



דרכים בפרשה

מקץ - חנוכה



וישלח פרעה ויקרא את יוסף ויריצוהו מן הבור ויגלח ויחלף שמלותיו ויבוא אל פרעה

So Pharaoh sent and summoned Yosef, and they rushed him from the dungeon. He shaved and changed his clothes, and came to Pharaoh.

רש"י ויגלח – מפני כבוד מלכות

Rashi: He shaved in honor of the kingship

The Torah tells us that Yosef was rushed from the prison; he shaved and changed his clothing. Rashi writes that he did it because of “*kevod malchus*”; Yosef did it out of respect and honor for the king. Chazal tell us that because it was Rosh Hashana, Yosef was reluctant to cut his hair. However, given that *kovod malchus* of Paraoh was involved, he consented.

The Baalei Mussar offer a different approach. They suggest that Yosef was initially reluctant to cut his hair because it was his hair that had gotten him into trouble in Potifar’s home. Yosef was *mesalsel b’saaro*. He used to play with his hair; he was overly concerned with his physical appearance. Realizing the source of his sin, he no longer wanted to do anything that would further improve his appearance. Upon further consideration he changed his mind, however not because of Paraoh, for that would not have sufficed. When Rashi writes that he did it because of *kevod malchus*, he is referring to the *malchus* of Yaakov. In Canaan, Yaakov was considered royalty.

Yosef was concerned that when they would ask who he was, it would be an embarrassment to Yaakov’s name for them to see such a disheveled and undignified looking son. He had a family name to live up to.

Similarly, in *Parshas Vayeishev*, we saw how Yosef refrained from sinning with Potifera because he constantly had the image of his father on his mind. When the Torah writes וימאן, that he refused, the *trup* on this word is a *shalsheles*. וירא יוסף מראה אביו נגדו – and Yosef saw the image of his father in front of him. There was a constant chain linking Yosef to his father at all times. It was this chain that saved him from *chet*, and this same chain that gave him the strength to retain his family pride.

Perhaps, we can offer yet another approach; **כי לה' המלוכה ומושל בגויים Hashem’s and He rules the nations!**

When Rashi writes that he did it because of *kevod malchus*, we can suggest that Yosef had in mind the *malchus* of the King of all Kings. Yosef was reluctant, as explained previously, because his hair had led him to his original mistake. However Yosef agreed

because he now had a new opportunity being presented to him. Would he be able to return to the scene of the crime and remain whole? Could he go back to his original mistake of misusing his hair and do teshuvah by using it for the right reasons? The Rambam writes in Hilchos Teshuvah that *teshuvah* is not be complete until a person is in the same situation once again without succumbing. It was for this *kevod malchus*, i.e. doing teshuvah before the true King, that Yosef was willing to cut his hair.

When we think of it, *kavod* is a very funny thing. If we look at the famous Chanukah story of Chana and her seven sons, at first glance we see something that defies logic. The Midrash in Eicha describes how the emperor tried to get the sons to bow down to the idols. Each son stood steadfast in his *emunah* of *HaShem Echad* and refused to bow down, thus getting killed *al kidush HaShem*.

After six sons lay dead before him, the cruel emperor turned to the youngest of the sons and tried in many ways to convince him to bow down. He promised him wealth and honour, *osher* and *kovod malochim*, but nothing could tempt this two-and-a-half year old child.

Finally the king tried to make a compromise. Desperately trying to save face in the eyes of the onlookers, the emperor threw down his

signet ring and merely requested that the boy pick it up, thus giving the appearance of bowing but not actually worshipping.

Again the boy refused, this time adding, “*Chaval alecha!* I have pity on you. You are afraid of what the *basar vedam*, flesh and blood spectators, will think of you. How much more should I be afraid of the *Melech Malchei Hamlachim!*”

Upon looking at this Midrash, it boggles the mind to think that an emperor who can put anyone to death at mere whim is worried, “What will they say?” But alas, his failure would wound his pride; his frail human ego.

Yosef was prepared to cut his hair only because it was the *kavod* of HaShem that was now at stake. No longer did personal *kavod* make a difference.

In a day and age similar to the times of the Chashmonaim in that we, as the Am Hanivchar, are surrounded by a culture which has values that are antithetical to the values of the Torah, the temptation to imitate the modes of dress and language in the hopes of gaining approval from *their* society is strong. The *neiros* of Chanukah remind us that as Yidden, it is our desire to win the approval of HaShem only, and no one else!

Good Shabbos and ah freilichen Chanukah,

מרדכי אפפּעל

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