

STRICT JUSTICE OR MONUMENTAL KINDNESS?

PARSHAS VAYECHI

I read the following amazing story in a few places. One was in the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation Shabbos Menu Newsletter:

Rabbi Avraham Yona Scheinberg is the nephew of Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg zt"l and is a Rosh Yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel. Due to Corona virus restrictions, he wanted to make sure that the police would not stop his daughter's wedding. Before making the wedding, he discussed the arrangements and received the okay from the police. In the middle of the wedding, a different group of police came and stopped the wedding. As they were taking Rabbi Scheinberg and his wife to the police station, he told the crying kallah not to worry, that this was all from Hashem. Months later, a young man called Rabbi Scheinberg saying that he was the one who had called the police to stop the wedding. He had been fearful of the gathering crowd, not realizing that the police had already okayed it. The young man asked for forgiveness for ruining the wedding. The Rav said that he forgave the fellow, however he still had to get forgiveness from the chassan and kallah. It was very difficult for him to approach the couple, but he did go and ask for forgiveness. The kallah knew that the proper thing was to forgive but she did not feel it in her heart. She told the fellow to come back in a few days. When he did return, the kallah forgave him totally. A few days later, the kallah was in a terrible car accident. She had to be freed from her car by the "Jaws of Life", used when an accident victim is trapped in their car. Miraculously, the kallah emerged without a scratch. When he heard what had happened, her father told her that there had been a Heavenly decree against her. Instead of allowing her to be seriously hurt, Hashem had ruined her wedding instead! "When you granted forgiveness to the boy, the heavenly decree was annulled".

Would we consider the ruined wedding to have been **strict justice or monumental kindness?**

Our forefather, Yaakov, felt that his life was almost over. He called for his son, Yosef, who was the second-in-command in Egypt. Yaakov made two requests. He asked not to be buried in Egypt, not even for a short while (**Malo Haomer**). He also wanted to be buried with his forefathers in the Cave of Machpelah, in the Land of Israel. Yosef, the loving son, agreed to both requests. At Yaakov's request, Yosef also swore that he would fulfill both requests. Sometime later, Yaakov became ill. Yosef returned to see him. **Rashi** says, at that time Yaakov said to Yosef, "I know that you harbor resentment in your heart against me". Yaakov had asked Yosef to bring Yaakov's body to

"Rochel died in the Land of Canaan on the road...and I buried her there on the road to Efras, which is Bethlehem". (48:7)

the Cave of Machpelah. Yet, Yaakov did not do so for his wife Rochel, Yosef's mother. He did not even bury Rochel in a nearby city. Rather, he buried her on the side of the road.

Yaakov and Yosef were exceedingly close, yet Yaakov sensed that Yosef had some minimal feelings of resentment that his mother, Rochel, had not been accorded the proper respect for her burial. Yaakov told Yosef that he acted on the directive of Hashem. It was Hashem who wanted Rochel to be buried on the side of the road. Why? After the destruction of the first Beis HaMikdash, the Jewish exiles were going to pass the place where Rochel was buried. At that time, Rochel

was going to come out to weep and plead for mercy for them. Our forefathers and mothers came out of their graves and pleaded with Hashem to eventually bring the Jews back from exile. Hashem did not listen to their prayers. Hashem only listened to Rochel's prayers (Rochel said to Hashem that she had permitted a rival into her home by enabling Leah to marry Yaakov. If she, who was only flesh and blood, was not jealous, certainly Hashem should not be jealous that an idol was erected in the Beis HaMikdash). Thus, it was imperative that Rochel be buried in that exact location. When the Jews would pass by, she could pray to Hashem to have mercy on them (**Rashi**).

On some, small level, Yosef could not understand why Yaakov did not give Rochel more respect when he buried her. Yosef was exceedingly wise and had strong faith and trust in Hashem. Ultimately, since Hashem orchestrates all events, why did Hashem allow this to happen? **Was this strict justice or**

monumental kindness? It seemed wrong. Over a thousand years later, it became clear that Rochel's burial on the road was NOT a slight to her honor. Rather it was a great kindness by Hashem, enabling Rochel to successfully plead to Hashem on behalf of her children.

Interestingly, Yosef's own bones were buried in Egypt temporarily (until the Jews were redeemed). If his children would have been able to bring them to Eretz Yisroel right away, and would not have, someone could have said that this was disrespectful to Yosef. Yet, that would have been incorrect. It was not **strict justice, but monumental kindness. Yosef's bone had to have remained in Egypt!** When the Jewish people came to the Red Sea, it only split in the merit of Yosef! Since Yosef did not sin and fled from Potifar's wife, similarly, the Sea "ran" when it saw Yosef's coffin (**Da'as Zekanim** Bereishis 39:15 referring to **Tehillim** 114:3)!

Whatever Hashem does is for the best!

What appears to us to be strict justice may be a monumental kindness done for us by Hashem. At the time, we may not even realize it, as the kindness may not even manifest itself until many years later.

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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