

SCHEDULE

שבת קדש

Mincha Erev Shabbos  4:33 PM

Candlelighting 4:33PM

Daf Yomi 7:30 AM

Shacharis-Followed by Kiddush 8:30 AM

-Sof Zman K'S- 9:21 גר"א <> 8:39 מ"א

Mincha 2:15 PM

Mincha - Followed by Shalosh Seudos 4:30 PM

Maariv - 5:41 PM

Avos U'Banim 6:30 PM

Weekday Minyanim & Shiurim

Sunday

Shacharis I 6:50 AM

Daf Yomi- By R' Teichman 7:30 AM

Shacharis II 8:30 AM

Mincha / Maariv 4:40 PM

Monday - Friday

Daf Yomi- By R' Teichman 5:45 AM

Shacharis:

Monday, Thursday 6:40 AM

Tues., Wed., Friday 6:45 AM

Mincha (Mon-Fri) 1:45 PM

MINCHA/MAARIV GONE SOUTH

Daf Yomi -Take II (Mon-Thurs.) 9:00 PM

Maariv (Mon.-Th) 9:45 PM

FRIDAY NIGHT LEARNING



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Motzei Shabbos 6:30PM

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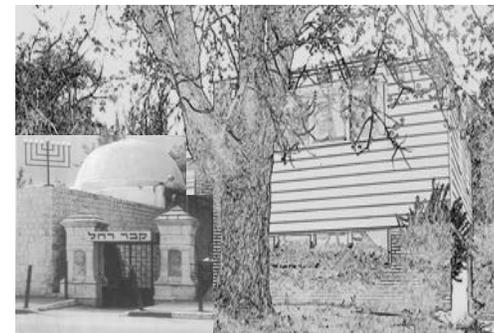
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Issue# 310

RABBI'S MESSAGE

The Path to Heaven is Paved with Good Intentions

On the heels of the tragic death of Rachel another calamity occurs. Yaakov Avinu had previously established his bed in the tent of Rachel. Now that she was gone he transfers it into the tent of Bilhah, her handmaiden. Reuven sensing a terrible slight to his mother Leah, who understandably played second fiddle to Rachel during her lifetime, impulsively reacts and moves his father's bed into his mother's tent without his approval.

In describing this event the Torah states (בראשית לה כב) *Reuven went and lay with Bilhah.*

The Talmud (שבט נה) asserts that whomever alleges that Reuven actually sinned is certainly mistaken. Nevertheless despite his not having committed a "crime" the Torah chose to depict it graphically so. Why?

The simple understanding of this anomaly is to teach us that sometimes even subtle errors are to be considered grievous crimes because it is in the rotten root that may bring one to find its expression eventually in an actual sin.

Alternatively it may be understood that the righteous are measured by a more exacting yardstick, relative to the expectations from them. For a refined individual a minor defect in behavior is tantamount to a terrible sin of an average person.

A remarkable interpretation of this verse accentuating Reuven's innocence is quoted in the name of Rabbi Yehuda HaChasid:

וישכב את בילה פילש אביו, *And Reuven left the house of his father Yaakov*

וישמע ישראל, *because Reuven heard that his father Yaakov desired to lay with Bilhah*

ויחיו בני יעקב שנים עשר, *when Yisroel heard this he sent for Reuven and moved his bed into the tent of Leah*

(פי הטור הארוך) *with Reuven's return they numbered once again twelve children!*

(פי הטור הארוך)

It is reported by Rabbeinu Efrayim, one of the Tosafists, that subsequent to this explanation being taught by the Chosid, Reuven appeared to him in a dream and kissed him on his head! (בפירוש עריות)

It is alleged that in the town of Cracow, Poland as well, both the Rama and the Megaleh Amuklos interpreted the verse favorably and Reuven appeared to them appreciatively and kissed them.

Yet there seems to be an opinion that attests to Reuven having actually perpetrated an adulterous act.

Rebbi Eliezer interprets the admonition that Yaakov spoke to Reuven prior to his death as seemingly alluding to an actual sin.

Yaakov exclaims, *Water-like impetuosity- you cannot be foremost, because you mounted your father's bed; then you desecrated Him Who ascended my couch.*

Rebbi Eliezer says the word פוטה is an acronym for the words: פוטה, *you hurried*, חבתה, *you were guilty*, זלזלה, *you denigrated me.* (שבט נה)

The Targum Unkelos which was written based on the teachings of Rebbi Eliezer and Rebbi Yehoshua (מגילה ג), indeed translates our original verse literally, *and he lay with Bilhah.*

In fact the Talmud says it is for that reason that in previous times when they publicly read and translated the Torah into Aramaic, this verse's translation was intentionally omitted so as not to disgrace Reuven. (מגילה כה)

The Rebbi Eliezer referred to here is actually Rebbi Eliezer ben Hurkanos, perhaps the most illustrious disciple of Rebbi Yochanan ben Zakai.

Tradition has it that he was the *gilgul*, the reincarnation of Reuven himself. It is for this reason that he was called "גדול האחים", רבי אליעזר הגדול, Rebbi Eliezer the Great, just as Reuven was the "גדול האחים", רבי אליעזר הגדול, the eldest of the brothers.

(וזהר חדש סוף איכה ד' קיא)

Leah names Reuven to express how, *Because G-d has discerned my humiliation.* The word גודל alludes to (לכ אברה חקת) רבי אליעזר הגדול!

How ironic and bewildering is it that Reuven's veritable *gilgul* takes the most extreme approach in understanding this incident!

What further deepens the mystery is that in the Mishna in Pirkei Avos (ב יג) where each student of Rebbi Yochanan ben Zakai is asked to profess what they believe is the proper way to which a man should cling, Rebbi Eliezer asserts עין טובה generosity, tolerance and benevolence towards others. Yet, he of all opinions seemingly condemns Reuven to actual adultery.

Although Reuven was stripped of his birthright which was transferred to Yosef, nevertheless he is called "גדול האחים", the "eldest" of the brothers, emphasizing a certain greatness.

In the Song of Devorah which commemorates the miraculous victory over Sisera and his army, she displays disappointment in the tribe of Reuven for not volunteering to join the battle even though they weren't summoned. She expresses her frustration that they didn't live up to their greatness that she describes as, (Outstanding) divisions of Reuven, great searchers of the heart.

The Talmud implements this verse as the measure of adulthood; the power to discern. (גיטין פט)

Reuven had strong convictions and acted on them. They all centered around his sensitivity towards others, an עין טובה, a generous eye:

The *dudaim* he devotedly brought as a young child of only four years of age, to soothe his mother's pain and longing.

He is extraordinarily attuned to his mother's frustration as he impetuously transfers his fathers bed to her tent.

He "saves" Yosef from being murdered by his brothers suggesting they rather throw him in a pit, with his intention to quietly return to retrieve him after they leave.

He is very noble, but in his impetuosity he tramples the sensibilities of his father. From the moment he realizes his failure he sets on a path of repentance, donning sackcloth and undertaking to fast.

If indeed all he did was, at the best, simply leave his father's house indignantly, or at the worst, move the bed, why all the self-flagellation?

The answer is that the greatness of living with conviction can only be justified if one is willing to constantly review and scrutinize one's actions authentically.

Perhaps that spiritual greatness was too dangerous to be in the hands of leadership, which requires at times a more pragmatic approach, nevertheless therein lay his greatness.

Rebbi Eliezer the embodiment of this enormity of spirit lived with very strong convictions. Those principles lead him to remain excommunicated until the end of his life. (בימינו)

He was able to live by and express those beliefs only because when it came to himself his "good" eye was capable of discerning with brutal honesty the implications of his actions.

Only one who can see the magnification of minor flaws as errors necessary to be corrected, and on par with real sin, has the right to act with strong conviction and be forgiven for mistakes of judgment.

It wasn't necessarily true that Reuven committed adultery, but in the eyes of the "גדול האחים", the greatest of brothers, it had to be treated as such.

In the blessing of Moshe to the tribe of Reuven he states:

יחי ראובן ואלימות (דברים לג) *May Reuven live and not die...*

Rashi quoting the Sifrei interprets, *May he live in this world and never die in the world to come.*

In the simplest sense this is Moshe's affirmation of Reuven's total absolution from the sin of incident of Bilhah.

The Targum Unkelos adds an additional dimension:

יחי ראובן לחיי עולמה ומותה תניח לא ימות *May Reuven live in the world to come and not die a second death.*

Rebbi Eliezer was thrown in a pit and accused of heretical teachings by the Roman authorities, but was nevertheless released. Although his contemporaries were doomed to death among the Ten Martyrs to atone for the sale of Yosef, Rebbi Eliezer the *gilgul* of Reuven, who intervened to save Yosef, would be spared such a fate. (פי טז)

This was the ultimate testament of validation of the noble ways of the "גדול האחים", the elder brother, Reuven.

Indeed the path to Heaven is paved with good intentions provided one places one's self under rigorous self-scrutiny, willing to accept full responsibility for one's actions.

May we live lives filled with conviction, not cowering for fear of failure or error. As long as we

use our "good eye" to carefully and honestly examine our motivations making sure they are pure, we can rest assured we will attain eternity!

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