



שמע קולנו

PUBLICITY FOR MITZVOS

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When Hakadosh Baruch Hu commands Moshe Rabbenu to return to Har Sinai to accept the second luchos, the Torah says (Shemos 34:3), "*V'ish lo ya'aleh imach,*" "And no man shall go up with you." The Medrash Tanchuma (quoted by Rashi) comments that since the giving of the first luchos was accompanied by much public fanfare it was subject to an *ayin hara* and ended up being broken. In contrast, the second luchos were given privately and lasted. The Medrash uses this example to extol the virtue of *tznius*, going about one's activities, including the performing of mitzvos, in a private and unassuming fashion. [See Rav Hershel Schachter, *Eretz Hatzvi*, pp. 96-99.]

However, in this week's parsha we find an important corrective to this perspective; sometimes it may be necessary to perform mitzvos in a public fashion in order to encourage others to follow one's example. As the brothers plot to kill Yosef, Reuven intervenes and convinces them to throw him into a pit instead. Rus Rabbah (5:6) comments:

א"ר יצחק בר מריון בא הכתוב ללמדך שאם אדם עושה מצוה יעשנה בלבב שלם שאלו היה ראובן יודע שהקב"ה מכתוב

עליו (בראשית לז:כא) וישמע ראובן ויצילהו מידם, בכתפו היה מוליכו אצל אביו, ואילו היה יודע אהרן שהקב"ה מכתוב עליו (שמות ד:יד) הנה הוא יוצא לקראתך, בתופים ובמחולות היה יוצא לקראתו, ואלו היה יודע בעז שהקב"ה מכתוב עליו ויצטב לה קלי ותאכל ותשבע ותותר (רות ב:יד), עגלות מפוטמות היה מאכילה. רבי כהן ורבי יהושע דסכנין בשם רבי לוי לשעבר היה אדם עושה מצוה והנביא היה כותבה. עכשו מי כותבה? אליהו כותבה ומלך משיח והקב"ה חותם על ידיהם. הדא הוא דכתיב (מלאכי ג') אז נדברו יראי ה' איש אל רעהו. ויקשב ה' וישמע ויכתב בספר זכרון לפניו ליראי ה' ולחושבי שמו

R. Yitzchok ben Merion said: The Torah comes to teach you that if a person performs a mitzvah he should do so with all his heart, for had Reuven known that HKB"Y would write about him, "And Reuven heard and saved him [Yosef] from their [the brothers'] hands," he would have carried him back to his father on his shoulders. And had Aharon known that HKB"Y would have written about him "Behold he [Aharon] is coming to greet you [Moshe]," he [Aharon] would have come to greet him with musical instruments and dancing. And he Boaz known that HKB"Y would have written about him, "And he served her roasted grain and she finished eating and had some left over," he would have fed her fattened calves. R. Cohen And R. Yehoshua of Sachnin said in the name of R. Levi in the past a person would perform a mitzvah and the Navi would write it down. Now who records it? Eliyahu writes it and Mashiach and HKB"Y sign on it. This is what the passuk says (Malachi 3:16), "The those

who fear Hashem spoke to one another and Hashem listened and a book of remembrance was written in front of him for those who fear Hashem and those who give thought to His name.

The Rashba (Teshuvos 1:581) arrives at a halachic ruling based on this Medrash. The Rashba was asked about an individual who was responsible for the construction of a new Aron Kodesh in his shul but insisted that his name be memorialized prominently on the top of the Aron in recognition of his efforts. Some members of the congregation thought that this was inappropriate and they turned to the Rashba for his response.

He notes that there was a long standing practice of according such recognition to communal benefactors and doing so is not only permissible but advisable. For example, the Gemara in Bava Basra (133b) records that Yosei ben Yoezer once donated a certain sum of money to hekdesh, and the gizbarim (the treasurers of the Beis HaMikdash) recorded the donation in his name. The aforementioned Medrash teaches us that Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself grants public recognition to the performers of mitzvos, and therefore we should do so as well, especially since such publicity will encourage others to follow the example. Rema (Yoreh Deah 249:13), presumably basing himself on this Rashba (see Shach, Nekudas Hakesef to Taz 4), writes that although one who gives tzedakah exclusively to enhance his own honor may be punished for doing so, it is appropriate to have public recognition of donations to tzedakah. (See, however, Shevet Halevi 5:134, who limits the scope of the Rashba and the Rema.)

In Hilchos Tzedakah, as well as in performing mitzvos generally, one must be careful about balancing what should be the natural, appropriate tendency towards modesty, with the need to sometimes publicise one actions in order to encourage or inspire others. To

borrow the term of Chazal (Brachos 5b et. al.) אחד המרבה ואחד הממעיט ובלבד שיכוין לבו לשם שמים - we should be guided by our desire to fulfil the *ratzon Hashem*.

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