

Parsha Thought

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לזכר נשמת מלכה בת יהושע - משה צבי בן גדליה

לזכר נשמת דוד בן אברהם ACHAREI / KEDOSHIM



Our parsha opens with the Yom Kippur rituals that are done by the kohen gadol on that day. One of the pesukim says וּכְפַר בְּעֵדוֹ וּבֵיתוֹ וְעַד כָּל קְהַל יִשְׂרָאֵל, he shall provide atonement for himself, for his household, and for the entire congregation of Israel. The gemara tells us that Reb Yishmael Ben Alisha once went into the Kodosh Hakadashim to bring the ketores. While he was there, he saw a vision of Hashem sitting on a high and exalted throne. Hashem said to Reb Yishmael, "Yishmael, My son, bless me". Reb Yishmael said to Hashem, "may it be Your will that Your mercy overpowers Your anger, and let Your mercy overpower Your other attributes; may You treat Your children with mercy and go beyond the letter of the law for them. Hashem nodded His head in affirmation. The gemara adds that we learn from this story that one shouldn't take the blessing of an ordinary person lightly.

The sefer, Tiferes Shlomo, asks how can the gemara call the great Reb Yishmael an ordinary person? Even Hashem Himself refers to the tzadikim with honor, as it says, "Hashem says who has power over Me? The tzadik, for I decree and the tzadik can annul it." Even if one would say that the gemara is just trying to teach us the value of an ordinary person's blessing, we don't need that, for we have a posuk that says, וְאָכַלְתָּ וּשְׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, eat, be satisfied and bless Hashem, which means that every Jewish person, no matter who he is, blesses Hashem after he eats. So, we have other places to teach this concept; what is the gemara trying to teach us?

The Tiferes Shlomo explains that the words בֵּרַכְתָּ הַדְיוֹט, the blessing of an ordinary person, is not referring to Reb Yishmael; rather it's referring to what Reb Yishmael did. Had this story happened to anyone else, they would have given Hashem all the exalted blessings of how great Hashem is and the greatness of His kingdom. Reb Yishmael, however, understood that Hashem didn't need his blessings. Reb Yishmael understood that this was an opportunity Hashem was giving him to ask for things for the Jewish people, all the ordinary things that people need: health, wealth, shidduchum, and happiness. This is what the gemara meant by saying, "don't take the blessing of an ordinary person lightly," don't think that what the other person needs isn't necessary or is unimportant. Rather, one must value the ordinary needs of each person. Reb Yishmael took the most precious moment on the holiest day in the holiest place to ask for the ordinary needs of the people.

We see a similar concern in the next parsha. The posuk tells us לֹא תִלִּין פְּעֻלַּת שָׂכִיר, a worker's wage shall not remain with you overnight until morning. The Ohr HaChaim explains what this adds to the prohibition against theft. He explains that one might think that theft is just forcibly taking someone's money, so the Torah is teaching us here that even holding back someone's wages temporarily, is also included in the sin of theft. We see once again how the Torah is concerned about the ordinary needs of a person, that one shouldn't have to wait to get paid. Let's take these lessons and, whether something is important to us or not is irrelevant, if it matters to someone else. Let's be concerned about the needs of others!