
פרשת בשלח

פרק יג פסוק יט

וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת־עֲצָמוֹת יוֹסֵף עִמּוֹ כִּי הִשְׁבַּע הַשָּׁבִיעַ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר פֶּקֶד יִפְקְדֵם אֱלֹהִים אֶתְכֶם וְהָעֲלִיתֶם אֶת־עֲצָמוֹתַי מִזֶּה אִתְּכֶם:

חז"ל

שכל ישראל היו עסוקים בכסף וזהב ומשה היה עסוק בעצמות יוסף שנאמר ויקח משה את עצמות יוסף, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה עליך נתקיים חכם לב יקח מצוות (משלי י:ח), יוסף היה חייב לאביו לקברו מפני שהוא בנו ואתה לא בנו ולא בן בנו ולא היית חייב לעסוק בו וקברת אותו וכן אני שאיני חייב לבריה אני מטפל בכך ואקברך שנאמר (דברים לד) ויקבור אותו בגי' (שמות רבה פרשה כ).

מושג

חכם-לב יקח מצוות.

Translation:

One who is wise of heart will take Mitzvos.

Explanation:

One who is wise will choose his Mitzvos wisely¹. While all of Klal Yisroel were busy with the Mitzvah of taking gold, silver and clothing from the Egyptians as Hashem had commanded, Moshe busied himself with the Mitzvah of keeping the promise made to Yosef by his brothers, to take his bones out of Mitzrayim. Moshe chose this Mitzvah because in his heart he knew it to be the greater Mitzvah, as he did not benefit financially as we would have had he 'gone for the gold'. Because he did the Mitzvah with a completely pure heart, Hashem rewarded him *מדה כנגד מדה* by burying Moshe.

Looking in the Pasuk:

The Midrash is commenting on the need for the Torah to tell us that Moshe himself took Yosef's bones. The wording *ויקח משה* compares with the rare wording of the Pasuk in Mishlei, *יקח מצוות*. In addition, the Midrash explains the extra word *עמו*, *with him*. It teaches that this type of pure Mitzvah is the only type we 'take with us' for eternity.

Musag Learning Outcomes:

Know: Levels of Mitzvos; *מצוה לשמה*.

Understand: How one goes about choosing the preferred act and consequences of choices.

Think: Analyze text of Pasuk learning from seemingly insignificant facts or redundant words.

1 See note #1

NOTES

1. The Midrash from which this Musag is taken is difficult to understand, for the Jews who were taking from the Egyptians were themselves fulfilling a Mitzvah! Hashem had instructed Moshe to ensure that the Jews ask the Egyptians for gold, silver and garments:

דְּבַר־נָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם וַיִּשְׁאַלּוּ אִישׁ מֵאֵת רַעְהוּ וְאִשָּׁה מֵאֵת רַעוּתָהּ כְּלֵי־כֶסֶף וְכֵלֵי זָהָב: (יא:ב)

Rashi quotes the Gemoroh in Berachos which explains that this was done so that Avrohom Avinu should not claim that Hashem kept the promise of slavery but not the promise of leaving with great wealth:

אין "נא" אלא לשון בקשה. בבקשה ממך הנהירם על כן, שלא יאמר אותו צדיק אברהם, "ויעבדום וענו אותם" קנים בהם, וְאִתְּרֵי כֵן יֵצְאוּ בְּרִכְשׁ גָּדוֹל" לא קנים בהם

Accordingly, the Jews were doing a great service to Hashem by taking the wealth of the Egyptians².

The Pasuk clearly relates that the Jews took from the Egyptians because Moshe had told them to do so; וּבְנִי־יִשְׂרָאֵל עָשׂוּ כְּדַבַּר מֹשֶׁה וַיִּשְׁאַלּוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם כְּלֵי־כֶסֶף וְכֵלֵי זָהָב וּשְׂמֹלֹת: (יב:לה)

Why, therefore, does the Midrash credit Moshe with doing a Mitzvah and not the Jewish people? Additionally, one might ask, why do we need a Pasuk in Mishlei to prove to us that it is wise to do Mitzvos? Isn't that fairly obvious? Also, why does the Pasuk say יקה מצוות, a term never used in Tanach, and not simply say יקיים מצוות? And finally, why is the term חכם לב used here and not just חכם?

One possible answer is that the Pasuk is not teaching that it is wise to do Mitzvos, but rather that one who is wise carefully chooses his Mitzvos. Moshe could have also chosen to 'go for the gold', and he could have easily justified doing so as doing a great service to Hashem. We would have definitely termed him a חכם for listening to Hashem and thus ensuring that Avrohom Avinu had no complaints. But Moshe realized that there was another Mitzvah to be fulfilled: taking Yosef's bones. Which to choose?

Moshe realized that taking gold would also benefit him personally and physically. Who couldn't use a few extra dollars? The Mitzvah of ביזת מצרים would therefore not be a pure Mitzvah. But taking Yosef's bones would not benefit him at all; the Mitzvah would remain pure, without any personal gain³. Moshe's heart told him which to choose, חכם לב. It told him to choose the action in which the *only* thing he would be taking was the Mitzvah. That is why the Pasuk does not say יקיים מצוות, but rather לשמה חכם לב. The Pasuk is teaching that the wise of heart chooses a Mitzvah which is totally לשמה, when the *only* thing he is 'taking' (gaining) is the Mitzvah, when he is only יקה מצוה.

The remainder of the Midrash relates that Moshe merited to be buried by Hashem himself as a result of this Mitzvah. There is a Midrash Tanchuma which provides more detail:

במדה שאדם מודד בה מודדין לו, יוסף קבר את אביו ואין באחיו גדול ממנו שהיה מלך וזכה לצאת מן הקבר על ידי משה, משה הוציא את עצמות יוסף ממצרים ואין בעולם גדול ממנו והוא מלך שנאמר (דברים לג) ויהי בישורון מלך לפיכך זכה משה שיתעסק בו שכינה שנאמר (דברים לד) ויקבר אותו בגיא (מדרש תנחומא)

In the end result, Moshe's decision to choose the Mitzvah which contained no personal gain was rewarded at the end of his life. Interestingly, the benefit he received did not result in physical gain, but only in the fashion in which he was buried. However, this seems to be exactly the point. That which benefits us physically is by nature temporary. After all, "you can't take it with you". But that which is completely spiritual stays with you forever; you continue to benefit from it for eternity. Perhaps this may be gleaned from our Pasuk which tells us that Moshe took Yosef's bones, and then adds, עמו, with him⁴. The Pasuk is teaching us that only this type of Mitzvah do you truly take with you.

2. Additional questions:

- The term חכם לב is also used by the building of the Mishkan בכך חכם לב. Is there any connection?
- We call burying the dead a חסד של אמת, as יעקב told his sons וְעָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי חֶסֶד וְאֵמֶת אֵל נָא תִקְבְּרֵנִי. How does this connect to our Musag? במצרים

2 Remember we are talking about ביזת מצרים not ביזת הים.

3 אח"כ ראיתי שכ"כ האבני נזר. וב"ש

4 The Gemoroh in מחנה לוייה is allowed in תמא מת כ: actually learns from this word that