

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

Set the Bar High

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

Oftentimes, those that are observant and committed to Torah and Mitzvos think that those that are not religious need to do Teshuva. However, us - we made it. Through viewing what we are capable of and what is expected of us through a Torah lens, we will quickly discover that the bar is much higher than we think, and the need for Teshuva is universal. The Gerrer Rebbe taught this lesson when he was once approached by someone who embarrassingly said, almost apologizing, "I am a Baal Teshuva," to which the Rebbe responded, "If only I was a Baal Teshuva." In this week's Parsha, we have two such ideas that set the bar extremely high.

The Pasuk (29:21) says, "Yaakov said to Lavan, give me my wife as I have fulfilled my days, and I will come to her." Rashi comments, "Even the lowest of the lows don't speak like this, rather his intention was to have children."

Rashi's answer is difficult to understand, if this language is an unrefined way to speak, why would Yaakov speak that way. Granted his intention and focus was on having children to be able to build Klal Yisrael, but this is still an inappropriate way to speak. He should have just said give me my wife. Why use an expression that was beneath him?

It must be that Yaakov was so entirely focused on his mission of building Klal Yisrael that this phrase no longer had any connotation of anything cheap or inappropriate. His focus and his frame of mind literally changed the meaning of these words, and it no longer retained its cheap and lowly connotation. This idea illustrates the lofty level of the Avos, as they couldn't even fathom doing something for a personal temptation, as they were

completely enveloped in their mission. Our Sages tell us that a person is obligated to say, "When will my actions reach the Avos?" This very statement attests to our ability to reach such lofty levels, and even this idea is within our reach.

We find a similar idea that illustrates the loftiness of the Avos in the Ralbag's commentary. In explaining the Pesukim of Yaakov working for Rochel, he writes, "The eighteenth benefit is in Middos, it is fitting for a person to fulfill that which he accepted upon himself to give or do for another completely and with a full heart, despite the fact that the person acted inappropriately to him."

The requirement to fully fulfill your contractual agreement even if someone cheated you is understandable. Integrity and honesty dictate such behavior. However, the requirement to do it with a full heart is puzzling. Why and how can a positive attitude, and a person's heart being on board be expected of you when you were cheated and lied to!?

It must be that when a person commits to do a job, that commitment includes doing it with a full heart. The feelings and the attitude with which a person does his job is all part of his initial agreement. The rationale behind this may be because a person whose heart is into it, performs the job more efficiently and therefore that becomes part of the definition of doing your job completely.

This is a lesson in Middos for everyone, which means a person has the capabilities to be completely swindled and still fulfill his commitment without any resentment. This lofty level is something we can and are expected to attain.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

“Only to Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov do we refer to as “Avos – fathers”, for they are the general fathers of the Jewish nation. However, we do not refer to Adam and Noach as “Avos”, though they are even more general fathers. For since the lineage of righteousness had been severed from their descendants, who were wicked people, they are not referred to as “Avos”. However, from the time of Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov, [though some of our ancestors descending from them have been very evil and sinful towards Hashem] the knowledge of Hashem and love and awe of Him has never ceased. (*Mabi”t, Beis Elokim, Shar HaTefillah Chapter 8*)

If, according to the Mabi”t, our ancestors were “*very evil and sinful towards Hashem*”, how can we say, “*the knowledge of Hashem and love and awe of Him never ceased*”? We see from here that, in contrast with the rest of the nations, in the depths of even the most wicked of Jews there exists true *knowledge of Hashem and love and awe of Him*.

It is interesting to note that this same thought is brought out with the very same wording, by the Seforno in his commentary on *Shir HaShirim* (1:5) where he states: “Klal Yisroel says to the nations of the world: You can not claim that it is unfair that Hashem provides me with a more intimate level of Divine assistance, for we are indeed more worthy of His affection than all other nations. For though we are soiled in our deeds as you are, we are comely in our knowledge of Hashem and awe and love for Him.”

At first glance this is hard to understand. If the Pasuk is referring to Klal Yisroel at a time when we were **soiled in our deeds as you** (the nations of the world) **are**, how can we say **we are comely in our knowledge of Hashem and awe and love for Him**? We see from here as well that no matter to what level of depravity the Jew may fall, their deeply held awe and love for Hashem still burns in their heart, as hard as it may be to see that flame.



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

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In this week’s Parsha, Hashem promises Yaakov: “*I am with you: I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.*” Yaakov follows this promise by vowing: “*If G-d remains with me, if He protects me on this journey that I am making, and gives me bread to eat and clothing to wear, and if I return safe to my father’s house and Hashem shall be my G-d. And this stone, which I have set up as a pillar, shall be G-d’s abode; and of all that You give me, I will set aside a tithe for You.*” (Bereishis 28:15-22)

How can Yaakov say, “**If** G-d remains with me, **if** He protects me on this journey that I am making, and gives me bread to eat and clothing to wear...” when Hashem just promised him He would do just that?

Upon Yaakov’s return home the Pasuk relates, “Yaakov was greatly frightened...” The Gemara (Berachos 4a) explains that although Hashem had promised to protect him, he was worried that perhaps his sins would prevent this promise from being fulfilled. (The Mefarshim explain that although through bitachon he would have been saved, he did not want to be saved through Hashem’s attribute of mercy, rather, he only wanted to be saved through Hashem’s attribute of judgment, and when Hashem promises something to an individual, it’s fulfillment can be dependent upon one’s merits.)

According to the above Gemara we understand why Hashem’s promise was still not a surety, however, it is still hard to understand Yaakov’s words, for if Hashem’s protection was solely dependent upon his refraining from sin what was the point of vowing that if Hashem would protect him he would set aside a tithe for Him?

The interpretation of the Targum Yonasan on the words, “If G-d remains with me, if He protects me on this journey that I am making and gives me bread...” answers our question. He says, “If the Word of Hashem will be my Helper, and will keep me from *shedding innocent blood, and from strange worship, and from impure converse*, in this way that I am going; and will give me bread...” Indeed, Yaakov had no need to request Hashem to protect him physically as that had been promised to protect him as long as he refrained from sin, rather, Yaakov was solely asking for spiritual protection needed to earn Hashem’s physical protection.