

Chazal teach that when Adam was about to turn 930 years old, he regretted his earlier generosity and wanted to back out of the deal. G-d urged Adam to keep his word. G-d pointed out that Adam would have a descendant Yaakov who would make a vow and keep it. Ultimately, Adam agreed to keep his earlier vow.

The Rokeach cites an even more startling version of this Medrash: When Adam originally agreed to give over 70 years of his life to the future Dovid HaMelech, he signed a document to that effect. The document was "co-signed", so to speak, by the Master of the Universe and by the Angel Matat. In the Rokeach's version of the Medrash, when Adam turned 930, he tried to deny that he ever made such an agreement. At that point, the Almighty pulled out the document proving that he had made the deal!

The Medrash in Tehilim cites in this vein, that Dovid HaMelech's comment in Tehillim [146:3]: "Do not trust nobles nor sons of man (ben Adam), for he holds no salvation." refers back to Adam's attempt to retract his gift of the 70 years.

What are Chazal trying to tell us with this Medrash?

The book Mayanei haChaim by Rav Chaim Zaitchik makes an interesting observation.

Rav Chaim Zaitchik interprets that Adam HaRishon -- as with all Tzadikim -- cherished life so much that as he was approaching death he could not bear to forgo the opportunity he had to accomplish

more with those extra years. There is so much that a Tzadik can do with even one more year, with even one more month, with even a single day. Life is so precious that when he realized that his time was up, he became so distraught and irrational that he forgot his promise or was willing to retract the promise (depending of the varying versions quoted above).

This desire to retract does not stem from evil or shortcomings on Adam's part. On the contrary, it stemmed from his greatness and his understanding of the value of life.

A pasuk [verse] in Hallel states: Yakar B'Ainei Hashem hamavsa l'chasidav [Tehillim 116:15]. We just finished reciting this for 9 days. What does this mean? Rashi interprets Yakar to be equivalent of Kaved (heavy or difficult). The pasuk thus means it is difficult for the Almighty to bring death to His righteous ones.

Others however interpret: when the Almighty sees how Tzadikim act when they are staring at death, it is precious in His eyes. He is pleased with the fact that they recognize the great value of life.

The Ibn Ezra points out that the mitzvah of "You shall rise before those who have seivah" (the elderly) [Vayikra 19:32] is a different mitzvah than that cited at the end of the same pasuk: "You shall give honor to the face of the zaken". The term zaken in the phrase "you shall give honor to the face of the zaken" refers to a Torah scholar (zeh she'kanah chachmah). However, the term seivah in the mitzvah to rise before the elderly refers to anyone who is old.

The Ibn Ezra asks, why must we honor the elderly by rising before them? The Ibn Ezra answers that people who are elderly have learned to appreciate the value of life. They deserve honor for that recognition. A person acts differently, thinks differently, and has a different perspective on life when he is in his fifties and sixties than when he is in his twenties and thirties. He is a different type of person. We need to honor that perspective and attitude by rising before such people.

When Adam was "born," and was told he had 1000 years in front of him, it was tantamount to someone coming to a millionaire and asking for \$1000 donation. The millionaire is prepared to flippantly give over the 1000 dollars. It means very little to him. But if this same millionaire loses all his money he will be greatly aggravated over the fact that he gave away 1000 dollars.

At the end of his life, Adam was like the millionaire who lost his money. The 1000 years that he once had in front of him were now behind him. He had a different perspective on life now. It is because of that perspective that we rise up before the elderly. It is because of that perspective that we say "Precious in the Eyes of G-d is (the time of) death for his righteous."

Parents Love Children More Than Children Love Parents

I would like to share a fascinating Shalo"h haKadosh. The Shalo"h haKadosh writes that a person should give as much as he can afford to his daughters so that they might be able to marry a Torah scholar. But, he writes, "I am not in favor of the practice I see that when a wealthy person gets old, he distributes all his money amongst his children, assuming that they will take care of him." He

categorizes this latter practice as a major mistake. A person should not give his money to his children, necessitating him to ask them for money when he is old. One cannot rely on children for support - even if their wealth comes from their parents!

The Shalo"h haKadosh explains that the nature is that fathers love sons and fathers love daughters. However, it is also nature that the parental love to their children is greater than the reciprocal love of children to their parents.

Why is that?

The Shalo"h haKadosh explains that every personality trait that exists in creation is inherited from Adam. However, Adam had no parents. Therefore, Adam never exhibited the emotion of loving his parents. He did, however, develop an emotional love for his children. Hence, this love transferred down to all his descendants -- even though they did have parents -- their love of children was greater than their love of parents.

The Shalo"h haKadosh concludes by citing the whimsical quip that one father lovingly provides for 10 children but 10 children cannot support one father.

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Bereishis are provided below:

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