

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 36

Shemos, Sicha 1

The Context:

After Moshe struck down an Egyptian taskmaster who was threatening a Jewish man, two Jewish witnesses to the act threatened to inform Pharaoh.

The Torah continues, "Moshe became frightened and said, "Indeed, the matter has become known!" (Shemos 2:14)

Rashi offers two explanations. 1) According to its simple meaning, Moses was afraid Pharaoh would kill him. 2) Midrashically, it is interpreted to mean that he was worried because he saw in Israel wicked men, informers. He said, "Since this is so, perhaps they do not deserve to be redeemed."

The Question:

Why does Rashi not suffice with the simple explanation? What difficulty is there in Moshe's fear of Pharaoh that necessitates a non-literal, midrashic reading?

The Basic Explanation:

Rashi was bothered by a general question in this verse: What narrative purpose is there in the Torah telling us that Moshe was afraid of the informers? It was not they who caused him to flee, but Pharaoh's actual attempt on his life. The Torah does not add detail for the sake of detail, it only includes information critical to the development of the story. Why, then, does the verse tell us that Moshe was afraid?

The Midrashic interpretation, that Moshe was afraid of the Jewish people's deservingness of redemption, offers a moral lesson that can be derived from Moshe's fear.

The Deeper Explanation:

Yet, we can still explore the simple explanation and justify the Torah's inclusion of Moshe's fear of Pharaoh in this story.

The Midrash relates that there were two people whom G-d reassured that should not fear, who nevertheless did fear for their wellbeing — Yaakov and Moshe. (Bereishis Rabbah, 76)

The commentators disagree whether this is in praise of Yaakov and Moshe or not. Some maintain that this Midrash praises their

humility: even though G-d had promised them protection, they were still afraid that their deeds would not live up to their standards and they could forfeit G-d's protection. Others maintain that the Midrash criticizes Yaakov and Moshe for their fear, because "a person's heart should be true and trusting in G-d."

Upon reflection, how can anyone disagree with the first opinion, that Yaakov and Moshe are to be praised for their fear that their deeds would be found insufficient?

Questioning Trust:

This is actually a more fundamental question concerning the very notion of "trust in G-d:"

No one can be guaranteed that they will be found meritorious before G-d, so how can we "trust" that G-d will always provide us with the outcome we want? What justification is there for assuming and trusting that G-d will do good for us in every situation?

We might say that "trusting in G-d" is not assuming that there will always be a good outcome, but rather, a sense of security that comes from knowing that whatever happens comes from G-d, that we are always in His hands. Therefore, we have nothing to fear, for even if the outcome is not what we desire, we are assured that it comes from G-d and must be beneficial for us.

Yet this is insufficient. The plain meaning of trust in G-d is that G-d will do good for us,

even if we are undeserving. The question remains: What basis is there for this degree of trust?

Think Good:

The explanation can be found in the famous statement of the Tzemach Tzedek to a father of an ailing child, "Think good and it will be good." This is a unique spiritual task, distinct from faith or belief in G-d. "Think good" means truly and fully relying on G-d that there will be tangible good, no matter how difficult this may be to imagine. This is strenuous psychological and spiritual work, and as a result of this, "it will be good," G-d rewards this fierce, irrational faith with an irrational response of goodness, even if it is undeserved.

This is why the Torah included the seemingly unnecessary detail, "Moshe feared," in the narrative. Moshe should have had complete trust in G-d that even if the witnesses did inform on him, he would be saved. Because he lacked this faith, therefore he was placed in danger and had to flee. Thus, this detail teaches us this critical lesson in our work of developing trust in G-d.

The Lesson:

Whenever we encounter obstacles and challenges in our lives, we must develop this strong-willed trust in G-d, to "think good," to truly trust that G-d will provide us with a positive outcome. This will elicit G-d's miraculous intervention, "it will be good."
