

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

Truth Must Reign Supreme

based on the weekly Shmuess given by HaRav Shaya Cohen, Rosh HaYeshiva Zichron Aryeh

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח | לעילוי נשמת הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר | לעילוי נשמת רפאל חיים דוב בן ריסא שושנה | לרפואה שלמה יהושע דוד בן אלטא יענטא

In this week's Parsha, the daughters of Tzelafchad approached Moshe and Elazar to present their claim to a portion in Eretz Yisroel. The Ralbag says we learn from here, "That it is inappropriate for a person to refrain from bringing his judgement to great people due to embarrassment. Rather, it is proper for him to be steadfast and exert effort in pursuing what he deserves. This is derived from the fact that the daughters of Tzelofchod were not embarrassed to present their claim to Moshe, Elazar and the Nesiim."

The Ralbag's insight from the daughters of Tzelafchad is based upon his assumption that they would not have been required to overcome this embarrassment, but we see from the fact that they presented their claim that one is required to overcome their embarrassment. At first glance the Ralbag is difficult to understand. Why would the daughters of Tzelafchad be embarrassed, they had a legitimate claim to a portion in Eretz Yisroel? It is understandable that they may be uncomfortable going in front of such great people. However, why would that embarrassment have been so great that it would have prevented them from making their claim? In addition, why would we think that one is not required to overcome this embarrassment?

The Ralbag is teaching us that a slight feeling of embarrassment is really much more painful and serious than we think. Although the daughters had a rightful claim to a portion in Eretz Yisroel, we would have thought that they would be justified in holding back their claim, due to the tremendous pain that they would endure by presenting it.

We find a similar idea of the sensitivity of the soul to embarrassment expressed by the Alter of Slabodka. The Alter points out that in Bentching we say, "Please Hashem let us not need to receive gifts from human beings, rather directly from your hand that is full, open, holy, and expansive, so that we not be embarrassed and humiliated forever." The Alter points out that our soul is so sensitive to its dignity, that if we would receive gifts from Hashem, but the gifts were somewhat restrained, we would be embarrassed forever. Yet, despite this deep sensitivity of the

soul, we are obligated to overcome this embarrassment if we have a rightful claim to something. What is just and right must reign supreme even in the face of pain and embarrassment.

We find a similar idea expressed by Rashi. The Pasuk says, "Moshe brought their judgement to Hashem." Rashi comments, "The law was concealed from him. Here Moshe was punished for having taken a crown by saying, any matter which is difficult for you, you should bring to me." Obviously, this was not an expression rooted in arrogance, for Moshe reached the pinnacle of humility. It is evident then that the deficiency with the expression was that Moshe was implying he knew everything, and that was not true. Rashi implies that Moshe was punished by Hashem by concealing the Halacha from him. However, in Parshas Devarim it seems that this was not a punishment, but rather a lesson meant to correct Moshe's inaccurate statement. In Parshas Devarim on the Pasuk of, "Any matter which is difficult for you, you should bring to me," Rashi comments, "Because of this matter the laws of the daughters of Tzelafchad departed from him."

We find this same idea when Shmuel said to Shaul, "I am the one who sees. Hashem said to Shmuel, 'I swear by your life that I will let you know that you do not see.' And when did he let him know? When he came to anoint Dovid, Shmuel saw Eliav and said, 'Certainly his anointed one stands before Hashem.' Hashem said to Shmuel, 'Didn't you say that I am the one who sees? Do not look at Eliav's appearance.'" The Rashi in Devarim implies that Moshe's lack of knowledge of the Halacha was not a punishment. Rashi compares this to Shmuel, where Hashem said, "I will let you know that you do not see." This sounds like it is referring to both Moshe and Shmuel, that it was an action taken by Hashem to correct their mistake. This Rashi echoes the idea we said before, that despite the fact that this was embarrassing to Moshe, the truth had to reign supreme. Sometimes we find ourselves in a situation where we are faced with an opportunity to speak up for what is rightfully ours, and we may hesitate due to feelings of embarrassment. The actions of the daughters of Tzelafchad can motivate and inspire us to muster up the strength and courage to do what the Torah deems right and just, by asserting ourselves to speak up.

Why did Priority-1 initiate the 1-Focus Say Nishmas Campaign?

Priority-1 initiated this campaign because we are passionate about helping people strengthen their emunah and develop a strong connection with Hashem. We have noticed a wonderful increase in awareness of Hashem's absolute control over the world during the coronavirus pandemic. We want to ensure that the strides we have made on a communal level continue even after the crisis ends. That is the sole purpose of this campaign.





Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

Last week we explained the importance of studying Shir HaShirim as a means of providing us with the tangible benefits, in the here and now, of a loving relationship with Hashem. The following is another Chazal that brings this point out poignantly:

“When Rav Eliezer fell ill, his students entered to visit him. They said to him, ‘Our teacher, bless us.’ He said to them, ‘May it be His will that the fear of Heaven shall be upon you like the fear of flesh and blood.’ His students said, ‘To that point and not beyond?’ (Shouldn’t one fear G-d more?) He said to them, ‘If only a person would achieve that level of fear! Know that when one commits a transgression, he says to himself: I hope that no man will see me.’” (Berachos 28b)

This statement is difficult to comprehend. The students referred to in the above Gemara were Tannaim, how could they have feared man more than Heaven? The Vilna Gaon provides us some explanation: “Before one actually commits a sin he can abstain from it even through fear of Heaven alone. However, once he has already initiated the sin he does not abstain from it out of fear of Heaven, rather, only due to fear of man will he leave it.”

However, the Gaon’s words still leave us perplexed. How could these Tannaim, who believed with the greatest clarity that the eternal embarrassment of sin is infinitely greater than any passing shame, have feared man more than Heaven?

Perhaps this can be understood based upon the words of Reish Lakish (Sotah 3a): “A man commits a transgression only if a spirit of craziness enters him.” In such a state, future shame, even infinite and eternal, will not prevail. Conversely, the immediate effect of present shame directly negates the present pleasure of the sin being committed thereby preventing its culmination.

If regarding Tannaim future reward or punishment, in all of its infinite enormity, had to be supplemented by present and tangible consequences, how much more so is this true regarding our generation? If we do not enlighten ourselves to the present and tangible benefits of Torah and mitzvos, how can we hope to succeed?!



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

A Westwood Realty Initiative

I’ve been feeling down lately and it’s affecting every aspect of my life. What can I do to give me a steady boost throughout the day?

Adam was stunned by the transformation. George had always been one of the least competent workers in the palace. His depression had shown through the work he did and through his interactions with others, but today was different. He had completed his duties long ahead of schedule and they had been executed flawlessly. Perhaps it had something to do with the steady smile on his face and spark in his eyes. He seemed to be floating on a cloud, but what could be the reason for this? “George!” called out Adam as he approached, “What in the world has happened to you? Where have all your worries left to? Why can’t you stop smiling?” “You’ll never believe what happened today,” George responded, “I bumped into the king himself this morning. I was shocked that he even noticed me, but his hello slowly turned into a half hour conversation. Somehow, he was really impressed with what I had to say and I could see in his eyes how much he enjoyed conversing with me! It was the words he ended the conversation with that left me speechless and with a smile that refuses to leave my face. ‘George,’ he said with a smile, ‘I don’t remember having such a pleasant conversation with someone in a long time. From now on I want you to come to my chambers every day from 8:00 to 9:00 in the morning, from 2:30 to 2:45 in the afternoon and from 9:00 until 9:20 each night, just to shmooze and enjoy each other’s company.’” George’s words left Adam speechless with envy. “I guess that knocks you right out of the struggle of the simple palace servants. But what about your financial and other predicaments? Did he say anything to you about them?” “No,” responded George, “But don’t you realize, once I’m the one he enjoys conversing with three times each day, I have nothing left to worry about!”

The king of a simple kingdom told George that he enjoys speaking to him three times each day. But the King of the Universe asks of you, “Let me here your voice!” (Shir Hashirim 2:14) “I crave your conversation three times each day!” (Medresh Tehillim 116). George’s king is of flesh and blood, here today and tomorrow in the grave, but yours was, is, and will always be in total control of everything that will ever happen in the world! George’s king cares about him but yours said, “In your every pain I am pained!” (Yeshayah 63:9) “When you hurt I say, ‘My head hurts! My arm hurts!’” (Sanhedrin 46a). George’s king never promised he’ll grant him his requests but yours promised, “Anyone who prolongs his prayer is assured that his prayer does not return unanswered!” (Berachos 32b). George’s king said he enjoys conversing with him but yours said, “I have no greater pleasure in the entire world than when you raise your eyes to me and My eyes gaze upon yours!” (Tur O”Ch 125). George’s king called him a great servant, but yours called you, “My son! My firstborn!” (Shemos 4:22) “My beloved! My perfect one!” (Shir Hashirim 5:2)

If George now walks with head held high throughout the day, how can you not be dancing in the streets!? We attend those appointments faithfully each day, we needn’t even spend more time on them, if we simply focus, for one small minute, on what Chazal testify is truly taking place at those occasions, we will never walk again. Rather, we will dance through our days with immense fulfillment, supreme confidence and infinite joy!