

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת וישב

ויראו אחיו כי אתו אהב אביהם מכל אחיו וישנאו אתו ולא יכלו דברו לשלם
“His brothers saw that it was he whom their father loved most of all his brothers so they hated him; and they could not speak to him peaceably” (37:4)

R' Yonason Eibenschutz says that the Torah commands us to rebuke wrongdoers because holding anger in can only lead to greater harm. It is better to rebuke someone gently before anger builds up because that will solve the problem and nip it in the bud. If the brothers would have spoken to Yosef in the very beginning of this story, the problem would have been solved without an incident. However, the posuk tells us that they found themselves unable to speak with him in order to bring about peace. Why could they not speak to him? They were afraid that if they rebuked Yosef, since "it was he whom their father loved most," he would tell their father what they had said and this would cause Yaakov distress.

Why did Yosef insist on repeating his dreams to his brothers if he knew that they would hate him for it? Since they never rebuked him for his inappropriate behavior, he was unaware that they disliked him so much. They bore the hatred in their hearts and did not display it outwardly. Yosef did not know and so he told his brothers about his dreams, thinking that they would like to hear it. Communication is key in all relationships. This is an example of a case where a lack of communication caused major problems.

וישמע ראובן ויצלהו מידם ויאמר לא נכנו נפש
“Reuven heard, and he rescued him from their hand; he said: We will not strike him mortally” (37:21)

The Sfas Emes says that Reuven meant well when he suggested that they throw him in the pit. However, when he returned he found that his advice was for naught as Yosef had been sold before he could bring him home. This caused him great distress. However, the Torah testifies that Reuven's actions were actually extremely vital because he saved Yosef's life. That is why the Torah stresses that he rescued Yosef from their hands through his words. The lesson that we can learn from this is that even when it seems to us that our endeavors are unsuccessful, we should not despair. There may have been ramifications that we do not see but of which Hashem takes note. This is why we say that no prayer goes for naught. When a person prays for something and is not answered, it does not mean that his prayer has been wasted. Instead, Hashem has chosen to store his prayer away to be answered at a later time regarding a different matter.

At this point, Reuven thought that he had missed his chance to save Yosef despite his best intentions. Later on, he found out that what he did was actually very important. Unlike Reuven, though, many people never see the fruits of their labor. We should recognize that every good deed that we try to do has an impact. Hashem knows what is in our hearts and will bestow a blessing upon all our well-intentioned actions.

ויהי בעת ההוא וירד יהודה מאת אחיו ויט עד איש עדלמי ושמו חירה

“It was at that time that Yehuda went down from his brothers and turned away towards an Adullamite man whose name was Chira” (38:1)

The midrash on this posuk says that at this point in time everyone was busy: The brothers were busy with the aftermath of their sale of Yosef, Yosef was busy fasting, Reuven was busy fasting, Yaakov was busy fasting, Yehuda was busy getting married and Hashem was busy creating the light of Moshiach.

R' Simcha Bunim of Peshischa says that it seems Yehuda had the smartest reaction of all the people involved, based on the fact that Hashem caused the roots of Moshiach to come about as a result of his marriage. While everyone else was occupied in activities that outwardly appear to be spiritual and holy, Yehuda's marriage, while seeming mundane, was the most important. How do we understand this? Hashem knows the inner thoughts of every single person. The difference between Yehuda and all the others was that he chose not to dwell on the past but to focus on the present and to have hope for what was to come. This forward-looking attitude seems to have been the best reaction to the tragic events that had just unfolded.

This is not to say that everyone else was acting incorrectly. There are many paths to serve Hashem and each one had their own way of dealing with what had occurred. However, it is noteworthy that Moshiach came as a result of the attitude to look forward. This is the whole idea of Moshiach, that we wait for him and look forward to that great day when he will arrive and bring mankind to its ultimate destiny. This is the attitude from which Moshiach began to teach us that this is the way we should always feel about Moshiach, constantly awaiting that glorious day, may it come speedily in our time.

**הוא מוצאת והיא שלחה אל חמיה לאמר לאיש אשר אלה לו אנכי הרה ותאמר
הכר נא למי החתמת והפתילים והמטה האלה**

“As she was taken out, she sent word to her father-in-law, saying: By the man to whom these belong I am with child. And she said: Identify, if you please, whose are this signet, this wrap and this staff” (38:25)

Chazal point out the greatness of Tamar in this story. She was willing to be burned alive rather than embarrass Yehuda by publicly stating that he was the father of her children. Chazal derive from this story that “It is better for one to throw himself into a furnace and not embarrass his friend publicly.”

Each Motzoei Shabbos, R' Yehoshua Leib Diskin would give a parsha shiur in Brisk. All the participants received a cup of tea when they came to the shiur. One week, the person who prepared the tea put salt in it instead of sugar. The students were unable to swallow the tea, but R' Diskin drank it without even grimacing. After the shiur, his wife asked him why he felt it necessary to drink the whole thing and how he managed not to even betray through his reactions that it was unpalatable. He responded that Chazal teach us not to embarrass a person at all costs. Had he spit out the tea, the attendant would have been embarrassed that he had ruined it. Instead, R' Diskin chose to silently stomach the unappetizing tea so that his fellow should not be shamed in public.

ויהי כמשיב ידו והנה יצא אחיו ותאמר מה פרצת עליך פרץ ויקרא שמו פרץ
“It was, as he drew back his hand, that behold his brother emerged. And she said:

With what strength you asserted yourself! And he called his name Peretz” (38:29)

R' Yaakov Kamenetzky says that the birth of Peretz, the forebear of Moshiach, is symbolic of how Moshiach will arrive. There will come an event that will cause everyone to believe that Moshiach is imminent. Nevertheless, Moshiach will not come right away and will come from somewhere else. The Rambam says that we have no way of knowing how the arrival of Moshiach will play out, but we can try to glean something about it from the stories of our ancestors. Even when Moshiach does not arrive, we should not despair. We must confidently believe that Moshiach is coming very soon and that Hashem will ensure that he comes at the appointed time.

Kesharim Baruch College/NYU Parsha Shiur

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