



THE CHALLENGE OF THE WEEK

(TRANSLATED FROM VEHA'AREV NA 2)

WHO SHOULD BE THE SANDAK?

THE CHALLENGE: Reuven had three daughters and strongly desired a son. He went to one of the *Gedolei Hador* for a *Beracha*, and the Rabbi blessed him that he should merit a son. Grateful for the *Beracha*, Reuven promised that if he would have a son, he would give the Rabbi the honor of being *Sandak*.

However, Reuven's fourth child was a daughter – and so were his fifth and sixth children.

When his wife became pregnant for the seventh time, Reuven approached a close friend from his *Kollel*, an *Avrech* who was a serious *Ben Torah*. Since it was still within the first forty days of the pregnancy, Reuven asked him to *Daven* that this time he should merit a son.

The *Avrech* gladly agreed. Reuven then told him, "If this child is a boy, I will give you the *Zechut* of being *Sandak*." They shook hands to seal their agreement. The *Avrech* took Reuven's request seriously, *Davened* extensively, said much *Tehillim*, and even gave *Tzedaka* on Reuven's behalf.

After nine months, Reuven's wife gave birth – to a son!

Reuven immediately went to his friend to share the good news and invite him to be the *Sandak*. Suddenly, however, he remembered his original promise to the *Gadol*. Although he had already had three daughters after receiving the *Beracha*, Reuven recalled that at the time he had thought to himself, "Even if this next child is a girl, perhaps I will eventually have a son, and when I do, I will give the *Gadol* the honor of *Sandak*."

Reuven now approached Rav Zilberstein with his question:

Does Reuven's original commitment to the *Gadol* obligate him to give him the *Zechut* of *Sandak*, or should he honor his later agreement with the *Avrech*?

THE SOLUTION: The *Rama* (*Yoreh De'ah* 264:1) writes that one should try to choose a *Mohel* and *Sandak* who are *Tzaddikim*. If a person has already given someone the honor of *Sandak*, he may not retract his commitment. Nevertheless, if he does retract it, the retraction is valid. A *Kinyan* does not change this. (continued on next side)

DVAR TORAH – Yosef's Special Blessing

And to Yosef he said: Blessed of Hashem be his land, with the bounty of dew from heaven, and of the deep that couches below (33:13).

The *Mefarshim* ask: What does Moshe mean by saying, "Blessed of Hashem be his land"? Wasn't all of *Eretz Yisrael* blessed by Hashem?

Rashi explains that Yosef's portion was indeed superior to that of the other *Shevatim*. But why should Yosef's descendants receive the finest portion of the Land?

The *Sforno* offers a different perspective. The superiority of Yosef's land was not itself the *Beracha*; it was simply a natural fact. The actual *Beracha* begins with the following words: May this exceptionally fertile land receive Hashem's special assistance – "the bounty of dew from heaven, and of the deep that couches below." Yosef's land should not depend solely on rainfall, but should be blessed with abundant dew and underground springs, ensuring that it consistently produces plentiful crops.

The *Ohr Hachaim* explains that Yosef's special portion was intentional and came for two reasons. First, Yosef's descendants would later complain to Yehoshua that their territory was insufficient for such a large population. Moshe therefore blessed them that their land should expand and provide enough space for them.

Second, Yosef had sustained the entire Jewish people in Egypt during the years of famine. *Chazal* teach that because he supported them, it was considered as though he had brought them into the world, and they are therefore sometimes referred to as "the sons of Yaakov and Yosef" (*Tehillim* 77:16; *Sanhedrin* 19b). Therefore, *Middah K'negged Middah*, Yosef was rewarded with the finest portion of the Land.

The *Chizkuni*, quoting a *Midrash*, offers another remarkable explanation. Yosef was rewarded for overcoming the temptation of Potiphar's wife. When Adam sinned by listening to Chavah, the ground was cursed. Yosef, however, specifically "did not listen to her". Since Yosef demonstrated the opposite of Adam's failure, he merited that the curse placed upon the land should be removed from his portion, allowing it to return to its original state of blessing.

Yosef's blessing teaches us that Hashem rewards a person not only for what he accomplishes, but also for what he successfully resists. Yosef preserved his holiness in the face of a powerful temptation, and generations later, his descendants inherited a land characterized by extraordinary blessing. Every time we overcome a temptation or refrain from doing something wrong, we may be accomplishing far more than we realize – the spiritual effects can endure long after the moment has passed.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE WEEK (continued from previous side)

However, if he swore that someone would receive the *Zechut*, he must keep his commitment.

In this case, Reuven's original commitment to the *Gadol* was indeed a serious commitment, and ordinarily he would not be permitted to retract it. However, Reuven subsequently promised the *Avrech* that he would be the *Sandak*, and they sealed the agreement with a handshake. This later commitment constitutes a retraction from his original commitment. Although such a retraction is improper, the *Rama* teaches that it is nevertheless effective.

Furthermore, there is room to argue that Reuven's original commitment may never have clearly applied to this particular child. At the time, he had already had several daughters, and it is possible that his intention was that the *Gadol* would receive the *Zechut* of *Sandak* for the next birth in which his *Beracha* would be fulfilled. Since that did not occur with the fourth child, there is a question whether the original commitment extended to all future births.

On the other hand, Reuven's commitment to the *Avrech* was made explicitly for this child and was sealed with a handshake. The *Rama* rules that when a commitment has the force of an oath, one may not simply retract it.

Therefore, Rav Zilberstein ruled that Reuven should give the *Zechut* of *Sandak* to the *Avrech*.

Nevertheless, there is a way for the *Gadol* to receive the *Zechut*. If the *Avrech* is willing to relinquish the *Mitzvah* for the benefit of the *Gadol*, Reuven can have his oath annulled by a *Bet Din* of three, as with other *Shavuot*. Once the oath is annulled, the *Gadol* may serve as the *Sandak*.

DVAR TORAH – Why Is Shemini Atzeret Immediately After Sukkot?

The Torah commands us to celebrate seven days of Sukkot, followed by an additional day called an *Atzeret*: Shemini Atzeret. Before returning home, we are commanded to remain in Yerushalayim for one more day.

Interestingly, Shemini Atzeret is not the only holiday called an *Atzeret*. Shavuot is also referred to as an *Atzeret*. *Chazal* therefore ask: Why did Hashem place Shemini Atzeret right after Sukkot? Why not separate the two by fifty days, as Shavuot follows Pesach?

The *Da'at Zekainim* (Bamidbar 29:36), quoting the *Midrash*, gives a fascinating answer. Hashem arranged the calendar this way for our benefit. Pesach and Shavuot take place during the spring and early summer, when traveling to Yerushalayim is relatively easy. Therefore, it was not difficult for people to make the journey to celebrate Shavuot fifty days after Pesach.

Sukkot, however, takes place as the rainy season begins. If Shemini Atzeret were delayed for several weeks, people would have to make another difficult journey to Yerushalayim and then return home during the winter rains. Hashem therefore placed Shemini Atzeret immediately after Sukkot, allowing everyone to fulfill the *Mitzvah* without the burden of making another journey during the rainy season.

This teaches us a beautiful insight into the Torah's commandments. Even when Hashem asks us to make an effort, He takes our circumstances into account and does not impose unnecessary difficulty upon us. The placement of Shemini Atzeret reminds us that Hashem's commandments are given with Rachmanut and consideration for our needs. When we encounter a difficulty in serving Hashem, we should remember that He understands our limitations – and that our challenge is meant to help us grow, not to break us.

INSIGHT ON THE HAFTORAH - The Servant of Hashem Who Never Stopped Serving

And it was after the death of Moshe, the servant of Hashem... (Yehoshua 1:1).

The *Mefarshim* ask: Why does the *Passuk* refer to Moshe as “the servant of Hashem” even after his death? Once a person passes away, how can he continue to serve Hashem?

The *Malbim* offers a beautiful explanation. There are two types of *Tzaddikim*. One person may dedicate himself primarily to perfecting his own *Avodah* and spiritual level. His personal service of Hashem comes to an end when his life ends.

But there is another type of *Tzaddik* who does more than perfect himself. He dedicates his life to elevating his entire generation and the generations that follow. Such a person's influence does not end with his death. Every *Mitzvah*, act of *Avodah*, and piece of Torah accomplished by others because of his teachings and example is credited to him as well.

This is the meaning of the words in *Tehillim* (111:3), “*And his righteousness endures forever.*” The righteousness of a great person continues through the generations as long as his influence continues to produce spiritual growth.

Moshe Rabbeinu was the ultimate example. He did not merely serve Hashem for himself; he taught the entire Jewish people how to serve Hashem. Every generation that learns his Torah and fulfills the *Mitzvot* because of his teachings continues his *Avodah*. Therefore, even after his death, the Torah could describe him as “*Moshe, the servant of Hashem.*” His service had not ended – it continued through the people he had influenced.

SHABBAT SHALOM & CHAG SAME'ACH!