

Gratitude

"Take vengeance for the children of Israel against the Midianim. Afterward you will be gathered unto your people." (Bamidbar 31:2). Rav Leib Chasman, in his sefer "Ohr Yoel" illuminated this episode with a fascinating insight. The Yalkut Shemoni relates that Moshe's death would follow this war with Midian. If he wished to push off the war 20 or 30 years, then he would prolong his life. However, Moshe acted immediately. "I have no permission to delay this mitzvah." Even the Bnei Yisrael did not want to go to war for fear of losing their beloved leader. Yet, Moshe urged them on.

Can anyone not help but be amazed by Moshe Rabbeinu's pure heart? What a love of Hashem and His mitzvos! Yet, the next scene is puzzling. Moshe did not go to Midian himself; rather he sent Elazar and Pinchas to lead the fighting. Hashem commanded him to do this mitzvah personally, and was anxious to fulfill it. Why then, did he not go himself? Rav Chasman answered that he had *hacoras hatov* (gratitude) towards the Midianim. He grew up in Midian (after fleeing from Paroh at the age of twelve), and he did not want to harm the people of the land. Is this really enough of a reason to push aside a personal command from the Almighty? After all, the Midianim were evil enough to cause the death of 24,000 Jewish souls. What favors did they do for him?

Says the Medrash, "Do not throw a stone into a well that you have drunk from." Yes, Hashem commanded Moshe to take vengeance from the Midianim. However, Hashem also commanded him to "walk in His ways". Emulate Him. Yes, take revenge. However, do not go yourself, because you owe them a debt of gratitude.

Kinderlach . . .
To who should you be grateful? To Imma for giving birth to you. Then caring for you, feeding, clothing, and tending to all of your needs from when you were a baby until this very day. To Abba, for supporting the family, learning Torah, and guiding your education. To your teachers for teaching you, and to your study partners for learning with you. To the

shopkeeper who brings the food for you to buy. To the bus driver who takes you where you want to go. To the city workers who keep the streets clean, and provide your home with electricity, water, and everything else that you need. But most importantly, to Hashem. Who keeps your heart beating, your eyes seeing, and everything else working. And Who sends all of these other people as his agents, to help you in all these different ways. Thank you one and all!

take such an extreme change in such a short time."

"But I want to live there Doctor Kalt." "Then you have to make a gradual change Mr. Hayes. Move a little farther north, where the weather is a little cooler. When you become accustomed to that weather, make another move farther north. You will become accustomed to the cooler weather over there also. Keep moving farther and farther north, slowly, and deliberately. Eventually, you will reach the North Pole. By then you will be accustomed to the climate."

"What you are saying, Dr. Kalt, is that a drastic change must be made patiently, and in slow steps."

"Precisely."

"These are the journeys of the Children of Israel" (Bamidbar 33:1). The Malbim zt"l asks, why did the Children of Israel need to wait forty years before entering the Land of Israel? Hashem could have brought them in immediately. The answer is that they were not ready. They had sunken into the lowest level of *tumah* (impurity) in Mitzraim. They could not pull out of it immediately, as their many mistakes in the *midbar* (desert) proved. And so, they needed time. To slowly but surely purify themselves. Only then, would they be ready to enter the Holy Land.



Kinderlach . . .

Some things happen quickly. Others take time. Working on improving ones middos (character traits) takes time. It is a long-term project that lasts a lifetime. For this, we need patience. Changes do not happen overnight.

Progress is made, but there are also setbacks. Two steps forward, one step back. Listen to the words of the verse, "For though the tsaddik may fall seven times, he will arise" (Mishlei 24:16). Have patience with yourselves, kinderlach. Become tsaddikim.

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It Takes Time

"Doctor Kalt, I can't take it anymore."

"What is the problem Mr. Hayes?"

"This hot weather. Every day is summer. 365 days a year. Hot and humid. I can no longer live here in the tropics. I want to move to the North Pole."

"That's quite an extreme change, My Hayes. Do you realize that at the North Pole it is freezing cold winter 365 days a year?"

"I don't care. It will be a pleasure after this heat."

"You may feel like that for the first few hours or even the first day or two. However, after that you will become very cold and uncomfortable. You body cannot

Parasha Questions:

- Why did Pinchas go to war and not Elazar his father? (Rashi 31:6)
- What conditions did the Bnei Gad and Reuven have to fulfill in order to get the land on the other side of the Jordan? (32:20-23, 29,30)
- Which countries bordered on the south of Eretz Yisrael? East? (Rashi 34:3)
- Can a murderer pay money to a) avoid the death sentence? b) buy release from *Ir Miklat*? (35:31,32)
- The husbands of the daughters of Tzelofchod came from which tribe? Why? (36:3,6,7 and Rashi 36:3)