

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

Giving Maaser: Nothing To Lose, Everything To Gain

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 | לרפואה שלמה יהושע דוד בן אלטא יענטא

In the Igeres HaGra, the Vilna Gaon writes to his wife, “For the sake of Hashem you should separate a fifth (*His opinion was that Maaser was 1/5, while others hold it is 1/10) as I tell you, and I am warning you not to separate less than this amount. This is because if you do less than this, many Mitzvos and Aveiros will be violated at every moment. In addition, this is as if you have denied the holy Torah, G-d forbid.”

The statement made by the Gra that one who does not give a fifth to the poor is considered as if he denied the Torah requires further analysis. Firstly, no source is quoted by the Gra, nor do we find this equation stated anywhere. Secondly, what is the rationale behind this equation? Perhaps we can answer that the Gra’s equation is sourced in a famous Drasha on a Pasuk in this week’s Parsha. The Pasuk (14:22) states “עשר תעשר”. The Gemara (Tannis 9a) makes the following Drasha from this Pasuk, “You should give a tenth in order that you become rich.” The Gra reasoned as follows, the only way somebody would pass up the opportunity to get rich is based on his lack of belief in this promise from Hashem. Therefore by not giving Maaser one is revealing his lack of belief in Hashem’s promise and is in essence denying what the Torah said.

However, in truth this source falls short in establishing the

Gra’s equation. Perhaps one who doesn’t give Maaser fully trusts that he will become wealthy in the future, however he is prevented from giving Maaser due to his concern that the loss will be felt right now. In other words, he believes his future will be bright, however his present situation will be worse, and that holds him back from giving Maaser. Based on this question, the Gra’s source for this statement remains unanswered. Perhaps we can answer that the Gra statement is based on a different Drasha on the same Pasuk. The Pesikta says, “Give Maaser, you won’t lack anything.” It is clear that if someone is not giving Maaser out of fear that they will be lacking, he is denying Hashem’s promise. That may be what the Gra meant when he said, “That it is as if he denied the Torah.”

Based on the above idea, we can offer an explanation that would resolve a common question asked on the two promises from Hashem derived from this Pasuk. At first glance the promise that Hashem made that you won’t be lacking seems unnecessary, as he already promised we would become rich. We can explain that the promise for wealth is in the future, and the promise that there will be no loss is in the present. Hopefully this idea can help strengthen our resolve to give Maaser as we have nothing to lose and everything to gain.



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

The overwhelming love for Hashem buried in the recesses of every Jewish heart is apparent throughout Shir Hashirim. This begs for an explanation for the baffling phenomenon of Jewish people who seemingly reject all attempts to develop a relationship with Hashem.

Let us take another look at the paragraph in Shir Hashirim most descriptive of our paradoxical relationship with Hashem:

After being separated from His wife for so long, the husband (Hashem) returns to her door. "Open up! Open up! My wife! My beloved! My soulmate! Oh, the obstacles I have overcome to reach you, to reunite with you. I'm freezing and soaking wet. Let Me in, please!" Eyes lighting up, He finally hears the voice of His wife (Klal Yisroel). However, his delight immediately turns to disbelief. His heart shatters into a million pieces. "I have already retired for the night, how can I dress again? I have already washed my feet, how can I soil them?" she says.

Rabbeinu Avraham Tamach explains the wife's disturbing response to her husband's pleas: "The wife rebuffs her husband in an attempt to further ignite his love for her. However, she purposefully uses a lame excuse for denying him entry, worrying that if she used harsher words he may give up on her completely.

This reveals to us an additional explanation behind a Jew's rejection of the One he so deeply desires. Many times it is not due to his truly wishing to be cut off from Him, for in the depths of his heart there always remains a burning desire to be close with Him. Rather, deep down in his heart he believes that by, "playing hard to get" he will succeed in further stoking the flames of Hashem's love for him, which in truth is his life's desire.



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

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The Pasuk in Parshas Behar (Vayikra 25:19), discussing the Brachos that will come to Bnei Yisroel if they follow the Chukim and Mitzvos of the Torah, says, "Vishavtem Lavetach" - and you will dwell securely. Rashi defines Betach as "Shelo Tidagu" - you will not worry. Bitachon is the absence of worry.

- 1) **Ein Mikrah Lefanav - No accidents.** The Chazon Ish writes that the first step in Bitachon is understanding "Ein Mikrah Lefanav" - there are no accidents in this world. Hashem has total control over every single detail; He is constantly involved in every detail (and He has infinite amount of love and care for me and everything He does is good). This intellectual understanding is stress relieving, but it does not remove stress totally since I may not like the results.
- 2) **Kivui - Hope.** Rav Avraham ben HaRambam writes about the next step: Kivui-hope. This is the understanding that I am not sure what is going to happen, but I do know one thing - I'm not giving up hope. I know that nothing is beyond Hashem's ability to make happen and I know He is the ultimate in kindness and mercy, so I will hope to Hashem and never feel forlorn or desperate. This reduces worry even more.
- 3) **Bikush - Request.** The next step is bikush - requesting and searching. I know the address, so to speak, that I need to contact to get results. One medium through which I contact Hashem is Tefillah. This also gives me something to do. I am not only hoping for the results, I am actually actively doing something meaningful to bring them about. I am requesting assistance from Hashem and drawing closer to Him. This reduces stress even more.
- 4) **Bitachon - Confidence.** The next step is Bitachon. This is a feeling from within, a certain confidence in which I feel sure that Hashem will not let me down. It is an emotional feeling of confidence and trust in Hashem which derives from internalizing the above three steps. This is a source of enormous stress relief, although not total, in that if my Bitachon weakens, I may not get the desired results.
- 5) **Chesed U'Mishpat Ashira - Feeling that all is equally good.** The final step is as Dovid Hamelech writes, "Chesed U'Mishpat Ashira." (Psalms 101:1) The Gemara in Brachos explains this to mean, "Al chesed ashira, v'al mishpat ashira" - on the kindness I will sing, and on the judgment I will sing. This very difficult level to achieve is a level of such confidence in Hashem's Chesed - that I don't even distinguish the good from the bad, the reward from the punishment. This is the ultimate stress relief. It makes no difference to me what happens. It is all equally Hashem's kindness.