

SEFER
ALIYOS REFOEL ZEV
ON THE PARSHA

Megillas Koheles

THE NEGIAH OF GA'AVAH

"The toil of fools exhausts them, as one who does not know the way to town."

The *Medrash Koheles Raba* explains that this *passuk* refers to Yiftach. During a battle with the Pilsitim, Yiftach made a *neder* that should Hashem help him return home victorious, he would bring as a *korban* to Hashem the first thing to exit his house. When he arrived home safely, his daughter came out to greet him. In compliance with his *neder*, he brought her as a *korban*. The *Medrash* explains that Yiftach should have gone to Pinchas to absolve his *neder* instead of bringing his own daughter as a *karbon*. One would inquire as to why Yiftach did not go to Pinchas to absolve his *neder*? The *Medrash* explains that Yiftach incorrectly thought that it would be inappropriate for him, the leader of Klal Yisroel, to ask advice from Pinchas, a common member of the *kehilla*. The *Medrash's* words imply that Yiftach was subject to the *middah of ga'avah*, and that was why he could not bring himself to seek help from Pinchas.

On the surface, the *Medrash* seems incomprehensible. How is it possible that Yiftach's *ga'avah* was able to prevent him from saving his daughter's life? A parent's love for a child is unparalleled; Yiftach's love for his daughter surely surpassed his love for himself. How is it possible that he would not do everything in his power to protect her, even swallowing his pride?

From this *Medrash* one can understand the devastating manner in which bad *middos* can trap us. *Ga'avah* alone likely could not have caused Yiftach to sacrifice his daughter. The *ahava* that a parent has for a child is simply too powerful. The *Yetzer HaRah*, therefore, did not directly pit Yiftach's *ga'avah* against his love for his daughter for that would have been useless. Rather, Yiftach's *ga'avah* manifested itself in a much more subtle manner – as a *negiah*. It caused Yiftach to have a

slightly inflated opinion of the respect due to him as *shofet*, to the extent that he erroneously determined that traveling to Pinchas would demonstrate a lack of *kavod malchus*. It was thus impossible, in Yiftach's mind, for him to go to Pinchas even if that meant that his daughter would die. Yiftach would have done anything in his power to save his daughter, but to his perception going to Pinchas was simply not an option- it was against *halacha*.

By their very nature, personal bias or *negios* are very difficult to detect. Often they are so ingrained in us that without careful introspection, we would not even notice that they exist. It is incumbent upon all to recognize this, and strive to remove them lest they negatively influence our abilities to make decisions.

Parshas V'zos Habracha

A TICKET TO OLAM HABA

During a period of famine in Canaan, Yaakov Avinu sent his sons to Mitzrayim to procure food. In the process, Yosef, who was now viceroy of Egypt, and not recognized by the brothers, demanded that the brothers bring Binyomin down to Mitzrayim. Yaakov, however, did not want to let Binyomin go down to Mitzrayim. In an effort to convince Yaakov to send Binyomin along with the brothers, Yehuda made a pledge that he would suffer the consequence of spiritual excision – *nidui* – in both this world and the next, if he failed to return Binyomin safely. *Rashi*, in his commentary on *Maseches Sotah* (7b), remarks that while Yehuda did indeed fulfill the conditions of the pledge, the *nidui* nonetheless took effect. As a result, when Yehuda passed away, his body decomposed and he was not permitted to enter the Heavenly Academy.

Rashi comments (*Devarim* 33:7) that during the forty years that the Jews spent in the desert, Yehuda's bones rattled in his casket, whereas the other brothers' bodies remained fresh and whole. Moshe Rabbeinu prayed that Yehuda should no longer suffer this indignity. His prayers were answered: Yehuda's body was restored and Yehuda gained entrance into the Heavenly Academy. The *Gemara* in *Maseches Sotah* tells us that both Yehuda and Reuven admitted their guilt¹ and were thereby allowed into *Olam Haba*. The *Gemara* explains that the source for Reuven's admission of guilt is rooted in the juxtaposition of the

¹ This refers to Reuven's incident of moving his father's bed (*Bereishis* 35:22), and Yehuda's incident with Tamar (*Bereishis* 38).

קהלת י'
(ט"ו) עמל הכסילים תיגענו אשר לא ידע
ללכת אל עיר :

מדרש רבה קהלת פרשה י פסקה טז
(א) ד"א עמל הכסילים תיגענו זה יפתח אשר
לא ידע ללכת אל עיר לא היה לו לילך אצל
פנחס ויפר לו נדרו אלא אמר יפתח אני ראש
וקצין לישראל אלך אצל פנחס ופנחס אמר
אני כהן גדול בן כהן גדול ואלך אצל עם
הארץ מבניי תרייה ספת ההיא עלובתא
ותרויהון איתחייבון על דמה יפתח נישול
אבר אבר ונקבר דכתיב (שופטים י"ב) ויקבר
בערי גלעד ובכמה מקומות נקבר דאת אמר
ויקבר בערי גלעד אלא מלמד שהיה נישול
אבר אבר ונקבר במקומו פנחס מה הפסיד
נסתלקה ממנו רוח הקדש מאתים שנה
דכתיב (ד"ה א' ט') ופנחס בן אלעזר נגיד
עליהם אין כתיב כאן אלא נגיד היה עליהם
לפנים והי עמו:

blessings for Reuven and Yehuda in *V'zos Habracha*. The blessings were put together because of the argument Moshe posed to Hashem: "Who caused Reuven to admit? Yehuda did! If Reuven was let into *Olam Haba*, Yehuda should be permitted to enter, as well." Hashem agreed, and restored Yehuda's body.

It seems that the encouragement that Yehuda provided to Reuven was rather insignificant. As the *Sifsei Chachamim* (*Devarim* 33:7) points out, Reuven had already repented prior to the incident of Yehuda and Tamar. However, that initial repentance was done in private. Later, after Yehuda admitted his sin in public, Reuven did likewise. Yehuda merely made Reuven aware of the potential benefit of a public confession.

Furthermore, Yehuda had no particular intention to provide an example for Reuven. Yehuda's motive was to prevent Tamar from being burnt to death. Additionally, it appears that Yehuda did not ever give Reuven any specific advice. Reuven merely drew his own conclusion from witnessing Yehuda's actions.

It should be noted that Yehuda had many other qualities that Moshe Rabbeinu could have used in his prayer. Yehuda was a great *talmid chacham*, as he was the one Yaakov sent to Mitzrayim to establish a yeshiva before the rest of Yaakov's family would move there. The *Malchus* was given to Yehuda; undoubtedly, he was worthy of having such an honor bestowed upon him. One would suppose Yehuda had a great many attributes Moshe Rabbeinu could have utilized in his appeal. Yet, we find that Moshe Rabbeinu chose to focus his entreaty solely on Yehuda's influence on Reuven, which was minimal, indirect, and unintentional. What is so unique about this point that Moshe Rabbeinu specifically chose it for Yehuda's defense, and successfully so?

We see what a unique merit it can be to help another person come closer to Hashem. Yehuda helping Reuven get into *Olam Haba* proved to be the point that enabled him to do the same. There seems to be some *mida-kneged-mida* form of justice that Hashem will allow in a person's defense, even when other merits will not succeed. Though Yehuda's role in Reuven's repentance was minimal, it made the difference in Hashem's acceptance of Reuven's *teshuvah*, and thereby helped Yehuda where all else failed. This point can encourage us in our efforts to reach out to our fellow Jews to help them come closer to Hashem.²

² Another point that can be gleaned from here is how Hashem takes into consideration even seemingly small incidental results of our actions. Everything we do, and every impact we make, even those that seem trivial and negligible, are significant and considered by Hashem.

CLAIMING RESPONSIBILITY FOR ONE'S ACTIONS

The *Medrash* explains that the *passuk* (*Mishley* 31:29) refers to *Moshe Rabbeinu*, who elevated himself above all others, including all other biblical figures. The *Medrash* enumerates several examples that demonstrate Moshe's superiority. One is a conversation between *Avraham Avinu* and Moshe, in which Moshe justifies his claim of superiority to Avraham, noting that Avraham only fed those who were uncircumcised and fed them only in inhabited lands, while Moshe fed the entire Jewish nation in the desert.

The *Anaf Yosef* explains that Moshe was referring to the *manna* that fell in the desert only in his merit. The *Anaf Yosef* then cites a *Medrash* that quotes a verse stating that Moshe "did righteousness" with the Jewish people. The *Medrash* asks, "What did he do for them? They had the manna and they had the well!" The *Anaf Yosef* explains that since Moshe was the one who led them into the desert, taking them from a land in which their basic needs were provided, he thereby assumed the responsibility to provide them with sustenance. The manna, therefore, could not be regarded as his *tzedakkah*.

It is puzzling that it would be Moshe's responsibility to provide them with food. Indeed, when Hashem asked Moshe to take His people out of Egypt, he refused, relenting only when forced by Hashem to accept the mission. Furthermore, Moshe was offering the Jewish nation the greatest kindness imaginable: delivering them from slavery to become Hashem's chosen people. How could it be his responsibility to feed them considering the tremendous act of kindness he was already doing for them?

It is apparent from this *Medrash* that one is truly responsible for anything which results from one's actions, whether such actions were undertaken voluntarily or by force. However great a favor one was intending to do, one must always assume ultimate responsibility for the results.

Sefer Aliyos Refoel Zev, organized liluy nishmas R' Refoel Zev Chait A"H, is a compilation of Mussar Shmuessin originated, developed and written by talmidim of Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim of Queens. These submissions were written by R' Ari Derdik, Rabbi Ben Prero and R' Chanan Hanson and edited by ARZ staff. Feedback and constructive comments are welcome at arzontheparsha@gmail.com Thank you to the many individuals who have helped with the forthcoming sefer.

דברים לג
(ז) וזאת ליהודה ויאמר שמע ה' קול יהודה ואל עמו תביאנו ידיו רב לו ועזר מצריו תהיה:

רש"י
(ז) וזאת ליהודה - סמך יהודה לראובן מפני ששניהם הודו על קלקול שבידם ... ועוד פירשו רבותינו שכל מי שנה שהיו ישראל במדבר היו עצמות יהודה מתגלגלין בארון מפני נדוי שקבל עליו שנאמר וחסאתי לאבי כל הימים אמר משה מי גרם לראובן שיודה יהודה וכו

עין שפתי חכמים אות א ש

דברים רבה פרשה יא
ד"א אברהם אומר למשה אני גדול ממך שהייתי זן לעוברים ולשבים א"ל משה אני נתעליתי יותר ממך אתה הייתי זן בני אדם ערלים ואני הייתי זן בני אדם מהולים ולא עוד אלא את הייתי זן בישוב ואני הייתי זן במדבר... לפיכך אמר שלמה רבות בנות עשו חיל וגוי אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא הואיל ונתעלה מן הכל הוא יברך את ישראל וזאת הברכה.