



Respected Rewards

Two brothers, both acting in a like manner, yet garnered significantly different rewards. “*Vayikach Shem v’Yefet et hasimlah vayasimu al sh’chem sheneihem vayelchu achoranit vayechasu et ervat avihem u’fneiheim achoranit ve’ervat avihem lo ra’u*— And Shem and Yefet took the garment, and they placed [it] on both of their shoulders, and they walked backwards, and they covered their father’s nakedness, and their faces were turned backwards, so that they did not see their father’s nakedness.” (*Bereishet* 9:23) The word “*vayikach*”

expresses the singular; Rashi teaches that Shem exerted more effort to fulfill the mitzvah of covering his father and therefore his children merited the mitzvah of tzitzit,

while Yefet’s descendants merited burial. What is the significance of each of these rewards? And why the apparent disparity in consequence?

Rav Meir Chodosh zt”l in *K’Ayal Ta’arog* explains that clothing has two functions. The first is to cover one’s body to avoid the shame of physical exposure, the second is to afford him honor and dignity. Yefet was motivated by his desire to cover his father’s disgrace. Thus, his descendants merited



Rabbi Gedalia Schorr zt”l

burial, thereby providing their bodies with a physical cover and protection. Shem, however, was motivated by his desire to protect his father’s honor and dignity so his descendants merited a mitzvah that brings honor to one’s body and soul.

Another approach is offered by R’ Gedalya Schorr zt”l, *Rosh Yeshivat Torah V’da’at*.

He explains that each reward is perfectly aligned with the manner in which Shem and Yefet performed their actions. Shem was driven by an inner passion and



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energy to carry out this great act and was therefore rewarded with a mitzvah that is performed when one is alive. In contrast the singular “and he took,” reflects Yefet’s more passive manner, hence his reward is bestowed on those who are no longer alive. This is a clear example of *middah k’neged middah*, measure for measure. The attitudes we invest in actions result in a corresponding consequence.

Clearly the Torah is teaching us how important it is to invest energy and effort in our actions and deeds. Rav Avraham Yaakov Gordon zt”l emphasizes that Chazal underscores here that small differences in effort render major differences in rewards. Of course, Yefet did the right thing and his reward, burial, is monumental. However, the mitzvah of tzitzit, compared to the entire Torah, is eternity itself. Often, we allow ourselves to be satisfied with just “getting something done,” when we really should stretch ourselves that much more to infuse mindset and effort to achieve immeasurable dividends. Rav Wachtfogel zt”l adds that the difference may have been minute, even barely perceptible, yet, the Torah is keenly aware of the small nuances, and so should we.

The month of MarCheshvan, the month containing no holidays, is the perfect month for us to concentrate on infusing our actions with purpose and life force. Let us transform the ordinary into the superordinary, thereby reaping tremendous dividends in this world and the next one. ■

Mazal Tov to

Leah & Dr. Dovid Wolf and family

on the birth of a great grandson

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