

אושר החיים

לע"נ ר' חיים יוסף ליב בן ר' שאול יצחק ז"ל

Planting Righteousness

At the time that the *Shevatim* conspired to kill *Yosef*, *Reuvein* convinced them to rather throw him into a pit instead. His plan was, to come back to get *Yosef*, and return him to his father (*Vayeishev* 37:22). *Rashi* praises the act of *Reuvein* for attempting to save his brother, as we actually have various sources in *Chazal* which greatly extol Reuven's conduct. We are taught, that since *Reuvein* was the first to take action to save his brother, he merited to have the first cities of refuge – also a means of salvation – be placed in his territories (*Bereishis Rabah* 84:15, *Makkos* 10a). The *Chochomim* tell us further, that Hashem specifically chose these good intentions of *Reuvein* to reveal them to all (*Avos DeReb Nosson*, *perek* 45). Thus, we see how great Hashem considered this one act of determination that *Reuvein* displayed.

This very same *Rashi*, however, presents a problem. Since, immediately after *Rashi* points out his great act, he tells us the reason behind *Reuvein's* alacrity to save *Yosef*. *Reuvein* was actually fearful that, as the *Bechor*, he would be chiefly responsible for the reprehensible ambition of the *Shevatim* to kill *Yosef*. This seems to imply, that *Reuvein* was *not* completely sincere in his intentions of saving *Yosef*; there was some element of this deed that was *not lesheim shomayim* (see *Sifsei Chochomim* quoting the *Maharshal*). If so, why did the *Chachomim* find this particular incident, as a reason to effusively praise *Reuvein*?

We find a *posuk* in *Mishlei* (11:18) which states, "*Rasha oseh pe'ulas shaker, vizorei'a tzedakah secher emes – The wicked one does an act of falseness, while the one who 'plants' righteousness, will have a reward of truth.*" We can explain this to be saying, that there is a vast difference between the way in which the *tzaddik* conducts himself in all of his affairs, as opposed to the ways of the *rasha*. While the wicked looks at all that he does as a mere 'action', the righteous one views everything, as 'planting' towards future spiritual growth. Thus, as the *posuk* indicates, acts which are done solely for the sake of this wicked person's own gratification, such as to satiate his desire or for personal honor, are therefore not intended to bring about further growth. They would therefore, be deemed as acts of falsehood; acts which have no standing (see *Shabbos* 104a). Conversely, when the *tzaddik* fulfills any act, his intentions will surely include the desire to bring about more *ruchnius*; as much honor to Hashem as possible. This, the *posuk* relates, is the cause for the reward of truthfulness – of continued standing.

פרשת וישב
תשפ"ה

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Perhaps, this is the intention of the *Gemara* (*Rosh Hashana 4a*), which states that the one who comments, “*I am giving this tzedakah in order that my son should live*” or “...so that he should merit reward in the next world”, this person is a completely righteous individual. How can this be? His intentions are clearly for his own sake (see *Tosafos d”h Bishvil sheyichya b’ni*)?! Moreover, as the *Gemara* itself asks, we find that when a gentile would act in a similar manner, we would not consider it as acceptable. Why, then, is it so different when this Jew makes these comments?! *Tosafos* explains, when the *umos ha’olam* fulfil a *Mitzvah* with a condition involved, for some personal benefit which does not come to fruition, they have regret upon doing the entire *Mitzvah*! Thus, we see the intentions of the *Rasha*, who does not seek perpetuation of *ruchnius*, but rather personal gain alone. The *Tzaddik*, on the other hand, is surely interested in helping his own situation. Nevertheless, his *chief* intentions in his *hanhagos*, is to bring about more *ruchnius* growth, whether it directly affects him personally, or even if he has no personal benefit from it.

This is possibly the meaning of *Rashi* in explaining the intentions of *Reuvein*. It is true, that there was also an element of ‘*shelo lishma*’ (on his great level) when he sought to save *Yosef*. Yet, *Chazal* attest to his genuineness, that despite his personal feelings, *Reuvein* would no doubt have anyways been dedicated to saving his beloved brother from the hands of death. Since, the ways of the *Tzaddik* is to ‘plant’ continued righteousness in this world.

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