

Awakening the Slumbering Heart

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
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In this week's Parsha, the Pasuk (10:9) says, "When a war comes to your land..., you should blow the trumpets, and you will be remembered in front of Hashem." The Ralbag comments on this Pasuk, "The purpose of this Mitzvah is, a person will call out to Hashem at a time of crisis to be saved from the imminent danger, because Hashem is close to those that call out to him. Therefore, Hashem commanded them to blow the trumpets at the time they are davening and fasting, to stir their hearts to a complete Teshuva. The trumpets will awaken their slumbering hearts in a manner that will humble them, and they will return to Hashem, which will cause their Tefillah to be heard, and they will be remembered by Hashem."

In this Ralbag lies the secret to being saved in a time of Tzarrah. The formula is Tefillah and Teshuva, one without the other is not guaranteed to work. Through Teshuva, one's Tefillah is assured to be heard due to his closeness to Hashem. However, the Ralbag does not stop here, he explains that there is another step in the formula. Awakening a person to do Teshuva requires the trumpets, otherwise he is sleeping. The sound of the trumpets humble a person which leads to Teshuva. The need for this additional step in the formula is perplexing and requires further clarification. Firstly, why are the trumpets necessary to wake a person up? He is at war! The fear and anxiety of the war should surely be enough to stir him to Teshuva! Secondly, what is the Ralbag emphasizing by saying that he will be humbled and then he will do Teshuva, perhaps the

sin that he committed is not rooted in arrogance, and therefore humbling him is unnecessary?

We can answer the above question by gaining a deeper understanding of the Ralbag's understanding of sin. The Ralbag must understand that every sin is in truth rooted in arrogance. It stems from the philosophy that I am unwilling to subjugate myself to the will of the Creator, and I will do what I want, and live how I want; or it may be an attitude developed to justify my actions. Either way, this arrogance prevents a person from doing Teshuvah, and it even makes his heart deaf to the sounds of war that should tug at his heartstrings. He sees the war coming and senses the danger, but is unwilling to change his laissez-faire attitude and do Teshuva. He rather calls out to Hashem to save him without taking on the responsibility to change. Therefore, Hashem commanded us to blow the trumpets as this loud shrill will humble our hearts, which will lead to Teshuva and our Tefillos being heard.

In our generation, rarely is someone a stranger to danger and Tzarros. We are all looking for a formula to put an end to pain and suffering. Although we may not have the trumpets, we can use an idea taught to us from Rav Yisrael Salanter by Tekias Shofar to supplement this sound. Rav Yisrael tells us that in our generation the sound of the Shofar does not impact us as it did in previous generations. We need a more powerful sound, the roar of Limud Hamussar. Limud Hamussar will humble us and stir us to Teshuva, which will allow our Tefillah to be heard.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

Your ointments yield a sweet fragrance, Your name is like finest oil— Therefore maidens love you
(Shir HaShirim 1:3)

“Just as oil its beginning is bitter and then it becomes sweet so too the Torah, one may be pained by it in the beginning but makes a good ending with it. As the Pasuk (Iyov 8:7) says: ‘Though your beginning be painful, in the end you will grow very great.’” (Medrash Rabbah Devarim 7:3)

The above Pasuk seems to contradict the following Pasuk (Mishlei 3:17) describing the Torah: Her ways are pleasant, and all of her paths are peaceful. As the Rabbag explains on that Pasuk: “Behold the pathways of the Torah are pathways that are exceedingly pleasant and sweet to the person. For the Torah didn’t burden a person with any burden too harsh for him, rather all positive and negative commandments are sweet and desirous in and of themselves.”

It seems the answer lies in the wording of the Pasuk in Mishlei: Her (the Torah’s) ways are pleasant and all of her paths are peaceful. This does not exclude the possibility that in the beginning they can be hard, rather this just means that it’s paths, once one walks steadily upon them, are entirely pleasant and sweet. We all witness people finding it hard at times when they are still getting onto the path of Torah, however, those who have successfully ridden upon its path would not trade its sweetness for anything in the world.



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“There was a great and mighty king who ruled over most of the world with a mighty hand. His splendor and greatness had no equal amongst all the kings on Earth. All he had was one tender son whom he loved with all his soul. Out of his great love, he wished to bequeath to him all his treasures and riches, but he was unable to for he had enacted a law many years prior prohibiting his bestowing anyone any gifts without the recipient being worthy of them based upon his actions and deeds. Without a doubt, such a king desperately awaits for his son to perform some good deed so that he may generously reward him. So too, the King, Who grants life to all the worlds, Who with wisdom established the universe, and He created the world to bestow of His glory on all His creatures. The greatest bad in His eyes is when this bestowing of good is prevented, as the Gemara (Taanis 8a) states: Reish Lakish said: What is the meaning of that which is written: ‘And He will close up the heavens.’ (Deuteronomy 11:17)? This verse teaches that when the heavens are closed up from bringing down dew and rain, this is similar to a woman who has the pangs of labor and yet does not give birth...”

(Kli Machazik Brachah I’Talmid HaAriz”l, Chap. 1)

How lucky are we that Chazal have taught us an exception to the King’s decree: “Rav Yitzchok said: Everything is attained through kivuy (awaiting)!” (This means that even if one isn’t worthy, he merits all the gifts in the merit of kivuy which means Emunah and Bitachon – Eitz Yosef in the name of Netzer HaKodesh.) (Bereishis Raba)