

Judging Favourable – Joshua 22: 10-12, 15-16, 21, 27-28,

וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־גִּלְיָלוֹת הַיַּרְדֵּן אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֹנוּ בְנֵי־רְאוּבֵן וּבְנֵי־גָד וְחֻצֵי שִׁבְטֵי הַמְּנַשֶּׁה שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ עַל־הַיַּרְדֵּן מִזְבֵּחַ גָּדוֹל לַמֶּרְאָה: וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה בָנוּ בְנֵי־רְאוּבֵן וּבְנֵי־גָד וְחֻצֵי שִׁבְטֵי הַמְּנַשֶּׁה אֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֶל־מֹול אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֶל־גִּלְיָלוֹת הַיַּרְדֵּן אֶל־עֵבֶר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְהָלוּ כָּל־עַדַּת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלֵה לַעֲלוֹת עֲלֵיהֶם לְצָבָא: ... וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־בְּנֵי־רְאוּבֵן וְאֶל־בְּנֵי־גָד וְאֶל־חֻצֵי שִׁבְטֵי־מְנַשֶּׁה אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַגִּלְעָד וַיְדַבְּרוּ אִתָּם לֵאמֹר: כֹּה אָמְרוּ כָּל עַדַּת יְהוָה מִה־הַמַּעַל הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר מַעַלְתֶּם בְּאֵלֵהי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְשׁוֹב הַיּוֹם מֵאַחֲרֵי יְהוָה בְּבָנוֹתְכֶם לְכֶם מִזְבֵּחַ לְמַרְדְּכֶם הַיּוֹם בִּיהוָה... וַיַּעֲנוּ בְנֵי־רְאוּבֵן וּבְנֵי־גָד וְחֻצֵי שִׁבְטֵי הַמְּנַשֶּׁה וַיְדַבְּרוּ אֶת־רֵאשֵׁי אֲלֵפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל... "כִּי עַד הוּא בְּיָמֵינוּ וּבְיָמֵיכֶם וּבֵין דְּרוֹתֵינוּ אַחֲרֵינוּ לַעֲבֹד אֶת־עַבְדַּת יְהוָה לְפָנָיו בְּעֲלוֹתֵינוּ וּבְזַבְחֵינוּ וּבְשִׁלְמֵינוּ וְלֹא־יֵאמְרוּ בְּיָמֵיכֶם מָחָר לְבָנֵינוּ אֵין־לְכֶם חֶלֶק בִּיהוָה: וְנֹאמֵר וְהָיָה כִּי־יֵאמְרוּ אֵלֵינוּ וְאֶל־דְּרוֹתֵינוּ מָחָר וְאָמְרוּ רְאוּ אֶת־תִּבְנִית מִזְבֵּחַ יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לֹא לַעֲוֹלָה וְלֹא לְזָבַח כִּי־עַד הוּא בְּיָמֵינוּ וּבְיָמֵיכֶם:"

So the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh, in the land of Canaan, and made their way back to the land of Gilead, the land of their own holding, which they had acquired by the command of the LORD through Moses. When they came to the region of the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan, a great conspicuous altar. A report reached the Israelites: "The Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built an altar opposite the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan, across from the Israelites." When the Israelites heard this, the whole community of the Israelites assembled at Shiloh to make war on them... And they came to the children of Re'uben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Menashshe, to the land of Gil'ad, and they spoke with them, saying, Thus says the whole congregation of the Lord, "What trespass is this that you have committed against the God of Yisra'el, to turn away this day from following the Lord, by building for yourselves an altar, that you might rebel this day against the Lord?"... Then the children of Re'uben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Menashshe answered, and said to the heads of the thousands of Yisra'el,.. "but that it may be a witness between us, and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the Lord before him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, You have no part in the Lord."

A discussion on Judging favourably based on Joshua 22

A Related Story:

As Shabbat approached, a man found himself in the deep of the forest, lost and wondering where he would spend Shabbat. Suddenly, he noticed a house at a distance. As he approached it, he was pleasantly surprised to notice a mezuzah posted on the door. He knocked and asked the owner whether he would be kind enough to host him for Shabbat. Surprisingly, the man began questioning him awkwardly: "So, you will be partaking the three Shabbat meals with us? And when will you be leaving?" And he even demanded a considerable sum of money in exchange for the room he gave him for the night.

The lost man understood that if he wished to spend Shabbat with this "host", he would have to help prepare the meals and dish out the sum of money on demand.

Needless to say, after spending such an exorbitant sum, the guest was not the slightest embarrassed to eat to his heart's content, taking second and third servings of the varied dishes on offer.

As he began to take leave of his host on Motzei Shabbat, the latter told him that he was accustomed to giving his guests a gift, so they would remember him and he handed him an envelope.

At first, the guest refused to take it, telling his host that he did not need a reminder. How could he forget such a memorable host? But he finally agreed, and after opening the envelope, he realized it contained the exact sum of money he had given his host in exchange for accommodations and meals!

"Why did he reimburse the money I gave him?", he wondered.

The host replied that he had a single purpose in mind: making him feel comfortable. Had the host not paid; would he have dared eat to his heart's content? Wouldn't he have felt embarrassed to be the recipient of such kindness while giving nothing in return? Paying his dues gave the guest the impression he did not owe any favours to his host and thus, he could fully enjoy all that his host offered.

Some Interactive Resources:



How is the recently publicised institutional racism effected by not judging people favourable?

Is there a way for this to have been avoided and to be better in the future?



Do we judge people differently in different contexts especially online; can this ever be a good thing?

Other sources and quotes to bring into discussion:

Pirkei Avot 1:6

Yehoshua ben Perachiah and Nitai of Arbel received from them. Yehoshua ben Perachia says, "Make for yourself a mentor, acquire for yourself a friend and judge every person as meritorious."

Pirkei Avot 2:4

Do not judge your fellow until you come to his place.

Richelle E. Goodrich (American poet and author)

"We live our lives supposing things are as they appear to be when that is almost never the case."

Some Textual Questions to ask Chanichim:

- Why did the leaders of the generation jump to such a harsh conclusion when all they saw was an alter being built? (as context this was just after the land of Israel was conquered and the 2 and half tribes returned to Transjordan)
- Could there have been a way for the majority of the Jewish nation to allow this to go and assume the best or maybe acting harshly was in the interest of keeping entire nation united?
- Who was in the right at the end of the story? Should the two and a half tribes not built the alter as a reminder of Hashem or was that a good idea overall?

Some General Questions to ask Chanichim:

- This concept is most noticeable in the Mishnah in pirkei avot (1:6), why do you think the Mishnah groups the concept of judging favourably with the idea of having a rav and a friend?(what do these other concepts mean?)
- It is mentioned again in pirkei avot (2:4). Why do you think the Rabbis included it twice?
- Do you think there is ever a time where it is not wrong to jump to conclusions and not judge favourably?

Some Personal Questions to ask Chanichim:

- when have you not judged somebody favourably? Did you then come to regret it or do you still think that person was doing something wrong?
- Do you think you should change your actions so it cannot be seen as doing something wrong or just assume people should be judging you favourably: (in Judaism we do have the concept of Ma'arat ayin that you shouldn't do things that looks like a sin even when they are not)