

How To Ask Directions

פרשת ויצא

In this week's Parsha, Yaakov is on his way to Lavan's house in Charan, and he sees people gathered at a well. Yaakov approaches them and says (29:4), "My brothers, where are you from? And they said, we are from Charan." Then Yaakov continues to ask them for directions to Charan.

The Ralbag learns from this Pasuk a lesson in Middos. He says, "It is fitting for a person to speak to others in a gentle and pleasing manner, so that they will be at complete peace. This peace will result in a person being given the help that he needs. This idea is derived from the fact that when Yaakov asked the shepherds, 'Where are you from?', he did it in a gentle and pleasing manner, and he called them his brother."

The Ralbag requires further clarification. Granted that for a person to receive a significant favor from someone, a two step process of speaking gently, and making complete peace is necessary. However, applying this to Yaakov seems extreme. Yaakov was merely asking for directions. Why would such an insignificant request necessitate reaching a perfect peace? In addition, Yaakov merely called them 'brother.' How then does such a small expression of unity create a perfect peace?

"That slight expression of warmth ensured that his request would be satisfied."

We see from here that interpersonal relationships are extremely complex. These relationships are so delicate, that a person cannot even be assured that he will receive correct directions, unless he consciously tries to instill peace. On the flip side, although these relationships are so delicate, the formula needed to create this peace is fairly simple. Yaakov merely called them his brother, and that slight expression of warmth ensured that his request would be satisfied. We all need help at times, therefore it is critical that we use this strategy in all our interactions.

Igniting The Spark of Bitachon

In this week's Parsha (30:25), Yaakov is ready to leave Lavan and return home after the birth of Yosef. Rashi explains why Yaakov was now ready to face Eisav and return home. He says, "Once the nemesis of Eisav was born, like it says, 'The house of Yaakov is fire, and the house of Yosef is a flame, and the house of Eisav is straw.' Fire without a flame does not have the ability to travel far. Once Yosef was born, Yaakov trusted in Hashem and he wanted to return."

At first glance Yaakov's newfound Bitachon necessitates understanding. Yaakov was afraid of Eisav, even though Hashem promised him he would protect him. This fear was due to his concern that he may have sinned, and perhaps he was no longer deserving of Hashem's protection. Yaakov's fear was rooted in his fear that perhaps he sinned, and therefore Eisav will be able to hurt him in the present. Therefore, how does Yaaakov's knowledge that in the future Yosef will defeat Eisav dissipate the present danger of Eisav?

It seems that in order to spark the emotion of trust in Hashem, one does not have to directly address the cause for his lack of Bitachon. But even something unrelated can generate a renewed feeling of trust in Hashem. Based on this we should constantly be on the lookout for inspiration, as we never know what can spark our Bitachon.

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