

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

The Secret To Stopping A Rebellion

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
לרפואה שלמה יוסף בן מלכה מטל | יעקב אליעזר בן חנה נשא

In this week's Parsha the Pesukim (29:3-4) say, "And Hashem did not give you a heart to know, eyes to see, and an ear to hear until this day. I led you for 40 years in the desert, your clothing did not wear out, and your shoes did not get worn out from your feet." The Seforno comments, "And Hashem did not give you a heart to know,' meaning even though Hashem tried, through His laws and miracles, to give you a heart to know, as it says, 'In order that you tell over...and they should know that I am Hashem,' they did not attain this goal due to their constant rebellion. 'I led you,' meaning, however, now after seeing Hashem's abundant kindness with you in the desert in order that you should know, He brought you now to the land of Sichon and Og where you have an inheritance in the land and you are capable of fulfilling the goal. It is now appropriate that from here and on, He will give you a heart to know."

This Seforno is quite puzzling, and requires further clarification. Initially, Hashem did not give them a heart to know because they couldn't achieve that level due to their rebellion, which would indicate that the preventive to reaching the ultimate levels of knowledge of Hashem, was rebellion. However, the Seforno then says that by entering Eretz Yisrael they are now capable of fulfilling the goal, which implies that what was preventing them from achieving the goal was capability. Which was it; was it rebellion or capability which prevented them from achieving this goal of "a heart to know"?

It must be that there is a strong connection between rebellion and feelings of incapableness. When a person feels that he can't do something, he is incapable of reaching the goal, his only choice is to negate the goal. Keeping the goal on a pedestal while having to cope with the feelings of, 'I can't reach it', is too painful, so he therefore must reject the goal. This is what the Seforno is telling us, when Klal Yisrael felt capable of achieving the goal, the rebellion disappeared.

Rosh Hashanah is only two weeks away, and we are all looking for areas to improve in. This idea can be helpful in our Teshuva process, as the areas where we are falling short may be due to our feelings of inadequacy. Perhaps we are not learning enough because we feel we won't amount to anything, and we are not Davening properly due to our feeling unworthy of being listened to. The reality may be that the entire block to our Teshuva process is a complete lack of recognition of our own strengths and capabilities. Therefore the call of the hour is to work on recognizing our own greatness - who we are, and what we can be. In addition, we need to realize that when we face a Nisayon, we can overcome the challenge. As the Gaon says, "Hashem does not give us a challenge we can't pass." Knowing that we can succeed will put an end to us saying that we don't want to.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

Rashi explains that the opening of the third Perek of Shir HaShirim refers to the period when Klal Yisrael wandered in the desert for forty years before entering Eretz Yisrael. According to Rashi, Klal Yisrael was searching for Hashem during this time but felt they could not find Him.

This is perplexing, considering that this generation witnessed some of the most obvious miracles. Their daily food, the manna, arrived miraculously at their doorsteps every morning, with a double portion on Fridays. They were protected by the Ananei Hakavod, shielding them from the heat of the day and the cold of the desert nights, while the Amud Aish provided guidance. Their clothing miraculously remained fresh and intact throughout the forty years. These wonders clearly showed Hashem's presence. So how could they have felt they couldn't find Him?

It seems that the nature of our relationship with Hashem is such that we have an intense longing for closeness to our Creator. No matter how close we already are, if there is even the slightest sense of something missing, it can feel as though we haven't found Hashem at all. Our desire for a connection with Hashem is boundless, and we constantly yearn to grow closer. When obstacles arise, whether they are misdeeds or other barriers, we may feel as though we have lost that connection entirely, despite the many signs of His presence around us.



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It's important to address a fundamental question: If Hashem loves us deeply, has provided for our needs even before birth, and sincerely desires to fulfill our requests—especially since it is effortless for Him—why doesn't He simply do so? Why is it necessary for us to actively focus on and internalize these truths in order to benefit from them?

To understand this, we must explore a foundational principle Hashem has established in how He governs the world.

“As it is known, the Creator, blessed be His name, constantly watches over each individual and all aspects of their lives. The degree to which a person turns their heart toward Hashem determines the extent of His supervision over them. The Medrash on the Pasuk ‘Hashem is your shadow’ illustrates this: ‘Just as a shadow mimics your actions—when you extend one finger, it mirrors one finger, and when you show your entire hand, it reflects the whole hand—so too with Hashem. The more a person turns to Him, the more Hashem turns toward them.’” (Rav Zundel Mi'Salant in a letter to his son).

This principle clarifies why we must consciously focus on the truths that strengthen our belief in Hashem's willingness and ability to fulfill our requests. Although these truths exist regardless of our awareness, Hashem's response in managing our lives is proportionate to the attention and belief we place in these realities. The more we focus, the more we open ourselves to experience Hashem's care and guidance.