



Dear Parents,

*Erev Shabbos Parashas Beshalach Shabbos Shira 5780*

A parenting skill that is both essential and exceedingly hard for some to master, is to catch a child doing something right. No matter how badly or how often they mess up (and consequences are most likely appropriate at such times), when they actually do something properly they must be praised, and where appropriate, rewarded.

Perhaps if we were to realize that such an approach is not just a parenting/teaching technique, but a part of *Torah Hashkafa* (outlook) such a reaction to our children's behavior would become easier and more commonplace. *Rabbi Yehuda Leib Chasman zt'l* (elaborated in *Ohr L'Nesivasi* by *Rabbi Elyakim Rosenblatt, zt'l*) has a penetrating insight into a 'minor' event recorded in this week's *Parsha*. The very first *pasuk* (*Shmos 13:17*) states "And it was when *Pharoah* sent (*Beshalach*) out the nation..." The *Medrash Rabba* (20:3) questions how can the Torah say *Pharoah* sent them out – it was *Hashem!* How can it be that *Pharoah* gets the credit? The *Medrash* answers that in this instance *Beshalach* means escorted. *Pharoah* escorted, gave honor to the Jewish People as they left *Mitzrayim*. The *Medrash Tanchuma* adds that *Pharoah's* reward for escorting *Klal Yisroel* was the command 'not to despise the Egyptian' that found expression in the permission granted to a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Egyptian convert to marry into the ranks of the Jewish nation.

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This is mind-boggling on so many levels. *Pharoah* had cruelly and harshly perpetrated so much evil against the entire Jewish people for so long, had refused to let them leave Egypt until *Hashem* forced his hand and threatened his life through the plague of slaying the first-born, and yet he is singled out for praise and reward for one tiny act of taking a few steps in honor of the Jews?!

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Furthermore – the reward was not just for *Pharoah* but the entire nation earned Divinely endowed protective custody. Egyptians would forever be protected even from feelings of animosity from Jews and gained potential entry into the ranks of the Jewish nation. In considering the larger picture of *Pharoah's* and the Egyptian people's unmitigated cruelty to the Jewish nation isn't this reward entirely unwarranted?

We see from here the value the Torah places on every small act of goodness. It is never overshadowed or obscured by the total picture of who the person is. Every positive act performed by a human being is significant, is never lost and is remembered by *Hashem*. It is not *Batul B'Shishim* (nullified by the overwhelming percentage of 'not good' behavior). We also see the tremendous power of even a small act of goodness and how it is never lost even in a lifetime of negative behavior. This one act of accompanying the Jewish nation for a few steps, created a merit for *Pharaoh* and his entire nation that lasts forever.

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In light of this lesson, it should come easier for us to understand why we should zero in on our child(ren)'s positive behavior and small acts of goodness. We not only will help habituate good behavior; we will be acting in accordance with *Torah Hashkafa* and *Hashem's* desire to magnify and glorify every act of goodness and kindness that one of His creations performs.

Best wishes for a most rewarding *Shabbos*,

*Rabbi Kalman Baumann*