

Zera Shimshon

Profound Divrei Torah culled from the writings of the Gaon and Mekubal Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachman Michael Nachmeni zy"l, author of Sefer Zera Shimshon on Chumash and Toldos Shimshon on Pirkei Avos, who promised that all who study his words will be blessed with an abundance of good, wealth and honor, and will merit to see children and grandchildren thriving around their table.



Vayishlach תשפ"א

• Zera Shimshon - the Limud that brings Yeshuos •

גלייך 114

אמרות שמשון

Why the Prophet Ovadia

Resolved to Replicate Yaakov's Strategy

וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיִּצְרָ לוֹ וַיַּחַץ אֶת הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ וְאֶת הַצֹּאן וְאֶת הַבְּקָר וְהַגְּמָלִים לְשְׁנֵי מַחֲנֹת: וַיֹּאמֶר אִם יָבֹא עֵשָׂו אֶל הַמַּחֲנֶה הָאֶחָד וְהִכָּהוּ וְהָיָה הַמַּחֲנֶה הַנִּשְׁאָר לְפָלִיטָה: (לכ ה-ט)

And Yaakov became very frightened, and it distressed him; so he divided the people who were with him, and the flocks, cattle and camels, into two camps. And he said, "Of Eisav comes to one camp and strikes it, then the remaining camp shall be a refuge".

The Gemara in Sanhedrin (לט ע"ב) discusses the instance when the prophet Ovadia used the same strategy as his forefather Yaakov. א"ר יצחק מפני מה זכה עובדיהו לנביאות, מפני שהחביא מאה נביאים במערה. שנאמר, ויהי בהכרית איזבל את נביאי ה' ויקח עובדיהו מאה נביאים ויחביאם חמשים איש במערה וגו'. מאי שנא חמשים איש, א"ר אלעזר מיעקב למד שנאמר והיה המחנה הנשאר לפליטה. - Why did Ovadia merit prophecy? Because he hid a hundred prophets in a cave and saved their lives. As the Passuk says: 'It was when Izevel was decimating the Prophets of Hashem, that Ovadia took a hundred prophets and he hid them, fifty men in a cave, and he sustained them with bread and water'. Why did he choose to hide them fifty men to a cave? Why not simply hide all hundred in one cave? R' Elazar said: Ovadia learned this strategy from Yaakov, as the Passuk says, 'If Eisav comes to one camp and strikes it, then the remaining camp shall survive'. Similarly, Ovadia hid the prophets in two caves so that if Izevel discovered one hideout, the prophets in the other would escape.

This entire analyzation of Ovadia's behavior begs for an explanation.

Firstly, what was the Gemara's question in the first place, 'Why did Ovadia choose to hide them fifty men to a cave, and didn't hide them all in one cave?' Why can't it be that Ovadia operated with this simple strategy in order to save one group in the event that the other group would be discovered? And secondly, even R' Elazar who did indeed explain that Ovadia's conduct was in line with this approach, nevertheless felt it necessary to explain that Ovadia learned this strategy from Yaakov; why couldn't he explain that Ovadia came up with this simple strategy by himself?

הוצאת הגליון והפעחת לזכות

לברכה והצלחה

Avrohom Elazar ben Yisroel Yehudah,
Pessi Rochel bas Harav Ezra
Yisroel Zev ben Avraham Tzvi
Yehudis Baila bas Shlomo Yehudah

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The Yerushalmi in Peah (פ"א ה"א) explains that it was the absence of loshon hora in the days of Achav which helped them win battles, despite their idol worship, and says as follows. דורו של אחאב עובדי ע"ז היו, וע"י שלא היה להן דילטורין היו יורדים למלחמה ונוצחין. הוא שעבדיהו אמר לאליהו, הלא הוגד לאדוני אשר עשיתי בהרוג איזבל את נביאי ה' וגו' ואכלכלם לחם ומים וכו'; ואליהו מכריז בהר הכרמל אני נותרתי נביא לבדי לה'. וכל עמא ידעין ולא מפרסמין - The generation of Achav were idolaters; yet because there was no loshon hora among them, they would go down to war and win. This is implicit in what Ovadia told Eliyahu, "See, has it not been told to my lord what I did when Izevel killed the prophets of Hashem... and I sustained them with bread and water". And Eliyahu proclaims on the top of Mount Carmel, "I alone have remained as a prophet of Hashem", and the entire people knew that Ovadia is hiding a hundred more, yet none of them disclosed this to the king.

It seems clear from this Yerushalmi that all the Jews indeed knew about the one hundred prophets that Ovadia hid, yet were nevertheless meticulous with the laws of loshon hora and thus did not reveal this secret to the king.

It is in view of this that the Gemara understood that it was obviously not the simple strategy of 'saving one group in the event that the other group was discovered' that brought Ovadia to hide the prophets in two groups. For Ovadia knew that the people of his generation were careful with the laws of loshon hora, and would therefore be careful not to let the secret be revealed; hence there was no reason for him to suspect that the king would find the prophets. Thus, the Gemara sought to understand what indeed was Ovadia's reason for not hiding them as one group.

We can also explain that when R' Elazar said that 'Ovadia learned this strategy from Yaakov', it wasn't so much for the sake of Ovadia's scuffle with Izevel that he utilized this approach, for in his specific situation he wasn't concerned that either group would be discovered.

Rather, the reason why Ovadia made use of this strategy was on behalf of the coming generations who may not realize that Ovadia had no need for the strategy, and thus when they would see that Ovadia had rejected Yaakov's tactic, they may infer a clear directive that one has no need to strategize, but may instead rely on miracles. It was in order to avoid this misunderstanding that Ovadia utilized Yaakov's strategy, in order to teach the Jewish People that in every situation that may arise one may not put his faith in miracles, but must rather strategize and do all that he can to protect himself from adversity.

The Display of Mercy Shown When Praying on Behalf Of Wicked People

וַיִּשָׂא יַעֲקֹב עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה עֹשֵׂוּ בָא וְעִמּוֹ אַרְבַּע מְאוֹת אִישׁ וַיַּחֲזֵן אֶת הַיְלָדִים עַל לְאָה וְעַל רָחֵל וְעַל שְׁתֵּי הַשְּׁפָחוֹת: וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת הַשְּׁפָחוֹת וְאֶת יְלָדֵיהֶן רֵאשֻׁנָּה וְאֶת לְאָה וְיְלָדֵיהָ אַחֲרָנִים וְאֶת רָחֵל וְאֶת יוֹסֵף אַחֲרָנִים: וְהוּא עֹבֵר לִפְנֵיהֶם וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֶרְצָה שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים עַד גְּשׁוּתוֹ עַד אַחֲיוֹ: (לג א-ג)

Yaakov raised his eyes and saw - and behold, Eisav was coming, and with him were four hundred men, so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two maids. He put the maids and their children first, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Yosef last. Then he himself went on ahead of them and bowed earthward seven times until he reached his brother.

The Midrash (ע"ח) goes on to interpret a Passuk in Tehillim to be alluding to this very incident. והוא עבר לפניו. הה"ד. כרחם אב על בנים, תני ר' חייא כרחמן שבאבות. ואי זה הוא רחמן שבאבות, ר' יהודה אמר זה אברהם, אמר אברהם חלילה לך מעשות כדבר הזה, ר' לוי אמר יעקב, והוא עבר לפניו, אמר טב דיגע ר' לוי אמר יעקב, 'Then he himself went on ahead of them'. Thus, it is written, 'As a father is merciful towards his children, so has Hashem shown mercy to those who fear him. R' Chiya taught us; this means that Hashem's mercy is like that of the most merciful of fathers. And who is 'the most merciful of fathers'? R' Yehudah said: That is Avraham, for Avraham said in his prayers on behalf of the people of Sedom, "It would be a sacrilege to you to do such a thing, to bring death upon the righteous along with the wicked". R' Levi said: It is Yaakov, of whom our verse states, 'Then he went on ahead of them'. Yaakov said to himself, "If Eisav comes to do battle, it is better that he strike me and not them".

We can understand the opinion of R' Levi who interprets the Passuk which mentions the 'merciful father', to be alluding to Yaakov's mercy, as he indeed displayed great mercy when he went in front of the others and said "If Eisav comes to do battle, it is better that he strike me and not them". However, the opinion of R' Yehudah who interprets the 'merciful father' to be alluding to Avraham who prayed on behalf of the people of Sedom, is hard to comprehend, for why do those prayers of Avraham represent the epitome of mercy, when all he prayed for was that Hashem judge them with justice, and that He spare the righteous people of Sedom?



When Avraham prayed on behalf of the people of Sedom, all he asked of Hashem was that He should judge them with justice, as he clearly said, חלילה לך מעשת כדבר הזה. להמית צדיק עם רשע... חלילה לך השפט כל, *It would be a sacrilege to you to do such a thing, to bring death upon the righteous along with the wicked... It would be a sacrilege to you! Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?!* Therefore it's difficult to understand why Hashem replied to Avraham, אם אמצא בסדם חמשים צדיקים בתוך העיר ונשאתי לכל המקום בעבורם, *"If I find in Sedom fifty righteous people in the midst of the city, then I would spare the entire place on their account"*, for just as the

righteous do not deserve to die along with the wicked, so too do the wicked not deserve to be spared along with the righteous.

It would seem that from Hashem's reply to Avraham's request, we can gather that when Avraham appealed for justice, he was in fact entreating for justice in light of Hashem's virtue of justice. As the Gemara in Brachos (ו"א) tells us, וחנתי את אשר אהן אע"פ שאינו הגון, ורחמתי את אשר ארחם אע"פ שאינו הגון. Hashem said, "I shall show favor to whom I choose to show favor" - which implies even to one who may indeed be unfit to be shown favor - "And I shall show mercy to whom I choose to show mercy" - which implies even to one who may indeed be unfit to be shown mercy. Therefore, when Avraham prayed on behalf of the people of Sedom, he did in fact pray on behalf of the wicked people as well, in light of Hashem's virtue of

'showing favor and mercy even to those who may indeed be unfit of such'. Accordingly, Hashem replied, "If I find in Sedom fifty righteous people in the midst of the city, then I would spare the entire place on their account."



According to this insight, that Avraham's prayers for justice wasn't an appeal of mercy solely on behalf of Sedom's righteous people, but was rather an appeal on behalf of the wicked people of Sedom as well, we can understand the opinion of R' Yehudah who recognized these prayers of Avraham as the epitome of man's mercy; for when one utilizes an opportunity to beseech for mercy for all of mankind, even for wicked people, there is certainly no greater display of mercy.

זרע שמשון פרשת וישלח אות 1

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