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PARSHA ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Vayigash ✍️ Rabbi Shmuel Shapiro

First Impressions

Parshas Vayigash contains the climax of the saga of Yosef and the Shvatim. By examining this finale, perhaps we can gain insight into the entire parsha. The pasuk states: “And Yosef said to his brothers, “I am Yosef, is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him because they were ashamed before him.” Chazal add, “woe to us from the day of judgement, woe to us from the day of rebuke...”

HaGaon Rav Avrohom Pam, *zt”l*, asks the following. Yosef revealed himself because of his great compassion for his brothers and spoke appeasing words to assuage his brothers’ shame. How can we possibly interpret his words to include even a hint of rebuke? Rav Pam answers as follows. The realization that the viceroy of Egypt was Yosef was the greatest reproof in and of itself. The brother that they had denigrated and accused of sinister intentions had been shown the grace of Hashem and uplifted to royalty. And they, the Shvatim were indeed fulfilling his prophetic dreams and prostrating themselves before him. This was the ultimate reproof.

What caused them to make such an error in judgement? Throughout the parshiyos we see a clear difference between the way Reuven and his brothers understood Yosef. Chazal explain that Reuven saw the positive side in Yosef’s dreams. Yosef dreamed of eleven shvatim bowing down to him. Reuven, still repenting from the “*Ma’aseh Bilha*,” felt encouraged. “He counts me in among the tribes and I should not save him!?” The brothers however, retained their first impression of Yosef. To them he appeared to be manipulating himself into the

position of sole continuant of Klal Yisroel, so they judged him to be a rodeif. Not seeing anything positive in Yosef’s intentions, they retained their first impressions and did not perceive the positive within him. Whenever his actions had two possible interpretations, the brothers judged them to be sinister. Finally, in our parsha, the Shvatim come to realize the truth.

HaRav Pam quotes a gemara that continues this theme. Rav Yosef the son of R’Yehoshua had a glimpse of the World to Come and was asked what he had seen. “I saw an upside down world,” he replied. “Those that were uplifted in this world were lower in status and those that appeared lowly down here have a greater status in the World of Truth.” In this external world, people who appear great inside are overlooked. This was the cause of their error in our parsha. The Shvatim based their decision on their impressions. Had they had a deeper understanding of Yosef’s essence they would have perceived his righteousness.

We are always making evaluations of the people we encounter and often we retain our first unfavorable impressions which can lead us to misjudge them, as we have seen. If we delve a little deeper and strive to be aware of each person’s inner greatness, inner struggles and inner dreams, we can avoid these pitfalls and thus increase our Ahavas Yisroel.

Rabbi Shapiro learns daily at the kollel.

Ta'anis Tzibur

Some of the halachos pertaining to one who isn't fasting

Rabbi Ephraim Friedman

On a public fast day [i.e. the seventeenth of Tamuz, the ninth of Av, Tzom Gedalyah, the tenth of Teves, and Ta'anis Esther], it is forbidden to eat or drink even the smallest amount. (One who is suffering from illness or who contends with an ongoing medical condition should consult a Rav to determine if he is required to fast.) If while fasting one mistakenly eats or drinks something, he is still obligated to fast for the duration of the day. It is not necessary for this person, or for one who is forced to eat due to illness, to make up the fast in a different day.

The following halachos apply to one who ate or drank on a public fast day:

1) He should not serve as the Shliach Tzibur unless there is no one else suitable. If one who is not fasting is mistakenly sent up as the Shliach Tzibur, or if he is sent up as the only one capable of leading the tzibur, he should not recite Aneinu as an independent brocho in the repetition of Shmoneh Esrei. Instead, he should include it as part of Sh'ma Koleinu just as individuals do in their silent Shmoneh Esrei. In addition, he should omit the phrase, "byom tzom ta'aniseinu", and he should say instead, "byom tzom hata'anis hazeh".

2) He should not serve as the Ba'al Koreh to lain Vayichal.

3) With regard to calling this individual for an aliyah, the halacha is as follows: The Magen Avrohom (cited by the Mishna Brurah 566:19) states that on a Monday or Thursday morning he may be called up, since the Torah would be lain then regardless of the fast. Other Achronim disagree with the Magen Avraham on this point and pasken that he should not receive an aliyah even then, since the parsha being lain (Vayichal) is unique to the fast day, and he isn't fasting. However, even these Achronim agree that if he were to be called up, he should not decline the aliyah.

During Mincha on any day of the week, and during Shacharis on Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, he may not be called up, because Krias HaTorah at these times is solely a function of the fast. If the Gabai was unaware that this individual is not fasting, and he called him up, the Achronim disagree as to whether or not he is allowed (and consequently required) to accept the aliyah. To avoid this predicament, the Mishna Brurah strongly advises that this person step outside of the Shul during the time that people are being called up. This is particularly important if this individual is the only Kohain or Levi present. If a Talmid Chochom who is unable to fast- or who mistakenly broke his fast- is inadvertently called for an aliyah, he is permitted to accept it if he fears that to decline would cause a chilul Hashem.

There is an opinion amongst the Achronim that one who is not fasting *may* nonetheless be called up for an aliyah. The Chasam Sofer writes in a tshuva (O.C.157) that the laining on a fast day is due to the significance of the day, and that significance is just as real and meaningful for one who is unable to participate by actually fasting. The Aruch HaShulchan (O.C. 566:11) shares this view as well. The Mishna Brurah, however, does not mention the opinion of the Chasam Sofer in this matter. (See also Tshuvos

HaGaon Rebbe Akiva Eiger (1:24) who does not agree with the Chasam Sofer's logic.)

4) A person who is not fasting cannot be counted amongst the minyan to allow the Shliach Tzibur to include a separate brocha of Aneinu in the repetition of Shmoneh Esrei, nor for the purpose of laining Vayichal. In truth, however, it is not universally accepted that a minyan of men must be fasting to allow these two additions to be included in the davening. The Sha'arei Tshuva quoted by the Mishna Brurah (566:14) cites an opinion that it is sufficient that six or seven fasters be present. Other Achronim, not brought by the Mishna Brurah, say that even three fasters would suffice. In the tshuva mentioned above, the Chasam Sofer suggests that even if no one is fasting, it may be permissible to lain Vayichal. He does indicate, though, that he is uncertain about this point. In any event, on a Monday or Thursday morning, when Krias HaTorah is a standard part of the tefilla, the Mishna Brurah indicates that Vayichal can be lain with six fasters present. When fewer than six are fasting, Hagoan Rav Moshe Feinstein (Igros Moshe O.C. 4:113) and HaGaon Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (as quoted in Halichos Shlomo- Tefilla 12:5) pasken that the regular parsha which would have been lain that morning if not for the fast, should be lain. (See, however, Tshuvos Imrei Yoshor (2:124) who paskens that in such a case there is no Krias HaTorah, even on a Monday or Thursday.) Needless to say, in all these cases, it is the Rav of the Shul who should be consulted as to how to proceed.

5) If one is not fasting, it is questionable if he should recite Aneinu in the brocha of Shma Koleinu in his private Shmoneh Esrei. On the one hand, the Mishna Brurah (568:3) paskens that he should, because it is a fast day for klal yisroel albeit he is not fasting. (Even according to this opinion, however, he should replace the phrase, "byom tzom ta'aniseinu" which means on **our** fast day, with "byom tzom hata'anis hazeh", meaning on **this** fast day.) In a different location, however, the Mishna Brurah (565:1 in the Be'ur Halacha) brings a machlokes Achronim, and he himself sides with the opinion that Aneinu should not be said at all by one who is not fasting. To resolve this apparent contradiction, a number of M'chabrim suggest that the second citation is referring to one who is not fasting as a result of illness, while the first citation is referring to one who can and must fast, but mistakenly ate or drank at some point. Since this second individual is required to resume fasting, he should say Aneinu, while the one who is not fasting at all should not.

6) It should be noted, that when we refer to one who is not fasting with regard to receiving an aliyah or being counted among the minyan, included in this category is a person who at the time of davening has not yet eaten, but who knows that due to ill health he will not be completing the fast. He, too, should not receive an aliyah (Mishna Brurah 566:20) and is not counted with the requisite number of fasters at the minyan (Piskei Tshuvos 566 note 17).

One who ate or drank less than a shiur, however, is still considered to be fasting with regard to the above halachos and with regard to reciting Aneinu.

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