

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

High Level Motivation Is Not Enough

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 (45:9-11), Yosef tells his brothers, "Go quickly and bring up my father...and I will sustain you here." The Ralbag learns the following lesson from here, "The fourth benefit is in Middos. A person should help his father and his family when he is able to do so. This is illustrated by the fact that Yosef invested effort to bring his father and his whole household down to Egypt, so that they would not become impoverished by the famine etc."

Upon initial analysis this lesson in Middos derived from Yosef bringing his father down to Egypt needs further clarification. Perhaps Yosef's motivation to bring his father down to Egypt was due to missing him after being separated for so many years. He now finally has the chance to reunite, learn from his father, and make up for lost time. Surely this drive was present in Yosef. In lieu of this understanding, the Ralbag's lesson is difficult, as where do you see the Middah to take care of your family in this story, you may merely be seeing a son's desire to spend time with his father?

It must be that the Ralbag understood that granted Yosef had a strong desire to connect to his father, however without the ingrained Middah of wanting to help his family he would not be able to act on this desire. The passion and emotional drive to get something done can't really spur us into the fullest action unless it is combined with our Middos. This idea explains why often we find ourselves motivated and driven to accomplish great things, yet we fall short on carrying through. Our ability to produce is dependent on the Middos and nature we ingrain in ourselves. Momentary high level motivation does not produce the ultimate results, rather it is the way we shape our character that causes us to act on our inner wants.

Where Did My Passion Go

The Gemara in Brachos (16b) says, "Rebbi Elazar said the following after he finished Davening. May it be Your will Hashem...that we wake up and we find in our hearts the desire to fear you. Rashi explains this

request as follows, "That the Yetzer Harah should not overpower us with thoughts of the night which would cause us to turn away from Hashem during the day. Rather when we wake up every morning our hearts should be desiring Hashem."

Understanding Rebbi Elazar's concern requires further analysis. Rebbi Elazar was concerned that his passion to do the right thing would weaken from the time that he went to sleep to the time he woke up, due to the Yetzer Harah overpowering him. This concern seems unfounded, as firstly, Rebbi Elazar was someone whose thoughts were so refined, always absorbed in thoughts of Torah. Surely, even if he was less on guard at night, the impact would not be significant, especially after saying Krias Shema before bed? Secondly, anything he thinks about while sleeping is out of his control and not related to his conscious thought process. So, understanding how this would impact his motivation to fear Hashem, which he went to sleep with, presents a challenge. Thirdly, why is he so concerned that he will lose this desire, there are many things he would be able to do in the morning when he wakes up to reawaken this desire, such as learning Mussar and Davening for Yiras Shamayim?

We can glean from here a powerful insight into the dangers of being distracted. In this scenario, Rebbi Elazar was concerned that a slight breach in Yiras Shamayim, can reduce his drive for Yiras Shamayim. A mere lack of focus at night, due to sleep, can cause our passion to simmer and potentially extinguish. In our generation there is no lack of distractions that actively take us away from Avodas Hashem. However, we see from here that the problem is not only that those distractions cause us to not to learn in the moment, but it even goes further to reduce our passion to continue learning and growing. A passion we can't afford to lose, as it seems to be the driving force in our actions, based on Rebbi Elazar's request that the desire of our hearts to fear Hashem be present upon awakening.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

"When Yosef observed their profound embarrassment, he beckoned to them, saying, 'Draw near to me, I implore you' (*Bereishis 45:4*). As each brother approached, Yosef embraced him, shedding tears of compassion, as stated: 'And he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them' (*ibid.*, 15). Much like Yosef consoled his brothers through tears, the Holy One, blessed be He, will bring redemption to Yisroel with weeping, as expressed: 'They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them...'" (*Tanchuma Vayigash 5*).

It appears from the Midrash that during the Geula Hashem will weep as a means of comforting us. One might question the necessity for Hashem to console Klal Yisroel through tears at the time of their redemption. Should not the very act of Geula provide the utmost comfort?

The connection between Hashem's consolation and Yosef's actions may run much deeper. While the redemption itself serves as a solace for the pains of our Galus, similar to Yosef's brothers, we may still harbor concerns. Upon witnessing Hashem's immense love, we might fear that the profound pain we caused Him by seemingly forcing Him to part from us throughout the years will impact our closeness to Him even after our redemption.

Therefore, just as Yosef wept upon revealing himself to his brothers who betrayed him, offering solace through this display of love, so too Hashem will shed tears as an expression of love when revealing Himself to us, His beloved children, who caused Him much separation-induced anguish. This serves to console us, reassuring us that He harbors no resentment and His love for us remains unwavering.



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"Hashem will answer you on the day of affliction." (*Tehillim 20:2*)

"This is analogous to a father and son who were walking on their way. When the son tired, he said to his father, "Where is the city." The father responded, "This will be your sign, when you see a cemetery you will know that the city is close by." So too Hashem said to Klal Yisroel, "When you see the afflictions are covering you at that time you will be redeemed." As the Pasuk says, "Hashem will answer you on the day of affliction."" (*Medrash Tehillim ibid*)

Perhaps the reason for this is that the Pasuk (*Yeshaya 57:15*) says that Hashem dwells specifically among those who are humble of spirit. The Maharal (*Netzach Yisroel 11*) explains that because of this Hashem dwells among Klal Yisroel especially during our exile when we are humbled. The Chofetz Chaim writes that when Hashem dwells among us He saves us from all our afflictions as the Pasuk says, "Since Hashem your G-d moves about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you." Therefore, when our afflictions peak and cover us we can be sure that Hashem will immediately rest His presence among us, saving us from all afflictions.

However, we needn't wait till our suffering peaks. As soon as we experience affliction, if we humble ourselves and realize our complete powerlessness to save ourselves and that only Hashem can help us, our humility immediately merits the dwelling of Hashem's presence among us thereby saving us from any and all afflictions!