

Pursuit of Purpose

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פרשת

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Insights Into Chinuch Hamussar

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
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The Gemara in Horayos states, “Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav, a person should always occupy himself with Torah and Mitzvos, even Shelo Lishmah, because through Shelo Lishmah it will come Lishmah. This is derived from the fact that Balak received a reward of Rus coming from him, for bringing 42 Korbanos to Hashem.” Generally, we assume that the concept that Shelo Lishmah leads to Lishmah is based on routine and habit. Over time we will begin to get used to the Mitzvah and appreciate its beauty. However, this Gemara is presenting a different approach, that it is based on a Zechus for doing the Mitzvah, and you will even be Zocheh to something in later generations.

The Maharsha comments on this Gemara, “Tosfos asks - We generally say that if someone occupies himself with Mitzvos Shelo Lishmah, he would have been better off not being created, so how can the Gemara say he receives a reward for this? Tosfos answers that the statement that says 'he would have been better off not being created' is referring to someone doing a Mitzvah to hurt others, but if doing the Mitzvah is motivated to protect a person's reputation that is not in the category of 'he was better off not being created.' Based on this answer, our Gemara is difficult to understand, since Balak's motivation was to hurt others, as he came to curse Klal Yisrael - so he should not receive a reward! This can be explained that Balak's motivation to curse Klal Yisrael was out of fear for his life...and thus was considered as if he was doing it for his own personal reputation. That is what the Gemara means that because Balak brought Korbanos Shelo Lishmah for his personal reputation, he was Zocheh that his children Dovid and Shlomo would bring Korbanos Lishmah.”

Another challenging part to understand in the above Gemara is the Zechus that Balak's Korbanos generated. Granted he was able to be removed from the category of “he would have been better off not being created,” as his motivation was out of fear, however, his entire strategy in bringing the Korbanos was with the intent of destroying Klal Yisrael and not to get close to Hashem. What Zechus could this act generate? Additionally, our Sages tell us that Hashem rewards our actions based on the extent of our sincerity.

What reward could this insincere act possibly deserve?

It must be that it is the very action itself of bringing the Korban which generates the Zechus. The act of bringing the Korban to Hashem is Mashpiah on a person and connects him to Hashem. Therefore, even though Balak's act seemed to be completely devoid of any purity or sincerity, as his intentions on the surface were to curse Klal Yisrael which was rooted in his fear, by doing the action of bringing the Korban it instilled within him some level of connection to Hashem that generated a Zechus of Lishmah in later generations. A powerful insight can be learned from here. Often we tend to undervalue our actions, as we question our sincerity and motivation behind our Mitzvos. We see from here that even when we have the wrong intentions, the actions themselves can create such a connection to Hashem from which we are deserving of great rewards.

However, the power of the action to influence seems to need another ingredient to achieve its maximum effectiveness. The Sefer Hachinuch writes on the Mitzvah of Pidyon Haben, “Hashem wanted to merit us by doing a Mitzvah in the first of our fruits. The purpose of this Mitzvah was in order for us to know that everything is from Hashem, and nobody has anything in this world except for what Hashem gives us out of His kindness. He will understand this when he sees that after a person labored so intensely, and invested so much effort into this fruit, despite it being so dear to him, he then gives it immediately to Hashem, emptying it from his domain and placing it in Hashem's domain.”

The Sefer Hachinuch does not merely say that the act of giving it to Hashem will cause a person to realize everything is from Hashem. He emphasizes that seeing himself do the action is critical for the message to be received, as he says “He will understand this when he sees.” Clearly, the power of Chinuch Hamussar is not just doing the action, but rather it is paying attention and looking at what I am doing. Seeing myself do the Mitzvah allows the message of the Mitzvah to penetrate my heart. We can glean from here that if we want our actions to influence us, we should not just do the action, we need to pay attention and focus on what we are doing.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

When Moshe Rabbeinu repeats the story of Bilham's attempt to curse Klal Yisroel he says (Devarim 23:6): "But Hashem your G-d refused to heed Bilham; instead, Hashem your G-d turned the curse into a blessing for you, for Hashem your G-d loves you."

The Ohr HaChaim explains: Although G-d had good reason to heed Bilham's request to destroy Klal Yisroel because of the sins of Klal Yisroel, He decided not to allow him to do so and to extend His goodwill to the Jewish people even though they could not claim it by right. The Torah adds, "Because G-d loves you," i.e. not because of your merit.

There was enough sin in Klal Yisroel at the time for Bilham's curses (to destroy Klal Yisroel), to be accepted. What then saved Klal Yisroel? The infinite love Hashem felt towards them even in such a state where they were deserving of total destruction. We must always remember no matter what spiritual state we are in, even at a time when we are deserving of total destruction, Hashem is overflowing with infinite love towards us!



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In this week's Haftorah, we read about the state of Klal Yisroel at the time of Moshiach's arrival:

"The remnant of Yaakov shall be among the nations like dew from Hashem, like droplets on grass—which do not look to any man, nor place their hope in mortals." The Radak explains that just as one who awaits dew only hopes to G-d for no human can bring it, similarly Klal Yisroel will await only Hashem's salvation.

Indeed, in the past we have quoted the words of the Ramchal (Ma'amar HaKivuy): "This indeed will be the final rectification – because of the great hope of Klal Yisroel despite the depths of our exile, they faithfully trust in their redemption."

As the Vilna Gaon (Mishlei 22:19) writes: "The central reason for the giving of the Torah to Klal Yisroel is so that they will place their trust in Hashem." Therefore, when this purpose has been fulfilled the end of days will arrive and Moshiach will come to bring us back into the loving arms of our Father in Heaven to delight in His presence forever!