

Emulating Hashem Through Action

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-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 says (22:1), "And Hashem tested Avraham." The Seforno explains the nature of this test, with the understanding that Hashem knows the future and the inner workings of Avraham's heart. He writes, "Hashem's intention was that Avraham's love for G-d as well as his fear of G-d should not merely be in potential but it should be actualized. Through bringing these feelings into action, he will be more similar to Hashem who is good to the world in action. The purpose of man's existence is to emulate the virtues of G-d to the greatest extent possible. As the Pasuk declares, 'Let us make man in Our image.'"

Upon initial analysis this Seforno is perplexing! He says that by Avraham acting with love and fear he will be more similar to Hashem, Who actively does good. What is the comparison between Avraham, who is acting with love and fear of Hashem, and Hashem, Who is doing good to the world? How are these two things the same, that this would make Avraham more like Hashem?

It seems that the only clear comparison between these two things is the concept of bringing a Middah into action. Just like Hashem is good and also brings that goodness into actions, similarly, we should act on the virtues of our heart. This Seforno offers us a new dimension into the Mitzvah of "והלכת בדרכיו", we are not commanded to merely develop good Middos but also to act on those Middos. Acting on them alone is a fulfillment of this Mitzvah. Often people say, "But he has a good heart, his intentions were pure." However, we see from here that being like Hashem requires us to act on our Middos. This insight can increase our motivation to not just be satisfied with our internal values, but to act on them as well.

Honesty Has No Bounds

The Pasuk says (22:13), "And Avraham took the ram, and brought it up for an Olah in exchange for his son." The Seforno explains the

need for this exchange: "In exchange for what he had in his heart to sacrifice his son, this is in line with Pasuk in Tehillim (15:2) ודובר אמת בלבו - he spoke truthfully in his heart."

This Seforno requires further clarifications. Why would Avraham be faulted for a lack of truth if he did not sacrifice the ram. His plan to bring a Korban was based on Hashem's instruction, and now he is being commanded not to bring it. Where is there a lack of truth in his heart?

Granted, we find in the Gemara in Makos, this Pasuk of דובר אמת בלבו - "He speaks truth in his heart," used in reference to Rav Safra. While Rav Safra was davening, he was approached by a person who wished to purchase an item from him. The person offered a price, but Rav Safra couldn't answer. However, Rav Safra in his heart intended to sell it for that price. The buyer thought the reason he did not receive a response was that his offer was too low. He then continued to offer a higher amount. After Rav Safra finished davening he only accepted the price he had thought to agree upon in his heart, as taking the higher price would have retroactively made the thought in his heart a lie.

In this situation we can understand the lack of truth, as he had already thought in his heart to agree to the lower price. However, by Avraham anything he thought in his heart was all based on the commandment of Hashem, and now Hashem is saying not to do it. This does not appear to be a deficiency in the Middah of Emes!

We see from here that although it was all based on the commandment of Hashem, the fact that Avraham thought in his heart to bring a Korban, not doing so would turn out to make the act not real and lacking in the Middah of Emes, despite the fact that Hashem is telling him not to bring it. We can glean from here how far reaching the Middah of Emes extends, and how careful we have to be when it comes to honesty.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

In last week's Haftorah (Yeshayah 40:27-31) Hashem asks Klal Yisroel:

"Why do you say (somar), Yaakov, and speak (sidaber), Yisroel, 'My way is hidden from Hashem, and from before my G-d my cause will pass?'"

Why does the first part of our Pasuk refer to Klal Yisroel as "Yaakov" and in the second part as "Yisroel"? Additionally, why does the Pasuk use the word "somar" (which is a lighter form of the word "say") by Yaakov and it says "sidaber" (a harsher form of speech) by Yisroel, if Yaakov and Yisroel are both saying the same words?

Throughout Tanach the Mefarshim interpret "Yaakov" as referring to the lower cast of Klal Yisroel and "Yisroel" as those of higher status. According to this we may suggest that both casts of Klal Yisroel say, "My way is hidden from Hashem, and from before my G-d my cause will pass." However, the simple people understand that their issues are actually hidden from Hashem, as He is simply unaware of them, they therefore use a lighter expression "somar". In contrast, the higher cast of society knows this can't be true. Rather, they understand that although Hashem is Omnipotent, He purposefully is ignoring their issues out of anger towards them, they therefore use the stronger expression "sidaber".

Next week we will explain Hashem, response to both casts of Klal Yisroel:

"Do you not know? Have you not heard? Hashem from of old, Creator of the earth from end to end, He never grows faint or weary, His wisdom cannot be fathomed. He gives strength to the weary, fresh vigor to the spent. Youths will grow faint and weary, and young men will stumble and fall; and they who trust in Hashem shall renew their strength as eagles grow new plumes. They shall run and not grow weary; they shall march and not grow faint."



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

A Westwood Realty Initiative

Excerpts of a letter written by Rav Chaim Greinaman Zt"l

It is a common belief that the advancement of Medicine results in a longer lifespan, for example: So and so who was stricken with a certain illness today will be cured as opposed to if he would have gotten it yesterday. Or: If not for the dangers of the roadways there would be many more people alive with us today and it's a miracle that there are groups of Hatzalah for that's why so and so remained alive, for they arrived when there was still time and treated him properly.

All the above are thoughts founded in Kfira (heresy) in Hashgacha Pratis (Divine supervision). No one ever remained alive if it was decreed upon him to die and no one ever died before his preordained time....

The truth is just the opposite. It was decreed upon so and so to die, therefore he was stricken by an incurable illness or happened to be at the place of the accident and at a time when no one was able to save him. His friend, on the other hand, who's preordained time had not come, was stricken by an illness that already had a cure, or reached the place of the accident a minute later, or was hit at a time when there were people available to save him.

Those who associate these events to each other, calculating how many died from a specific illness during this month or how many died in accidents during that month etc. are involved in Kfira Beshogeg (unintentional heresy) and misleading people to attribute everything to chance as if, G-d forbid, the world is Hefker (a free-for-all).