

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

Three Tips to Connect to Hashem

Based on the weekly Shmuess given by HaRav Shaya Cohen, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Zichron Aryeh

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח | הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר | רפאל חיים דוב בן בן-ציון שלום | ר' ברוך בן ר' יהודה | שרה בת ר' יחזקאל | ראובן יוסף בן יהושע | דב בעריש בן פסח צבי
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In this week's Parsha, there are three Seforno's that provide us with insights to helping connect to Hashem. On the Pasuk of "And Yisro heard," (18:1) the Seforno says, "The word 'hearing' is used by something that is not currently happening, however when describing current events the word 'seeing' is used....Since leaving Mitzrayim was currently happening, Chazal say that what Yisro was hearing about was Krias Yam Suf and the war of Amalek. This is because both of these events already happened. However, the explanation that He took them out of Mitzrayim, is referring to him hearing all that Hashem did for the Jewish people when they left Mitzrayim - the Makkos and the wonders and signs. Therefore, he was inspired to come himself to the Midbar, and he did not send Moshe's wife and children through a messenger. Yisro himself was seeking Hashem."

It seems from the Seforno that Yisro did not come as a result of hearing the previous miracles of Krias Yam Suf and the war of Amalek alone. Perhaps these miracles created the initial interest, but it was a conglomeration of also hearing about the Makkos. Hearing of all of these miracles were necessary to inspire Yisro to come seek Hashem. Often, we think that if we hear about a miracle it would move us. We see from here that human nature is such that a person needs to see many miracles in order to internalize Hashem's involvement and create a spark to change his life. This even applies to a Yisro who already heard about Krias Yam Suf, which Chazal say, "A maidservant saw on the Yam even what Yechezkel Ben Buzi did not see." We need to continuously look for these Nissim in our lives, and not be satisfied with a few experiences, as when it comes to Nissim the more is really the better.

The Seforno states after the Aseres Hadibros, on the Pasuk of "Do not make for me gods of silver." (20:20) "After Klal Yisrael saw that they didn't need an intermediary to connect to Me, they were commanded, 'Do not make for me gods of silver.'" This Seforno implies that if Hashem did not speak to Klal Yisrael directly, and they thought

themselves as unworthy to connect to Hashem, they would be a step closer to Avodah Zarah. If they thought they can only connect to Hashem through a Tzaddik, this would make them vulnerable to the worst of sins. Only after Hashem directly connected to each and every person were they able to be commanded not to engage in Avodah Zarah. This idea was brought forth by the Eigel where many Meforshim learn that what caused the sin of the Eigel was an over dependence on Moshe. We see from here the importance of knowing that each of us has the ability to connect to Hashem directly.

Another Seforno which gives us a further insight into connecting to Hashem is on the Pasuk of Yisro advising Moshe. The Pasuk says (18:25) "And Moshe chose Anshei Chayil." The Seforno comments, "After Moshe searched and he did not find people that had all of the attributes that Yisro mentioned, he chose Anshei Chayil - people who had extensive knowledge and who were dedicated to finding the truth of a matter. People possessing these qualities would lead to Yisro's plan more than people possessing the quality of Yiras Shamayim."

We see from here that a commitment to truth is the ultimate quality, and this took precedence even over the quality of Yiras Shamayim. There is a famous story where Rav Dovid Lebowitz had a discussion with a Rebbe about the greatest quality that was lacking in America. The Rebbe said Yiras Shamayim, and Rav Dovid said Torah. Rav Dovid was even quoted as saying that you can find Yiras Shamayim by the other nations of the world, but Limud HaTorah, and the drive for Emes that it creates, can only be found by Klal Yisrael.

We see from the above Seforno's three tips in connecting to Hashem. Number one - in order to be inspired to connect to Hashem we need to see the magnitude and multitude of His involvement in the world. Number two - in order to connect to Hashem, we need to know we can connect directly without an intermediary. Number three - the Middah of Emes must stand above the pursuit of everything else.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

In this week's Parsha, we read of the great miracles and revelation of Hashem at Har Sinai. We may think that if only we could experience Hashem's revelation here and now, we would surely attain much greater levels of connection to Hashem. But now in the depths of Galus when Hashem fulfills the prophesy of, "And I will hide My face from them at that time," what can we do to connect with Hashem?

The following Pasuk in Shir HaShirim, with the explanation of the Seforno, provides us an answer to this question.

[Klal Yisroel says to Hashem:] **As a bag of myrrh my beloved is to me, lie upon me** - reveal Your Shechinah upon me as in the past and we will return to You as before. ... Hashem responds: **Ah, you are fair, my darling** - behold now you need not the same type of revelation of Shechinah with signs and miracles as then, for I have already made you - **you are fair** - through the giving of the Torah and Mitzvos that I have written, to show with intellectual miracles. (*Shir HaShirim 1:13-15 with Seforno*)

Klal Yisroel says to Hashem: If you reveal Yourself to us as You did by Har Sinai when You opened the heavens and showed us there is nothing besides You, and You alone are in complete control of the universe, that will give us the ability to return to You as in the past. What is Hashem's response? You don't need such miracles anymore; the Torah I have already given you contains the greatest intellectual miracles and Divine Revelation in the world. You need merely to delve into its depths, and you will personally experience Har Sinai whenever and wherever you are! Perhaps this is the meaning of the Zohar (brought in *Nefesh HaChaim*) which states: One who toils in Torah, it is as if he is presently standing by the giving of the Torah at Har Sinai!



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

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A heretic saw that Rava was immersed in studying Halacha. His fingers were beneath his leg, and he was squeezing them, causing his fingers to spurt blood. Rava did not notice that he was bleeding because he was engrossed in study. The heretic said to Rava: "You impulsive nation, who accorded precedence to your mouths over your ears. You still bear your impulsiveness, as you act without thinking. You should listen first. Then, if you are capable of fulfilling the commandments, accept them. And if not, do not accept them." Rava responded to him: "About us, who proceed wholeheartedly and with integrity, (Rashi explains - trusting in Hashem that He will not overburden us) it is written: "The integrity of the upright will guide them," (Proverbs 11:3), whereas about those people who walk in deceit, it is written at the end of the same verse: "And the perverseness of the faithless will destroy them." (Shabbos 88a)

We are all familiar with the words of the Vilna Gaon: "The central reason for the giving of the Torah to Klal Yisroel is so they will have Bitachon in Hashem." From the above Gemara we see that our receiving of the Torah was also only through our Bitachon in Hashem. Additionally, we see that even regarding our spiritual obligations, we must not be overwhelmed by them. Rather, we must place our trust in Him that we will succeed in their fulfillment, bringing us happiness in this world and eternal bliss in the World to Come!