



דרכים בפרשה

בא



ויאמר ה' אל משה בא אל פרעה

HaShem said to Moshe, "Come to Pharaoh"

The parsha begins with HaShem telling Moshe to go back yet again to the ever-obstinate Pharaoh. What would the mood of Moshe be like upon returning to him? With Pharaoh's display of the highest level of *chutzpah*, it would only be natural for Moshe to want to deal with him harshly and speak to him in that manner as well.

If we look back at Rashi's comments to 6:13, **ויצום אל בני ישראל: צום עליהם להנהיגם בנחת ולסבל אותם. ואל פרעה מלך מצרים: צום עליו לחלק לו כבוד** -we find that HaShem instructed Moshe and Aharon how they should treat the recalcitrance of the Jews and Pharaoh. Toward the Jews they should be patient and understanding; to Pharaoh, they should display the honour and respect to which his position entitled him to.

The Chasam Sofer zy"va explains that there was a lot at stake here. Although Pharaoh did not deserve any honour, especially with the way he was behaving, it was still important that he be given the utmost respect. By not honouring him, there would be two possible reactions. The first and most obvious is that he would become further infuriated. But more importantly, the Chasam Sofer continues: what happens if Pharaoh does not get upset? What happens if he would choose to accept the shame? This would result in a terrible

outcome! By Pharaoh not reacting even though he was embarrassed, Pharaoh could effectively receive a *zechus* in *shomayim* so great that it would amount to complete forgiveness for everything that he had done.

This means that no matter what one has done in life, there is still a unique chance of *teshuvah* through accepting shame and not responding.

This amazing power that comes from accepting shame and not responding is more than just a *segula* for *teshuvah*. It can literally open the most closed gates in *shomayim*.

One mind-boggling example of just how powerful this *koach* can be is found by Rochel Imeinu, when she was finally granted a child. She names him Yosef, proclaiming, **אסף אלוקים** - *HaShem has gathered in my embarrassment*". Rashi explains that Rochel suffered embarrassment for being barren and now she was no longer embarrassed, so therefore she named him Yosef. The Ibn Ezra offers an amazing insight on this *passuk*. He explains that each time Rochel would pass someone with a child, she would suffer embarrassment from the other woman, yet she had never responded to the smirks and comments. Each and every offense was duly noted by HaShem and added together. They were gathered up into a great pile of *zechuyos*

for her, ultimately totalling enough to merit her having a child.

Recently, I met a Yerushalmi gabbai tzeddaka with whom I had a very close friendship with many years earlier in Eretz Yisroel. We started reminiscing and he told me that he has five children. I mentioned that I recall only four; when was the fifth one born? He continued to relate the following amazing story: He got married at the ripe old age of 18, and by 23, he had 4 children. By the time he was 30, he still had 4 children, and as thankful as he was, he said that he and his wife found it difficult because they came from families of 14 and 16 respectively, and each of their siblings had many children as well. A visit to the doctor revealed that she would not have any more children. At that time, he was a young gabbai of a great, famous Rebbe. For personal reasons, he moved on to another job and found himself davening elsewhere. One year on Purim, after ten years of not going back, he decided to stop in to the Purim Tish. The “Purim Rebbe” saw him enter and decided to make him the subject of his jokes. His humiliation and embarrassment in front of hundreds of people was immeasurable. Feeling so upset and dejected on Purim night, he walked home and shared with his wife his pain. His wife suggested that they accept the shame with love and perhaps in that merit, they would have another child. Sure enough, nine months later, their fifth child was born to them whom they named Esther as they felt that this was their own personal Purim miracle.

Similarly, we also find that Yaakov Avinu received a *brocha* that his children shall be like the dust of the ground and like the stars and sand. The common denominator between the three is that HaShem is promising that the

children will be too numerous to count. But what is the *mashal* of dust? Which quality is HaShem referring to?

In Shemoneh Esrei we ask HaShem, ונפשי כעפר לכל תהיה - *and let my soul be like dust to everyone*”. The dust of the earth is the epitome of selflessness. Everyone steps on it, and yet it takes no offense, even continuing to bring forth produce. We ask HaShem that we should be הנעלבים ואינם עולבים שומעים חרפתם ואינם משיבים - those who are insulted and do not insult, who hear their shame and do not respond. If for whatever reason we need to be insulted and hear our embarrassment, we should have the strength to refrain from returning the insult. The Ruach Chaim comments that when one spends his time trying to return insults to people, this deters him from advancing in serving HaShem. There are numerous stories of tzaddikim who advised people to get *brochos* from someone with this quality, and it was this very *middah* that HaShem was telling Yaakov that Klal Yisroel should strive for.

How precious is just one moment of not responding, hence our tefillah ונפשי כעפר לכל תהיה. This is the *brocha* that Yaakov Avinu received and this is what opened the locked door for Rochel Imeinu! Now we understand the cautionary measure that was given to Moshe and Aharon when dealing with Pharaoh.

Good Shabbos, מרדכי אפפעל



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