

Pursuit of Purpose

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Right and Wrong is Not the Only Factor

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

In this week's Parsha, Shechem and Chamor approach Yaakov Avinu and his sons asking them to consent to give over Dinah in marriage to Shechem. Chamor requests that his people and Yaakov's family intermarry with each other. Yaakov remains quiet while his son's answer deceptively that they will only be able to agree to this arrangement if his people all undergo a Bris Milah.

The Ralbag derives the following lesson from here in Middos, "It is not appropriate for a complete person to speak deceitfully, even if their intention of what they are trying to achieve justifies it. However, it is appropriate for a person's mouth and heart to align. It is due to this reason that Yaakov did not want to respond to Shechem and Chamor with the agreed upon plan, because this answer wasn't true. Without a doubt they would not give over their sister to Shechem even if he agreed to be circumcised... They thought that they would refrain from doing a Bris Milah due to the difficulty of it, and would give back Dinah." This idea is echoed by the Medrash that says, "Why did the brothers jump to answer before their father? Because they knew about him that he was a Tam and an extreme Chasid,

and there was no deceit in him."

Upon initial analysis the Ralbag and the Medrash are difficult to understand. Why couldn't Yaakov speak deceitfully? It was clearly Halachically okay as they all agreed to the plan, including Yaakov. In addition, the stakes were so high, as this was the only way to free Dinah his daughter, and save her after being raped, surely the ends justify the means?

We see from here that when deciding what to do and how to act, Middos play a significant role in that decision. Thinking only in terms of wrong and right, is not enough. Our decisions need to be filtered through two tracks, the Shulchan Aruch and Hilchos Middos. Yes, saving Dinah and lying was the right thing to do, and it had to be done, but in Hilchos Middos Yaakov couldn't lie. Therefore, he let his son's answer and remained quiet.

The importance of Middos is best expressed by a statement from the Vilna Gaon, "If not for Tikkun HaMiddos, why am I alive." Clearly, when planning our Seder Hayom of Limud Gemara and Limud Halacha, Limud HaMussar cannot be neglected. As it is the purpose of our life.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

I recognize the remarkable achievements of the Jewish people throughout history, considering that many of the most exceptional individuals have been Jewish. However, it is also a stark reality that some of the most reprehensible individuals have been Jews, as conveyed to Haman (Megillah 16a): The Jewish nation is likened to the dust of the earth and the stars. They can descend to the dust, yet rise to the stars. This prompts the question: maybe we are not that great after all?

The Pasuk in Shir HaShirim (2:1) sheds light on this paradox: "[Klal Yisroel says] I am a rose of the plain, a rose of the valleys. [Hashem responds] Like a rose among thorns, so is my darling among the maidens."

The Vilna Gaon offers an insightful interpretation, comparing the rose of the plain, susceptible to damage from the sun, with the rose of the valley, which thrives due to the sheltering protection from the sun. Klal Yisroel, in essence, asserts its exceptional beauty among all nations, akin to the rose of the valley. However, it notes that its darkness is derived from exposure to the sun, akin to the rose of the plains.

The Vilna Gaon continues on that this characteristic is, in fact, an admirable trait. Delicate and appealing complexions, representative of beauty, are more susceptible to blemishes and sunburn from the sun, whereas coarse complexions are less affected. Similarly, in the context of moral beauty, when delicate individuals stray, their allure diminishes, while coarse individuals may not experience a significant decline.

From this perspective, the tendency to falter when detached from the Torah serves as another testament to the inherent greatness of the Jew. Just as delicate complexions are more susceptible to the effects of the sun, the moral sensitivity of the Jewish people makes them more susceptible to the consequences of straying from their ethical foundation.



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Some might argue, "I acknowledge the concept of achieving more than I deserve through Bitachon, but the difficulty of cultivating this trust seems insurmountable. I am inclined to settle for what I believe I rightfully deserve."

Regrettably, the foundation of such a viewpoint is flawed. This becomes evident when we examine the commentary of the Riv"א on this week's Parsha, specifically on the Pasuk (32:26) describing Yaakov's struggle with the angel. The Riv"א notes that despite Hashem's assurance to Yaakov, "I will protect you wherever you go," the angel managed to injure Yaakov. Why? Because Yaakov allowed himself to succumb to fear in the face of Eisav. A parallel scenario unfolded with Moshe, to whom Hashem had promised, "For I will be with you," yet Moshe suffered harm on his journey due to his fear of Pharaoh, expressing, "Please send someone else."

This narrative illustrates a crucial point: the deficiency of Bitachon not only hinders one from attaining more than they deserve, but it can also obstruct the reception of what is already destined for them. Thus, it is evident that one's lack of Bitachon not only limits the potential for greater blessings but can also jeopardize the fulfillment of what is predetermined.

In light of these lessons, when confronted with challenges, let us bear in mind: our only true adversary is the self-fulfilling prophecy of fear. By nurturing Bitachon and dispelling unwarranted fears, we open ourselves to the abundance that awaits, transcending the confines of what we may deem as rightfully deserved.