

## Reuven heard, and he rescued him from their hand. (37:21)

Reuven slowed the process, ultimately convincing his brothers not to be guilty of cold-blooded murder. *Chazal* teach that Reuven acted nonchalantly concerning his act of saving Yosef, not giving it the importance that it deserved. They say that had Reuven been aware that Hashem would write in His Torah that Reuven was to be credited with saving Yosef, he would have taken Yosef right then and there and carried him on his shoulders back home to Yaakov *Avinu*. Reuven acted properly, but did not give his actions much thought.

A similar statement is made concerning Boaz, who gave Rus some meat to eat. The *Megillah* records this act of kindness for posterity. *Chazal* say that had Boaz known that his simple act of decency was being given such distinguished coverage he would have fed Rus fattened calves. In other words, he would have gone to all lengths for her. The *Midrash (Vayikra Rabba 34:8)* concludes, “In the past, a person would perform a *mitzvah*, and the *Navi* would record it. Now, if a person performs a *mitzvah*, who records it? Eliyahu *HaNavi* and *Melech HaMoshiach*.” They are quite impressive codifiers!

With the above in mind, we should reflect on the value of each *mitzvah* and our appreciation thereof. *Horav Aharon Kotler, zl*, notes that the Torah giants of old, Reuven and Boaz, were well aware of the intrinsic value of the *mitzvos* they were performing. Their error was in not recognizing that their actions were actually worthy of being included in the Torah. *Rav Aharon* distinguishes between a *mitzvah* that becomes Torah and one that does not. When one reads about Reuven’s act of saving Yosef, he is actually studying Torah. He must recite *Bircas HaTorah*, the requisite blessing over Torah study. With every word of this sentence that he reads, he fulfills a *mitzvas asei*, positive commandment. Furthermore, he is not simply reading Jewish literature – he is studying Torah, which, in its own right, spiritually elevates and refines him.

Had Yehudah and Boaz known that their activity would achieve such critical acclaim, they would have acted more forcefully, with greater alacrity and moral perfection. So should we, when we are performing *mitzvos*. When we realize the awesome integral value of each *mitzvah* and the compelling nature of the great achievements we can catalyze, our entire attitude toward *mitzvah* performance will change drastically.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* takes this idea further. Imagine if Reuven could see into the future that Yosef – the brother whom he rescued – would become a leader and sustainer of the entire world. Millions of lives hung in the balance of his power. In addition, Yosef was the one brother who was born with the power of vanquishing Eisav. Boaz was the progenitor of David *Ha’melech* and the Davidic dynasty. All of this happened as the result of a “simple” act of *chesed*, kindness. We see now that there is no such thing as “simple.” Everything is great. We never know what wheels we are setting in motion when we act correctly by performing a *mitzvah*.

This idea is especially significant with regard to those whose chosen vocation in life is Torah

dissemination. We have no idea how far-reaching is our influence, how many lives are saved by our act of reaching out to a fellow Jew. It does not take much. One kind word, one smile, one pat on the back can change a disillusioned student's attitude and save him from spiritual extinction. The little we do now grows immensely over time. Can we imagine the reward of those who devote their lives to this endeavor?