

The Delicate Nature of The Middah of Yashrus

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 | דב בעריש בן פסח צבי
לרפואה שלמה יוסף בן מלכה מטל | יעקב אליעזר בן חנה נשא

In this week's Parsha, the Pasuk (47:11) says, "And he gave them property in the land of Egypt in the best part of the land, in the land of Ramses, like Pharaoh commanded." The Ralbag derives from here: "The sixth benefit is in Middos. It is not proper for a person who is managing someone else's property to do with the property as he desires. Rather he should only give to his relatives what the property owner wanted. This holds true even if the one managing the property is the cause of the owners wealth. This is derived from Yosef. Despite the fact that he was appointed to manage Egypt, he did not want to give his family property in the best part of the land without Pharaoh's consent. This is why the Torah emphasizes that, 'Yosef gave them property in the best part of the land like Pharaoh commanded.' So too, we find in regards to the produce that was under Yosef to distribute to whomever he wanted, he did not want to give them more than they needed...All of this indicates the Yashrus of Yosef, and that he was not into luxuries and extras. Therefore, he did not ask Pharaoh for permission to give to his father more than the amount that Pharaoh wanted to give on his own."

The Ralbag seems to imply that if Yosef was interested in luxuries, then he would not have been capable of acting with Yashrus to the extent of only giving his family what Pharaoh wanted. This is difficult to understand, as Yosef reached Shleimus, and his Middah of integrity was thus so

refined and solid. One would have thought that his lofty Middah of Yashrus would be able to withstand and not be tainted by a focus or interest in luxuries. However, we see the opposite from the Ralbag, that despite his elevated Middos and Shleimus in Yashrus, if Yosef would have been focused on luxuries, that Yashrus would have been tainted. We see from here how important it is to develop the Middah of being satisfied with less, and being happy with what we have, as our focus and even desire for more can tarnish our precious Middah of integrity.

In addition, we see from the Ralbag how far the Middah of Yashrus extends. What would have been so wrong with Yosef asking Pharaoh to give his father a bit extra? Yosef literally transformed Pharaoh's empire into the wealthiest country, and he served him loyally. Now his family comes down to Egypt and he wants to treat them well. Why would this be inappropriate?

We see that despite his contribution to Egypt, Yosef felt giving or even asking for more for his family, without Pharaoh desiring this would be inappropriate. Him acting with the property assigned to him to manage in such a manner would be overstepping, and to preserve his integrity he only acted based on Pharaoh's command. We see from here how careful we have to be when it comes to the Middah of integrity as it goes beyond the basics of being honest and just.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

George was once a prince and Jack was once a pauper, but their present fate had brought them very close to each other. Having been captured by pirates on the high seas they now worked side by side for many hours each day for their new masters. Luckily, they were treated relatively well and were provided with decent food and board. One day over supper Jack turned to George and asked, "Why are you so miserable? We are very lucky to have been bought by decent masters, who provide us with decent accommodations and treat us as regular workers. In fact, I'm really happy, my life is better now than it was before we were captured." "Of course," George responded, "You are comparing your present situation to your previous one, a life of constant toil just to put some stale bread upon your table, while I compare my lot to living in a royal palace, a host of servants waiting to fulfill my every desire."

As the Chosen Nation of Hashem, the princes of Creation, who have already merited to feel the infinite pleasure of our Father the King's closeness when He revealed Himself to us at Har Sinai and "kissed us from the kisses of His mouth," so to speak. This pleasure, seared into the depths of every Jewish heart, is so great that no physical pleasure can ever bring us true satisfaction. This spurs us on to constantly search for something more. And even in the depths of our exile we still cry out:

"Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for Your love is better to me more than any wine banquet and more than any pleasure and joy." This figure of speech was used because He gave them His Torah and spoke to them face to face, and that love is still more pleasant to them than any pleasure, and they are assured by Him that He will appear to them to explain to them the secret of its reasons and its hidden mysteries, and they entreat Him to fulfill His word, and this is the meaning of ***"Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth."*** (Shir HaShirim 1:2 with Rashi)



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And I, in Your kindness have placed my trust, my heart rejoices in Your salvation. (Rav Chaim Brisker explains this as even before it actually takes place, for I am so certain it will.) ***I will sing to Hashem when He has saved me.***
(Tehillim 13:4-6)

"What are we going to do?" cried the innkeeper, R' Mottel's wife. "If you don't pay the landlord the entire amount you owe him by 9:30 tomorrow morning, he promised to throw our whole family into his dungeon." "I've been working on my Bitachon for many years now," replied R' Mottel, "and I'm not worried in the slightest, I have no doubt that my dear Father-in-Heaven, who cares about me more than we even care about our own children, will take care of everything." The Vilna Gaon, a guest at the inn witnessing this exchange, waited to see how this man's Heavenly salvation will come about.

At 9:25 am the next day, the Gaon sees R' Mottel reassuring his wife, "True, I still do not have the money, but I will go right now to the landlord, and you'll see how Hashem will take care of everything." The Gaon followed R' Mottel from a distance on the five-minute trek to the landlord's mansion, to see what would happen.

9:26: Suddenly, the Gaon sees a wealthy man on horseback ride up to R' Mottel and engage him in conversation. R' Mottel shakes his head with an emphatic "no" following which the man rides away. 9:28: The rider returns to R' Mottel, says a few words following which R' Mottel again shakes his head emphatically and the rider rides away. 9:30: It's the dreaded deadline and R' Mottel is standing confidently in the landlord's doorway. Suddenly, the Gaon sees the rider returning, he exchanges something with R' Mottel and rides off. The landlord, opens the door, accepts something from R' Mottel, who then turns around and heads back to the inn.

"What happened?" asks the Gaon. "When I was already in the landlord's doorway without any money Hashem sent someone to buy my entire fruit crop for the coming year for their full value which is more than twice the sum I owed the landlord!" "But what happened the first two times he came up to you?" asked the Gaon. "The first two times he offered me a little less than the true value of my crops, so, naturally, I refused to sell them!"

When one is already rejoicing in Hashem's complete salvation, with Hallel already at the tip of his tongue, he won't settle for anything less!