

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

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The Power of Viewing Everyone in the Image of Hashem

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

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנחם | הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר | רפאל חיים דוב 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, (Kedoshim 19:18) the Torah commands us to, "Love your friend like you love yourself." The Medrash Rabbah in Bereishis (24:7) records an argument regarding this commandment, "Ben Azai says, "This is the book of the generation of man' (referring to man being in the image of Hashem) is the great principle of the Torah. Rebbi Akiva says, 'Love your friend like you love yourself' is the great principle of the Torah. A person should not say since I am disgraced, I will disgrace my friend with me. Since I am cursed, I will curse my friend with me. (Eitz Yosef - A person who is insulted is comforted when others are insulted, as the famous saying goes: misery loves company.) Rebbi Tanchuma says if you do this, you should know who you are disgracing, he was created in Hashem's image."

Upon initial analysis, this Medrash is perplexing. The commandment to love your friend like you love yourself tells us, as the Gemara in Shabbos expresses, "That which is hateful to you, don't do to your friend." Based on this definition of the Mitzvah a person would say, "I hate being disgraced or cursed, and therefore, the last thing I would want is my friend who I love to feel this pain," - the exact opposite of the Medrash! Why does the Medrash seem to say that you would be inclined to disgrace your friend?

The Medrash can be explained that since a person loves himself more than he loves his friend, when he is in pain he has two conflicting feelings. On the one hand, he never wants his friend to experience what he is going through, and on the other hand he derives some comfort in others being

in the same position. The stronger of these two feelings is the love a person has for himself, and that would have caused him to misinterpret the Pasuk in a way that would make it permitted to hurt his friend. Only by focusing on the fact that his friend is created in the image of Hashem can he overpower the love he has for himself.

We can glean a powerful insight from here in working on our Middos and Bein Adam L'Chaveiro. Often the path we take when trying to improve our sensitivities towards others is working on our love for Klal Yisrael. We see from here that although this is important and our obligation, it may have a limitation when conflicting with our love for ourselves. When faced with this obstacle, the love for ourselves which can cause us to hurt others, may not be able to be restrained by the love we have for others. However, there is a powerful force that we can use to restrain the love for ourselves and refrain from hurting our friends - focusing on the fact that he is in the image of Hashem. This focus can help us achieve even greater levels of sensitivity towards our friends than internalizing our love for them, as it may not be able to be overpowered by the love of ourselves.

The Alter of Slabodka would stress that the main area of life to focus on is that we are all created in the image of Hashem, and everything in life flows from this realization. It is clear from the above Medrash that not only does everything in life flow from this realization, it is also the key to overcoming our weaknesses in our Middos.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

The voice of my beloved is knocking: “Let me in, My own, My darling, My faultless dove! For my head is drenched with dew, My locks with the damp of night.”

(Shir HaShirim 5:2)

In this week’s Parsha (19:17) we are commanded to rebuke our fellow Jew who has strayed from the righteous path. The explanation of the Zohar on the Pasuk in Shir HaShirim sheds light on the correct approach to carrying out this mitzvah.

“Despite all of Moshe’s reprimanding of Klal Yisroel, all of his words were with love, as the Pesukim state: ‘For you are a people consecrated to Hashem your G-d, of all the peoples on earth, Hashem your G-d chose you to be His treasured people..’ ‘You are children to Hashem your G-d..’ ‘And you, the ones who cling to Hashem your G-d..’ ‘Therefore, you will listen to Hashem...because out of Hashem’s love for you...’ this is as the Pasuk states: ‘Open up for me, my sister, my wife.’” (*Zohar Ha’azinu 86b*)

When Hashem wishes to rebuke Klal Yisroel, in their most dreadful spiritual state - in the depth of the Galus - when they seemingly have no interest in Him, He says: “Open up for Me! My sister! My beloved! My dove! My faultless one! For my head is drenched with dew, My locks with the damp of night.”

We must follow this demonstration from Hashem on the proper path of giving rebuke, and only rebuke our fellow Jews who have strayed from the path with the utmost respect and love – no matter the dreadfulness of the situation.



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

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When Aharon HaKohen’s two sons died while bringing Korbonos before Hashem the Pasuk states: “Then Moshe said to Aharon, “This is what Hashem meant when He said: Through those near to Me I sanctify Myself, and gain glory before all the people.” And Aharon was silent.” Rashi comments that Aharon was rewarded for his silence.

The Netziv asks: Rashi’s comment that Aharon was silent connotes that he didn’t cry over their deaths, but it doesn’t connote that he accepted Hashem’s decree with happiness that he should be rewarded?

Perhaps we can suggest an additional explanation based on the Gemara (*Eruvin 19a*) which says: “And Rav Yirmiyah ben Elazar also said: Come and see that the attribute of flesh and blood is unlike the attribute of Hashem. For the attribute of flesh and blood is to place an iron or a wooden hook in the mouth of a person who was sentenced to death by the government, so that he should not be able to curse the king when he is taken away for execution. But the attribute of Hashem is that one is willingly silent when he is sentenced to death by Hashem, as it is stated: ‘For You silence is praise.’” Rashi on this Pasuk explains the praise inherent in silence as follows: “Silence is praise to You for there is no end to Your praise, and one who overly praises, in fact diminishes His praise.”

Based on the above, perhaps we may suggest that Aharon’s silence did not connote a lack of happiness, rather Aharon’s Bitachon in the kindness of Hashem - even while taking his two children away from him - was so great that any words of praise to Hashem would have diminished the true gratitude He felt to Hashem at that time.