

Never Underestimate Klal Yisroel

As a parent or teacher it is not uncommon to encounter a child who acts defiantly despite being showered with goodness. Our natural reaction to this child is to proceed with caution, and to be concerned that this behavior will repeat itself. In this week's parshah, we are taught by the Seforno that generalizing from situation to situation may at times be inappropriate with regards to Klal Yisroel.

In פרק יד פסוק טו, the Pasuk says "Hashem said to Moshe, why are you crying out to me? Speak to the Jewish people that they should travel." The Seforno comments on this Pasuk, "Moshe did not cry out to Hashem out of fear of פרעה and his army, because he already informed the Jewish People of the Egyptians' eventual downfall and death. Rather, Moshe cried out to Hashem due to the brazenness of the Jewish people, who said, "Were there not enough graves in Egypt?". Based on this, Moshe thought that they would not listen to him to enter the sea. Hashem responded to Moshe, "You are חושד בכשרים, they will not disobey your directive."

"When Klal Yisroel behave inappropriately it does not reflect their essence."

Understanding Hashem's criticism of Moshe for being concerned that Klal Yisroel would not listen to him, requires further clarification. Klal Yisroel witnessed all the miracles of the Makos in Egypt. They were currently being protected and lead by a pillar of clouds by day and fire by night. Yet despite all the past and present miracles, Klal Yisrael could not imagine escaping their current desperate situation, and they said to Moshe, "You took us out to die." They were still bound by nature and viewed the sea as an insurmountable obstacle. Based on this, Moshe's concern seems completely rational, and his tefillah asking Hashem for help, seems completely appropriate. Where did he go wrong?

It seems from here that Klal Yisroel cannot be underestimated, and when they behave inappropriately it does not reflect their essence. By Moshe reacting to their rebelliousness, he showed that his opinion of them was slightly lowered by their behavior. It was this new perspective on Klal Yisrael, which led him to believe they would disregard his instructions to enter the sea. Therefore, he was criticized by Hashem, merely for expressing his concern through davening, as his suspicion was unfounded due to the greatness of Klal Yisrael.

We can extrapolate from here an important lesson in how to properly respond to challenging behaviors. Often we are quick to shape our views of our children and students based on their behavior. We see from here that a significant momentary slip up, or statement of rebellion, should not cause us to lower our opinion of them. This momentary lapse does not reflect who they are, nor does it taint their character. Therefore we need to proceed with caution when confronting these situations so as to not be חושד בכשרים.

BASED ON THE WEEKLY SHMUSS GIVEN BY HARAV SHAYA COHEN, ROSH HAYESHIVA ZICHRON ARYEH

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח
לעילוי נשמת הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר
לרפואה שלמה רפאל חיים דוב בן ריסא שושנה