

Shemos 2014

1.

Our actions are paid back measure for measure

“And all the persons who emerged from Yaakov’s loins were seventy souls, and Yosef was in Egypt.” (1, 5)

"ויהי כל נפש יצאי ירך יעקב שבעים נפש ויוסף היה במצרים."

Nachalas Tzvi page 133:

Seemingly, the words “and Yosef was in Egypt” are superfluous! What is the relevance of Yosef being in Egypt to those who were moving to Egypt?

The whole reason the Jews had to go to Egypt was because Yosef was there. Since the brothers sold Yosef who subsequently ended up in Egypt, they were therefore punished by having to go down to Egypt as well. “And Yosef was in Egypt” is explaining the whole reason why the Jews were in Egypt, because of the sin that led to Yosef being in Egypt.

This is a perfect example of the Mishna in Sotah (8b) which teaches the concept of midah k’neged midah (measure for measure). Meaning, the brothers got what they deserved, since they sold Yosef, and he ended up in Egypt, they therefore ended up in Egypt as well.

We never know the effect our actions can have. The brothers thought they were selling Yosef to be a slave, and he eventually became the leader over all of Egypt! By being nice to a person, we could potentially change their life. All of our actions have major effects, and that’s why we should always strive to be nice to people.

We additionally learn another powerful message from this incident. Even if we do not get punished immediately for a certain sin that we performed, we will eventually get punished. Conversely, even if we do not get rewarded for a certain mitzvah that we perform immediately, we will eventually be rewarded. As a side point, even if we don’t see ‘fruit’ (positive results) from the learning and mitzvahs that we perform immediately (which is usually the case), we should not be discouraged and disappointed, rather, we must realize that the reward and ‘fruits’ will come either in this world or the next.

We also learn another tremendous and fundamental lesson from this episode. Even though the brothers thought they got away with selling Yosef, nevertheless, their sinful act was eventually discovered. Similarly, sometimes we have an incorrect assumption that we ‘got away’ and ‘escaped’ a certain sin which we unfortunately performed, the reality is that this sin will eventually be divulged. That sin and every sin will be disclosed in this world and/or the next.

2.

Why did Hashem appear to Moshe specifically by means of (via) a burning bush?

“An angel of Hashem appeared to him in a blaze of fire from amid the bush. He saw and behold! The bush was burning in the fire but the bush was not consumed.” (3, 2)

"וירא מלאך יקוק אליו בלבת אש מתוך הסנה וירא והנה הסנה בער באש והסנה איננו אכל."

Ohel Aryeh (page 43):

Why did Hashem appear to Moshe specifically by means of (via) a burning bush?

This pasuk indicates that Hashem is with us in galus (exile) and feels our pain. When we are in pain, Hashem is also in pain. The pasuk in Bereishis (46, 4) states "I shall descend with you to Egypt." The question arises, why does the pasuk use the word 'מצרימה' instead of 'למצרים' (With the letter ה at the end of the word instead of a ל at the beginning)? It's because the gematria (numerical value) of מצרימה is the same as שכינה (385). This additionally teaches us that even though we are in galus, the Shechina (divine presence of God) is with us.

The Be'ar Mayim Chaim (parshas Shelach) suggests an additional answer. **The pain the Shechina feels when we are in pain is even greater than the pain we actually feel. When a person sins, in addition to the punishment he receives for performing the sin, he gets punished for the pain that he causes Hashem by doing that sin. When a person repents he will get rewarded not only for the teshuva (repentance), but also for alleviating the pain of Hashem.**

This is why Hashem appeared to Moshe via this type of bush; to teach us that even if everything looks thorny and we are painfully surrounded, Hashem is still with us.

An additional answer is that Hashem is teaching us that He is with us at every stage of our lives, wherever we may be. Even when we are in the lowest place, represented by a lowly thorn bush, and we feel so far from Hashem, He is still nevertheless with us just like he was in the thorn bush.

The simple answer that the Gemara in Shabbos (67a) offers is that the thorn bush symbolizes lowness and humility. Meaning, it was due to the humility of the thorn bush that Hashem rested his divine presence on the thorn bush.

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