

Pursuit of Purpose

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פרשת

ויצא

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Be Happy With What You Have

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

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In this week's Parsha, פרשת ויצא, Yaakov asks Hashem (28:2), "And give me bread to eat and clothing to wear." The Ralbag derives from here that "it is not appropriate for a person to be overwhelmed and anxious for wealth, rather he should be satisfied with his necessities being taken care of. This can be seen from the fact that Yaakov only asked Hashem for what was necessary, which was bread to eat and clothing to wear."

The Ralbag implies that if Yaakov would have asked for bread with cheese or a few pairs of clothing, going beyond what is absolutely necessary, that would have been considered that he was anxious about wealth. Although this request would have still been conservative, and only a bit beyond what was necessary, the extra focus and concern for something beyond what is needed can have devastating effects. It can cause a person to start being anxious, and not satisfied with what he has.

Granted that this idea is beyond most of us, however we can still learn from here that sometimes our pursuits for money and Parnassah increase our anxiety and stress regarding money. When we Daven for money, that focus itself can possibly be damaging.

The Ralbag continues to define what we would call a very conservative request or pursuit as something inappropriate in the Pasuk in the beginning of the Parsha, (28:11) "And he took from the stones of the place and put it under his head, and he laid down in that place." The Ralbag gleans the following lesson in Middos from here; "It is not appropriate for a person to run after pleasures, rather he should only take what is necessary. This is illustrated from the fact that Luz was next to this place, and Yakkov could have gone there to sleep on a bed. However he was satisfied with the stones of the place..."

The Ralbag implies that if Yaakov would have gone to seek a bed to sleep in, that would have been considered chasing after pleasure. Often we think that if something is normal, we would not define it as running after pleasure.

However, we see from here that the definition of running after pleasure is much more narrow than we thought, and pursuing pleasure starts with the small things, like needing a bed.

This Madreigah is beyond us and not recommended for our generation. However the concept is important, as we see that by indulging in our "basic necessities", we may fall into the category of pursuing pleasure.

Pushing Beyond Our Limits

The Pasuk says (28:11-18), "Yaakov reached the place and slept there, because the sun went down...and he awoke in the morning". The Ralbag derives a lesson in Middos from here. He explains, "It is appropriate for a person to act with Zerizus, and not be lazy. This is because laziness is a very bad Middah that distances a person from Shleimus. It is for this reason that the Torah tells us that Yaakov went to sleep in that place because the sun went down. However if not for the sun going down, Yaakov would not have been lazy from continuing to travel on that day. It is for this reason that it is mentioned that he awoke in the morning to go on his way."

At first glance this Ralbag seems puzzling, traveling is exhausting, and a person can be going with great Zerizus, yet still need to rest and take a break. The Ralbag implies that if Yaakov would have been able to continue traveling but did not, it would be an expression of laziness.

We see from here that if a person doesn't push themselves to continue even when they are exhausted, that can be a result of a person's Middah of laziness, or result in laziness. Therefore, it is critical to go beyond and push further, so as to not strengthen the Middah of Laziness, a Middah that distances a person from all Shleimus. Granted, this Madreigah seems very lofty, and we may not yet be on that level. However, what we can derive from here is that sometimes the extra push can make all the difference, and the lack of pushing harder can be extremely detrimental to our Ruchniyus.

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Shir Hashirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

Revelation of Hashem's Glory Leads to Love

"King Shlomo [a reference to Hashem throughout Shir HaShirim] **made for Himself a canopy:** This refers to the Tent of Meeting, which was established in the Tabernacle at Shiloh. He made for Himself a crowning canopy for glory..." (Shir HaShirim 3:9)

Why did Hashem feel the need to create for Himself a crowning canopy for glory? And why is this described in Shir HaShirim, a song of infinite love between Hashem and His children?

Similarly, in the Shemoneh Esrei, we recite: "And He will bring the Redeemer to their children's children for the sake of His name, with love." Could it be that our Father in Heaven, whose boundless love for us overflows at every moment, will ultimately send the Redeemer not for the sake of His children who have endured two thousand years of suffering, but rather for the sake of His name?

The answer lies in the concluding words: "for the sake of His name, with love." Hashem, in His perfection, is entirely without need. Yet, He is deeply concerned with His glory and the honor of His name—not for His own sake, but out of love for us. Why? Because the most certain way to bring us to love Him, and thereby merit eternal paradise—the ultimate purpose of Creation—is through the revelation of His glory.

As the Rambam explains: "What is the path to attain love and awe of Him? When a person contemplates His wondrous and great deeds and creations and appreciates His infinite wisdom that surpasses all comparison, he will immediately love, praise, and glorify [Him], yearning with tremendous desire to know [G-d's] great name, as Dovid stated: 'My soul thirsts for the L-rd, for the living G-d' [Tehillim 42:3]. When he continues to reflect on these matters, he will immediately recoil in awe and fear, appreciating how he is a tiny, lowly, and dark creature, standing with his flimsy, limited wisdom before He who is of perfect knowledge, as David stated: 'When I see Your heavens, the work of Your fingers... [I wonder] what is man that You should recall him' [Tehillim 8:4-5]." (Rambam, Yesodei HaTorah, Chap. 2)

Hashem's concern for His name stems from His infinite love for us, as it is through the revelation of His glory that we come to truly love Him. This love draws us closer to fulfilling our purpose: an eternal bond with Hashem.



Emunah Highlights

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He Won't Let Us Down

"I have taken refuge in You, O Hashem; let me never be shamed; save me through Your righteousness." (Tehillim 31:2)

The Alshich explains: "Even without my praying, but solely because I have taken refuge in You, I am assured that I will not be shamed forever—not in this world, from physical suffering, nor in the World to Come, from the suffering of the soul. I do not even need to ask this of You explicitly; rather, You will save me with Your righteousness as an act of kindness, without diminishing my merits. The reason for this salvation is the merit of my taking refuge in You, even without prayer."

From this, we learn that one who places complete trust in Hashem is assured that they will not be let down, even without explicitly praying. This assurance extends not only to their present circumstances but also to their future in the World to Come, which is typically dependent on one's service of Hashem. How can this be reconciled?

This question applies to trust in Hashem regarding matters of this world as well. Chazal teach (Bava Kama 50a): "Rav Chanina said: If a man claims that the Holy One, blessed be He, is lax in the execution of justice, his life shall be forfeit, as it is stated: 'He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment.'" (Devarim 32:4)

The resolution to this apparent contradiction lies in the Alshich's concluding words: "You will save me with Your righteousness—as an act of kindness, without any diminishment of my merits. The reason for this salvation is the merit of my taking refuge in You, even without prayer."

At first glance, this seems paradoxical: if salvation is in the merit of taking refuge in Hashem, how is it achieved without diminishing other merits?

The answer lies in understanding the profound nature of trust in Hashem. When a person places their trust in Hashem despite feeling bereft of personal merits, this pure and unwavering trust itself becomes a significant merit. It is the most genuine form of reliance on Hashem, requiring deep faith and humility.

Because this trust is inherently meritorious, it justifies Hashem's salvation without depleting a person's other merits. This principle holds true not only in matters of this world but also in the World to Come, where one who trusts fully in Hashem will not be let down.