

# Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

## Blurry Vision

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 | הפאל חיים דוב בן בן-ציון שלום | ר' ברוך בן ר' יהודה | שרה בת ר' יחזקאל | ראובן יוסף בן יהושע | דב בעריש בן פסח צבי  
לרפואה שלמה יוסף בן מלכה מטל | יעקב אליעזר בן חנה נשא

In this week's Parsha, the Pasuk (11:1-6) says, "And the people were like evil complainers in the ears of Hashem...The riffraff in their midst felt a gluttonous craving, and then the Israelites wept and said, 'If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish that we used to eat free in Mitzrayim, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. Now our souls are dry. There is nothing at all! Nothing but this Manna to look to!'" Rashi comments on the words that they were like complainers - "They seek a pretext to separate themselves from following Hashem."

These Pesukim inform us of an insight into human nature that is quite shocking. In essence, Klal Yisrael is complaining and saying that their life in Mitzrayim was better. Let's not forget that in Mitzrayim they were tortured, their babies were killed, and they were enslaved in bitter slavery. This complaint is quite absurd and would seem to border on insanity! We see from here that when someone has a desire or there is an underlying will to separate from Hashem, they are completely blinded and can say and think the most irrational thoughts that have no basis in reality. This lesson is still valid, even though we know that they were spiritual giants - and thus their complaints must have been very small - but because of their stature, the Torah views it very seriously.

This idea is further expanded upon and illustrated by Rav Moshe Chaim Luzatto in the Mesillas Yesharim, where he describes the Middah of laziness. He says, "Behold, we see with our eyes many times, that a person already knows his obligation, and it is true to him what he needs to do to save his soul, and what he is obligated to do in regards to his Creator, and he still shirks his responsibility. This is not due to a lack in his recognition of his obligation or

any other reason. It is rather due to the weight of laziness that overpowers him. He will say, 'I will first eat a bit, or sleep a bit, or it is difficult for me to leave my house. I have taken off my robe, how can I put it back on? It is very hot outside, it is extremely cold or rainy,' or any other excuses that the mouths of the lazy people are filled with. Meanwhile, the Torah is left unstudied, the Divine service is neglected, and the person abandons his Creator. However, if you would ask the lazy person to explain his ways, he would come back to you with many statements of our Sages...and he does not see that those arguments and reasons are not born of his sound judgment."

Rav Moshe Chaim Luzatto is describing a person who intellectually is fully aware of his obligation, and what he needs to do to save his soul. This awareness is itself motivating. However, the Middah of laziness will result in him abandoning his responsibility completely, and making poor excuses to justify his behavior, even supporting his behavior with statements of Chazal. The extent to which this person is fooling himself is mind boggling! He knows what he has to do, and he will not do any of it, with the rationale that he can't, based on an excuse that would never hold him back from work or making money.

We see from the above scenario how truly blinding Middos are. A Middah of laziness does not only cause us to fall short in our obligation, but it also causes us to think irrationally, and base our behavior on faulty logic. The imperative for Tikkun Hamidos - refining our character - is clear, and it is critical that we tackle this before we face challenges where Middos will act as blinders from seeing reality.



## Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

In Shir Hashirim, we find a discussion, according to the Seforno, between Klal Yisrael and Hashem. Klal Yisrael, distanced from the Divine presence during the long exile, craves to return to Hashem and to once again fully follow the ways of the Torah. Klal Yisrael asks that Hashem should once again show us His miracles, so that we may sense His Divine presence and return to Him and follow in His ways.

Hashem's response has very far-reaching implications. He tells us that we don't need to see and experience Divine miracles to connect with Him and feel His Divine presence. We are the recipients and students of His Torah, and the study and observance of the Torah provides us with "intellectual wonders" (miracles) and through them we can recognize and connect with the Divine presence. The profound depth and amazing sensitivities that we find in Torah, above and beyond anything that we find in the outside world, inspire us to realize that they are sublime messages and directives to us from the Creator Himself. The realization that we possess, study, and follow the Divine instructions and internalize Divine insights, offers us a connection with Hashem that parallels, if not surpasses, the inspiration that we can receive from witnessing Divine miracles.

Our long and bitter history in exile from our land and wandering the globe for close to two thousand years is replete with endless miracles. In fact, our miraculous survival together with our Torah intact may be the greatest of miracles. Yet, if we long to see the Hand of Hashem even beyond the miracles that we do see, the study of our Torah is where to begin. This may be what our Sages meant when they said that Hashem says, "If they would forsake Me, but maintain the connection to My Torah, then the spiritual light or enlightenment that emanates from the Torah would bring them back to Me."



## ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

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The Ramban (Shemos 13:16) writes: "And the purpose of all the commandments is that we believe in Hashem and be thankful to Him for having created us, for we know of no other reason for the first creation, and Hashem has no demand on the lower creatures, except that man should know and be thankful to Him for having created him." However, the Vilna Gaon seems to disagree when he writes (Mishlei 22:19): "The central reason for the giving of the Torah to Klal Yisroel is so that they will place their trust in Hashem, as the Pesukim (Tehillim 78:5-7) state: 'And He established testimony in Yaakov, and He set down a Torah in Yisrael, which He commanded our forefathers to make them known to their sons. In order that the last generation might know, sons who will be born should tell their sons. **And they should put their hope in Hashem**, and not forget the deeds of Hashem, and keep His commandments.' For the main point of everything is true bitachon, and it is the sum total of all the Mitzvos!" Can these two outlooks be reconciled?

From the following words of one of the great Rishonim (Sefer HaIkrim 4:49) we see that the outlook of the Ramban and the Vilna Gaon are one and the same. He writes on the Pasuk, "Therefore turn to Hashem; keep mercy and justice and wait for Hashem continually." (Tehillim 27:14) "For hope and waiting for Hashem are better than all the praises that one can give Him, as the Psalmist (71:14) says: 'But as for me, I will hope continually, and will add to all Your praises.' Now this seems like a very strange remark indeed. How can he say that he will add to all the praises of Hashem, when we read in Tehillim (106:2): 'Who can express the mighty acts of Hashem, or make all His praise to be heard?' A person cannot even enumerate the infinite praises of Hashem, not to speak of adding to them. But the meaning of the verse is this, that by waiting continually for Hashem he adds to all the praises which a person can give to Hashem."