

# Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

פרשת  
שמות

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## The Strength of Fear

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

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנח | 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, the Torah tells us that Yocheved and Miriam defied Pharaoh's decree and did not kill the babies. As the Pasuk says (1:17), "The midwives feared G-d, and they did not comply with the command of the king of Egypt." The Ralbag derives the following lesson from here: "It is inappropriate for a person to agree to do despicable acts despite the fact that he is being pressured and commanded to do so from the ruler. Rather it is appropriate for a person to fear Hashem more than the ruler, as Hashem is the ruler of the ruler. This is why we find that the midwives did not listen to the king of Egypt to kill the babies, because they feared Hashem more than him. Due to this fear of Hashem, they had no fear of the possible punishment that would be meted out to them by the king of Egypt."

Upon initial analysis, the Ralbag is perplexing and requires further clarification. The Ralbag says that the reason Yocheved and Miriam refrained from murdering the babies was because they feared Hashem more than Pharaoh. Yocheved and Miriam were both great Tzadikos who lived and would surely be willing to die based on their principles. It is difficult to imagine that they would have murdered these babies or acted differently without this fear of Hashem, as there are seemingly so many other factors that would prevent a person from committing this heinous act. The moral and Halachic issues involved, and a person's own sensitivity and compassion, to name a few, should have been enough to stop them from committing murder. Why did they specifically need the fear of Hashem to stop them?

From here we can learn a powerful insight into the impact of fear. It seems that there are circumstances where even the greatest people would succumb to outside pressure and fears despite their refined Middos, moral fortitude, and iron

clad principles. The emotion of fear is so overpowering that one could be in danger of compromising his values and principles in a way that could possibly bring him to terrible sin! (Due to Yocheved and Miriam's lofty level, it could even have been considered murder!) Therefore, it is necessary for a person to draw strength from that very same emotion to counter the fear. He must fight fear with the fear of Hashem. This fear of Hashem gives a person the ability to withstand a pressure that his righteousness alone could not face.

This insight can be extended further. The Ralbag writes, "Due to this fear of Hashem, they had no fear of the possible punishment that would be meted out to them by the king of Egypt." This implies that the fear of Hashem did not merely overpower the fear of Pharaoh, rather it completely eradicated it. As the Ralbag says, "They had no fear." This is despite the fact that the fear of Pharaoh was so strong that their moral compass alone could not withstand it. Yet the fear of Hashem seems to be so impactful, that it not only combatted this powerful fear of Pharaoh, it completely dissipated it.

We can even take this one step further. A few Pesukim later, the Pasuk says, "And it was because the midwives feared Hashem, He made them houses." The Ralbag says, "This informs us that Hashem rewards those who fear Him for their fear." Yocheved and Miriam saved lives. Our Sages tell us, "And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world." (*Sanhedrin 37a*). One would think that their reward is based on their life-saving activities. However, the Ralbag says it is due to their fear of Hashem. We see from here how precious fear of Hashem is to Hashem. Due to the fact that fear of Hashem is the force behind their willingness to sacrifice their own lives, it is the primary reason for their reward, even more than saving lives.



## Shir HaShirim Insights

*In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern*

The Midrash (*Bamidbar Rabbah 2:15*) on the Pesukim in this week's Haftorah states: Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to him (Yirmiyah): "From the north will begin the bad etc." And what does it say following this? "Go proclaim to Yerushalayim: Thus said Hashem: I accounted to your favor the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride — How you followed Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Yisroel is holy to Hashem the first fruits of His harvest."

This is analogous to a king who married a woman. He said, "There is none more beautiful than her, there is none more praiseworthy than her, there is none more put together than her." The woman's aide entered her house and saw her in her filth, the house was not set up, and the beds were not made. Her aide said to her, "I wish you'd hear how your husband praised you in the street, that praise does not fit with these deeds." The aide said, "If when she is filthy, he praises her so, if she acted properly how much more so." So too, the generation of Yirmiyah was sinful and He says to them, "I remember the kindness of your youth." Yirmiyah said to them, "I wish you'd hear what He says about you, "Go proclaim to Jerusalem...I accounted to your favor the devotion of your youth...Yisroel is holy to Hashem..." He said, "If when they sin, He praises them so, when they do His will how much more so."

We see from here that a most effective way to get one to amend their evil ways is by letting them know how much you appreciate the good in them. This will make them think, "If when I act inappropriately, he thinks so highly of me, how much more will he admire me if I amend my ways!"



## ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

*A Westwood Realty Initiative*

"I understand why having bitachon is the greatest asset to have in every aspect of my life and will bring me the greatest success materially and spiritually, but how do I begin my journey to attain this coveted trait?"

Dovid HaMelech (*Tehillim 31:1*) answers this question:

"Oh Hashem, my heart was not proud nor my look haughty; I did not go in ways greater or beyond my ability."

What is "greater or beyond my ability" in the eyes of Dovid HaMelech, the great king of all Klal Yisroel, the fourth leg in Hashem's Kisei HaKavod?

Dovid HaMelech (*Tehillim 31:2*) continues:

"But I have calmed and quieted my soul like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child am I in my mind."

Dovid HaMelech tells Hashem: My heart was not proud nor my look haughty (What would be haughty of me?) to think that I, myself, am capable of anything more than a weaned child who clings to its mother is capable of doing! For this reason, my soul relies on You just as such a child relies upon its mother!

Then Dovid HaMelech tells Klal Yisroel (*Tehillim 31:3*):

O Yisroel! Await Hashem's help from now and forevermore!

The extent to which we internalize that there are no other options, is the extent to which we will come to rely on our only true option!