

Finding The Silver Lining

פרשת אמור

We are bombarded with daily updates regarding Covid-19. The tragedies and suffering that people are going through are overwhelming. Therefore it would be helpful at this time to find a positive and optimistic outlook amidst the pandemic, so we don't fall into a state of negativity and despair.

During Ashrei we say, "Hashem is good to everyone." Each one of us constantly receives an immeasurable amount of good from Hashem, yet we so often fail to appreciate this goodness. Often we fall short in our appreciation due to seeing the good as a whole versus breaking it up into its individual parts. When we view the good in our lives as a statistic, we fall short in our appreciation. Our Sages' recognition of this quality in our character can be best illustrated in the manner in which they set up the Pesach Seder. We don't focus on the exodus from Egypt as a whole, but rather split the Seder into four cups of wine, each representing a different stage of the redemption. In this way, we are able to break down the redemption into different parts, so that we can focus on and appreciate Yetzias Mitzrayim.

In this week's Parsha, we find another strategy that can assist us in appreciating the goodness we receive from Hashem in our daily lives. The Medrash (Vayikrah Rabbah 28:3) comments on Hashem asking the Bnei Yisroel to bring an Omer. "Hashem said to Moshe go and tell Yisroel, when I gave them the Manna, I gave them a measurement of an Omer for each one of them. However, now that

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you are giving an Omer to Me, I am only asking for a measurement of an Omer from the entire Klal Yisroel. Furthermore, the Manna was like flour and I am only asking you for barley." There is another Medrash (Medrash Agaddah 2:60) that echoes the same theme. The Medrash comments, "Rebbe Tanchumah says, go and see the goodness of Hashem. When Hashem gives to Klal Yisroel it is without limitation, however when He asks from them He only asks for a miniscule amount. When He gives produce to them, He gives according to His abilities, as it says, 'You will eat old grain that was stored, and you will have to clear out the old for the new grain.' However, when Hashem asked from them, He asked according to their ability, like it says, 'You shall cut and bring an Omer, the beginning of what you cut to the Kohen.'"

At first glance these Midrashim seem difficult to understand. The miracle and benefit of the Manna was well known to Klal Yisroel. The Manna tasted as you wished, it was delivered at your front door (if you were worthy) and it provided all the nutrients that you needed. Rabbeinu Sadya Gaon says that the Manna was the greatest miracle in the desert because it was constant. The goodness of the Manna is glaring! Why would Hashem need to enhance Klal Yisroel's appreciation by telling them, "I am only asking you for an Omer?" The second Medrash is just as perplexing. The Klal Yisroel is being blessed so abundantly, that they need to get rid of their old crops so that they can make room for the new. Why would their appreciation be lacking without Hashem pointing out how little He is asking from them? Additionally, how does Hashem's asking for so little, when he gave them so much, serve to enhance their appreciation? Hashem doesn't need anything. Receiving a little or alot from Klal Yisroel is irrelevant to Hashem. Therefore, how does this comparison serve to engender in Klal Yisroel greater appreciation for the generosity of the Giver?

We can answer that in order for someone to properly appreciate the good that they received, they need a measure of comparison. This measure of comparison offers us a standard of appreciation which can help us better recognize and relate to the good. However, without this contrast, the good is lacking context and may be undervalued. So although Hashem doesn't need anything, the comparison was still able to serve as a measuring stick to measure the good they received.

Perhaps from the above Medrash we can derive a positive outcome of Covid-19 pandemic. It would be safe to say that our greatest wish is that things return to normal. A few months ago we would never have guessed that normal meant going to shul, shopping, or even just visiting parents and grandparents. Things that we never thought of appreciating have become our greatest desire. When our current situation is finally over, we will have a measuring stick to appreciate so many things that we always took for granted.

BASED ON THE WEEKLY SHMUSS GIVEN BY HARAV SHAYA COHEN, ROSH HAYESHIVA ZICHRON ARYEH

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח
לעילוי נשמת הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר
לעילוי נשמת רפאל חיים דוב בן ריסא שושנה
לרפואה שלמה יהושע דוד בן אלטא יענטא