

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

פרשת

נח

VOL 102

It Is All About Doing For Others

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

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנח | 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

In this week's Parsha, the Torah (6:9) says, "And these are the generations of Noach, Noach was a righteous man, Noach walked with Hashem." The Seforno explains the Pasuk - "Righteous in his actions....He walked in the way of Hashem to do good to others, and rebuked his generation."

It is clear from the Seforno that Noach is only being identified as walking in the ways of Hashem due to his care and concern for others. His righteousness and strength of character in withstanding the evil of his generation alone would not warrant this title. This is despite the fact that his generation was involved in the worst immoral behavior which he resisted. However, Noach's personal principles and commitment to morality would not allow him to be called walking in the ways of Hashem. It is only his doing for others that deserved this title. Granted that according to the Seforno it makes him a Tzadik, but to be identified as one who is "following the ways of Hashem" one needs to do good for others. This idea can be taken one step further from the Medrash Tanchuma who says that Noach was called a Tzadik, "Because he gave food to the creature of Hashem." According to the Medrash one can't even be called a Tzadik unless he does good for others! The idea expressed above was constantly emphasized by Rabbi Chaim Volozhin who said to his son, "Man was not created for himself but to do for others."

The importance in doing for others is further illustrated by the following Seforno which explains that Noach only merited in having children once he started rebuking his generation. This is mind boggling! According to the Seforno, Noach was

a Tzaddik who was not swayed by the despicable behavior of his generation. Our environment has a tremendous influence on us, and resisting bad influences is not easy. Yet, Noach's fortitude and unwavering beliefs were not enough to merit children. Only his starting to rebuke others and show concern for them were able to merit him children.

We can use these ideas to help inspire ourselves to do Chesed and care for others. Generally, we are all somewhat selfish and our purpose in this world is to break this Middah. By doing so and being selfless instead of selfish we can be defined as walking in the ways of Hashem. Often Bachurim in Yeshiva will exempt themselves from doing kindness by saying that for now their entire focus has to be on their own Limud Hatorah. Although this is true, the Rosh Yeshiva of Chofetz Chaim, Rav Henoch Lebowitz ZT"L used to say that a Bachur has to do some Chesed so his heart does not become like a stone which is unmoved by anything. Opportunities such as learning with others who need help in their learning can preserve the softness of one's heart.

The following story, told over by Rav Lazer Plachinski ZT"L, can help a Yeshiva Bochur gain a proper perspective on Chesed as it pertains to his learning. "There was a Bochur from the Chevron Yeshiva who used to always visit the Chazon Ish. He brought with him questions that his friends from the Yeshiva asked him to ask. One day he said to the Chazon Ish, "Maybe I shouldn't come anymore as it is Bitul Torah, as it takes two hours each way." The Chazon Ish responded, "When a person does Chesed his Nefesh becomes greater, and now he can understand the Torah better."



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

We have explained in the past that no matter how great the miracles Hashem has performed for Klal Yisroel in the past, only through the eternal loving communication we experience with Hashem each and every day through the study of His Torah can our relationship continue for all future generations.

The reason for this is brought out beautifully in Chazal:

What is the meaning of the Pasuk, "Pour your heart out like water opposite the face of Hashem"? From here they learned that any Talmid Chacham who sits and reads and studies and delves into the Torah, the Holy One blessed be He sits opposite him and reads and studies with him. And if the Pasuk had not said so, it would be impossible to say and anyone who did would acquire the death penalty. (Tana D'Bei Eliyahu chap. 18):

Chazal view this relationship as so intimate that it is referred to as Hashem kissing us as the Pasuk states: **Kiss me from the kisses of Your mouth for Your love** (the words of the Oral Torah) **is better than wine** (the Written Torah). (Shir HaShirim 1:2, Bavli, Avodah Zara) The Written Torah is compared to wine, perhaps symbolic of its continued relevance despite its age. However, studying the Oral Torah is compared to receiving a kiss from Hashem for its understanding necessitates Hashem's continued intervention as the One Who "teaches Torah to His nation Yisroel."

Is there is any greater closeness than this? Is there anyone in the world more fortunate than such a person?



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He does not prize the strength of horses, nor value the fleetness of men; but Hashem values those who fear Him, those who trust in His faithful care. (Tehillim 147:11)

The Pasuk does not state, "Hashem values those who fear Him, and those who trust in His faithful care. Rather 'Hashem values those who fear Him, those who trust in His faithful care.'" It seems that one who fears Hashem will inevitably also be one who has bitachon in Him. Why is this necessarily so?

Perhaps we can answer this based on the Pasuk (Tehillim 130:4): "Yours is the power to forgive so that You may be held in awe." The Ramban (end of Sefer Bamidbar) seems to understand this to mean that if not for the knowledge that Hashem mercifully forgives those who sin, people wouldn't fear Him altogether. Although logically this would be an even greater reason to fear Hashem, the way the human mind works is that it gives up entirely when it is overwhelmed with pressure and subconsciously will then block out the logical fear of Hashem altogether. Based on the above we can understand why one who truly fears Hashem must also already have attained the Middah of Bitachon.

It is interesting to note the Pesukim that follow the above Pasuk: "Yours is the power to forgive so that You may be held in awe." – "I trusted, Hashem; my soul trusted; and His word I awaited. I await Hashem more eagerly than a watchman for the morning, waits for the morning. O Israel, wait for Hashem for with Hashem is steadfast love and great power to redeem!"