

The Value Of A True Friend

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

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנחם | 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 | לרפואה שלמה יוסף בן מלכה מטל

In this week's Parsha, we have the episode of Yehuda and Tamar. Throughout this story the Torah emphasizes Yehuda's friendship with Chirah. The Ralbag derives the following lesson from this friendship, "The first benefit is in Middos. It is appropriate for a person who is moving to a new place to make sure that he has friends there. Through this he will be able to live there peacefully. This lesson is learned from the fact that Yehuda invested effort to acquire a friend in the place that he arrived. This is referring to Chira Adulami, who Yehuda loved to such an extent that he went with him to care for the sheep after Yehuda's wife had died. In addition, he was trusted by Yehuda to retrieve the security Yehuda had given to Tamar, and thereby protect Yehuda from the embarrassment and pain. This illustrates their strong bond of friendship."

Upon initial analysis, the Ralbag is difficult to understand. The Ralbag implies that if Yehuda would not have had Chira as his good friend, there would have been a deficiency in peace. Why would there be a lack of peace, surely Yehuda's Middos were stellar, and his interactions with everyone would have been pleasant. It would have been understandable if the Ralbag would have said that without Chirah, Yehuda would have felt lonely, and unhappy. However, to say that there would be a lack of peace requires further clarification, as we can assume that Yehuda would have not stirred up any fights, and would have been a model citizen who is respected by all! In addition, Chirah is only one person. How does having this relationship with one person result in peace with everyone?

It must be that our initial perspective on peace is incorrect

and requires a paradigm shift. We see from here that peace is not merely defined as the absence of friction between two people. If that were the case Yehuda would not need Chirah to live there peacefully. Peace is defined in the positive, as the depth of relationship between two people who trust each other with their greatest secrets. Once a person has developed a close relationship even with one person who will go to the end of the world for them, they will be able to live peacefully within their society.

This idea that a positive relationship with one person can impact all other relationships is echoed by Rabbeinu Yonah in Avos. In the second Perek, Mishnah 9, Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai tells his students, "Go out and see which is the straight path that a person should grab onto? ...Rebbi Yehoshua said a good friend." The Rabbeinu Yonah comments, "It is easy to be a good friend without exerting too much effort, to someone you like. The goal being that one person derives benefit from you. This will lead a person to love everyone." It seems that if a person has a place to develop his love for someone else, that love will spread to everyone.

An important insight in how we approach relationships can be gleaned from the above. We tend to think that as long as we mind our own business, and avoid conflict we are living a life of Shalom. We see from the above that Shalom is not a passive pursuit but one that requires reaching out to others and developing positive relationships. Although this may sound overwhelming, from the Ralbag and Rabbeinu Yonah it is clear that Shalom starts with creating one strong relationship, and everything will follow from there.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

Your dry fields, dry land is called בֵּית הַשְּׂלֵחִין [=thirsty land], and it necessary to irrigate it constantly; a field watered by rain [בֵּית הַבַּעַל] is superior to it. (Sifsei Chachomim - The Mishnah in Bava Basra describes בֵּית הַבַּעַל as a field in the valley that is moist and does not require irrigation.) Here he praises the arid field, “Your arid fields” are replete with all good like an orchard of pomegranates, this is said of the smallest of Yisroel, who are succulent with good deeds like a pomegranate orchard and of all luscious fruits... (Shir HaShirim 4:13 with Rashi)

When we look at the righteous amongst us, we see succulent orchards of all luscious fruits and when we look at the sinful in our midst, we see empty fields. However, Shlomo HaMelech teaches us that in truth both are comparable to succulent orchards of all luscious fruits, the only difference between them is that the righteous are compared to a field that receives natural rainfall producing succulent orchards of all luscious fruits, however, the sinful need to receive constant external irrigation, our constant teaching and guidance with love and devotion, whereupon they too will produce the same succulent orchards of all luscious fruits that lies buried within them, as it does within each and every Jew!



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

A Westwood Realty Initiative

Jack, personal assistant to the famous real-estate mogul Richard Cohen, had seen his boss execute hundreds of lucrative deals from start to finish. The emotions involved in the process usually followed a set trajectory. The initial search for the deal was somewhat tense followed by a find which would lead to an extremely anxious and stressful few weeks of negotiations and all sorts of persuasions and attempts to secure the deal. Once the other side agreed, there were only the final legal procedures that involved filling out forms and hoping for the needed approvals. The latter procedure was much less stressful, for it was out of their hands, they would either be approved or not, but there was nothing they could do except to fill out the forms and hope for the best.

One who believes that everything is decided by Hashem knows that all the wheeling and dealing we may do is merely procedural. It is dictated by our obligation of hishtadlus, without which we risk losing what Hashem has planned for us, but it in no way is actually a cause of our success. That is all decided above, as we say in the Tefillah of U'nesaneh Tokef on Rosh Hashanah it will be written and on Yom Kippur it will be sealed... who will become impoverished and who will become rich... When we internalize this, every aspect of our business, even the seemingly critical wheeling and dealing, will not be stressful, rather, it will be with the relaxed feeling of knowing these are all mere procedural requirements called hishtadlus, but it is already out of our hands...And in the hands of our loving Father-in-Heaven!