

“Do We Have Enough Reward Points”

Our Gd is always graciously rewarding and giving to all mankind. HaShem never reneges on a reward that is due to any person or animal that performs an act of kindness, even if done unintentionally.

In our parasha the dog is rewarded. In 11:7 we read that no dog in all of Egypt will bark when our people proudly march out of slavery into freedom. Though it is a natural instinct for dogs to bark and howl upon encountering strangers, yet here, when 3 million strangers, men, women and children walked out Egypt –not one dog barked out of respect and awe for our people, that made them a part of the Kiddush HaShem The Almighty therefore instructs us in parashat Mishpatim [22;30] that if we want to dispose of a piece of meat in our house that is not kosher-“Throw it to the dog”. Not the cat or any other disposal but only “to the dog”. This is Gd’s way of saying, “I never forget a good deed”.

Likewise, we find the donkey being rewarded. Just like the first-born of our people belong to HaShem and he therefore must be redeemed through a Pidyon HaBen ceremony, so too, the Torah commands us in 13:13, the first-issue donkey you shall redeem with a lamb or kid, which is called a “Pehter Chamor” ceremony. The only non-kosher animal with a firstborn status is the donkey. The Seforno explains that the donkey is a reminder of the Exodus, because the Egyptians were so insistent upon our people’s immediate departure from their country that there was no time for them to obtain enough wagons for their possessions. Therefore, everything had to be loaded onto donkeys. Normally, they could never have borne so many heavy burdens; that they did so was another of the miracles of the Exodus, hence the special treatment of donkeys in our Torah Laws. “The L-rd never overlooks a good deed”

Even the Egyptians are granted a special reward. Regarding the 8th plague, the Makah of Arbeh [locust], HaShem tells Moshe that this Makah will so resonate in the eyes and ears of the world that “you will be able to relate to your son and your son’s son that I made a mockery of Egypt...that you may know that I am HaShem” [10:1]. This is the only plague which includes the expression “so that you will be able to relate to your son and your son’s son”. Why is that so? What was so different about the Makah of locust that the Torah singles out and tells us that this plague will be discussed for generations after the Exodus? The Ramban suggests that after this plague, when Moshe prayed, at the request of Par’oh that the locust should be removed, Moshe used the expression “There should not be left a single grasshopper in all the land of Mitzrayim”[10:19]. The Kli Yakar elaborates this that Egypt will never again be afflicted with a locust plague in all their history. Never again will they lose a stalk of grain because of grasshoppers. Even if all of Egypt’s neighbors, including Israel, Ethiopia, the Sudan have a plague of locust, Egypt will never again suffer from that.

Therefore, when Eretz Yisrael will be smitten by locust (Gd-forbid) and Egypt will be protected from it, our children will ask their parents in amazement-“why is this happening?” The father will relate the entire story of the locust and Exodus. But why should Egypt be entitled to such a blessing? Why should Egypt be granted a “Locust Free

Guarantee”? We see that although Egypt deserved the punishment from the plagues, but through those plagues the greatness of Gd emerged to our people and to the world at large. A great Kiddush HaShem! Gd was pleased and He rewarded Egypt for its part in ***causing it to happen***. “HaShem never overlooks a good deed”-even if done unwillingly.

Let us reflect upon all the good deeds that we have done in our lives, in the past year, past month, week- or even today, remembering that Gd never overlooks even the smallest good deed, and try to increase that in the days to come.

Shabbat Shalom, Rabbi Aharon Ziegler, from Deerfield Beach, Florida
