

דרכים בפרשה מקץ

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יודבר שר המשקים את פרעה לאמר את חטאי אני מזכיר היום

And the wine butler spoke to Pharaoh saying: my sins I recall today.

The Alshich Hakadosh wonders why it is that the *Sar Hamashkim* (wine butler) merited being the *shliach* (agent) in Yosef's release from prison. He explains that there was a certain character trait of *hachna'a* (submission) that the butler displayed when he came in front of Pharaoh. The words *את חטאי אני מזכיר היום* - *my sins I recall/mention today* seem to imply that he was actually referring to more than just one sin. Although he was only thrown into jail because of the sin of allowing a fly into the king's goblet of wine, the plural "sins" alludes to another sin. The Rishonim (Riva) explain that he felt he had sinned by not keeping his promise to Yosef about making mention of his existence in the jail.

This feeling of *hachna'a*, that something wrong was being done because he did not keep his word, and subsequently making good on his promise (even two years later) was a merit for him, which in turn, gave him this great opportunity to save a tzaadik.

Recently, I needed to exchange the license plate on my car. Not having the proper tools to screw/unscrew the plate from the car, I walked in to an auto mechanic right next door. There was a huge sign there which read, "Don't even think of asking to use our bathroom or our tools". Without a choice, I asked anyway. Before looking up at me, I already got a, "can't you read the sign" growl from the owner. But when he saw my yarmulke, he stopped, pointed to it, and said, "Never mind, you can take it, I know you will bring it back". It felt good knowing that the Yarmulka still represents an assumption of *ehrllichkeit*.

Later on in our parsha, we find this same concept as well with the incident of Yosef sending the brothers back home with instructions of returning with Bin-yomin. Yosef gave them provisions for the road as well as the grain that was needed for Yaakov. He also had his men secretly return their money which was paid, back into their bags.

Quoting the Brisker Rav, Rav Shimon Shwab explained that Yosef knew without a doubt that they would return to Mitzrayim when someone else's

money was found in their possession. The children of Avrohom, Yitzchak and Yaakov would not be at peace with themselves until it was returned.

We can also make a similar suggestion earlier in the parsha. Pharaoh summoned Yosef, telling him that he heard about his dream interpreting abilities. Yosef responded - בלעדי - that the wisdom does not belong to me even one bit; it is all Hashem. Any person looking to improve their current situation would play up the conversation or at the very least keep quiet, but Yosef does the opposite, not accepting any of the credit for himself. When Pharaoh sees this, he understands that Yosef is different. The honesty and middah of *hachna'a* that Yosef displayed was more than enough to convince Pharaoh to raise up Yosef to the highest possible status.

We learned earlier about Avrohom Avinu's aversion of dishonesty when it came to his nephew Lot allowing his own shepherds to graze in other people's property. Without delay, an ultimatum was given by his uncle, Avrohom: either you go or I go. Chas V'Shalom, that for even a moment someone should think that Avraham was engaging in dishonesty.

The *aveira* of telling a lie is further underscored in the Torah: מדבר שקר תרחק - *Distance yourself from falsehood* (Shemos 23:7). The gemara (Shabbos 55a) teaches: אמר רבי חנינא חותמו של הקב"ה אמת - *The seal of HaShem is truth*. On the other hand, the gemara in Sanhedrin (103a) teaches that one who constantly lies will not merit to greet the Shechina in the World to Come.

Sadly, society has fully accepted that people are no longer truthful. We hear the constant call of #fake-news on the media for lying to the public, but then we see that there are no great tzaddikim on the other side either. "My word is my bond" no longer exists.

But this should have no bearing on the way Klal Yisroel conducts themselves. We are better than them and there should never even begin to be room for a comparison. The very last words that Moshe Rabbeinu told Klal Yisroel were *אתה על במותימו* - *You will tread upon their high places* (Devarim 33:29) Incredibly, Rav Schwab writes that this possuk is symbolizing the exalted moral levels of a *Yid* and what is expected ethically. If we want to know where to set our standards, we must look at the high levels of the *umos ha'olam* and make that our *starting point*.

מרדכי אפפּעל, Good Shabbos