

Sin-proof (Shemot)

They attack the one man with their hate and their shower of weapons. But he is like some rock which stretches into the vast sea and which, exposed to the fury of the winds and beaten against by the waves, endures all the violence. –Virgil

Cynics often question the power of one person against the masses. That one individual can change the course of history seems statistically improbable. Yet history is composed and inspired by exactly such personalities. Without the steadfastness of Winston Churchill, it is not clear the Nazis would have been defeated. Without the clarity of Abraham Lincoln, the course of American history may have taken a different, darker turn. The examples are countless.

Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Prague, the *Kli Yakar* (1550-1619), is of the opinion that one man can inspire others to righteousness. That inspiration, amongst other things, has an interesting side benefit. Inspiring others to do good, grants an added measure of protection from sin.

At the beginning of the Book of Exodus, the Bible recounts briefly how the children of Israel descended to Egypt. It adds that “Joseph was in Egypt”. The grandfather of all commentators, Rashi, explains that this sentence alludes to Joseph’s righteousness. The righteousness though is only mentioned after his death, for how can we know the full account of a man until after his life has been lived? Righteousness is further compared to the stars that stay forever in the sky after the setting of one’s life.

The *Kli Yakar* then elaborates based on the verse in Daniel (12:3):

“...and they that turn the many to righteousness are as the stars for ever and ever.”

Such people, those who inspire others to righteousness, are granted additional protection from sin. Why? The *Kli Yakar* (on Exodus 1:1) explains that ideally there should not be a situation where the man who inspired so many, should go to Hell, while his disciples go to Heaven. Hence, they are granted an additional measure of protection from sin.

May we have opportunity to inspire others and be inspired ourselves.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

Dedication
To the memory of Elka Sarah Solomon z”l.