

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

The Eternal Beauty of Klal Yisrael

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
לרפואה שלמה יוסף בן מלכה מטל | יעקב אליעזר בן חנה נשא

As a nation we are currently in an **עת צרה**. The Matzav in Eretz Yisrael is frightening, and we are seeing antisemitism rear its ugly head once again. On the other hand we are simultaneously seeing countless soldiers, Chilonim, donning Tzitzis and Tefillin, and asking Klal Yisrael to keep learning and davening for them. Throughout the ugliness we are experiencing the beauty of the Jew, and it is shining ever so bright.

This true beauty is illustrated by the Pasuk (1:5) in Shir Hashirim, “I am dark, but beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem— Like the tents of Kedar, like the pavilions of Solomon.” Rashi explains the Mashal of the Pasuk as follows: “You my friends, let me not be light in your eyes. **Even if my husband has left me because of my darkness, for I am dark because of the tanning of the sun, but I am beautiful with the shape of beautiful limbs. Though I am dark like the tents of Keidar, which are darkened because of the rains, for they are always spread out in the wilderness, I am easily cleansed to become like the curtains of Shlomo.** The Nimshal is: Klal Yisrael says to the nations, “**I am dark in my deeds, but I am beautiful by virtue of the deeds of my ancestors, and even some of my deeds are beautiful. If I bear the sin of the golden calf, I can offset it with the merit of the acceptance of the Torah.**”

Upon initial analysis, the Mashal and Nimshal don't seem to align. In the Mashal the beauty of beautiful limbs can be seen right now, whereas in the Nimshal the deeds of my ancestors don't make me beautiful right now, rather their merit remains. Secondly, how does

the merit of Kabbalas Hatorah offset the sin of the golden calf, as Kabbalas Hatorah came before! In addition, how does the Mashal, that the tents of Keidar are easily cleansed, fit with the Nimshal?

We can glean from here two powerful insights into the enduring beauty of every Jew in the Galus. One is that we see from the Mashal that Zechus Avos doesn't just mean their merit remains. Rather it means that we inherited the beauty of their character and that beauty remains in our DNA, and can visibly be seen. That is why the Mashal compares Zechus Avos to the shape of beautiful limbs, to illustrate that the Gadlus of the Avos can still be seen in every Jew. Secondly, we see from the second part of the Mashal that the sins of Klal Yisrael are only skin deep and easily cleansed. The reason for this is explained in the Nimshal, that due to Kabbalas Hatorah our sins stay on the surface and never impact our insides, making them easily removed.

This prophetic description of the Jew throughout the Galus by Shlomo Hamelech is inspiring. Although we may meet Jews that look anything but beautiful due to their sins and inappropriate behavior, they still have the Gadlus of the Avos inside of them. Not only that, but that this Gadlus can be seen to the discerning eye. Furthermore, even their sins are easily removed as they still possess the greatness imbibed by Kabbalas Hatorah. With this we can understand the massive Kiruv phenomena that we are seeing in Eretz Yisrael, and around the world, as a Jew is never distant from his true self.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

“And Hashem said to Avram, ‘Go forth from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you.’” (Bereishis 12:1)

“Go forth: *Go to you, for your benefit and for your good, and there I will make you into a great nation, but here, you will not merit to have children. Moreover, I will make your character known in the world.”* (Rashi)

Pirkei D’Rabi Eliezer count the above commandment as one of the ten great tests Avraham Avinu was given. However, it seems from Rashi that Hashem was commanding Avraham to go for his own sake, so that he will merit the reward he had longed for his entire life - to bear children and become a great nation, as opposed to continue suffering the unbelievable pain of childlessness. Why would that be a test for him?

Perhaps we can explain this based on the following explanation of Rav Chaim Volozhner on the concept of serving Hashem Lishma - for its own sake: “Possibly the highest form of Avodas Hashem is serving Him with the intention to get rewarded - where one serves Him with the intention that Hashem (so to speak) will have the pleasure of rewarding him.” (Ruach Chaim 1:3)

Perhaps this was indeed the great test of Avraham. Hashem said: “Go! However, I don’t want you to only focus on fulfilling my commandment, rather, focus on the infinite reward it will bring you, and all that reward that you desire in order to give Me the pleasure of providing it to you.”

Such is the infinite love of our forefathers for Hashem. How wonderful is the knowledge that this love, although sometimes buried so deeply in our hearts, was bequeathed to us by them. As the Mefarshim explain the Pasuk in Shir HaShirim “Meysharim they loved You” - They inherited love for You from their forefathers, Avraham Yitzchak and Yaakov who are called “Yesharim”. We need to merely fan the flames of love already burning in our hearts for it to burst into a conflagration!



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The Ramban in Lech Lecha writes: “Know that Avraham, our father, unintentionally committed a great sin (on his lofty level) by bringing his righteous wife to a stumbling block of sin on account of his fear, lest he be killed. He should have trusted that Hashem would save him and his wife and all his belongings for Hashem surely has the power to help and to save. Also, his leaving the land which he had been commanded from the beginning to live in, on account of the famine, was also a sin. For in famine Hashem would redeem him from death. It was because of this deed that the exile in the land of Mitzrayim at the hand of Pharaoh was decreed for his children.”

We see from the words of the Ramban that the entire Galus of Mitzrayim was a result of a lack of Bitachon. This gives us a deeper understanding into what merited our ultimate redemption from there as Rabbeinu Bachaya (Kad HaKemach) writes:

In the merit of Bitachon, Yisroel was redeemed from Mitzrayim, for Chazal state in Medrash Tehilim (22) “‘To You they cried out and escaped,’ and why? ‘In You they trusted and weren’t shamed,’ all in the merit of Bitachon.”

Being that the exile of Mitzrayim was a result of a lack of Bitachon, Yitzias Mitzrayim was made possible only through a strengthening of Bitachon!

The Rabbeinu Bachaya above beautifully finishes off this thought as follows: “And because the trait of Bitachon is one of the foundational principles of the Torah we find that the Torah is based upon it and is called ‘Bitachon’ after it, this is as the Pasuk (Mishlei 21:22) states, ‘A wise man ascended to a city of mighty men,’ (this refers to Moshe, our teacher, who went up among the angels, who are mighty in strength,) ‘and brought down its mighty Mivtachah’ - trusted stronghold - the Torah.”