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Not Chasing after Honor and Self Aggrandizement

There is a parable of a person who owned a very high tower which had a weak foundation. Because of the deficiency in the foundation, he should have lessened the height of the tower so that it would be more stable. But instead of doing so, he actually raised the height and had it decorated with fancy designs of birds and animals, as one would expect to see in a castle or a palace.

Any time he made any extra income, he would spend it on beautifying this tower, without paying any heed to the condition of the foundation. One day, as was to be expected, the tower collapsed into a heap of rubble. Everyone ridiculed him for building a construction with no base or foundation.

A human being must realize that he is like a tower with a shaky foundation, and has no idea what life may bring him at any moment. The only hope that he has, is to lower himself by becoming contrite and humble. But instead of doing so, he tries to make himself important by chasing after honor, without realizing that his foundation is very shaky. Greatness is what brings a person down. We are told that G-d puts down someone who aggrandizes himself but raises one who is humble.

(See Qol Sasson of H"R Sasson
Mordekhai Moshe, ch. 22)



מדרש בן איש חי
Midrash BEN ISH HAI

Shoftim: Two Types of Truth

צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדָּף לִמְעַן תִּחְיֶה "Justice, justice shall you pursue, in order that you may live" (Debarim 16:20). The word "justice" (Sedeq) can also be translated as "truth". Why is the word said twice in this verse?

There are two types of truth in the world. One is when the person who speaks and the one who hears understand the same truth. The second type is when a person speaks and his words may be interpreted in two different ways. In the latter case, only the one who speaks knows the truth of what he was saying.

The one who hears misunderstands, so it is no longer considered to be the truth anymore. This is not the choicest form of telling the truth but is only permitted in particular circumstances. The preferred way is when both the one who speaks and the one who hears understand the words in the same way.

The doubling of the word "Sedeq" is to let us know that we must take pains to ensure that the truth is understood by both the one who speaks and the one who hears. The verse adds, "in order that you may live", because truth brings life to the world as is explained in "Sha'ar Ma-amarei Rashbi".

(See 'Od Yoseph Hai Derashoth, Parashath Shoftim. Ben Ish Hai Derashoth, Parashath Shoftim)



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Relying on G-d Gladdens the Heart

וְאֵנִי | בְּחֶסֶדְךָ בְּטַחֲתִי יִגַּל לְבִי בִישׁוּעָתְךָ I have trusted in Your loving kindness, my heart will rejoice in Your salvation (Psalms 13:6).

When a person is saved from any type of suffering, if he believes that his salvation will come through natural causes, he will not rejoice in it. If, on the contrary, he feels that being saved from his anguish cannot occur by natural means, but has faith in G-d, that He will save him through His great kindness, then, when it occurs, he will rejoice greatly. This is because he knew that overcoming the sorrow that was troubling him was far from being possible through the natural course of nature.

When the Psalm says *I have trusted in your loving kindness*, this means that I will not rely on money, strength or another person to save me from my situation, because I see that, from every angle, natural causes will not help. That is why, when You come to my rescue, *my heart will rejoice in Your salvation*.

(See Hayyim Wehashalom, Tehillim 13)

Marrying Someone Other than Your Soul Mate

אֵשֶׁת חַיִּל מִי יִמָּצָא וְרָחֹק מִפְּנִינִים מְכָרָה A woman of valor who will find? And her value is far above pearls.

The Zohar tells us that a good wife comes from G-d, for He decides who is suited to whom before they are born.

The caveat is, however, that in order for the man to find his true soul mate, he must follow the right path which was laid out for him, that of the Torah. If he does not do so, it would hardly be appropriate for him to marry his true soul mate, who is diligently following the paths of the Torah. In such a case, his *primary intended* is not required to marry him and he is provided another who is at his lower spiritual level.

We see from this that, even though G-d has set aside the ideal soul mate for us, in order to reap the benefits of this, or any other blessing that G-d has set aside for us, we must diligently follow the path that we, His children, are expected to follow, that of the Torah and its Mitzvot.

(See Zohar [1:229a], including how the soul may still reunite with its primary intended. See also Alsheikh on Mishlei, ch. 31.)

Women's Corner - by Rabbanith Ruth Menashe 'a"h

Stones with a Heart

Would we ever approve of embarrassing another human being? Of course not. Would we ever consider expressing such sensitivity towards an inanimate object such as stone? I would seriously doubt it. However, our holy Torah, which guides and affects every aspect of our lives, reveals an exceptional outlook.

The Kohanim (priests) who ascended to the altar, did so by walking up a ramp as opposed to climbing up stairs. We may wonder why they did so. This was done as a result of an instruction from the Torah: *You shall not ascend My altar on steps* (Shemot 20:23).

The reason for forbidding them from ascending on steps is to save the stones (of which the altar was built) from shame, which may have arisen when the priests lifted their legs to go up the steps, even though they were wearing linen breeches.

One may rightfully pose the question: do inanimate objects such as stone, feel shame?

(To be continued)